

XIV.—THE NEWCASTLE TO CARTER BAR ROAD (A696 AND A68)

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A convenient date at which to begin a study of this road would be the 27th January 1748/9 when, according to the Journals of the House of Commons,¹ there was presented to Parliament

... a petition of the Gentlemen, Clergy and Freeholders of Northumberland (names subscribed) which set forth, That the road leading from the West Cowgate near the town of Newcastle upon Tyne by or through Kenton, Pont Eland, Hyham Dykes, Newhamege, Belsay Mill and South Middleton, unto the north side of the River Wansbeck, is a common High Road, and greatly frequented, and by reason of the many heavy carriages passing thereon, the said road is become so deep and ruinous that travellers cannot pass without great danger and loss of time; nor can the said road be effectually amended, and kept in repair by the Laws now in being for repairing the highways of this kingdom unless some provision be made for raising money to be applied for that purpose: And therefore praying that leave may be given to bring in a bill for erecting one or more Turnpike or Turnpikes upon the said road and for levying a toll thereat; and that, with the money arising therefrom, the said road may be amended and kept in repair.

The route is of interest, for a terminal point at the River Wansbeck means that north-west of Belsay this road originally followed what is now regarded as the Bolam and Middleton road and according to Armstrong's map of Northumberland, 1769, would link up with other "systems" going north by Rothbury or by Cambo, Elsdon and Otterburn, in the direction of the Carter. The petition was then referred for examination and report to a committee of over

¹ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. XXV, p. 705.

forty members which included the well-known local names of Sir Wm. Middleton, Mr. Blackett and Sir Chaloner Ogle. They were to meet at five o'clock in the Speaker's Chamber and have power to send for persons, papers and records.

On 3rd February Sir Wm. Middleton presented the Committee's report, including the evidence of Mr. John Dixon² that the road in question

is a High Road and by reason of the many heavy carriages passing through the same, in a very bad condition, and cannot be repaired by the methods prescribed by the Laws in being.

The House then gave authority to bring in the required Bill directing Sir Wm., Mr. Ridley, Mr. Aislabie and Sir Hugh Smithson, to prepare and introduce it. Ten days later it was presented by Mr. Ridley and had its First Reading. On 17th February it passed its Second Reading and on the 3rd March its Third, becoming

An Act for repairing the road from the West Cowgate near the town of Newcastle upon Tyne through the west end of Kenton, Pont Eland, Hyham Dykes, Newham Edge, Belsay Mill and South Middleton to the North side of the River Wansbeck, in the County of Northumberland.

On 22nd March the Royal Assent was received.

Highway Acts make somewhat dull reading and this Act of 1749 is no exception. The preamble closely echoes the petition while the names of the Trustees, which run to nearly three pages, have a familiar ring about them which tends to recur in succeeding Acts. The Allgoods, Aireys, Andersons, Bigges, Blacketts, Collingwoods, Fenwickes, Ogles, Shaftoes, Swinburnes, are all there every time. And so the Act rambles on for thirty pages with all the usual clauses on tolls to be charged, exemptions, the appointment of collectors, officers and their salaries, the making of satisfaction, drains, statute work, milestones and so on. Perhaps the only point worthy of special mention is that no turnpike

² A person of the same name was consulted twice when road repairs between Longhorsley and the R. Breamish were proposed in 1751-52.

is to be erected nearer to the West Cowgate than at the South end of the lane leading down to Kenton.

If we have lingered over the 1749 Act it is because its existence has usually been overlooked. It is not proposed to deal at such length with succeeding Acts but it should be remembered that they cost considerable sums of money and the services of a solicitor were required at every phase. We are fortunate in having such a solicitor's bill (probably Edw. Bigge) for his charges in the passing of the 1749 Act. It is part of the Allgood collection³ of papers and contains 29 items totalling £219. 16s. 9d. ranging over such charges as £1. 2s. 0d. for making four copies of the petition, £5. 5s. 0d. for perusing alterations in committee, £3. 15s. 0d. for making 10 copies of the Trustees' names, £29. 8s. 6d. for engrossing the Bill and expedition of same, £54. 10s. 6d. as the fees of the House of Lords at their Second Reading, 0. 6. 0. for swearing three witnesses, £10 for 200 copies of the Act by the King's printers, and £21 for the solicitor's own fee, all of which, as the Act made quite clear, had to be paid before any other debt.

Such information as we have about the next eighty years is gleaned mainly from subsequent Acts and from press notices, though it is not proposed to consider more of the latter than those pertaining to the first year or so of the Trust's life as an indication of the nature of the business with which the Trust had to deal in its early stages. The 1749 Act stipulated that the trustees (or any seven or more) were to meet at the sign of the Seven Stars, Ponteland, on 28th April and choose a clerk; subsequent meetings could be at this inn or at any place near the road. The gentleman chosen was John Isaacson, as we know from his signature upon notices, the first of which appeared in the *Newcastle Journal* of May 6th 1749 and announced a meeting of trustees at the Moothall in Newcastle on 18th May to borrow a sum not exceeding £1000 on the credit of the tolls and requested persons willing to undertake the repairs to send

³ Deposited at Northumberland C.R.O.

