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THE SANDWICH TO DOVER TURNPIKE 1833-1874

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Though it was quite short - only some eleven miles - the Sandwich to Dover Turnpike road is of considerable interest. Though some records survive for quite a number of the turnpike roads in Kent, most of those records are very incomplete and it is not possible to understand what was going on owing to lack of evidence. The records of the *Sandwich to Dover turnpike*, however, are much more complete: there are two account books which cover the years 1797-1832 and 1863-1874¹ and two minute books which cover the years 1832-46 and 1846-74², when the Trust was finally wound up. The account books are less helpful than might have been hoped, as they refer to receipts and payments in the briefest way, often only by initials, and usually without detail of what transaction was involved, but the minute books cover in detail the last 42 years of the Trust's existence. Rather more to the point is the fact that the line of the road was to be paralleled by a railway: in 1847, a branch line was opened by the South Eastern Railway from Minster (on the Canterbury-Ramsgate line) to Deal, then the site of an Admiralty dockyard, and an important victualling station for ships either sheltering in the Downs or making their last English landfall before a long voyage. This line was extended to Dover in 1881 as a joint project between the South Eastern Railway and the rival London, Chatham and Dover line, so that it is possible to see from the Turnpike Trust's minutes the effect of the coming of the railway on half the length of road - unfortunately, the Trust was wound up before the second part of the railway was completed, but the fact that it was so wound up is an eloquent piece of evidence in itself. The Trust's records, therefore, give an excellent, almost unique (in Kent at least) opportunity to see just how the coming of the railway affected the contemporary road system.

¹ Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone [CKS] T11/F1 and T11/F2, respectively.

² CKS T11/A1 and T11/A2, respectively.

When the surviving Minutes begin the Trust was evidently reasonably prosperous. The four gates (Dover Castle hill, Deal Castle, Upper Deal and Stone Cross at Sandwich; effectively a gate at each end of the road, and a gate on either side of the township of Deal) were being let at an average annual rental of some £830 a year (£867 in 1833, the first year for which the record survives in this form), and this continued until 1838. The Trust felt sure enough of its position to repay £300 worth of bonds in April 1833, and the road was deemed to be 'in tolerable condition throughout' in that October. The Trust certainly was not ready to throw its money about; in October 1834, an offer to provide two gas lamps for each toll gate at an expense of £10 a year per gate was declined on the ground that the expense was not justified, though in July 1837 the gatekeepers were '...to have each a sufficient light at their toll houses to enable passengers to distinguish their money' which conjures a delightful picture of elegant gentlemen fumbling in their purses to find the necessary pence for the toll.

The Minutes contain a ceaseless list of minor repairs required or carried out: in January 1834, the Corporation of Sandwich was required to repair the embankment of the South stream between St. Bartholomew's [Hospital] and the town; at the April meeting it was noted that the repair had been completed. In 1835, the Surveyor was instructed to use a sieve with a mesh of 2 inches rather than the 2½ inches hitherto employed, presumably to ensure a better surface. At the same time the crest of Hacklinge Hill was to be lowered by three feet 'more or less', and similar injunctions and requirements continue to appear over the years. Occasionally, the Minutes record that somebody has been presented before the local magistrates and charged with stealing some road stone, or sand, and has been duly fined. The overall image presented is one of a small group of Trustees (few tended to attend the quarterly meetings) doing their conscientious best to maintain their not very long road as well as they might.

However, all was clearly not well with the Trust's finances. In January 1838, new bars (which seem from the context to have been subsidiary gates) were to be erected at Sholden church, and at Walmer pond - the exact placing of the latter was to be the subject of much debate on and off over the next decade, with proposals to move it up the hill to a position opposite the National school being regularly defeated - presumably with the idea of increasing revenue. If that was the intention, it does not seem to have worked very well, as in April 1838 proposals to improve the road were rejected as 'impractical in the present state of the funds', and the idea of putting the maintenance of the road out to contract was mentioned, though it seems to have got no further than that. At the same time the

Master-General of the Ordnance was asked to wait for the £25 a year due from the Trust in connection with Dover Hill (perhaps as rent for the land the toll-house stood on; it is not clear in the Minutes why any payment was required) '...during the inability of the Trust to pay it.' At the same time the payment of interest due to bond holders was suspended '...except to absolutely necessitous holders'. How the level of necessity was to be judged seems to have been left to the Treasurer to work out, not always to everybody's satisfaction; in May Mr Watson was denied his interest as 'not really necessitous'.

