

THE ROADS THAT LED BY PRESTOUNGRANGE



*Figure 20: The old milestone on the Great Post Road, as described by Martine, just outside the East Lodge of Drummore Estate.
© A Ralton, 2004.*



*Figure 21: An old milestone on Edgebuckling Brae;
© A Ralton, 2004.*

Blucher was also the name of a type of four-horse coach,¹⁴⁸ named in honour or even perhaps as a way of marketing the vehicle after the great General's part in the Battle of Waterloo and the name of this house gives an indication that there was probably some kind of change stop here at this time; indeed nearby 'Mrs Forman's' was originally a coaching house.

The road was subject to various improvements over the years and some of the old sections of road can still be used today by non-motorised transport. Examples are at Tranent¹⁴⁹ and at Prestoungrange.¹⁵⁰

THE COMING OF THE RAILWAYS

The coming of the railways and the opening of the Edinburgh to London line in 1846 also had an acute effect on how people used the roads. This doubtless curtailed the use of the tunnel

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Figure 22: Part of the former Great Post Road, now a right of way for non-vehicular access, at the west end of Tranent near Birsley Brae. ©A Ralton, 2004.

and the road to Dolphingston from Prestoungrange. However, on the first edition OS Map there is still a clear line of the route shown from the tunnel to the West Lodge on the Wallyford road which neatly avoids the toll bars. It is interesting to note that in the great industrial age of canal and railways a canal was also proposed that would follow roughly the same line as the current A1; however this did not go ahead.¹⁵¹

The wider effect of railways amongst the travelling public was to increase the arbitrary nature of whether the public used tolls or not, and of course if they could avoid them they would. It was possible now that farmers could get their produce to Edinburgh by taking a road that led to the station either avoiding all tolls, or at least tolls that would have been paid prior to the railway. The effect of the railways was to encourage shorter travel distances and a denser network of routes.¹⁵²

It did however mean that those whose journeys did not involve the railway, or whose location meant that they could not avoid tolls, still continued to pay, and one can understand the sense of injustice that some no doubt felt as they saw other parts of East Lothian managing to escape toll-free. This was possibly compounded by the fact that an Act of 1844 rendered all former statute labour roads in the County of Haddington into turnpike roads.¹⁵³

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Figure 23: This extract from the OS 1st Ed of Haddingtonshire (1854) map shows the recognisable pattern of main roads in Prestounpans and vicinity today, as well as the viaduct over the tunnel with a clear track marked to West Lodge; and also a routeway to Dolphinston Colliery. © National Library of Scotland.

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Robert Hislop, brewer and owner of Fowler's Brewery in Prestonpans, speaking at the Government Enquiry into public roads in April 1860 stated:

I have long been established in my present business at Prestonpans. I employ in my business five non-agricultural horses; these are employed chiefly in carrying goods to the railway station, and also to Edinburgh, Haddington and the other towns around. We send almost all our goods to Edinburgh by our own carts; but what goes through Edinburgh, we send by railway. Our Brewery is 9 miles from Edinburgh. The annual amount paid in tolls for these horses is estimated at £20 per annum. We pay two tolls to Edinburgh, three to Leith (9 miles distant), two to Musselburgh (3 miles distant); and these last are paid for travelling over little more than two miles up road. The people of Prestonpans consider the tolls to which they are subjected as very oppressive, and I concur in that opinion. It was at one time proposed to put on certain new tolls between Prestonpans and the railway, but this was successfully resisted. If those tolls had been put on, the parties paying them would on an average not to have used more than about a mile of the road before passing through them. It would have been quite impossible to have gone out of Prestonpans in any direction without paying tolls. The present rate in our Parish for statute labour is 37/6d per plough gate. For our Brewery horses we pay annually £3. Nothing is paid for my dwelling house.¹⁵⁴



Figure 24: The Milestone built into the Fowler's Court development on the High Street;
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The Haddington Courier of 25th February 1870 records numerous lengthy debates on how the roads and their administration could be improved. There also seems to have been some rivalry between the east and the west parts of the county and questions were asked as to why the west appeared to get a greater amount of money spent on their roads. Sir George Grant-Suttie of Prestoungrange was to reply to this by arguing that the whole of the County was to benefit from good roads at the west part of the county on account of the need for coals throughout the county originating from Prestoungrange and the other coal mines of the west of the County.¹⁵⁵

The end was in sight for the toll system of raising funds for road improvements however.

The Editorial of the *Haddingtonshire Courier* of 20th June 1862 states:

It is now generally admitted that the tollage system, as it at present exists, is quite inadequate to maintain roads in the condition befitting a County like East Lothian, and a remedy has become imperatively necessary.

Not all the people of East Lothian were enthusiastic about the abolition of tolls, however. The Heritors and Tenants of the Parish of Humbie in their meeting of 5th October 1857 unanimously resolved to oppose the scrapping of tolls. Situated at the south end of East Lothian there seemed to be a general fear amongst the Humbie Parishioners that as their nearest market town was Dalkeith and their nearest railway station Tynehead, both in Midlothian, they could be in the undesirable position of having to pay rates for road improvements based on an assessment of the annual value of land and heritages (as was proposed for East Lothian) and also having to pay tolls which would continue in Midlothian. The fact that there were no tolls in their Parish would also have had something to do with their attitude.¹⁵⁶

ROAD REFORM

The County Road Act of East Lothian was passed in 1864, but to most people's disappointment tolls were not in fact repealed and the worst fears of the Humbie Parishioners were realised i.e. tolls remained and rates were also extracted for the upkeep of roads. A continuation of tolls no doubt had

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something to do with the outstanding debts remaining for road works.

