ROADS IN THE BATTLE DISTRICT: AN INTRODUCTION AND AN ESSAY ON TURNPIKES

In historic times travel outside one's own parish was difficult, and yet people did so, moving from place to place in search of work or after marriage. They did so on foot, on horseback or in vehicles drawn by horses, or by water. In some areas, such as almost all of the Battle district, water transport was unavailable.

This remained the position until the coming of the railways, which were developed from about 1800, at first very cautiously and in very few districts and then, after proof that steam traction worked well, at an increasing pace. A railway reached the Battle area at the beginning of 1852. Steam and the horse ruled the road shortly before the First World War, when petrol vehicles began to appear; from then on the story was one of increasing road use.

In so far as a road differed from a mere track, the first roads were built by the Roman occupiers after 55 AD. In the first place roads were needed for military purposes, to ensure that Roman dominance was unchallenged (as it sometimes was); commercial traffic naturally used them too. A road connected Beauport with Brede bridge and ran further north and east from there, and there may have been a road from Beauport to Pevensey by way of Boreham Street. A Roman road ran from Ore to Westfield and on to Sedlescombe, going north past Cripps Corner. There must have been more.

BEFORE THE TURNPIKE

It appears that little was done to improve roads for many centuries after the Romans left. Most rural roads would have differed little from today's footpaths – if in most cases rather wider – and early nineteenth-century maps show little distinction between the two. Until the sixteenth-century, it is believed, there were no carriages and the only wheeled transport would have been two-wheeled farm carts. Classier travellers went on horseback. The problem of road quality was recognised as early as 1534, when an Act of Parliament provided a mechanism for creating new roads, but the matter was not taken seriously until 1555. With great optimism parishes were made responsible for the upkeep of roads and empowered to charge a rate in respect of the cost.

No doubt some parishes took this more seriously than others. There must have been some parts where things were better. But even now, anyone who walks the Sussex countryside may find some footpaths in poor condition. When it has rained they may be muddy and impassable; after a period of drought the horses' or cows' hoof marks make walking very difficult. Sometimes a stream runs down the path. Walking and riding cannot have been easy, and trying to haul a cart would sometimes have been near-impossible. From Whatlington, for example, the road to Hastings led first to Whatlington along Stream Lane, which must always have been difficult to use in even mild weather.

It is clear that many if not most parishes failed to keep their roads in a decent state. There were several reasons for this attitude. Investing in roads did not necessarily produce a better

income for the people of the parish concerned, but it certainly cost money: men had to be diverted from their normal work and material found that might often have to be carted – again over bad roads – for long distances. The 1555 Act required everyone holding land worth over £50 per annum to supply two able-bodied men, with appropriate animal and tool support, to repair roads for eight hours on four consecutive days (increased in 1563 to six days). The parish was annually was to elect two surveyors to check on progress and report to the local justices.

Those who were to pay for roads had to supply the men and they probably did not see the necessity for improvement, given that they travelled by horse, two-wheeled waggons and only rarely by coach until the mid-seventeenth century. There was no defined standard for the satisfactory condition of a road and no external process of inspection, so parishes generally did as little as they could – very often nothing. The men appear not to have been paid, which cannot have encouraged them even when engaged, except probably on their landlord's property.

With the exception of the road between London and the port of Rye by way of Northiam (which became a very early turnpike) there were no major strategic reasons for improving the roads of eastern Sussex, as opposed to those, say of Kent and Hampshire which were major trade and military or naval highways. In those days, to get from one part of the county to another, even for short distances, it was common to use the sea.

THE TURNPIKE ARRIVES

The result of neglect has been described in many places (see in particular the 1971 work by E J Upton, attached): Sussex roads had an evil reputation. Given that a major part of commercial traffic was timber one might have thought that more attention would be paid to the problem, for timber was very heavy and could destroy a road. Acts of Parliament after 1555 attempted to remedy the matter but the answer was long in coming. When it came it was to provide toll-gates through which certain classes of traffic could not pass without payment. The roads were called *turnpikes*, after the means of opening the gates. Each turnpike required its own Act of Parliament, which in turn required renewal after some years, with or without amendments; and any amendment by itself required a new Act. In any case it took a long time – some 80 years – for the Battle area to be fully turnpiked. (The complex development of local turnpikes is well set out in the Upton essay attached and is not repeated here).

The location of gates changed a little with the times but there was one at each entry/exit to a turnpike, including side roads where appropriate. In Battle one turnpike cottage still exists on North Trade Road. Others were at the foot of Lower Lake, near the Black Horse at the top of Telham hill, at the bottom of Virgin's Lane, on Whatlington Road and at the Battle end of Netherfield Road. For reasons to be described later there was none at Marley Lane, except briefly at first.

Income came from tolls and parish 'composition': that is, a statutory obligation on the relevant parishes to acknowledge that part of their own role in providing and maintaining their roads had been transferred to the turnpike trusts, and that they should contribute to them.

The principal long-term effect of turnpikes was of course to create many of the roads we know today. As examples, before they arrived,

1 traffic coming from St Leonards northwards had to follow a course generally west of today's road and then go down (Old) Hollington Lane and steeply up again. There were many bends and corners. The turnpike created the new straight road that we now see.

2 the way from Hastings to London ran along the Ridge and aimed for Battle. The turnpike created Sedlescombe Road and the bridge at Baldslow under which it runs; thereafter a new road made for Kent Street and Sedlescombe, with much widening and straightening.

3 getting from Battle northwards involved using Whatlington Road, with all its bends and hills. The last turnpike built in the area created the new straight road to John's Cross, and northward traffic used that road thereafter. A consequence was that the eastern part of North Trade Road, which used to run along Chain Lane and down from Watch Oak, was moved southward.

The effect of the turnpike was considerable. The Royal Mail from London to Hastings began in 1784, and we know something of the time taken to complete what were now organised and daily journeys. From Hastings to Sevenoaks, for example, they were timed to take seven hours:

> To Battle: 50 minutes; then a ten-minute stop.
> From Battle to Lamberhurst: two hours and forty minutes; a half-hour stop was to allow for bags to arrive from Rye and Tenterden.
> From Lamberhurst to Sevenoaks: two hours and fifty minutes, with no stop at Tonbridge.

In 1843, it was recorded, three stage coaches for passengers left every week for Hastings and three for London.[1]

In addition existing roads that were turnpiked were improved – not only as to their surfaces but as to the general avoidance of steep hills and boggy areas.

Clearly the increased traffic would have led to improved business in towns such as Battle, in the inns and shops.

THE TURNPIKE GOES

Turnpikes were intended to make money as well as to improve travel. They always found this a little hard even if all was well until the arrival of the railways. The railway from the north was extended from Robertsbridge southward at the very beginning of 1852, and from then on the turnpikes tried to stay in business. But the use of coaches on routes parallel to the railway died away very quickly. It might be thought that those turnpikes that did not parallel them might have survived, but they did not, for example from Battle to Heathfield.

There was probably little traffic to start with, and even a marginal fall in use could bring on the danger of closure. In fact it was the first to experience problems: in 1855 it asked the

Battle local board for a contribution towards its upkeep in that parish: £3 per mile was agreed. In 1859 the original turnpike through Battle won £7 10s p a from the board, and the St Leonards to Sedlescombe one £3 p.a. The first of these shut on 31 October 1873 but even then there were residual matters – the tollhouse at the foot of Lower Lake, for example had to be bought before demolition. The last turnpike closed in 1880.

