

## The Windsor Forest Turnpike.

By ARTHUR T. HEELAS.

IN the estate office at Easthampstead Park there is an interesting old ledger, entitled, "Accounts of the Treasurer to Windsor Forest Turnpike." Although the entries are simply the transactions of the Trust quite a lot of information can be gathered from them. With the kind permission of the Marquis of Downshire, and the courtesy of his late agent, Captain D. F. Woodford, the accounts have been carefully examined and extracts taken from them. These give us some idea of the management, cost and control of one of the principal roads in the eastern end of the county in the old coaching days. The users of our roads to-day should not be unmindful of what they owe to the Turnpike Trusts and the great coaching companies.

Although the Romans converted many of the primitive trackways of the ancient Britons into good metalled roads, and made many military roads for strategic purposes, which form part of the network of our modern highways, all these roads were allowed to fall into decay during the Dark Ages, the period of 500 or 600 years that followed the departure of the Romans. The art of road making was lost ; their condition even throughout the Tudor and Stuart reigns was appalling and it was not until the transition from the pack-horse to the broad wheeled vehicle, about the end of the 17th century, that the demand for better roads became insistent.

The outcome of this demand was the introduction of the turnpike system, which started in a small way and ended by converting the local communications of the country into one of the best road systems in Europe. It was the turnpike system that made coaching possible and enabled this popular means of transport to develop in the way it did. The method adopted in the turnpike system was to grant, by private Act of Parliament, powers to a syndicate or trust to take over a specified section of a road or trackway and convert it into a highway capable of accommodating and strong enough to withstand the strain of the new form of traffic just developing. These roads had to be broadened and straightened out and re-made in many

places, and to enable this to be done the trust was allowed to erect gates and charge tolls and incidently earn a profit for the investment of the Trustees. The turnpike system had one great drawback. It was not continuous for there were no national roads between distant centres. This state of affairs obtained until 1810, when Thomas Telford was appointed engineer for the Holyhead road. It took him twenty years to remake the road, get rid of seventeen English and six Welsh Trusts on it and have the Menai Straits suspension bridge built ; he then had the first great completed road in Great Britain.

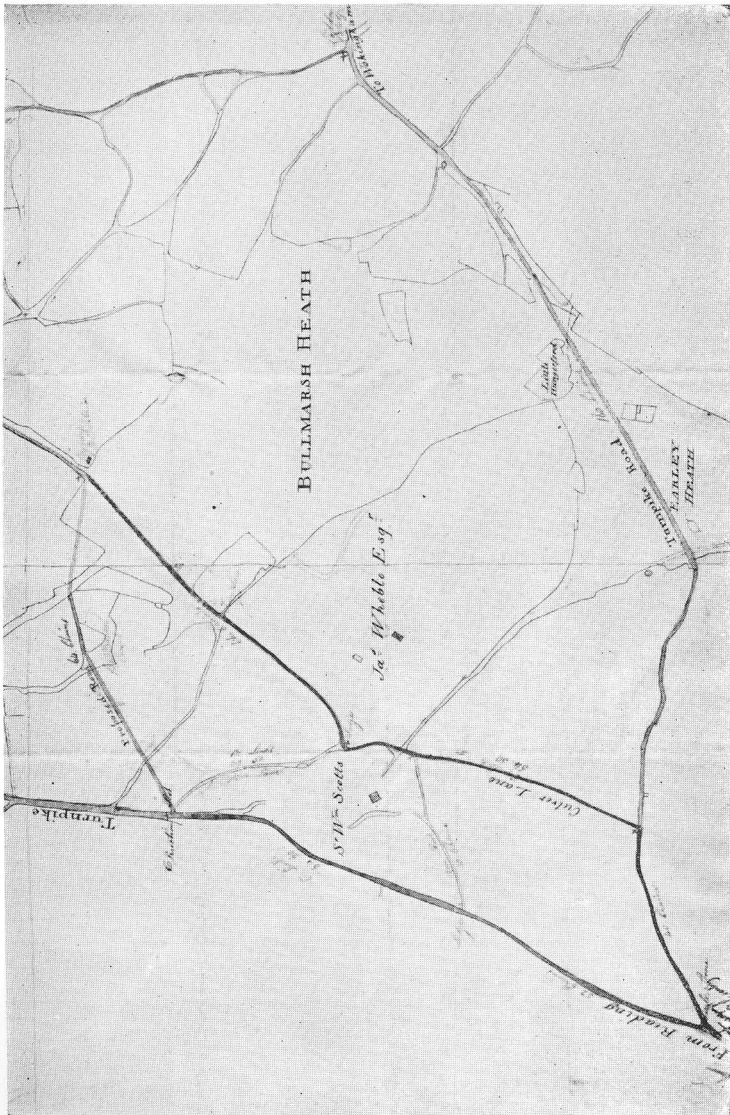
Adverting to the subject of this article, namely The Windsor Forest Turnpike Trust, it was necessary to find, if possible, the private Act of Parliament that authorised the formation of the Trust in order fully to understand some of the items in the Treasurer's accounts. This proved a much more difficult task than was anticipated as many of the private Acts of the 18th century were not printed and are only found in MS. form. After a long search the Act was eventually found in the Newspaper room at the British Museum. The title was " Windsor Forest Turnpike, 32 George II. 1759." The preamble to the Act states that " the Road leading from a Place called ' The Old Gallows ' "

