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RUTV 6 is booklet number 6 in a series on the turnpike roads of Oxfordshire and adjoining areas.



A stage wagon of the type used on the Gloucester Road through Faringdon

Fyfield to St John's Bridge & Kingston Bagpuize to Newbridge Turnpike – and Faringdon's Turnpike Roads

6.1 Introduction

In the early years of the eighteenth century the main roads radiating out from London were taken into the care of turnpike trusts. A single trust was normally responsible for about ten to twenty miles of highway that would pass through a number of parishes. Each trust was set up under an individual Act of Parliament, which appointed trustees who were empowered to place toll gates, levy tolls on users of the road and use the income to improve and maintain the whole length of the road. The concept was extended to important provincial roads during from the middle of the 18th century, so that by the beginning of Victoria's reign most major highways were turnpiked. Trusts took over the management of the main roads from the parishes, who had previously been unable or unwilling to maintain good through-routes along which trade could flow. Nevertheless, the parish was still obliged to supply Statute Labour to assist in repairs and trusts were allowed to obtain local materials without charge.

Turnpiking was introduced to improve and widen the highway. In most cases the turnpike adopted existing routes, following the line of old roadways and utilising established bridges. In their turn, the turnpikes formed a foundation for the present network of major roads across Britain. The Fyfield to St John's Bridge & Kingston Bagpuize to Newbridge Turnpike Trust is typical of those set up to administer main highways across the agricultural counties of southern England. It was responsible for roads from two important Thames bridges that had carried major trade routes for many centuries before turnpiking. It was established in 1732, towards the end of the first phase of turnpike trust formation, during which the main coach and wagon routes from London were improved. This section of road linked with adjacent stretches of turnpike road to form one of the trunk routes to the southwest Midlands, Gloucester and South Wales. At Fyfield it abutted the Culham Bridge to Fyfield section of the Henley & Dorchester Turnpike that carried traffic west from the bridges at Abingdon. The Henley to Abingdon section was turnpiked in 1736, although the road between Abingdon and Fyfield was not taken under the control of the trust until 1755. At its western end the road became the responsibility of the St John's Bridge to Cirencester Turnpike Trust, created in 1727. Although there was no overt coordination of these various trusts, improvements on adjacent sectors of this trunk route put pressure upon the citizens of towns on either side of a new turnpike to follow suite.

The roads south from Faringdon were turnpiked about twenty years after the main Gloucester Road. The road south-eastwards to Wantage and the Thames bridge at Wallingford was covered in an Act of 1751 and the ancient highway south-westwards from Faringdon towards Highworth, Malmesbury and Acton Turville was turnpiked in 1756. The network of major roads was completed with the turnpiking of the north/south roads across the ancient bridge at Radcot in 1771, the new crossing near Tadpole House in 1777 and Lechlade Halfpenny Bridge in 1792.

As roads to the east of Faringdon were improved, the bridges widened and new crossings built, the preferred route west towards Gloucester changed during the course of the 18th century (Figure 6.1). Faringdon is a natural node for most routes on the southern bank of the upper Thames and so many of the earlier changes had little impact on traffic through the town. However, improvements in the roads and bridges carrying traffic onto the northern bank, particularly the opening of Swinford Bridge in 1767, reduced the amount of traffic travelling from Oxford through Faringdon.

Nevertheless, the Fyfield to St John's Bridge road remained an important route with the status of a post road until the building of the Great Western Railway dramatically cut the long distance road traffic passing through the whole of this area.

6.2 History of the Route

6.2.1 Old Highways

A number of parallel ridges run on a northeast to southwest axis across this region. Faringdon is located on a band of Corallian Limestone that divides the clay vales through which the rivers Thames and Ock flow. The relatively high ground of the Corallian Ridge was a dry route for travellers moving east towards the Thames crossings near the site of Oxford. Tracks from the Cotswolds crossed the Thames over a limited number of fords, and later over bridges. These routes then continued south across the wetter ground of the Ock valley to reach the chalk ridgeways beyond Wantage (Figure 6.2). At Faringdon several routes from over the Thames converge on the ridgeway track, making it a natural crossroads for traffic from several very different areas. It may be no coincidence that Faringdon was a Royal Manor and was of sufficient strategic importance for the Plantagenet kings to maintain a castle here. Most early English kings from Henry I onwards used Faringdon as a resting place on their frequent journeys between Woodstock and royal estates in Wiltshire. The bridge at Radcot was used to cross the Thames and the travellers then followed the ridgeway road out to the Roman road at Blunsden (RUTV 9).

The Gough map, reputed to have been drawn in 1360, shows the Oxford to Bristol road along the Corallian Ridgeway, passing through Faringdon (Figure 6.3). The road between Faringdon and Lechlade was also an ancient route for travellers to a safe crossing of the Thames. In addition, it connected with the ancient saltways from Droitwich along which packhorse trains brought salt to be loaded on barges at Lechlade (Houghton 1932). The road from Fyfield to Faringdon was part of two major routes described by John Ogilby in the first systematic recording of English roads in 1675. From Faringdon his road from London to St David's headed towards St John's Bridge whereas the Oxford to Bristol road went on to Highworth and Purton (Figure 6.4), essentially the same road shown on the Gough map. Ogilby's roads follow the modern road from Kingston Bagpuize, bypassing Longworth and Hinton. The prehistoric ridgeway route would have passed directly through these villages, closer to the northern scarp face. John Rocque gave the ancient track equal status to the turnpike on his map of 1761 and it can still be discerned as a continuous route on the 1830 OS map (Figure 6.5). The increase in traffic heading towards Abingdon may account for the divergence of the road further south during medieval times. Nevertheless, local traffic continued along the old track so that, in the 18th century, the turnpike trustees thought it necessary to place a side gate at the point where the old route, Netherton Lane, crossed the Kingston to Newbridge road.

6.2.2 Ancient Bridges

A trackway across the river to the east of Lechlade pre-dates St John's Bridge. An early wooden bridge was swept away in 1203 and the townspeople of Lechlade had begun to rebuild this in stone, receiving 50 marks from King John prior to his death in 1216 (Phillips 1981). Isabella de Ferrers, whose lands included Lechlade Manor, founded an Almshouse for men working on the bridge; this eventually became the Priory of St John. In 1229 Peter Fitzherbert, Isabella's husband, was granted a license to erect a gate across the new bridge, presumably to raise tolls to off-set the substantial costs of such a large stone structure. Henry III (1216-1272) frequently used this road to travel between Faringdon and Cirencester (RUTV 9).