NEW ROADS

It may be surprising that apart from roads serving housing estates there have been very few new roads since the end of the turnpikes in the 1880. With two exceptions, a comparison of various maps shows only straightening and widening. One exception was the extension of Marley Lane to what is much more recently the A21. Before 1865 there was a track leading along what is now the 1066 footpath from Marley Lane eastwards, joining the (now) A21 at Kent Street. This was abandoned in favour of a flatter extension of Marley Lane eastwards, starting with the double bend north of Marley Farm and proceeding as at present. This avoided the difficult route that would earlier have been taken by some, presumably largely wheel-less, traffic – through the Great Wood or straight on at Marley Farm, up a hill and then through a wood.

By the mid nineteenth century the quality of the roads was improving very considerably. The macadam system was adopted (then without tarring). The macadam system is simple: three layers of stone of decreasing size, with the smallest at the top being compacted originally by men with iron instruments, later by steam engines (the first mention of which is in the Battle UDC records in 1895, but clearly one had been used earlier); and for the first time each road had a camber to assist drainage.

One can still see this surface today (2018) in country lanes where the tarmac has worn away, for example in parts of the road between Etchingham and Stonegate, but most clearly in the stony lanes crossing the 1066 footpath in Battle Great Wood. The accounts of the Battle local board, and then of the urban district, are full of orders for stone, and when ready for use its heaping at the sides of roads could cause problems for local inhabitants and landowners.

Tarring began in Battle (and later elsewhere) from 1907, partly in response to the growth in motor traffic, where speeding vehicles seriously disturbed the old surfaces. It was cheaper than the old method if it involved simply spreading tar on top of existing surfaces but it had its disadvantages. Tar melted and spread in hot weather; most traffic was still horse-drawn but the horses found the new surfaces slippery on hills, particularly Battle Hill. At one point the UDC was asked to keep a central longitudinal patch of Battle Hill untarred so that horses could get a better grip; clearly this would have been unworkable, though it would certainly have led to what is now known as traffic calming. Tarring proceeded slowly in other areas – for example Sedlescombe was not tarred until 1936 – but the needs of the Second World War provided the final push.

Tarring encouraged speeding. Speeding remains a problem, of course but in those early days there were no speed limits, no warning signs, no roundabouts, no pedestrian crossings, no white lines, no traffic lights. Battle UDC kept asking the county council to introduce speed limits – 10 mph was asked – but in fact the county council was very reluctant to do more than put up warning boards in some places, for example at the corner of Mount Street and

Battle High Street. The only other road signs would have been the occasional fingerpost. It took national action to set in motion the practices that we now have.

The number of minor road changes since then are too numerous to mention, but there were schemes for new roads altogether though only one of them has so far been carried into effect (see page 6).

Among the plans for Battle roads were, in 1934:

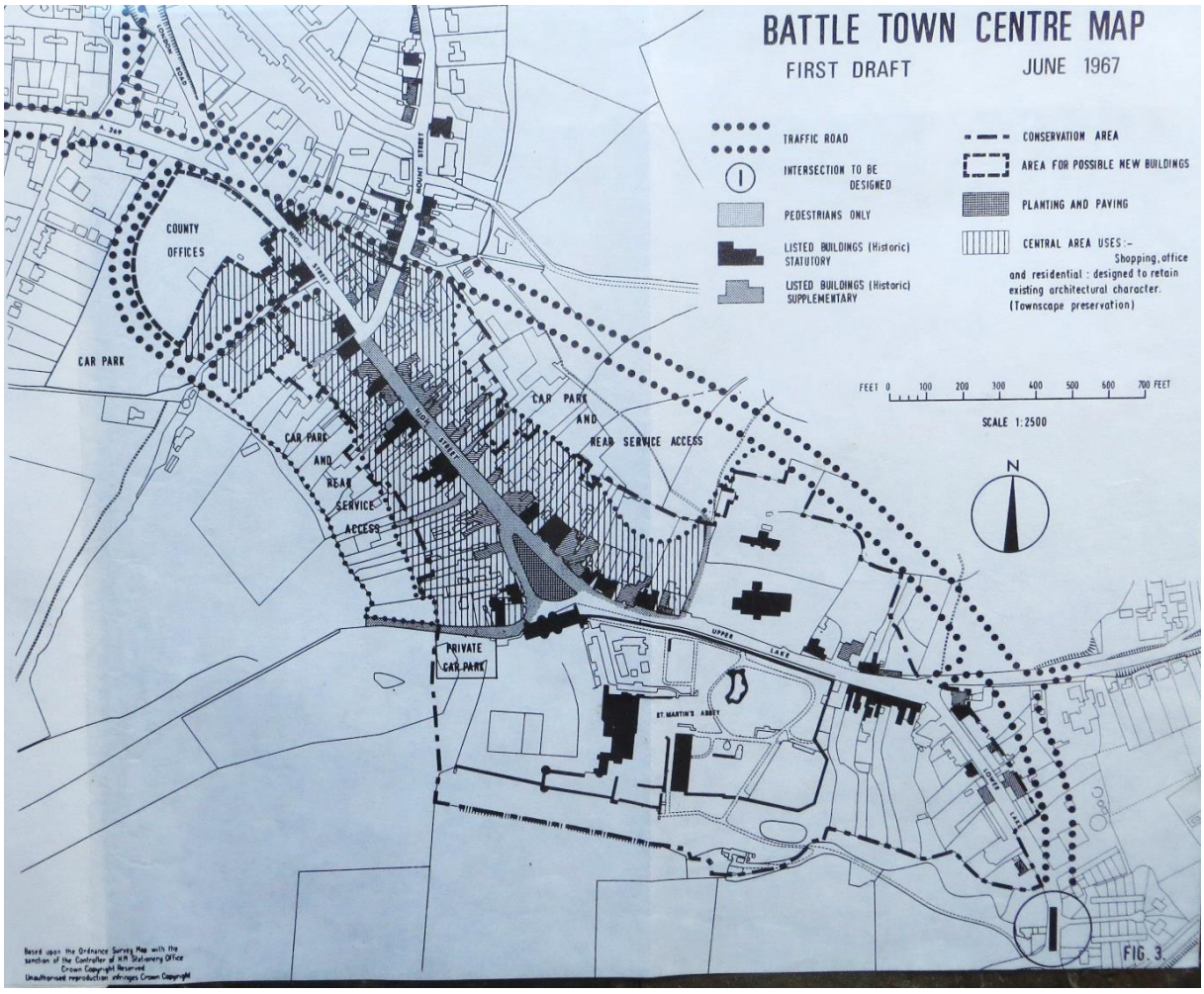
1 between the southern end of Saxonwood Road and the North Trade Road at Tollgates.

2 between the junction of London Road and Netherfield Road (they must have meant what is now Netherfield Lane) to the North Trade Road south of Philcox Shaw.

3 on the eastern side of the railway between Battle Hill and Marley Lane.

4 to give access to a five-acre plot south of the tannery (now Tesco).

The growth of motor traffic, both commercial and private, was never resisted in any way by successive governments. The job of county surveyors, in a nutshell, was to get the traffic through – which, as we now know, encourages more traffic. The country's growing wealth produced an electorate with cars, which demanded action. So in the 1960s plans were made



for a Battle by-pass. Various options were mooted for both the eastern and western sides of the town, and preference seemed to be attached to a road starting by Station Road, going northwards to the east of Lower Lake, passing below the eastern side of the High Street (presumably on an embankment) across the field owned by the National Trust and ending at Watch Oak. Had funds been available Battle High Street would have been a quiet and pedestrianised backwater but the noise of traffic would have been considerable elsewhere and of course in time there would have been delays at each end. As will be seen from the map above the present Market Square would have been county council offices and the primary school would have had to have been elsewhere when the time came to move it from Marley Lane. The old Methodist Chapel at the foot of Battle Hill (south of the map) would have been demolished and so would the Zion Baptist Chapel on Mount Street. It turned out that the cheaper option was to divert the A21 to the improved line it follows today, by way of Whatlington and Kent Street.

