

The firm I worked for had their own saw mill where we cut the trees to suit our various types of work. It was very heavy, hard work as everything was done by hand, all lifting and cross-cutting of the trees. We also went out in the woods at times during the winter to fell the trees. These were delivered to the saw-yard on a timber-wagon pulled by two or three horses.

Although life was hard we seemed to enjoy ourselves. We cycled to Barnstaple most Saturday evenings (9miles) to the pictures, one could see the pictures for 9d.(4.5p). By this time I had left Sunday School but I still sat in the Choir.

During one night in 1935 I was walking up the High Street in Barnstaple. I saw in Burton's (one of the first chain of the men's tailoring shops) window suits made to measure 37s 6d. I went inside and was met by a young man dressed in a black coat and pin striped trousers, white shirt and grey tie and a smart hair cut. 'Can I help you Sir?' I said that I would like a suit made of the herring-bone grey material in the window at 37s. 6d. After taking my measurements he told me to call back in a week for a fitting. Calling back the following week, the suit was tacked together for fitting and any adjustments needed. 'Call again next week and you can collect it', said the young man. I called to pick up the suit, complete with waist-coat, the next week, and it turned out to be one of the best suits I have ever had.

I carried it home in a box on my bike.

One of the jobs we did was undertaking - not a pleasant job, but it had to be done. We also did painting and decorating, cream or brown were used no bright colours in those days. Wallpaper was very expensive and there was very little choice. We did paper a room in a cottage occasionally but the walls were rough, we used to say 'Like papering the end of a wood-rick'.

In fact we did anything that was needed, the country was a good place to serve an apprenticeship, you couldn't jump in a car and pop to Barnstaple for one thing, you quite often had to improvise.

We did work for one of the Murch family who owned steam rollers and traction engines. In their yard, one day I saw one of the engines being cut up for scrap by acetylene cutters (what a shame) and there were three or four more outside waiting for the same fate.

By this time I had bought my first bicycle (second Hand, of course) for £1.0s.0d, now I was mobile.

When I wasn't working I would deliver telegrams or messages or fetch parcels from the station, the Portsmouth Arms anything to earn a few pence. I even bought a few 'old bikes' and did them up as a way of making a few bob.

About 1935 I bought a brand new bicycle, a Raleigh Super Sports for £5.18s.0d. I kept this purely for pleasure as I still had the one that I had bought for £1.

We cycled quite a lot on a Sunday afternoon and going from Barnstaple to Bideford during the depression of the late '20s and early 30s' one could see a dozen or more ships layed up in the Taw Estuary because there was no wharf fee. The ships were only small cargo ships with one man on board.