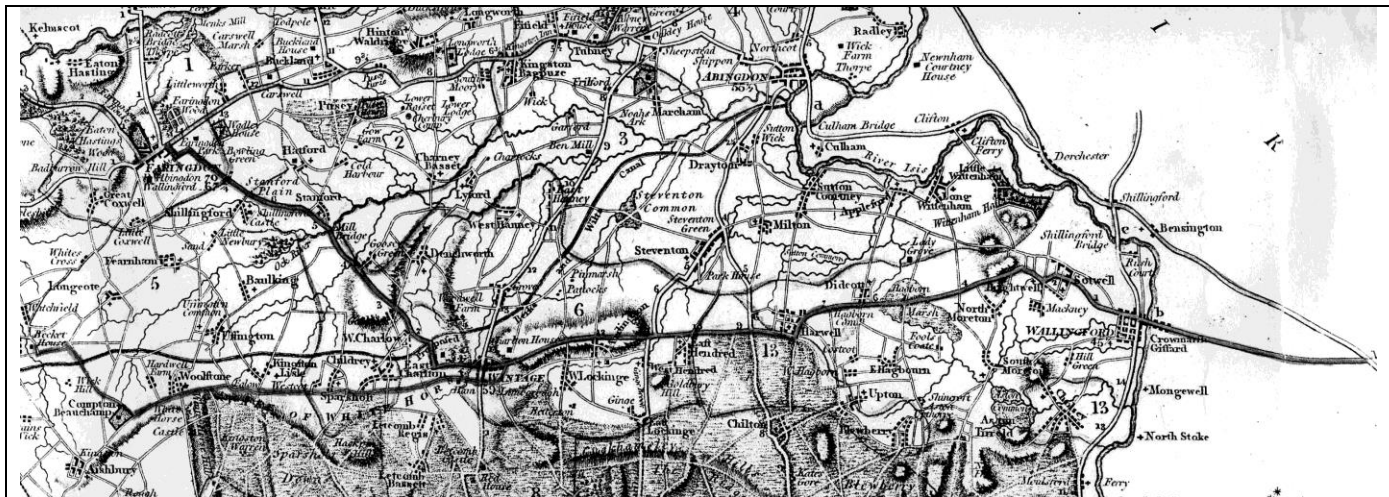


CONTENTS

5.1 Introduction.....	2
5.2 History of the Route.....	2
5.2.1 Stanford Road	2
5.2.2 Icknield Way/Portway.....	3
5.2.3 Wallingford Road.....	4
5.2.4 Early use of the Road	5
5.3 The First Act	6
5.4 Implementing the Act	7
5.5 Later Acts.....	7
5.6 Wallingford Toll-Bridge	9
5.7 The Trustees.....	10
5.8 Trust Officers and Finance.....	11
5.9 Toll Collection	12
5.10 Toll-Gates	14
5.10.1 East of Wantage	14
5.10.2 Gates in Wantage	14
5.10.3 West of Wantage	15
5.11 Traffic on the Turnpike.....	16
5.12 Closure and Surviving Evidence of the Turnpike.....	17
Sources	18
Appendix 1: Wallingford, Wantage & Faringdon Turnpike Trust - Officers.....	21

RUTV 5 is booklet number 5 in a series on the turnpike roads of Oxfordshire and adjoining areas.



Smith’s map of 1808 showing the main turnpike road from Faringdon, through Wantage to Wallingford and the abandoned branch from Wantage to Shrivenham

The Wallingford, Wantage and Faringdon Turnpike

5.1 Introduction

The road system in England had deteriorated badly in the 17th century. Bridges and causeways were left neglected as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries that had previously administered and maintained these structures. At the same time, a steady increase in wheeled traffic threatened to destroy the poorly constructed main roads and stifle economic growth. Turnpike trusts were a legal device to recover the costs of maintaining the principal roads by levying tolls on those travellers and traders who most benefited from their use. Individual Acts of Parliament dealt with particular section of highway and the trustees appointed under each Act raised loans to finance the improvements. Income from the tolls was used to repair the road and repay of the loans. In the Thames valley region, the main roads (now the A4 and A40) were turnpiked around 1720. After 1750 there was a surge in turnpiking of the important cross-routes and the main east/west road through the Vale of White Horse was improved during this period. This road linked the market towns of Faringdon and Wantage on the western and southern edge of the Vale with the river quay and bridge over the Thames at Wallingford. The Wallingford, Wantage & Faringdon Turnpike Trust was initially responsible for 32 miles of road, a little over the average of 28 miles for trusts set up in England during this period (Pawson 1977).

5.2 History of the Route

The turnpike from Wallingford ran westwards, into the Vale of White Horse (Figure 5.1) but branched north-westwards at Wantage to reach Faringdon. The road west of Wantage was turnpiked for only a short period. The main section of turnpike was a secondary component in the network of radial roads westwards from London. This pattern, dominated by London as the hub for trade, emerged in Tudor times. However, the route incorporated sections of older roads, which had served different functions. The stretches of road that ran west to east were part of ancient tracks following the ridges bordering the Thames valley. The section from Wantage to Faringdon was part of a network of medieval trade routes that ran across the Ock valley (Figure 5.2). These tracks ran south from fords and bridges over the Thames between Oxford and Lechlade. Travellers heading south from the Cotswolds and Midlands were obliged to cross the series of high ridges and wet clay vales that run on a northeast/southwest axis across the region. Travel along roads in the Ock valley would have been difficult, particularly during the winter when "founderous mud" could be so deep it might engulf a waggon or rider. The smaller ridges between the streams could be used to avoid the worst of the boggy ground and it was the best of these north/south tracks through the Vale that formed the north-westerly section of the turnpike.

5.2.1 Stanford Road

The slight ridge between Faringdon and the river crossing at Stanford affords a relatively dry route for travellers who had crossed the Thames at Lechlade or Radcot. It has probably been a trackway since prehistoric times: the Saxon charter boundary of Shellingford refers to the road as *hrycg weg* (a ridgeway; Gelling 1974). This road clearly developed into a medieval trade route used by packhorse trains carrying wool from the area around Burford to the Channel ports for export to the Continent (Bonney 1992). King John and Henry III used this road on several occasions in travelling from Faringdon to Wallingford during the early 13th century (RUTV9). Other evidence of its importance as a highway comes from the travel records of the Bishop of Hereford who, with his entourage, passed this way on several occasions in the 13th century (Howse 1962). On one notable occasion, just after Christmas 1289, his procession set forth from their overnight stop at Fairford Manor House, crossed by

the Lechlade ferry and rested at Faringdon. On December 30th, the cavalcade tried to cross the Ock at the "stony ford" but the river was so swollen by incessant rains that many of the carts became stuck. They were only freed with the help of servants sent by John of Wantage (John may have been living close to his home town of Wantage, though in 1300 he was Warden of Merton College, Oxford). On the journey back from London on January 24th, the carts were upset in the mud over Stanford Plain, causing destruction or damage to a greater part of their loads. Even this relatively dry route was not without its perils.

Until the 19th century this route was a drove road, forming an extension of the Welsh Way along which cattlemen driving their beasts from the Welsh Marches to markets near London. This droveway actually by-passes Wantage: it branches off the present road between West and East Challow, goes over Windmill Hill to cross the stream at Letcombe, before climbing diagonally up Court Hill to meet the Ridgeway near Red House. Unlike the drovers, the medieval packhorse trains carrying wool between the Cotswolds and Southampton probably came through the town of Wantage. They may have turned east along the causeway from Childrey to East Challow and so joined the Ickniel Way or used an ancient branch of this road though the Roman site at Belmont and across the Letcombe Brook to enter Wantage up Mill Street. From here, refreshed in the town, the merchants would travel south-east, going diagonally up the face of the Downs, over the wide shelf of middle chalk above Chain Hill to reach the Ridgeway near to the tumulus on which the monument to Lord Wantage now stands.

There is evidence of an alternative packhorse route from Lechlade to Challow. A raised pathway called Pack Horse Lane still crosses the modern road north of Childrey near to the canal. This greenway is used by the local hunt (Howse, personal comm.) and can be traced from Lechlade, south of Faringdon, through Ringdale, Fernham, Long Lane, Uffington, Baulking, Piccadilly Cottages, Featherbed Lane, Westcot and Sparsholt. Nevertheless, the current Faringdon to Wantage road was probably a better route since it follows higher ground and so is drier.

Morden's Berkshire map of 1695 does not show a direct road from Wantage to Faringdon (Figure 5.2). The old road from Faringdon, through Stanford, is clearly indicated but from Stanford the road runs close to Childrey. The lane from West Challow to Childrey and the Childrey/Wantage packhorse road (now the footpath) appear to be favoured over the road that now runs from Challow Station to Childrey and the present A417 road through East Challow. This higher road is still discernible on the Rocque map of 1761 when all the stream crossings still existed. It is surprising that the turnpike trustees chose to improve the road to East Challow that passes over low lying ground rather than use the packhorse road from West Challow.

