

courses of brickwork is well attested in houses of the period, though it seems remarkable that it did not occur to the builders that the wood would rot away and present the same problem in the future. The courses of pammets are a feature not encountered by the writer or by Mr. Darby before. In one corner of the aisle are a group of tombslabs dated from the 1780's to the 1820's, said to cover a vault, and it may have been the digging of such vaults that originally caused the arcade to become unsafe. Mr. Darby is of the opinion that the wooden beams may have remained in a spongy condition until the drought of 1976 caused them to dry out and disappear, as similar subsidence has resulted in other churches in the area owing to a lowering of water tables since that date.

On some of the piers of the south arcade are marks, facing north and south, which might have been made by a parclose screen and might indicate that the piers were replaced facing the wrong way; but this is far from certain.

When the above conclusions were first made, no documentary evidence had been found; but the staff of the Norfolk Record Office have since discovered references in the Norfolk Archdeaconry visitation books in 1786 to 'some underpinning and earth to be removed' and in 1788 to 'earth to be removed from the walls of the church and some underpinning wanting to the walls'.¹ This would seem to confirm the suggested date.

The lesson that these findings teach us is that many other churches of apparently medieval date may have undergone considerable post-medieval reconstruction which is not evident simply from the visible structure.

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¹ Refs ANF/1/125 and ANF/1/128 respectively.

THE STOKE FERRY TURNPIKE

by J. F. Fone, B.Sc., F.I.C.E.

If one looks at the turnpike map of Norfolk (see page 196) one notices that they mostly radiate from Norwich or Kings Lynn. There is, however, a cluster around the small town of Stoke Ferry. These were created under the Stoke Ferry Turnpike Act of 1770,¹ (see map page 197). The present paper seeks to investigate this unusual situation.

From Tudor times² it was the duty of every parish to maintain its roads. Owners or occupiers of land valued at £50 per year were obliged to provide a cart, horses, tools and two men. Everyone else had to work on the roads for four days (afterwards increased to six); this became known as statute labour. In the late seventeenth century, with the more common use of wheeled vehicles, the standard of maintenance became unacceptable, particularly on important roads leading to large market towns, or London. To deal with this problem, Turnpike Trusts were set up to repair and improve particular roads. Capital was subscribed and tolls were collected to pay the interest and repay the capital. The normal period was for 21 years, as it was thought that by then the roads would be in such a condition that parishes would find little difficulty in keeping them in repair.