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<sup>1</sup> The only place of this name on the road was the " Gallows Tavern," an old inn that stood in 1743 on the site of the present " Marquis of Granby," near the Reading Cemetery. It is quite possible that this is the place referred to as the road actually starts from there, it being on the boundary line of the Borough and the liberty of Earley in the parish of Sonning. In addition it was a likely spot for gallows to be erected, being just outside the town and at the junction of three important roads. The minutes of the Trust in 1852 and 1859 refer to a dispute between Mr. Wheble and the Trustees over an encroachment that affected the Statutory width of the road opposite the Cemetery. This proves that the Trustees had jurisdiction over this section of the road, although the Act would not allow them to erect a toll-gate on the Reading side of Loddon bridge.

[The author's observations regarding the The Gallows Tavern are correct. The Editor of this Journal possesses the original award of Wm. Baker of Reading, Surveyor, who in 1742 was appointed to make a survey and admeasurement of certain Common Fields in Earley with the object of an Inclosure by mutual consent of the freeholders and landowners. The following names of landowners, freeholders and lessees appear:—Sir Henry Englefield of Whiteknights; Elizabeth Manley of Earley Court; William Soley of St. Mary-le-Strand; Edward Legrand of Maiden Earley; George Blagrove of Bullmarsh Court; the Provost, Fellows and Scholars of Queen's College, Oxford; Sir George Fettiplace of Swinbrook; the Dean of Sarum, the Earl of Macclesfield of Sherborn, Oxon; Frances Danvers and John Danvers of Throp Mandeville; and Benjamin Child of Calcot. The Gallows Tavern was in the occupation of John Burford in 1742 and tradition has placed the gallows on the tongue of land at the junction of the Forest (Wokingham) Road and the highway to London.—Ed.]

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Map circa 1820 showing Windsor Forest Turnpike road crossing Earley Heath.

in the parish of Sunning (Berks), through the Town of Wokingham, new Bracknowl and Sunning Hill to a Stream of water or rivulet called Virginia Water, in the Parish of Egham, Surrey, is in a ruinous condition, narrow in many places and dangerous to Travellers, and the same cannot be effectually repaired and widened without the aid of Parliament."

The preamble throws a certain amount of light on the condition of the road before the coaching days ; for further information a glance at a map of " Bark Shire " published by Robert Morden rather before this period, clearly shows that the road ends abruptly about three miles beyond " Ockingham " ; also there is no trace of a road beyond Bracknell to Blacknest. The maps of those day were, however, very crude in detail and if there was only a trackway that may account for it not being marked. Further research discloses that the so called old road was merely a forest trackway used by six or eight- horsed forest waggons ; also Norden's map of the Forest, 1607<sup>2</sup>, does not show any kind of roads through the parish of Sunninghill, (through which parish the road would have to traverse) other than bridle tracks. The Charter that Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, granted to Broomhall Nunnery, Sunninghill, shows that there was a royal road, a *via regia*, or highway, in Plantagenet times from Old Bracknell to Reading, but it did not extend to Sunninghill.<sup>3</sup> This road was evidently used by the royal sportsmen and their followers when they were in residence at their hunting lodge at Easthampstead and visited the great Abbey at Reading.

