MANCHESTER-AUSTERLANDS TURNPIKE:

> *"An Act for repairing the Roads from the Town of Manchester, leading through Newton, Failsworth and Oldham, in the County Palatine of Lancaster, to Austerlands in the Parish of Saddleworth in the County of York."*
> – ***Public Act, 8, George II, c. 3*** *(1734/35)*

Travel before the Turnpike

Although there had been tracks and primitive roads across the Pennines from Oldham into Yorkshire for centuries, perhaps the first modern version of the present A62 between Manchester and Leeds began its existence in 1735 as a turnpike, or toll-road, from the western end of Newton Lane (now Oldham Street) in Manchester to Thorpe Lane in Austerlands. My interest in this subject began after I discovered that some of my ancestors were 'clothiers' living in the 18th and early 19th centuries in several homesteads known as Roebuck Low, Green Lane and Strines that are found on the west side of the Pennines just north of Austerlands and the present A road to Huddersfield. Such clothiers were independent woollen merchants and cloth makers who were sometimes referred to as the 'little makers' and were described by the Cleckheaton Guardian as *"...men who doffed their caps to no one, and recognized no right in either squire or parson to question, or meddle with them..."*.

These enterprising individuals not only wove cloth, they also travelled the country buying raw wool and then selling the finished product. Thus the clothiers of Strinesdale would have spent many hours on the roads both travelling over the Pennines into Yorkshire to buy wool and westwards to the markets of Manchester to sell their cloth. Indeed, Benjamin Nightingale, in his history of Lancashire Non-Conformity, relates that in 1775 the new minister of Greenacres Congregational Church, the Rev. Edward Harrison from Swinden-in-Craven, was introduced to the congregation by "*Mr. John Winterbottom, of Green Lane, a woollen manufacturer, who frequently went to Craven on business matters*" (see Chapter 3).



The Cloth Makers from *The Costume of Yorkshire* by George Walker (1814).

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The Deanery of Craven consists of a number of small towns and villages in a largely agricultural area to the west of Skipton. The village of Swinden is roughly 50 miles from Strinesdale, and can be reached either by travelling on the east of the Pennines *via* Hebden Bridge and Keighley or on the western edge of the hills *via* Rochdale and Burnley. On today's roads in a modern van or truck the journey might take 80-90 mins, but with a horse and cart on the roads of the early 18th century, the same journey might have taken 10-15 hrs, depending on the weather! By all accounts the roads in the early 1700s were very bad, often rutted and full of pot-holes that filled with water or mud when it rained or snowed. In addition, outside of the major towns, the roads in the Pennines were little more than single tracks totally unsuitable for wheeled vehicles – perhaps accounting for the clothiers preference for packhorses rather than horse-drawn carts (see illustration).

There was little or no control over road maintenance by the Government. Essentially each Parish was commanded to keep its roads in a state of good repair, and the local councillors did as little as was necessary to keep their parishioners happy. Clearly, the journeys of the travelling clothiers would have been made much easier with better quality, well-maintained thoroughfares and, in the middle of the century, things began to change.

The rise of the toll roads

The late-1600s had seen the first introduction of turnpikes, which were roads that required the users to pay a fee or toll to use them; however, it wasn't until the early or middle of the next century that the idea really took off. The premise being that the tolls would pay the cost of building and maintaining the roads. The introduction of these roads led to some annoyance for many road users who suddenly had to pay to travel a route they had previously used for free – some referring to this process as legalized highway robbery, and sometimes leading to riots and the destruction of the toll bars and houses that had been set up to collect the fees. Having originally considered that road improvement would have helped my clothier ancestors, in retrospect I can't help feeling that they might have been amongst the protestors, and probably carried on using their packhorses to avoid these new-fangled toll roads!

Indeed, the main beneficiaries of these improved highways would have been the wealthy landowners and merchants who used wheeled vehicles either for travel between their estates or for transporting their merchandise long distances. Support for this contention can be clearly seen in the list of Trustees who petitioned for the building of the Manchester-Austerlands turnpike.

The men behind the Manchester-Austerlands Turnpike

Because the creation or improvement of a turnpike required an Act of Parliament, the first-named Trustees in the Act were seven Members of Parliament (MPs). In addition, there

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were four local Baronets, two lawyers, a Fellow of the Royal Society, a surgeon, and another 69 landowners and/or businessmen listed as Trustees.

