

## Daniel Defoe on the turnpike roads, 1724-1726

(Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 11 (1724-1727), Appendix, pp. 179-180, 194-199; in D. B. Horn and Mary Ransome, eds., *English Historical Documents, Vol. X, 1714-1783*, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 541-44.)

...The Reason of my taking Notice of this Badness of the Roads, through all the Midland Counties, is this; that as these are Counties which drive a very great Trade with the City of *London*, and with one another, perhaps the greatest of any Counties in *England*; and that, by consequence, the Carriage is exceeding great, and also that all the Land Carriage of the *Northern* Counties necessarily goes through these Counties, so the Roads had been plow'd so deep, and Materials have been in some Places so difficult to be had for Repair of the Roads, that all the Surveyors Rates have been able to do nothing, nay, the very whole Country has not been able to repair them; that is to say, it was a Burthen too great for the poor Farmers; for in *England* it is the Tenant, not the Landlord, that pays the Surveyors of the Highways.

This necessarily brought the Country to bring these Things before the Parliament; and the Consequence has been, that Turn-pikes or Toll-bars have been set up on the several great Roads of *England*, beginning at *London*, and proceeding thro' almost all those dirty deep Roads, in the Midland Counties especially; at which Turn-pikes all Carriages, Drovers of Cattle, and Travellers on Horseback, are oblig'd to pay an easy Toll; that is to say, a Horse a Penny, a Coach three Pence, a Cart four Pence, at some six Pence to eight Pence, a Waggon six Pence, in some a Shilling, and the like....

The Benefit of these Turn-pikes appears now to be so great, and the People in all Places begin to be so sensible of it, that it is incredible what Effect it has already had upon Trade in the Countries where it is more compleatly finish'd; even the Carriage of Goods is abated in some Places, *6d. per* hundred Weight, in some Places *12d. per* hundred, which is abundantly more advantage to Commerce, than the Charge paid amounts to, and yet at the same Time the Expence is paid by the Carriers too, who make the Abatement; so that the Benefit in abating the Rate of Carriage is wholly and simply the Tradesmens, not the Carriers.

Yet the Advantage is evident to the Carriers also another Way; for, as was observ'd before, they can bring more Weight with the same Number of Horses, nor are their Horses so hard work'd and fatigued with their Labour as they were before; in which one Particular 'tis acknowledged by the Carriers, they perform their Work with more Ease, and the Masters are at less Expence.

The Advantage to all other kinds of Travelling I omit here; such as the Safety and Ease to Gentlemen travelling up to *London* on all Occasions, whether to the Term, or to Parliament, to Court, or on any other necessary Occasion, which is not a small Part of the Benefit of these new Methods.

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I mention so often the Safety of Travelling on this Occasion, because, as I observ'd before, the Commissioners for these Repairs of the Highways have order'd, and do daily Order, abundance of Bridges to be repair'd and enlarg'd, and new Ones built, where they find Occasion, which not only serve to carry the Water off, where it otherwise often spreads, and lies as it were, damm'd up upon the Road, and spoils the Way; but where it rises sometimes by sudden Pains to a dangerous Height; for it is to be observ'd, that there is more Hazard, and more Lives lost, in passing, or attempting to pass little Brooks and Streams, which are swell'd by sudden Showers of Rain, and where Passengers expect no Stoppage, than in passing great Rivers, where the Danger is known, and therefore more carefully avoided.

In many of these Places the Commissioners have built large and substantial Bridges for the Benefit of Travelling, ....

And for farther Confirmation of what I have advanc'd above, namely, that we may expect, according to this good Beginning, that the Roads in most Parts of *England* will in a few Years be fully repair'd, and restor'd to the same good Condition, (or perhaps a better, than) they were in during the *Roman* Government, .....

A particular Example of this, I have mention'd already, *viz.* the bringing of Fat Cattle, especially Sheep to *London* in the Winter, from the remoter Counties of *Leicester and Lincoln*, where they are bred; by which the Country Grasiers are oblig'd to sell their Stocks off, at the latter End of the Summer, namely *September and October*, when they sell cheap, and the Butchers and Farmers near *London* engross them, and keeping them 'till *December and January*, sell them, tho' not an Ounce fatter than before, for an advanc'd Price, to the Citizens of *London*; whereas, were the Roads made good and passable, the City would be serv'd with Mutton almost as cheap in the Winter as in the Summer, or the Profit of the Advance would be to the Graziers of *Leicester and Lincolnshires*, who were the original Breeders.

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I might give Examples of other Branches of Inland Commerce, which would be quite alter'd for the better, by this restoring the Goodness of the Roads, and particularly that of carrying Cheese, a Species of Provision so considerable, that nothing, except that of live Cattle, can exceed it.