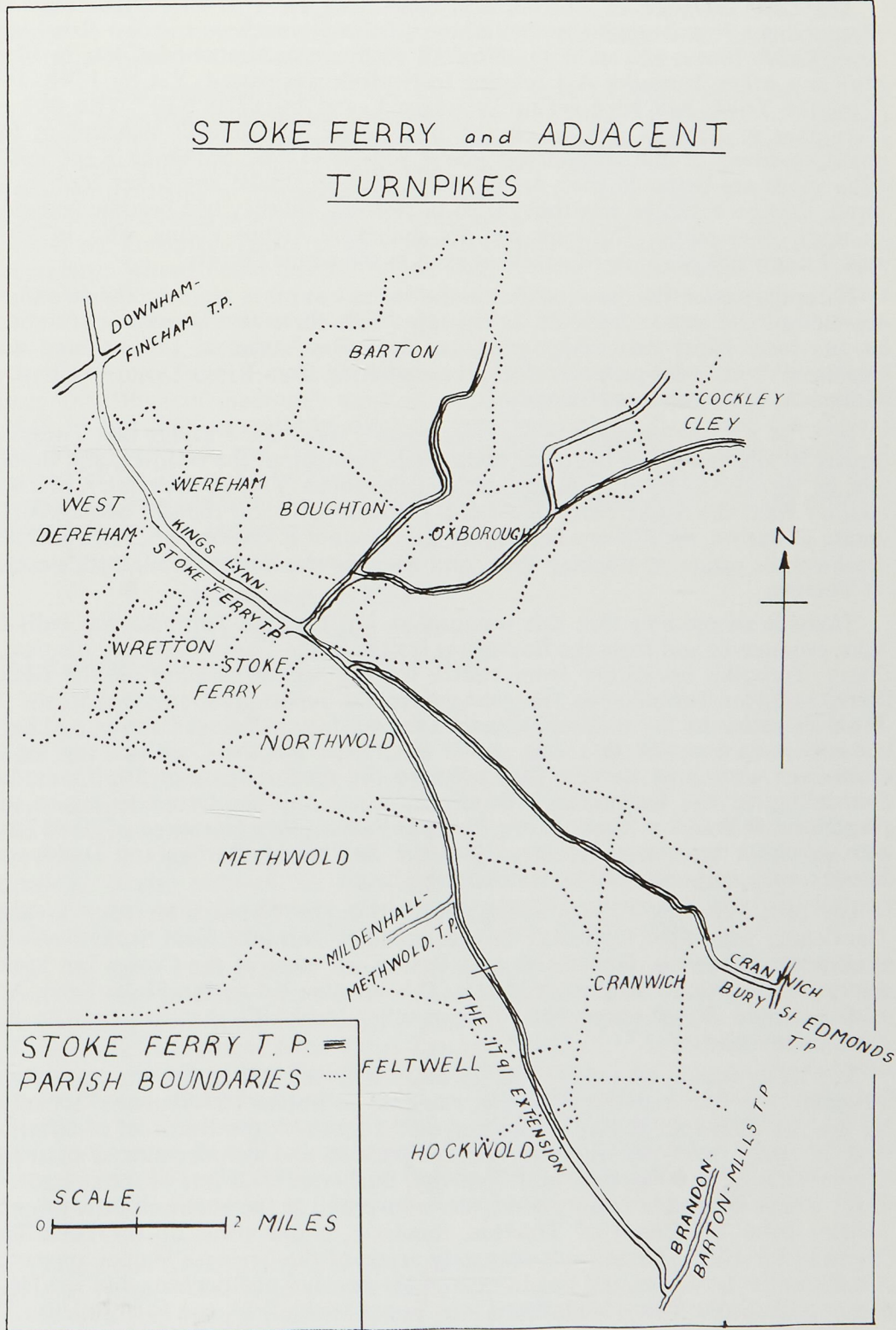


Fig. 2

The first Turnpike in Norfolk was created in 1695, from Attleborough to Wymondham,³ and gradually the whole of the Norwich – London Road was turnpiked.⁴ It was not until the Norfolk section was almost complete in 1766 that any other Turnpike Act relating to Norfolk was passed. Yet by 1748, 160 Turnpike Trusts had been set up in England, and by 1770, 530.⁵ This lack of Turnpikes in Norfolk was, no doubt, due to the high general standard of the roads, because of the widespread gravel soil. In 1796, Nathaniel Kent said,⁶ ‘The roads are better in their natural state, than in almost any other county, so good, that no turnpike was thought of in Norfolk, till they had become common in most other parts’. This view was not shared by Arthur Young, who, in 1769 said ‘I know not one mile of excellent road in the whole County’.⁷

Naturally, after the London Road the early turnpikes were in the Fens,⁸ as travelling there was so difficult. In the late 1760s there were a number of notices in the local paper concerning proposed turnpikes,⁹ and in 1766 a map was produced¹⁰ showing proposed turnpikes radiating from Kings Lynn, to Gayton, Grimston, Babingley and Hillington.

In 1754 a letter appeared in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*¹¹ saying that Turnpike Trusts should build a network of main roads throughout the country, and should not be allowed to build roads to Gentlemen’s estates. Yet, 26 years later, this was exactly what the Stoke Ferry Trust did. Particularly to; Sir Hanson Berney Bart’s estate at Barton, Sir Richard Bedingfeld Bart’s estate at Oxborough, John Richard Dashwood’s estate at Cockley Cley, and towards the Earl of Mountrath’s estate at Weeting.

There is an opinion that this was not so, but that the Turnpike was built to take produce to and from the flourishing staithe in the Town. Certainly the Stoke Ferry Turnpike benefitted from traffic for the staithe coming on the Stoke Ferry – Lynn Turnpike, as the gate was at the junction of the two trusts. If, however access to the staithe, other than for the four mentioned above, had been an important consideration, one would have expected the Cockley Cley leg to have been continued another four miles to the market town of Swaffham; the Barton leg to the Downham – Swaffham Road; and the Cranwich leg to the Swaffham – Brandon Road. If one looks at Faden’s Map (surveyed 1790-94) the two northern arms seem to serve just the Bedingfeld, Berney and Dashwood Estates and a large area of fen, common and heath.