The second and much later new development has been the Robertsbridge by-pass. Robertsbridge had an even worse traffic problem than Battle: a narrow curved street with a hill at one end and a junction in the middle. Before the by-pass (1989) it was a problem area.

It remains that there have been no further major road developments since the demise of the turnpike. Indeed, in the whole neighbouring area the only ones are Queensway at the northern end of St Leonards and the 2014 road between Bexhill and Hollington, now (2018) very slowly leading to a planned improvement in traffic arrangements on the Ridge.

In Battle itself, is course, there have been some discernible minor changes. The footpath in Marley Lane, on the side of the old school, was agreed in 1858. A few years later the Duke of Cleveland caused the footpath on the Abbey side of Upper Lake to be made, raised from the road. Toll gates were removed as the turnpikes fell in. in 1947 the higher part of Lower Lake was flattened a little and a footpath made on the church side of Upper Lake, necessitating moving the churchyard wall back.

THE FUTURE

Road traffic faces real problems. It is beginning to be realised that the very future of individualised transport is in doubt, given the need to address climate change: even electric cars need fuel, if probably more economically produced than in each vehicle, and with the resulting emissions better controlled at source.

Roads in the Battle area remain problematic. In the 1960s the old A21 through Battle was diverted to its present course past Sedlescombe, and it remains one of the more dangerous roads in the south of England. Resources for improvements, for example at Sedlescombe, Kent Street and Whatlington, are not available. Battle itself is badly crowded, and the planning systems clearly do not work effectively: both the state schools are north of the High Street, leading to considerable congestion twice a day during school terms, yet the planning authority still tries hard to build large numbers of new houses on the south side where no schools are planned. Given the lack of public funding, new roads may be provided by private capital in connection with housing development. In Battle, for example, in 2017 the town council supported in principle a new road between the Hastings Road and Marley Lane (without having been shown any plans), and the government has now agreed to support it. A full by-pass would be expensive and obtrusive, and would run through an Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty. The county council has refused to ban certain types of traffic from the town or to restrict their permitted hours. There are times when the car parks are inadequate for the demand, and in any case on-street parking can and often does lead to obstruction.

Sources

The main sources for this brief study are the minutes of the Battle Sanitary Board (1851-1894) and of Battle Urban District Council (1934-74). The records of the *Hastings and St Leonards Observer* and the *Sussex Express* both contain useful material.

The reference to Upton is to the lecture account, which follows below. BDHS records contain an undated essay, probably by John Springford, on roads in Battle.

George Kiloh

TURNPIKES: THE GATES AND TOLL HOUSES IN AND AROUND BATTLE

In the first half of the 18th century the roads around Battle must have been typical of those in Sussex generally. Much has been written – in a derogatory manner – by travellers who have recorded that the roads in Sussex must be the worst in the country. It is recorded that in 1703, Charles, King of Spain, riding in a coach was six hours travelling the last nine miles on a visit to Petworth House.

I should think everyone is familiar with the traditional tale of a Sussex gentleman, who seeing a man's hat on the road, gave it a kick and then noticed a man's head underneath. The man said, "Here, that's my hat, help me out, I'm in a quagmire". He was helped out and then it was found that he was on horseback. After much struggling the horse was freed as well and it came out eating hay. After further investigation it was found that the horse had been standing on a load of hay, and underneath the hay was a waggon and in front of the waggon was the team of four horses with the carter valiantly struggling to get along the road.

A few years later Macaulay wrote "In some parts of Sussex none but the strongest horses in winter could get through the bog in which at every step they sank deeper".

Daniel Defoe, who died in 1731, wrote of the prodigious timber grown in Sussex and said "I have seen one tree on a carriage, which in Sussex is called a tug, drawn by twenty-two oxen, and even then it is taken but a small way, sometimes a whole summer is not dry enough to make the roads passable and it takes two years to get the timber to Chatham". He also speaks of a "lady of good quality being taken to church in her coach drawn by six oxen, the way being so stiff and deep that horses could not go in it.

It was to improve the state of the roads that the Tudor Highway Law was passed. Once every year, every common labourer of town and countryside was to give six days forced labour to help the repair of the roads in his district. Landowners and farmers were put under penalty to see that their men performed this duty. Nobody likes working for nothing, so the law only got perfunctory observance. The men worked unwillingly, and managed to spin out their labour that the six days might have been only two. Even then it was skimped. Further, employers directed the labour mainly to repairing the roads leading to their own estate or farm, so that travellers received no benefit from the ordinance. The only time the roads of any district seem to have been in good repair was when a Royal Progress was expected, and as Royalty did not often come to this part of Sussex, the roads remained in a deplorable state. When Royalty was expected, however, the whole town, to avoid Royal displeasure and heavy fines, turned to patching-up and gravelling, this later became the parish responsibility.

Another abuse was that, with no special authority responsible for the road, those whose land adjoined it began to take portions of it for themselves, until its breadth diminished by more than half.

To prevent excessive loads worsening the bad highways, there were many restrictions in the early road legislation as to the number of horses to be used with wagons, as well as regulations as to the width of the wheels.

1752 saw the start of road improvements to Battle, when in Parliament an Act was passed for repairing the road from Malling Street in Lewes to Broil Park Gate – just north of Ringmer. The following year an Act was passed entitled "An Act for repairing and widening the Road leading from Flimwell Vent in the Parish of Ticehurst in the County of Sussex to the town and port of Hastings in the said County". This road took the course of the existing London road progressing through Hurst Green, Robertsbridge, Whatlington, Mount Street, Battle High Street, Telham, the Ridge and so down through Ore and down the old London road into what is now called "The Old Town of Hastings". What we call Hastings today, is of course, a relatively modern growth, stimulated by the improvements in travel and the opening up of sea-side towns as places of pleasure.

This Act saw the introduction in the Battle area of what turned out to be the hated and despised Turnpike and its attendant Keeper. Turnpikes were so names because their construction was a row of pikes across the road which were turned on a pivot by the Toll Keeper after payment of the appropriate Toll, so allowing the traveller to pass. Later, Gates were substituted for the Turnpikes and the term "Turnpike" was applied to mean the Road itself.

Of these barriers, three were erected in Battle, the first along Whatlington Road, opposite Gate Farm – the actual Toll House was only demolished a couple of years ago, being replaced by a modern bungalow, still bearing the name "Pay Gate"; another known as Lake, which old maps show as across the road in Lower Lake, above Powdermill Lane, and a side gate at Marley Lane, these side Gates being to collect Tolls from people entering onto the Toll Road from adjacent lanes or roads. It is of interest that this particular side Gate has a very short existence, being discontinued in 1788 when the revenue was £5:17:2d for the whole year, whilst the salary of the Gate Keeper was £5:4s. for the same year the accounts show that revenue at John's Cross Gate was low and this was also abandoned. *[There is a reference to 'Blackfriars Gate' in the 1851 census records, which might suggest that the gate had been restored or merely that the particular point was known by that name, like Tollgates Cottage on North Trade Road.]*

From the 1750's travel now became a little easier from Hastings to London, although the first reference to a coach leaving Hastings for London was in 1745. This left Hastings at 4 a.m. Monday, arriving at Robertsbridge the same day, Sevenoaks the next day and London the third, returning to Hastings during the three following days.