This is chiefly made in the three *North West* Counties of *England*, *viz.* *Cheshire, Gloucester, and Warwickshires*, and the Parts adjacent, from whence the Nation is very meanly supply'd, by reason of the exceeding Distance of the Country where the Cheese is made, from those Counties where it is chiefly expended.

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I could enlarge here upon the Convenience that would follow such a restoring the Ways, for the carrying of Fish from the Sea Coasts to the Inner Parts of the Kingdom, where, by reason of the Badness of the Ways, they cannot now carry them sweet; This would greatly encrease the Consumption of Fish in its Season, which now for that very Reason, is but small, and would employ an innumerable Number of Horses and Men, as well as encrease the Shipping by that consumption.

## Arthur Young on the Lancashire roads, 1770

(Arthur Young, *A Six Months Tour Through the North of England*, IV (1770), pp. 580-585; in D. B. Horn and Mary Ransome, eds., *English Historical Documents, Vol. X, 1714-1783*, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 544-46.)

*To Lancaster.* [from Windermere.] Turnpike. Very bad, rough and cut up.

*To Preston.* Turnpike. Very bad.

*To Wigan.* Ditto. I know not, in the whole range of language, terms sufficiently expressive to describe this infernal road. To look over a map, and perceive that it is a principal one, not only to some towns', but even whole counties, one would naturally conclude it to be at least decent; but let me most seriously caution all travellers who may accidentally purpose to travel this terrible country, to avoid it as they would the devil; for a thousand to one but they break their necks or their limbs by overthrows or breakings down. They will here meet with rutts which I actually measured four feet deep, and floating with mud only from a wet summer; what therefore must it be after a winter? The only mending it in places receives, is the tumbling in some loose stones, which serve no other purpose but jolting a carriage in the most intolerable manner. These are not merely opinions, but facts, for I actually passed three carts broken down in these eighteen miles of execrable memory.

*To Warrington.* Turnpike. This a paved road, and most infamously bad. Any person would imagine the boobies of the country had made it with a view to immediate destruction; for the breadth is only sufficient for one carriage; consequently it is cut at once into rutts; and you will easily conceive what a break-down dislocating road rutts cut through a pavement must be. The pretence, of wanting materials, is but a mere pretence; for I remarked several quarries of rock, sufficient to make miles of excellent road. If they will pave, the breadth ought to be such as to admit several carriages abreast, or the inevitable consequence must be, the immediate cutting up. Tolls had better be doubled, and even quadrupled, than suffer such a nuisance to remain.

*To Liverpool.* Turnpike. This road is mostly a pavement; the first part of which is such as I have just described; tho' scarcely so bad. But towards *Liverpool* is of a good breadth, and as good as an indifferent pavement can be. It is observable this is a second work; the first narrow one being found as I have described it.

*To Altringham.* Turnpike. If possible this execrable road is worse than that from *Preston*. It is a heavy sand, which cuts into such prodigious rutts, that a carriage moves with great danger. These sands turn to floods of mud in any season the least. - wet.

*To Manchester.* Turnpike. Part of it the same as the last; the rest a paved causeway, and done in so execrable a manner, that it is cut into continual holes: For it is made so narrow, that only one carriage can move at a time, and that consequently in a line of rutts.

*From Dunholm to Knotsford.* Turnpike. It is impossible to describe these infernal roads in terms adequate to their deserts: Part of these six miles I think are worse than any of the preceding.

*To Holmes Chapel.* Turnpike. Much better.

*To Newcastle.* Turnpike. This, in general, is a paved causeway, as narrow as can be conceived, and cut into perpetual holes, some of them two feet deep measured on the level; a more dreadful road cannot be imagined; and wherever the country is the least sandy, the pavement is discontinued, and the rutts and holes most execrable. I was forced to hire two men at one place to support my chaise from overthrowing, in turning out for a cart of goods overthrown and almost buried. Let me persuade all travellers to avoid this terrible country, which must either dislocate their bones with broken pavements, or bury them in muddy sand.

*To Bursletn.* Turnpike. Deep muddy rutts in clay. Here you must let me pause; for these execrable roads continuing no further, I must in general advise all who travel on any business but absolute necessity, to avoid any journey further north than *Newcastle*. All between that place and *Preston* is a country one would suppose devoid of all those improvements and embellishments, which the riches and spirit of modern times have occasioned in other parts: It is a track of country which lays a most heavy tax upon all travellers, and upon itself. Such roads are a much heavier tax than half a crown a horse for a toll would be. Agriculture, manufactures, and commerce must suffer in such a track, as well as the traveller. The rates of carriage and hire of carts must either run enormously high, or the farmers starve by letting their teams. But it is only bad management that can occasion such very miserable roads, in a country so abounding with towns, trade, and manufactures: The tolls of the turnpikes for several paved roads do not rise higher than *3d. per* horse, for which sum they pave wide enough for one carriage. If this was quadrupled they might certainly do it well for three, and then it would escape being cut up: But if they were five times trebled, it would be infinitely preferable to the present condition. Until better management is produced, I would advise all travellers to consider this country as sea, and as soon think of driving into the ocean as venturing into such detestable roads. I am told the *Derby* way to *Manchester* is good. But further is not penetrable. . . .