At the time of the Act there were seven Parliamentary constituencies in Lancashire – Clitheroe, Lancashire, Lancaster, Liverpool, Newton, Preston and Wigan. Both of Clitheroe's MPs were Trustees (**Sir Nathaniel Curzon [1676-1758**], 4th Baronet of Kedleston Hall; and **Sir Thomas Lister [1688-1745]** of Gisburne Park), both of Lancashire's (**Sir Edward Stanley [1689-1776]**, 5th Baronet of Bickerstaffe; and **Sir Richard Shuttleworth [1683-1749]** of Gawthorpe Hall & Forcett), one of Preston's two MPs (**Sir Henry Hoghton [1678-1768]**, 5th Baronet of Hoghton Tower), and both of Wigan's (**Rt. Hon. James Barry [1667-1748]**, 4th Earl of Barrymore; and **Sir Roger Bradshaigh [1675-1747]**, 3rd Baronet of Haigh Hall).

None of these MPs was selected in what today we would consider a free-and-fair election; all were 'elected unopposed'. Clitheroe was a well-known 'pocket' borough where MPs were elected by owners of 102 burgages. Initially, the burgages had individual owners; however, by 1727 Nathaniel Curzon and Thomas Lister owned, or controlled, 57 of these burgages. As well as being co-MPs, Curzon and Lister were also brothers-in-law, both being married to daughters of Sir Ralph Assheton, 2nd Baronet of Middleton. Indeed, they had obtained several of these burgages from their father-in-law. In addition, in 1716 Lister's wife, Catherine, had inherited Werneth Hall from her father; so, Lister was also the Lord of the Manor of Oldham. The MPs for Lancashire were appointed by the Earl of Derby, at this time the Rt. Hon. James Stanley the 10th Earl, a distant relative of the MP Sir Edward Stanley who would ultimately succeed James as the 11th Earl. In Preston, the elections were dominated by the local country gentry, amongst whom the Hoghton family was prominent. In Wigan the MPs were elected by the Freemen of the Borough who were appointed by the Mayor – both the Rt. Hon. James Barry (twice) and Sir Roger Bradshaigh (five times) were Mayors of Wigan, and during their mayoralties had created numerous Freemen.

Three of the MPs were Whigs (Hoghton, Stanley and Bradshaigh), although Bradshaigh had originally been a Tory and was deeply in debt to his fellow Wigan MP, the Tory and Jacobite James Barry. The other four MPs (Barry, Curzon, Shuttleworth and Lister) were all Tories. Richard Shuttleworth, like Barry, was a noted Jacobite whose relatives had been involved in the 1715 Jacobite Rising, but at later dates he sometimes voted with the Whigs and doesn't appear to have been involved in the Rising of 1745. On the other hand, Barry provided significant financial support for an intended invasion of French troops in support of Bonnie Prince Charlie's raid into northern Britain in the Jacobite Rising of 1745 and was lucky to avoid prosecution for treason.

In addition to these MPs, the rest of the Trustees were very wealthy men. It should be noted that to qualify as a Trustee, one had to "*…be, in his own Right or in the Right of his Wife, in the actual Possession and Enjoyment of Lands, Tenements, or hereditaments, of the yearly Value of One hundred Pounds, or shall be heir apparent to some Person or Persons having an Estate of the yearly Value of Three hundred Pounds…*". According to the National

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Archives currency converter £100 in 1740 would be equivalent to approximately £12,000 today.

At the top of the Trustee list were the local nobility:

Sir Ralph Ashton, Bart. (1692-1765) – 3rd Baronet of Middleton, son of Richard Assheton brother of the 2nd Baronet and cousin of both Nathaniel Curzon's wife, Mary Assheton, and Thomas Lister's wife, Catherine Assheton.

Sir John Bland, Bart. (1691-1743) – 5th Baronet of Hulme Hall. He had previously been a Tory MP for Lancashire (1713-1727). He was a Jacobite who, in 1715, was arrested on suspicion of treason, but later released.