It might be worth mentioning here that road improvement mainly referred to the putting of stone and beach on the existing surface as no real system of road-making was in use. Surveyors were appointed by the Turnpike Trustees but in most cases these men knew very little of what is today termed civil engineering. In this respect the county had to wait until the early 19th century, 1806 for Thomas Telford and 1817 for John Macadam, who were to be the instigators of real road improvements. The term Macadamising stems from Macadam, more of this later.

A few years after, 1762, saw the introduction of an Act for widening the Road from Flimwell to Rye. This Road passed through Highgate, Newenden and Northiam. A quotation from the Act reads “by reason of the deepness of the soil and very heavy carriages frequently passing and repassing through the same loaded with timber and guns for Naval and Ordinance Service, very ruinous and bad, and in the winter season almost impassable, and other parts thereof by reason of their narrowness and dangerous to travellers” etc. From such as this can be seen the necessity of such Acts. This particular Act provided for the erection of no less than six “Bars, Gates or Turnpikes upon or across the said Road between Flimwell and Rye. In addition this Act provided for the improvement of the Road to Tubs Lake north of Hawkhurst towards Cranbrook and also the Road to Coopers Corner in the parish of Salehurst. The latter joining up with the Flimwell to Hastings Turnpike at the junction just to the north of Hurst Green. A further Gate was to be erected on each of these two lengths of Road. Tolls were to be charged were laid down in this Act and were as follows:

> One pair or yoke of Oxen drawing shall be deemed and taken to be but as one horse;
> For every coach, etc., drawn by six horses or beats of draught, the sum of one shilling, and drawn by four horses or beats of draught, the sum of nine-pence, and drawn by three or two horses or beasts of draught, the sum of six-pence, and drawn by one horse or beast of draught, the sum of three-pence; for every waggon, wain, etc., drawn by four or more horses or beasts of draught, the sum of six-pence, and drawn by three or two horses or beasts of draught, the sum of four-pence and drawn by one horse or beast of draught, the sum of two-pence, for every horse, mare or gelding, laden or unladen, and not drawing, the sum of one-penny; for every mule or ass laden or unladen and not drawing, the sum of one half-penny, for every drove of oxen, cows or neat cattle, the sum of five-pence per score, as so in proportion to any greater or less number, for every drove of calves, hogs, sheep or lambs, the sum of two-pence per score and so in proportion for any greater or less number.

With Turnpikes and like obstructions, now going across Roads throughout the country, one can well imagine how these barriers caused frustration to run-away lovers with irate fathers in pursuit, criminals escaping from Bow Street Runners – and the Runners themselves; shepherds with their flocks; farmers going to market; “Nobility and Gentry” in their carriages; gentlemen on “King’s Business” – and maybe “Gentlemen” on King’s Business of another kind with a keg or two of smuggled brandy hidden under a load of hay!; commercial travellers or “Bagmen”; Highwaymen who sometimes urged their horses to leap the closed gate and above all, every other vehicle on the road and by no means last, stage-coaches, all had to stop at the Turnpike Gate. Exceptions to paying the Tolls were applied to Militia, Naval Authorities, Royalty and persons on the King’s Business, and inhabitants of the Parish going to church, to a funeral or to an election.

The next stage in improving the Roads in Battle came in 1766 with the introduction of an Act authorising a Trust to be set up to Amend the Road from Broil Park Gate to the Town of Battle. This road led from the corner of Mount Street, via Watch Oak, along the still existing track behind Wellington Gardens, now known as Chain Lane, onto and along North Trade Road, down to Catsfield, on to Ninfield, Boreham Bridge, more or less following the road as it is today to Ringmer. An interesting insertion in the Act was that “No Gate or Gates, Turnpike or Turnpikes, shall be set up within half a mile of the Road leading from the Parish of Brightling to the Town of Battle. This accounts for the siting of the North Trade Toll Gates, the residence of Mr. and Mrs Beaty-Pownall. This is the roadside cottage just before Tollgates Estate.

Also included in the Act were amendments in the Road from Broil Park Gate to Hurst Green through Burwash and Etchingham. This pair of Roads, were also to be in receipt of equal shares in the surplus of Tolls collected on the Malling Street (Lewes) to Broil Gate Turnpike. Since the records and accounts show that upkeep of the Roads was more than income, this added subsidy greatly helped and was the cause of much of the Turnpike Treasurer's correspondence, necessitating sometimes travelling to Lewes to claim this sum.

Referring back to my mention of Chain Lane, this short length of Road is still an unmade road and those of you who know it and its present state will have a very clear idea of what the roads were like after the Trusts had carried out improvements to the muddy surface. Without any disrespect to the council or the present owners, this road must be what it was like when last used as the turnpike.

Network of roads was now emerging round Battle and the next Trust authorised was by Act of Parliament in 1771, when the Vinehall to Rye Road was the subject of improvements. This Act also referred to improvements in the line of Road from Cripps Corner to Staplecross and Beckley.

Entries in the Account Book of 1796 for the Flimwell to Hastings Turnpike make reference to the carrying of beach as Road repair materials, for the section from Hastings to Battle, and cinders for the Flimwell to Robertsbridge Section. These cinders were most likely iron slag. One direct entry reads: "609 loads of cinder taken from Footlands Farm belonging to Mr. Collins, at 2d. per load." Footlands Farm is still known by this name today and is referred to in Ernest Straker's book "Wealden Iron" as 'the site of a Roman Bloomery'.

Whilst on the subject of accounts, John Fuller, who at this time was Treasurer of the Broil Park Gate to Battle – better known as the Laughton Turnpike – notes in his Account Book receipts of the Gates on this Road. "June 23rd, 1797, half a year's rent from Mr. Scrase for Ninfield Gate £43:1:0, Mr. Blackman half a year's rent of Borsham Gate £48, Mr. Richard Sharpe, two quarters rent £53 for Laughton Gate, £30:4:8½ from Mr. Tilden for Tolls of North Trade Gate for 25th September 1796 to 26th May, 1797 and one quarter's rent from John Oxley of Amberstone Gate the sum of £16."

A further entry shows the receipt of £3:10:6 as composition paid by Ninfield Parish. The Parishes' responsibility towards maintenance of the Road, in lieu of "Statutory Labour" was termed "composition". This was paid in a very erratic manner. John Fuller made a note of the lengths of the Turnpike Road in the various Parishes and the account of composition due from each. This was at the rate of £1:10:0 per mile, and Battle Parish contribution is noted as £2:14:6 for a length of I mile 3 quarters 24 rods.

Entries also appear for evading Tolls. In the accounts of 1795/96 is show the receipt of one pound in respect of "penalty of George Levell convicted in passing through a private way to evade payment of the Toll".

Revenue on the Flimwell Turnpike appears to have risen steadily in the last two decades of the 18th century, no doubt starting to reflect both the growing pace of commercial expansion – "the Industrial Revolution" – and also the commencement of interest in Hastings as a resort town, coupled with the improvements in conveyance. Revenue appears

to have been at its lowest in the period 1785 to 1797 when it hovered around £1,000 per annum. The 1798/99 accounts show the best year with a revenue of £1,602:6:1½.

Expenses averaged about £700-£800 but during 1797/8 expenses amounted to £917:8:5½ and in 1798/9 accounts they rose to £1,286:0:3d. During the latter year reference is made to the very considerable amounts spent on road repairing materials, especially on the Robertsbridge to Hastings sections. The reason for this is perhaps to be found in the accounts for 1799/1800, where there is an entry labelled "Bill of Costs 3 indictments of road in Parishes of Whatlington, Mountfield and Salehurst, indicted by the P.M.G." this connects in well with an entry in the Post Office Record Office. In Class 42 (Surveyors' Reports to P.M.G. Vol. 18 p.83 for 4th December 1799), Mr. Aust, the Post Office surveyor for the Home District makes reference to the complaints of the contractors employed by the Post Office to convey the mails by cart from Hastings to London, in which they blamed their lateness on the state of the road. The section complained of was from Woodgate (Pembury) to Stonechurch (Flimwell). The Surveyor indicated that the road south of this point was satisfactory as it was attended to in the summer after the Turnpike Commissioners had been indicted. The repairs were reported to have been effected "from materials contiguous to that part of the road."

