

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

THE BLACKSMITH

Blacksmiths were a staple of every medieval town. They made – or wrought - objects from iron or steel. They made weapons, tools, utensils, and often also worked as a farrier, make shoes for horses.

In English, the “*black*” in “blacksmith” refers to the black layer of oxides that form on the metal surface during heating. Smith, on the other side, might come from the old English word “*Smythe*,” meaning “to strike.”



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Blacksmiths in the 1310 Gorleston Psalter. British Library 154v. Image courtesy of Medieval Miniatures.

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_49622_f154v

In Welsh, the word is *Gof*, which may come from name of the Celtic god of smithying. The craft of turning rock into metal, then metal into beautiful objects, was thought to be so amazing that it might be supernatural.

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Blacksmiths in the 1303 manuscript Psalter of Queen Isabella of England.
Image courtesy of Medieval Miniatures.

Text adapted from:

<https://medievalbritain.com/type/medieval-life/occupations/medieval-blacksmith/>
<https://www.laleston.com/village-blacksmith>
<https://manuscriptminiatures.com/4447/13987>

Blacksmiths heat pieces of metal until it becomes soft enough for shaping with hand tools, such as a hammer, an anvil, and a chisel. Then they forge it into the shape they want, hammering, bending and cutting it.

Blacksmiths, who were then early always men, learnt their trade from a Master, often from a young age. As it was an important job, a young Blacksmith had to work hard to be able to carry on with his job.



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