

## **Memories of Transport in Kibworth Beauchamp in the 1930s**

*By Dennis Clarke*

In the 1930s very few people had cars, so cycles and trains were the main forms of transport. Trades people brought their goods and produce to the village rather than people going to shop in the neighbouring city or town. Horses and carts were used by coal merchants to make their weekly deliveries whilst the bakers and milkmen would use a pony and trap each day. There were three travelling shops, Messrs Tarrant and Garners from Fleckney supplying groceries, and Monks of Market Harborough selling ironmongery and paraffin for lamps and heaters.

People who did not work in the village would either cycle daily to market Harborough (6 miles) or to Leicester (9 miles) or, if finances permitted, use the train. Apart from the two hosiery factories, the railway was a main employer. There were four signal boxes (Wistow, Kibworth North, Kibworth South and Gumley) requiring three signalmen each. At the Kibworth station there were office staff and porters and then there were linesmen and delivery men, the latter again using a horse and cart.

There was an excellent train service. Express trains from St Pancras, London, would call at Bedford and Kettering on their way north including Scotland (The Thames Clyde Express). Then the local train would follow from Kettering immediately afterwards calling at Glendon and Rushton, Desborough and Rothwell, Market Harborough, East Langton, Kibworth, Great Glen, Wigston Magna and so to Leicester. At the small stations the local mail and milk in churns would be loaded into the guard's van at the rear of the train. On summer weekends there would be trips to the seaside, for example to Skegness, Great Yarmouth, Blackpool, the fare being about seven shillings (equivalent to 35 pence). Dress was very respectable with the ladies in dresses and the men in suits and collar and tie.

At this time bus services were relatively few. There was a Midland Red service to Leicester (no. 612) using Tilling Stevens single decker buses. A private bus run by Reeves of Fleckney used to pass through the village on a Tuesday going to and from Harborough market. Another one, Smeeton, brought people back from Market Harborough on a Sunday evening, calling at Foxton, Gumley and Smeeton. It was a favourite family Sunday walk from Kibworth to Smeeton, to Debdale, Foxton Locks and on to the Black Horse in Foxton for liquid refreshment before catching the little bus home to Kibworth.

Despite the excellent train services, and with the modest bus services and only a very few people being able to afford a car, many folk did not tend to venture far afield and spent what little leisure time they had in the village, on their allotments, at whist drives or skittles at the Working Men's Club or at Saturday night dances in the village hall.

Kibworth was obviously fortunate in having its rail services for in those days it was not unknown for some people who lived in remote villages not to venture out of their birthplace during the whole of their lives.

*Written in November 2008*