The situation cannot have been helped by the fraudulent behaviour of some of the toll collectors: the Walmer toll bar collector was found to be issuing free tickets in July 1838. This of course will have been a loss to the lessee, rather than to the Trust, but if the practice were to become widespread, lessees would not come forward, hence the Trustees' concern.

At what must have been a very tense quarterly meeting in October 1838 the Treasurer reported that the average income for the five years ending at Christmas 1838 had been £860, but that the annual average expenses had been £911; the Trust had been losing money at the rate of £51 a year. The Surveyor reported that another £400 was needed to put the road into repair, and it was resolved to issue further bonds for £500 on the security of the tolls. Future expenses (presumably including interest on the new bonds) was expected to run at £1,115 a year. A sub-committee had previously been appointed to consider the financial situation, and it now reported that:

It is evident that the present income of the Trust is totally inadequate to afford the necessary funds for maintaining the road in repair and providing for the payment of the bondholders, and it appears to your Committee absolutely necessary to increase the revenue £300 a year by some alteration of the tolls now payable on the road.

It was resolved that each gate should in future collect its own toll - presumably, it had been possible to buy tickets which passed more than one gate, and this had clearly been the cause of some loss of revenue, which the Trust now hoped to defeat. For a long-term solution, it was resolved that a petition should be made to Parliament to alter the Acts of 37 George III (1797?) and 58 George III (1818?), which presumably laid down the various toll rates. Hardly surprisingly, with the financial situation in such a state of flux, nobody would be very keen to take a year's lease of the tolls, and so they were let out for the first six months of 1839 only for a total of £359, considerably less than they had been worth (on a pro-rata basis) in the previous years.

In January 1839, the Surveyor reported that the expenses of keeping the road in repair for that year would come to some £1,192 11s. 9d. - even worse than the figure suggested only three months before. During the spring of 1839 the petition to Parliament proposed in October 1838 had been formalised into a Bill, and its progress through Parliament was under discussion. For the quarter June-September 1839 the Trust decided to take the collection of tolls into its own hands, and four toll keepers were appointed. The keepers at Upper Deal (which also covered the Sholden bar) and Deal Castle (which also covered Walmer bar) were to be paid 18s. a week each; the keepers at Dover Castle gate and Stone Cross gate were to receive 14s. each. That the Stone Cross keeper should be paid at a lower rate was not surprising; that gate's rental was always the lowest of the four, but it is a little surprising that the keeper at Dover Castle hill was considered to be worth no more than his colleague at Stone Cross: the Dover Castle gate was usually either the most, or second most, expensive gate in terms of rental of the four. Perhaps the fact there were subordinate bars to be looked after at Upper Deal and Deal Castle swung the scale in their favour. At all events, the Dover Castle hill keeper was not long enough in his post to have much opportunity for complaint, as the tolls were let out in September, for the period 6th September to the end of the year, roughly four months. The four gates were let for a total of £523, representing a very much increased annual value of some £1,560, presumably reflecting the new tolls permissible under the new Act, though this is nowhere specifically stated.

At all events, the Trust was by no means out of the financial wood as yet, and in October 1839 it was reported that total indebtedness stood at £1,181 12s. 4d. whereof £557 6s. 6d. represented unpaid interest: as a temporary solution a further bond of £300 was to be sought.

