

NOTES ON THE CHEPSTOW AND DISTRICT TURNPIKE TRUST

The Trust was set up in 1758 and lasted until 1871. It was given birth by an Act of 1758 "for the repair of certain roads in Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire" for 21 years from 1st May, 1758. The roads covered a large area of Monmouthshire, extending from Chepstow Bridge to St. Arvans and via Devandon and through Raglan, Abergavenny and Brecon. Another provided a link between Crick and New Passage. In Gloucestershire the road comprised a route more or less following the existing road from Chepstow Bridge to Hawkins Pill just north of Newnham (evidently the turnpike road from Hawkins Pill to Gloucester was set up under an Act of 1726), and the road from Tutshill Crossroads down to the Old Passage ferry at Beachley.

The Act divided this area into seven divisions, of which the first division (Chepstow Division) included the Gloucestershire section and also that part of the Monmouthshire section from Chepstow Bridge to Magor. A vast number of trustees were appointed by the Act, including many local notables and also the Clerk of the Peace of Monmouthshire, the Mayor and Corporation of Gloucester City and the Mayors, Recorders and Town Clerks of Monmouth and Newport. The Trustees or any 9 of them were to meet at the Town Hall, Usk on the 30th April, 1758 and might divide themselves into groups of not less than five, each group to deal with a respective division. The trustees were authorised to set up gates, turnpikes and toll houses and to charge tolls.

No tolls were to be collected within eight miles of a previous collection on the same day and on the same road and no toll was to be

collected on the return journey on the same day at the same point. The cost of obtaining and passing the Act was to be equally shared amongst the seven divisions and thereafter each division was to be financially independent. Penalties were provided for by-passing the gates by cutting across fields, or for passing tickets to other people, or for removing a horse from a carriage and putting it on again on the other side of the gate!

Trustees were to appoint Clerks, Treasurers, Receivers, Collectors and Surveyors and these officers were to be "allowed salaries". Any Receiver, Collector or Surveyor who failed to render proper accounts was to be committed to jail, there to remain without bail until he had rendered proper accounts and made the necessary payment. Surveyors were authorised to dig gravel, sand, stones etc. without payment but must "level the holes". They could dig in private land provided it was not and had not ever been cultivated, and was not park or paddock. But compensation had to be paid in the case of private land. Trustees were authorised to acquire land, and where owners failed to treat within 20 days of notice, the Justices had power to fix compensation and accommodation works. Trustees were authorised to sell the old road when a diversion had been constructed.

The first meeting of the Chepstow Trustees took place on 2nd May, 1758 and at a subsequent meeting they appointed a Clerk at £10 p.a., a Treasurer or Receiver and three Surveyors in Monmouthshire and one in Gloucestershire. Labourers were to be paid, in Monmouthshire 10d. per day and in Gloucestershire 1/- per day. Surveyors

should not exceed 9/- per week and the trustees agreed to borrow £2,000. It was initially resolved that one-third of the money received by the Treasurer should be paid to Robert Boyes (Gent.) for the reparation of the road in Gloucestershire: one-third to Valentine Morris Esq., and one-third to John Williams (Gent.) for the Monmouthshire roads. (These were later appointed Surveyors "without salary".)

Various turnpike gates were to be erected including one at Crossway Green (north west of Chepstow), one at Tutshill and one at the top of Beachley Green "in the road leading from Chepstow Bridge to Beachley". Turnpike houses were to be "10' in the clear in breadth, 16' in length and 7' in height" and the cost was limited to £20 each.

The accounts and minutes reveal the following entries:-

For mending 136 yds. of road by agreement	£9. 7s. 0d.
For raising 434 cart loads of stone on Gallows Hill @ 3d. per load	£5. 0s. 6d.
Labour on 83½ perches of finished road @ 3/6	£14. 12s. 3d.
For making 281 perches of road in Parish of Tyddenham	£85. 7s. 8d.
To Mr. Morris for 3 wheelbarrows	18s. 0d.
Building the house at Crossway Green as per bill of William Morgan	£26. 17s. 0d.

1759

The allowable cost of each turnpike house was now increased to £30 and toll gatherers were appointed for the various gates at 5/- per week. The loan of a further £7,000 was authorised. The trustees resolved to remove the old cross "without the gate in Chepstow" (being an obstruction to carriages), the stone to be used for mile stones. It was further resolved to obtain 40,000 toll tickets, 10,000 for each section.

The trustees compounded with one William John, a lime burner, "for all carriages and horses going to and coming from his lime kiln" for £8 p.a. "But if he charge more than 5/- per dozen for his lime this shall be void".

