

Ask an artefact - 'Swingle tree'



Can you read the passage and draw how you think this artefact was used?



This is called a "swingle-tree". A swingle tree is a wooden or metal bar used to balance the pull of a draught horse or other draught animal when pulling a vehicle. It was part of the harness for the canal horses. Because the horses had to walk along the towpath and the lighters were on the canal they were not directly behind the horse the way, for example, a plough would have been.

The job of a swingle tree is to, as the animal walks; stop the ropes or chains rubbing its shoulders or sides. The swingle trees were attached to the back of the harness by the two iron hooks at each end and the rope that was attached to the lighter was tied to the hook in the middle. This system was used until engine powered lighters were invented.

What is your artefact made from?

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How was it used?

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What replaced your artefact, what does this job now?

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