Changes in ownership of the manor made patronage of the bridge uncertain over the following centuries so that it frequently fell into a poor state of repair. This may explain why in 1289, after

staying overnight at Fairford Manor, the Bishop of Hereford chose to use the ferry to cross the Thames at Lechlade before resting the following night at Faringdon (Howse 1985). By 1338 the prior and his six priests had so neglected their responsibility to collect alms and maintain the structure that Edward III was asked to grant rights of pontage, allowing tolls to be collected from travellers. The bridge was described as "so broken down and ruinous as to be dangerous to persons passing over it" (Phillips 1981). It suffered damage in 1389 during the rebellion of the Duke of Gloucester but, as on other occasions, its importance as a key crossing of the Thames ensured that it was reinstated. Following transfer of the assets of St John's Priory to the Chapel of St Mary in Lechlade in 1473, the financing of further repairs and maintenance of the bridge was a matter of dispute until the 16th century. During his travels in the 1530s, John Leland passed across St John's Bridge on his journey from Oxford through Faringdon to the Cotswolds (Toulmin Smith 1964). He noted that the bridge had three stone arches and there was a causeway, three miles in length, presumably towards Buscot. In 1550, a Commission set up by Edward VI found that the Deans of St Nicholas College, Wallingford, were responsible for upkeep of the bridge at an estimated cost of £40/a. The bridge was described as having 26 arches; at least 16 of these formed the causeway to Buscot (Andrew, pers. comm.). Baskerville noted in 1692 that the bridge had 11 arches to vent water in time of flood and had two great arches "where loaden boats go through".

St John's Bridge is an important crossing between the north and south banks of the Thames. In Medieval times pack-horse trains carrying wool from the Cotswolds to Southampton for export to the Continent used it. In addition, it is a strategic bridge on the east/west route between London and Gloucester, used for many centuries by traffic that had crossed the Thames at Wallingford, Abingdon or Oxford, as well as by travellers originating on the southern bank of the river. This dual role made it the principal bridge on this section of the Thames and the roads either side it were heavily used by long-distance travellers and must have been constantly eroded.

Radcot Bridge and Newbridge were built within a few years of St John's. All three were constructed with the pointed Gothic arches and strengthening ribs typical of Early English churches of that period. There had been a simple stone bridge at Radcot as early as 958 (Phillips 1981) and in 1208 King John ordered Brother Alwyn to repair the bridge at *Redcote*. Royal travellers seemed to prefer this bridge across the Thames rather than the neighbouring crossings at Newbridge or St John's Bridge (RUTV 9). In 1202 John had granted lands between the river and Faringdon to the Cistercian Order for the construction of a new abbey. Although, after only a few years, the monks abandoned this site in favour of Beaulieu, they constructed a very large grange at Wick, close to Radcot. The present stone bridge (Figure 6.6a) was probably the work of the Cistercian monks and their masons. It has three pointed arches and a niche that may have been a font or could have held an effigy of the Virgin Mary.

The economy of medieval English was founded on wool and crossings of the upper Thames were important since it was the main natural barrier between the wool towns on the Cotswolds and the export markets across the Channel. Packhorse trains from Burford and Witney would find Radcot a convenient point to bridge the river *en route* for Faringdon and Wantage (Figure 6.2). The alms given to the monks would have ensured the bridge was kept in good repair. Beaulieu Abbey held the property at Wick until Henry VIII seized it in 1538. This continuity of ownership may have ensured that Radcot was better cared for than St John's Bridge. Nevertheless it suffered serious damage during the Wars of the Roses in 1387 during a battle between Henry Bollingbroke and the Earl of Oxford. The centre span may not have been repaired until 1393 when Richard II granted pontage, permitting tolls to be levied for two years to finance repairs. As the wool trade declined, the importance of Radcot decayed. Leland did not use the bridge in any of his travels. Thomas Baskerville in 1692 noted that besides the main bridge under which boats passed, there were two

other bridges just to the north, across side channels; one of these had two arches the other of four. The latter, Pidnill, was illustrated by Mrs Davenport in the 1845 (ORO) and appears to be of similar design to the main bridge (Andrew, pers. comm.)

Newbridge is similar to Radcot (the old bridge) but is larger. Stylistic evidence points to it being built a little after Radcot; for instance the cutwaters are carried up to the roadway to provide refuges for pedestrians (Figure 6.6b). It is conveniently positioned on the road south from the Cotswold wool markets such as Witney. A bridge may have been built here on the orders of the Prior of Deerhurst who owned the Manor of Northmoor (Phillips 1981). Collection of alms for upkeep of the crossing was delegated to hermits who lived at the end of Standlake village, where the Chequers Inn later stood. Although the structure may date from the 14th century, there are no records of pontage prior to 1400 and Anthony Wood stated that it was "built as 'tis said (or at least repaired) tempore Henrici VI, by John Golafre" (Toynbee). This would make the construction, or major repairs, contemporary with the Burford crossing of the Thames at Abingdon. Newbridge eventually passed to the Abbey of Tewksbury until, in 1540, Henry VIII seized its property. When Leland passed this way in the 1530s, on his journey from Oxford to Witney, the main bridge had six stone arches approached by a long causeway on either side (Toulmin Smith 1964). Baskerville in 1692 stated that there were seventeen arches on the Berkshire side and twenty-eight on the Oxfordshire bank. Cromwell's forces broke Newbridge in 1644 on their retreat to Wallingford but the damage had been made good by 1649 when a group of Levellers tried to retreat across it (Phillips 1981).

6.2.3 Travellers & Traders

The chief function of these three medieval bridges was economic, to carry travellers and trade across the Thames. Wharfs were built alongside the bridges to facilitate the transfer of goods between road and river transport. River transport was the most effective means of carrying bulky goods long distances and so the roads leading to the river were important routes for the export of local produce. Burford stone was despatched from Radcot for Wren's reconstruction of London, Droitwich salt was trans-shipped at St John's whereas malt, wheat and wood were probably exported from wharfs beside all three bridges.

