

Today's Journey

BRASSINGTON TO BRADBOURNE

Patricia has wanted to walk the "Edges" above Froggatt and Curbar. It seemed a good idea, not many clothes shops on the "Edge" but with the recent downpours it may have been a bit to boggy. So we decided to go the Bradbourne as a favourable alternative. Not much chance of finding a women's outfitters there as well.

Again the 411 Brassington bus did not let us down. Or at least it's passengers didn't. The whole spectrum of village life comes to the fore. Well at least some of it.

While waiting for the bus in Matlock station three "gentlemen suddenly appeared and promptly draped themselves over the railing peering like some native fisherman hoping to spear a fish for supper. What is so fascinating about an empty bus bay I do not know but the three wise men draped motionless until the 411 drove into the bay. Like follow my leader they walked in unison onto the bus, each in turn sitting on the left hand side one behind the other, pushing themselves against the window to gain a better view probably of the bus bay.

They each had said a good day to Ray the driver and the conversation got under way.

"Put any bets on then?"

"Nah, only done numbers" came the reply.

Then silence.

Again another voice rang out.

"Had a gud 'un other day, ten to one"

"That were a bit o' all raight then"

Then silence.

"good bit o' racing on telly today, I mun watch that when I gerrom".

"Ah" both replied to the speaker who was sat in the middle.

They all look around at the passing scenery and any event out of the ordinary.

"Eh up, what we gor 'ere" says one as the bus passes a car transporter parked at the side of the road.

Worra place t' pull up"

"I see that walls collopsed"

"Garden an all, raight back nearly t' bungalow"

"What's goo in on ere" says one as a large digger picks a bucket of soil from a ditch and empties it onto the back of a waiting lorry.

The driver tells them it a water main being replaced.

One by one they each crane their necks to look into the hole as the bus goes by. The one behind the first having to crane his neck a bit further because the first one is blocking his view and the third one craning his neck even further out so he can see beyond the second ones head. Each head springs out one after another within a fraction of a second making it look like a scene from the "Sound of Music" the one where the children sing "So long, farewell".

Having seen the hole them men settle back briefly only to lurch forward to "push" the bus

along faster as they each shove the bar in front of them as the bus slows because of a slow driver in front of the it.

As we approach some traffic lights one of them makes the statement "ah if thas in front o' queue when lights go green, thas got ta go".

As we climb Cromford Hill, Jacko gets a mention, he was last seen "propping bar up in far end" but has not been seen since.

As we approach Wirksworth one by one the three wise men alight until the last one of them gets off.

The driver then gets out of his cab and helps a lady onto the bus who has a shopping trolley full to the brim. Others get on with her. Morning John, morning Ray.

John is a bit unsteady on his feet. The driver waits until he has actually sat down. Such care and courtesy is often found on these "local" buses. Only when he is sat does the driver move away.

As Ray drives away he passes the last of the wise men and bellows out. "or raight mother". The wise man nods in approval.

As well as John and the old lady, two other elderly ladies get on.

"Are ya all right" one asks with a concerned voice to the lady with the shopping trolley.

"Am fine, just short of breath" was the reply

"ooh, have ya got ya puffer"

"ah left it at om"

"yer mun remember yer inhaler".

As we swing into Nether Gardens one old lady reads out loud from a large poster, " Army Cadet Force",

"what yer having for dinner" says John.

" Fish and chips from a packet" says someone else.

As we pass Rise End and turn towards Hopton the verges are a mass of dog daisies. The sky pale blue, the tall grass wafting in a gentle breeze and the old barns some cracked all the way down one side add there own countryside grey to the picture.

John alights at Godfreyhole, a small hamlet on the way to Hopton. Godfreyhole House is a grey stone building with a tall red brick chimney stack on the edge of it's right gable.

When we get to Hopton the driver helps the lady with the trolley to her door.

"That's a good greenhouse, he says "it looks sturdy".

The greenhouse is two narrow panes of glass wide and about three foot high.

"Ah it's got me tommies in " she says proudly.

Off we go again, and soon another passenger alights, this time at Carsington.

Another John. He jumps off the step as if he was a paratrooper. He lands and holds out an outstretched arm as if hoping to connect with a wall. He steadies himself, smiles, waves a cheery goodbye and marches off. He must be nearly eighty.