## Canal transport in Nottinghamshire, 1794

(R. Lowe, *General View of the Agriculture of the county of Nottingham* (1794), pp. 51-52; in A. Aspinall and E. Anthony Smith, eds., *English Historical Documents, XI, 1783-1832*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 541.)

There is a great trade carried on in this county by water, by means of the river Trent, and the different canals. By the Trent are carried downwards, lead, copper, coals, and salt, from Cheshire, cheese, Staffordshire ware, corn, &c.; upwards, Raff or Norway timber, hemp, flax, iron, groceries, malt, corn, flints from Northfleet, near Gravesend, for the Staffordshire potteries.

*By the canal from Chesterfield-to Worksop and Retford, and to the Trent at Stockwith-downwards, coal, lead, sleetly stone, lime and lime-stone, chirt-stone, for the glass manufactories, coarse earthen ware, cast metal goods and pig metal, oak timber and bark, and sail cloth. Upwards, Fir timber and deals, grain, malt and flour, groceries, bar iron, and Cumberland ore, wines, spirits, and porter, hemp and flax, cotton-wool and yarn, Westmorland slate, and various sorts of small package. Upwards and downwards, bricks, tiles, hops, and candlewicks: other articles, however, bear but a small proportion to the coal, downwards; and the corn, groceries, foreign timber, and iron, upwards....*

## **John Campbell on canal building in the mid-eighteenth Century, 1774**

(J. Campbell, *A Political Survey of Britain*, II (1774), pp.: 263-270; in D. B. Horn and Mary Ransome, eds., *English Historical Documents, Vol. X, 1714-1783*, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 546-48. Campbell describes the Duke of Bridgewater's canal, built by James Brindley and opened in 1761.)

A NOBLEMAN of the First rank formed a Design of making a Canal from Worsley Bridge to Manchester in the County of Lancaster, for the carrying thither his Coals; which not being barely for his own, but also for the publick Benefit, an Act of Parliament passed in Anno Domini 1759, to enable him to undertake this Work, with all the proper Clauses for securing the Advantages that had been proposed to the Community. After the Canal was actually begun, it was thought practicable to carry it over the River Irwell upon Arches, and so over Trafford Moss to Longford Bridge, which made another Act necessary; and such a Law being obtained, this stupendous Work was carried into effectual Execution. The Value of this Mode of Navigation came from thence to be better understood, and the very extensive Uses to which it might be applied were more clearly comprehended. In consequence of these Discoveries it was determined to carry the Duke of Bridgewater's Canal over the Rivers Mersey and Bolland, and to continue it to that Part of the River Mersey, over-against the Hemp Stones, in the County of Chester, where that River is naturally navigable, and the Passage consequently open to Liverpool. The Powers requisite for the Performance of this made a Third Act necessary, which, upon the Petition of the Inhabitants of the Country through which the proposed Canal was to pass, and who were to be benefited by it, was likewise obtained, the Duke taking upon himself the whole Expence, and this without demanding any Augmentation of Tonage.

This unexpected Extension of the Canal, which, from a Thing of private Convenience, was now become a Work of so much publick Utility both to Lancashire and Cheshire, very naturally excited a Spirit of Emulation in the Inhabitants of the adjacent Counties; the trading and manufacturing Part of which especially saw the Importance of this new Water-Carriage, they felt their own Wants, and, after mature Consideration, conceived they might in the same Way be relieved. This, upon due Deliberation, produced an Application to Parliament for the Powers they judged necessary for cutting a navigable Canal from Wildon Bridge in Derbyshire, to run Westward into Staffordshire, and then proceeding North to join the Duke's Canal at Preston Bridge, and to terminate therewith by falling into the Mersey at Runcorn Gap in Cheshire. An Act accordingly passed for this Purpose Anno Domini 1766; and the very same Year, so prevalent was the Desire of promoting these Inland Navigations, that an Act likewise passed for the making another Canal from between Bewdley and Tillon Brook in Worcestershire to Haywood Mill in Staffordshire. By these Canals a Conjunction will be effected between the Severn and the Trent, and of both with the Mersey, so that consequently a Communication will be opened between the Ports of Bristol, Liverpool, and Hull.