their proposals to the clerk or deliver them at the meeting. How far the trustees were successful is difficult to say in the absence of recorded minutes but over the course of the next twelve months press notices seem to suggest that work had to be tackled piecemeal as though the worst sections were being put in order first. The *Journal* of 27th May gives notice of a meeting to be held on 3rd June at the Moothall when surveyors of all parishes through which the turnpike passed were to furnish the names of people in their respective areas legally chargeable towards repairing any part of the road and to state what their responsibilities were so that each might be permitted to compound for his services. The vacancy caused by the resignation of the Ponteland gatekeeper was also to be filled, a matter which may have had some connection with a second notice in the same edition stating that during the previous Wednesday night or Thursday morning the turnpike gate and several posts and rails belonging to the trust had been pulled down and together with the gate-keeper's centinel (thus) box burnt and destroyed, an action which could be punishable by death! Twenty pounds' reward was offered for information leading to conviction, an offer open even to the culprit who might report his accomplices. Indeed the trustees promised to do their utmost to obtain pardon for such co-operation. In the issue of 10th June it was stated that the next meeting of trustees would take place at Ponteland at the home of Mr. Robert Shotton when again the business would be concerned with surveyors' lists of those liable to statutory duties and evidently carried over from the previous meeting. Meetings advertised for the 10th and 28th July at the Moothall were evidently of a routine nature but the issue of 5th August carried notice of a meeting to be held on 21st to consider proposals for the immediate repair of one measured mile of the road from the R. Wansbeck southwards. As insufficient trustees appeared, however, a further meeting was arranged for 21st September!

Of subsequent meetings we have no details until that of

3rd March 1750 when the erection of another turnpike gate was to be discussed. It must also have been decided to repair six miles of road directly northwards from Clickhamin,⁴ since at the following meeting, to be held at the home of Shotton at Ponteland on 22nd March, proposals for the repair of this section were to be considered and two hundred pounds borrowed on the credit of the tolls. A further meeting on 28th April, also at Shotton's house, was to concern itself with the examination and settlement of the accounts of the Treasurer, Surveyor and Gatekeeper. So far there has been no other mention of the Surveyor to the Trust though it is probable that his appointment had been made at an early stage and that he was John Brown of Kirkharle, brother of the renowned "Capability" and agent of the Duke of Portland. Entries in the Newcastle *Courant* in September, October and November, 1758, show that he resigned his appointments as Surveyor of the Military, Alnmouth and Ponteland turnpike roads almost simultaneously; his salary was probably twenty pounds a year with each trust.⁵ At the May meeting in the Moothall all who had compounded for their statute work but not paid their compositions were to attend and discharge their obligations, and a year later on 9th May 1752 the *Journal* announced that the road from Ponteland to the Wansbeck had been made and repaired and that all or any part could be let in order to maintain its condition; also that the Trust wished to borrow £1400 at four per cent.

Of the numerous subsequent Acts only those of 1797, 1818 and 1830, have been consulted. The preamble of that of 1797 mentions the amendment and continuation of the original Act of 1749 by others of 1755 (28 Geo. II) and 1776 (16 Geo. III), also of its replacement by the present Act. It also states that a considerable sum of money had been borrowed on the credit of the tolls, some of which

⁴ Now Clickemin. First farm on the Newcastle side of Ponteland. Six miles would extend to Belsay.

⁵ See *A.A.* 1966, p. 206 for short biographical note.

cannot be repaid and the road kept in good repair unless the terms of the previous acts are enlarged; further that the repair of the road connecting this turnpike with its Alnmouth counterpart would be very much in the public interest. This has reference to the short length of road along the north bank of the Wansbeck which joins the Alnmouth or "Corn" road at Wallington bridge and is said by the Act to be one mile and three furlongs in length but very ruinous and in parts too narrow. No doubt it was hoped that the provision of a more effective link between the two systems would be followed by an increase in revenues, though it is unlikely that this work was carried out for many years.

The Act follows the usual pattern but among its more interesting features are the provisions that trustees, or any five of them, may elect new members to fill vacancies in their numbers provided that notice of such elections be affixed to the tollgates and given to one or more Newcastle papers at least twenty days before the meeting; the qualifications of trustees are specified together with the oath to be taken; the first meeting under the terms of the new act is to be held on 10th June (1797) at the house of Robt. Atkinson, innkeeper, in Ponteland and thereafter at the same place or some other near the road though no adjournment must be longer than three months; trustees may erect tollgates across or at the side of the road, tolls⁶ to be paid but once a day at any gate, and payment to cover the return and as many other journeys as might be made through it the same day; no toll is to be taken on the new road (i.e. along the Wansbeck); the penalty for evasion is to be a fine not exceeding three pounds of which half may be paid to the informer; accounts are to be audited half yearly in January and July; trustees may widen, turn or alter any part of the road provided satisfaction be made to owners of land affected and such parts, together with the new road, walled or fenced;

⁶ Examples of tolls to be charged were 7d. for every chaise drawn by one horse, 10d. per score for every drove of oxen or cows, five shillings and sixpence for a two-wheeled wagon with wheels six inches broad and drawn by eight horses.

timber must not be hauled except on wheels; colliery owners may lay wagonways across the road.