The narrow lanes connecting these villages, Hopton, Carsington and Brassington seem to hold no fears for the driver as he whizzes along as if he was at Le Mans. Soon we turn into Maddock Lane with it's long row of cottages and to the bus stop opposite the Miners Arms.

Brassington village lies on a hillside, thankfully we do not have to climb up any further. The bus has taken us up the hill and the road we need is a long level lane past the church and on towards Bradbourne. This route would have been familiar with the folks of 1712 as listed in the Land Tax for Brassington.

Henry SPENCER, Henry BELFIELD, William WHEELDON, John OULDFIELD, Robert ALSOPP and **George ALLSOPP**. Robert was from Hill Top and George was a "taler". These are just a few of those liable to pay Land Tax.

Looking back at the churchyard, surrounded by grey stone walls over five feet high we can see near the road side edge gravestones that may have been of those who once paid land tax.

Ann REDFERN wasn't there. Like us, but in the year 1828 she was on her way to Bradbourne. Aged just 26, she would be buried there on the ninth of May. Thirty years later but on the twenty second of January, **Alice GREATOREX** aged 79, also of Brassington would be buried at Bradbourne.

When **Henry SPENCER** of Brassington wrote his Will in 1707 he left "a Cow intirely" to his wife Ann. In 1710 it appears on his Inventory worth one pound and ten shillings and described as "An Old Barren Cow". Still he also left some cheese worth eight shillings. He also left to his grandson Henry son of **Robert SPENCER** of Ible "his stithey" which his son Henry was keeping for him at Hopton. He could either have the anvil or twenty shillings when he finished his apprenticeship. Hellin, his sister also received some metal. A "Great Kettle". I have visions of Henry carrying the anvil up the hill to Ible and crying out "ellin get kettle on, I coud do wi a brew, me arms a killin me, I fetched this ere from Hopton". Also bequeathed were two "Bibbles" the greater one to his son Henry and the lesser one to his son Anthony, but if his wife wanted to use them, then as long as she "hould her name" then she could.

On the way out of "Brasson" a group of cows gather around a field gate. Obviously not related to the "old barren cow" I still wonder if they know who has the Bibles now. Patricia offers them tufts of grass in an attempt to get them to divulge the information. They put their heads together and say they will go away and chew on it.

We carry on along the road and cross the boundary into Bradbourne. A metal farm gate declares it lies at the entrance to Sandhurst Farm, Bradbourne. The farm lies some distance from the road but its three chimneys clearly visible. On the old OS map of 1900 this was called Sandpit Farm and in 1832 **William BURTON** was the farmer. **Sarah GINNIS** farmed there in 1857.

Passing the farm we look to our right and see in the distance Ballidon Quarry and further round the tall spire of Parwich church. The fields roll away into the distance until they meet the skyline.

We pass the sign that says Bradbourne asks motorist to "Please drive slowly". Up to this point I don't think we have met a motorist. Next to the sign and in a rough lay-by is a tractor. It must belong to the farm across the road. The map identifies it a Clapgate Farm. In the mid 1850's a **Richard EYRE** farmed here. We have dropped some fifty feet and the same muddy side roads must have been evident in 1712 when **William BEARDSLEY, George WILLIS, Henry BRADLEY, George FERN, Robert WAYNE, William TAYLOR** and a host of **BUXTONS** were living here. **Samuel BUXTON** collected the dues for the Land Tax. He was also joint collector and assessor with **Henry BRADLEY**.

Patricia pauses briefly as a dog barks near the farm. He probably thinks it's the taxman again.

As we approach the junction leading either left or right into Bradbourne some workmen are packing up from digging a hole in the road. The three wise men would have had a field day had they come this far. The phone box on a grass verge is of the bright red type and not the shower cubicle variety. Bradbourne Hall is hidden behind tall hedges and we walk towards

and old street lamp with some commemoration to Queen Victoria on its base. The church is down a gravel lane beside the old vicarage.



There is no one in sight, the roads are quiet, so we decide to sit down on a wooden seat of the dodgy variety to enjoy a welcome break a drink and a bite to eat. It is at this point Bradbourne explodes with activity.

Every van in Fenny Bentley and every car in Hognaston and Kniveton it seems chooses this moment to drive by. Some cars slowing up as they approach us. One even turns round for a second look. Someone suddenly emerges with a hairy hound on the end of hopefully strong rope. I keep a few crisps back just in case they are needed to pacify the beast, I console myself knowing that at Ible some

descendant of **Henry SPENCER** has an anvil in which to fashion a suit of armour or knowing my luck he took the twenty shillings.

