

## Duxbury Turnpike Roads

Duxbury and Chorley are situated on ancient highway routes linking the south of Lancashire with Preston further north. The responsibility for the repair and maintenance of these roads in times gone past fell upon townships, and local people were reluctant to pay out when travellers who benefitted were frequently from other areas. Duxbury, being thinly populated, had few rate-payers. In 1650 it was reported that “the highways in Chorley betwixt the market towns of Bolton and Preston are very foul and in great decay.” That notwithstanding, in 1658 coaches were advertised from London to Kendal via Wigan and Chorley, and presumably passing through Duxbury. A hundred years later, the roads were no better: Dr. Aitken, who was surveying for canals described the surface south of the Yarrow as “pebble stones bruised with hammers with nothing to fill the interstices (intervening spaces).”

Turnpike Trusts were established to improve the roads, and the first ones for Lancashire were passed in 1725. In 1726, Acts were passed for two routes between Wigan and Preston; one via Euxton and another from Boars Head to Chorley via Heath Charnock. The Wigan and Preston Trust was later split into two divisions, North and South of the River Yarrow; the Duxbury and Chorley Route was called the Higher Road and the Euxton Route the Lower Road. These early turnpikes frequently improved existing roads with better surfaces and drainage and some bends straightened and roads widened. By the 1730s coal was being carried into Preston on the new road.

Over the whole country, the twenty years from 1751 to 1770 saw the greatest number of Parliamentary Acts for new roads. Nightingales in Heath Charnock was the junction for three Turnpike Trusts. These were the Bolton and Nightingales Trust, the Wigan to Preston Road and the Salford Road.

The first road between Wigan and Preston, along Wigan Lane, followed an ancient route through Duxbury Park, close to the Hall, crossing the Yarrow about 400 metres west of the current Yarrow road bridge. The Salford Road came from Westhoughton and joined the Wigan to Preston road west of Nightingales using Rawlinson Lane. The Bolton and Nightingales Trust used the eastern section of Rawlinson Lane.

The arrival of the Lancaster Canal brought changes. The Salford Road was moved to the eastern bank and joined the Bolton Road. (The Westhoughton

and Duxbury Trust was the successor to the Salford Road). Following an act of 1824, the three Trusts co-operated to build a new road to Chorley including a new Yarrow Bridge and a skew bridge over the Canal. The Westhoughton Trust road was extended from Rawlinson Lane to join the new road south of Skew Bridge and the Wigan to Preston road was diverted to join the new road north of Skew Bridge (opposite Fredericks Ice Cream Parlour). The old route through Duxbury Park and up Red Bank Brow was abandoned. The South of the Yarrow route to Wigan was opened in 1837.

NB This piece draws on various sources, but particularly John Whiteley's article on Turnpikes in "Leading the Way; A History of Lancashire Roads" edited by Dr. Alan Crosby.

John Harrison

November 2018.