In Saxon and Medieval times the flow of traffic from north to south was crucial to trade, particularly wool (Bonney 1992). St John's, Radcot and Newbridge were dry crossings for the medieval pack-horse trains carry precious wool. In the Tudor period the pattern of transport across southern England began to change as London assumed a more dominant role in trade as well as administration. Its position on the Gloucester Road made St John's the pre-eminent bridge on this section. Although clothiers' wains travelling to London could use the route through Witney or Marlborough, a significant number must have chosen the lower route over the Thames bridges at St John's and Abingdon to reach the London road (Figure 6.1). Over the centuries, there have been changes in the relative importance of the northern route, close to Oxford, and the Faringdon road. The Bishop of Hereford in 1289 took the Faringdon to Wantage route but in 1696 Celia Fiennes chose to go from London to Hereford via Uxbridge, Islip and Woodstock to Pershore, i.e. along the Cotswold route, through Oxfordshire (Hayward 1947). Mr Loveday (Markham 1984), writing in August 1731, noted that "Faringdon stands on a stony ground in ye decline of an hill. The town decay'd upon ye turning ye Western Road thro' Burford". Thus by the early 1700s the Cotswold route was being revitalised and roads across the Vale were less favoured as through routes. It was against this background that the Act to turnpike the road from Fyfield to St John's Bridge, through Faringdon, was taken.

6.3 Creation of the Fyfield to St John's Bridge Trust

The Fyfield Road has the distinction of being the subject of one of only four turnpike Acts to be defeated in its passage through Parliament. A very early attempt at turnpiking in 1699 was thrown out by the House (Pawson 1977) and it was not until 1732 that the road could finally be taken into the care of a body of trustees, dedicated to providing a good through route. The Act of 1732 covered the road leading from St John's Bridge near Lechlade to Fyfield, through Faringdon (Figure 6.7). A further Act of 1738 added the branch from the Hind's Head at Kingston Bagpuize along the Witney road to Newbridge on the Thames. The earliest Act refers to the road as leading from St John's Bridge to Fyfield, the second Act as Fyfield to St John's Bridge: the second designation is used in this study.

6.3.1 *The First Act*

The petition to Parliament during debate on the first Act claimed that powers to amend the road were required "by reason of many heavy carriages frequently passing through the same and being so bad and ruinous that passengers can not pass and repass in the winter season without danger" (JHC 22, 66). In evidence to prove the allegations of the petitioners Henry Pye Esq., of Faringdon said "the road between a place called Eaton and Faringdon is so bad that such travellers and carriages as usually passed through that road were now obliged to go another way, whereby the town of Faringdon had entirely lost its trade" (JHC 22, 70). This story is consistent with that of Mr Loveday and also suggests that passenger coaches rather than carriers were the important traffic for this road. Surveyors of this road were always likely to experience problems, on the low ground going down towards the river. The Parliamentary Committee agreed that this road could not be "effectively amended and kept in repair by the Laws now in being", i.e. by the parishes using Statute Labour, and that further provisions needed to be made by granting of powers to a turnpike trust.

Some hint of the reasons for opposition to the abortive 1699 Act might be inferred from the exemptions in the successful petition. Inhabitants of Lechlade, Highworth and Buscot travelling to markets in Lechlade and Highworth only had occasion to use about a quarter of a mile of the turnpike, between the bridge and the old lane to Inglesham. Only a half toll was to be charged on such traffic. Similarly, wagons and carriages belonging to inhabitants of Shellingford, Stanford, Hatford, Pusey, Littleworth, Buckland, Hinton and Longworth were granted a half toll in going from their village to the Fairs and Markets of Abingdon. In addition coaches and carriages that had stayed overnight at Faringdon were not obliged to pay a second toll the next day, it being normal to pay the toll on only one occasion each day.

The first meeting of the trust was to be at the Green Dragon in Faringdon, on or before 22nd June 1733 and subsequent meetings could be at any other place near to the said road. Based on the records of other turnpikes, the trustees would have set about arranging loans, toll collection and repairs very soon after the passing of the Act.

6.3.2 *The Second Act*

In 1738 the trust petitioned to take into its care an additional two miles of road leading from Kingston as far as Newbridge. In evidence to the Parliamentary Committee, Mr Lionel Rich said that the trustees had originally borrowed £900 to make improvements to the fourteen miles of road in their charge. Toll income amounted to £320 and annual expenses £121 but the debt was then £1102/8/6. This could not be paid off unless a further term was granted, the new section of road was included and the tolls were increased (JHC 23, 256). Mr John Nash who was a tenant on an estate adjoining the road to Newbridge stated that this was called The Wash and "is very often so flooded that passengers are obliged to go over in boats and that the same has been so these 40 or 50 years".

The fact that this application came so soon after the initial Act suggests that the prospect of paying tolls at St John's had led many travellers to use the free crossing down river at Newbridge. This new section covered the road south of the river, from the Hind's Head Inn on the existing turnpike road at Kingston Bagpuize to the Swan Alehouse at Newbridge. Action was also called for to prevent cattle and single horses by-passing a particular furlong on the road, probably near the Hind's Head Toll-Gate, and avoiding payment of the toll whilst receiving the benefits of the improvements (JHC 23, 308).

Under the new Act, tolls were increased by a third with effect from 1st June 1739. At the same time the concessionary tolls for Lechlade, Highworth and Abingdon Markets were increased from a half to three-quarters of the full toll. The penalties for failure to provide Statute Labour was clearly specified as 10/= per day for each team or draught and 1/6 per day for every person liable to do work. The upper limit on borrowing was increased to £2,500, providing the trustees with more scope to finance repairs.

6.3.3 Later Acts

By 1762 the debt of the trust had risen to £2,300 and despite large expenditure the road was still judged to be ruinous, so the trust requested a further renewal of its powers and another increase in the toll (JHC 29, 368). Although most turnpike Acts gave trusts powers for a period of about twenty-one years, it was normal to claim that continuation of the powers was necessary. Thus, the repeated claim that the loan could not be paid off did not mark out this trust as being particularly inefficient. It must be assumed that the continued poor state of the road was the result of increased traffic as this road attracted the heavy wains carrying cloth and stage coach travellers *en route* between Gloucester and London. When renewing their powers in 1832 the trust considered extending the turnpike from Newbridge to Witney but eventually abandoned this idea. In retrospect, this was a very wise decision since within ten years traffic on the turnpikes began to decline rapidly.

6.4 The Trustees

There were 38 trustees named in the first Act and a further 17 in the second (Figure 6.8). The list was headed by the larger landowners in the area, several of whom did not live immediately adjacent to the turnpike. The Barrington family of Shrivenham, including Lord Barrington himself, were prominently represented, as were the Astons from Wadley House, Pleydell from Coleshill House, Capt Lovedon of Buscot House and the Pyes of Faringdon House. From further afield were the Tyrells of Stanford, Bartholomew Tipping of Woolley Park and Sir John Stonehouse of Radley. Many of these gentlemen were trustees on other turnpikes in the area, presumably seeing their public duty and long-term property interests conveniently coincide in the trust. The vicars and rectors of the parishes through which the road passed were also enlisted as trustees. Their local knowledge and authority would avoid conflict and ensure cooperation in supplying parochial Statute Labour for work on the road. There were a number of Faringdon's lesser gentry and businessmen, including James Reynolds and William Winchester whose interests would have been limited to Faringdon and the improvement of the Gloucester Road.

