

THE ROADS THAT LED BY PRESTOUNGRANGE

Housing estate streets have been built rapidly in the last century and their names reflect either local councillors and great people or events associated with Prestonpans.¹⁶⁵ The Battle of 1745 is an obvious theme: *Gardiner's Road*, or *Johnnie Cope's Road*, for example, and *Thorntree Crescent* and *Hawthorn Road* from the tree where Colonel Gardiner was wounded; *Bankton Terrace* reflecting Bankton House, formerly the property of Lord Bankton before the Colonel lived there. Lately there is even a *Jacobite Way*.

Other local worthies and former councillors commemorated are: Mackie, McLeod, Nimmo; Ormiston, Robertson, and Wilson; and *Ayres Wynd* after a favourite walk of the Reverend Logan Ayre (although this street name exists today the original layout has been changed); *Alexander Drive* after the famous surgeon who worked alongside Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War, and whose statue occupies a prominent place in the town; *Sir Walter Scott Pend*; *Schaw Road* after Dr James Schaw the philanthropic owner of Preston House; *Oswald Terrace* after Dr William Oswald, heir to the Hamilton properties in Prestonpans; and also lately a *Robert De Quinci Place*. *Polwarth Terrace*, etc. is thought to be named after Lord Polwarth, a local County Councillor representing Humbie who was instrumental in getting a direct water supply to Prestonpans from reservoirs in the Lammermuirs in the early 1920's.¹⁶⁶ *Pyper's* and *Cookies Wynd* also echo other local characters.¹⁶⁷

Names from the industrial age are *Summerlee Street*, after the company that owned Prestongrange Colliery in the late 19th Century; *Fowler's Court*, situated in the former Brewery buildings; and *Rope Walk*, named for the rope manufactory behind the west end of the High Street; *Bellfield Square* after the owner of one of the many potteries which flourished in Prestonpans and not forgetting *Acheson Drive*, named after the 16th century entrepreneur Alexander Atkinson (Acheson)¹⁶⁸ who owned the Haven and gave his name to it when it was an important sea port.

Other geographical or agriculturally derived names are: *Rigley Terrace*, after Rigley Hill; *Inchview*, looking over the Firth of Forth to the islands named from the Gaelic – *Inchcolm* and *Inchkeith*; and *Nethershot*, *Middleshot* and *Longdykes*, after field names. *Harlaw Hill* is also of some interest. The second element of the name, *law*, means hill, which is repeated in English as so often happens in place names, the other element is unknown but it is possible that the name has a similar meaning to *Harlow* i.e. the Army Hill

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Figure 26: Fowler's Court, with milestone built into wall;
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(from the old English *here hlaw*¹⁶⁹). If correct, this would date it to a time when the Anglic settlers lived in Prestonpans – from the period of the Dark Ages up to when Prestonpans became an ecclesiastical settlement in the early medieval period. However, a degree of caution is necessary, as the name may also have been transferred from another place when a landowner established a house there.

There are others, and probably those elder residents of Prestonpans whose knowledge will doubtless be superior to mine could add and expand on this list.

THE MODERN ERA

Tolls have not completely disappeared, and whenever they recur in the media it is almost guaranteed to cause heated debate; the continuation of tolls on the Forth Road Bridge and the proposal of the City of Edinburgh Council to charge tolls electronically on vehicles entering the city being just two recent examples.

The proliferation of coach travel meant that streets had to be widened to accommodate these vehicles in Prestonpans and elsewhere. In July 1899 the Western District Committee of the County Council formed a sub-committee to consider how to widen West Loan, which had been narrowed as a result of a field being enclosed. The report states:

The sub-committee inspected the road at Prestonpans West Loan, and have to report that the road is narrow throughout its entire length. The road opposite the Glebe, including the footpath, is 20 feet wide at the widest part.

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The hedge, or wire fence appears to encroach a little on the road, while the portion of the road opposite the north end, where a wall has been erected to fence the field from the road, is a little narrower (17 feet).¹⁷⁰

Happily this situation was resolved by the Council feuing a strip of land 130 yards long and moving the wall three feet for the landowner.