Two months later the trustees ordered that "whereas a composition was agreed with certain persons on 12th April, 1759, which hath since been found prejudicial to the interest of the turnpikes, it is now resolved to cease and determine them".

A gate or chain was to be erected between Lydney and Newnham and 60 lbs. of candles were to be equally distributed between the several toll gatherers within the district. Prosecution was to be commenced on David Jones the younger of Tyddenham "for not doing his duty on the high road within the said parish".

Amongst the 1759 accounts were the following items:-

Paid Francis Pritchard, meeting in the road, for 2 skins of parchment for leases	14s. Od.
Paid William John for 22 barrels of lime towards altering the Turnpike House	9s. 2d.

1761

Information received that several persons had placed gates near the several turnpike gates in order to evade the same. They were ordered to appear at the next meeting to compound their tolls.

The Treasurer's salary was fixed at £15 p.a. "for his trouble of receiving the money and keeping his accounts".

1762

Lamps to be set up at the turnpike houses. The Clerk was to publish a notice that all farmers would be obliged to do their duty

(upon pain of being fined) "that is to say furnish one team and two able-bodied men for every £50 p.a. for rent".

1764

The Clerk authorised to advertise officially for letting of the several turnpike gates

1770 Act

Additional roads in Wales and Herefordshire thus extending as far west as Aberystwyth. Period of validity extended by 21 years beyond the end of the first 21 years (i.e. to 1800).

Area now divided into 9 divisions, the first division comprising the Chepstow area again. This virtually became a separate trust for the 24 miles (approximately) each side of Chepstow Bridge.

The Royal Family exempt from tolls, also local people going to Church, Chapel or funerals.

Surveyors to publish lists of persons "liable to do statute work" and any found to be idle or negligent shall be "turned off" by the Surveyor and shall be liable for further duty "as if they had not come at all".

1776

Double tolls to be charged for all wains, waggons, carts etc. with wheels less than 6" wide, as permitted by the Turnpike Act.

1778

A turnpike gate or chain or bar to be set up between Lydney and Newnham at Ruddle.

1800 Act

Tolls now stated as follows:-

Horse	1d.
Horse and cart carrying lime	2d.
Horse and cart or carriage	3d.
Horse and timber waggon between 1st November and 1st March	double toll
Horse laden or going to be laden with charcoal	½d.
Oxen	½d.
Calves, sheep etc.	½d.

These rates applied in 7 of the 9 divisions and in the Chepstow and New Passage divisions the tolls were 50% higher. Double tolls were to be charged on Sundays and as in earlier Acts, tolls might be levied by distress e.g. a horse could be sold and the "over plus" returned to the owner "on demand".

Trustees authorised to erect fences and ditches on common land to prevent avoidance of tolls, and penalties were provided for persons passing over ground adjoining gates and for owners permitting them to do so.

Again the Royal Family was exempt from tolls, also carts carrying stones for the road, or hay or straw "to be laid up in the houses, outhouses, barns, or used in the parish served by the road". Free passage for persons attending Church or Chapel or funerals or for the mails and soldiers.

Chaining of wheels prohibited on hills where the fall is less than 3" in a yard, or through Chepstow. Fine 6/- to 10/-. Notices forbidding this practice were to be placed at the top of each hill. Every waggon to trail a roller behind one wheel on "ascending any

hill". Fine for default 5/- to 10/-.

Lamps to be erected at gates. Fines for damaging 20/- to 40/-.

Field gates to open inwards.

Owners of adjoining land were to be given six days notice to remove soil etc. already scraped off the road, the trustees or the surveyor providing workmen to fill the carts. Land owners exempt from this duty during harvest.

The trustees could decide what proportion of the statute work was to be done on the turnpike roads with a maximum of four days p.a. and may compound with parishes for statute labour.

1820

Tenders received for lowering the road at Newnham Hill by 'taking off part of the top and raising the bottom". Tender of James Westcot accepted for £441 18s. 9d. in September. Contractor instructed to complete the work in November! He was paid an extra £21 for building the wall at Newnham Church and subsequently an extra £50 for his losses incurred on the work. William Howard of Woodchester was appointed surveyor to superintend this work and was paid £1 11s. 6d. per day for journeys and expenses, each journey not to exceed two days.

1821

Weighing engine to be erected at Tutshill Gate and extra tolls charged.