On 24th February 1770 a notice appeared in the ‘*Norwich Mercury*’ inviting Gentlemen who were interested in the intended Turnpike from Stoke Ferry to Methwold, Cranwich, Oxborough and Barton, to meet at the Crown Inn Stoke Ferry, at 11 o’clock on the 1st March. This meeting led to the Stoke Ferry Act obtaining the Royal assent before three other local bills that had been in the pipeline much longer.¹²

The likely reason why there was no delay with the Bill is that the promoters, probably the four mentioned above, managed to obtain 157 Trustees! Included in this list were four M.P.s,¹³ four mayors of Lynn,¹⁴ the Recorder of Lynn,¹⁵ and 25 clergy, many of whom served two parishes and included almost all of the incumbents of the Fincham and Cranwich Deaneries.¹⁶ If one looks at Faden’s map, which shows the county seats, one is surprised at the absence of the County Gentry from the Board of Trustees. Similarly, if one turns up the Land Tax Returns for 1767,¹⁷ one finds that only seven of the Trustees’ names appear in the Stoke Ferry returns, and one in each of the parishes of Boughton and Foulden. Among the Stoke Ferry landowners was Roger Micklefield, the local solicitor.¹⁸

The place one finds most of the Trustees' names is in the Norfolk Poll Book.¹⁹ This is to be expected, as a property qualification governed entry to Turnpike Trusts, as it did to the Parliamentary Franchise, or indeed to most public offices.

The capital required initially for the Trust was £1,500, but no record has survived as to who contributed this. In the case of Downham Market – Fincham Turnpike in 1772, the share certificates were for £100 each, and with the exception of one man who contributed £500, everyone else contributed £100.²⁰ The only reference to shares in the Stoke Ferry Trust that I have found is to two £100 shares mentioned in a will in Mrs. Coates' book on Stoke Ferry.²¹ Many people looked on Turnpike Trusts as an investment, and their interest in the road was secondary. Where could people invest their money at that time? The County banks were only just starting up, and government loans were restricted. There were, from about 1760 to 1830, the canals but there were very few in Norfolk. For land owners, Inclosure Acts could be profitable, for they enabled them to get a better return from their land. Drainage of the Fens had been an investment since the Duke of Bedford's work in 1630 and the Merchant Adventurers' in 1660,²² but nothing could be done on the fringes of the Fens until the outfalls had been improved, and this did not take place until the early 19th century.²³ Instead of finding in Stoke Ferry a Drainage Act, followed by an Inclosure Act, to improve the yield from the land, followed by a Turnpike Act to get the produce to market, we find the reverse:

Turnpike Act 1770¹

Inclosure Act 1815²⁴

Drainage Acts up to 1834²⁵

The Railway Act came much later, in 1879²⁶

The original Act expired in 1791, and a new one²⁷ was obtained. This extended the London arm from Warren House to Devil's Dike, on the boundary of Hockwold and Weeting, but there was no gate on the extension. There was no alteration in the list of Trustees. The tolls were increased slightly and some of the concessions were withdrawn. Notably, the parishioners of Wretton, West Dereham, Wereham and Broughton were no longer exempt if they only went to the North West side of Stoke Bridge, whereas Stoke Ferry inhabitants continued to enjoy this privilege. It also reduced the Statute Labour for Methwold inhabitants to two days a year, while Northwold men remained at three days' work. (The mileage of Turnpike in Methwold was less than half that in Northwold).

In the early 19th century, the Turnpike map of Norfolk looks very different from the map of thirty years earlier. Beside the early Fen Turnpikes, there were ten radiating from Norwich,²⁸ and a number of Turnpikes in the neighbourhood of the chalk escarpment from Kings Lynn to Thetford.²⁹ It is interesting to note that there was never any Turnpike connection between the two groups between Thetford and Fakenham, as the roads from Swaffham to Narborough, and Swaffham to Fincham remained parish roads until they were taken over by the County Council. In 1792 there were three Turnpike routes from Kings Lynn to London; via Wisbech, Littleport or Barton Mills; this last had three alternatives, via Methwold, Brandon, or Thetford. Even today, not everyone is agreed which is the best route.