<i>Payments</i>		<i>Receipts</i>	
Road	£ 40.00.00	Balance in hand	£ 18.18.00 ³ / ₄
Interest	£ 71.10.00	Of Mr Hooper	£200.00.00
		Of Mr Waller	£ 80.00.00
			<hr/>
			£298.18.00 ³ / ₄
<i>Liabilities</i>			
Bills unpaid	£703.18.06		
Arrears of interest	£551.18.09	<i>Deficiency</i>	£539.09.02 ¹ / ₄
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	£838.07.03 ³		£838.07.03

³ *Sic*: Quite how the total figures in this column were arrived at is a mystery.

At the end of 1839 the Treasurer's accounts for the past year made such gloomy reading that, exceptionally, they were copied into the Minutes.

To add to the gloom, the Treasurer reported that expenses for 1840 (including repayment) would come to £1,443 10s. — and that, to make matters worse, 'The road [was] reported to be in a very bad state of repair'. However, even to this black cloud there was a silver lining: the tolls had been let for a total of £1,506, nearly twice the previous average annual rate. Perhaps it was as well for the Trustees' peace of mind that they did not know that this figure was never to be reached again.

December 1840 saw another proposed move of a gate, this time of the Stone Cross gate to the end of Felderland Lane — that is, about a mile nearer to Deal, but the proposal was defeated and a similar proposal was again defeated a year later (December, 1841). In January 1841 it was reported that the '...road...[is] progressively improving, but still in a bad state of repair', and expenses for 1841 were estimated at £1,504 12s. Finances were obviously getting better though, and in May 1841 it was agreed that bond holders should be paid one year's interest — presumably that due in 1838. By January 1842 the estimate for the coming year's expenses had been brought down to £1,400 3s. 9d., and another year's interest was paid to bond holders that May. In November came the first of the various unsuccessful attempts to move the Walmer bar to a new position outside the National School. In November 1842, the tolls for 1843 were advertised at a total of £1,380, but even at this reduced figure there were no bidders, and the Trustees again decided to collect the tolls for themselves. This time the Upper Deal collector was only to be offered 15s. a week, and the Deal Castle man 12s., though a separate collector was to be employed at Walmer for 7s. The Dover Castle and Stone Cross collectors were to be paid 12s. each. The total wages bill would thus be £2 18s. a week; in 1839, it had been £3 4s. Did this indicate that the 1839 keepers had been overpaid, or that there was now less work for them to do? Or perhaps that cheap labour was easier to come by?

By January 1843, the coming year's estimated expenses had fallen to £1,305 11s., but a suggestion to push up income by establishing another bar in Walmer 'at Mr Ansell's' was defeated after the receipt of a memorial from those living near Mr Ansell. Another year's bond holders' interest was to be paid in January, 1843, and another in January 1844, when the expenses estimate had been given as £1,364 12s.: the road was reported to be 'much improved in repair'. In April of that year it was resolved that half a year's interest be paid; the other half was authorised in September. The bond holders were thus now receiving their due interest, but unless some payments of overdue

interest were made which were not minuted (which is quite possible) they still appear to have lost three years' interest.

All the same, by 1844 the Trustees could look back on the last six years with some pride. What had been a disastrous financial situation had been dealt with, and the Trust was now clearly solvent. No bid had been received for the Stone Cross gate in 1842, and the Trustees presumably collected the tolls for themselves, as they did for all gates in 1843, but rents for 1840, 1841 and 1844 had averaged £1,471, and estimated average expenses for those years had been given as £1,337 11s. The road was now in better repair than it had been, interest was being paid on time, even if arrears may not have been paid in full.

But there was a cloud 'no bigger than a man's hand' on the horizon. In October 1844, the Trust's clerk was directed to watch the progress of the several railways bills which were being brought before Parliament and which might affect the Trust's interests. In October 1845, the Trustees noted that the South Eastern Railway's proposed branch from Minster to Deal and Walmer would cross the Trust's road on the level in various places, and the clerk was instructed to record the Trust's resolve to 'dissent from the proposed undertaking'. By January 1845, the Trust was considering reports on various railway bills, those for the Central Kent and the Kentish Coast. A memorial was to go to the House of Lords (presumably to the Select Committee) urging 'the necessity of due regard being had to the vested interests of the bond holders'. The Trustees do not seem to have been very worried; they must have been much more interested in the estimate for the coming year - £1,247 1s., down yet again, with the road reported to be 'considerably improved in repair': the financial situation was so promising that the Trustees resolved to pay off £200 of their principal monies.