The Act, after the preamble, gives a long list of the Trustees ; the following are a few of the better known men mentioned in the list :—

Lords Henry and George Beauclerk, Viscount Bateman, Viscount Fane, Sir Robert Long, Sir Monux Cope, Sir Charles Cotterell Dormer, Sir Henry Englefield, Baronets ; Sir Neville

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<sup>2</sup> G. M. Hughes, " History of Windsor Forest," p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> Henry de Lacy granted " 100 acres of land of our waste of Asserridge (Ashridge) to the Nunnery of Broomshall," and the Charter in describing the position of this land states " which lies between Pillingbere (Billingbere) and the royal way which leads from Brackenhale (Old Bracknell) to Rdinge (Reading).

Aldworth, etc., also the Recorder, Aldermen and Town Clerk of the Corporation of Wokingham, for the time being ; John and George Blagrove, Michael Blount, the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Reading, for the time being ; the Rt. Hon. Henry Fox, Henry Fyshe Palmer, Rev. Richard Palmer, Daniel Rich, William Trumbull and several Wokingham residents. The Act further states " That the said Trustees, or any five or more of them, shall meet together at the house of John Chaplin, known by the Sign of "The Rose " in Wokingham on the 28th Day after the Day of the passing of this Act, and shall adjourn themselves from time to time, to such Times and Places near the said Road . . . for putting this Act in Execution. The said Trustees at all their meetings, shall defray their own Charges and Expenses."

" The Trustees shall or may cause to be erected one or more Gates or Turnpikes, in, upon or across the said Road, and also erect a Toll house to each Gate ; and shall demand or take the following Tolls or Duties, before any cattle or Carriage shall be permitted to pass through the same." " It shall also be lawful . . . . to erect Gates and Tollhouses on the sides of the said Road, or across any Lane or Way Leading into or out of the same to prevent Persons evading the Payment of the Tolls hereby granted."

TOLLS. " For every Coach, Chariot, Berlin, Landau, Chaise, Chaise Marine, Calash, Chair, or Hearse, drawn by Six Horses, Mares, Geldings, or Mules, the Sum of One Shilling ; and drawn by Four Horses &c., Eight Pence ; and drawn by Two Horses &c., the Sum of Four Pence ; for One Horse &c. Two Pence. For every Caravan, Waggon, Wain, Cart, Dray, or other carriage drawn by Four or more Horses, Mares, Geldings or other Beasts, the Sum of One Shilling ; . . . Three Horses . . . Eight Pence ; by Two . . . Four Pence ; and by One Horse . . . Two Pence." For every Horse, Mare, Gelding, Mule, Ass or other Beast of Burthen laden or unladen, and not drawing, the Sum of One Penny. For every Drove of Oxen, Cows, or Neat Cattle, the Sum of Ten Pence per Score, and so on in Proportion for the greater or less Number. For every Drove of Calves, Hogs, Sheep or Lambs, Five Pence per Score."

“ Be it further enacted, That no gate or Turnpike shall be erected by virtue of this Act nearer to the said Place called ‘ The Old Gallows,’ than the South Side of the River Loddon. In case a Gate be erected in any part of a Lane called Mill Lane or Sindlesham Lane, no Tolls shall be collected from any of the Tenants of John Spencer, Esq., his Heirs or Assigns, occupying any Messuages, Mills, Lands or Fishing at Sindlesham.”

“ Be it further enacted that a person after having paid the Tolls shall be permitted to pass through the same gate or gates, with the same Carriage or Cattle, Toll-free, at any time or times during the same Day, to be computed from Twelve of the Clock in one Night, to Twelve of the Clock in the next Night.”

“ LODDON BRIDGE. The Bridge called Loddon Bridge,<sup>4</sup> is situated on the Road intended to be repaired by this Act, and the said Bridge is supported and maintained by Daniel Rich Esq, Olivia Barker Widow, Sarah Biggs Widow, and others, and they have lately been at very great charges in rebuilding the said Bridge ; and the said Road being repaired in manner herein before mentioned, will occasion much greater Traffick over the said Bridge than otherwise would have been ; That the said Trustees shall pay unto Daniel Rich, his Heirs and Assigns, the Annual Sum of Seven Pounds, net Money, to be by them applied towards the Support and Repair of the said Bridge ; and Daniel Rich and the others shall be exempted, freed and discharged from the Repair of the Clapters near the said Bridge called Loddon Bridge and the Bridge near Wokingham.”

“ No Victualler shall hold any Place of Profit.” No ale-houses were allowed to be kept by toll collectors at any public bridge, nor were persons retailing liquors of any kind allowed to act as trustees, or hold any office under them, or collect tolls ; yet we find a local brewer acting as one of the trustees.