With the notable exception of the introduction, which reiterated the old familiar cry that the "road cannot be properly mended, improved, and kept in repair unless the (1797) Act, which is near expiring, be continued for a further term", the Act of 1818 contained a number of variations, no doubt the outcome of experience, favourable or otherwise. Three trustees might now act for the rest but the offices of clerk and treasurer were no longer to be held by one and the same person. No one was to be liable to pay more than two tolls for which the collector must give a ticket denoting such payment and specifying the gate or gates which it freed. Collectors must also display their names in letters at least an inch in length on a board placed on some conspicuous part of the toll house or toll gate; scurrilous or abusive language to passengers might even cost gate-keepers up to two pounds! Trustees also became subject to certain limitations in that they could no longer vote upon the election of officers unless they had held their appointments for two years and attended at least one meeting; nor could they permit the deviation of the road by more than one hundred yards from the established line without the consent of the owner or owners concerned. All gates placed in any field adjoining the road were to swing inwards towards the field,⁷ though trustees were to use their discretion regarding those already erected; persons liable to statute work or chargeable towards repairing the road remained so and surveyors were to supply lists of such persons to Justices of the Peace (two or more) who would yearly adjudge what proportion of statute work was to be done by the inhabitants of the various parishes situated upon it, or what sum they should pay in lieu.

Though the 1818 Act was to have effect for the usual twenty-one years a mere twelve had passed before a successor appeared in 1830. The West Cowgate-R. Wansbeck Turn-

⁷ Presumably in the interests of road safety!

pike was now approaching transformation for men had begun to see a Newcastle-Carter route as a rival to the North Road. Indeed a survey of northern roads was undertaken by Telford and Rennie, and their estimates and plans submitted to Parliament but the ultimate survey from Newcastle to Otterburn was the work of a local surveyor, Thomas Sopwith,⁸ and dated 1829. That from Edinburgh to Otterburn and on to Elsdon and Cambo was made by J. L. MacAdam.⁹ Sopwith's survey was undertaken on behalf of the Ponteland Trust and contains a number of interesting features. Basically it followed the old turnpike as far as Belsay but with four important variations to reduce gradient, or distance and, though none of them was ever carried out, two merit attention. One of these was embodied in the act and involved the straightening of the existing road between West Kirkley Gate, now known as *The Wagon Inn*, to Newham Edge, alias the modern *Highlander*. The other (Fig. 1) might be regarded as the original draft for a Ponteland bye-pass which after 140 years and much discussion and change of plan has still not materialised! Sopwith envisaged an almost straight line from Street Houses crossing Callerton Lane some 300 yards south of the village and rejoining the old road well beyond the west end. This, he explained in a letter to the Trust, would save 209 yards but whether the advantages gained would outweigh the good condition of the existing road and the expense of a new bridge were considerations that only the committee could decide.

West of Belsay the story is very different. If the new road was to provide a convenient route to Scotland, then it could not be allowed to meander by way of Middleton Bridge, Cambo, Harwood and Elsdon, hence the "new line" surveyed by Sopwith came into being. According to the Act it was to be "A road from the present road at or near Belsay Fir plantation to the town or village of Otterburn"

⁸ See *D.N.B.*

⁹ Both may be seen at N.C.R.O.

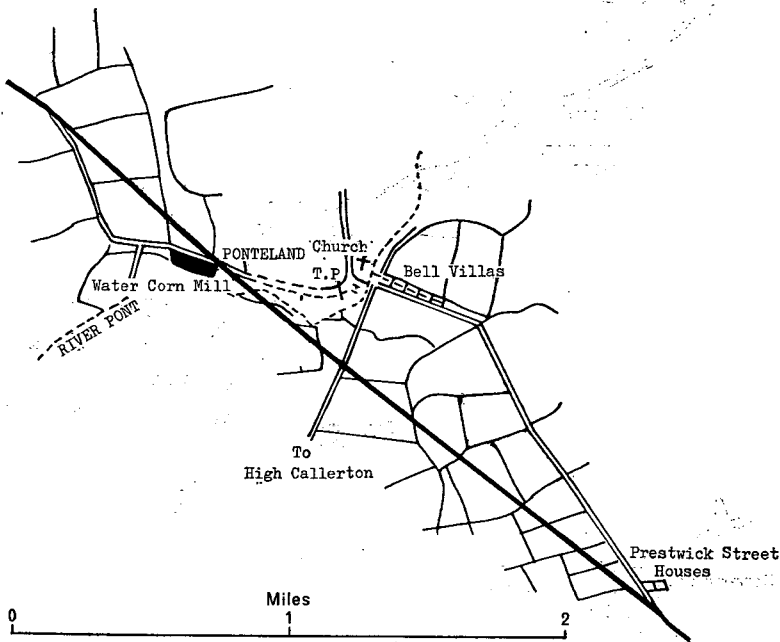


FIG. 1 SOPWITH'S SUGGESTION FOR A PONTELAND BY-PASS 1829

and would pass through the various townships specified. Mention was also made of the road from Middleton Bridge to Wallington Bridge, a section which, though permitted in 1797, had apparently never been put into good order. Such a road is not marked on Smith's Map of Northumberland dated 1804 though a diagonal connection from Middleton Bridge to Cambo is so indicated. Apart from the specifications and authorisation of new lines, the 1830 Act contains little else of interest. The Trustees included the usual names and their first meeting was to be the third Tuesday after the passing of the Act which received the Royal Assent on 8th April 1830; no money was to be spent on any of the roads mentioned in this Act unless tollgates were situated on them. There was a new list of tolls but these were to be