In April 1845, the railway was becoming less of a fantasy and more of a problem: the South Eastern Railway was to be asked to indemnify the bond holders for any loss occasioned, and the Company was asked to carry its railway only over or under the Trust's road, rather than across it (i.e. by a level crossing). The meeting was enlivened by the draw for the repayment money. It had been agreed that the £200 be split into four lots of £50, and the serial numbers of all the bonds were written on separate pieces of paper, put into a handkerchief (so stated in the minute) and four lucky names were drawn. The handkerchief cannot have been a great success; when the draw was made on future occasions, it is recorded that a hat was used.

By May 1845, no reply had been received to the Trust's letter about the railway, and the Clerk was instructed to warn the promoters that, unless the Trust was indemnified, it would oppose the branch by

Counsel. Later that month the Clerk reported that the Company had stated that the railway would not go further than Deal, and not on to Walmer or Dover. This was more because of the geography of the Deal - Dover route, which no less a person than George Stephenson had said was impossible in the present state of railway development without the expenditure of far more money than the railway company had at its disposal⁴, but the Trustees must have been pleased, nonetheless. The Company was willing to agree a site for their terminus in Deal - perhaps the Mayor and Corporation of Deal had already suggested a site to the Company - but they warned that they would have to insist on a level crossing at Sandwich; the Trustees seem to have accepted this, and merely reiterated their determination to oppose level crossings in Deal or Walmer - which the railway had already implied would now not be required, anyway. The branch, which in the end terminated in Deal was opened to traffic on 1st July, 1847, but the event was not mentioned in the Trust's minutes, nor was the fact that the branch's first locomotive had to come by way of the Trust's road from Dover to Deal, a journey only made with great difficulty⁵. The Trust appears to have treated the interloper with dignified disdain.

Bond holders continued to be paid, £200 a time in four lots of £50 as the time passed - June and November 1846, April and May 1847, April and November 1848, July 1849 - but by 1852 money was getting rather tighter; only two lots of £50 were paid in that year, though another bond holder accepted £99 for a £100 bond, perhaps deciding that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush.

The railway mania continued; in January 1846, the Trustees considered plans from the Dover and Deal Railway, the Dover and Deal Railway and the Cinque Ports, Thanet and Coast Railway, the North Kent Railway and the Great Kent Atmospheric Railway, and in January 1850 the North Kent Railway Continuation Company, and decided to dissent from all of them. Perhaps more long-sighted than the Trustees, would-be lessees of the toll rentals were fewer; nobody had taken the Upper Deal gate in 1845, or the Upper Deal and Stone Cross gates in 1846 and 1847, and there were no bids for any gate in 1848 and 1849, and when the gates were eventually all let in 1850, it was for only £1,004. For the years 1850 to 1859 (except for 1855, when only one gate, that at Dover Castle was let), annual rents

⁴ House of Lords record office: Select Committee on Railway bills (South Eastern): branch to Deal and extension of the South Eastern Canterbury, Ramsgate and Margate Railway Bill. Committee office evidence, 1845. Vol. 77. Evidence of George Stephenson.

⁵ Gray, A., *South Eastern Railway* (Midhurst, 1990), 252.

averaged £957 13s. 4d., not far from what they had been just over ten years previously.