After rush hour, we have some real moments of quietness punctuated with the whistling of a blackbird. Directly across from us is the wonderfully named Haven Hill. This must be Bradbournes answer to Pendle Hill in Lancashire, only much smaller and slightly flattened. You have to use your imagination a bit. I can imagine not running up it like Hayley Mills and company did on that hill in "Whistle down the wind". However for Patricia, Haven would be heaven. Her disappointment soon turns to joy as I tell her that there may be a shopping centre at Hognaston.

Well it's been a long time since we last went through it so who knows. If Matlock can have a Sainsburys anything can happen.



We head along the road towards Kniveton and pass a row of nicely fashioned cottages. Some covered with ivy and climbing roses. Stone built and topped with tall red bricked chimneys this is the built up area of Bradbourne, the old quarter or oldish at least.

There's a tiny letter box, similar to Ballidons, just about big enough to take notelets.

Soon we are joined by the Havenhill Dale Brook that once powered Bradbourne Mill where **GERRARDS** milled. The virtually treeless top of Haven Hill all 906 feet of it dominates the area. On the roadside

verges umbellifers flourish, still waiting to put out there creamy white canopies, tall feathery grasses sway gently hiding Herb Robert and Pink Campion. We notice a yellow flower, it has a narrow spike about a foot high. It's new to us, and hope we see more as we walk along the road. We don't, and I miss the opportunity to take a picture. Patricia sees this as a good opportunity to revisit. Particularly as it may mean a second visit to "Hognaston Shopping Centre" !

In 1857 Bradbourne had **William BRINDLEY** as tailor, **Tommy EYRE** shod the horses, and **Jimmy ROWLAND** shod the people. **Maria MELBOURNE** kept a shop and the Schoolmaster was none other than **John SMITH**.

Nearby and up a rough lane sitting perched on a hill is Crowtrees farm, in 1857 the home of **Zaccheus STAFFORD**. A **Thomas STAFFORD** was buried here in 1814 aged 48 and may have been related. **Tommy TIPPER** was only a year old when he was buried at Bradbourne in 1831 while **Samuel LOVATT** reached 80 before he returned to the earth in 1815. Jane, the thirty one year old daughter of **William** and **Elizabeth TAYLOR** of White Meadow was buried a year later.

Lea Hall, Ballidon and Aldwark folk also appear at regular intervals in Bradbourne burials. These places although some miles from Bradbourne are part of the parish. Lea Hall kept its "Poor" with Tissington but its taxes were paid to Bradbourne. In 1851 only 23 people lived there. **Elizabeth DALE** lived there in 1840 but was buried at the latter end of that year in November aged 41. From Aldwark near Grange Mill in 1814 came 86 year old **Elizabeth BALL**. Two years later, 86 year old **Philip HODGKINSON** joined her. From Ballidon eighty year old **Hannah ELLIS** and eighty four year old **Hannah WRIGHT** both arrived in 1814 and others right down to **Sarah BLORE** in 1875. She was just eleven.



We follow the road looking out to our right at the track, seemingly outlined and "chalked in" that leads over the hill losing itself among small trees as it meanders its way to New House and Closes Farm in Kniveton parish. We can hear the brook but it is all but hidden from view by huge rhubarb type leaves. A footbridge crosses it near Park Farm a tall three storey building set back of the road. It's pretty laid back here, the hammock hanging between the trees proves it. Netherton Hall is located just where it says it is, at the Nether Town end of Bradbourne. A tall stone built place and like most of Bradbourne "done up" and modernised.

Bradbourne is a very quiet spot, apart from the "rush hour" very little noise and traffic. Maybe it was a good day. One can imagine sheep and geese and cows being herded down these roads in days gone by when it would possibly have been noisier.

We leave along Brackendale Lane and arrive at a spot where Carsington, Brassington and Hognaston all converge. Forget Stonehenge or the Bermuda Triangle, here is where mystery lies. Patricia's left hand moves into Carsington while the right one strays towards Hognaston. Her left leg takes root in Brassington while her right ear sways between all three. It's like crossing the International date line and getting jet lag. Suitably dazed I think this may be a good time to come clean about shopping in Hognaston !