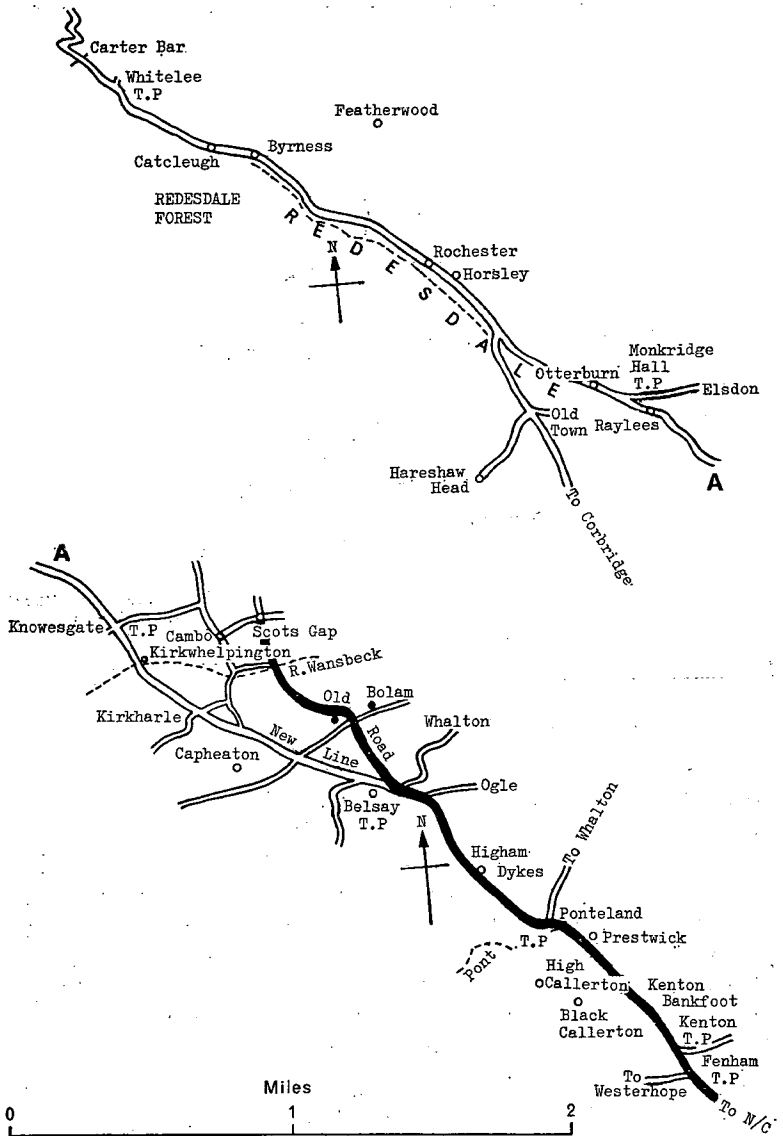


FIG. 2. THE NEW LINE. THE OLD ROAD IS SHOWN IN BLACK

paid only once per day for passing and re-passing any turnpike and any others freed by the same ticket. Not so stage coaches, however, or coaches travelling for hire whenever a new hire had taken place. Proceeds from the tolls were to be applied in the following order: first, expenses incurred in passing the Act; second, paying interest upon securities or mortgages of the tolls; third, building expenses; fourth, altering or repairing roads and lastly in paying off principal or other debts.

The Act, which was to be effective for 31 years, was merely the outward manifestation of intense behind-the-scenes effort both before and after publication. The local Solicitors to the Trust were Messrs. C. and P. Fenwick of Newcastle, and the London Agents for the Bill, Bramwell, Son and Turner of No. 3 Paper Buildings, Temple. Examples of the liaison maintained between the parties concerned and of the problems that arose are provided by letters in the Belsay collection, mainly from Fenwick to Sir Charles Monck, one of which, dated Dec. 1829, says that he has the draft of the Bill and suggests a meeting to fix the tolls where concessions appear to have been made. An earlier letter refers to four tolls on the road as though this were the number envisaged and these would probably be Kenton, Ponteland, Belsay and Knowesgate. A further letter of February 1830 says that Fenwick will be visiting London and mentions a meeting with Bramwell. Occasionally disputes arose over the line of the road as at Kirkharle where concessions appear to have been made to both Loraine of the Manor House and to Aynsley of Little Harle Tower. A letter from Sopwith to Monck dated 9th November, 1829, makes it clear that the matter has been settled.