A Scheme that would have been thought, and perhaps would have been found impracticable in the preceding Century, and which, all its Circumstances considered, must appear astonishing to our Posterity. These prodigious Works, now in a Train of

Execution, shew that we ought not to despair of Things of great national Utility, though they may long dwell in the Minds, or only float upon the Tongues of Men. It proves that a single vigorous Attempt will do much more than the most serious or even the most conclusive Arguments. For Facts speak to the Senses and to the Feelings of Mankind, as well as to their Reason. As soon therefore as it appeared, that an easy and commodious Passage could be opened between Manchester and Liverpool, all Diffidence and all Difficulties vanished. Surveys were immediately directed; and, as soon as they were perfected, Subscriptions chearfully followed, the Nobility and Gentry expressing the warmest Zeal in risquing their private Property for the publick Service. But then this Zeal was according to Knowledge; they were clearly convinced of the Utility of the Undertaking; and they saw, without suffering any Uneasiness, that Time, Labour, and Expence, must purchase them those Benefits this new Navigation was to bestow; and therefore what in Days of less Industry, less Commercial Spirit, and, let us add, less Opulence, would have been held insuperable Obstacles, did not at all deter them from pursuing so great and so glorious a Design.

WHAT the actual Advantages, that will be derived from these Canals when finished, may be, Time and Experience only can determine; but upon what reasonable Expectations they have been so steadily as well as strenuously supported, is incumbent upon me to report, in order to justify the Pains taken about them in this Work. It is a vast Tract of Country through which they are to pass, and not barely one or two, but several Counties that are to share the Benefit of them, with this remarkable Circumstance in their Favour, that in no Part of this noble Island could such a Communication be of more Use, the Number considered of large, and many of them manufacturing Towns, in its Vicinity. All Kinds of Provisions, but more especially Grain, will by their means be rendered cheaper, and kept to a more equal Price. For by furnishing Manure from great Distances at a low Rate, and giving a quick Carriage even to remote Markets, the Canal will excite an active Spirit of Cultivation, and the Certainty of obtaining a speedy Supply at a small Expence will render an unreasonable Rise *of Com*, where it has been in Times past frequently and fatally experienced, for the future in a great measure impracticable. Many bulky, but at the same time very useful Commodities, such as Flint, Free, Lirne, Mill, Grinding, and Paving Stones, Marl, Slate, Coals of different Kinds, Marble, Alabaster, Iron Ore, will find a much easier and cheaper Passage, and of course reach many more and those too better Markets, than they can be carried to, circumstanced as they are at present.

FREQUENT Additions will probably be made to these natural Riches from the Discoveries that must arise from the cutting through a Variety of Soils in the Progress of this great Work, some Instances of which have occurred already. Besides, the Staples of these several Counties may be carried farther, in greater Quantities, and be notwithstanding afforded at lower Rates, such as Timber from different Parts of Lancashire, the Salt and Cheese of Cheshire, Earthen-ware from Staffordshire, numerous Articles from Birmingham, and all the various Manufactures from, Manchester and other Places, will be relieved from a Variety of Impediments under which they have hitherto laboured. Raw Materials of every Sort will be conveyed with much more Ease and Expedition to the several Towns where they are wrought up, and, when manufactured, will with like Facility be carried to the Ports from which they are usually shipped, either Coast-ways to different Parts of this, or into other Countries. Thus Agriculture, Manufactures, domestic Trade, foreign Commerce, and every Species of Industry

subservient to all these, will be evidently and in a high Degree promoted by this Hand Navigation, to say nothing of the Numbers who will live and be comfortably subsisted by it. It must however be acknowledged, that some Objections have been made against, and some Suspicions suggested, as to Inconveniencies with which it may be attended. It is but justice to observe, that these are in their Nature far more uncertain, and at the same time of much less Consequence, than the Benefits that have been before stated, nor would it be at all impossible to find Remedies for them even if they should happen.

... The Dexterity shewn in adapting Machines to a Variety of Intentions, which have been introduced in many new Undertakings, that might otherwise have proved impracticable, does great Honour as well to this Country, as to the present Age.

IN nothing hath this been more conspicuous, than in the last-mentioned of our Improvements, that is, the navigable Canals, which have been chiefly conducted by one original Genius, so fertile in Resources, that hitherto no Obstacles, however formidable, have put a Stop to his Designs. He was prepared for his Operations above, by his Knowledge in conducting those under Ground, in the Coal Mines at Worsley, so that the Difficulties which occurred in the Progress of the Canal, though they appeared new, or rather were so in the Sight of others, were not beheld in the same Light by him; for his Acquaintance with the Mechanic Powers, and what Experience had taught him of their Effects, produced a Confidence which was held for Temerity till the Event shewed it was well founded. But his Works being publickly carried on, their Principles were quickly understood, his Resources became known, and he readily contributing both his Advice and his Assistance, we see them extended under his Direction with equal Spirit and Success. There is little Doubt to be made, that when-ever these great Works shall be completed, and their Consequences evidently displayed, they will be imitated in many Places.