Expenses for 1849 were forecast as £899 12s., but the Trustees were warned that the '...road was in a declining state between Deal and Dover, but in good repair between Deal and Sandwich.' Perhaps because of this in January 1850 the year's expenses were forecast as increased to £1,085.12s. The trend of annual expenses was generally downward, however, which may reflect the fact that bonds were steadily being paid off, so that the interest due on them no longer had to be allowed for, but when the Trust received notification in November 1850 that it should make provision for a sinking fund for the repayment of bond holders under the terms of 12 & 13 Vict., c. 87, the Trustees voted to defer consideration of the matter: however, in January 1851, they formally agreed to comply with the provisions of the Act. The year's forecast expenses were brought down to £833 17s. 4d., but the road was described as being in a declining state between Deal and Sandwich (paralleled by the railway) and rather improved between Deal and Dover (where it still had the monopoly). Despite this, expenses for 1852 were further reduced to £800 17s. 4d.

Perhaps to reduce the nuisance which payment of tolls certainly occasioned regular travellers along the road, 'composition' appeared for the first time in January 1855; four gentlemen offered various sums to buy what would appear to have been the equivalent of season tickets for the use of various sections of the Trust's road, which offers were accepted. Such offers and acceptances appear quite often in later years.

As pointed out above, the rents for the tolls, though much less in the 1850s than they had been in the early 1840s, were still in general above the level of those pertaining to the 1830s, before the Trust obtained its new Act of Parliament, and as late as 1872, the last year when all the gates were let, the rental received was £1,127, considerably above the level of the 1850s. All the same, the Trust was, by the mid 1860s, only just paying its way. The balance carried forward from one year to the next varied between £2 2s. 6d. (1867) and £327 4s. 9½d. (1872), but averaged £139 5s. Nothing was being put aside for future contingencies. The end came in 1874, when the Trustees offered the toll-houses and their surrounding lands to the owners of neighbouring property at the Surveyor's valuation, with a note that they were not to be sold for less than this, though when the local landowner was offered the Stone Cross toll house for £107, his return offer of £87 was hastily accepted.

Over the years, the minutes of each meeting had ended with a paragraph to the effect that the meeting was adjourned until such and such a time, on such and such a day, to meet at such and such a place. The last minute (for 27th October, 1875) signals the end of an era:

'The meeting was adjourned until such time and date as the Trustees may determine'.

The Trust was gone.

EFFECT OF THE RAILWAY ON THE ROAD

The effect of the railway on the Trust's fortunes seems to be very clear. In the 1830s the Trust was in a position of considerable financial difficulty; the new Act secured in 1839 made the imposition of increased tolls possible and from that, the rents for which the various gates could be let increased dramatically, almost by a factor of two.

The South Eastern Railway opened its branch from Minster to Deal in July 1847. Between Sandwich and Deal the Trust's road passed only through the parishes of Sholden and Upper Deal on its way to Deal; there can have been very little traffic along the road which was not travelling from one end to the other of that section of the road. The rents for which the Trust was able to let the two gates at either end of this stretch of the road collapsed. The Upper Deal gate could only be let for some £250 a year in the early 1850s, less than the rental in the early 1830s; by the end of the decade the figure had dropped to about £220. The story was the same at the Sandwich end of the road, at the Stone Cross gate. The rentals there dropped to the levels pertaining in the 1830s: both gates were bringing in a sum which had been castigated as wholly inadequate in October 1838. The fact that this fall in revenue was a result of the railway is firmly outlined by the fortunes of the other two gates, at Deal Castle and Dover Castle, at either end of that stretch of the Trust's road which was not to be paralleled by a railway until 1881.

The Dover Castle gate rental, having been about £200 a year in the 1830s jumped to about £350 in the early 1840s - when the new tolls were in force, but there was no railway rivalry at all - and only fell back to a figure between £300 and £350 for all the 1850s. The Deal Castle gate did not weather the storm quite as well; after an average rental of just under £350 in the 1840s, it dropped back to about £225 in the 1850s, but this was well above the 1830s figure of about £175.

