SUTTON COLDFIELD LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP

Stage and Mail Coach Services through Sutton Coldfield in the 19th century

The A446-A453 fingerposts at Bassett's Pole, Sutton Coldfield on the line of the old turnpike. This was the site where Lord Bassett of Drayton set up the first of the giant poles on the London Road to mark the Staffordshire-Warwickshire County boundary.
(Author's photograph taken on 25/11/2008)

Roy Billingham

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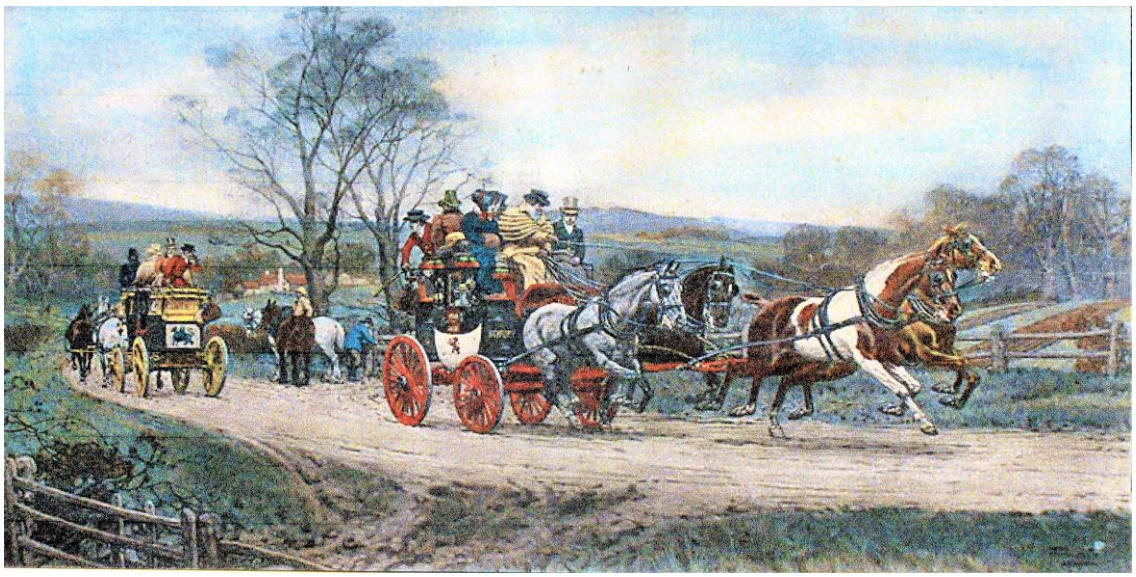

"Behind Time" **an anonymous 19th century English engraving in a private collection.**

Preface

The following account was researched from about 2004 to 2010 when I was a mature student studying local history at the University of Birmingham's Centre for Lifelong Learning at Selly Oak under the tutorage of Peter Leather. I had the intention of it being published, possibly in the ***Birmingham Historian,*** the thrice annual magazine of the now defunct Birmingham & District Local History Association of which the Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group was a member for many years.

This research work was put on "hold", possibly because around that time my spare time was taken up with a newly discovered enthusiasm for researching above-ground archaeology in Sutton Park, mainly associated with the location of old sawpits but also latterly locating late 19th century military bell-tent drainage ditches following a 2011 heathland clearance programme in Longmoor Valley.

While recently searching for another lost local history treasure, I came across this research paper in my computer archives, albeit labelled with the wrong title – hence it had become lost. Curiosity won the day and I was able to transfer the lost work to my active file.

On reading the manuscript, I had quite forgotten how much research had gone into its production, much of it sourced in the Local History Section on Floor 6 of the old Central Library in Birmingham although I did note that an account by Helen Holbeche of her experiences of travelling alone on a stagecoach from Birmingham to Shrewsbury was missing from the text for some forgotten reason. Also, there were no pictures to give added interest; this omission has been addressed in the final text with a selection of appropriate illustrations.

The original manuscript had a mixture of references: some footnotes, some buried in the text and an extensive bibliography at the end of the work. Time being of the essence, I have decided to keep this arrangement as it is at present because I no longer have access to many of the sources and this work was written using presently unsupported forms of Microsoft so I feel that technically it is less complicated to leave the text in its original form. It is not a system of referencing that I would choose to use for a new piece of research but references are present in one form or another within the text and I hope readers will understand.