Another gentleman who objected to alterations in the line of the existing turnpike at Otterburn as suggested by both McAdam and Sopwith was Mr. James Ellis of that village. Both lines crossed his land and were, he claimed, disadvantageous to him, especially Sopwith's. He not only offered to point out another line across his property which

would be shorter, more level, and less detrimental to himself, but even threatened to delay the Bill's passage. Doubtless these were but samples of the many problems that were encountered in the planning stages and two of the leading members of the small committee who managed the Trusts affairs at this time were its Chairman, Sir Charles Monck¹⁰ of Belsay, and its Treasurer, Sir John Edward Swinburne of Capheaton, President of this Society from 1813 to 1860. Their industry, and particularly that of Sir John, is attested by the vast correspondence involving these and other gentlemen and now preserved at the County Record Office. Other active trustees were I. M. Aynsley, H. C. Trevelyan, E. Collingwood and W. Batson. To Sir John, the sixth baronet (born 1762 died 1860) fell the onerous task of raising funds at four per cent often against his personal bond in the early years. Investment began slowly. In 1830 £2,500 had been obtained between August and November, a sum which was increased by £1,000 in 1832 and £3,600 in 1833. By January 1836 the total stood at £13,200 and by January 1838 at £15,060, the principal investor being Lady Swinburne with four sums of £1,000. Once funds were available then work on the "new line" between Belsay and Otterburn could begin and it is of interest to note that the road is still widely known by that name. Exactly when operations began has not been determined but in a letter to Sir Charles dated 14th Aug. 1830 (and preserved in the Middleton papers) Sir John says that he has found an experienced contractor whose name appears to be "Dawson" (though the handwriting is difficult to decipher) who will undertake the work for £200 a year. The rate was apparently regarded as high but Sir John notes that he has seen examples of the work of cheap undertakers which had to be done again.

We are fortunate in having an estimate, apparently by Sopwith, though unsigned, of what the cost of the road

¹⁰ The Middleton family of Belsay assumed the name of Monck in 1800 but reverted to Middleton about 1870.

between Newham Edge¹¹ and Otterburn would be. He had evidently been asked to base his calculations upon the assumption that the road would be twenty-one feet wide to a depth of nine inches and states that preparation of the bed to receive the stones would be 3s. per rood of seven yards; while winning and breaking 14 "fathers" of stones at 1s. 9d. a "father" of 22 cubic feet would be £1. 4s. 6d.; cartage would add another £1. 1s. 0d., making a total of £2. 8s. 6d. per rood. A mile at such a rate would cost £609. 14s. 3d. and, say, four conduits for same another £1. 10s. 0d. The total cost of this sector of eighteen miles would thus be £11,001. 16s. 6d.; fences and bridges not included. Sopwith added a note of warning, however. Nine inches of broken stones was too little and if such an amount were laid on at first a further five inches would be required. Stones could be broken for less money but they would not be small enough and the road would be ill made with the large stones always working to the top.

In due course work on "The New Line" began but we know from correspondence that even in 1836 the road as far as Otterburn was not complete. In 1832 negotiations were taking place with Sir Charles Monck over the site of a toll house at Belsay. A rent of one shilling a year was agreed and the toll house erected in the fork of the Otterburn and Bolam roads. An item in the general Statement of Accounts for 1832-33 refers to "Four months collection at Belsay Gate £45. 7s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., while a reference in the 1833-34 accounts mentions "13 months collection at Belsay *New* Toll Gate £144. 7s. 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", strongly suggesting that the new installation had recently been completed. The house was demolished over thirty years ago. The overall impression one gets at this period is that progress was somewhat slow and difficult. At one stage Sir John was authorised by the Trust to raise money especially for the development of the sector over the Knowes and it is not till 1836 that the

¹¹ Those of his suggestions for the line from Newham Edge (The Highlander) to "Belsay guide post" were not adopted.

Knowes Toll Gate is mentioned in the accounts.¹² Strips of land 1320 yards and 660 yards long (both 11 yards wide) were only acquired at Monkridge and Ottercops in 1834 and '35, the first for £130 and the second for £136. Even as late as 4th Jan. 1842 there is a reference to a refusal of the townships of Otterburn and Monkridge to contribute to the upkeep of the road because a quarter of a mile of it was unfinished near Otterburn and 2½ miles near Belsay. These could not be finished as the funds of the Trust were exhausted. People employed by the Trust in a professional capacity were not always as efficient as they might have been. In a letter to Sir John dated 4th Nov. 1841 Sir Charles refers to a fine of £5 against Belsay Highway Surveyor for bad repair of road, half of which sum was retained by Monck himself as informer! He complains in a further letter of 27th Dec. that he is very dissatisfied with the state of the road from Woosington to Newcastle and cannot see how the Surveyor, who at this time was Luke Pearson, could have any excuse so long as he could recover on the townships. The truth was, went on Sir Charles, that he was very lazy and as P. Fenwick (the Solicitor who acted as Clerk to the Trust) was very stupid they got nothing done between them. The road had been indictable at any period throughout the Summer and as late as November nothing had been recovered from the townships! Workmen employed on the road worked from 6.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. with an hour off at mid-day; one month's notice was required. Their duties included scraping the roads with patent scrapers when half an inch of puddle had accumulated. One penny per "mark" of 35 yards could be claimed for this work with a further penny per mark for placing the mud in decent heaps.