1822

First reference to a Chairman in the Minutes who thereafter signed the Minutes. Previously all trustees attending the meeting

had evidently signed the Minutes at the time. Tolls increased to 2d. for a horse laden or unladen and 6d. for every horse drawing a coach etc., but if carrying timber between 1st November and 1st March - 1/--. The trustees considered whether to appoint a general surveyor for the whole district but decided that "funds were not equal to it".

1823

The wall to protect the Churchyard bank at Newnham had fallen into the road and another contractor was later paid £45 for rebuilding it.

1824

Valentine Parsons appointed general surveyor at £150 p.a. He was later paid £200 for repairs to Blakeney Hill. In this year a theodolite was obtained for the surveyor.

1830

Scheme approved for new line of Blakeney Hill.

1835

Surveyor to prepare scheme for Sandford Hill with gradient of $2\frac{1}{2}$ " to the yard. Tenders received amounted to £830, £1,050, £1,340, £2,700, £2,750. The last two being submitted by Richard Davies Junior and Richard Davies Senior of Abergavenny. It was later decided to accept a different tender at £900. A scheme had been prepared previously by William Metcalfe, a consulting engineer of Monmouth, for a new road to by-pass the old alignment at Sandford. Mr. Metcalfe stated that the filling would be 30' deep "which will enable horses to trot up without stopping a coach and to come down the hill without tying a wheel". His estimate being £1,164 and this would have produced an

alignment and gradient approximate to that which was built in 1965 at a cost of about £80,000.

1837

Scheme for Nibley Hill prepared by William Metcalfe. William Metcalfe produced a scheme for regading the road at Viney Hill and he was obviously concerned about the crossroads here and suggested pulling up the turnpike road so as to make a bridge over the wide roads, which he said would have a headroom of 16', and proposed that slip roads could be built connecting the side road with the turnpike road. Agreed at £750 - maximum gradient of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to the yard.

1838

General dissatisfaction with the surveyor, Richard Allum of Shipton-on-Stour, appointed at £140 p.a.

Gas lamps erected at two of the gates.

1839

Surveyor had employed his own son as a "Superintendent Surveyor". Trustees resolved that he should be paid only as a labourer.

1840

The tenant of three of the gates in the Chepstow area (Green Dragon, Beachley and Chepstow Bridge) asked to be relieved owing to his losses as a result of the "decrease in travelling". The trustees decided that they were unable to do this.

Appointment of surveyor again advertised. Twenty-nine applications and Thomas Holland of Gloucester appointed at £120 p.a.

1841

Surveyors soon opened a quarry near Chepstow and advertised stone for sale.

1845

Trustees decided to erect finger posts.

1846

Appeal to Thomas Fulljames the County Surveyor of Gloucestershire regarding the dangerous turn at the Gloucestershire end of Chepstow Bridge. There had been several accidents and one man had been killed there.

1848

Trustees resolved that men need not work on Good Friday or Christmas Day but were to be paid as if they had.

1850

County Surveyor called in to survey and report on the bridge being built by the Railway Company to carry the Beachley/Tutshill road, since the trustees considered that this was going to be too narrow.

Mr. Fulljames reported "I found the bridge nearly completed on the day of my survey 6th November, 1850, and the centering struck". He commented that the parapet would not be to a height of 4' as was required by Section 50 of 8 Victoria Cap. 20 and that the minimum width between parapets would be only 19' 10" i.e. 2" less than the Act required, and that this would be reduced still further when the coping stones were laid. But since Chepstow Bridge had only a width of 14' between kerb stones he recommended no action by the trustees against the Railway Company.

Collection of Tolls

In the early years of the turnpike trust tolls were collected by appointed toll gatherers, paid from 3/- to 5/- per week. but after 1765 the gates were let by auction and the rentals shown on the schedule below were noted.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Turnpike Gates</u>			
	<u>Tutshill Crossroads</u> (at Chepstow Bridge from 1837-1848)	<u>Beachley</u> £	<u>Lydney</u> £	<u>Newnham</u> £
1765	50	35	-	-
1801	117	*	122	105
1803	181	51	110	90
1806	181	51	142	102
1809	207	63	130	106
1812	-	-	154	130
1816	184	86	152	140
1819	220	86	134	120
1821	230	72	176	120
1824	302	75	-	170
1827	300	156	190	172
1829	300	102	192	174
1832	310	110	254	218
1835	405	170	245	205
1837	Chepstow Bridge - 416	124	262	180
1840	382	142	258	214
1843	320	130	235	170
1846	300	75	220	150
1850	Tutshill - 442	106	280	227

* toll keeper appointed to collect.

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Sources

Glos. R.O., D428 Minutes, accounts, plans and other records of Chepstow Turnpike Trust, 1758 - 1871