Road surfaces were also considerably improved by the laying of tarmac (named after John Louden MacAdam, one of the great Scottish road engineers of the 19th Century who made great improvements in road surfacing) and this was used widely on roads from 1910 onwards.¹⁷¹

The beginning of the 20th Century also saw the development of tramway systems in East Lothian. The line from Edinburgh extended to Musselburgh in 1904, and then on to Port Seton in 1909.¹⁷² An original stretch of that tram rail line can still be seen just outside to the east of the Prestongrange Industrial Heritage Museum at Morrison's Haven. The development of tramways meant that some streets had to be widened and consequently some fine old buildings in Prestonpans High Street were demolished or altered with parts shaved off to accommodate the wider road.

The trams were replaced by buses from 1928; and in 1935 the first stretch of dual carriageway in Scotland was laid down between Seton and Cantyhall north of the railway, supplanting the original Great Post Road which lay to the south of the railway line and which had necessitated several level crossings. This was due to the development of the internal combustion engine and the emergence of the motorcar, which was to see a further revolution in transport and the roads on which they travelled. This was especially the case after the Second World War, when the stability of peacetime and the growing economy meant that motorcars were being acquired as consumable products by many more households.

The Great Post Road became known as the A1 as a result of the establishment of the Ministry of Transport in 1919. The Road Act passed in 1920 standardised the system for road classification and numbering. Class 1 roads were to be denoted by the prefix 'A'; Class 2 roads were to be denoted by the prefix 'B'; class 3 roads were to be denoted by the prefix 'C', although this latter class is generally not shown as such on most maps.

Thus in Prestonpans the Mid Road, part of which was formerly the Great Post Road, became known as the A198;

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Figure 27: The line of the former coastal road, now superseded by a new road on reclaimed land from the sea; Jim Corsiter's excellent mural of the Cornish Beam Engine and James Watt [from the Prestoungrange Arts Festival's collection] is seen on the wall. © A Ralton, 2004.

Prestonpans High Street became the B1348; West Loan became the B1349 and East Loan was categorised as a class 3 road.

The B1348 to the north of Drummorie, using part of the old road past Ravenshaugh and West Pans, had several difficulties with landslides which necessitated the building of a retaining wall for the Drummorie Estate until a new line of road was created out of the sea by the laying of waste ash from Cockenzie Power Station and the reclaiming of land. The new line of road was opened along the coast in 1975.¹⁷³

The A1 travelled through Tranent and Musselburgh into Edinburgh. However the increasing use of the car meant that the new phenomenon of 'gridlock' became a serious issue for travellers. Calls were made for a Tranent By-pass and also a Musselburgh By-pass and on 27th March 1986 the by-pass for Musselburgh was opened by Sir Malcolm Rifkind after works costing £9M.¹⁷⁴ The dual carriageway was then extended eastwards to Haddington in 1996 at a further cost of £26M.¹⁷⁵ By this time, there were strong calls made for the further improvement of the A1 eastwards to Dunbar and this too was accomplished in early 2004. Inevitably all such changes and

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development raised wider issues concerning loss of countryside, and the wider environmental impact on the landscape.¹⁷⁶

In this respect there have also been initiatives for greater non-motorised transport, as Government has recognised the need for people to become more active and thereby healthier. Laws have been changed to seek to facilitate greater access to the countryside. The legacy of coal mining in Prestonpans has left several former mineral railways leading to the former collieries of Preston Links, Northfield (Penny Pit) and Bankton (where the path to the 'Blue Knowe' was a former coal miner's path¹⁷⁷) as walkways. The coastal trail along the Firth of Forth now called the John Muir Way, after the famous conservationist, will eventually follow the entire coastline of East Lothian between Edinburgh and Cockburnspath in the Scottish Borders.

Thanks to this developing awareness of the need to promote ways of achieving a healthier population, these old roads are no longer simply of historic interest. Instead, they offer a valuable resource which is likely to be increasingly used in the future.

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