Going back to the Government Enquiry into the public roads in Haddingtonshire and an account in the *Haddingtonshire Courier* of 30th March 1860, we have a detailed note of revenue and debts outstanding as follows:

Detailed Note of Revenue						
	<i>1844-45</i>			<i>1845-46</i>		
Great Post Road	£4,484	12	0	£4,565	18	0
North District Road	1,353	0	0	1,479	0	0
South District Road	628	5	6	630	2	3
Killpallet District Road	330	0	0	357	0	0
Ormiston District Road	348	0	0	223	0	0
	£7,143	17	6	£7,264	0	3

	<i>Bonded and Floating Debt</i>			<i>Postponed Debt</i>		
	<i>1844 - 45</i>			<i>1845-46</i>		
Great Post Road	£4,800	0	0	£2,500	0	0
North Road	578	10	8	0	0	0
South Road	1,800	0	0	707	7	2
Killpallet Road	2,300	0	0	870	12	3
Ormiston Road	425	2	10	184	17	8
	£9,403	18	6	£4,263	7	1

It was not until 1878 and the Roads and Bridges Act that tolls were finally abolished. This Act vested the management and maintenance of highways and bridges in the Burgh Local Authority.¹⁵⁷ The Burgh of Prestonpans had been set under the 1850 'Act to make more effectual provision regulating the police of towns and populous places in Scotland, and for paving, draining, cleansing, lighting and improving the same (15th July 1850).' This was not implemented until 1868 and such was the strength of feeling regarding tolls and taxes, its introduction caused great concerns and even riots¹⁵⁸ much akin to the Poll Tax protests in the late 1980s.

AN EARLY RIGHT OF WAY DISPUTE

The rights of access to the Cross came under dispute when, in 1889, the Cross was enclosed by a high wall and a gate which was padlocked by Wright, the market gardener. This created something of a 'stushie' at the time. with a Dr. William Ireland of Preston Lodge writing in the *Evening Dispatch* of August 31st 1889 of his long use of the route past the Cross as a public right of way.¹⁵⁹

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The scene today is of course much different, with open access to the Cross at all times. Then, however, the market garden had ploughed right up to the base of the Cross and a high wall enclosed the whole garden. The enclosure of the Cross may in fact have helped to preserve it although the old village surrounding it had long since gone by this time.

Two other agencies were also involved in this episode not least the Trustees of Schaw's bequest, named after Dr James Schaw who bequeathed his property of Preston House in 1784 to be made available for the "maintenance and education of boys".¹⁶⁰ Part of the lands owned by the Trust was tenanted to the Wrights. Secondly, the Scottish Rights of Way and Recreation Society was concerned. The papers in the National Archives of Scotland detail the correspondence between Dr. Ireland and the Society. Although they do not give information as to how this dispute was resolved (probably without going to Court), the end result is that today all can access the Cross.

SOME LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS OF NOTE IN PRESTONPANS

There are two *Loans* in Prestonpans: East and West. Why there should be two roads running in the same line of direction very close to each other is on the face of it puzzling. However, both roads could be part of an early form of one-way system: a Loan was generally a grassy track for animals to be driven between a township and common grazing,¹⁶¹ and it might well be awkward for two herds of cattle to pass each other from opposite directions. An alternative reason for the establishment of the two roads so close together was perhaps the use of one route being diverted or stopped up at one time; from the Plan of the Battle of Preston, East Loan can be seen to have been moved. Alternatively, given that a line east of West Loan marks the boundary between the former burghs of Preston and Prestoungrange – owned by the Canons of Holyrood Abbey and the Monks of Newbattle Abbey respectively – perhaps the existence of two roads results from various land disputes between those two parties.

What is certainly known is that, as late as the 20th century, animals were still driven on to the 'killing houses' located where the War Memorial is now and at the Co-operative store house at the bottom of Redburn Road.¹⁶²

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The *Double-Dykes* road was a path not more than about a yard wide where the Co-op workers walked the bullocks to the Redburn Road Killing House. Jimmy Burns recounts that if you happened to be travelling through the path at the same time as the bullocks they always won!¹⁶³

Local folklore tells us that *Redburn* Road is supposed to have been named as such because of it running red with the blood of the massacred Hanoverian troops at the Battle of Prestonpans. It may also have been blood from the nearby Killing House; or even water that had been contaminated by runoff from all the coal mines nearby which turns water a rusty red colour.

Low's Wynd is no longer in existence. It used to be where the Kinetic Sculpture and the monument to Robert Burns are located. On the south side of the High Street by the Church gardens, the lane is called *Mill Wynd*, and it preserves the characteristic causewayed paving typical of the time. There is a fine picture of this road in Alistair Tulloch's book¹⁶⁴ "Prestonpans in Old Picture Postcards." This shows the lane paved with *causey stanes*. The name for a causeway is thought to have been derived from *calsay* meaning a hard paved road on which your heels (the *calcareous* bone of your foot) could march.



Figure 25: Mill Wynd and its causey stanes; © A Ralton, 2004.