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Transportation and Communication

Roads in Sussex had a particularly bad name. Right up until the 17th century when Turnpike roads were instituted and generally developed, highways were largely cart tracks, rutted in summer and muddy up to the axles in winter. A traveller in Sussex in 1752 maintained that "a Sussex road is an insuperable evil".

Communication between Warnham and Horsham must have been on foot or horseback only until well into the seventeenth century.

Such roads as there were were primarily concerned with the movement of iron and coal and it was only as the need of trade outside local areas developed that highways as such were established. For the rest, communication was by track and footpath through the forests and across the Common. These tortuous and multifarious ways were of particular advantage to smugglers and felons.

Up to the 17th century legislation was not concerned with the upkeep or condition of highways, but with security, viz. 1825 law that all trees etc., either side of highways between market towns must be cut back 200-ft each side.

Earlier, an Act of Parliament in 1534 for the "Amending of highways in Sussex" which "shall and may for henceforth extend, take effect and be put in execution in every place in Sussex where the ways and streets are noyous to the King's said subjects in the said County of Sussex" – did little to improve their state or improve communications between places.

The first general Act for repair of highways passed 1555. ("Travel at this period was indeed a great adventure and only to be undertaken with a stout heart, for trading purposes, or under a strong personal obligation. (Reference 2)

An Act of 1584 and 1597 had to do solely with ironworks. Under the 1584 Act, it required owners of ironworks to provide "one hundredweight of Sinder, Gravel, Stone, Sande or Chalk for repairing roads for every 6 loads of coal or ore and every ton of iron carried on roads between 12th October and 1st May."

Up to 1663 roads were entirely the responsibility of parishes through which they passed and land holders, and not of those who used them. The Turnpike Acts relieved them of these parts of the roads only. There were many complaints at Assizes and Quarter Sessions about the state of the roads. In 1662, at East Grinstead Assizes, it was represented that "the highway from Warnham Bridge to a house called Sheremark is in great decay and is to be amended by the parish of Warnham."

"Item, we further present that the greater part of this Wyld of Sussex is by carriage to and from the ironworks in the wintertime contrary to the said statute utterly spoilt by the carriage of iron and cole to and from the ironworks in the sayd Wyld of Sussex."

In 1628 a jury returned a true bill against the parishes of Horsham and Warnham "for the state of the highway called Broadbridge and of the bridge called

Farthyng Bridge".

About 1637, the Water Bailiff to the Earl of Arundel, (Reference 1) who describes all waterways in this area, mentions what he calls "the Wapple Way leading from Surrey gate, between Denland and Rudgebrooke to the highway that goeth to Horsham, leading straight South by the East and South side of the said Denlands to Earthenbridge between certain lands called Hoppes and Knells, part of Den aforesaid. Thence by the lands called Mayes, and so Southward by the Mansion House of Mr Richard Yeates, late William Young's and before John Eydies, called Eads, alias Edes, and so into the Kings Highway that part of the said Mr Yeates his lands called Endes and Stroodlands in Slinfold Parish."

This Wapple Way is a bridle path or pack road and is a continuation of the so-called Smugglers Lane on the Surrey side. The path through Denne Wood is obscure and passes west of Ridgebrook Cottage. It issues again as a well-defined grass-grown bridle path debouching on to Marches Road immediately opposite Mayes Lane (the Water Balliff's "Highway which goes to Horsham"). Here evidently the old track turned west along the south side of Denlands for a short distance past Stone Farm where it swung south again between Hoopers Barn to the track where the Council cottages now are. Earthenbridge, apparently a lost name, was probably a narrow embankment with a wooden bridge carrying the path southwards over Sladebottom Gill and so past Maltmayes and Benland Cottages and, where the road now turns eastwards sharply, the old Wapple Way went through Benland Wood by the present bridle path and so direct to Ends Place.

The 1st Turnpike Act for Sussex was in 1696 and referred to highways between Reigate and Crawley, being the road from Steyning and Horsham to London "in a ruinous and almost impassable condition".

Carriages, apart from crude agricultural carts, were introduced about 1564. Long waggons or wains were used for the carriage of merchandise between London and the principal towns.

