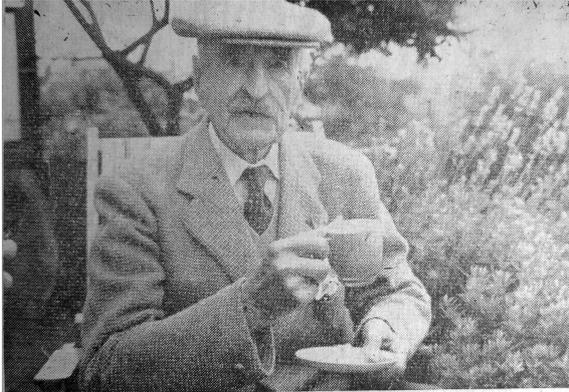


Mr. Edmund Hussey

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By Carl Whiteley



Mr. Edmund Hussey relaxes with a cup of tea in his delightful river-side garden at Willow Way. C.T. Photos

In a few weeks' time Mr. Edmund Hussey will be 96. He retired 26 years ago after working 50 years for a family firm of engineer's merchants at Clerkenwell and Bloomsbury.

During that 50 years he served under four generations of the family but since retirement the fifth-generation has stepped into the business.

Name of the firm is Stedall and Co. Ltd., and Mr. Hussey's one ambition is to meet the fifth member of the Stedall family. This he hopes to achieve next month for he has invited Mr. Jonathan Stedall to visit him at his river side home at Fairhaven, Willow Way.

Mr. Stedall can look forward to an interesting meeting.

A man with a wonderful memory, Mr. Hussey will be able to recall his long and happy association with the Stedall family

He joined the firm at the age of 20 after completing his apprenticeship in the country. He became a salesman and part of his job was to demonstrate complicated machinery, including all kinds of lathes, from the ultra-primitive pole lathe to the full automatic. On retirement he had reached the position of manager of the machine-tool department.

During his travels Mr. Hussey came into contact with many blacksmiths and he developed a very high regard for this trade. He became intensely interested in the work and after retirement decided to become a blacksmith himself.

Coming to Christchurch six years ago, he took over for the forge in Sopers Lane and although 90 he worked more than nine hours a day, six days a week. And all his profits went to charity.

Mr. Hussey was a customer of the Stedall firm for 20 years after his retirement. He needed tools and materials for the forge.

Being a blacksmith was a very satisfying life. He enjoyed himself and at the same time helped others less fortunate than himself.

A HOBBY

Playing around with metals and a forge was only his hobby until one day he heard a lecture on the leprosy problem by the Rev. Tubby Clayton, founder of Toc H.

At this time Mr. Hussey was living in Chelmsford and as there was a colony not far from his home he determined to do what he could to help them.

His first job was to collect £50 in public subscriptions. But he did not like the thought of asking people for money, so he sold some of his wrought ironwork instead. That raised £5 more than was needed, and repeat orders for these goods came along steadily for 20 years. But for health reasons at 94 he decided to give up this work.

During the last war Mr. Hussey put his skill to good use by making many unobtainable articles. He made large wooden spoons for preserving fruit and jam making, steel tongs for lifting the bottles of fruit out of the boiling water, wooden stools, hairpins and grips, sighting stands for the Home Guard, bedsteads for guide dogs and many other useful articles.

Said Mr. Hussey: "I found it was a great satisfaction to be able to provide helpful devices for those who had some limitation or loss of limb".

GADGETS

He made a gadget whereby a blind girl could cut slices of bread evenly and to any given thickness, he provided a man who had only one arm with a special carpenter's brace and an electric bell for a leper who was blind and had no sense of touch in his hands.

Mr. Hussey has made music stands, candlesticks, table lamps, bookends and hearth sets and all for charities. He made a couple of easels for children suffering from infantile paralysis and a lot of his work was for the British Red Cross and Empire Cancer Campaign.

"A WORK OF ART"

Mr. Hussey believes that the craft of the shoe-smith can never be mechanised and will never die out. "To make, fit and nail a perfect horse-shoe needs brain, hand and eye," he said. "It is really a work of art for it has the three qualities which justify that designation: beauty, truth and goodness."

In his long life Mr. Hussey has learned many things. These are some: Every difficulty is an opportunity; it takes very little to make some people very busy; if you have a job to do that you hate, do it at once and get rid of it; do not lend more than you can afford to give; the reception you get depends very much on the approach you make.

Mr. Hussey has been delighted to find among so many imperfect man-made articles something that centuries have proved to be at least within sight of that almost impossible target of perfection.

He explained: "It gave me a thrill 80 years ago when I was given some carpenter's tools that were probably 30 to 40 years' old.

"On looking into a tool shop window last week I noticed that all the handles and, in fact, the tools themselves, were just reproductions of those I had been given which were made more than a century ago. It gave me tremendous admiration of our ancestors who designed those tools.

"All through the centuries of science, education and technical study no one has ever dared even to suggest any improvement of the original design of the handles of these tools," he added.

CHURCH WORK

Mr. Hussey was engaged in church work for nearly 80 years as a choirboy, Sunday school superintendent, churchwarden and diocesan reader. He was a member of the Rural Industries Community Council, chairman of Chelmsford branch of Toc H, chairman of the Chelmsford branch of the C.E.M.S. and on the committee of the Homes of St. Giles.

During the last war Mr. Hussey was typist to the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

A very active man for his age, he attends the Priory Church and has a walk morning and afternoon, weather permitting.

Mr. Hussey is looking forward to next month. He will have lots to tell Mr. Stedall.