5.2.2 Ickniel Way/Portway

The mid-section of the turnpike built on one of the ancient trackways that run east/west along the southern edge of the Vale of White Horse. The Great Ridgeway follows the crest of the Downs and the Ickniel Way runs parallel to it, along the spring-line below. These routes have been in use as long distance highways since prehistoric times. The Ridgeway across this section of Berkshire provides a relatively dry, through-route between Wiltshire, the Thames valley and Reading. This natural track provided an all-weather route before the Romans arrived and it continued to be of some importance into the medieval period. Even in 1802 the East Hendred Enclosure map names the Ridgeway as the public road from Swindon to Reading and it may be assumed that a proportion of the Wantage traffic would have used this highway in preference to the lower road that passed over wetter ground. However, it does not pass through any habitable areas and travellers are committed to a

rather exposed and water-less journey. By the late 17th century the Ridgeway does not appear to have been a major highway, certainly for vehicular traffic, since on Morden's map it is only shown as a discontinuous track where it fits in with other routes.

The Icknield Way hugs the springline, keeping out of the dense woodlands and marshes of the Vale but giving pack-animals and travellers access to fresh, reliable supplies of water. This old route is said to have been adopted by the Romans (Crampton 1965) but it may not have had the fully metalled surface associated with military roads. Although the Icknield Way was (and to the west still is) a tortuous road it assured the traveller of safe transit between a string of prosperous communities on the productive, easily worked soils at the junction of chalk, Greenland and clay soils. For traders the Icknield Way was a useful through-route whereas for locals it provided an easy path to their neighbours. The route divides into two branches to the east of Wantage and does not merge again until Upton. The lower track is called the Portway, a medieval name applied to other pathways in the South Midlands (e.g. the Oxford to Faringdon road), generally where tracks lead towards market towns. The more direct track on the higher ground continued to be called the Icknield Way.

During Saxon times, as lowland settlements grew, the Icknield Way probably increased in importance and Saxon charters refer to it as a "strait" implying that it had been Romanized (Gelling 1974). Although relatively less important for trade, the Ridgeway remained the preferred path for the military; the Danes in particular used it to reach Wessex from Reading. In Medieval times the Icknield Way was considered to be one of the main highways of England, judging by the fact that the King's Peace extended to it, so that crimes such as robbery on this road were punished severely (Crampton 1965). By the 18th century the Icknield Way had declined to such a state that the antiquarians Stickle and Wise argued over its true line (Thomas 1913). In 1740 the loss of the ancient road through Lockinge Park may have been the source of a dispute between Dr Niblett, Rector of Lockinge, and Matthew Wymondsold, the Lord of the Manor. The Park had been extended about 1730 and Dr Niblett's notes refer to the lost road as "the ancient pack and prime way" (Havinden 1966). At the start of the 19th century Mr Church, a Wantage surveyor who prepared maps for the Enclosure Commissioners, wrote, "The Ickleton Way has been ploughed up across Wantage East Field till it enters Charlton; it then passes through West Lockinge. It is lost across Mr Bastard's park in East Lockinge, but appears again from the park to Ginge brook, in Ardington Parish". He then described its line through Sparsholt Court Manor, across Newbury Way, though Harwell, West Hagbourne and Upton to Moulsoford. He noted that "from Upton to Streatley it forms part of the new turnpike road from Wantage to Reading" (Thomas 1913): this was the Harwell to Streatley Turnpike created in 1803. On maps of the 18th century the way east of Wantage is referred to as Lockinge Causeway, suggesting that it was on a noticeable bank. This section is on a hillside and so would not have been boggy, leading to the conclusion that Roman foundations or an agger might have survived. There is an earthwork of undefined origin where the road crosses the Charlton/Lockinge boundary.

The lower branch of the Icknield Way, known as Portway, was adapted for use as the turnpike between Wantage and Harwell. The less successful section of turnpike west from Wantage to Idstone utilised the old Icknield Way as far as Compton Beauchamp.

5.2.3 Wallingford Road

The third section of the turnpike deviates from the Icknield Way at Harwell to carry the traveller north of the ancient fords over the Thames at Moulsoford and Streatley, towards the medieval bridge at Wallingford. Between Harwell and Brightwell, the road had to cross moorland and marsh to reach the high ridge that links Wallingford to the Sinodun Hills. The final section east of Wallingford was probably a relatively good road and was used by

Leland during the 1540s to travel from Wallingford past the Sinodun Hills to approach Abingdon from the south (Toulmin Smith 1964).

By medieval times, changes in the main crossing point on the upper Thames had reduced the status of the Icknield Way/Portway. Hedges (1881) claims that a wooden bridge spanned the Thames at Wallingford from Saxon times (ca. 600AD). William the Conqueror crossed the Thames here in 1066 and later built one of his first castles to control this strategic position. Wallingford became an important overnight resting place for the early kings of England on their journeys between London or Windsor and the royal hunting lodge at Woodstock. During the 12th and 14th centuries the road from Reading along the south bank of the Thames to Wallingford and then over to the Oxfordshire bank was used more frequently by the royal entourage than any other road in the kingdom (RUTV 9). The earliest documentary evidence for a bridge is in 1250 when the first stone bridge was constructed across the river at this point. The king's castle commanded this, the lowest, all-season crossing point of the Thames. The bridge was important both for travel between the north to the south bank of the Thames, and hence west to Oxford, as well as a crossing for those travelling westwards from London, along the Henley road. Trade brought by these travellers was a major factor in the prosperity of Wallingford (Dewey 1977). As England developed into a single Kingdom, the old north/south trade routes between Mercia and Wessex gave way to trade towards London and so Wallingford's position on the east/west route grew in importance. However, by the medieval period, new crossings of the Thames had been created giving better access to the north bank. Royal patronage of the old castle declined and Wallingford Bridge became a secondary route over which trade goods, including wool, were carried from Gloucester, through Henley to London.

5.2.4 Early use of the Road

Travellers to the west sought the best crossing to shorten the long journey along the meanderings of the Thames. In 1416 the river crossing at Abingdon was improved by the building of the Culham and Burford Bridges. As a result, traffic over the older bridge at Wallingford declined. Other bridges at Henley and Oxford provided alternative routes along the northern bank of the Thames valley, further eroding the importance of Wallingford. Eventually roads across the Thames bridges at Abingdon and Oxford became the principal routes to Gloucester and Worcester. Serious damage to Wallingford Bridge during the Civil War may have accelerated the relative decline of this crossing point so that by the end of the seventeenth century the road west of Wallingford was no longer a main highway. Nevertheless, some east/west trade between the Cotswolds and London must still have travelled through the Vale, between the Thames crossings at Lechlade and Wallingford.

The West Country clothmakers were "gentleman clothiers, not peddlers, and carried their goods by land, carrying not by horsepack as in the north" (Defoe 1724). In the 16th century Thomas Deloney (Burke 1942) described large convoys of clothiers' wains from Gloucester and Worcester blocking the highway as they carried cloth to the capital via Reading and Colnbrook. It is not clear which of the three routes this refers to; the Bath Road, the Cotswold route through Northleach, Oxford and Wallingford or the Lechlade, Wantage, Wallingford road. No doubt all routes prospered to a degree. As the century progressed the vehicles grew larger and the trade they carried brought wealth and the resources to further improve the bridges and inns along the road.

The itinerary of the Bishop of Hereford suggests that this route through the Vale to the Thames at Wallingford was a main highway in the early medieval period. Nevertheless, the earliest accurate road map, by Robert Morden in 1695, shows no road between Wantage and Wallingford (Figure 5.2). Nevertheless, a road did exist as an estate map for West Hendred

dating from 1606 shows the Greenway from the village leading to "The Pathway to Wallinfyrde" (Philip 1975). Hence, the trustees of the new turnpike probably took responsibility for an old highway that lay along sections of parish road between Wantage and Wallingford. As will be seen later, the trustees had to borrow much more money to improve this eastern section than was required for the Faringdon to Wantage stretch. Although heavier use of the road close to Wallingford may account for some of this greater expense, the difficulty of maintaining a good road across the muddy ground east of Harwell would have been a major cost. As late as the 1830's when the Ordnance Survey map was produced, the road from Ardington through to Brightwell was unfenced, through open ground (Figure 5.3).

The pressure for improvement came from users of the road from Wantage to Wallingford. In March 1749 an advertisement in the Reading Mercury proclaimed that this "High Road" had "through want of proper repairs become ruinous and unsafe" and "some public spirited people intend to remedy the above mentioned grievance by Prosecution in the Kings Bench". In other words the parishes were threatened with indictment and fine by the Justices unless they used "the approaching Summer Season for making such repairs". This complaint and imminent prosecution may have prompted the prominent individuals in the affected parishes to seek a turnpike Act to help "amend" the road.

5.3 The First Act

The preamble to the 1751 Act (25 Geo II c21) summarises the problem that justified turnpiking.

"Whereas the high road leading from Wallingford in the County of Berks to Wantage, and from thence to Faringdon in the said County, and also the high road leading from Wantage to a place called Idson in the said County, are in divers places so bad and ruinous, especially in the winter season, that travellers can not pass without great danger, and the said roads can not by any ordinary course provided by Law for repairing of highways of this Kingdom be effectively amended and kept in good repair, unless some prohibition be made for raising money to be applied to that purpose."