What I have added at the end of the text is a bibliography of material used plus a recommended reading list relating to turnpikes, Royal Mail coaches, coaching inns, stagecoaches and coaching contractors.

Roy Billingham, November 2022

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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to establish the extent of the mail and stagecoach services that travelled from Birmingham through Sutton Coldfield to Lichfield, Tamworth and destinations northwards during the late 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries so that an accurate picture can be built up of the effect that this form of transport had on the local population and how it helped to shape the pattern of their lives.

Coach traffic has not been treated in isolation so to put the subject into its historical context I have attempted to ascertain the state of the local road systems and to define as far as possible the network of coaching inns that supported the deployment of coaches on the routes from Birmingham connecting Sutton Coldfield to Lichfield, Tamworth and Burton-upon-Trent and all points north.

I have looked at the particular national and local conditions that applied at the time with respect to the necessity and the ability of people to travel. In order that we can have more understanding of what coach travel was like, the personal accounts of well-known coach travellers have been used, including that of a Sutton Coldfield lady who made a journey by stagecoach from Birmingham to Shrewsbury in c.1825.

Although this work is principally concerned with the local history of Sutton Coldfield, the very nature of the subject dictates that it is necessary to consider in some detail the relevant local history of the neighbouring towns of Birmingham, Lichfield and Tamworth with passing references to Burton-upon-Trent, Shrewsbury and Wellington. After all, Sutton Coldfield in the Golden Age of Coaching was merely a small market town that happened to be on a route linking two major coaching destinations, Birmingham and Lichfield. Also, this work describes in some detail the general aspects of coaches and coach travel together with the development of the Royal Mail so that we can get some idea of the logistics of contemporary travel.

An account of this nature could result in a monotonous timetable of arrivals and departures of coaches to and from their respective destinations, and it is hoped that this pitfall has been avoided. The coaching industry enjoyed a dynamic growth in the period under investigation so, in order to get a snapshot of the available services and reduce the complexity, I have chosen the year 1835 which is generally regarded to be around the peak of the ‘Golden Age of Coaching’.

When we read the accounts of historic personalities and their travels we often overlook the difficulties and discomforts that beset them. As examples, such great socialites as Hester Piozzi (formerly Hester Thrale) travelled extensively in this country as well as “doing the sights” within Europe despite the great discomfort that she experienced. Her good friend Dr. Johnson was also a great traveller and his physical bulk must have added to his great discomfort whilst being transported by coach. Members of the Lunar Society frequently travelled long distances in the pursuit of their interests as did other luminaries like Joseph Priestley. Members of Parliament had frequent need to travel between their constituencies and London which in many instances would have involved days of uncomfortable travel overland to say nothing of the occasional sea crossings for the Irish representatives who would have been subject to the vagaries of wind and water associated with that form of transport.

One of the great pleasures of researching local history is that each nugget of information is like a piece of a giant jigsaw in which the interlocking pieces have an essential interdependence and add to our knowledge of the history of a local area.

1. The State of the Nation's Roads

Until the latter half of the 18th century most roads were no better than rough tracks worn by the constant traffic on hoof and foot. People travelled either on horseback or on foot depending on their means since coach travel was largely impossible in all but the driest weather and the transportation of industrial ores and goods, household goods and foodstuffs was usually by trains of packhorses because wagons tended to become stuck in the muddy conditions. At about this time it could be said that travel by road was impossible when the weather conditions were wet and cold.

Court says, *"There were remote parts of the country where no private or public coach or any form of wheeled vehicle could easily go until a much later date than 1750. There the traveller, or perhaps one should say the youthful and active traveller, was still the man astride a horse."* He adds that at about this time, *"Edinburgh and Exeter were both the greater part of a fortnight distant from London; Manchester and Liverpool were three to four and a half days distant; Birmingham was two and a half days distant."*[1]

In her book "The Lunar Men", Jenny Uglow notes that both Matthew Boulton and Josiah Wedgwood *"...found it maddening being linked to the ports and the capital by long, tough journeys. Pack-horse trains and overloaded carriages struggled across quagmires in winter and rock-hard ruts in summer: often a third of Wedgwood's pots were smashed when they reached their destination."*[2] She goes on to refer to Erasmus Darwin as a man who knew his roads and who *"in 1766 calculated that he travelled ten thousand miles a year as he dashed from patient to patient across country. When the lanes were too narrow, cut deep beneath overhanging trees, he abandoned his carriage and took to his horse, ……Even in his carriage, bumping over ruts and holes and bashing against hedges, his journeys were a bone-shaking experience."*[3]