The Minutes Books of the trust survive for the period 1787 until its demise almost a century later. These record the appointment and status of new trustees who replaced those who died. Based on these records, there seem to be more Faringdon businessmen involved towards the end of the 18th century than had been the case when the trust was set up. Nevertheless, there were still a significant number of landed gentry on the Trust and, over the period 1788 to 1824, the social standing of the trustees changed very little (Appendix 1). This contrasts with the Wallingford, Wantage to Faringdon Trust and the Besselsleigh Trust in which there was a loss of the more highly placed

gentry leading to a greater domination by local clergy. However, the clergy were regular attendees at meetings of the Fyfield to St John's Bridge Trust. By 1787 the trustees had begun to meet at the Crown in Faringdon rather than the Green Dragon. This venue continued until 1804 when they transferred their quarterly meetings to the Market House. Whether this reflected a general concern to be more business like, or was influenced by the large number of clergymen trustees is not clear.

6.5 Business of the Trust

The trustees appointed officers to administer the turnpike. Members of the Ward family seem to have combined the role of clerk and treasurer for many years. This dynasty was replaced by the Crowdy family around 1830. Both families were local solicitors and so were well placed to deal with the legal, political and administrative functions.

The trust's surveyor organised supplies of road mending materials and the Team Labour from the parishes through which the road passed. To fill the holes and keep the roadway above the water table, stone, chalk and gravel were regularly laid, gullies were repaired and drainage improved. The parishes of Buckland, Kingston and Southrop had quarries and Fyfield had a stone pit. The surveyors also leased a quarry at Siddington importing the material along the Thames & Severn Navigation through the St John's Bridge wharf, which the trust had built in 1797. In 1801, they tried to get the Commissioners of the Thames navigation to give free passage for boats laden with stone through Buscot and Lechlade locks; by 1841 330 tons a year of stone was delivered to the wharf for use on the turnpike. Major projects were put out to contract, as in 1770 when tenders were invited to re-make a half-mile of road between Buscot and St John's. The aim was to raise the roadbed above the water mark and make new bridges and arches in the causeway. This work was paid for by public subscription since in August 1770 an advert stated that "all noblemen, gents and others who have been pleased to subscribe on completion of the work" were to pay at places in London, Cirencester, Gloucester, Hereford and Monmouth. The breadth of this subscription gives an indication of how far users of the road travelled.

Local men undertook the job as surveyor in the early days: John Stone, surveyor at the end of the 18th century, probably had no specific skills in road mending, though John Nock the stonemason, who succeeded him, had some relevant training. As use of the road increased in the early 19th century, the trustees sought outside help. In 1818 the clerk wrote to John Loudon McAdam at Bristol requesting this leading figure in British roadmaking to conduct a full survey of the Fyfield Turnpike. Later that year, the trust appointed Richard Smith a Faringdon yeoman, as surveyor at £2 per week and instructed him "to go to Devizes where work is being superintended by Mr McAdam, to obtain instruction to qualify him to execute the office of surveyor". McAdam was already engaged by the Abingdon District Turnpike Road Trust at a salary of £80/a and the Fyfield to St John's Bridge Trustees sought advice from their neighbours on whether this covered the cost of a sub-surveyor. In 1827, McAdam was appointed General Surveyor to the Fyfield to St John's Bridge Trust for a period of five years with a salary of £100/a with the right to appoint a sub-surveyor at £200/a. The trustees recommended he use Richard Smith who presumably did the local work, advised by McAdam from his base in Bristol. However, Smith may have been too conscientious since in 1834 the trustees considered the cost of repairs too high and sacked their surveyor in favour of Captain Bradstock of Cirencester. The new appointee was presumably a military surveyor and kept things simple but functional. However, as the fortunes of the turnpike declined in 1846, the trustees fell out with this surveyor as well. By 1864, after a period putting the repairs out to contract, the trust agreed to provide funds to the Faringdon & Abingdon Highways Boards for the repairs and in 1871, when the trust's own surveyor Mr Dyke died, Mr Barfield, surveyor of the Faringdon Highway Board took over responsibility for the turnpike.

The trustees arranged the annual auction of leases for the tolls on the turnpike. The minutes frequently record that no bid, or no sufficient bids were received for individual gates. In the early years Newbridge, the least valuable gate, was regularly let for three years at a time. If at the second auction there were still no acceptable bids, the trustees hired a collector. For instance, in 1789 John Stone who was also a surveyor, collected tolls at Newbridge at a salary of 5/= per week. In the early years, the tolls were farmed to individuals describing themselves as labourers (Appendix 2) and the rent was payable monthly. Advertising at this time seemed rather *ad hoc* but, by the end of the century, regular notices were placed in the Oxford Journal and Reading Mercury (Figure 6.9). Yeoman and innholders had begun to take up leases on turnpike tolls. Some investors, like John Brown of Speenhamland, operated across the region and leased tolls on other major roads such as the Stokenchurch turnpike (RUTV 10). By the early 19th century leasing or farming of tolls had become a major financial undertaking and in 1827 the trust advertised in Felix Farley's Bristol newspaper and Aris's Birmingham Gazette. Professional toll-gate keepers now took many of the leases. Men, such as William Hanley and William Brown rented gates in other parts of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. They often leased more than one gate in a particular year and stayed only a few years at individual gates, whether due to competitive bidding or choice is not clear.

6.6 Toll-Gates

The records of the trust indicate that during the early history of the road there were three main gates; at Newbridge, Kingston and Buscot. Rocque's map of 1761 shows a turnpike close to St John's Bridge where the old road from Coleshill and Inglesham joined the Gloucester road. After the construction of Lechlade Halfpenny Bridge and the turnpiking of the Lechlade to Highworth road in 1792, this road became unimportant and the toll-gate may have moved nearer to the St John's Bridge. In 1833 the trust considered moving the Buscot Toll-House to Snowswick Lane junction. This indicates the importance of obtaining the tolls at this side gate where traffic from Coleshill and Highworth could enter. The 1876 OS map shows that the main gate was at the bridge but there was a check-gate at Snowswick Lane, under the control of the Buscot Gate (Figure 6.10). Other side-gates were created, or lanes blocked, to catch cross country travellers. Examples in 1791 were on Burg Hill Lane from the blacksmith's shop in Buscot to Coleshill and on Mudhouse Lane from milestone 73 to Coleshill. In the final disposal of property in 1876, mention is made of a booth at Snowswick and a toll-house at St John's Bridge, presumably the latter was what was referred to as the Buscot Gate.