The bulky agricultural goods from the Vale had to be transported at the lowest possible cost to the burgeoning markets of the lower Thames valley. The absence of a reliable route to the east handicapped businessmen and farmers in the region and evidence to the Commons Committee during the passage of the Bill (JHC 26, 316) highlighted these economic factors. The Wantage petitioners mentioned the difficulty of bringing wagons to their market to sell corn, butter and cheese. The Wallingford petitioners complained that "trade was almost at a stand due to the excessive badness of the roads into the town" and that "the disruption of trade in the winter impoverishes the farmers of the Vale, rendering them incapable of paying their rents. Opening a communication between the Vale and the River Thames would be an inconceivable advantage permitting supplies of malt, meal, cheese, butter and other provisions to be supplied to London and Westminster at cheaper rates". By playing on the advantages to the inhabitants of London and Westminster in their evidence, the proposers of the bill clearly recognised the value of self-interest. The observation that carriages could not pass each other reflects the status of the proposers; no doubt the carts and wagons of the lower classes were expected to take to the ditch. The petitioners alleged that easier communication would allow farmers to sell to merchants at the local markets, rather than transport the goods themselves down to the Thames wharves.

Evidence given by John Price of the Ham in Wantage and Thomas Bigg, presumably of Wallingford, regarding the decline in the local markets seems overstated. It was claimed that Wallingford market tolls fallen from £70 to £24 and in Wantage from £40 to 10/= per

annum! The Wantage Rack Rent Rolls (ORO) for 1757 show that ten shillings was the rent for the smallest stall. There were 19 stalls and 8 shops in the Market Place yielding a total rent of £46/18/=, an amount that remained almost constant into the 1760s. If the trade was bad, some rents may not have been collected but a 100-fold improvement after turnpiking does not seem credible. Nevertheless, the perception of local businessmen was that better communications were essential if they were to share in the growing prosperity of the nation.

5.4 Implementing the Act

The road was divided into three sections. The trustees were empowered to raise £1,000 to finance the Wallingford to Wantage section (14 miles), £500 for Wantage to Faringdon (8 miles) and £750 for Wantage to Idson (10 miles). The trust was given the power to build gates or erect turnpikes on or across the road and to build tollhouses and take tolls from travellers on the road. The charges were set in bands according to the size of vehicle or type of animal (Figure 5.4). Use of the Wantage to Faringdon section was charged at half the price of the other two sections. The Act restricted the powers of the trusts to work against the public interest. Only one payment was necessary for each day and exemptions included persons going to vote, going to church, moving produce around their property or taking dung or farm implements to the fields. The aim was to extract payment from those earning their living by transporting material over long distances rather than to take payments from local parishioner or the poor traveller on foot. The trustees had to erect milestones along the improved roads giving distances between places; anyone defacing these stones was subject to a £2 fine, a threat that may have helped preserve the many stones still found along the line of this road.

The Act specified that the initial meeting of the trustees should be at the Bear Inn, Wallingford, on Monday 27th April 1752, to elect a Clerk and other officers. The Reading Mercury reported that they met at 12 noon and an ordinary (dinner) was provided. Based on the evidence given to the Commons in 1767, the trustees worked quickly to erect gates and appoint officers within a few months of the Bill being passed. They also borrowed against toll receipts in order to “amend” and improve the neglected highway. The Priorshold map shows that the road east of Wantage was a turnpike by 1754 and there was a gate across the road at Charlton. Rocque's 1761 map shows only a turnpike gate at the East Challow boundary but marks milestones along the road east from Wantage. Judging from the milestones that survive on the short-lived section running due west from Wantage, the original route was modified so that the road left the Icknield Way at Compton Beauchamp and terminated at Shrivenham, close to the home of the Barringtons who were among the principal sponsors of the Bill.

5.5 Later Acts

The proposers hoped that the road improvements would be completed and paid for during the 21-year term of the Act. In practice most turnpike trusts sought continuation of their powers for over 100 years, through a series of new Acts that gave opportunities to alter the operation of the trust and to change the tolls. The first important changes to the Wallingford, Wantage & Faringdon Trust were incorporated in the Act of 1764. This extended their powers from the end of the existing turnpike at Wallingford as far as the Henley to Dorchester Turnpike on Nuffield Common. At the same time powers were extinguished on the Wantage to Idstone section and the three sections of the original Trust were consolidated into a single body.

Evidence given to the Commons Committee provides the background to these changes. The initial Act was concerned with bringing goods to the Thames side wharf at Wallingford but

the 1764 Act reflects the needs of a society more dependent on the turnpike road network. The extension to Nuffield Common created a good coach road to London. The trustees and their supporters were frustrated by the poor state of the road east from Wallingford and wished to provide travellers on the turnpike with a better link to the main Oxford to Henley road. The Act defined this section as being from "the ancient high road leading from the north east corner of Nuffield Common on the top of Gangsdown Hill in the Parish of Nuffield, otherwise Tuffield, to the commencement of the Wallingford to Wantage road". This junction was "at the north east corner of Kennicroft with the bridge of Wallingford". The bridge, however, remained under the control of an independent trust. The importance of this new section of road may be judged by the fact that the Trust would repair the three and a half miles of carriageway without demanding tolls. A private subscription was sought to pay for the work. This proposal was enacted and subsequently the Trust is referred to as the Nuffield Common, Wallingford, Wantage and Faringdon Turnpike. In documents this was often shortened to the Wallingford, Wantage and Faringdon Road or even the Wantage Road. The current road from Wallingford through Crowmarsh meets the Henley road at the bottom of Gangsdown Hill, near Ambrose Farm. This road replaced the route through Nuffield village when the Henley Turnpike was realigned in 1827/8 (see RUTV 7), though the older route is still marked by milestones on the OS map of 1830 (Figure 5.3).

The Wantage to Idstone road was a financial disaster. This road had been added to the original proposals as an amendment but was obviously ill conceived. In May 1752 the officers for this section were appointed by the trust and by October 1752 they had erected a tollhouse and gate at the Wantage end. Even with a rent of five shillings per week the gatekeeper made insufficient money and abandoned the job in June 1753. Even limiting toll collection to market days was uneconomic and this section of the road had effectively ceased to operate as a turnpike after November 1753. Mr Atkins of Kingston Lisle House had used his own money to improve the road near his property but was prepared to write off this expenditure. He had been the chief promoter of this road and had acted as surveyor as well as financier to this abortive attempt to revive this old track along the springline. Milestones still survive along this section of road, although the tollhouse had already disappeared by 1764.

The third outcome of the Act was to combine the three sections of the old trust under one body, so that funds could be applied across the whole of the road rather than just to the individual sections where the tolls had been paid. John Toovey, the treasurer from Wallingford, reported that the section between there and Wantage received £300 per year in tolls, while Alexander Boote of Wantage, clerk to the trust, said that the western section through Stanford only raised £40 per year. The loans to cover expenditure on repairs to each section reflected this difference, with all £1,000 allowance borrowed on the Wallingford section but only £150 on the Faringdon road. Unifying the trust allowed money to be spent as needed; eventually about £4,000 was borrowed for repairs. However, in line with the original split, the trust continued to have two clerks, one at Wallingford, the other at Wantage and committee meeting alternated between the two towns. The main meetings, to deal with letting the tolls, were held for many years at the Lamb in Wallingford. Presumably the Wantage meetings were held in one of the main inns, probably the Crown in which the Bishop family had an interest. By 1858, the trustees began to meet half way between the main towns at the White Hart, Harwell.

Further Acts in 1773, 1819 and 1841 (RUTV3) renewed the powers of the trust. The latter Act made provisions for the trustees to erect a new tollgate at Challow and to move two of the existing tollgates.

5.6 Wallingford Toll-Bridge

The extension to Nuffield made the turnpike dependent on the Wallingford Bridge. The poor state of the bridge had been a factor in the decline of the town in medieval times but tolls collected from traffic crossing the bridge and barges passing beneath were a steady source of income to the Corporation. An Act of Parliament (36 Ch II) allowed tolls of 4d for wagons carrying cheese, wool and household goods, 2d for wagons carrying corn, wood, rags, coal or stone and 1s-6d for a barge. Despite some repairs in 1530, the Civil War damage had not been rectified. In May 1751 the Corporation of Wallingford sought bids for "casting the four wooden arches of the Great Bridge with brick or stone" (RM). The work was undertaken by Joseph Absolon (Hedges 1881), and the Reading Mercury announced on Aug 21st that the bridge was opened "so that carriages may pass over". This had been an initiative of the Corporation of the Borough but since the Corporation were amongst the petitioners for the 1751 Turnpike Act, the two improvements were effectively linked.