The second Stoke Ferry Turnpike Act expired and was replaced in 1811 and again in 1830.³⁰ The later recites that great improvements had been made in the roads with the money borrowed, but this could not be paid off, and the roads

could not be effectively improved and kept in good repair unless the Act was again renewed. The roads remained the same as in the previous Act, the tolls were slightly varied, and we see the introduction of two new classes of vehicles. Vehicles drawn by steam or gas, 2s-6d, as against the highest toll charged for a vehicle drawn by animals of four pence. We also have the broad wheel class. The idea had sprung up that vehicles with broad wheels rolled the roads, and might do more good than damage.³¹ So:

Carts with wheels over 6 inches wide	three pence
Carts with wheels over 4½ inches wide	three pence three farthings
Carts with wheels under 4½ inches wide	four pence

An important difference between this Act and the previous two was the reduction in the number of Trustees from 157 to 29. This time the Act ran for 31 years.

Anyone reading the renewal Act would not realise that all was not well with the finances of the Trust. We notice that in 1820 the Trust were one year in arrears with the payment of interest,³² whereas other Trusts in Norfolk were up to date, except for the Downham Market – Fincham Trust which was seven years in arrears. The income and expenditure of the Stoke Ferry Trust was:³³

Income	1823/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
Tolls ³⁴	£380	384	384	384	386
Contributions from parishes ³⁵	85	96	116	102	101
	£465	£480	£500	£486	£487
Expenditure					
Repairs	225	273	250	326 ³⁶	369 ³⁶
Administration	106	87	71	100 ³⁶	118 ³⁶
Interest	236	198	105	156	135
	£567	£558	£426	£582	£622

This compares unfavourable with some other Trust in the area,³³

For the year 1826/27	Income	Expenditure
Stoke Ferry	486	582
Lynn – Hillington etc.	1179	653
Lynn – Downham Market & Stoke Ferry	1193	650

So the Trust's affairs were far from rosy at the time of the second renewal Act. Stoke Ferry did all their work by direct labour, where as some of the others did it all by contract. Unlike other Trusts the Clerk and the Treasurer were both local men.³⁷

In 1830 the cost of obtaining a renewal Act averaged £436,³⁸ so in 1831 legislation was introduced to provide for general renewal acts.³⁹ Accordingly, the 1832 Act was the last private act obtained by the Stoke Ferry Trust, and it finally ceased on 1st November 1870.⁴⁰

With the coming of the railways, the Turnpikes, in general, found it impossible to continue, and in 1870 The Highways and Locomotive Act⁴⁰ provided that

disturnpiked roads should become 'main roads'. Although they reverted to the Parish, one half of the cost was borne by the County. Norfolk Quarter Sessions were not happy that all their disturnpiked roads should become a burden on the County rate payers. As has already been said, some were roads to serve private interests, and did not really form part of a main road system. The argument dragged on until, at mid summer session 1879, the Justices decided to send a deputation to the Local Government Board.^{4 1} The Board was not moved, and all the roads became 'main roads'. Norfolk had some justification in the case of the Stoke Ferry – Barton, Stoke Ferry – Cockley Cley, East Winch – East Walton, and Roydon – Grimston Roads. This was confirmed in 1919 when these were the only main roads in the County which were not classified under the Ministry of Transport Act.^{4 2}

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October 1981

The following books have been used for background information in the preparation of this paper.

Webb, Sidney and Beatrice. *The King's Highway*, 1913
 Albert, William. *The Turnpike Road System in England*, 1972
 Cossons, A. 'The Turnpike Roads of Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology*, vol. 30
 Coates, Doris E. *Stoke Ferry. The Story of a Norfolk Village*, 1980

Norfolk County Record Office is abbreviated to N.R.O.

¹ 10 Geo. III c.78.

² 1555 2/3 Philip and Mary c26.

³ 1695 7/8 Will. III c 26.

⁴ 1708 Wymondham – Hethersett 7 Ann c 4.

1725/6 Amending Act 12 Geo. I c 22.

1746/7 Hethersett-Town Close 20 Geo. II c16.

1766/7 Attleborough-Thetford 7 Geo. III c 76.

1792 Amending Act 32 Geo. III c 111.

⁵ Webb, p.124.

⁶ *General View of the Agriculture in the County of Norfolk*, 1796, p.16.

⁷ *A Six Week Tour through the Southern Counties*.

⁸ 1765 Wisbech – Downham Market. 5 Geo. III c83.

1765 Wisbech – Wiggenhall St. Mary Magdalen Bridge – South Lynn. 5 Geo. III c 101. (Wiggenhall Bridge was the lowest bridge across the Ouse.)

⁹ e.g. The 'Norwich Mercury'.

23. 7.1768 Downham Market – Wisbech.

