

Travelling in style

This photograph shows a wonderful example of an early motorbike with a basket-chair sidecar being driven by Frederic Gibbs with his younger cousin Edward Gibbs.



It was probably taken in 1912 or 1913. The first wicker sidecars were patented in 1903 and could be attached to any motorcycle in less than two minutes. The total cost for a Trafalgar motor cycle plus “side carriage” was about £50.

Ann Dickinson (nee Gibbs), who grew up in Reepham, sent the photograph to the Eastern Daily Press in 1993 and it was published as part of the Down Memory Lane series.

Ann was the daughter of Frederic J. Gibbs, who was living with his uncle Edward Gibbs, the ironmonger, in 1911.

The following note written by Ann for the newspaper gives some colourful details of her father’s life.

“Fred had been invalided out of the East India Extension Telegraph Company, for which he had been cable-laying, and came to Reepham in 1904. The Reepham Gibbs were his only relatives, his father having been murdered at sea by Chinese pirates and his mother having died. After recovering from TB he took up photography, taught himself clock-making, made a car from bits and pieces and made wirelesses.”

Note : Frederic gave his birthplace as “The Straits Settlement, Singapore” in the 1911 census, and in 1898 there is a record of an F J Gibbs, Joiner, age 16, as part of the crew of the cable ship Sherard Osborn, arriving in Sydney from Singapore.