The presence of the toll-bridge may have been a factor in the decision not to levy tolls on the new section of road from the Henley Turnpike. In 1770, soon after the extension of the road to Nuffield, Richard Toovey, mayor and turnpike trustee, William Toovey, also a trustee, and William Mayne, Bridgeman, arranged to widen the bridge further. The turnpike trust were obliged to allow £10 off the rent of Thomas Taylor, the toll-gatherer at Wallingford Gate, "in consequence of the injury he sustained by the falling of Wallingford Bridge" in March 1810. The Parliamentary Act to "Improve Wallingford Bridge" (49 Geo III; 1809) provides evidence that Taylor's claim was probably reasonable. The Act of 1809 allowed a loan to partly rebuild and widen the bridge that was "greatly damaged by violence of the floods, various parts of it having been broken down". While the main bridge was under repair, a temporary wooden bridge and tollgate were built by John Phillips (Phillips 1981) and the Act allowed for use of a ferry as well as the temporary bridge until construction was finished. The central arches of the old bridge were replaced by three new piles and the northern, upstream side was widened using the loan of £6,000 approved in the Act (Dewey 1977). The contrast between the old pointed Gothic arches and the round arch sections abutted to them can still be seen along the causeway on the eastern bank (Figure 5.5a). John Treacher, the contractor, demolished the old Chapel of St Mary Grace, which had housed the medieval priests who had once financed repairs to the bridge. The tollhouse was to be located here but the approach road was judged too narrow and a so new tollhouse was constructed at the highest point on the bridge. This impressive octagonal building (Figure 5.5b/c) constructed of stone, cost £199/4/6; twice as much as the tollhouses built by the turnpike trust. Treacher was also surveyor to the Thames Commissioners and so his concern to improve movement of barges along the river no doubt influenced his advice to the trustees that the five river arches should be replaced by three large spans (Phillips 1981).

The bridge tolls were let in a similar manner, but separate from, those of the turnpike. An advertisement in the Reading Mercury of July 1811 announced that the tolls were to be re-auctioned for a term of three years from 24th August, the previous rental being £549/a for "the tolls payable at Wallingford Bridge and the temporary bridge". This last statement suggests that improvement work was still in progress. John Hedges was to be clerk and treasurer to the Bridge Committee, posts he also held on the turnpike trust. The Act allowed for considerably heavier tolls to be levied on the new bridge, 8d for a four wheel coach and 2d for each horse. At the same time pontage on each barge passing under the bridge was one shilling. The income from bridge tolls rose from £200/a to £500/a following the improvements, although it is not clear how much this reflected a change in traffic usage. If it is assumed that the average toll on the new bridge was approximately one shilling and that pontage only contributed about £20/a, it appears that about 200 tickets were sold each week.

This number is slightly higher than the estimate of the number of vehicles using the whole turnpike suggesting, as one might expect, that Wallingford itself generated some traffic.

By 1843 income from the new tolls was sufficient to completely repay the loan capital. The trustees sought advice (BRO) on whether to discontinue the tolls and rely on income from their properties to cover the estimated £50/a for maintenance of the bridge. They decided instead to reduce the tolls to that charged under the old Act, prior to the reconstruction of 1809. They expected to raise £30-£40 from tolls on wagons and cattle and £20 in pontage from barges. A note in the margin of the documents, dated 1852, records that "Tolls not so much now because railroad takes traffic". In 1843 the tolls raised a bid of only £39/10/- and in 1852 income was only £30, although it rose to £50 by 1862. This was still less than the £117 income to the commissioners from rent on property. A photograph of 1870 shows a tollgate still in place and tolls continued to be levied until 1883. The Bridge Estates used the revenue from investments to finance further maintenance and it was not until 1934 that the counties took responsibility for the old bridge (Phillips 1981).

5.7 The Trustees

The original turnpike trustees included 14 Baronets, 4 Knights, 4 Doctors, 167 Esquires & Gentlemen and 28 clerks (clergy) together with the Mayor, Recorder and Aldermen of the Borough of Wallingford. Of the Esquires & Gentlemen, about a third were probably Wantage residents or landowners. A smaller number can be linked to Wallingford and other trustees represented the gentry and tradesmen of the communities along the route. This points to the enterprise being a Wantage based initiative, supported by a number of Wallingford businessmen. It was to encourage local farmers to bring produce into Wantage Market, where it could be sold to merchants who would use the new road to supply markets down the Thames valley.

The list of trustees was headed by Lord Viscount Fane, a County MP, Lord Viscount Barrington and several members of his family from Shrivvenham as well as William Bouverie of Pusey and Sir Robert Throckmorton of Buckland House. Clerics from most parishes through which the road passed were trustees, including Thomas Brewer vicar of Wantage and George Woodward, the parson of East Hendred (see Gibson 1982 for letters regarding use of the turnpike). The long list of gentlemen included some obvious beneficiaries of improved transport, such as John Frogley, proprietor of the Bear Inn, the town's largest hostelry, and Henry Knapp, a local financier who owned the Crown in Wantage. John Bishop, who ran the local coach service from the Crown, was also a trustee: his family kept the Lamb at Wallingford and were the chief carriers between the two towns and London until the early 19th century. Edward Wells, the largest brewer and maltster in Wallingford, was a trustee, no doubt expecting to benefit from improved links to his pubs such as the Bell in Wantage as well as better supplies of raw material. Maltsters in Wantage, such as Joseph Belcher and William Stanley, would hope to benefit from the wider markets to the east while farmers, such as John Hobbis, George Godfrey and John Batten of Grove, William Stone of Charlton and Joseph Stroud and John Clement of Wantage, would expect to sell their dairy products and grain to the city markets via the Thames wharves. Other trustees include John Taylor, the miller, William Church, who ran a hemp mill and sackmaking business in Grove, John Winkworth, the largest of the Wantage sackclothmakers, Thomas Barnes, Robert Butler and Berenberg Stamp, the largest drapers in the town. General traders, such as Thomas Garrard whose family were braziers, and John Kirby an ironmonger, also acted as trustees. Finally, local professionals, such as surgeon Gilbert Cowper, apothecary Edward Towsey and solicitors William Stirling, joined the trust. Although it is not clear from the Act, it is probable that Alexander Boote, who later

became clerk to the trust, organised the legal initiative that brought together this collection of local gentry and tradesmen to improve the position of their town.

The composition of the Trust changed with time as the original members died and were replaced. Between 1751 and 1841, there was a 60% reduction in the number of Trustees and their social standing declined. The number of Baronets, Knights and doctors fell from 22 to 1, the number of clergy from 28 to 20, almost doubling their proportional representation, whereas the "other gentlemen" category remained constant at 76%. A very small proportion of trustees were active and many individuals might have been enlisted solely to facilitate acceptance of change by parishes through which the turnpike passed and from whom Statute Labour was still required. Most meetings were attended by no more than a dozen trustees, usually the local businessmen and professionals, and were chaired by one of these men (Appendix 1)

5.8 Trust Officers and Finance

Trustees could appoint salaried officers including at least one clerk, treasurer, receiver and collector of tolls as well as surveyors. In the early 19th century the four surveyors were paid up to £20 each per year, compared with £25 for each clerk and five guineas to the treasurer. Appendix 1 lists the names of those who served as officers to the trust. The two clerks, who dealt with the administration of the trust, were local solicitors; the Hedges family in Wallingford and Mr Beckett or the Ormonds in Wantage. The treasurer was normally a Wallingford businessman. After 1832 a General Statement of Accounts (Figure 5.6) was filed annually with the local Clerk of the Peace, William Budd of Newbury. These, along with some account books, are now kept in Berkshire Record Office. Interest was paid annually on the loans, generally at a rate of about 5%; this made mortgages to the turnpike an attractive investment for local gentry seeking a source of relatively safe income from their capital (Figure 5.7) These accounts indicate that receipts from tolls were the main income and that this was spent mainly on labour and haulage (Figure 5.8). The figures hide the substantial contribution from Statute Labour, the annual obligation of all parishioners to provide several days work and a team of horses to help repair roads within the parish. The Act did not take away the obligation of parishes to provide Statute Labour; in fact up to three days of the labour had to be done on the turnpike road or else Composition Money was to be paid *in lieu*.

Surveyors, who organised repairs and supervised contract and parish labour, were recruited locally. Each post was generally advertised and the road was divided into four districts with one man responsible for Nuffield to South Moreton, a second for the Harwell Section, a third covering Wantage and East Challow and a fourth Stanford. The 19th century accounts book shows that the surveyors leased the quarry at Stanford from Mr Hunter, to provide stone, and obtained gravel from the Wallingford area. Paying for carriage of these materials and for digging stone, digging and screening gravel and breaking stones was a significant part of the costs incurred by the trust officials (£142/16/10 in 1823). In the later years of the trust a single surveyor covered the whole road. He was probably an appointee of the Local Highways Board since Robert Sheldon, surveyor after 1856, fulfilled the same function on other trusts, including the Besselsleigh Turnpike. A surveyor was free to take materials needed for road construction from any waste ground without payment, as long as the resulting holes were made safe. If there was insufficient material he could take it from private ground, making suitable recompense for any resulting damage. In order to make appropriate repairs and improvements, the surveyor could oblige people to remove nuisances, cut causeways, make drains and widen roadways, recompensing the landowners and making compulsory purchases as necessary.

