Early 20th C Rail routes from the East Midlands.

It is often thought that inhabitants of small isolated rural communities during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century travelled infrequently away from their villages due to a lack of money and a poor travel infrastructure.

Whilst the first reason may have some validity, there was in fact a very good travel network provided by the Railways. Although Foxton did not have its own railway station there were two very close by, Lubbenham and East Langton, and one slightly further afield in Market Harborough. The first two mentioned were within 30 minutes walk from Foxton and Market Harborough 30 minutes by the local carrier.

Thus local villagers could easily access mainline rail routes for either pleasure of for trade. The following schematic route map shows how access could be achieved to the whole of mainland UK. Because of the multiplicity of railway companies and routes many train changes would have been required for long distance travel, but access was available to the north of Scotland, the south of Cornwall, the west of Wales and the east of England.

The schematic map is not to scale and does not show all the intermediate stations. The stations that are marked are to give a general indication of travel direction for any given destination.

The second diagram gives some indication of the multiplicity of local stations at the beginning of the 20thC, If four sectors are considered, each 10 miles by 10 miles, with Foxton at the centre it can be seen, as indicated on the accompanying chart, that Foxton was at the heart of some 30 railway stations.

The desire to travel and be mobile is relative to a certain mind set, and one that is taken for granted today. However some 100 years ago there were also many people who had no inclination to leave their familiar surroundings and this was not necessarily due to a lack of money. They preferred to stay within their comfort zone, and it was not unknown locally for individuals who despite having been born at the end of the 19thC never left Leicestershire during their entire life.

The advent of WW1 considerably changed these feelings, as "mobilisation" became common in civilian as well as military circles. Paradoxically, 100 years ago there were something like 8,000 mainline railway stations in the UK, today there are less than 3,000.