

## Harrison's Double Decker Bus

Text: David Gibbs

This interesting photograph, contributed by Merriott resident Ben Read, provides the opportunity to recall the days back in the early 1950s when Merriott benefited from a regular daily service all the way to Weymouth, by double-decker bus.



The service was provided by a local bus company, Harrisons, who were based in Clapton. Harrisons was a private hire company but also ran regular services around the villages west of Crewkerne. In the picture above, the proprietor of the company - Ben Read's grandfather - his wife and sons are flanked by their bus drivers and conductors who worked for them. Note that the destination board of the coach to the left of the double-decker reads London.

The Harrison busses were a light shade of blue. My grandparents lived at Hewish and as a small boy I remember with my mother and grandmother catching a Harrison bus at the top of Hewish Lane to get to Crewkerne where we disembarked and caught the Safeway or Southern National home to Merriott. Normally, the Harrison busses didn't run as far as Merriott.

It was about 1947 that the Southern National Bus Company based in Yeovil, introduced double-deckers. I was at school in Yeovil at the time and travelled on Southern Nationals every day. I recall being somewhat disappointed that it wasn't possible for them to be used on the Crewkerne/Merriott route because of the low road bridge at

West Coker Hill and so I was rather pleased when the Harrisons double decker arrived on the scene.

I believe it was first used for private hire, in particular to take workers from the Merriott and Crewkerne to work at F J Edwards Ltd, an engineering factory in Chard employing many local people where they made world-renowned sheet-metal working machinery. The outward journey started at Merriott, down Knapp, and finished there in the evenings.

The Weymouth service came a short while after and started at Bakehouse Corner and left at 9.00am. I travelled to Weymouth on it a couple of times, once with my brother Jack. It seemed to take forever, a very tortuous and extended route taking in as many villages as possible, no doubt necessary to make the service viable. It didn't arrive in Weymouth until about mid-day but to get there was well worth the agony of the journey there and back.



On arrival in Weymouth, with my brother Jack, 1951  
Fair Isle pullovers must have been all the rage, not to mention the collar and ties and the polished shoes.