

**SADDLE / HARNESS AND COLLAR MAKING IN
OSGATHORPE IN THE MID TO LATE 19th
CENTURY**



BY SAMUEL T STEWART - JANUARY 2024

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Illustrates a light duty saddle / harness and collar used on farm horses for pulling small carts and waggons etc.

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Osgathorpe had its own saddle / harness and collar makers from before 1851 to post 1881. This is not surprising when one considers the concentration of farming in Osgathorpe and the local area when horses were the beasts of burden used to pull carts / waggons, hayricks and ploughs etc. It was not only in farming that horses were the beasts of burden, they were also used to haul coal laden waggons around the district for example. Many different arrangements of harnesses and collars were used dependent on the task in hand and the illustration on the front cover shows a typical light duty arrangement for the pulling of small carts with shafts. Chains often supplemented the more heavy duty harness arrangements used for ploughing as shown below. Note the heavy duty collars around the horses necks.



In 1851, Joseph Platts, who was born in Coleorton and aged 27 was recorded as a saddler. He was living with his wife Catherine, aged 25 who was born in Osgathorpe and son Thomas, aged 4, who was born in Thringstone.

By 1861, Joseph was recorded as a "Master Harness Maker" employing one man which was likely to have been Joseph Buckerfield, a sadler, aged 50 who was lodging with Henry Rennocks who was the Victualler at the Royal Oak Inn, Osgathorpe, at that time. Thomas, his 14 year old son was recorded as being a harness maker also.

In 1871, Joseph Platts was still operating his business as a 'collar and harness maker'. He and his wife Catherine now have two daughters, Catherine and Mary. E., aged 9 & 7 respectively. His son Thomas, still living at home is now recorded as a 'journeyman, collar and harness', so presumably he was selling / obtaining orders for his father's products further afield. Interestingly they now have a 21 year old apprentice living with them named Alfred Walker who was born in Doveridge, Derbyshire.

In 1881, Joseph (now recorded as being born in Thringstone?), aged 57 is recorded as a 'saddler'. Their daughter Catherine, aged 20, is still living with them. **They are shown as living next door to the Royal Oak where James Brooks was the Vicualler at the time.** Their son Thomas, now married to Sarah H.D., aged 37, who was born in Belton are living in the adjacent property to his mother and father. Thomas is recorded as a 'Collar and Harness maker'. They would have lived in the properties directly to the left of the 'Royal Oak' (see map on the next page).

By 1891 there are no Platts recorded as residing in Osgathorpe.



Extract from 1883 25 inch O/S Map showing the Royal Oak and adjacent properties

The recordings in the censuses cannot be taken as reliable with respect to job description. The making of saddles, harnesses and collars for farm horses were normally all made together as they interacted with each other. That is not to say they didn't make conventional horse riding saddles also.

NOTE

A **harness saddle** for a **farm horse** is an element of the horse harness which supports the weight of shafts or poles attaching a waggon or plough etc, to a horse. Like other types of saddle, it lies on the horse's back directly behind the withers and usually has an internal supportive framework, often called a *saddle tree*, for that reason. It is custom fitted to an individual horse, and has fittings (buckles, rings, etc.) for attachment of other pieces of harness. It is usually secured on either side by a girth passing beneath the horse. Unlike riding saddles, it is an integral part of the harness and is not used as stand-alone equipment.

A horse collar is a part of a horse harness that is used to distribute the load around a horse's neck and shoulders when pulling a wagon or plough.