STATUTE WORK. “ The inhabitants of the several Towns, Parishes, Hamlets, and Places through which the Road lies, who by the Laws, Statutes of this Realm, are or shall be obliged or liable to perform the Work in the Highways, for the repairing

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<sup>4</sup> This bridge was rebuilt in 1754.

thereof, commonly called " Statute Work " shall be subject to do and perform the same Work, and shall and are required to do so many Days Work in such Parts of the Road as the Trustees shall direct."

Mile stones are to be erected and the road to be measured, also posts for directions are to be placed in suitable places.

For further particulars of this Turnpike Trust it is necessary to refer to the old account book that has recently been unearthed in the Easthampstead Estate Office. The accounts were beautifully kept in a parchment clasped ledger and were clearly set out in small copper plate writing ; in fact it would be difficult to find a finer example of the art of writing in any commercial account book. The Clerk was Bryan Richards who was only paid a pittance in comparison with the wage such a scribe could command in these days. The accounts were rendered periodically to the Trustees who were responsible for the investments and cash transactions of the Trust ; many of the Trustees had a financial interest in the turnpike.

The period covered by the accounts was from 1759 to 1768. There were three principal turnpike gates owned by the Trust ; they were Loddon Bridge, Copped Beach, (usually known as Buckhurst Hill, Wokingham) and Blacknest, near Virginia Water, all three being situated on the main road between Reading and Staines. In addition there were two other gates mentioned, one at Sandford (Hurst) and the other at Sindlesham, but the receipts from these two gates are not shown in the accounts.<sup>5</sup>

The treasurer of the Trust was William Trumbull, son of Sir William Trumbull of Easthampstead Park, who had been Secretary of State in the reign of William and Mary ; after the death of Trumbull his son-in-law, the Hon. Martin Sandys, second son of the first Baron Sandys, succeeded to the office. Among the Trustees were several prominent Wokingham residents

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<sup>5</sup> It may be assumed that these were merely guard gates as by making a detour by either of these lanes it would have been possible to evade the toll at the Loddon bridge gate. It will later be seen that several such attempts were made notwithstanding the foresight of the trustees.

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*W<sup>m</sup> D<sup>r</sup> The. Trustees to Windsor Forest Turnpike their General*

<i>1739.</i>		<i>L. s. d</i>
<i>May 17</i>	<i>To Cash paid Tho<sup>s</sup> Beaud on Acol</i>	<i>100.</i>
<i>June 17</i>	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid John Bond for Blakenest Turnpike House in full</i>	<i>41.</i>
	<i>25 To d<sup>r</sup> paid Tho<sup>s</sup> Collins for lodgings in full</i>	<i>7.</i>
<i>July 18</i>	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid D<sup>r</sup> Richards for Advertisement &amp;c in full</i>	<i>1. 5. 9</i>
	<i>28 To d<sup>r</sup> paid e. Valt. Drumell by Toll Money</i>	<i>40.</i>
	<i>30 To d<sup>r</sup> paid d<sup>r</sup></i>	<i>60.</i>
<i>Aug. 21</i>	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid Tho<sup>s</sup> Draker lodgings in full</i>	<i>10.</i>
<i>Sept 17</i>	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid e. Valt. Drumell</i>	<i>30.</i>
	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid d<sup>r</sup> by Toll Money</i>	<i>40.</i>
<i>Oct. 6</i>	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid Tho<sup>s</sup> L'helps on Acol</i>	<i>20.</i>
	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid John Bond d<sup>r</sup></i>	<i>10.</i>
	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid William Gurler d<sup>r</sup></i>	<i>10.</i>
	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid Mark Hat d<sup>r</sup></i>	<i>10.</i>
<i>26</i>	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid e. Valt. Drumell</i>	<i>80.</i>
<i>Dec 7</i>	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid d<sup>r</sup> by Toll Money</i>	<i>20.</i>
	<i>To d<sup>r</sup> paid Sundries on Acol &amp; making the New Road over Brierwood Common in full</i>	<i>315. 11. 5</i>
	<i>To Balance</i>	<i>3/ 4 1/2</i>
		<i>L 835. 12. 2 1/2</i>

*W<sup>m</sup> Truett*

Windsor Forest Turnpike: page from Treasurer's ledger.



apart from those already mentioned, namely, Samuel Trash, Thos. Wilmott, Samuel Still, Thos. Ed. Colleton, Brian Leach, Thos. Brooks, Edward Wise, Rev. W. Pennington, William Cooke, D. Staverton, James Webb (the Brewer), and others ; these men " advanced cash on the credit of the Tolls at £5 per cent. " ; the cash advanced was usually £50 or £100, exceptions were the treasurer who had £500 invested at 4 per cent. and Lord George Beauclerk, £200 at 5 per cent.