Two other items of expenditure – though not recurring – was the building of Toll Houses and erection of the mile-stones, both of which were catered for in the original Acts. An entry in 1790/1 was for £58:10 to John Piper for building a Toll House to Northbridge Street and other works as per order.

The erection of milestones was a Statutory obligation on the Turnpike Trusts, these to be "at the distance of one mile from each other, and denoting the distance of every such stone or post from London, as the Trustees shall seem meet." Posterity – or the E.S.C.C. has been very kind to us as from Flimwell to Rye practically all the mileposts still remain – a cast-iron plate on a massive stone, and from near Hailsham along the Dicker through Uckfield, Ashdown Forest to East Grinstead and beyond into Surrey on the London Road there exists almost every mile the cast-iron post, those in the Uckfield area bearing the Pelham Buckle in addition to the intriguing distance to Bow Bells signified in sign language. These were all removed during the 1939-45 war and were amongst the few replaced after the war ended.

The year 1801 saw another Act passed to amend and widen the Roads leading from Staplecross to Hornscross and Northiam, joining the Flimwell-Rye Turnpike Road, and from Staplecross to Bodiam Bridge, through Bodiam and Salehurst to the Flimwell-Hastings Turnpike at Silverhill, Robertsbridge, and allowing for further Bars, Gates or Turnpikes in, on or across all these roads.

Accidents on the Road have been recorded and one such is quoted by Mr. L.F.Salaman in his book "A History of the Parish of Hailsham", Lt. Thomas Donald Webb was riding for the first time a spirited horse given him by his young wife. He lost control of the animal, colliding with the Amberstone Turnpike Gate and was killed. This happened on the 7th February, 1805. Lt. Webb was aged 26 and there is a tablet in Hailsham Church to his memory.

At the turn of the century on the Turnpike Roads passing through and in the vicinity of Battle, we have now thirty-one main Toll Gates, several side Gates and the Turnpike Trustees controlling close on one hundred miles of Road. It will be seen that travelling was becoming

a very expensive item in one's budget be it either for pleasure or necessity. Never-the-less, money was still available for investment and when on 1st April, 1813 Parliament passed "An Act for making a road from Beech Down near Battle to Heathfield and from Robertsbridge to Hood's Corner", the Trustees had little difficulty ion raising Mortgages on the expected Tolls to the value of £4,550, this being advertised at a rate of interest of 5 per cent. In actual fact no interest was paid on the capital whilst this Trust was in existence and we find that at the final winding up there were even insufficient funds to pay back the capital loaned – but that is looking ahead. For the present, the concern is to lay out the intended Turnpike the route of which, starting at Beech Down, Battle, straightening and making the existing lane and path to a point near the Gun Inn at Netherfield. From there following the existing Road through to Hoods Corner and so on approximately in the line of the old road to Cade Street, joining the Lewes-Burwash Road at Heathfield. A branch from Hoods Corner using the existing Road through Brightling, Oxleys Green to Cold Harbour, joining the Flimwell-Hastings Turnpike south of Robertsbridge. Provision was made in the Act for Turnpikes and Toll Houses to be erected at certain points on the Road and also mileposts indicating the distance to London or other suitable towns. On the 19th of April, 1813, the first General Meeting of the Trustees appointed was held "at the house of Sarah Bartlett, widow, known by the sign of the Swan at Hoods Corner". At this meeting it was resolved that the Act be put into effect, the Trustees were sworn in, and the Treasurer, Mr. John Hilder, give security in £500 for this office. It was resolved that the Surveyors appointed; Messrs. Samuel Wickens and Tilden Smith, make a report at the next meeting to fix and place the Gate and Gate Houses, etc., and that the subscribers pay into the hands of the Treasurer 10% of their respective subscriptions. At the second meeting on the 28th May, 1813, the Trustees discussed and took into consideration the necessary mode of forming and making the said Turnpike and resolved that the bed of the said Road be of the width of 22ft at the bottom, the crown of the Road be of 11ft and that the centre of the Road be raised so as to be 18 inches from the bottom of the water table before the same is gravelled and that the gravel be not less than 9 inches thick. That the hills of Netherfield, Darvel Hole and Dallington or any other part of the Road be reduced so as not to exceed 18 inches in every rod. And that all new fences to divide the Road from other grounds be at least 30ft apart. Mr. James Putland proposed to make and complete the whole of this intended Road on or before the 2nd August, 1814, at the rate of "210 per mile. This being the lowest tender it was accepted. James Putland was authorised to build the Road according to the line stamped out by the Surveyors and to keep the Road in repair until it was delivered to the Trustees as complete. All arches and other necessary erections to carry off the water from the Road were also to be made by James Putland, to the satisfaction of the Surveyor for the same sum. It was agreed that Mr. Tilden Smith, who was one of the Surveyors, be employed to build the bridges at Darvel Hole, Dallington Stream and at Three Cups at Heathfield for the sum of £115 and to complete the same within three months, of proper size and height and of good materials.

At the meeting of the Trustees on the 14th July, 1814, the Surveyor reported that the Road was completed by Mr. Putland according to the terms of his agreement and it was resolved that he be paid his bill of £3,303:11:1½ and that the Road now be taken into the Trustees own hands.

Following a notice in the Lewes Journal on Monday, 31st May, 1813, the Committee met on the 10th June and resolved that Toll Houses and Gates be immediately erected, to be

finished on or before the 1st September, to be at or near – 1. Netherfield Gun Inn, 2. Hoods Corner, 3. Cade Street, Heathfield, and 4. Cold Harbour in Salehurst.

A Mr. James Lansdell of Battle tendered to build the Toll Houses, "with privies, Gates and fences and to paint them for the sum of £400." Toll collectors were appointed at a meeting of 30th September, their salary to be 7/- a week for collecting the Tolls, to live in the Toll House rent free. It was further resolved at this meeting that the gates be closed on the first day of October and Tolls and other duties be demanded and taken by the collector from that day. Toll Boards or Tables were to be prepared and placed at the several Gates and mileposts to be erected on the Road.

The Road had been in use for a few weeks only when it was reported to the Trustees meeting on the 18th November, 1813, that due to the extreme bad state of the road in many parts no more money should be advanced until the next General Meeting or until certain parts of the Road were made passable for the winter.

On the 18th December, Mr. Lansdell was paid £406:15:6 for building the Toll Houses, £6:15:6 more than his tender.

Gates were not always erected in the most suitable place and at the Meeting on 25th August, 1814 it was decided that a notice should be given of the Trustees' intention to remove the Toll Gate at the Netherfield Gun, 100 yards south east of its existing site and to erect a side Gate across the Road leading to Netherfield Toll. This was left in abeyance for two years. On the 24th October, 1816, the matter was raised again but it was not until 27th March, 1817, that an order was made for this Gate to be moved. The next reference to this is in the Minutes of the Trustees dated 25th November, 1819, when the Treasurer was authorised to pay Mr. Tilden Smith the sum of £30 for building a new Toll Gate and removing the Gate at Netherfield.

Parish composition on this Road was at the rate of £3:3:0 per mile.