15. 4.1769 & 10. 6.1769. Norwich – Scole.

13. 5.1769 Yarmouth – Caister.

11. 11.1769 Barton Bridge into Norfolk.

18. 11.1769 Kings Lynn to Gayton.

¹⁰ Map of proposed Turnpikes from Kings Lynn East Gates. N.R.O. B.L. 5/25.

¹¹ August 1754 p.349.

¹² Kings Lynn – East Walton 10 Geo. III c85.

Kings Lynn – Gayton, Grimston, Babingly and Hillington. 10 Geo. III c86.

Kings Lynn – Downham and Stoke Ferry. 10 Geo. III C185.

- ¹³ Details in this footnote and 14 and 15 are taken from Hamond Le Strange's *Norfolk Official Lists*, 1890.
 Sir Edward Ashley M.P. for Norfolk 1768, 74, 80, 84.
 Sir John Turner Bart. M.P. for Lynn 1738, 41, 47, 54, 61, 68.
 Thomas De Grey M.P. for Norfolk 1768.
 Hon Thomas Walpole M.P. for Lynn 1768, 74, 80.
- ¹⁴ Sir John Turner Bart. M.P. Mayor of Lynn 1768.
 Samuel Browne Mayor of Lynn 1769.
 Phillip Case Mayor of Lynn 1764 & 1777.
 Edward Everard Mayor of Lynn 1772 & 1782.
- ¹⁵ Henry Partridge Recorder of Lynn 1745-1769.
- ¹⁶ Extracted from Dawson Turner's *List of Norfolk Benefices*, 1847.
- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Cranwich Deanery | | |
| Caldicote 1760-85 | | Rev. Robert Rolfe |
| Hilborough 1756-85 | | Rev. Robert Rolfe |
| Stanford 1751-79 | | Rev. Robert Rolfe |
| Cranwich 1768-79 | | Rev. William Greene |
| Methwold 1768-79 | | Rev. William Greene |
| Gooderstone 1767-75 | | Rev. John Coe |
| Hockwold 1746-82 | | Rev. William Adamson |
| Northwold 1757-74 | | Rev. Robert Oram (see also below) |
| Oxborough | | Rev. Joshua White |
| West Tofts 1761-73 | | Rev. William Adkin |
| Weeting 1749-73 | | Rev. William Adkin |
| The Curate of West Tofts | | Rev. Cyril Clough |
| The Curate of Hockwold | | Rev. Robert Heaton |
| Fincham Deanery | | |
| Barton St. Andrew 1755-84 | | Rev. James Adamson |
| West Dereham 1765-83 | | Rev. James Adamson |
| Beechamwell St. Mary 1763-87 | | Rev. Thomas Ibbot |
| Beechamwell All Saints 1723-95 | | Rev. Thomas Ibbot |
| Stoke Ferry 1768-74 | | Rev. Thomas Ibbot |
| Bexwell 1769-70 | | Rev. Robert Oram |
| Crimplesham 1735-74 | | Rev. William Harvey |
| Fincham 1746-87 | | Rev. William Harvey |
| Denver 1769-88 | | Rev. James Hicks |
| Shingham 1763-85 | | Rev. Joseph Forby |
| Shouldham All Saints | | Rev. Joseph Forby |
| Ryston with Roxham | | Rev. John Deering |
| Hilgay 1740-74 | | Rev. John Deering |
| Watlington 1767-91 | | Rev. Jermyn Pratt |
| Wereham 1746-92 | | Rev. Jermyn Pratt |
| Wretton 1746-92 | | Rev. Jermyn Pratt |
| Wimbotsham 1764-79 | | Rev. Thomas Moore D.D. |
| Stow Bardolph 1764-79 | | Rev. Thomas Moore D.D. |
- ¹⁷ Land Tax Returns for the hundred of Clackcross, N.R.O.
- ¹⁸ Coates p. 49-55.
- ¹⁹ *The Poll Book for the Knights of the Shire for the County of Norfolk*, 23.3.1768. Printed by W. Chase by permission of the High Sheriff.
- ²⁰ N.R.O., B. 22.
- ²¹ The Will of Dr. Harvey, made 1801 died 1803. p. 13. For details of Dr. Harvey see p. 61 of Coates.
- ²² Private Act 12. Chas. II c 2.
- ²³ The Eau Brink Cut, to straighten the Ouse, was talked about for 50 years before the Act was passed in 1795 35 Geo. III c 77, and then it was not opened until 1821. The Norfolk Estuary Act, to improve the outfall was passed in 1846, 9/10 Vic. c 388. (H. C. Darby, *The Draining of the Fens*, 1956.)
- ²⁴ 55. Geo. III c 51.
- ²⁵ 4/5 Will. IV c 63.
- ²⁶ 42/43 Vic. c 188.
- ²⁷ 31 Geo. III c 100.
- ²⁸ For a complete list of all Norfolk Turnpike Acts, see Cossins p. 198.
- | | | |
|---------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| | Norwich Thetford | see n.4 |
| 1768/69 | Norwich Scole | 9 Geo. III c. 66 |
| 1768/69 | Norwich Caister Causeway | 9 Geo. III c. 68 |
| 1770/71 | Norwich Bixley & Kirby Bedon | 10 Geo. III c. 54 |

