

Today's Journey

Ashbourne (via half of Derbyshire)

On a damp afternoon, after what had been a sunny warm morning we made the decision to go to Ashbourne and hopefully make a visit to one of the adjoining villages.

There are a few buses in mid Derbyshire you should use if wanting to see a cross section of the area. Matlock to Bakewell via Stanton and Matlock to Clay Cross are two services that will take you to your destination along side roads and through villages and hamlets in the area. Matlock to Ashbourne is another. At four pounds twenty pence return, you can sit and gaze at the countryside as it unfolds before you, at the sides of you, and behind you. On top of that you meet all manner of characters and situations that make the ticket price worth it for that alone.

Although we have been to Ashbourne many times before, we have not been during the winter months, when most of the trees are devoid of their greenery and the scenery is a little different. Hedgerows no longer hide their secrets. What lurks behind that bush or what views will we see now that the hawthorn reveals what she is hiding.

The bus pulls out on time and we head towards Matlock Bath under the watchful eye of High Tor, sweep along the A6 passing the Midland Hotel and County and Station watering holes, positioned on either side of the road, like Border Controls on the way into and through Matlock Bath. The "Bath" sporting less lights now that the Venetian Nights have gone. The Pavilion is waiting to open its doors so the youth can dance the night away and the bus does a samba as we leave the village and the New Bath Hotel up on the right, heading and making our way towards Cromford.

Arkwrights red bricked mill is doing a roaring trade with buses bringing in tourists from all over the place.

We approach Cromford turning right up the approach to Cromford Hill. The Greyhound, the pub, not the bus serves another useful function. High above its doorway a large clock has been telling the time for hundreds of folks daily. No one gets on here and the bus takes a run at the hill. Past North Street with its School at one end and the Bell pub at the other. Further up the hill passing Addison Square and Barnwell Lane, the entrance to the quarry on the right and the entrance to Black Rocks on the left. Now under the "Arch" at Steeple Grange, the Bridge that carried the High Peak railway and now carries thousands of cyclists, ramblers and horse riders as they explore the High Peak Trail.

We bounce down Steeple Grange and arrive at the Market Place at Wirksworth just past the Red Lion. In the distance the sky looks an ominous grey, getting darker by the minute. Still, we tell ourselves we shall be in Ashbourne shortly and hopefully we will be able to set off walking, or whatever.

The bus sets off again and very soon comes to rest outside the old Wirksworth cinema. A few people get on, nattering away and the driver gets off. He nips into a local shop and comes back later with a couple of bottles of pop.

Again we resume our journey climbing the little hill or hump out of Wirksworth and passing the Kings Field as a man on crutches comes out. He's sober, he has to be, he's got to steer the things.

The old tape Mill of Tatlows comes alongside and then disappears as we head out into the country. We negotiate a tiny bridge and head onwards taking a right turn to the village of Kirk Ireton. This is a lovely village, old houses with big slabs for tiles, it has its own Post Office still and pub. We miss the road to Hulland and instead take the corner and head along a lane, and that now the hedges have given up their leaves, allows us to

see extensive views of the Carsington Reservoir below.

Brave Admirals venture forth, ships move along firing broadsides, crew prepare to repel boarders, the mutineer walks the plank, the Jolly Roger is hoisted and the colours are nailed to the mast. Cries of "yo ho ho and a bottle of rum" are heard flowing across the lake. Then there is the Kraken and the man eating sharks to deal with. All to be done and dusted before the sun sets, before they sail back to shore and head home to read the next chapter of Treasure Island.

The long lane, undulating across the top of the hill leads towards a group of houses, farms stretched out in a small line facing towards us. This is Callow, not to be confused with Calow near Chesterfield, this is Callow, pronounced locally as "Caller". We pass this hamlet and approach the Godfreyhole junction, where we turn left. Just after Callow the road descends and a rather bumpy ride ensues. Suddenly a mobile phone goes off.

Everyone seems to search briefly, before realising that the tone is not theirs.

The noise remains a mystery. Not long after the junction the bus turning into the Gell stronghold of Hopton sets off the noise again, by going over a rough piece of road. It becomes apparent to one embarrassed lady, that the present she has brought for someone has been "knocked" into active mode and the strains of "British Grenadiers" belts out for a bar or two. Every jolt produces a new tune, everyone tries to name that tune before it finishes, "London Bridge" or "Grand old Duke of York".