5.9 Toll Collection

The turnpike trusts created in the early 18th century appointed a toll-gatherer who took the tolls on behalf of the trustees. However, by the 1750s trusts were looking at toll farming as a means of managing toll-collection in order to maximise their income, reduce theft and minimise cost. As early as 1755 the Campsfield Trust had leased out the right to collect tolls. The earliest record of the Wantage Road leasing tolls appears in an advert of 1767, which announced an auction of the lease - “the several gates erected on the turnpike road will be put up by the Commissioners at the Lamb in Wallingford”.

The right to collect tolls on this road was normally leased for three years. The trustees got a set amount from the auction and the lessee then arranged for the tolls to be collected, keeping the money to recover their costs and hopefully make a profit. Figure 5.9a illustrates a typical advertisement from the Reading Mercury announcing the auctioning of the lease. Until the mid-19th century, the auctions were held at either the Bear or the Lamb, the latter being the large coaching inn still standing at the crossroads in Wallingford. In 1798, the Lamb was occupied by Mr Joseph Bishop, the local coach owner and presumably a relative of one of the original trustees, John Bishop. In 1804 Mr Jonathan Elderfield who was one time surveyor for the Harwell section of the turnpike ran the Bear. The accounts book of 1804 reveals that the auction was advertised in both the Oxford Journal and the Reading Mercury at a cost of £2/5/- for five insertions. The bidders were treated to dinner at the Lamb in Wallingford, costing the trust two guineas. A further £8/17/- was paid to draw up the legal documents for the three leases that were then given. In the 1840s, the venue for the auction was moved to the Hare at West Hendred, almost the mid-point on the turnpike. This coincided with the increased importance of the gates on the western section of the road, as traffic going to the railway stations became an important source of toll income.

The accounts book show that the tolls were leased to a wide variety of people (Appendix 1). Some were local men such as Thomas Haines who leased Stanford Gate in the 1830s and Charlton Gate for a time; in the 1850 electoral register John Haines qualified as an elector on the basis of his lease of Charlton Toll-House. Thomas Haines was also an original trustee of the Besselsleigh Turnpike and had interests in the Newbury Street Toll-House. However, it is unlikely that the lessee actually collected his own tolls; John and Thomas Haines were registered in Sparsholt and Denchworth on census night 1851. Toll collection on minor roads was a lowly job often given to retired labourers, although some level of basic education was required to count the money and keep records. Nevertheless, the Wantage road was of sufficient value to attract investors from elsewhere. Thomas Porter, who leased gates on the larger Stokenchurch, Botley and Henley roads leased gates on the Wantage road, as did William Rackley another professional gatekeeper, though both would have used hired staff to collect the money here. The trustees had difficulty letting all the gates and the Stanford Gate seems to have given particular problems, with the Surveyor paying for a hired man on occasions. During the 1820s Thomas Poor, the surveyor, may actually have become the lessees. By the mid-19th century toll collecting had become less lucrative and in the 1860s, Thomas Poor and his family emigrated to the USA (Mrs Howse, personal comm.)

Paying tolls was resented and stories retold by Lingham (1992) are typical of the lengths to which individuals went to avoid payment. The Squire of Fulscot Manor used to jump over the Hagbourne Gate on horseback rather than pay. A more legitimate, though dubious trick exploited the fact that someone selling goods in a village was exempt from tolls. A local trader used to carry logs in his cart so that he could leave these with a friend in the village under the pretence of a sale. The lane from Charlton Farm to the main road is said to have avoided Charlton Gate.

There were initially four principal turnpike gates along the route; Wallingford, Ludbridge, Charlton and Stanford (Figure 5.1). Each would have had a substantial wooden gate and barrier, with accommodation alongside it to house the toll-collector. At the eastern end of the turnpike, passage was originally controlled by the Wallingford Gate. The next gate in the 18th century was nine miles to the west at Ludbridge, where the road crosses the Hendred Brook. Three miles further on was the Charlton Gate and finally the Stanford Gate was half way between Wantage and Faringdon. Surprisingly, there was no major gate at the Faringdon end, suggesting that the main flow of goods was towards Wallingford. The siting of the gates was changed in the light of experience. A gate is shown on the boundary between Wantage and East Challow on Rocque's map of 1761 but this had disappeared a few years later in favour of the Charlton Gate. The trustees could not hope to levy all users of the road and invested the minimum necessary to collect most money. Ideally, the gates were placed where travellers could not take an alternative route over open country (e.g. at a bridge). Travellers paid once per day to use the turnpike and so loaded wagons moving east from Faringdon to the Thames wharf would pay at Stanford. On the return journey next day they would pay at Wallingford. Traffic outward bound from Wantage would pay at Charlton and, if they stayed overnight, at Wallingford on their return journey. Hence, the Wallingford Gate was the greatest beneficiary of the two way traffic.

In 1841, following the passing of a renew Act, the trust's accounts (Figure 5.8) show that £303/3/9 was spent on "Improvements (building three new Toll Houses etc)". It appears that, in response to the changes in traffic caused by building of the Great Western Railway, the trust built a new gate at Challow and took the opportunity to move the Charlton Gate and transfer the Wallingford Gate to Slade End (Figure 5.1). The opening of Didcot junction led the trust to close its gate at Ludbridge to allow construction of a new gate at Didcot in 1846/7 (Figure 5.9b). A further gate was erected at Hagbourne Lane, east of Didcot Station, in 1857. All of these tollhouses have been demolished, although the penultimate toll-cottage to operate at Stanford did survive in a modified form until the 1970s, at Stanford Mill Bridge.

Figure 5.10 shows the income derived from leasing individual gates during the late 18th and early part of the 19th century. It is clear that travel patterns changed over this period, altering the relative importance of the gates. Until the 1830s Wallingford Gate was the most valuable but after 1840 the Stanford Gate attracted the highest bids at auction. The higher flow of traffic through the Stanford Gate arose from its proximity to Challow station, on the Great Western line. Surprisingly, Didcot Gate did not generate a large income and initially the trust had difficulty leasing the new gate. This suggests that Didcot was primarily a junction where rail passengers changed trains rather than where large numbers of local travellers joined the train, though toll-avoidance may also explain the low income. The Hagbourne Gate seems to have levied a new source of travellers (to the Corn Exchange) and its construction was a major boost to turnpike revenue.

The influence of the railway on the relative importance of the eastern and western sections of the road is very strongly reflected in the pattern of toll income after 1840. However, there is some evidence of another perturbation of the local transport system about 1810. This can be attributed to the opening of the Wilts & Berks Canal and the construction of the wharf at Wantage. After 1810, the income from the Charlton Gate rose significantly, exceeding that of Stanford for a while, before falling back in the 1830s. This is to be expected if heavy goods were being carried from the wharf, eastwards from Wantage. Although the opening of the turnpike from Harwell to Streatley in 1803 provided an alternative route to the Reading road, it appears to have had little impact on the income of the established turnpike trust at the Wallingford Gate.

5.10 Toll-Gates

5.10.1 *East of Wantage*

Greenwood's map of 1824 (Figure 5.11) shows the Wallingford toll-bar on the western boundary of the town, near to the Workhouse (the Corporation had a toll-gate on Wallingford Bridge). After 1807 the Wallingford Gate was leased with a weighing engine, which lay alongside it. This engine was "a huge crane, rising high above the road, which actually lifted the waggon and its contents from the ground" (Phillips 1983). It was used to check excessively heavy loads, for which the wagoner was fined. Indeed, the accounts show that Thomas Wilkins, probably the wagoner from Wantage, was fined £1/19/6 for overweight in January 1803 and Mr Harding a similar amount in October 1803. However, in 1829 the old engine was sold by auction, raising £8/9/6, probably for scrap. The Wallingford Gate was abandoned during 1841 and another gate constructed at Slade End, further from the sub-urban edge of Wallingford. Although it can be seen on the 1878 OS map, no trace now remains of the Slade End Toll-House, which took over control of the eastern end of the road. However, it appears to have been constructed of brick and designed to give the toll-collector a clear view of the highway.

Prior to 1840 there very little traffic would have been generated in the small farming communities west of Wallingford and so there was a long stretch of uncontrolled road as far as Hendred. However, following construction of the Great Western Railway, travellers bound for the new stations at Steventon and Challow increased the trust's toll income. It received a further boost when the line to Oxford from Didcot junction was opened in 1844 and in response to this, a new gate was erected west of Didcot to collect tolls from the local traffic bound to and from the new station (Lingham 1992). The toll-house was small but elegant (Figure 5.12a), contrasting with the very simple toll-houses being built at the same time by the larger trusts that were experiencing substantial decreases in income. The 1878 map shows the Didcot Toll-House on the open stretch of road south of Dudcote, at the Junction with Vauxhall (Foxhall) Lane (Figure 5.12c). A toll-bar across Park Lane was probably serviced from this tollhouse too. In 1857, the construction of the Corn Exchange at Didcot further stimulated the local economy. The trust responded by building a further gate on the east side of Didcot near to Hagbourne Lane (Figure 5.12b). This was little more than a wooden hut but survived as a shed into the second half of the 20th century.