Weighing engines were installed at both Buscot and Kingston gates to check overweight wagons, the excess charges were extra income for the lessee. The mechanism of the Kingston weighing machine was modified on improved principles by Thomas Angell in 1822 and was in use for several decades. Kingston Gate was at the crossroads, next to the Hind's Head Inn. There was an associated side-gate at Southmoor and a side-gate & check barred the highway from Hind's Head to Frilford (Holders Bank) in 1798. The location of the toll-house is shown on the 1878 OS map (Figure 6.10). The third gate was at Newbridge, on the edge of the wharf. Greenwood's 1824 map (Figure 6.11) shows the bar on the Berkshire bank. A side gate, which controlled access to the ancient Corallian Ridgeway route at Nethererton Lane, was attached to the Newbridge lease. Although it was not a main gate, a toll-house was built at the cross roads in 1825 at the cost of only £15 to the mason; perhaps booth would be a better description than house (Figure 6.10).

The only other toll-house that can be definitely assigned to the trust is that at Faringdon Hill. In 1823 the approach to the hill had been eased and a footpath laid on land given up by Daniel Bennett "provided the trust build a wall and fence against his land" (presumably the wall still surviving on

the north side). In 1840 a well attended meeting of the trustees voted by a majority of four to erect a new gate at the top of Faringdon Hill, rather than at the alternative site near the lane leading to Barcot. The construction was put out to tender and five bids ranging from £73 to £100 were submitted. The trust thought all unsatisfactory and finally instructed their own surveyor to build the house, on the south side of the road for no more than £80. The gate was finished in 1843 but the lease came up for auction just as the turnpikes were beginning to suffer serious competition from the railways.

Tradition has it that the Roundhouse at the Hinton Waldrist junction was a toll-house. It is a two storey thatched building adjacent to the road and the window space above the door is blank, suggesting that toll board might have been set there. If the toll gatherer used it, it would only have been prior to 1787, when advertisements begin to name the three main gates, or it was used to control a later side gate. The latter is more likely as there is no evidence of the building on the 1814 OS map and although the 1824 map shows the building, no toll bar is marked (Figure 6.11). The most likely reference to its construction is in 1835 when the Trust paid £500 for an additional gate at the "entrance to Littleworth from Abingdon". The cost is considerably more than that for a normal single storey toll house and makes the building even more of an enigma.

6.7 Income from Tolls

The tolls to be levied on the road from Fyfield to St John's Bridge by the Act of 1732 and those charged after 1739 are shown in Figure 6.12. Several local turnpikes chose to charge separately for the vehicle and the animals drawing it, but this trust elected to simplify calculations by having a single charge. The tolls for large waggons and coaches were similar but the charges for small passenger vehicles were higher than for the equivalent cart. This pattern was retained when the tolls were increased in 1739, the charge for the vehicles pulled by four or more horses rising from one shilling to one shilling and fourpence. The tolls were designed to levy through-traffic rather than local parishioners. Pedestrians paid no toll, nor did vehicles carrying material for the road, dung, mould or compost for manuring local land, nor waggons carrying hay, corn or straw within the parish. Post-horses carrying mail, soldiers and persons going to vote were among other exemptions.

During the great coaching era of the early 19th century, the Stroudwater Mail used this route, thanks to the success of Abingdon in keeping traffic flowing across its bridges. Nevertheless, it was the large volume of stage coach traffic that generated income; the Royal Mail coach passed through toll-free. A contemporary aquatint of the print on the cover shows that the coach on the bridge is a stagecoach, coloured yellow and black, not the maroon and black of the Royal Mail. A 19th century painting, now in private hands, shows a similar yellow and black stage coach passing through the centre of Faringdon. In 1862 general guidance on charging for steam engines was introduced through Parliament and the Fyfield to St John's Trust amended its toll boards to charge between 4d and 6d per 2 tons weight of vehicle, it being an offence not to have the weight and owner inscribed on the vehicle. No records survive to show the types of vehicles using the road but traffic was light compared with modern roads. The £1,000 income from leasing of tolls in the 1790s was equivalent to the toll charges for less than 300, four-horse vehicles per week.

Income from leasing the tolls on the main gates rose steadily until the early 1840s (Figure 6.13). Although in the 1790s both Buscot and Kingston Gates were let for similar amounts, the Kingston Gate eventually emerged as the most valuable, bringing in 50% more per year than the gate west of Faringdon. This presumably arose from an increase in long distance traffic towards Gloucester but also a growth of local travel between Faringdon, Abingdon and Oxford. The building of the

Halfpenny Bridge at Lechlade may also account for the stagnation of income from Buscot Gate after 1800.

The Faringdon Hill Gate was installed just as the railways began to provide long distance travellers with a more attractive alternative to the stage coach. It was a period when there were few bidders for existing gates and no one seemed to want this new and unknown risk. Until 1846 the Faringdon Gate was leased with that of Buscot and only after 1847 was it shown as a separate income. Even then it only raised a similar amount to Newbridge over the following 30 years.

6.8 The Bridges

The trust was not responsible for the bridges but was party to the persistent disputes between the counties, particularly Berkshire and Gloucestershire who were responsible for repairs on St John's Bridge. On several occasions, the minutes record actions to get the Gloucester side to pay for repairs. A new stone arch was needed on the Berkshire side of the old bridge to carry the road over the navigation channel cut between St John's and Buscot Locks by the Thames Commissioners around 1790. This is probably the structure illustrated on cover, though it is not clear whether this shows the original arch or the result of the rebuilding in 1795 after the first arch failed. The existing blue brick arch over the navigation channel was built in 1879 just after the demise of the turnpike. In 1830 the three medieval, pointed arches of St John's Bridge were in a bad condition but there was disagreement over who was responsible for repairs (Phillips 1981). Gloucestershire eventually paid to have the centre pier removed and a new span put onto the remaining abutments. This failed and the last remnants of the medieval bridge were demolished in 1884 (Jervoise 1930).

Radcot Bridge had declined in importance since medieval times and in 1777 the Oxford Journal reported that "evil minded persons had wrenched out stones". The main arch at Radcot was thought to be too narrow for laden barges to clear and so about 1787 a backstream was enlarged to form a navigation channel over which a new bridge was built. The old bridge attracted the attention of William Morris when he moved to Kelmscot in 1871 and through the efforts of his daughter the structure was repaired and preserved. In a dispute in the early 20th century it was stated that although the turnpike trust had been responsible for the road on either side, it had never taken responsibility for Radcot Bridge itself (Phillips 1981).