In mid-17th century these were supplemented by a few stage coaches on the principal highways and by privately owned coaches.

In 1693 there was an established wagon and pack horse system between Horsham and London.

Towards the end of the 17th century fresh Acts of Parliament were frequently passed regulating traffic and the number of horses and widths of wheels used. Roads were still atrocious - "in some parts of Sussex none but the strongest horses in winter could get through the bog in which at every step they sank deep" (Macaulay).

In 1751 Dr John Buxton describes a journey from Leith Hill to Shermanbury and refers to the roads as "abominable, Sussexian". He asks why it is that oxen, the swine and the women and all other animals in Sussex are long legged? He suggests it is because of the exercise required to pull the feet out of so much mud by the strength of their ankles that the muscles get stretched and the bones lengthened.

By mid-18th century travel was increasing and there was a plethora of bills for new and improved roads and the introduction of new turnpiked sections (not without much local objections).

On 11th January 1755 a Petition of J.Ps., Clergy, Gentlemen, freeholders and other inhabitants of the Borough of Horsham was presented to Parliament, stating that "the main roads from the market place at Horsham through Warnham, Capel, Dorking and Leatherhead (to Epsom) by reason of the soil thereof, and of the many heavy carriages frequently passing the same, some parts thereof are become so ruinous and bad that in the winter season are almost impassable for any manner of carriages and very dangerous for loaded horses and travellers and, in many parts, so narrow as to render them dangerous to passengers" and praying

leave to bring in a Bill to amend the same. This was approved and the Bill enacted by March that year. Trustees were appointed and erection of toll gates and levying of tolls were authorised.

Tolls from Horsham to Dorking were :-

For every coach, chariot, landau, berlin, herse, chaise or calash drawn by six or more horses, mares, geldings or mules	1/6d
If drawn by 4 horses etc	1/-
If drawn by 2 horses etc	0/6d

For every wagon, wain, cart or other carriage	1/-
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For every horse, mare, gelding, mule or ass, laden or unladen and not drawing	2d
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For every drove of oxen or other neat cattle the
sum of 10d per score and in proportion.

For every drove of calves, sheep, lambs or swine,
the sum of 5d per score and in proportion.

Other Turnpikes were established :-

1764 Horsham to Shipley, West Grinstead, Ashurst, Steyning, Bramber and Beeding.
(In 1804 said to be best road in Britain).

1792 Crabtree to Horsham connecting Brighton Rd. and Henfield.

1802 Worthing to West Grinstead connecting Horsham, Steyning.

1809 Horsham to Guildford.

1811 Five Oaks to Broadbridge Heath connecting Guildford Road.

1823 Horsham to Crawley - London - Brighton Road.

1835 Highway Act setting up a Highway Board responsible for local roads and pavements.

Up to 1840 all roads except Turnpikes were still rutted and muddy, even up to 1850s on local roads walkers would sink in mud up to their calves.

In early Acts restrictions were put on width of wheels and the number of horses permitted so as to prevent excessive loads, and extra tolls applied to those not conforming.

The road to Horsham

As late as 1724, according to Richard Budgen's map, the highway through Warnham ran from the Surrey border to Billingshurst and to join Stane Street rather than through Horsham, petering out only as a track across Broadbridge Heath. The highway from Dorking to Horsham was incomplete between Lower Chickens and Westons, and it was necessary to go round by a track roughly on the line of Bell Road via Daux to get to Horsham. That link in the road was not completed until 1755 when the Horsham - Dorking - Leatherhead - Epsom Turnpike was completed.

The communication between Warnham and Horsham appears to have been of a secondary order and, until quite a late date, it was limited to foot and horse traffic across the Common. Even in 1901, when there was a fire at Warnham Court, Mr Morrison, the coachman, rode to Horsham to summon the Fire Brigade.

References

(1) The High Stream in Arundel Rape – written by or for The Water Bailiff of Thomas Howard, 24th Earl of Arundel circa 1637. Edited by J.Fowler

(2) A Millenium of Facts in the History of Horsham and Sussex by W.Alberry, from which much of the detail in this article has been taken.