

## Chapter 3

# SOUNDS AND NOISES

The view held by some people that life in the village was 'monotonously quiet' is a completely false one. On most days the 'putta-putta-put' of the gas engine at the mill could be heard from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m., and then at intervals throughout the day the pleasant ringing sound of the Blacksmith's hammer on the anvil could be heard by people in the near vicinity. When the wind was in the right direction the hooter or bell at Waterside Works could be heard distinctly. It sounded several times during the day, but at 7.45 a.m. people took special note of it as it was accepted as Greenwich time, and workmen would set their watches at the correct time. If the wind blew from the opposite direction, the hooter at Brantham Xylonite Works could be heard, as well as the roar of the trains going over Cattawade Bridges. If the clock on Stutton School was heard striking, it was considered a sure sign of rain approaching. In School Term time the bell at the village school could be heard at 8.45 a.m., 8.55 a.m., 1.45 p.m. and 1.55 p.m. reminding parents, as well as children, that it was time for lessons. One has to bear in mind the fact that very few cottagers had reliable time pieces, and so the schoolmaster was anxious to help the scholars arrive on time. At about 9 a.m. on five mornings a week the bugle of 'Dilla' Stiff could be heard, and at 11 a.m. Percy Abbott blew his whistle, and those people who required goods from Ipswich would give their order to one of these two carriers. Then there were the Church Bells, which were rung for each Service, every Sunday, and for practice for 1½ hours on a Monday evening. One of the bells was used to inform the Village of a death. It would toll at intervals of three minutes, for an hour. I believe it was three pulls for a man, two pulls for a woman, and one for a child. The 'death' bell was also tolled at the time of a burial. It began to toll about an hour before the time fixed for the Church Service. This was a signal for the villagers to draw blinds as a mark of respect for the deceased. On arrival of the cortege at the Church, the bell was silent until the end of the Service. It was then tolled until the procession reached the graveside.

The sound of horses' hooves on the picked stoned roads was

quite common, and sometimes very interesting: each horse or pony had a distinctive step, especially when trotting. The heavy horses which pulled the waggons loaded with corn etc. were often very attractive with their braid and brasses, and the teamster would be congratulated when he pulled up at The Compasses to give the horses a rest.

It was also very interesting to listen to the sounds that came from the fields where ploughing and other operations were in progress. The horses were guided by verbal instructions, as well as by reins, namely 'Cupee-wee' meant go to the left, 'Grr Wherr-ee' to the right, and the well known 'Whoa'a there' meant stop. If these instructions were not obeyed, they would be repeated in a loud throated shout, with a few choice words added!

As there were very few machines around, it was possible to hear the footsteps of the workmen with their heavy footwear, going to and from work. One pensioner (Abraham Stiff) who was bedridden, would guess, mostly correctly, who was passing his house, by the particular 'step'.

As each butcher killed, on the premises, the animals which supplied the meat for the shops, some very distressing noises were often heard. Pig killing probably caused the greatest concern, and as I lived near to the slaughterhouse at Reed House I have vivid memories of the piercing shrieks that could be heard at killing time. The mournful blare of the bullocks, and the continuous bleating of the sheep was sure evidence of their unnatural surroundings.

Quite frequently, in the autumn, a set of threshing tackle would pass through the Village making an indescribable din and noise. First came a 'Ransome' Steam Traction Engine, pulling a threshing box or drum, and then followed an Elevator or Straw Pitcher. All three vehicles had heavy iron wheels and were without any kind of springs. Anyone who has never witnessed such a procession cannot possibly imagine the interest and excitement that was created. The engine driver and the steersman rode on the engine, and a third man rode in the pony cart that followed the elevator. In addition to the loud rattling noise that was created, a tell-tale trail of bits of straw, chaff, and dirt was left from one farm to another. Later on, when the threshing box had been 'set' along side a corn stack, more pleasant humming sounds could be heard, as the grain was separated from the straw. If the corn being threshed was wheat, it would be conveyed in coomb sacks to Holbrook Mill to be ground into flour.