The engineer for the Thames & Severn Canal recommended that one of the pointed arches at Newbridge should be replaced by a flat bridge and the ribs removed from the other arches. Thankfully, the Oxfordshire Justices rejected the main plan but did allow some of the ribs to be removed in 1801. The decorative work above the cutwaters may have been taken down at this time. Despite the loss of the supporting ribs the bridge has withstood heavy traffic ever since, justifying the comment of the Oxfordshire County Surveyor in his report of 1878 (COS) that this was a "very fine ancient bridge and a noteworthy specimen of good construction and building".

6.9 Milestones

The accounts of the Fyfield to St John's Trust show that they paid for repairs and replacement of milestones on several occasions. In 1789 the Trust employed someone to survey the state of their milestones, presumably since it was thought they were inadequate. It was resolved that new plates of cast iron were to be provided in 1809. The plates were to be inscribed "denoting distances from London, Abingdon Faringdon and Cirencester and also denoting the name of the Parish in which the milestone sits". The milestone at Southmoor headed "Long TP" (in Longworth Parish) is obviously a direct result of this action; the stone post appears to be purpose made. The stones near Buscot are

similar but omit the parish name. The records show that the milestones were also repaired in 1823 and re-lettered in 1853. A triangular cast iron marker west of Faringdon has recently been "removed", though it looked relatively modern.

At the same time as modifying its milestones in 1809, the trust proposed to put "posts on side roads denoting the same leads to e.g. Newbridge or Witney". These old sign-posts have long ago disappeared but several Parish boundary markers have survived. Superficially these look like milestones but were set up as a result of the 1822 General Turnpike Act, which obliged trusts to place markers where the road crossed parish boundaries. The smaller trusts seem to have ignored this requirement but the Fyfield/Kingston and Longworth/Hinton boundaries are marked with iron plates on triangular stones. The parish boundary post between Southmoor and Kingston Bagpuize was restored recently to commemorate the centenary of the creation of Parish Councils.

6.10 Competition and Change

Competition from the Cotswold road through Oxford and the loss of traffic following the opening of Lechlade Halfpenny Bridge may have limited the growth of toll income in the early 19th century. Nevertheless, income exceeded the cost of repairs throughout the 1820s and 1830s. The Minutes Books record the progress and economic growth of the local community such as the arrangements to lay pipes to supply gas to Faringdon in 1836. Nevertheless, in the same year there was the first hint of problems to come. The clerk received a request from the Cheltenham surveyor to help in opposing the proposed railway from Milton to Cheltenham. The remaining years of the trust reflect the growing competition from alternative methods of communication. The real damage to the business of the trust had been wrought by the main line railways running to the north and south of the Vale. These carried the long distance travellers and goods traffic that had been the main users of the Fyfield Road. Unlike the Wantage turnpikes, which were adjacent to railways, this road did not benefit from the increase in local carrier traffic. The trust was already in serious trouble when in 1862 an Act of Parliament proposed the construction of the East Gloucester Railway from Faringdon to Whittington. This would involve a railway crossing at Eaton Hastings and the Trust protested that this would further reduce their traffic. Their argument that a bridge was needed won the day, although in the end the railway was not built. Mr Campbell of Buscot Park built a local railway for use on the estate in 1870; this necessitated the building of a set of swinging gates across the turnpike. The following year the trust was asked to permit the erection of telegraph poles beside the road from Faringdon to Buscot.

6.11 Other Turnpikes through Faringdon

Faringdon stands on ancient routes running both north/south and east/west across the Vale of White Horse and Upper Thames Valley (Figure 6.2). Although the Fyfield to St John's Bridge Turnpike was the first, and probably the most important road through the town and across the Thames, several other turnpikes were built in the area (Figure 6.14). The principal highway to Wantage and Wallingford is dealt with elsewhere in this series (RUTV5). The road to Bristol runs southwest from the town but in earlier times the minor B4019 road to Highworth was more important than the present A420 trunk road. The old packhorse road across Radcot Bridge and through Faringdon was upgraded to a turnpike by the Great Faringdon to Burford Trust forty years after the road over St John's Bridge

6.11.1 Faringdon to Acton Turville Turnpike Trust

Two important roads run southwest from Faringdon into Wiltshire. The older of the routes was the Highworth road through Coleshill, shown in 1350 on the Gough map and recommended in 1675 by

John Ogilby as the Oxford to Bristol Road. This highway, turnpiked by Act of Parliament in 1756, covered the road from Faringdon to Highworth, Blunsden and Cricklade then on to Malmesbury and the Wiltshire County boundary at Acton Turville on the road to Bristol. Judging from the milestones still standing along the roads southwest of Faringdon, two routes were used to Highworth. The description in the petition for the Act coincides with Ogilby's Road through the Parish of "Great Coxwell, Coltshill and Eastrop" and most 19th century maps show this as the main road. However, there are old milestones marked with distances to London on the road from Watchfield to Highworth, suggesting that this was an alternative road for some long distance traffic, at least in the 18th century. From Highworth the road followed the ancient ridgeway as far as Blunsden but then deviated from Ogilby's road to go north along the old Roman road to Cricklade before turning west again through Minety to merge with the old Ogilby road near to Malmesbury. This avoided Bradon Forest but the old track was still in use and Packhorse Gate was built where the old ridgeway crossed the Cricklade to Purton Turnpike. By the 19th century the road was administered as the Malmesbury Number 2 District and, although several of its officers were from Faringdon, this trust was clearly based in Wiltshire.

As far as Watchfield the present A420 coincides with the alternative road to Highworth. It is not clear who administered the branch of the road from Watchfield to Stratton. The 19th century maps give it turnpike status and there are milestones from Faringdon to the County boundary. The Local Highways Board may have set up these stones, as Swindon became a more important transportation hub in the 19th century. On the 1878 OS map there was a single toll-house on the Coxwell Road, Faringdon, close to the Queen's Arms pub. On the First Series one-inch OS map there is no toll-house on the road to Stratton but a gate is shown on the road just west of Highworth. It appears, therefore, that the Faringdon to Acton Turville Trust controlled both the Highworth and the Swindon roads through their gate at Faringdon. An advertisement in the Oxford Journal in June 1840 indicated that the "gate at the end of Faringdon Town called Faringdon Gate" was leased for £360/a, significantly more than other gates such as Westrop Gate and Severn Bridge Gates, let for £167 and £208 respectively. The Faringdon to Acton Turville Trust eventually became responsible for a web of roads in north Wiltshire, centred on Malmesbury. None of these were trunk routes and most of the traffic was probably associated with local agriculture. There were a large number of gates on these rural roads but none seems to have generated a substantial income (Figure 6.15a), although the total income of the trust, £1,400/a, was fairly high (RUTV 3).