The Ponteland Trust, like many others, let their tolls for rent and in 1832 Kenton and Ponteland gates appear to have been let together at a combined rental of £60. 16s. 8d. per month. In May 1834 it was raised to £67. 8s. 4d. and

¹² The plan of the house may be seen at N.C.R.O. though the dwelling was recently dismantled.

by 1835 had risen to £75. 16s. 8d.; collectors wages at Kenton were about £26 per year and at Ponteland £18. 16s. 0d. For the year ended 11th May 1836 the income from the Kenton gate was £622. 17s. 8d. and from the Ponteland gate £368. 16s. 0d. and in 1839 £550. 5s. 4d. from the Kenton gate and £327. 19s. 0d. from the Ponteland. By 1840 the combined rental was £86. 5s. 0d. and had been as high as £92. 1s. 8d.; in 1843 it was £102. 10s. 0d. but the Fenham¹³ gate is mentioned in association with the other two. To correlate rents and anticipated income was a game of skill and profits must often have been marginal or even non-existent. Small wonder that the names of lessees changed so frequently.

At Belsay two gates, the New and the Old, were in operation from at least as early as 1832 and the income, probably from both gates, between 21st Sept. 1832 and 18th Aug. 1833 was £122. 12s. 4½d.; for a similar period in 1836-7 it was £142. 19s. 0d.; wages paid at this gate increased from £16. 11s. 0d. in 1833 to £20. 5s. 0d. in 1843, while rents, first mentioned at this gate in 1839 when the collector for Kenton, Ponteland and Belsay gates was a Mr. Hector Sutherland, increased progressively from £16. 13s. 6d. to £20. 5s. 0d. in 1843.

At the Knowes Toll Gate net income between 13th Feb. 1836 and 16th Jan. 1837 was £73. 12s. 8d. while the wage at this time was £13 per year. Traffic at this gate evidently increased steadily in ensuing years since for the year ended 12th May 1839 the rent was £86 which by 1843 (with some fluctuation) had become £93. Bad debts, however, were not unknown among lessees and at one period, probably about 1850, Robert Foster owed arrears of £24. 16s. 8d. on Belsay and Knowes gates. Others, including Hector Sutherland, already mentioned, owed a total of £15. 19s. 7d. in respect of Knowesgate, Fenham and Belsay. For the year beginning 12th May 1846 we have a complete record of the

¹³ Which was situated at the junction of the Ponteland and Stamfordham roads at Cowgate.

rental of the Trust's gates. Joshua Bower had obtained the lease of the Fenham, Kenton, Ponteland and the Kirkley and Blakelaw check gates for £1,245; George Taylor the Belsay gate for £230; and Robert Megginson the Knowes-gate and side gate for £65. Total £1,540.

From September 14th to October 14th 1832 the volume of traffic using the new Belsay gate was insignificant compared to that using the old gate, due no doubt to the comparatively short length of new road in use. An analysis of traffic using the old gate shows that the vehicle drawn by a single horse was the most frequent user (151 that month) and that Wednesday and Friday were the busiest days. Next came saddle horses (74) and then two-horse vehicles (63). Fifty-one three-horse vehicles passed through¹⁴ and four four-horse vehicles. Two and three quarter score of cows, sixteen and a half score of sheep and seven asses made up the tally for which the total receipts were £9. 7s. 0d. In the same period a mere twenty-four one-horse vehicles, thirty-two saddle horses and very little else used the new gate; receipts were £1. 2s. 3¼d. In 1835 in a similar period traffic had decreased generally at the old gate and increased significantly at the new. Receipts had fallen to £5. 8s. 0d. at the former and increased to £5. 15s. 2d. at the latter though the principal reason for the five-fold increase at the new gate was that the coach (which had changed from three horses to four in 1833) now ran on the new road instead of the old. Its forty-eight passages through the gate each month added £3. 12s. 0d. to the takings. By 1838 however, when much of the new road towards Otterburn must have been laid, the Belsay old gate had been completely eclipsed by the new. Receipts at the old gate for the period 25th March to 21st April had fallen to a mere £2. 16s. 9½d. compared with £11. 1s. 4½d. at the new. There had been no rise in the charges levied, but whereas 186 one-horse vehicles used the new gate only 49 used the old. Almost all other items showed

¹⁴ But this probably included the daily coach in each direction six days per week.

similar decreases except the new category of "corn carts" where the proportion was 8 to 9. The tolls stood at 1s. 6d., 1s. 1½d., 9d. and 4½d. for four-, three-, two-, and one-horse vehicles, 9d. for a corn cart, 2d. for a saddle horse, 1d. for an ass, 6d. per score for cattle and 3d. for sheep.