Passing the rounded brick wall that hides Hopton Hall we halt at the bus stop in Carsington. No one get off, no one gets on, but an older gentleman hands a piece of paper to the driver. It seems the old boy wants his shopping picked up in Ashbourne. The chaps on the front seats claim the old boy hasn't enough money to pay his fare. Merry banter ensues, with quips aplenty. The old boy retorts that the piece of paper accompanying the list will cover more than his fare. Mission accomplished, he steps of the bus and the passengers wave a cheery goodbye while the musical box or whatever the mystery object is sets off again.

Carsington like many of the villages we pass though is hanging onto its red telephone box and not giving in to the "shower cubicles" that have replaced so many.

We leave the village and make a turn right accompanied with the music as usual.

Passing Breach Farm we then take another turn right and head towards Brassington.

Here the driver takes every one by surprise as instead of turning towards the church, he carries on up the hill towards Longcliffe. No one is more surprised than the woman with the music machine, who having stood up, and whose head was turning left along with the rest of her body suddenly found the bus ignoring her brains thinking. This totally throws the music machine which breaks into the "Nutcracker".

All is revealed when the collective assumptions that he has taken Sam up the hill to "save his legs a bit" is confirmed. Sam feeling like royalty steps of the bus and carries on up the rest of the hill like a whippet.

The bus turns round and the driver receives plaudits from the passengers, "that wor nice of 'im" they say to one another.

The bus finally arrives where it should be, and most of the women get off, but not before noticing "they havner sold it then" as they pass a for sale sign.

The music box gives us one last blast and its owner marches through Brasson as if leading the Dagenham Girl Pipers in their rendition of Mull of Kintyre.

The bus travels a few more yards to the next stop, and on gets Mick.

Mick got on the bus to a chorus of "nah then Mick". Mick retorted "eh up Mick", Mick the recipient responded "hey up Mick"

"Hey up Roy" said Mick.

"Hey up Mick" said Roy. This was another Roy, sat behind the first Roy. The whole bus echoed to the sound of Mick, Mick, Mick, Roy, Roy, Roy.

Then there was Harold. "Hey up Harold" and so it went on.

Mick regaled in a blue Donovan cap jauntily set to one side leaned over and spoke to Roy

who was sat on the front seat. Whispers ensued to be followed with a series of "ah" "aah" "aahh" each time lasting longer and louder. Mick then brought out of his pocket a carefully folded piece of paper, and proudly handed it over to Roy.

"ah saw a run last wick, it wer running at Suth'll, Friday, come in at eight to one".

"Ah" said Roy.

"Ah" said Mick.

Mick took back the piece of paper, folding it delicately like a skilled origamist. By the time the bus was half way down the road leading back to Carsington Water we had the makings of a model of Riber Castle, but a bump in the road made one of the turrets crumble and he gave up.

He sat back, looking like the master of his own destiny, unperturbed that the Riber venture had crashed.

At the junction the bus bounced across the road, swaying this way and that as we approached the Public House known as "Knockerdown". Taking yet another turn, this time left, we make our way to Carsington Water. This place has many activities suitable for all the family, but today no one is wanting the bus. We had at least expected to see a man with a wooden stump and carrying a sword in one hand and baring a knife in his teeth.

We return to the main road and head for Ashbourne only to take another left turn to "Hognaston only" as the sign says. Why "only" is any ones guess, as cars went through the village and out the other side. Maybe they never come back. Some people all of the same surname once left Hognaston and never came back. **Annie Elizabeth** aged just six months, **Fanny**, eight months and **Elina** aged thirty three, all **WIBBERLEYS** died in the early 1860's. They all lie in the churchyard of Osmaston by Ashbourne.

The bus reverses and head backs up the hill between the houses that make the main road of Hognaston. Hognaston is aiming to be twinned with London, the Red Lion displays a small red lion on it's wall. Anything Trafalgar Square can do ...