6.11.2 Great Faringdon to Burford Turnpike Trust

The ancient route between Faringdon and the Cotswolds wool towns across Radcot Bridge was turnpiked in 1771. A meeting of noblemen, gents and others desirous of promoting the turnpike was held at the Crown in Faringdon on 20th Nov 1770 (JOJ). The application went ahead; Mr William Taylor told a Parliamentary Committee that the road from Faringdon to Clanfield was "in a very ruinous condition and much incommoded by deep water, particularly between Pidnell Bridge and Clanfield where it is frequently overflowed by the Thames, thereby rendering it very dangerous to travellers and at some times impassable and some parts are so founderous and narrow as to make it necessary to turn the course thereof which will not only save a considerable expense but render the same much more convenient" (JHC 33, 186). The trust became responsible for what had been the old packhorse route from Burford through Clanfield. A second trust, created in the same year, administered the other packhorse road from Galley Hill (Witney) to Clanfield, with toll-gates either side of Curbridge on the Witney road and a gate at Ven Bridge (see section 6.12.1 below).

For many years there were three principal gates on the Great Faringdon to Burford turnpike road, at Radcot, Black Bourton and Burford. A sketch by Mrs Davenport, ca 1845, shows that the Radcot Toll-Cottage was adjacent to Pidnill Bridge. This was on a backwater, to the north of the main river

in Oxfordshire proper, and had similar pointed arches to the main Radcot spans: it has now been replaced by a bridge bearing the date 1863 on a beam. The Burford Gate seems to have been close to the Bird in Hand where the Faringdon road ran across the ridge and into the town. The main Oxford to Northleach road (the present A40) used to approach Burford along the river valley and a branch of the Faringdon turnpike ran along the ridge to meet it at the Upton Gate (Figure 6.15b). In 1821, the Crickley Hill to Campsfield Trust which was responsible for the Oxford road (RUTV 8) sought to improve the road above Burford in order to avoid problems in the narrow streets along the old route. They agreed to take over 320 yards of road previously administered by the Faringdon Trust and paid £1,500 to the latter as compensation for this and the loss of the gate near the Bird in Hand. The road transferred to the Crickley Hill Trust was presumably the section running from White Hill, above Burford, to the Upton Gate. The Great Faringdon Trust then concentrated its toll collection at Black Bourton with a side-gate at Burford (Figure 6.15b).

The Faringdon to Burford Turnpike was administered by men from Faringdon and meetings were held in Market House. The owner of Faringdon House, William Hallett, managed to get the route of the road diverted away from his park in 1812 and created new roads to Thrupp but by 1833 the old route had been reinstated. The income to this trust was not very high, generally around £300/a. It suffered a fall in income with the arrival of the railway (RUTV 3), although it did recover somewhat in the 1860s.

6.12 Later Turnpikes across the Thames

Six years after the turnpiking of the Radcot road, another crossing of the Thames was created by the Astall to Buckland Trust at Kent's Weir; this eventually resulted in the building of Tadpole Bridge. The road met the Fyfield to St John's Turnpike near Buckland and fed additional traffic onto this turnpike. Towards the end of the century a new turnpike was proposed from Burford through Lechlade to Swindon. This enterprise to "open up the Southern Parts of the Kingdom" was stimulated by the completion of the Thames & Severn Canal, which increased the importance of Lechlade as a riverside port. The passing of the Act in 1792 led to the building of a new bridge over the Thames; Lechlade Halfpenny Bridge. This alternative crossing of the river probably drew some traffic away from St John's Bridge but had little impact on the east/west route.

6.12.1 Astall to Buckland Turnpike Trust

The three medieval bridges over the Thames were under the control of turnpike trusts by 1771 but the inhabitants of towns such as Bampton saw the need for a new crossing. In 1777 the Astall to Buckland Trust was established to create a route from the trans-Cotswolds turnpike near Burford, through Brize Norton and Bampton, to the existing Faringdon to Oxford and Abingdon road. However, the plan was complicated by the existence of the Galley Hill to Clanfield Turnpike, which already administered a section of the proposed route north of Bampton. It had a gate at Ven Bridge, levying traffic coming from Burford. Mr John Manders claimed that travellers between Astall, east of Burford, and Buckland were required to pay a toll here even though they only used a mile and a half of the road as far as Bampton (JHC 36, 190). The petition for a new turnpike bill sought to close the Ven Bridge Toll-Gate. There were protests that the Curbridge Heath and Lew Heath tolls on the older turnpike would also suffer (JHC 36, 245). In addition, the Crickley Hill to Campsfield Trust which administered the road between Burford, Witney and Oxford, complained that the new crossing would lessen their tolls and that they had already borrowed heavily against these to finance the construction of bridges over several rivers and streams (JHC 36, 257).

The new trust agreed to recompense the adjoining trusts for loss of income on the Faringdon to Burford Road and on the Galley Hill to Clanfield road. The bill was passed and the new trustees

were able to meet at Kent's Weir near Buckland in June 1777 in order to decide where the new bridge was to be sited and of what material it was to be built (Davies, JOJ). By August they had resolved to construct a stone bridge near Shilton Ford and called for builders to apply to William Lissett of Bampton to treat for the work. Phillips (1981) believes this to be the bridge over the backwater, not the main Tadpole Bridge, and that travellers crossed the main stream of the Thames by means of a ford until after 1788. The trustees, through their clerk John Leake, let the tolls at Ven Bridge in 1777 and again in 1779 for £55 per year (Davies JOJ), so the original plan seems to have been modified with the new trust taking over the old gate. Correspondents were able to report in 1780 that the road was much improved and in 1785, tolls of £75 were produced at the gate near Kent's Weir and £80 at Ven Bridge (Davies, JOJ).

