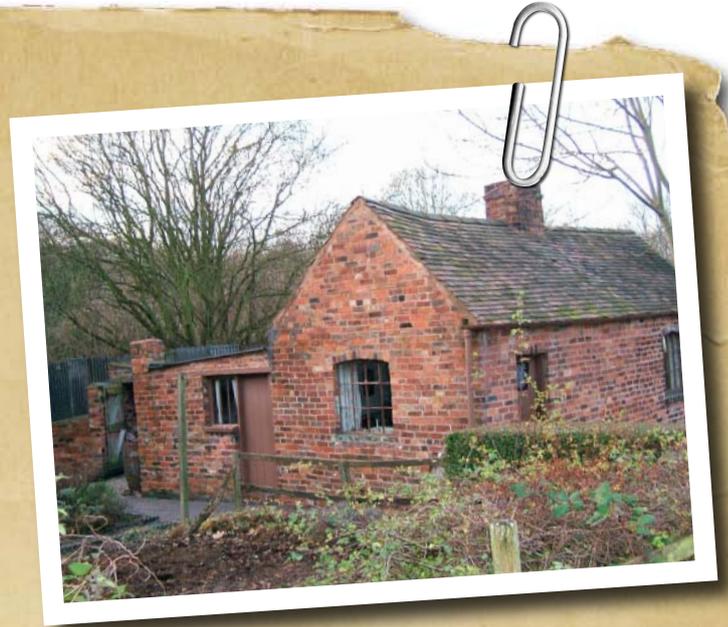


PITT'S COTTAGE

Pitt's Cott was originally constructed in Broad Lane, Bilston, around 1840. The cott was self-built by the Pitt family, using second hand bricks, which accounts for the uneven brickwork, out-of-plumb walls and general homespun look.



The cottage is named after its owner Sam Pitt, who worked at a nearby quarry, and later at the Caponfield Ironworks, opposite his home. His wife Charlotte, like other housewives of the period, kept a pig in a sty next to the earth closet in the garden. She stretched the meagre family income by making up clothes on her Singer sewing machine with bargain fabric bought at nearby Bilston market.



Friends of the Black Country Living Museum look after Pitt's Cott and can be found there most weekends.

The gloomy interior was cheered with light from a moveable paraffin lamp suspended from the ceiling. Socks are put on the legs of the table to stop them being damaged by the cat. Door and window curtains helped to keep out the draughts. The doilies on the shelves are made from old newspapers. Coal for the kitchen grate was stored in a bunker out in the garden.

At the back of the Cottage is an old pigsty, shown to the right.

The museum usually keeps Tamworth pigs, a breed known for hardiness, the ability to thrive in a range of climates from humid Asia to the chill Scots highlands, and their 'low maintenance' in terms of care and diet. Those kept in back yards will live quite happily on kitchen refuse. Tamworths used to be bred in large numbers in the Midlands for pork production.



Photograph by Mike Hessey

SOME MEMORIES OF BLACK COUNTRY PIGS

The Old Black Country family always had a pig in the sty. Now when a sow farries (gives birth) there is often an undersized half starved one - the "ricklin" it is called. The Old Black Country mother wasted nothing and she'd bring the ricklin in the house and rear it on the bottle. A pig is cleverer than a dog and it's cleaner... I knew an old chap who reared a ricklin which followed him about closer than any dog.

It went to the pit at knocking off time to meet him and they'd both enjoy a quart of Jimmy Baker's home brewed on the way home. Its passing was peaceful and it was mourned as a member of the family. They kept its tail hanging over the fireplace in the parlour for years and when the old chap died his widow curled it round his picture as a keepsake for the grandchildren. She could never see a pig without shedding a few tears to the memory of the old man.



Tamworth piglets