The Didcot Gate had replaced Ludbridge Gate, which was on the highway near East Hendred. The 1802 Enclosure map shows the Ludbridge Toll-house on the northeast side of the bridge, near the entrance to the Mill. This gate was noted by Greenwood in his survey during 1822/3 (Figure 5.11) but is absent from later Ordnance Survey maps and so the cottage may have been demolished soon after the gate was abandoned.

5.10.2 *Gates in Wantage*

The main tollgate built by this trust in Wantage was at Charlton. The Priorshold map of 1754 shows a building and/or gate across the road close to the parish boundary between Wantage and Charlton, just beyond the entrance to Charlton (Wick) Manor (Figure 5.13; Garnish, personal comm.). This does not appear on later maps. A bar is drawn across the eastern end of Wallingford Street on the 1806 Enclosure map (Figure 5.14). A small building is marked on the southern side of the gate, presumably a tollhouse controlling entry to the town but allowing passage from Garston Lane to Pigeon Lane for travellers on the Besselsleigh Turnpike. This structure may be the cottage shown on early pictures of the Cross (Hospital crossroads) but was demolished before the junction was realigned. Greenwood's map of 1824 (Figure 5.11) places the letters TB (Toll Bar) on the southeast side of the crossroads (i.e. by Ivy Cottage), though this map is less detailed than the 1806

map and the positioning of the letters may have been dictated by space rather than accurate location of the house. By the end of the turnpike era, in 1878, the Charlton Toll-House had been moved to the east of the township, a few hundred yards east of the Nelson Public House (Figure 5.12c), near to where the electricity sub-station now stands. It was of brick construction and had the typical bay window protruding into the road, allowing the keeper to see along the road in either direction. The gate at the Cross was on the edge of the urban area and so was not moved immediately after the passing of the Wantage Improvement Act in 1828.

The 1841 census lists James Dixon, tollgate keeper and his wife Jane in Wallingford Street, presumably at the Cross. However, by the time of the 1851 census the tollhouse had been moved to Charlton. The first entry in Charlton parish is;

Toll House: James Dixon, age 43, toll-gate keeper, born in Wantage, his wife Jane and their 5 children.

By 1861 James Dixon was publican of the White Horse in Newbury Street and Charlton Toll-House was occupied by Henry Jefferies an agricultural labourer, age 24, and his wife Mary Ann, the toll collector. The 1851 census lists no more gatekeepers on this section of the road; in particular there is no toll collector at the Cross. It therefore seems likely that the purpose built tollhouse was constructed in the 1840s, around the time when the railways were altering the traffic patterns.

The route the turnpike took through the centre of Wantage changed over time. On an early 19th century map (Figure 5.15) the turnpike sweeps through the Market Place, south of the Market buildings. A post-1835 drawing of the centre shows a deeply cut roadway beside the Town Hall. An 18th century advertisement mentions that Stirlings House was separated from its pleasure gardens by the turnpike road that presumably ran over the Brians Brook at this point. Thus, it would appear that the road had been improved through the centre of the town as well as in the countryside. Besides the gate at the Cross, the 1806 Enclosure map shows a second gate at the Newbury Street/Portway junction, where traffic passing south of the town centre crossed the end of the Besselsleigh Turnpike. The gates were set at right angles with a booth in the centre of the road, in front of the Royal Oak. The Wantage Improvement Act of 1828 discontinued "such parts of the Turnpike Roads passing into or through the Township of Wantage, on both sides whereof houses now stand.....and the Trustees of such Turnpike Roads shall not contribute towards the upkeep thereof". It would appear that the toll-booth on the Newbury Street/Broadway cross roads was closed as a result of the trustees losing their powers within the built up area of the town. It was probably at this time that the trustees moved the tollhouse to the eastern side of Charlton Parish.

The toll-house on the Idstone road was short lived, but the structure may be illustrated on the Wantage Town Lands Governors' map of 1753, on the waste at the east end of Freeman's Croft, opposite the site of the current King Alfred's School.

5.10.3 West of Wantage

On the 1761 Rocque map there is a turnpike gate linked to a small building on the boundary between the parishes of East Challow and Wantage. However, this gate is not mentioned in financial records from the 1780s and was probably closed and moved to the eastern side of Wantage. The 1801 Enclosure map for West Challow (Howse 1985) shows a small building beside a tollgate on the Wantage side of the Childrey turn. This toll-bar was also shown on Greenwood's map of 1824 (Figure 5.11) and pre-dates the building of the railway and any mention of a main gate at Challow. It must be assumed that this was originally a side gate supervised from the Stanford Gate.

A new gate was created in the parish of East Challow in 1841. This was to take advantage of the increased flow of traffic resulting from the opening of Challow (Faringdon Road) station. The 1851 census for East Challow lists Edward Wiltshire, age 45, as tollgate keeper with his wife Sarah, who was a schoolmistress. Both the Challow parishes stretch as far as the station so references to East or West Challow Gate probably relate to the same location; it is often called simply Challow Gate. In 1861 William Godfrey, age 30, Toll Collector, and his young family occupied the Turnpike House between Petwick Farm and Faringdon Road station. By 1871, West Challow Gate was the home of an agricultural labourer whereas in 1881, after the closure of the turnpike, Thomas Goodenough, a 60-year-old agricultural labourer lived at the Old Turnpike House. The 1878 Ordnance Survey map (25" to the mile), shows a tollhouse just east of Faringdon Road Station (West Challow Turnpike Gate) and a check, with no gate, at Goosey, west of the station.

The line of the road was changed to pass over the railway on a bridge but this is presumably a later modification and originally there was a very simple, perhaps ungated, level crossing. The main Challow Gate was controlled from a brick-built tollhouse adjacent to the bridge in 1878. The trustees approved the construction of the side-gate at Goosey Lane at their meeting in October 1856. This would have intercepted traffic that used the lanes east of Stanford in order to reach the station. Mrs Howse (1985) believes that at the Goosey Check-gate, located to the west of the station, had a small sentry box for the gatekeeper.

In 1878 the Ordnance Survey map shows that the Stanford Gate was about a mile east of the village at the junction of the Baulking Lane. A meeting of the trustees in 1856 had decided to move the Stanford Gate to this position a little east of the Baulking Lane. The cottage was marked on the map as a brick building but Mrs Howse (1962) was told that it was a small stone cottage with a thatched roof reaching nearly to the ground. She records that a man called Stratton used to be the gatekeeper but the job passed to Henry Spinnage, who had kept the gate at Childrey turn. It is claimed that Mr Spinnage later moved back to the old gatekeeper's house at the Mill Bridge, presumably when the turnpike closed. This brick cottage with tiled roof stood, until recently, on the NW side of the bridge. A photograph in the Packer Collection shows patterns in the wall, which suggest that this house was originally a single story building with a much steeper roof, probably of thatch. A publication in 1794, quoted by Howse (1962), gives this as the location of the original Stanford Gate. The county rebuilt the bridge itself in 1859, at the same time as Stutfield Bridge was improved, so earlier traces of the trust's work would have been removed. Neither the 1784 Enclosure map, nor the 1812 OS map nor the 1846 Tithe map showed a Stanford Toll-House but Greenwood's map of 1824 marks a toll-bar at Stanford Mill Bridge. In addition to the main gate, there was a small, railed Check gate across Park Lane. The toll-collector had a small sentry box, on the turf, to the Mill side of the lane (Howse 1962).

5.11 Traffic on the Turnpike

The road from Wallingford to Faringdon was included in the itineraries and strip maps (Figure 5.16) that were the pre-cursors to modern road maps. The main post-road to Gloucester went through Abingdon to Faringdon but the Wantage Road was used by some stagecoach and stage wagon services as well as local carriers' carts, farm wagons, private coaches and post-chaises.

No detailed records of traffic have been located for the trust but educated guesses can give some guidance as to the number of vehicles using the roads. Freeman (1979) examined local directories to estimate the number of local carriers using the turnpikes in Hampshire and calculated the income from these. He then assumed that on average vehicles pulled by two

horses would pay the other tolls. In the one instance where there were detailed records of vehicles passing through a gate, his estimation was only 10% less than the actual number. Although this method averages out several conflicting effects, it provides a credible number for the tickets issued and hence the vehicle beginning their journey through a particular gate. At the Wickham Gate, which Freeman studied in detail, there were 40 vehicles per day on average but on market days this doubled. About half the tickets were issued to coaches and chaises and half to carts and wagons. Based on these data it will be assumed that on average 75% of tickets on the Wantage turnpike were issued to two horse vehicles and the remainder to four horse vehicles, i.e. an average toll based on two and a half horses per vehicle.

In 1751 the tolls on the Wantage to Wallingford section of the road were 2d per horse and 6d for a four-wheel vehicle; say 11d as an average toll (Figure 5.4). Data from Figure 5.17 indicates that in the 1750s the trust received a total income of £350, £300 of which could have come from this section. This is identical to the amount quoted by Mr Toovey to the Parliamentary Committee in 1764. This corresponds to 125 tickets issued per week. Some vehicles would manage to return the same day for free but long distance travellers would only pass in one direction with this ticket. In 1841, when the average toll is estimated to be 1s-8d and total income £1,100 (of which £900 is assigned to the Wantage to Wallingford section), the number of tickets issued per week is estimated at 207; almost double the figure a century earlier.

