



*I was working for Mr George Thorne at Simonsbath
in the terrible winter of 1962/63.*

answer, that chap! Years later, when he died, Dick left me five shillings in his will – you’ve got to laugh, really, haven’t you?

Someone else I remember well was Sante Lafuente, the stockman at Cornham. He was a hard man, a tough man; he’d come over from the Spanish Civil War, escaped. No horse would frighten him – he’d jump onto anything and ride it away! The Galloway cows out on the common would take a bit of handling, they were wild and very quick, and would go for you, but Sante just stood his ground. A lot of people would jump the gate but not Sante. Tremendous he was! One of the last people cutting turf out on the common, too – I can remember him well, out there cutting turf.*

* Sante Lafuente was the stockman at Cornham for almost fifty years, and in his spare time cut turf for his own use. He needed between six and seven thousand turfs a year for all the heating and cooking at his cottage. He’d always cut from the same pit, which was up at Exe Head, beyond a field named Top Hill on the perimeter of the farm. A year’s supply would take the equivalent of four or five full days’ work and digging was started at the end of April, beginning of May to give the turfs as much time as possible to dry. He didn’t bother with the “skin turf”, which was not worth the effort, but concentrated on “pit turfs”. Sometimes a sledge was required to get them out – it depended on how waterlogged the ground was; this varied from year to year. He never built an interim rick on the common and cannot remember seeing anyone else do so in that area. Back at the cottage the turfs were taken to a shed where they were “ditched” (built carefully like a stone wall) into six-foot-square mounds with eighteen-inch gaps between each mound for the air to circulate. In 1988 he retired and went to live at Simonsbath, where he again cut turf for his own use, but now at the Brendon Common pits. He was also employed at this time by Dick French at Brendon Barton to cut turf and this he’d do all day, rather than at odd moments, and says he could easily cut a thousand in a day.