

Today's Journey

CUBLEY via KNIVETON and ASHBOURNE

We had a reason to get to Cubley, an old print, we wanted to see how much it had changed. Would the idyllic scene still be there, a picture of peace, how much was artistic licence? First we had to get there, a minibus to Ashbourne to connect to the one and only service to get to Cubley and those other villages in the area.

Our trip to Ashbourne was uneventful until we passed through Kniveton where the whole village seemed to be invaded by scarecrows. It's true! Outside the pub a scarecrow couple in wedding regalia were standing. In someone's front garden a family of mum, dad and son scarecrow seemed to wave as the bus went by, the squire scarecrow stood there with his shotgun. They were everywhere, besides the road, in gardens, we didn't see a single human! Well at least the happy couple had a good sunny day for the wedding.

Ashbourne is the biggest place in this area and many an ancestor must have visited it, just as local village folk do today, if only to visit the market whose sloping area is made up of all different types of cobbles, as if she cannot decide which floor covering would look best. Old fashioned tiny white cobbles, bigger stone ones, red brick in places and others all forming a patchwork quilt of stone and brick and inviting feet to come and walk on me and see the stalls.

We had only twenty minutes here before we had to get the Cubley bus. We raced (!), walked fast to the bus stop with minutes to spare. It is the only bus to the village on a Saturday, it will bring you into town and take you back but, if like us, you were going there, it left you. We were going to have to walk out. The bus, in fact, was a twelve seater mini-bus and all the folks on it knew each other, as village folk seem to have done since time immemorial. We asked for Little Cubley but the lady driver, although having lived and driven in the area, had never heard of "Little Cubley", just Cubley. It was a little old lady loaded up with shopping who said, "That's near where I live." So at least we knew where to get off.

At High Noon, bang on time, the Cubley "chara" set off on it's second, and last, visit of the week to the villages around Cubley. This area is dominated by red brick buildings and hedgerows, no stone walls down here dividing the fields. I stare in wonderment as we passed through Snelston, my great etc grandfather was miller here in the 1820's and the place was an absolute delight.

The mill no longer stands as such, it has been turned I had been reliably informed into a restaurant. The village houses are all different shapes as if **Joseph Paxton** had been given free reign with brick and I ask the question why did he leave? As we pass a building by the small stream I am sure I saw someone serving meals.

Onward to Norbury, where the lanes are so narrow if only half a car came the opposite way you would have to reverse, quickly through Norbury and Roston. As the bus stops a man appears from his front door, only three feet away and

helps his wife off the bus and into the house. Had she got no shopping to carry she could probably have jumped into the house from off the bus.

There are signs up everywhere pointing to the car park, a makeshift one in a builders yard, there's a garden party at the Hall and the cars must have somewhere to go. Someone thought it may have been a wedding. Did our ancestors have this problem all those years ago?

We carry on through Thurstaston, a tiny place that if you blink you will miss.

Then we feel as if we have hit the city as we arrive at Marston Montgomery. It has a row of houses, a post office and, of course, a red telephone box. A village necessity. In 1835, **Tom APPLEBEE**, would welcome you to the Cross Keys.

May be **John ALLCOCK** was also there delivering barrels, he was a cooper.

Onward past fields with black and white stood almost motionless in the distance, a field with four horses with nothing to do but run, if they want to, who cares, the pace of life is easy here. Then on to Cubley, the map tells me I can get a pint here but the state of the "Howard Arms" tells me, no! We pass the pub, crossing the busy A515 that goes to Ashbourne and as we do so, the old lady gets off near Little Cubley, from what we remember of the picture, this is the right place. The old lady shops twice a week in Ashbourne, carries all her shopping with her round town before going home and putting up her feet ready for the next visit. Those feet have carried her for over one hundred years! She's as bright as a button.

The picture we have is different only in the fact that a few more trees have grown and the conversation between the cowherd and his sweetheart would be drowned out by the roar of the traffic on the A515. We go past the church and onto the A515, the imposing red bricked North and South View farms stand back from the road as if not wanting to have any share in the madness that has come upon their quiet world.

On the same side of the road the old forge has found a new lease of life having been converted into a dwelling. So back into Cubley, the old village pump has seen harder working times but it's still a reminder of how different life was back then, no turn of a tap, a yoke and bucket probably.

There's one shop in Cubley, just as there was in 1835, when **Thomas COXON** kept his. **John GERRARD** was the miller and the village must have been one of sartorial elegance boasting three tailors; **Joseph BAKER**, **William RATCLIFF** and **John HALL** being the wizards with the scissors. **John TOMLINSON** made sure every workers foot was booted and **Christopher HARRISON** made sure every horse was shod. **Sam WILSON** and **Bob MILWARD** made sure you wheels kept turning and **Billy ATKIN** the carpenter did his bit as well.

We had no wheels, just a scorching sun beating down on us and a trip into no mans land. We were about to enter the outback.