Looking at the Charlton Gate in more detail gives information about traffic that originated in Wantage (note that vehicles from beyond Stanford would pay there and vehicles returning through Wallingford paid at the eastern gates). In 1841, the Charlton Gate would have accounted for about 20% of the trust's income; i.e. £220. Using trade directories covering the years 1830 to 1840 and assuming that carriers' carts were drawn by two horses and coaches/wagons used four horses, it is estimated that eight two-horse and eight four-horse public service vehicles would pay at Charlton Gate per week. This would generate £83/a in tolls. Using the earlier estimate of the average toll suggests that 32 other tickets were issued to private travellers and hauliers. A third of the traffic originating in Wantage appears to have been public transport, slightly on the high side of Freeman's average but in the middle of the range of 20% to 50% he found in Hampshire. Thus, the numbers seem consistent and suggest that about 50 vehicles a week left Wantage to travel east and perhaps 150 passed through the town in each direction. The traffic flow would vary during the week, being highest on market days. Nevertheless, it is clear that the road usage was very light compared with modern roads.

Direct evidence of toll income from travellers is provided by the Account book of Joseph Mayo (BRO), the coachman employed by Philip Pusey MP of Pusey House. In 1848/9 he regularly noted "gates to station 8d". This was the Wantage Road toll charge for "a horse drawing coach" after the 1841 Act. Thus, it appears that on his journey to Challow station he paid for a day ticket at Stanford Gate.

Less grand travellers were able to use the "car from the Alfred's Head, Wantage, daily, to the Station to meet Trains" as advertised in Pigot's New Commercial Directory of 1842. The omnibus between Wantage Market Place and Challow station was advertised in Trade Directories during the 1840s, though a press cutting of 1882 (Fuller 1988) described it as "undersized and dreary" Challow station served both Faringdon and Wantage until about 1850 when a new station was built at Wantage Road, north of Grove.

5.12 Closure and Surviving Evidence of the Turnpike

Turnpikes that carried long distance traffic through the Vale declined with the coming of the railways; the Fyfield to St John's Bridge Trust is an example (Figure 5.17). In contrast the Nuffield Common, Wallingford, Wantage & Faringdon Trust actually increased its income after 1840 (Figure 5.17). This prosperity resulted from the expansion of local traffic carrying goods and passengers to the stations at Challow, Steventon and Didcot. It generated sufficient income to pay interest on the loan capital and maintain the highway, making it one of the more successful trusts in the region.

The turnpike was finally discontinued as parts of a General Act of Parliament that deregulated enormous stretches of turnpike roads in the middle years of Victoria's reign. The full powers of the Wallingford, Wantage and Faringdon Trust were repealed with effect from December 31st 1873 but the trust was given until November 1878, to wind itself up. During this period it could spend no more than £900/a on repairs, pay no more than £120/a in salaries and pay interest at 3%. The final accounts filed by Messrs Ormond & Hedges showed that the trust handed over a balance of £190/4/= to the Highways Authority on the last day of 1877. There was a dispute over £30 carried forward for the surveyor, Robert Sheldon of Wantage, but the Local Government Board thought it was too small an amount to worry about (PRO). Nevertheless, some of the Highways Authorities who inherited responsibility for the road complained that they were in "a uniform (bad) state of repair throughout".

A note made by Charlton farmer Benjamin Castle in February 13th 1879 records "Attended last meeting of the turnpike trust in Didcot" (I. Hancock, person. comm.). At this meeting the final dispersal of assets would have been arranged. Its venue, in railway town, emphasises the changes along this road since the gentry of Wantage and Wallingford first met in 1752.

Towards the end, turnpikes were resented and so their passing was an occasion for celebration. Most of evidence of their existence was destroyed. Some records were probably retained by the solicitors who acted as clerks but only the treasurer's account books covering the first few decades of the 19th century have survived. The principal legacy of the trust is the line of the present A417 as far as Harwell and A4130 through Didcot to Wallingford. A more tangible reminder is the well-preserved set of milestones which beside the roads from Faringdon through to Wallingford and from Wantage to Shrivenham (Figure 5.18). Distribution of the three principal patterns of milestone may correspond to the jurisdiction the surveyors, though the Highways Boards of the Victorian era may have erected some of these. The oldest stones are on the short-lived turnpike from Wantage to Idstone/Shrivenham, west of Kingston Lisle. These probably date from 1752 and use old letter shapes and Roman numerals. The stone in Didcot Broadway has an inscription that differs from that recorded on the 1878 Ordnance Survey map and was probably erected later in that century. The remainder of the stones may date from the early 19th century, provide a tangible link with the locally administered enterprise that flourished over 200 years ago.

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Also other articles in this series on Roads across the Upper Thames Valley

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- RUTV 6; Fyfield to St John's Bridge & Kingston Bagpuize to Newbridge Turnpike
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- RUTV 13; Early Maps of the Upper Thames Region
- RUTV 14; Turnpike roads to Banbury

All enquiries to the author;

**Alan Rosevear,
7, Trinder Road,
Wantage,
Oxon OX12 8EE**

rosevear1@aol.com

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Trustees
Names.

sembled, and by the Authority of the same, That the Right Honourable Charles Lord Viscount Fane, in the Kingdom of Ireland; the Right Honourable William Wildman Lord Viscount Barrington, in the Kingdom of Ireland; the Honourable William Bouverie, the Honourable John Barrington, the Honourable Daines Barrington, Sir Wilughby Aston, Sir Henry Englefield, Sir John Moor, Sir George Oxenden, Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell, Sir Thomas Stapleton, Sir John Stonehouse, Sir Robert Throckmorton, Barons; Sir George Champion, Sir Thomas Head, Sir Jammet Raymond, Sir John Rush, Knights; the Reverend Stephen Niblett, D. D. the Reverend Phillip Barton LL. D. George Cooper M. D. David Hartley M. D. John Abery, John Arndell, Richard Aston, Abraham Atkins, Richard Bailey, Robert Baker, Wilmot Baker, John Bance, Henry Barker, Thomas Barnes, Thomas Bassett, John Batten, Joseph Belcher, Norreys Bertie, Thomas Bigg, John Bishop, Thomas Bishop, William Blackstone, Thomas Blagrove, Charles Blandy, John Blandy, Alexander Boote, William Bowles, William Brookland, Edmund Bridges, Francis Bridges, Mathias Browne, Richard Browne, Cudworth Bruch, Richard Burges, Jonathan Bush, Bush of Childrey, John Butler, Robert Butler, Thomas Butler, Paul Calton, William Church, Edward Wiseman Clerk, John Clement, James Colebrook, Ferdinando Collins, John Collins, Gilbert Cowper, Joseph Cox, Richard Cox of Ardington, Thomas Cox of Borton, John Dew, Tomkins Dew, Robert Dowsett, Thomas Edlin, Simon Eldrige, John Meggot Elweys, John Elstone of Hendred, Thomas Fettiplace, Henry Fludyer senior, Henry Fludyer junior, William Fludyer, John Frogley,

Part of the list of turnpike trustees in the original Act of 1751

Appendix 1: Wallingford, Wantage & Faringdon Turnpike Trust - Officers

<u>OFFICERS</u>				
<u>Year</u>	<u>Chairman</u>	<u>Treasurer</u>	<u>Clerk</u>	<u>Surveyor</u>
1765		John Toovey	Alexander Boote	
1789-92			Lovegrove & Beckett	
pre 1802	Mr Toovey			
1802 to		Dr John Hedges		Whitehall, Wallingford, Elderfield, Harwell Pusey, Challow, Moss, Stanford
1823	Edward Wells	Dr John Hedges		
to 1827	Edward Wells	Dr John Hedges		
1827	Chas A Allnott	Edward Wells		
1828	Thomas Greenwood	Edward Wells		
1830	Thomas Greenwood	Edward Wells	William Beckett/John Allnott Hedges	
1834	H.J. Walcott	Edw Button	W Beckett/J A Hedges	Wm Herbert, Wallingford, Francis Tame, Harwell Francis Poore, Stanford
1838	John Langley			
1842	Jos Hilliard	Thomas Owen	W Beckett/J A Hedges	Wm Herbert, Wallingford Francis Tame, Harwell Thomas Poore, Stanford
1847	Wm Hayward	Thomas Owen	W Ormond/J A Hedges	Charles Saunders
1852	B Wroughton	Thomas Owen	W Ormond/J A Hedges	Charles Saunders
1856	B Wroughton	Thomas Owen	William Ormond	Robert Sheldon
1858	T.B. Greenwood	John Hilliard	William Ormond	Robert Sheldon
1859		John Hilliard	J Kirby Hedges Edw Ormond	Robert Sheldon

TRUSTEES ATTENDING MEETINGS ca 1802

Thomas Hodgson	R Baker	R Baker Jnr	Thomas Wintle
Edw Wells	Edw Wells Jnr	William Mayne	D Dunell
Wm Stone	Wm Toovey	Wm Hazell	Chas Morrell

