

## TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL

In the latter years of the 1800's and even well into the 1900's the only methods of transportation, other than walking, would have been by bicycle or some method of horse drawn travel. Even with the advent of the motor car at the turn of the century, the cost of such transport would have been beyond the pockets of the majority of people. It would have been the farmers who owned most of the horse drawn vehicles so most of the villagers would have had to rely on the local carrier for the transportation of goods to and from the village. Carriers were characters in their own right and in many cases were the local farmers using their horse and cart. They were men respected and welcomed in both the village and the town where they took their orders to local shopkeepers, often receiving a small commission for the business they brought. More than just serving town and village, they were the only link with the outside world for weeks on end for those at isolated farmsteads, where it was the carrier who brought both the mail and the news. The carrier however, like so many other countrymen, saw their work not for gain, but as a way of life that had been in their family for generations.

Sam Gill tells us...

"If you did want anything you ordered it through the carriers. One carrier used to take his eggs to town and then he'd bring the stuff back. If you wanted something from 'Heath and Ashton' or the shops in town he would bring the parcel back and charge you tuppence or threepence for bringing it. Derek Alsop used to come with his father. Going to Leamington on these trips he would take my order on a Friday and he'd bring back what I wanted."

For personal transportation the bicycle was widely used, not only for the sole purpose of getting from A to B, but also for pleasure. Tom and Harold French are two who spent time cycling, even to the extent of taking a cycling holiday in the Aylesbury area...

"We used to cycle into Leamington to the pictures and my Father, on Sundays, would cycle the three miles into Southam to get the newspapers and then deliver them."

They also remember, as children, playing in the roads with complete safety...

"You could play with safety when we were kiddies, there were no cars. They did eventually come of course."

The first person to own a car in the village was Tom Eadon, father of Mrs Alice Neal. She remembers...

"Father had the first car. It was a Morris, a bull-nose Morris. I reckon that would have been about 1923."

Mrs Balsom also remembers this car and also the effect cars had on their horse...

"My uncle Tom had the first car in the village. He brought us back from Rugby once, Dad and me from Rugby market. When we were coming up the hill Dad sat forward. Tom said, 'Sit back Bert, you won't make no difference.' I hadn't sat forward, but I was going to ask uncle Tom if I should get out because I usually had to get out of the cart going up the hills.

We had a horse we had to get rid of when the cars came. He'd been in the habit of drawing the mail cart from Daventry. Prince his name was, a lovely black horse, but after the cars came, everything that went past him he'd got to pass. It was alright when it was just ponies and traps but when motor cycles or anything like that passed we used to have to jump out and get him with his head in the hedge. He couldn't stand the pressure because the cars were getting so fast. I couldn't manage him at all. I just used to have to let him go, then grumble at him when he'd stopped. Dad had to sell him in the end."

Before there was much motorised traffic on the road there was only one way into Napton. Tom and Harold French remember the gated roads...

"You could only get out of Napton one way. There were lots of gates across the roads to keep the cattle in. There was only one way and that was down Butt Hill, you could get down there without opening the gates. The only gated road now is from Shuckburgh to Priors Marston. As children we'd be about and we'd run to open the gates for the ponies and traps. If we were lucky we'd get a halfpenny, if we were extremely lucky we'd get a penny."

Around the turn of the century the railway, in the form of the Leamington to Weedon branch of the L.N.W.R., came to Napton and that meant easier and wider travel for a greater number of people. This route provided a passenger service until November 1952 from the Napton and Stockton station.

Mr Shelton's first job on leaving school was to drive people down to the station to catch a train or to collect passengers arriving at Napton station and bring them back into the village. The railways opened up the country to the people, for the first time ordinary village folk could easily take annual holidays at coastal resorts, go on outings and even travel out of the village for employment. The closure of the station in 1952 meant that those people who didn't own a car were left to rely on the local bus service. As is common with most rural services this is not a reliable way to travel and it is mainly the old people and the young mothers in a village who suffer most from the isolation. Napton is different in the respect that a list of people with cars, who are willing to act as drivers for the elderly is in existence and assistance is always at hand.

Every Tuesday a free bus goes from the local villages into Southam for the weekly market and that is a very popular service.