



Mr Ronald James, a blacksmith for 45 years, at work in his Salem Street forge

It's a time of change at the smithy

MR RONALD Darley James is one of the few village blacksmiths who have managed to continue earning a living from their old and once common-place craft.

Even so, times have changed a great deal in the 45 years since he first went to work in his father's smithy, when he was 15.

Now he works alone behind his home at 8 Salem Street. And, where once a blacksmith had to rely on the strength in his arm to get him by, Mr James now has more modern devices, like the power hammer that stands by his anvil.

He says that the job is a lot easier now than when he was first apprenticed. And the kind of work he does has altered to a great extent.

He is never asked to shoe a horse these days, although he does from time to time get asked to trim hooves.

Now the bulk of his work is in the manufacture and repair of agricultural imple-

ments — but they are implements of a very different kind from the horse-drawn ones he used to work on.

His father, Joseph Henry James, worked until his death in 1954. He had gone into the business when he was 15 at the forge of his uncle, Tom Braybrooks.

Mr James and his wife have a son, who is an electronics engineering designer in Swindon, and a daughter, who lives in Pinchbeck, and works in an accountants' office.