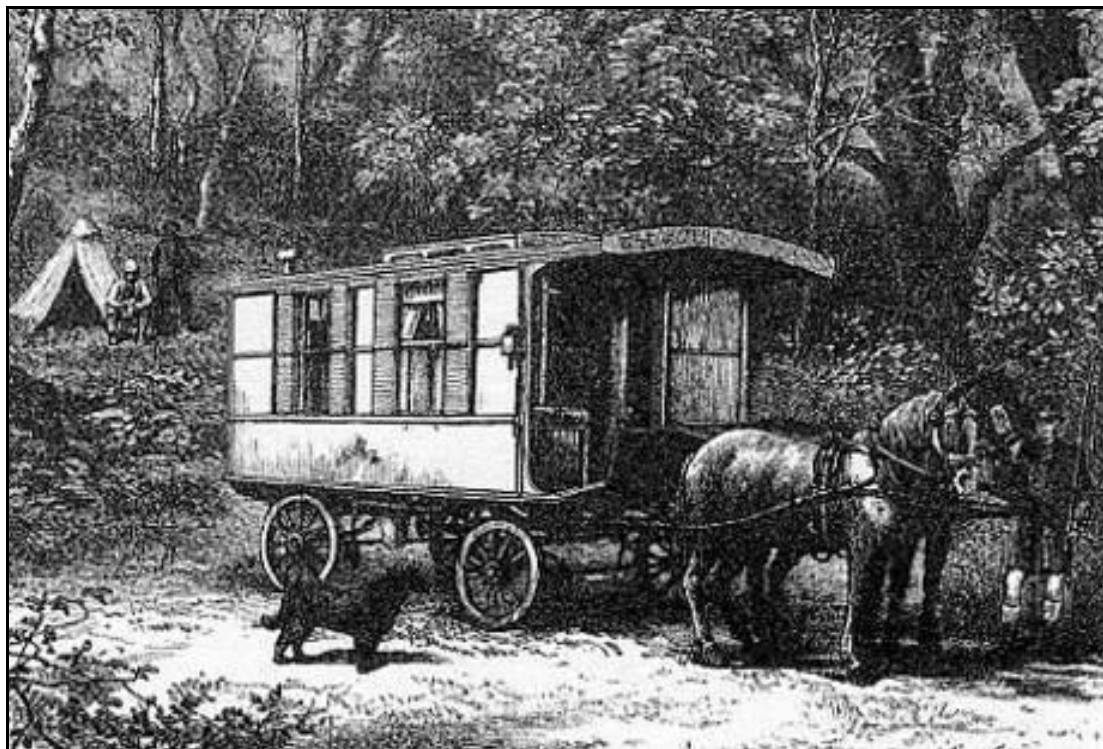


No.1 THE CROSS ROADS, NEWBOLD, COLEORTON



Transcribed by Samuel T Stewart from the Burton Observer and Chronicle - Published Thursday, 8 December 1960.

The following brings back memories for the writer and his wife in their younger days, and no doubt for other local folks as well.

The dream of an elderly couple who for more than 40 years roamed the roads of the Midlands in a caravan drawn by coloured horses, and found their brief encampments in the green lanes and on the verges of the highway has come true at Newbold, Coleorton near Ashby.

In a small paddock, beside a disused railway embankment (*Coleorton Railway*) that has become a mountain of sheltering hawthorn, *that they would have laid out their washed clothes on to dry*, have permanently scotched the wheels of their 100 year old van to find a haven, after a life of wandering.

John and Selina Squires, though they have the wind - whipped and sun scorched complexions of folk who have always lived in open-country weather, are not gypsies, but each was born in a caravan and followed the gypsy way of life. Neither has ever slept or wanted to sleep in a brick house.

Now in the Autumn of their lives they have reached a compromise. One of their most valued possessions is the license that permits them to stay in one place. It has abolished the legal threat of being ordered to move on.

True caravan folk live in a coloured world of gaily painted designs, gaudy head scarfs, bright neckerchiefs, patched horses, fiercely loyal dogs, jingling harnesses and tiny cabins where mirrors reflect the multiplicity of ornaments of burnished brass. It is a world that has a kind of planetary motion among the fixed homesteads of people who are forever rooted in the spot.

Many of Gypsy blood have found that, robbed of its perpetual motion, the enchantment of the world can vanish like a pearly mist on a summer morning. They do not covet the luxury of a legal permit to occupy a licensed site which would merely require them to exchange complete for partial freedom.

But John and Selina Squires are not of the blood Romany. They are only too glad to see the grass grow tall under the idle wheels of their van. At Newbold they have built a wooden parlour, the first they have had without wheels since their marriage at Long Eaton nearly 50 years ago. It stands a few yards away from where their caravan reached its journey's end

I am done with the road and just want to settle here, Mrs. Squires told me at Newbold. Yet even in retirement wandering folk still have to wander. So, she goes out daily with her husband. They ride on a flat dray drawn by their mare collecting rag waste, iron, bones and other domestic jetsam of the surrounding countryside.

Buying, bargaining, and bartering in a currency of pottery, the old couple ply a useful trade, to which they bring the dignity of honest experts. 'We can't read or write, but we can reckon,' Selina Squires said.

They are proud of the neatness of their site. Among their unpenned poultry, the wanderlust has not been quite suppressed. Some hens scorn the nesting boxes and lay their eggs in the hedge bottoms.

Their dogs, one a tight skinned muscular bull terrier, are developing a sense of local geography and a proprietorial air towards one homely field. The coloured horses crop the turf in a fenced and gated pasture instead of being hobbled on common ground at some roadside.

For none has life lost its flavour. If Mr and Mrs. Squires want old time amusement, all they need to do is go to a fair, preferably a horse fair like the one at nearby Belton. It was always one of their chief pleasures. The only difference now is that afterwards they can really go home - **for they have a proper address. No1.the Cross Roads, Newbold, Coleorton.**