

Transport

Roads

Before the Industrial Revolution: roads largely unchanged for two thousand years, many no more than rough tracks, very wet and muddy in winter and rough and stony when dry.

1555 Act: said that members of a parish (village) had to work for four (later six) days a year on local sections of road. Largely ineffective, because:

- villagers had no skills or tools
- they resented the loss of time for their own work
- they did not feel that the roads were of use to them

In the early 18th century **General Wade** built several miles of good road in Scotland for the government which feared a revolt and needed to move the army quickly.

Increased traffic followed growth in Industry – regular supplies of coal, iron, timber, brick and stone were needed. Finished products and increasing amounts of farm produce also needed to be moved to markets.

First Turnpike Trust: (groups of businessmen who, with permission of Parliament, took over stretches of road and rebuilt or repaired them in return for profits from tolls) set up in 1663. Others followed, most in 18th and early 19th centuries. **Not all roads improved**, however, because:

- ⌘ not all roads were taken over by Turnpikes
- ⌘ some Turnpike Trusts failed to make a profit
- ⌘ some used funds badly

Opposition: from local people who felt that tolls on roads (which they used relatively little) were not something that they should have to pay. The **Rebecca riots** took place in Wales when gangs of protesting men broke up gates and tollhouses.

Roads were now properly built by road engineers. One of the first was **John ('Blind Jack') Metcalfe (1717 – 1810)** built many roads in the north, using a heavy foundation and graded stones to a smooth surface.

Thomas Telford (1757 – 1834) started as a stonemason, also engineered canals, harbours, bridges. Built many roads, the most famous being the London-Holyhead road (now the A5) built for the Post Office. The foundation stones of his roads were carefully cut, then covered with carefully graded gravel. Drainage was a feature of the design.

John Macadam (1756-1836) built simpler, but cheaper and effective roads using limestone and sandstone (which would form a kind of cement) or granite chippings which ground together to make a solid mass.

Journey times improved by four or five times during this period of improvement.

1784 Mail service set up by John Palmer : these mail coaches were purpose built – fast, carried an armed guard and used a horn to warn the toll keepers to open the gates. Fresh horses were available at prearranged stages (usually Inns). Timetables were introduced as journeys became reliable. There was a **'Golden Age' of coaching** from then until 1830 when railways began to take over passenger transport.