Carter's Yard

Horses were the key to transport in the Black Country well into the twentieth century. They were used as draught animals to haul narrow boats loaded with goods on the nearby canals, to drag heavy coal carts and to pull trams, carriages, milk floats, delivery wagons and fire engines.

The guide who looks after the horses in Carters Yard will show you pictures of horses in the past including one pulling a coach. A journey from Birmingham to Bristol on this would have taken over 2 days compared with 2 hours by car and motorway today.

At best a coach pulled by two horses went at about 12/15 miles per hour, but this could not be managed for long before the horses became exhausted, so for long journeys, they had to be changed for fresh ones provided at intervals along the route.

Carts like the one used at the museum to deliver coal had no suspension, which meant that every bump and hole in the untarred and narrow roads would be felt by the carter - very uncomfortable!

Although some Shire horses were used for haulage in heavy industry, the majority of work in the Black Country was done using 'half leg' or short legged Shire cross breed horses able to pull smaller, two wheeled carts and canal boats. They were lighter to handle and cheaper to feed than the Shires.

How much can a horse pull?

If the load is on a 2 wheeled cart, it's about 1.5 times its own weight If the load is on a 4 wheeled cart, it's 2 times its own weight If the load is on water, it's about 10 times its own weight

Note: A fully grown Shire like William weighs about a ton.

A very important and interesting picture the guide will show or describe to you pictures up to 20 horses pulling the anchor made in May 1911 at Noah Hingley's works in Netherton for the ill-fated liner the SS Titanic.

The anchor, weighing 16 tons, is on its way to the railway yard at Netherton from where it was to continue the rest of its journey to the shipyards in Belfast. Obviously, making it was a very important event in the lives of the local people.