LESSEES OF TOLL GATES

<u>Year</u>	<u>Wallingford</u>	<u>Ludbridge</u>	<u>Charlton</u>	<u>Stanford</u>
1802	Wm George	John Rixon	Robert Gilder	James George
1804	Henry King			
1807	Thomas Taylor	John Rixon	William Hillier	Thomas Withers
1810	Wm Munt	Thomas Porter	William Hillier	John Withers
1813	Jno Austin	Jonathan Criswick	Thomas Porter	Thomas Porter
1817	Rd Swadling	Henry Willis	William Hanley	Joseph Poor
1818	Rd Swadling	John Robins	John Swayne	John Robins
1821	John Swayne	John Swayne	Thomas Harper	Thomas Poor
1823	Rd Swadling	Wm Venables	Daniel Painter	Thomas Poor
1824	John Harper	Rd Swadling	Benj Hodges	John Swayne
1825			Joseph Newport	
1826			Edw Willis	
1827	John Lemon	William Rackley	William Harris	Thomas Haines
1828	Wm Bennett	John Harper	Ed Willis	Thomas Poor
1829	William Rackley	John Arlott	John Lemon	Thomas Haines
1830	Rd Swadling	John Arlott	John Lemon	Thomas Haines
1831	William Baylis	Matthew Green	Thomas Haines	
1832	Isaac Clayton	Thomas Hart	Thomas Poor	
1834	Isaac Clayton		Thomas Keene	Thomas Poor
1836			Thomas Porter	
1838	Joseph Clayton	Charles Cooper	John Hatto	
1840	Joseph Clayton	William Brown		

INDEX

- Abingdon, 5
 Absolon, Joseph, 9
 Accounts, 11
 Act Parliament, 2
 Alfred's Head, Wantage, 17
 Ambrose Farm, 8
 Ardington, 4, 6
 Atkins, Mr, 8
 Auction of tolls, 12
 barge, 9, 10
 Barnes, Thomas, 11
 Barrington family, 7, 10
 Bastard Mr, 4
 Bath Road, 6
 Batten, John, 11
 Baulking, 3, 16
 Bear Inn, Wallingford, 7, 12
 Bear Inn, Wantage, 10
 Beckett, Mr, 11
 Belcher, Joseph, 10
 Bell Inn, Wantage, 10
 Besselsleigh Turnpike, 12, 15
 Bigg, Thomas, 7
 Bishop family, 10, 12
 Bishop of Hereford, 3, 6
 Boote, Alexander, 8, 11
 Bouverie, William, 10
 Brewer, Thomas, 10
 bridge, 2, 5, 14
 Bridgemen, 9
 Brightwell, 5, 6
 Buckland House, 10
 Budd, William, 11
 Burford, 2, 5
 Butler, Robert, 11
 carrier, 10, 16, 17
 Castle, Ben, 18
 Chain Hill, 3
 Challow, 3, 7, 9, 11, 15
 Challow Gate, 13, 16
 Challow station, 14, 16, 18
 Chapel of St Mary Grace, 9
 Charlton, 4, 7, 11, 13
 Charlton (Wick) Manor, 14
 Charlton Gate, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17
 Childrey, 3, 16
 Church Mr, 4, 11
 Civil War, 5, 9
 Clement, John, 11
 Clerk, 7, 8, 10, 11
 clothiers' wains, 6
 coach, 8, 10, 12, 16, 17
 Colnbrook, 6
 Commons Committee, 6, 7, 8
 Composition Money, 11
 Compton Beauchamp, 7
 Corn Exchange at Didcot, 14
 Cowper, Gilbert, 11
 Crowmarsh, 8
 Crown Inn, Wantage, 9, 10
 Culham Bridge, 5
 Deloney Thomas, 6
 Denchworth, 12
 Didcot, 18
 Didcot Gate, 13, 14
 Didcot station, 14
 Dixon, James, 15
 drove road, 3
 East Challow Gate, 15
 Elderfield, Jonathan, 12
 Fairford, 3
 Fane, Viscount, 10
 Faringdon, 2, 3, 4, 6, 13, 18
 Faringdon Road Station, 16
 Fernham, 3
 Freeman's Croft, Wantage, 15
 Frogley, John, 10
 Fulscot Manor, 12
 Gangsdown Hill, 8
 Garrard, Thomas, 11
 Garston Lane, 15
 Gloucester, 5, 6
 Godfrey George, 11
 Godfrey, William, 16
 Goodenough, Thomas, 16
 Goosey Check Gate, 16
 Great Western Railway, 13, 14
 Greenwood map, 14, 15, 16
 Grove, 11
 Grove Street, 15
 Hagbourne, 4
 Hagbourne Gate, 12, 13, 14
 Haines, family, 12
 Ham, Wantage, 7
 Harding, Mr, 14
 Hare, West Hendred, 12
 Harwell, 4, 5, 6, 11, 18
 Harwell to Streatley Turnpike, 4
 Hedges Mr, 10, 11
 Henley, 5
 Henley to Dorchester Trust, 7, 8, 9
 Highways Board, 12, 18
 Hobbs, John, 10
 Hunter, Mr, 11
 Icknield Way, 3, 5, 7
 Idstone, 5, 6, 8, 15
 Jefferies, Henry, 15
 John of Wanating, 3
 John, King, 2
 Kennicroft, 8
 Kingston Lisle, 18
 Kingston Lisle House, 8
 Kirby, John, 11
 Knapp, Henry, 10
 Lamb Inn, Wallingford, 8, 10, 12
 Lechlade, 2, 3, 5, 6
 Letcombe Brook, 3
 Lockinge, 4
 London, 2, 3, 6, 10
 Lord Wantage, 3
 Ludbridge Gate, 13
 Market Place, Wantage, 15
 Mayne, William, 9
 Mayo Joseph, 17
 milestone, 8, 18
 Morden map, 3, 4, 6
 Moulsoford, 4, 5
 Nelson Public House, 15
 new road, 6
 Newbury, 11
 Newbury Street Toll-House, 12
 Niblett Dr, 4
 Northleach, 6
 Nuffield, 9, 11
 Nuffield Common, Wallingford,
 Wantage & Faringdon Trust, 8, 18
 Ock, 2, 3
 Ormond, Mr, 11, 18
 Oxford, 2, 4, 14
 Pack Horse Lane, 3
 pack-horse, 2, 3
 Parish labour, 11
 Park Lane Side Gate, 14, 16
 Petwick Farm, 16
 Pigeon Lane, 15
 pontage, 10
 Poor, Thomas, 12
 Portway, 4, 5
 Price, John, 7
 Priorshold map, 7, 14
 Pusey, 10, 17
 Pusey Philip, 17
 railway competition, 10
 Reading, 3, 4, 6
 Red House, 3
 Ridgeway, 3
 Ringdale, 3
 Rocque map, 3, 7, 15
 Royal Oak, Wantage, 15
 Saxon Charter, 2, 4
 Sheldon, Robert, 12, 18
 Shellingford, 2
 Shrivenham, 7, 10
 Slade End Gate, 13, 14
 South Moreton, 11
 Southampton, 3
 Sparsholt, 3, 12
 Sparsholt Court Manor, 4
 Spinnage, Henry, 16
 stage coach, 16
 stage waggon, 14, 16
 Stamp, Berenberg, 11
 Stanford, 2, 3, 8, 11, 17
 Stanford Gate, 12, 13, 16, 17
 Stanley, William, 10
 Steventon station, 14
 Stirling, William, 11
 Stirlings House, 15
 Stone, William, 11
 Stratton Mr, 16
 Streatley, 4, 5
 Stroud, Joseph, 11
 Stuckley, 4
 Stutfield bridge, 16
 Surveyor, 4, 11, 12, 18
 Swindon, 4
 Taylor, John, 11
 Taylor, Thomas, 9
 Thames, 2, 5
 Throckmorton, Sir Robert, 10
 tolls, 7, 9, 17
 Toovey, 8, 9, 17
 Toovey, John, 8
 Towsey, Edward, 11
 Treacher, John, 9
 Treasurer, 8, 10, 11
 Uffington, 3
 Upton, 4
 waggon, 2, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17
 Wallingford, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17
 Wallingford Bridge, 5, 9, 14
 Wallingford Gate, 9, 13, 14
 Wallingford Street Gate, 14
 Wantage, 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 14, 17, 18
 Wantage Enclosure map, 14
 Wantage Improvement Act, 15
 Wantage Road station, 18
 Wantage to Idstone, 5, 8
 weighing engine, 14
 Wells, Edward, 10
 Westcot, 3
 wharf, 7, 8, 13
 White Hart, Harwell, 9
 Wickham Gate, 17
 Wilkins, Thomas, 14
 William the Conqueror, 5
 Wilts & Berks Canal, 13
 Wiltshire, Edward, 16
 Winkworth, John, 11
 Wise, 4
 Woodward, George, 10
 wool, 2, 5, 9
 Worcester, 5, 6
 Wymondsold Matthew, 4