

PAST TIMES

The Seaton Ross Carrier



Throughout most of the nineteenth century, trains and horse-drawn transport co-existed. Long before the railways however, a nationwide network of carrier's served the rural community. Numerous carriers' carts provided regular passenger and delivery services, which were essential to the survival of the rural population. The carrier was particularly in demand on market days and Saturdays. The carts were very similar to farmer's wagons, but less robust and with narrower wheels fitted with a canvas awning or 'tilt' supported by wooden hoops. By the 1880's there were 200,000

carriers in the country.

Two of the very early Seaton Ross carrier's were Thomas Batty and William Craven.

In the Baines 1823 directory, Thomas Batty is listed as a carrier travelling to the Fleece at the Pavement, York every Saturday. William Craven is also listed travelling to the Kings Arms, Fossgate, York departing every Saturday at 2a.m. in the morning and returning the same evening. The Seaton Ross carrier's also travelled to Market Weighton every Wednesday and Pocklington on a Saturday. They travelled at three or four miles per hour and as well as taking passengers, carrier's conveyed goods from the village to the markets to be sold and brought purchases back.

Carrier's carts were uncomfortable having no shock absorbing springs and bounced about on the rough country lanes. You clambered up the steps at the back sat on wooden benches along the sides of the cart with no upholstery to take the bumps. In the early 1900's a journey to York by carrier's wagon from Seaton Ross occupied four hours (due to the many stops on the way).

Thomas Drakes was a Seaton Ross carrier in the early part of the 20th century travelling to York market every Saturday. He and his wife were interviewed in the early 1930's and reminisced the life of a carrier in the early 1900's, Mr. Drakes " In those days the only means of travel was by walking to Holme or Foggathorpe Railway stations which necessitated a three miles walk except when the carrier's wagon left for either York or Market Weighton markets". Mrs Drakes commented " Things were much better in those days of the early 1900's, people did not earn so much money but you could always find a sale for your produce, York market is not the same now, at one time you could sell 50 lbs of butter but today (1933), you could not sell a dozen lbs, in those days there was no Empire butter on the market and margarine was not so largely used".

Mr and Mrs Drakes in addition to working their small holding, commenced the business of carriers and hucksters in 1897 attending the York market each Saturday, Market Weighton each Wednesday and occasionally Selby on a Monday. Mrs Drakes described how in wintertime, when the travelling was bad, it was often necessary to leave Seaton Ross at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to ensure getting to market in good time. Many rough journeys, when it was necessary to walk almost all the way over fog and ice-bound roads and the difficulty experienced in getting through floods at Sutton-on-Derwent, which were very bad in the early 1900's as the road was much lower in those days.

Mr Drakes eventually discontinued driving his carrier's wagon to York in the 1920's. During the 1920's, motorized coaches or lorries replaced the carrier's cart. These motorised vans or buses were packed with passengers but had hardly any room for the goods that were once the carrier's main trade. The first motorized bus to link Seaton Ross with York and Selby began operating in the early 1920's which was owned and run by Mr. Samuel Fentiman. By 1929 there was also the conveyance of omnibuses running daily to York by Everingham Brothers of Pocklington. The days of the carrier and his horse drawn cart were over and motorised transport had arrived and was here to stay. No longer did it take four hours from Seaton Ross to York. By 1933 on a good day it could be done in half an hour by motor omnibus!

The photograph above shows a typical carrier's cart in the early 1900's preparing to leave a village in the South of England for the local market with goods and passengers.

Malcolm Young – Seaton Ross - 2004