It had now become a practice to let the Gates by auction, the Gate being let to the highest bidder. In 1815, the Netherfield Gate was let to William Woddiwiss for £81, Cade Street Gate to Mr. Goldsmith for £120, Hoods Corner Gate to Mr. Randall for £139 and Cold Harbour Gate to Michael Phillips for £104. Tolls were rented to people in all manner of professions who had to enter into a Bond and give surety of others against payment of the rent. It is interesting to note that payment of rent in advance for the full 12 months in cash. Was subject to a discount which varied between 2% and 5%, there appearing to be no set rate.

James Philcox, lessee of the Hoods Corner Gate, failed to enter into the necessary surety and refused to pay rent according to the conditions. In consequence the Trustees decided that Notice be given of a Special Meeting to be held on 26th April, 1819 to take into consideration the necessary measures to be adopted and what proceedings to be taken against Philcox to compel him to conform to the conditions of letting, or remove him therefrom as may seem most advisable and appoint a fresh collector in his stead.

At the meeting of the 26th April, it was reported by the Clerk that James Philcox had quitted the possession of the Toll House belonging to the Hoods Corner Gate and the Tolls fell into the hands of the Trustees. It was further resolved that James Philcox be called upon

immediately for the payment of £79, being the money produced from the Gate between the 1st December and 16th April, clear of expenses of collecting.

It was necessary to resort to Courts of Law to interpret the finer points of the Act and one case held on March 21st 1817, in the Kings Bench, the decision was that carriages laden with manure and passing on a Turnpike Road which leads to the land of the farmer are exempt from the payment of Tolls.
In 1820 at the Court of Common Pleas, Gray v Shilling. This was an action brought by the owner of two coaches running to Pye *[surely Rye?]* to recover Tolls which he had paid by compulsion. It appeared that the Toll had been paid on 21st June, 1819, for some horses drawing one of the plaintiff's coaches, and that on their return with another coach on the same day, the Toll had been demanded. The question was, whether the same horses, drawing a different coach, were exempt from a second payment on the same day by the Act of 1804. The argument was to whether it was to the coach or the horses on which the Toll was paid. The Judge found for the plaintiff who was entitled to recover the Tolls.

Very little business was transacted at Meetings of this Trust, other than the annual leeting of Tolls, for the next few years.

In the meantime the original term of the Act relating to the Laughton Turnpike was drawing to an end and the Trustees concerned themselves with its renewal. In 1821 after the necessary expensive legal processes connected with presenting a Bill before Parliament, a new Act was passed. Two years later a new Act was passed relating to the Staplecross to Northiam and Silverhill Road Trust.

These new Acts related to "more effectively repairing the Roads" and virtually carried forward the powers previously held by the Trustees, including debts and other outstanding matters, in many instances the Trust was able to modify terms of repayment of capital vy creating a "sinking fund", amend the interest payable, and on occasion wipe out the interest debt which had accrued during the previous term, and deal with other matters such as amending the Tolls.

By this time the Roads were in a reasonable state of repair and new roads were being made to the specification of Thomas Telford and John Macadam. These men approached the matter differently but with the same end result, that of draining off the water. Macadam was appointed Surveyor of two Turnpike Trusts in Sussex – not around Battle – though his methods were gradually adopted by the Trusts.

William Cobbett in his book "Rural Rides" gives us a very good account of the state of the Roads in the 1820's but he hated Turnpikes and often expressed his opposition by refusing to pay Toll – as a result was frequently summoned to Bow Street.

Another author writes of his approval of Turnpikes and states "I arrived at the Turnpike Gate, where Toll was paid and then proceeded upon a firm road, full wide enough for any single cart but by no means wide enough for two and on meeting another one must drive down into the mud at the side of the road bank, and as there are no ditches nor any drains to carry off the standing waters from these flats they must soon be worse than the old clay deep roads. He shortly passed eight men and a boy who were all seated under a hedge. These labourers were not merely taking a rest, but generally having fun telling each other's

fortunes. When asked why they were not working they replied that there was plenty of time and that they had already taken seven weeks to repair the hill that lay before them. The writer rather thought that a dozen faithfull labourers could have repaired that stretch of Sussex Roads in a fortnight.

In the yellowed pages of a copy of the "Times" of this period a latter signed 'A Commercial Traveller' states "I have just returned from Kent and Sussex where in many places the Gates cost from 5/- to 7/- for less distance than 30 miles ….. for instance from Hastings to Lewes via Eastbourne. At Robertsbridge, half way between Hastings and Tunbridge Wells, there are three Gates (4d. ones) within half a mile."

The ensuing years saw much improvement to the coach services from London to Hastings and by 1815 a daily service was running, except for Sundays, it now being possible to reach London in a day. This coach, "The Diligence" was frequently impeded by the overflow of the Rother at Robertsbridge, and sometimes it even floated. Shortly after 1830 coaches were setting off from Hastings at 8, 9, and 10 o'clock respectively to meet at Tonbridge their counterparts coming from London.

The founding of St. Leonards in 1828 in turn led to road improvements. The St. Leonards' Coach had to make its way to Hastings and then up to Ore and along the old road. James Burton solved this problem by cutting a new road northwards from St. Leonards towards Silverhill, joining up with the existing road and so on to the Ridge.

In 1836 an Act was obtained for Making and Maintaining as a Turnpike a road from Beauport to Hastings. This started at the old Hollington Side Gate along a new section of road almost to the Tivoli, across Silverhill, down Bohemia and Cambridge Roads to where the Memorial now stands. *[He must mean the Albert Memorial, in the now-pedestrianised centre of the town, taken down in 1973.]* Hastings and St. Leonards coaches were now on an equal footing and the London journey shortened by two miles.

In the same year another Act provided for a Road from St. Leonards and St. Mary Magdalen to the Royal Oak Inn at Whatlington and through Sedlescombe to Cripps Corner. Both these Acts received Royal Assent on the 19th Mat, 1836.

Taking the Sedlescombe and Whatlington Act first, the Road as laid down would even today be quite an undertaking as this involved the making of a complete new Road over most of its length, together with cutting through the hill at Baldslow, near the Harrow Inn, building an archway for the existing London to Ore Turnpike under which the new road was to pass, and this to be carried out without impeding traffic on the old Road, by the provision of "a temporary Road". A passage in the Act also reads "the distance between London and Hastings will be shortened and a portion of the present line of the last mentioned Road (i.e. Flimwell-Hastings Turnpike) between John's Cross and the town of Battle will thereby be abandoned, etc., and the Trustees acting in the execution of this Act shall and they are hereby required to maintain and keep in repair such portion of the said Road when so abandoned …. As fully and effectually to all intents and purposes as the Trustees under the last recited Act could or might or ought to have done". We now have a condition whereby the new Turnpike Trust has the obligation to maintain the old section of Road which it had by-passed. From the point of view of the Trustees and the Officers generally it is doubtful if

there was any concern at losing a portion of Road as by the records these mean acted in the same capacity often for more than one Trust.

So in 1836 was by one Act of Parliament brought about the removal of through traffic from London to Hastings down Battle High Street. Ironic that the same contingency should be repeated 130 years later!

Battle then, though, apparently did not like to be deprived of the London to Hastings coaches, so in 1838 an Act provided for a complete new section of Road from Watch Oak almost straight and due north to John's Cross.

