

INTRODUCTION

This book is about roads and the how, why and where of their occurrence in the Prestonpans area through the ages. It has also been necessary to venture beyond the bounds of Prestonpans to show the reader where these roads led to and from, and where archaeological evidence has been found. In any study of roads the landscape must feature prominently if one is to show the natural obstacles man has had to overcome, or indeed the 'natural highways' that the landscape has provided. This landscape has been much modified by man, including development of roads and ways, and many prominent, and not so prominent, features in the landscape of Prestonpans will also be pointed out. The title of this book indicates that while it is possible to trail and explore the town of Prestonpans and vicinity in a single day it is however much better to explore 'The Pans' over a much longer period.

It is also important to note that although many of the routes described in this book are public roads, or perhaps even public rights of way, not every route will be so and it is not intended that the reader should assume that they may access every route freely without consideration for the rights of the proprietors to manage their land safely and efficiently.

Finally, the scope of this work, covering a huge period of time has inevitably meant that I have only scratched the surface; and with this in mind I have included an extensive bibliography for future researchers to explore should this publication spark a greater interest in any of the themes or time-periods mentioned.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PRESTONPANS AND VICINITY

The original settlement of what is now known as Prestonpans was called Aldhammer. It was as the land passed in ownership to the Cistercian order of monks of Newbattle (originally Neubotle – the new building from Anglo Saxon)¹ that the town came to be known as the ‘Priests toun,’ although there are indications that other priestly establishments were linked with the town before this, or near to this time.

However, some time before 1189 Robert De Quinci granted the monks of Newbattle a portion of the land in his possession, De Quinci owning the lands of Traffernent (Tranent).² A translation³ of the Charter states the boundaries thus:

As the burn of Whytrig falls into the sea, on the east, to the Marches of the Abbot of Dunfermling’s lands of Inveresch and Pontekyn [Pinkie], namely as the rivulet runs from Fauside to the sea, and that I, in presence of good men, perambulated the march between my own mains and Meduflat, and cast ditches for a memorial.



Figure 1: Prestonpans in its surrounding Landscape

Titles superimposed on Sheet 74 of the Ordnance Survey, 1930, OS One Inch Popular Edition [Water-Contour-pull map] © National Library of Scotland

THE ROADS THAT LED BY PRESTOUNGRANGE

This grant of land was extended by Robert's heir Seyer De Quinci, Earl of Winchester, in successive charters from 1200–1210 and was thus extended to include half of the marsh nearest the De Quinci properties, and also included the right to work and quarry coal (*carbonarium*) and the rights to the foreshore between aforementioned boundaries.⁴ The Charter of 1209 is the earliest known granting of rights to mine coal in Great Britain.

The Charter refers to the natural landscape and environment of the area, and I will attempt to describe that landscape and how it formed a natural compartment for man through the ages, and how this landscape has governed man's activities including travel.

Fauside (Falside) is part of the Tranent/Falside ridge looking over the western bay of the Firth of Forth at East Lothian. It is part of the D'Arcy / Crossgatehall geological fold,⁵ which is part of the range of higher land created through tectonic movements from the Southern Uplands geological fault line forcing the Midland Valley of Scotland against the Highland boundary fault line. The burn of Whytrig refers to a stream, now not obvious on the ground but possibly the same as the "dribbling burnie" described by McNeill and others.⁶ This ran from the prominence of Whytrig Hill, (Rigley Hill) approximately 200 feet above sea level, currently sandwiched between the new A1 and the main Edinburgh to London railway line, and down on the approximate line of what was to become known as West Loan.

Going back in time even further, the mark of the ice age was left on this part of East Lothian in the form of 'raised beaches.' This is where the land, after having been compressed for thousands of years by an enormous weight of ice, covering both land and sea, springs back again over a period of thousands of years so that land on the edge of the sea was raised. In the Prestonpans / Musselburgh area evidence for this can be seen where the raised beach comes 25 to 75 feet above present day sea level. Such land is well drained and made an excellent location for settlement, agriculture, and of course transport.⁷

Ice age glaciers, which affected the Forth Valley during the Loch Lomond Readvance about 11,000 years ago,⁸ left evidence of their activity as they carried rock debris for miles and deposited as they receded. The term used for these deposits is a 'glacial erratic'⁹ and these are generally rounded boulders smoothed by the scouring action of the ice. (Johnny Moat, named after a well-built former excise man,¹⁰ is one such example.)