The gate-keepers were Thomas Doe at Loddon Bridge, Thomas Collins at Blacknest, Aaron Dowle at Copped Beach, R. Staniford at Sandford Mill, and Thomas Alwright at Sindlesham ; they were paid a weekly wage of 8/- which they deducted each week from the tolls levied. At Loddon Bridge a week's tolls varied from £1 8s. in December to £5 in August, the average weekly takings being about £2 8s. ; at Blacknest the weekly takings were less as they fell from £2 6s. 7d. in May to 13/5½ in December, with a weekly average of about 30/-, with the exception of the week ending June 18th when the record takings of the year was made, viz., £8 4s. 1d. The tolls at Copped Beach only realised £42 3s. 8d. from June to December 31st, being an average of £1 7s. Totals. " The neat (nett) collections of the Tolls at the 3 Gates from the 11th January 1761 to the 10th January 1762 was £195 19s. 11½d., after the Gatekeepers were paid their respective salaries." In 1763 the nett takings were £214 13s. 2½d. ; in 1764 they were £242 1s., and in 1766, £254 15s. 7d., so that the traffic was steadily on the increase. Occasionally the receipts were increased by the penalties imposed for the infringement of one of the Turnpike Acts, There is an entry on February 1st, 1762, " By Cash received of William Lyfold for forcibly passing through the Gate 8th of Dec. last without paying the Toll on the Oath of Aaron Dowle. £2." Another entry on August 2nd of the same year, " By Cash rec<sup>d</sup>. of Thomas Spratley for bilking the Toll Gate on the Oath of Aaron Doule. £2." Also on February 7th, 1763. " . . . a Moiety of Five Pounds Penalty, rec<sup>d</sup>. of William Pitt, Esq., for his Servant, John Taylor driving a Waggon with Five Horses not having the Fellies of the Wheels Nine Inches broad, convicted on the Oath of Francis Collins.

£2 10s." Also on February 28th, " . . . a Moiety of Five Pounds penalty rec<sup>d</sup>. of William Watts Esq. for his Servant William guilty of the same offence on the Oath of Aaron Dowle, £2 10s." One man was committed to the County Gaol for an offence against the Act.

On the expenditure side of the accounts, Nathaniel Basnett, the road surveyor was paid a salary of £30 per ann; the clerk, Bryan Richards, received a yearly salary of £8. Daniel Rich Esq. received " a year's Bridge Rent of £7."<sup>6</sup> The bridge referred to was Loddon Bridge. The sum paid to the surveyor for the upkeep of the road depended largely on the balance in hand of the Trust. For instance in 1762, the Trustees paid over to the surveyor £378 6s. 8½d., and in 1766 the balance handed over was £78 15s. 5d., and in 1767, £59 17s. 7d., the two latter years' takings were not swollen with the investments of the Trustees as was the case in other years. The mileage of the roads is not stated, nor the upkeep per mile, but if the surveyor was responsible for only the main road from gate to gate it would be about fifteen miles. In December 1759, the surveyor was paid £315 11s. 5d., " on account of making the New Road over Priestwood Common in full."

Apart from the private Act of this Trust there were other Turnpike and Highway Statutes that gave trustees power to levy various tolls, such as the regulation for the number of horses per vehicle according to the width of the fellies of the wheels; to encourage the use of broad wheels certain concessions were made in the levy of tolls. Two oxen, or horned cattle, were charged as one horse (13 George III.). Under the same Act trustees were granted power to erect weighing machines at the gates to check the weights of loads, a scale of overcharges for loads was laid down which varied considerably with the size of the vehicle, the width of the fellies and the number of horses, it also varied with the time of the year. For instance, in summer heavier loads were allowed than in winter; a four-wheeled carriage having the

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<sup>6</sup> The Rich family were lords of the manor of Sonning, Daniel Rich being the fifth son of Sir Robert Rich, who was a Fellow of the Royal Society and who was buried in Sonning in 1768.

fellies of the wheels sixteen inches broad could carry eight tons in summer and only seven in winter. Carriages moving upon wheels or rollers sixteen inches wide were allowed any number of horses.