For now, though, let us go back to 1836 and the Hollington to Hastings Turnpike. Of all the records, Minute Books, Annual Reports and Treasurer's Accounts and Statements studied at the Trusts mentioned this evening. Surely none had such a bad start or such a chequered career in the comparatively short existence as did this one. It also being the shortest length of Road. The first meeting of the Trustees was held at the George Hotel, Battle, on Thursday, 9th June, 1836, when Charles Bellingham – a Battle solicitor – was appointed Clerk and William Scrivener Treasurer. Christopher Senior of Battle was appointed the Surveyor with a salary of £20 per annum on condition that he superintended the making of the Road without further remuneration. Finally William Brown of Tonbridge was appointed Superintending and Consulting Engineer and Surveyor to the Trustees. With the appointment of a Committee to commence negotiations with the proprietors of the land through which the Road was to pass the meeting was adjourned until the 21st July.

The progress of the railway to this part of the country is noted in the Act with the reference that no railway or tramroad shall cross the Turnpike on a level but be carried over by means of a bridge.

Mechanically propelled vehicles are also the subject of mention in relation to Tolls. Whereas all other Road users were permitted to pass and return through the same Gate, or a second Gate for only one Toll, "any carriage propelled or moved by steam, gas or by machinery or any like means or otherwise than by animal power shall pay a Toll for every time of passing and repassing of such carriage along the Road." The Toll for this type of carriage was no less than five shillings – compared to sixpence for every horse drawing a carriage. (The forerunners of today's motorist were from the start the subject of revenue extraction!) also written into the Act was the clause that horses returning through Toll Gates with different carriages were not to be exempt from payment of Toll. This clause obviously was written in because of the litigation I mentioned on the Rye Road.

It was originally intended that the line of Road from the "Victoria" at Hollington should proceed across to the Harrow along what is now Beauharrow Road, there joining the Ridge, but as the Trustees of the Eversfield Estate would not consent to this the existing Road was made joining the Ridge by Beauport. The estimate expense of the line recommended was £8,256. The expense of obtaining the Act of Parliament was £871:8:1d., "A great additional expense having been incurred in consequence of the opposition". £500 was estimated as the total cost of this Act.

Frederic Ellman of Battle was appointed Clerk to the Trustees at a yearly salary of £20 at the meeting held on 2nd May, 1838. At the following Trustees' meeting it was stated "that

owing to the unexpected increase in the valuation of the land and in a few other accounts the expense of making the said Road will with all incidental expenses connected therewith amount to the sum of £9,000 or thereabouts in addition to about £860 expenses incurred up to the time of passing the Act making about £10,750, towards which £8,350 has been subscribed which will leave a balance of about £2,400 unprovided for at present which sum we recommend should be raised on Mortgage of the Tolls.

Rising costs seem to have been the outcome of the improvement to the Roads, as it now costs £134 for the erection of a Toll House.

In October, 1838, the Clerk notified the Trustees' meetings that notices of Actions had been served on him for Trespass and Ejectment by Sir Charles Montileu Lamb, Bart., the owner of Beauport Park. Sir Charles was a Trustee of this same Turnpike and also a Member of the Committee formed for bringing the Act into effect! It would appear that Sir Charles objected to land being taken from his estate and ordered the Surveyor of the Sedlescombe Road, a Stephen Putland, and the Clerk of that Road, Mr. Jenner, to put fences across the Hollington Road. Opinion of Counsel was sought, and after receiving his opinion, the Trustees ordered that their Clerk should remove the fences. On the 3rd of August the Road was open to the public. These notices were served on the 3rd October to enable Sir Charles to recover possession of land which had been taken for the Road and compensation for the damage in making it. On 11th May, nearly two years later, Sir Charles put a proposal before the Trustees word "Payment for my land according to the valuation of Mr. Thomas including damage by severance or otherwise at £65 per acre – the slip of wood taken by me at the same rate – interest to be added to the price from the time the land was taken possession of – fencing to be paid for at the rate proposed by Mr. Bellingham and the land to be remeasured if I wish it." The suit in Chancery to be dropped each party paying their own expenses. If this be agreed I will take a Bond for the money."

This was agreed and letters of settlement were read to the Trustees at their meeting on the 4th December 1840.

This little contratemps cost the Trustees the sum of £267:3:6 in settlement with Sir Charles Lamb.

By July, 1839, the Turnpike Trust had a deficiency of £661 and the Mortgage debt was recommended to be increased to £11,500. Financial matters were not improved by such instances as one recorded in the March 1840 Minutes. "On the night of the 6th December last, an attempt at robbery was made at the Tivoli Toll House for which John Wood was convicted at the Assizes and transported for 15 year." It was the practice for the Toll receipts to be kept in the Toll Houses until collected by the Treasurer or lessee.

To reduce the pull for coaches up the hill into Battle, a new alignment was made on the Laughton Turnpike in 1837, this being the Road as we know it, alongside the recreation ground in North Trade Road. The new London Road was not then in existence, and the original height of the Road can be seen by the embankment on the London Road at the entrance to Watch Oak. Ground was purchased from Sir Godfrey Webster to carry out this improvement at a cost of £124:16s:10d. entries in the Accounts for the whole improvements are given as £395:1:7d., this including payment of £10:3:6d., as part of compensation to Mr. Ebenezer Brookes who was involved in an accident whilst this work was in progress. It

appears that the new piece of Road was in use and material was being removed from the old Road. This was fenced off after work but when Mr. Brookes was on his way home to Hurst Green between 10 and 11 p.m., on the night of 23rd August, 1837, he stated that no fencing was across the Road and as a consequence he went "over a precipice". Damage was claimed as £20:7:0 for repairs to his gig, but this was later, by arbitration, reduced to £13:15:0d. Mr. Brookes' reason given was "the labourer being a poor man, I was compelled for humanity's sake to reduce the original sum to £13:15:0 – part of which he will still have to pay, a lesson to him for the future not to listen (however sweetly he may charm) to the prepossessing voice of Mr. Shaw (a tenant farmer) in contradiction to the Surveyor's mandate, that had it been attended to the accident could not possible have happened."

The following year, the old section of Road was sold, part to Robert Watts for £14, the remainder to John Shaw for £6. Incidentally, Robert Watts and his brother James were surgeons in Battle at this time. Quite by coincidence, until recently two brothers with the same Christian name were also medical practitioners in Battle. Doctors Robert and James McNeilly.

Lavender Cottage now stands on a section of the displaced Road.

The 1830's saw a surfeit of Toll Road developments in the Battle area. In addition to the Sedlescombe and Hollington Turnpikes, the Battle to John's Cross Act was passed in 1838 and Cripps Corner to Hawkhurst in 1841. Straker in his book "Wealden Iron", states that "thousands of tons of cinder from the Roman Bloomery site at Oaklands Farm, Sedlescombe, were used when the new Road from the Harrow Inn to Whatlington was made in 1838-1840. This cinder heap is quoted as being 30 foot high. With the Oaklands heap exhausted, Mr. Byner, the Sedlescombe Surveyor from about 1870, dug and used between 2,000 and 3,000 cubic yards per annum of cinder from the Beauport Park Roman Bloomery. This heap was reported as being 30 feet above the surrounding land and covering in space two acres or more. Mr. Byner is locally reputed to have bought and demolished several Martello Towers for roadmaking after the Beauport cinder heap hd been exhausted.

Materials for road-making figure largely on the Turnpike accounts and by 1839 had reached a stage requiring tenders to be submitted for the thousands of tons required. For the Battle to John's Cross Road, tenders were sought for raising 3,320 cubic yards of stone from various local quarries – these being at Hastings, Hollington, Watch Oak, Salehurst and Ticehurst. In addition a quarry was dug at Rat Farm – now La Rette Farm – entailing the removal of 5,000 yards of earth and saving the stone excavated.