The final judgement on the success or failure of the "New Line", however, is to be found in the balance sheets of which a sample has been examined. All tell the same tale. Income of the Trust from all sources in 1835 was £1,269. 9s. 5¼d. but expenses amounted to £1,858. 10s. 10¾., of which over one thousand pounds was paid to T. Leighton the old surveyor and L. Pearson, the new. This would be mainly accounted for by labour, materials, and cartage on the new road. Fenwick's, the solicitors, bill came to £79. 4s. 7d. and their charges for the conveyance of land at Ottercops £153. 16s. 6d. Interest on capital borrowed came to nearly six hundred pounds and, all told, expenses exceeded income by £589. 1s. 5½d. a deficit met by Sir John. In 1838 the picture was much the same except that the debt had risen a little higher whereas in 1839 it was slightly lower (£297. 11s. 1d. to £907. 12s. 1d.) even though receipts from tolls fell by about two hundred and forty pounds. This appears to have been contained by spending some three hundred and twenty pounds less on the road (through Pearson the surveyor) than in the previous year. During the years immediately succeeding 1839 accounts do not vary greatly though by 1845 the debt had fallen to £655. 2s. 6d. and in 1846 to £260. 3s. 9d. These were better times with receipts showing an upward trend. In 1847, when the deficit had dropped to £146. 9s. 0½d., we find that the surveyor's accounts break down as follows: Manual labour £488. 6s. 11d., Team labour £183. 8s. 10d., Materials for surface repairs £66. 19s. 11d., Salary £75. The length of the Trust's main line was 28 miles, its branch line 6.34 miles; whinstone could be had for prices ranging from 1s. 0d. to 3s. 2d. per ton; Robert McVinnie of Belsay became the new surveyor. In 1850 the balance borne by the Treasurer was a mere 10s. 4d. and in

1857 a small balance-in-hand of £8s. 1s. 10d. was brought forward. On the Debit side however appear such items as "Income Tax £40. 4s. 0d." (not the first time it had been mentioned) and "Bank charges for 4 years £5. 14s. 3d."; total expenses were £1,348. 2s. 4d. Though the Trust might be described as "holding its own" this was far from making a profit and in this same year the bonded or mortgage debts still stood at £15,060 just as they had almost twenty years before.

Thus far we have considered only the affairs of the Ponteland Trust and its undertaking from Newcastle to Otterburn though less than a mile east of Otterburn it merged with the Elsdon and Redewater Turnpike which led up to Carter Bar and in turn met the turnpike of the Roxburgh Trust and so on to Edinburgh. As we have already noted, the line from Edinburgh and on by Elsdon and Cambo had been surveyed by McAdam, no doubt incorporating much of the existing "road" through Jedburgh which is clearly marked as a turnpike road as far as Carter Fell on Smith's map of Northumberland, 1804.

McAdam's Survey had been deposited at the Office of the Clerk of the Peace as early as 1828¹⁵ and probably on 13th November of the same year a meeting was held at Camboe (thus) attended by representatives of the Ponteland, Elsdon and Whitelee Turnpikes when it was resolved that an improved line of road should be procured between the towns of Jedburgh and Newcastle. The Elsdon-Carter Fell sector was controlled by three gates at Elsdon, Monkridge (where the Ponteland road met it) and Whitelee on the approach to Carter, though the Trust responsible for it seems to have faced considerable financial stress, particularly in the early years. It was recognised that whereas no one would advance money on Turnpike roads except under guarantee, yet the roads could not be kept in proper repair if burdened with interest. Railway competition in the Morpeth-Knowesgate sector was not feared however! Much remains to be learned

¹⁵ Whereas Sopwith's is dated 1829.

about the early days of Elsdon and Redewater Trust but we know from a report of the 1838 A.G.M. sent by the Clerk, Mr. Edward Lawson of Redesdale Cottage to Sir John Edward that the meeting took place on 9th March at Horsley under the Chairmanship of Archdeacon Singleton; also present were Messrs. Thomas James, Wm. Scott, Simon Dodd and Thomas Reed. It was reported that the Whitelee, Monkridge Hall and Elsdon gates had been let respectively for £320, £111 and £26 per annum. This apparently was an advance of £120. The meeting also renewed the determination (expressed on so many former occasions) to improve the line of communication over the Carter but considered it necessary to defer definite arrangements until satisfactory assurances had been received from the Scotch trust that corresponding improvements were about to commence on that side. This and shortage of money are recurrent themes in the correspondence of the 1830s. Even in Nov. 1837 the new line on the English side of Carter had not been finally settled and seemed unlikely to be before the next spring owing to lack of accommodation for labourers. Roxburgh Trust's difficulty was lack of funds. Mr. Oliver Rutherford, convenor of that Trust, had been prevented by ill-health, from attending the Redewater Trust's 1839 A.G.M. and explained in a letter to Sir John Edward that costs upon the new road in the Lauder area had far exceeded their estimates, also that Lord Lauderdale had not been nearly so generous as they had expected either in the matter of damages or value of land. Till the dispute with him was settled they could not know whether they had sufficient funds to complete the Carter improvement. At their A.G.M. in 1839 (Feb. 18th) with Simon Dodd in the chair, the Redewater Trust re-affirmed their resolution of the previous year regarding the road over the Carter Summit and resolved to borrow £100 on the security of the tolls to pay outstanding debts; the letting of the tolls was to be advertised and different lots of road contracted for. On 3rd August, however, Rutherford chaired a meeting at Horsley and intimated