The first reference to Tadpole Bridge was in August 1789 and Phillips (1981) concludes that its construction may have been linked to the improvements on the river as a result of the Thames Navigation Act of 1788. The bridge may have been built for the trust by the Thames Commissioners to compensate them for the loss of the ford. Improvements to river resulted in the navigation channel being deepened considerably and the weirs replaced or modified. The bridge design is similar to the Lechlade Halfpenny Bridge (Figure 6.6c/d), whether this reflects influence by the Thames Commissioners or merely a prevailing style is not known. A report prepared in 1880 for the County Surveyor states that the bridge had been built for the trust and, in 1802, when the arch had been rebuilt, the expenses were "charged to the Trustees of the Road". The 1824 Greenwood map (Figure 6.11) and the 1830 OS map show a toll-gate at the Thames bridge just above Kent's Weir, close to where Rocque's 1761 map showed Tadpole House. This road, over what is now called Tadpole Bridge, failed to attract large amounts of traffic and never seems to have become a primary route. Its income from leasing of tolls was generally below £300/a, so that the finances must have been stretched to carry the cost of the new bridge. By 1820 (Figure 6.15c), the gates on both the Astall to Buckland and Galley Hill to Clanfield Trusts were being auctioned at the same time and by 1844 the two trusts appear to have merged to create the Bampton Turnpike Trust. This avoided complications over the Ven Bridge tolls and decreased costs without affecting income. The Astall to Buckland Trust seems to have been legally absorbed into the Clanfield trust through a series of Acts passed in 1852 to 1858 (RUTV 3) to create Bampton Turnpike Trust. This was finally extinguished under the general Act of 1875.

6.12.2 Burford, Lechlade to Swindon Turnpike Trust

For many centuries the main river crossing in the vicinity of Lechlade had been at St John's Bridge, although there was a ferry closer to the town. Traffic bound for Highworth was obliged to cross at St John's and use a short section of the turnpike before branching to the west to reach Inglesham and the road south. An unsuccessful petition to Parliament in 1791 sought to improve the direct road from Lechlade to Swindon and provide an alternative to St John's Bridge. However, in October of the following year, at a meeting held at the King & Queen Inn at Highworth, a group of local gentry agreed to form a trust to turnpike the road from Burford to Swindon. A new bridge would be needed to replace the Bell Lane Ferry at Lechlade (Phillips 1981). The Earl of Radnor put up £300 and Ambrose Goddard and Edward Lovedon, the MP for Abingdon and owner of Buscot House each put up £100. James Crowdy a local solicitor placed advertisements in the county newspapers seeking further subscribers. Crowdy was eventually to become clerk to the trust and his family were later involved in the main turnpikes through Faringdon. The Act, passed in June 1792, created one body of trustees to deal with the road from Lechlade to Swindon, and another to cover the road to the north, including the new section of road, Thames Street, which ran into the town from the new bridge. The two groups of trustees shared responsibility for the bridge itself.

James Hollinsworth a mason from Banbury agreed to build the bridge, toll-house and gates for £480 but would receive a £200 bonus for completing the task by autumn 1793; he may well have earned this bonus (Phillips 1981). The tolls were 6d for a carriage, 2d per horse and a halfpenny for each pedestrian (this gave the bridge its name). The powers of the trust were renewed in 1813 but opposition to the toll on pedestrians was such that it was suspended in 1839. The trust experienced the decline of road and river trade following building of the Great Western Railway but suffered further problems when in 1854, Mr Groves, the lessee of the tolls absconded with the takings (Phillips 1981).

The toll-house on the bridge itself still survives. It is a small square, single story building on the northern approach to the bridge. The first series OS map shows one gate at the southern end of the road, between Swindon Wharf and Stratton, a second just south of Highworth, while the 6" OS map of 1876 shows a gate outside the village of Inglesham. There was probably a fourth gate near to Burford.

6.13 Demise of the Turnpikes

Paying tolls had never been popular and although the benefits of turnpiking were appreciated, the trusts were suspected of being at best inefficient and at worst corrupt. The canals competed with the roads for some heavy, long distance traffic. However, development of the Thames navigation may have increased the overall business on the turnpikes around Faringdon because additional traffic was generated servicing the wharfs. Nevertheless, the advent of rail travel in the 1840s spelt the end for long-distance coach and waggon transport and hence removed the main income of the turnpikes. The fall in traffic reduced the damage to the road so the change in transport patterns was not necessarily a financial disaster but the importance and status of the turnpikes declined over the following decades. By the 1870s many of the turnpike trusts in England were being wound up and their responsibilities transferred to Local Highways Boards that had been assuming increasing powers over local affairs during the Victorian period.

The Fyfield to St John's Bridge & Kingston to Newbridge Trust was given notice to close in an Act of 1873 and arrangements to hand over the keys to the gates and toll houses were set for 1st November 1876. The Faringdon Highways Board recommended demolition of the toll-houses in its jurisdiction at Faringdon Hill, Snowswick Lane and St John's Bridge and that the sites be added to the roadway. Materials recovered from the Faringdon and St John's Bridge toll-houses raised only £21 in total. Other assets of the trusts were auctioned. The Abingdon Highways Board decided to offer for sale the toll-houses in its area. John Blandy Jenkins, who owned land adjoining the turnpike in Kingston, was offered the houses for between £50 and £35 each but declined and waited for the auction. This proved a wise move since he successfully bid only £21 for the toll-house and gate at Kingston and £14 for the house and gate at Newbridge. The Netherton Lane Gate and toll-cottage were sold to the Abingdon Highways Board for £30.

Although all the principal toll-houses around Faringdon have disappeared, a number of the milestones and Parish boundary markers have survived (Figure 6.16). Unfortunately the St John's Trust and the Faringdon to Burford Trust chose to use cast iron plates on small stones and these have survived less well than the more traditional milestones. Souvenir hunters have removed several of the plates and the stone posts have been broken by mechanical grass cutters. There is a marked contrast in the way milestones were treated by the counties on either side of the Thames. No intact stones survive north of the river in what was always Oxfordshire, whereas a substantial proportion of the stones have been preserved on the old Berkshire side. The two medieval bridges at Newbridge and Radcot have outlived the turnpikes and the humpbacks of Tadpole and Halfpenny

Bridges now seem hazardous to motorised traffic. The present St John's Bridge was built by the County Council in 1886. All traces of the early bridges were removed to allow construction of the single segmented stone arch that still spans the river.



Cary's Coaching map of 1826 showing the position of Faringdon on the roads to Gloucester and Bristol

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I acknowledge the help and encouragement of Lis Garnish and the advice on Thames bridges by John Andrew.

Other articles in this series on Roads across the Upper Thames Valley

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All enquiries to the author;
Alan Rosevear,
7, Trinder Road,
Wantage, Oxon OX12 8EE

rosevear1@aol.com

First Published May 1993, minor revisions Aug 1994, August 1999, Nov 2002 & Mar 2005.

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