	1770/71	Norwich Swaffham	10 Geo. III c. 67
	1770/71	Norwich Watton	10 Geo. III c. 77
	1772/73	Norwich New Buckenham	12 Geo. III c. 95
	1794/95	Norwich Aylsham	34 Geo. III c. 114
	1811/12	extended to Cromer	51 Geo. III c. 27
	1797/98	Norwich North Walsham	37 Geo. III c. 147
	1823/24	Norwich Fakenham	4 Geo. IV c. 80
	1826/27	extended to Wells via the Dry Rd.	7. Geo. IV c. 136
	1828/29	extended to Hillington & links Wells to Langor Bridge & East Barsham to Lt. Walsingham	9 Geo. IV c. 101
29	1765	Littleport-Downham Market	3 Geo. III c. 36
	1770/71	Brandon-Barton Mills	10 Geo. III c. 65
	1770/71	Stoke Ferry	10 Geo. III c. 78
	1770/71	Kings Lynn-East Walton & Narborough	10 Geo. III c. 85
	1770/71	Kings Lynn-Gayton, Grimston, Babingley & Hillington	10 Geo. III c. 86
	1811/12	extended to Dersingham	51 Geo. III c. 21
	1770/71	Kings Lynn-Downham Market & Stoke Ferry	10 Geo. III c. 85
	1772/73	Downham Market-Fincham	12 Geo. III c. 98
	1786/87	Walsoken-Cross Keys	26 Geo. III c. 127
	1792/93	Cranwich-Thetford-Bury St. Edmunds	32 Geo. III c. 148
	1828/29	Methwold-Mildenhall	9 Geo. IV c. 44
	³⁰	51 Geo. III c.45 and 2/3 Will. IV c.83.	

³¹A Parliamentary Committee, in 1806, investigated all aspects of damage to roads by vehicles, width of wheels, whether cylindrical or conical, whether spokes should be dished, position of axles etc. The only definite conclusions they came to was that wheel rims should be broad and cylindrical. B.P.P. 1806 (321) vol. II p. 249.

³²Under the Act 3 Geo. III c.26 the accounts of Turnpike Trusts had to be sent to the Clerk of the Peace. See N.R.O. T286(B).

³³N.R.O., T286(B).

³⁴The Trustees did not collect the Tolls themselves, but let them out to the highest bidder for three years. See 13 Geo. III c. 84.

³⁵Although the Trustees could demand Statute Labour, by this time, the parish levied a rate and paid this to the Trustees in lieu. See 13 Geo. III c. 84, and 1670 22 Car. II c.12.

³⁶Although the totals for the two years are correct, there may be a slight error in allocation, owing to some bills being paid late.

³⁷B.P.P. 447 vol. XLIV p. 299. Clerk Roger Micklefield; see Coates pp. 49-55. Treasurer E. W. Etheridge; see Coates pp. 55-59.

³⁸Albert p. 60.

³⁹A Parliamentary Committee in 1826/7 (B.P.P. (383) vol. VI p. 1) said that 21 years was not sufficient time for a Trust, 31 years would be better, and they recommended a general renewal act, which would give a list of trusts throughout the country which were renewed. See 1/2 Will. IV c.6.

⁴⁰33/34 Vic. c.73.

⁴¹N.R.O., Quarter Sessions Minute Book C/S4/15.

⁴²9Geo. V c.50. The only other roads not classified were spurs; to Yaxham from the Swaffham Road, towards Holt and Erpingham from the Cromer Road.