that money was now subscribed for the new line on the Scottish side of Carter. Work, one might think, could proceed but a letter dated 11th Sept. 1839 from Lawson to Sir John indicated that their Mr. Dodd had met Mr. Spears, the Surveyor on the Scottish side, as arranged, to see what needed to be done at the points of junction but had been informed by Spears that estimates so far exceeded their calculations that they were considering altering their line and seeking more proposals. As a measure of the Redewater Trust's determination in this matter, work in the Carter area was evidently regarded by the Trust as a separate sphere of operations known as Carter Road Improvements, with its own account, but even in 1841 matters still dragged on. On the 2nd June Lawson wrote to Sir John that he had attended a meeting of the Roxburgh Trustees at Jedburgh the day before to learn the cause of delay on the Carter summit. Apparently orders had been given some time before to finish the work but their surveyor was waiting till work on the English side was finished so that they could convey their soil along it for disposal! Lawson had informed them that his trust had no use for their soil and that they must certainly not bring it on to the land of Mr. Trotter (whose ground appears to have run up to the Border) since they had already had great trouble with him. In a further letter, unfortunately not dated, though perhaps earlier than that just mentioned, Lawson says that the work on this side of Carter is now almost finished and that he expects the contractors to be paid off about 10th June; unfortunately the Scottish trust had not even begun the agreed three feet of cutting necessary at the top to suit work done on the English side and unless they began soon the new road could not be opened out that summer. Better news however was contained in a letter of 28th June when it was reported that Pearson¹⁶ had certified the new line of road finished to his satisfaction; the Scottish trust still could not agree on how to effect the junction but were determined that there would

¹⁶ Surveyor to the Ponteland Trust.

be little or no delay! The Elsdon and Redewater Trust and particularly their hard-working clerk, Mr. Edward Lawson, must now have felt considerable pride in their achievement, gained in spite of financial difficulty on the one hand and the slow progress of the Roxburgh trust on the other. Sir John had come to the rescue in 1836 and '39 with cash or guarantee of same to the tune of £182. 11s. 11d. which had bought the land for the new line on Carter from the owners, Trotter and Whealans, and paid the bills of Pearson the surveyor and Adamson the solicitor. Further subscriptions between 1840 and '41 including £100 from the Duke of Northumberland, and totalling £890 had cleared the accounts of the contractors, Stothard and Garford, for £850 between May 1840 and January 1841. All told, the Elsdon and Redewater Trust's improvements on the new Carter line between 1836 and '41 cost £1,790. 17s. 7d. and by February 1842 Sir John's contributions had totalled £230. 11s. 11d. Small wonder that Lawson kept so good a friend to the Trust fully informed of every development.

If we may now return to matters of a more general nature, frequent mention occurs in the Capheaton correspondence of the *Chevy Chase* coach and the anxiety of its proprietor, Mr. Croall of Edinburgh, to obtain a reduction of toll. In a letter dated the 9th May 1841 he had first of all written to G. Scott, the clerk of the Roxburgh Trustees, to say that very favourable terms had been offered to the Newcastle coach on the Kelso road and asks if they will reduce tolls for the *Chevy Chase* to half for a year since it has been the best Coach with four horses and has kept running in bad weather. If not then the tempting offer on the Kelso road might lead to it being taken off altogether or reduced to a two-horse coach. The result was that the Roxburgh Trust agreed to Croall's request and those members of the Redewater Trust that Lawson approached agreed to half toll for the winter months. The advice of Fenwick, the Ponteland Trust's clerk, was that as the tolls were let for one year, the trustees, even if they wished, could not

agree to a reduction during the lease. What action they eventually took is not certain but on the occasion of a similar request from Hazlehurst and Company of Edinburgh who wished to extend a coach service between Edinburgh and Jedburgh to Newcastle, a meeting of trustees at the Castle Inn, Belsay (last house on the left almost opposite to the Morpeth road) resolved that they had no power to grant exceptions. Lawson's last letter on the subject (29th May 1841) says that the proprietors have agreed to run the coach as usual (i.e. one p.m. from the Queen's Head in Grey Street) for the present but are considering the advantages of altering the *Chevy* to a night coach to suit the trains from London to Darlington since the railway offers to pay four-fifths of the tolls of any coaches running from Darlington to Edinburgh in fifteen hours. This however would mean leaving Newcastle at ten o'clock, the same time as the mail, and the mail proprietor objected unless he too could get relief of tolls for the winter months. Some years earlier in 1838 Lawson had written to Sir John, thanking him for a subscription towards building a bridge at Otterburn, and advising him to send letters by the *Chevy Chase* as they reached him sooner and were cheaper! All too soon the very railway with which the proprietor of the *Chevy Chase* proposed to co-operate would have advanced contemptuously to Edinburgh and beyond and the new transport with its fast-creeping tentacles would have strangled the life out of all rivals.

The winding-up of the various trusts mentioned is an aspect of our study upon which much work remains to be done. For the moment, suffice it to say that as the century advanced there were numerous Turnpike Acts but that the tendency from 1850 to 1871 seems to have been towards continuance through consolidation and so on to repeal. County records show that as from 1st November 1881 the Ponteland line of road through Castle Ward and the areas beyond was declared a main road on the expiration of the trusts involved.

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