



*Of all our ponies my favourite was Dolly and we were inseparable.*

climbing onto her back. She wouldn't even attempt to get up. On one occasion when I was very young, the house cow Lady Belle was lying down in the same field and I can remember thinking, "I'll just get on her back too, she won't mind!" Well, of course as soon as I climbed on she sprang up and I fell off and broke my arm. Brother Fred found me and the next thing I knew I was in Minehead Hospital.

Dad used to have the rights from the Blathwayt Estate to take down sections of standing oaks from the very steep area between the farm and the sea. Brother Fred would cut these down and then, with a special tool, twist the bark off in sections. As a child I would help by gathering up these sections of bark and standing them against the rails to dry off. I'd receive a little pocket money for this. We'd later load them onto a cart and take them down to the Porlock tannery, where they were used in the tanning process.\* The wood that remained after the bark had been removed was taken back to the

\* A tannery had existed at Porlock since the early 1600s and was situated opposite the Castle Hotel, where the shops are now. Sections of woodland – known locally as a "rap of wood" – were cut and the logs barked in the spring. The bark was dried and then weighed by the cart-load at the entrance to the tannery, where it was stored in huge sheds. It was then ground and added to water in pits where the hides were left to soak for about a year. During that time the tannin from the oak seeped into the pores of the skin, replacing the water with natural preservative. It was not pleasant living near a tannery: the putrefying hides in the pits stank and there was continual smoke from the fire where the spent bark was burnt. The tannery closed in the early 1930s.