



Travel  
Around  
Harefield

1871 to 1900

**A**t this time the commonest way to travel was on foot. Harefield people would walk along the canal or by field paths to Rickmansworth or Uxbridge for shopping or to board a train. Field paths were used daily by workpeople and there was a great outcry at any attempt to close these. The National Footpath Preservation Society in 1888 upheld the right to walk on the towpath.

When a Brackebury rick caught fire, a man "ran to Uxbridge for assistance and the firemen responded promptly." Their steamer fire-engine was of course horse-drawn. The steam was for pumping the water.

Harefield had a cycling club, and in 1900 they gave a dance at which Captain Schofield was M.C. Uxbridge Cycle Club had moonlight rides with late suppers. A new bicycle could cost £10 and the Alliance Bicycle Works offered a cycling course at West Drayton. An Act of 1878 ruled that "a light be exhibited in the direction in which proceeding." Nothing about a rearlight.

Farm produce was always advertised

as near "good roads" or the canal. The unmade roads, repaired only by throwing on more gravel, were treacherous. A letter from "an old horse" complained of holes six inches deep. Mr. H. L. Mills wanted the unemployed to do repairs. The Vestry discussed the making of Harefield's roads in 1893 and it was said it would cost £80 per mile.

The village had several carriers including Abigail Gristwood in 1875 aged 49, and the owner of the Lord Nelson beerhouse. From Uxbridge, Craxfords would take heavy goods to London at 8d. per cwt. Barrows' fly left Uxbridge on Fridays at 5 p.m. for Rickmansworth via Harefield. In 1886 a pony, 13 hands could be bought for £6. Several people were fined for working lame horses. In 1888 a Wheel Tax was proposed, to apply to carts over 10 cwt. Most accidents were due to horses bolting, or to driving too fast, especially at the bottom of Park Lane where several vehicles ended in the canal. This corner was later fenced.

The Asbestos Company used to take its employees to Hampton Court for an outing in two brakes provided by Mr. Miller at the King's Arms.

Business and professional people locally travelled in ponycarts. Mr. Freeman, the Inspector of Nuisances, must have covered many miles around the district in his ponycart, especially when in 1889 he took on inspection of cowsheds and milking equipment. The Sanitary Board could send an ambulance if he reported infectious disease.

In 1888 a balloon, the "Eclipse," with three aeronauts aboard, landed in a meadow at Harefield Place. They packed the balloon into a van, and left for London by train.

P.C. Hearn on duty at Gospel Oak saw Arthur Priest of Harrow and Phoebe Watson of Harefield tearing down Harefield Lane in ponycarts. He galloped after them and stopped them at the finger post. The pace he said was 14 m.p.h. They were fined 10/- each. In 1900 the Middlesex County Council agreed that the speed limit be reduced from 12 to 10 m.p.h.

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