The first turnpike road erected by law was in the reign of Charles II. in 1663. Statute work is referred to in the Act; this was a quaint way of working out the highway rate in lieu of cash payments. Those who could not afford to pay their rate had to go out on the roads and work it off; farmers seldom paid as they found it more convenient to supply teams of horses, carts and men instead.

Extracts from a highway surveyor's account book about this period<sup>7</sup> gives an idea of this method of rate paying and the cost of wages, "Rent £21. Thos. Siggary Don to Days. Henry Siggary Over age." Those over-aged, or too poor, or in the "Militta" (Militia) were released from payment of the rate. In 1772 the Tan house bridge at Wokingham on the Barkham Road was repaired; it does not appear to have been a very costly affair as the timber cost £1 2s., carting it 1/6, spikes and nails 1/-, one man for half a day's work 6d., a man for one day's work mending the bridge 2/-; evidently an expert because three men were paid 4/6 between them for a day's work on the bridge.

Ed. Hefford was paid, for piece work, 9/3 for digging thirty seven loads of gravel while J. May, for five and a half days' work "letting the water out of the roads, 3/8." Four men were allowed beer to the value of 1/6 for thirty days' work between them. "Four days pecking in rots (ruts) 2/8. Four throwing up 24 pools of road at Nonsuch 3/-.<sup>8</sup> A man and team ploughing road over 8/-. Wm. Lane for the use of My Cart last year 5/-. For throwing up 70 pole of road plowed a second time 11/6. For two loads of Heath for do 10/-." In 1782, the beer allowances were becoming rather more liberal as we find an entry, "Strong beer 1 pint per day for the team, £1 3s. 6d. Small beer

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<sup>7</sup> The Highway Surveyor's Accounts for the Berkshire part of the Parish of Wokingham, 1772 to 1810.

<sup>8</sup> Now the main road between Wokingham and Twyford.

1 quart per day per man for the Labourers, £1 1s. 2d."

Old inhabitants, who can remember the toll-houses and gates, state that the one at Loddon bridge was situated on the north side of the road, near the two lodges close to the third milestone from Wokingham. The Copped Beach toll-house and gate were also on the north side of the road, but near the bottom of the hill on the Bracknell side, just about where Amen lane joins the main road. Unfortunately there is little or no trace of them to be seen above the surface although there is reason to believe that the foundations still exist.

It is difficult to imagine what the condition of these country roads was like after the farmers had "repaired" them. Before the advent of the turnpikes, ruts two or three feet deep were not uncommon, and in a long journey it was not a question of whether the carriage had broken down, but how many times it had done so. The roads were so narrow that two vehicles could not pass in many places, that is why the bells on the farmers' teams gave out their melodious and necessary warnings in most country lanes. An attendant of Prince George of Denmark (Baron Ockingham) who was the husband of Queen Anne, gives a graphic account of the state of the roads in 1703, when the Prince went to meet King Charles of Spain in his journey from Portsmouth to Windsor. He says "The coaches were ordered at six of the clock in the morning, and we set out by torchlight, being Christmas time. We did not get out of our coaches again, save only when we were overturned, or stuck in the mud." They sat in the coach for fourteen hours that day, a very trying one for the Prince. They were thrown but once indeed in going, but in returning they were overturned twice. "Both our coach, which was the leading one, and his Highness's body coach, would have suffered very often if the nimble boors of Sussex had not frequently poised it up or supported it with their shoulders from Godalming to Petworth. The last nine miles of the way cost us six hours time to conquer them."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Archaeologia*, vol.IV.

Soon after the Forest Turnpike had widened the old trackway and converted it into a traversable road, the coaching enterprise of the country responded to the invitation. The natives of the Forest, who were only accustomed to their broad-wheeled waggons, were startled by seeing an apparition on wheels called the "Reading Flying Machine" flash by; this was shortly followed by the "Wokingham Flying Machine," which "sets out at six o'clock to London and returns the same day."

But alas the English roads had another set back, caused by the introduction of the iron rail about 1830, when many people thought that the road was doomed. This proved a serious check to road improvements for many years. The last great change in the history of the road has been brought about by the introduction of the internal combustion engine, and the roads appear now to have a wonderful time before them.

The Editor of this Journal has kindly sent some extracts from the minutes of a meeting of the Trustees, held at the Rose Inn at Wokingham, on May 19th, 1852, and also of a meeting held in 1859. These show that the activities of the Trust covered a period of one hundred years.