

Going to town by bus from Hamble in the early 1950s

The journey to Southampton for Hamble residents in the early 1950s was usually made by Hants & Dorset bus. There were three main routes to "town", the 71 via Lowford, Oakhill, Dodwell Lane, Hedge End, Thornhill, Lances Hill to the bus station; the 81, via Netley village, Weston Shore and Weston Grove Road to Woolston and the 82, Windhover cross roads, Kaness Hill then as the 71.

Route 81 was the most popular, there being a service every 15 minutes at rush hours and every 30 minutes off peak, whilst routes 71 and 82 were hourly, giving a 30 minutes frequency direct to Southampton.

Those using route 81 enjoyed a "sea voyage" across the Itchen on the Floating Bridge and a sprint up the shore on the Southampton side to get the Southampton corporation bus to the town centre. However, nine times out of ten the bus would pull away when the crew saw the "mob" rushing up the ramp! Thus, all being well, one could be at the Regal cinema Above Bar about 40 minutes after leaving Hamble.

One thing missing today compared to then is the friendliness of the conductors on route 81. Most were "locals" (the depot being at Woolston) and if one had children the folding push chair would be stowed under the stairs and on arrival at one's destination the push chair would be unfolded and placed on the pavement by the conductor or conductress.

The double deck buses on all three routes were of the "low bridge" type - upstairs there were rows of seats sitting four abreast and a walkway well along one side. Even in those days there were vandals around, for example, the warning sign on the roof above the upper saloon front windows read 'PLEASE LOWER YOUR HEAD', but after a short while in service read "FLEAS LOVE YOUR HEAD" after a bit of paint scraping.

The fare to Woolston? Thought to have been one shilling and three pence (8p) return in the early 1950s, the Floating Bridge was free and the Southampton corporation bus was three old pence each way.