It is also clear though that, though the volume of traffic passing along the Sandwich-Deal part of the road declined considerably immediately after the railway came - perhaps to about half its pre-railway level, if the rentals are any guide⁶ - it did not *continue* to

⁶ On the assumption that the volume of traffic in the 1830s and 1840s was more or less constant, the fall of rental value after the railway came to something like half its former value after 1847 suggests a corresponding decline in the actual volume of road traffic.

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ANNUAL RENTAL FOR WHICH THE VARIOUS GATES ON THE
DOVER TO SANDWICH TURNPIKE WERE LET FROM
1833 TO 1873

	1833	1834	1835	1836	1837	1838	1839	1839
							Jan-Jun	Sep-Dec
Dover Castle hill gate	198	190	206	216	216	217	73	120
Deal castle gate	190	181	177	180	159	182	100	130
Stone Cross gate	198	180	196	180	160	178	71	127
Upper Deal gate	271	269	282	263	231	254	115	155
TOTAL INCOME	857	820	861	839	766	831	359	532

	1840	1841	1842	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847
Dover Castle hill gate	326	301	301	0	353	371	361	381
Deal castle gate	346	336	351	0	339	351	361	367
Stone Cross gate	364	336	0	0	349	336	0	[250]
Upper Deal gate	470	441	441	0	452	0	0	[300]
TOTAL INCOME	1506	1416	1093	0	1493	1058	722	748

	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855
Dover Castle hill gate	0	0	317	342	307	301	341	335
Deal castle gate	0	0	252	251	231	221	251	0
Stone Cross gate	0	0	185	191	178	171	193	0
Upper Deal gate	0	0	250	241	252	251	251	0
TOTAL INCOME	0	0	1004	1025	968	944	1036	335

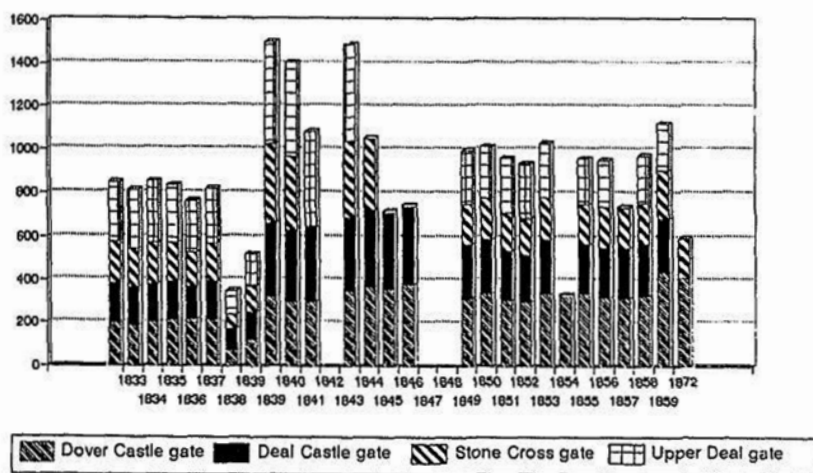
	1856	1857	1858	1859	1872	1873
Dover Castle hill gate	341	321	321	330	439	416
Deal castle gate	231	235	235	243	249	0
Stone Cross gate	181	194	194	194	219	191
Upper Deal gate	214	216	0	220	220	0
TOTAL INCOME	967	956	740	977	1127	607

A zero entry indicates that no bids were received for that gate in that year.

[x00] indicates that the gate was offered at that figure, with no bidders.

THE SANDWICH TO DOVER TURNPIKE

decline from 1847 onwards, but remained at more or less the immediate post-railway level for the rest of the period of the Trust's existence. The same would appear to be true of the Deal-Dover part of the road. Rentals at the Deal Castle gate moved very slightly upwards 1856-59, and though this pattern was not repeated at the Dover Castle gate, the rent for that gate for the last two years of the Trust's existence rose to an average of almost £430, higher than it had ever been before. All in all, the rental figures for the Trust's gates are a most vivid illustration of the effect of the coming of the railway on the local road transport system.



Dover-Sandwich Turnpike annual rental per gate