Sir Charles Duckenfield, Bart. (1670–1742) – 2nd Baronet of Dukinfield Hall, Cheshire. His half brother **Robert Duckenfield, Esq. (1687-1748)** of Manchester was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1741, and another of the Trustees.

Sir Oswald Mosley, Bart. (1674–1751) – of Ancoats and 1st Baronet of Rolleston (1720), Staffordshire. He was the High Sheriff of Staffordshire in 1700, created a Baronet in 1720 and also, from 1734, the Lord of the Manor of Manchester. His son **Oswald Mosley, Esq. (1705-1757)** would succeed his father as the 2nd Baronet of Rolleston and Lord of the Manor of Manchester in 1751, and was another of the Trustees. (Note: These Oswald Mosleys are distant ancestors of Oswald Mosley, Labour MP for Smethwick [1926-31] and founder of the British Union of Fascists [1932].)

The nobility were joined by local landowners, dignitaries and businessmen, perhaps of most interest to Oldhamers were **Benjamin Gregge, Esq. (1683-1740)** of Chamber Hall who was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1722, **Thomas Horton, Esq. (1689-1757)** of Chadderton Hall who was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1737, **Alexander Radclyffe, Esq. (1656-1740)** of Foxdenton Hall, and his son **Robert Radclyffe, Esq. (1707-1749)** who was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1744. The other Trustees included several clerics, lawyers, scientists, and many notable Manchester-area families (see a few examples at end of the article).

Taking the tolls

Ultimately the turnpike would be formed roughly along the route of the present A62 between Manchester and Austerlands with, initially, a single toll bar at Dob Lane close to a house called the 'Watch-house' at the border between Newton Heath and Failsworth (close to the present junction of Linwood Street and Oldham Road). However the Trustees were also given the power to add further toll bars at a later date. Here are the present-day locations of some of these toll bars, all of which are now lost (see Rosevear):

Oldham Street/Piccadilly, Manchester; OS Grid Reference: SJ 84372 98344
Oldham Road/Butler Street, Ancoats; OS Grid Reference: SJ 85300 99100
Oldham Road/Hulme Hall Lane, Miles Platting; OS Grid Reference: SJ 86080 99880
Oldham Road/Linwood Street (see above): OS Grid Reference: SD 88377 00825
Oldham Road/Ashton Road West, Failsworth; OS Grid Reference: SD 89180 01250
Oldham Road/M60, Hollinwood; OS Grid Reference: SD 90500 02500

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Oldham Road/Chamber Road; OS Grid Reference: SD 90990 03240
Huddersfield Road/Ripponden Road, Waterhead; OS Grid Reference: SD 94200 05600
Thorpe Lane, Austerlands; OS Grid Reference: SD 95821 05522

The tolls payable following the 1734/35 Act were as follows:

Coaches or Carriages drawn by 6 or more horses = 1s 6d
Coaches or Carriages drawn by 2-4 horses = 1s
Coaches or Carriages drawn by a single horse = 6d
Four-wheeled carts or wains = 2s
Two-wheeled carts or wains drawn by 3 or more horses = 6d
Two-wheeled carts or wains drawn by 1 or 2 horses = 4d
Any horse, mule or ass laden with coal = ½d
Any horse, mule or ass laden or unladen and not drawing = 1d
Any drove of oxen or cattle = 10d per score and in proportion for a greater or lesser number
Any drove of calves, pigs or sheep = 5d per score and in proportion for a greater or lesser number

Crossing the Pennines

In the same year that the Act creating the Manchester-Austerlands turnpike was passed, another Act had been enacted to build a road across the Pennines from Rochdale to Halifax and Elland (**Public Act, 8, George II, c. 7**). However, despite the fact that the turnpike through Oldham was subject to further repairs and alterations in 1747/48 (**Public Act, 21, George II, c. 15**), it would be another 12 years before the turnpike was extended across the hills to a major Yorkshire town. In 1759, an Act of Parliament (**Public Act, 32, George II, c. 48**) was passed to create a turnpike from Wakefield through Huddersfield to Austerlands. Over the next 70 years or so numerous Acts were created to repair, improve, widen, divert, and make other branches of the Manchester-Austerlands turnpike:

1771: **Public Act, 11, George III, c. 82**
1799: **Local and Personal Act, 39, George III, c. xxv**
1806: **Local and Personal Act, 46, George III, c. lxiii**
1825: **Local and Personal Act, 6, George IV, c. lxxxiii**
1837: **Local and Personal Act, 7, Willliam IV & 1, Victoria I, c. xliii**

In particular, the 1799 Act turnpiked the road from Ashton-under-Lyne to Royton crossing the Manchester-Austerlands road in the centre of Oldham, and in 1825 this thoroughfare was extended from Edge Lane through Royton village and on to Rochdale. On the other side of the Pennines there would be similar improvements and modifications of the turnpike from Wakefield – Parliamentary Acts being passed in 1778, 1820 and 1831.

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Some notable Trustees

James Chetham, Esq. of Smedley (High Sheriff of Lancashire, 1730), his cousin **Edward Chetham, Esq.** of Nuthurst, and another relative **Samuel Chetham, Esq.** of Turton Tower (High Sheriff of Lancashire, 1738), all three descendants of James Chetham brother of Humphrey Chetham (1580-1653).

Sir Darcy Lever, Esq., Doctor of Laws (1705-1743) of Alkrington Hall. High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1736.

James Lightboun (or Lightbowne), Esq. (c. 1680-1738) of Lincoln's Inn, Master in Chancery. One of the 12 Masters of the Court of Chancery. The Court of Chancery was a "court of equity" authorized to provide remedies in disputes between people but without awarding monetary damages. As an indication of his wealth, it was alleged in 1725, during the trial of the Earl of Macclesfield (1666-1732) for corruption, that Lightboun paid the Earl about £6,000 to obtain his position of Master in Chancery – over half a million pounds in today's money! He was the son of James Lightbowne (1646-1699) and Elizabeth Hough of Lightbowne and Hough Halls in Moston. James Sr. was also a lawyer, graduating from Oxford University (1662) and was a barrister and bencher of Gray's Inn. James Jr. had no children, but another **James Lightboun, gent.**, is listed as a Trustee, perhaps a relative.

George Lloyd, Esq. **(1708-1783)** of Manchester. Graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine from Queens College, Cambridge (1731), scientist and Fellow of the Royal Society (1737). He purchased Hulme Hall from Sir John Bland, 6th Baronet Of Hulme Hall (son of the 5th Baronet, see above) in 1751. The son of **Gamaliel Lloyd, gent.** a Manchester merchant and manufacturer who was also one of the Trustees.

Rev. Mr. John Penny M.A., Esq. – Rector of Ashton-under-Lyne.

Thomas Reynolds, Esq. of Strangeways, Director of the South Sea Company (1715-1722), and his son **Francis Reynolds, Esq.** who was later the MP for Lancaster (1745-1773).

Rev. Mr. Samuel Sidebottom, Esq. – Rector of Middleton.

Richard Townley, Esq. of Belfield Hall who was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1752.

The Warden of Manchester Collegiate Church – The Rt. Rev. Samuel Peploe (1667-1752). He was Warden from 1718 to 1738, whilst also serving as the Bishop of Chester from 1725 to 1752. He was a staunch Whig and anti-Jacobite who, when vicar of Preston in 1715, "mounted his pulpit" and urged his parishioners to support the new Hanoverian king (George I). Peploe was joined as a Trustee by the other Fellows of the church.

James Bayley, gent. of Withington (High Sheriff of Lancashire, 1757) and his son **Daniel Bayley, gent.** of Hope Hall.

Edward Byrom, gent. of Kersal, another **Edward Byrom, gent.** and a **Josiah Byrom, gent.**, all probably related – the Byroms were a family of wealthy merchants and linen drapers who owned the manors of Byrom (nr. Leigh) and Parr (now part of St Helens).

Samuel Clowes, gent. of Broughton Old Hall (Borough Reeve of Manchester, 1739-40), and possible relatives **Thomas Clowes, gent.** and **John Clowes, gent.**.

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John Dickenson, gent. of Birch Hall, Rusholme, merchant and Borough Reeve of Manchester (1749-50), notoriously the host of Bonnie Prince Charlie when the Scottish army reached Manchester during the Jacobite rebellion of 1745.

Richard Hall, gent. (1703-1793) – of Manchester. Surgeon.

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