We return to the road and finally take and stay on the road to Ashbourne. In so doing we pass through Kniveton, which also has a pub called the Red Lion. It does not appear to have a lion on the wall, maybe it was frightened by the scarecrows that the village puts out every year.

As we approach Ashbourne, Mick who has been quiet for a while, suddenly asks the driver to stop. He duly obliges and Mick hops of, a straightening of the hat, a wink and he's gone. Mick has managed to cut ten minutes it seems of the journey. He simply crosses the road and walks into Ashbourne town centre. The rest of us stay on the bus and finally arrive at the station.

In the market square we see "Spencers the Bakers", one of my ancestors moved here from Ible where **John SPENCER** became a currier. The square has a market today but not many folks appear to be walking round it. I tentatively stroll pass the stalls with Patricia who seems to be a woman with a purpose or should that be a purse.

"Shouldn't we be going for a walk" I say.

That puts her off her stride and we make our way out of town towards Mapleton. Well not exactly. We make our way out of town at what we think is the Mapleton Road.

We ask a lady taking a hairy mammoth for a walk if this is the Mapleton Road. She replies "well not exactly" she says.

Either it is or it isn't I thought but may be she was being one of the kind genteel ladies Ashbourne had in 1879.

Ashbourne Female Friendly Society had been in existence a good few years before 1879. These ladies contributed monthly amounts that were used to offset and pay for relief during difficult times. Some fifty four ladies were listed in 1879 in the contribution list,

but **Fanny SPENCER** had a bit of a problem no amount of money could help with, and her contributions were not forthcoming that year. She was dead.

Others though paid between a shilling and one and sixpence.

They included, **Ellen BROADHURST, Sarah CHAPMAN, Harriet JONES, Sarah TARLETON** and **Harriet MILWARD** paid the middle rate. **Catherine YEOMANS, Jane POUNTING, Sarah MOULD, Sarah Anne FAULKNER** and **Mary DERBYSHIRE** were among those who paid one shilling. **Anne SUDLOW** paid top rate of one shilling and sixpence.

The lady with the mammoth, well a very big dog lacking only tusks, informed us we were on the road to Mayfield. So we took it. We passed St Oswalds with it's spire towering into the sky, the hen perched on top looking so cold it must have been the original frozen chicken. To check the wind direction you have to wait for a break in the clouds to see the thing, and your neck has to be positioned at right angles to your Adams apple to look up at it. The sun also cannot be shining as you are likely to be blinded staring upwards at it, failing that you need a pair of sunglasses. So if you see a person in Ashbourne wearing dark glasses, and having a neck that can turn on a sixpence, these are people who know a so'wester from a North wind and will tell you if it will be a good days sailing on Carsington Water..

Unfortunately our trip to Mayfield was cut short, having turned down a road, with a public footpath along it, someone had decided to put an iron gate across the road and diverted the path into a flood plain. Having left the kayak at home we doubled back. We climbed a side road that took us above and overlooking St Oswalds, and though we were on higher ground the tower still seemed to be above us. We looked into the back gardens of the Grammar School and noticed a few plants growing, but as it was getting darker it was impossible to see what they were.

At the end of the lane where it joins with Dove House Green, an old black water pump stands.

Ashbourne is a little like Wirksworth in that its town houses are all sorts of sizes, shapes and colours and certainly makes it an interesting place to visit.

Edward PRINCE when aged twenty eight in 1864 visited the Osmaston by Ashbourne graveyard for his final journey, as did **William FULLER**, a Toll gate keeper, in 1867 being 67 years old. In 1878 **Ann PLANT** aged 81 and **John HODGKINSON** aged 63 joined them. All from Ashbourne, all buried at Osmaston.

The bus home at four twenty five on a cold Saturday afternoon makes its appearance and as it's the last bus, most of the folks who came with us return on it.

"Hey up Mick" says Mick.

"Hey up" says Harold

"Ah" says Roy, when Mick shows him what he's got in his bag.

"Ah" says Mick in return.

When we get to Kniveton, Mick complete with Donovan cap at a jaunty angle hops off the bus. It stops outside the Red Lion.

When he goes inside no doubt someone will say, "Hey up Mick" and Mick will show them the leek and onions in his bag.

"Thems beauties Mick" they will say.

"Aah" Mick will say in return.