A breakdown of Trust accounts for 1839 is given in a Report of a meeting held on the 15th February at the George Inn, Battle. This very Hotel and who knows, it may have been in this very room! The Mortgage debt stood at £21,380 and other liabilities amounted to £3,817:7:0d., – the Battle to John's Cross account debt amounting to £3,292:17:5d. Due to the revised expenditure on the making of this section of Road now being £14,337 as against the original estimated cost of £9,700, the request was made for local landowners to come forward with a further investment of £5,000. The tempting interest rate of 4% was offered.

Income of Tolls for the year amounted to £2,730 with the maintenance and interest repayments amounting to £2,708, leaving only £22 surplus for the year. It is also stated that

income was lower due to the Statute Duty now having been abolished. The total length of Road administered by the Trust being 17½ miles.

Improvements were made to the Laughton Turnpike in 1842. The hill at Magham Down and the proposed new line of Road to by-pass it had been surveyed six years previously – the wheels of officialdom ground exceeding slow even in those days. Improvements however were carried out during 1842-3 at a cost of £865:16:3d. New alignments and new Roads are characterised by their straightness and level runs, following on both the lines of railway building methods and Roman Roads. One can also see the effect of Macadam and Telford's recommendations.

At the same time as the Magham Down survey, the line between Tellis Coppice and Boreham Bridge was surveyed but this Road improvement came after the Turnpike era.

Referring back to the Hollington Road, a request was made to the Trustees in March, 1841 to reduce the Toll at the Tivoli Gate in order to bring it into line with other Gates on the Road. The high cost of the Gate was creating a diversion of traffic – especially "as regards the pleasure drives of visitors of Hastings and St. Leonards" – the petitioners also requested that the Gates be let at Auction. However, within a very few months – on the 5th November, 1841, Mr. Ticehurst – a Mortgage creditor took possession of the Tivoli Gate and received Tolls against his account. The Clerk reported to the Trustees meeting that judgment had been obtained in an action of ejectment against Mr. Ticehurst – but the records show him still to be "Mortgagee in Possession" in 1845. In 1847 John Chiltern is named as "Mortgagee in Possession" of the Tivoli Gate, the system being that as soon as one creditor had received payment for his outstanding account, another creditor took possession of the Gate.

The Hoods Corner Trustees stated that at a meeting in 1843 that 11/- per week was sufficient pay for a man working on the Road, and that an estimate for maintaining the Road from Heathfield to Battle and Robertsbridge for that year would amount to £740, of which £560 was for labour and carriage of materials and £80 for materials. Beach from the shore, sand stone from the estates in the neighbourhood and cinder from the old iron forges of the County being the material used on the Road.

The opening of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway was responsible for a considerable reduction in traffic and consequent loss of Tolls. The erection of a new Toll Gate at Hollington Lane was necessary as traffic coming, not only from Battle but also from Westfield, Brede, Udimore, Sedlescombe and Whatlington and other Parishes, using this lane to Bo Peep Station, were so avoiding paying Tolls on both the Hollington-Hastings and St. Leonards-Sedlescombe Turnpikes. It was also expected that the completion of the Tunbridge Wells to Hastings Railway would be likely to operate to the further prejudice of both these Trusts. Toll evasion was also taking place at Cade Street where Mr. Kemp, the tenant of the land behind the Toll House, was permitting people to pass through his field and so evade the Gate. In the course of his business – a woodbuyer – Mr. Kemp was also using the Road through his field for his own teams. The Trustees were of the opinion that this was contrary to the spirit of the Act, and were further of the opinion that a Bar should be erected at this spot. The matter was amicably resolved however by Mr. Kemp offering to pay 5/- a quarter for the use of the Cade Street Gate by his own team and keeping the gate to his field locked.

Boreham Bridge ceased as a Toll on 29th September, 1825, and thereafter the Toll House was let to Wartling Parish for an annual rental of £3. During 1853 the old Toll House was sold to the Earl of Ashburnham for £10.

On the new John's Cross Road, Virgins Lane Gate was built in September, 1838 for a cost of £140, whereon it was put into use for collecting Toll. The first quarter's rent of this Gate was £58:15:0d.

A new profession had entered on the scene – that of Professional Toll-hirer. These men would attend the annual auction of the Gates and gradually became the sole lessees of the whole length of Road.

From time to time, at the expiration of the Turnpike Acts it became necessary to apply to Parliament for their renewal, this usually being for a term of twenty-one years. The 1850's saw the last of these renewals. The run down of the Trusts commenced in 1871 with the winding up of the Laughton Trust and the sale of assets – Toll Houses and Gates. The last Tolls were collected at North Trade Gate on the 1st November, 1871 and the Gate was properly burnt on a bonfire on Guy Fawkes day – the 5th. Sale of the four Toll-Houses and gardens at Laughton, Amberstone, Ninfield and North Trade realised £285 – three of these houses still survive to this day. Gates and incidentals realised a further twelve guineas and to close the accounts a balance of £1,136:7:8 was distributed to the Parishes adjoining the Road which had in the past paid composition towards the Road upkeep.

Three years later, 31st October, 1874 was the winding up of the Hoods Corner Trust, the Toll-Houses at Cade Street, Cold Harbour, Netherfield and Hoods Corner being sold for a total of £135. A deficit arose of 15:10d on the final payments but this was catered for by entering the sum as an error in the balance.

1875 saw the cessation of the Hollington and Sedlescombe Trusts and the final removal of Toll-Gates in Hastings.

The Flimwell Trust wound up in 1880, by which time the Turnpike system throughout the County had reached its termination, Roads upkeep being taken over by Local Highway Boards.

E.J.Upton
Battle
January 1971

Acknowledgements

Travel in England (Thomas Burke)	Various Acts of Parliament
Historic Hastings (J. Manwaring Baines)	Battle Museum
Wealden Iron (Ernest Straker)	East Sussex Records Office
Sussex County Magazines	Yeakell and Gardner's Map of 1795

Minute Books and Account Books for the: Laughton Turnpike Trust Hoods CornerTurnpike Trust Flimwell Vent to Hastings Turnpike Trust	 Hollington to Hastings Turnpike Trust Surveyor's Report of 1813 Woods Corner Turnpike Trust
Hugh Gordon, Esq., and Brian Austen, Esq., members of the Sussex Industrial Archaeological Study Group	
1" Ordnance Survey map of 1813	
1" Ordnance Survey map of 1831 (reprint by David and Charles)	

Notes on E J Upton's paper

This transcription has been made as faithfully as could be, using all of Upton's (to our eyes idiosyncratic) insistence on capital letters and full stops. There appears to be a confusion at the foot of page 11 and on page 12 where *1813* should probably read *1814*. Similarly, on page 8, *1814* should probably read *1815*. There are also editorial interpolations in italics on pages 8, 13 and 14.

At two places the author refers to locations that may seem difficult. What he calls Hoods Corner was the historic name of Wood's Corner, as it appears in one of the acknowledgements); and the Gun Inn at Netherfield is now, and often was then, the White Hart.

Many mentions are made of the currency in use then and until 1971. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with it, the formation (for example) £6:15:6 means six Pounds, 15 Shillings and six Pence. The Pound contained twenty shillings (s), each of twelve pence (d = the Roman denarius). The abbreviation 5/- means five shillings or the contemporary value now shrunk to today's 25 pence. A guinea was 21s.

The value of the money in modern terms is complicated to calculate. One reputable website (www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/) suggests that in 2016 values one Pound in 1800 would today be worth £74.10 in terms of income or wealth, or £1,111 in terms of labour earnings.

George Kiloh
February 2018

[1] Edmund Vale: *The mail coach men*, quoted in lecture to the Battle and District Historical Society by Sir John Dunlop, on 11 October 1963.