Matthew Boulton who made frequent trips to London and elsewhere on business, often wrote to friends and associates about the discomforts of travelling. He used the scheduled coach services between Birmingham and London because this would have been cheaper than using his own post-chaise with its inherent extra costs of accommodation for the postillion, feed and stabling for the horses, and the inevitable repair and maintenance required for his carriage. [Dick, M. (Ed.), (2009), Studley, Brewin Books, Chap. 3, p.37, *"Matthew Boulton: A Revolutionary Player"*, - "A new species of gentleman"]

The first half of the 18th century saw trade expanding in the Birmingham area as the national increase in prosperity gathered pace; raw materials and finished goods, as well as food and household goods, needed to sustain a growing population, had to be transported effectively. This expansion in trade led to a growth in road traffic with an increase in the complaints about the state of the arterial roads into Birmingham mainly from the factors who had to use them to transport basic materials and finished goods to and from the factory gates. Roads were mainly a parochial responsibility and, as a result, were poorly maintained and deeply rutted.

In the early 1700s the Bristol Road from Birmingham was said to be almost impassable due to the heavy traffic in iron, coal and salt from the River Severn area and Droitwich, while the road between Birmingham and Evesham was said to have eighty packhorses* a day carrying fruit and vegetables for the needs of the local growing

* Packhorses were limited by the capacity of the panniers slung either side of the animals and to loads of around 2½ cwt (280lbs/127kg). Stone, R., (2005), *"The River Trent"*, Chichester, Phillimore & Co. Ltd, p. 32

population. Also, the road from the Wednesbury coalfield, from where most of the coal supplies emanated, was clogged with lumbering carts and wagons making their way to and from Birmingham. Cattle were driven on the hoof, to the detriment of their quality, from cattle rearing areas into the towns of the Midlands and this further added to the deterioration of the road surfaces. Goods known as 'Birmingham hardware', which largely comprised such useful items as scythes, cases of nails, wire, packs of locks, sieves, shears, hammers, scales, bellows and cutlery, were sent by road to Bewdley for loading onto the Severn barges bound for Gloucester and Bristol for shipment elsewhere. [Trinder, B., (2005), *Barges and Bargemen*, Chichester, Phillimore & Co. Ltd., p. 82] Bewdley was a place of much trade and, as Reinhold Rücker Angerstein the Swedish industrial spy observed in 1754, it was the 'harbour' that served Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Stourbridge, Dudley and Wednesbury. Likewise, after the completion of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal in 1771, Stourport became the point of transhipment for goods from the Upper Severn bound to or from the Mersey, Manchester, Birmingham, the Black Country, London, the Trent and the Humber. [Trinder, B., ibid p. 59]

With the growth in the nation's economy and trade both at home and overseas, largely as a result of the Industrial Revolution, there was a demand for speedy communications and heavy transport that at the time could not be satisfied by the existing road system. This state of affairs could not be allowed to continue and the establishment of turnpike roads in the late 18th century began to improve the conditions of the roads. But it was a slow and unpopular process and the frustration shown by Birmingham industrialists at the high prices of raw materials at the factory gate resulted in them championing a cheaper alternative to the roads, namely the canals. Although the creation of a network of canals centred on Birmingham dramatically improved the competitiveness of Birmingham goods this aspect of transportation does not form part of this investigation.

In 1791 a new route to Holyhead was opened. Originally the mail coach route from London had been via Chester and the North Wales coast, with ferry crossings at the Conwy Estuary and the Menai Strait. But in June of that year a new route was opened from Shrewsbury to Bangor, via Oswestry, Llangollen, Corwen and Llanwrwst, that avoided the Conwy crossing and mail coaches were diverted onto it. The fact that Shrewsbury became an important staging point on the route to Holyhead was due to the initiative of Robert Lawrence, innkeeper of the *Lion* at the top of Wyle Cop in that town. This new route was a steep, narrow and dangerous road; on the western approach to its summit, over 1000 feet above sea level near Llyn Ogwen, it became as narrow as 15 feet and as steep as 1 in 13. This physical feature was the cause of many accidents, some involving the Irish MPs travelling to London.

In c.1836 David Cox, the celebrated Birmingham-born artist, painted a dramatic watercolour of the very spectacular North Wales scenery in his *Pass of Llanberris*[*] which depicts, a stagecoach on this wild, lonely and dangerous road.

[*] Cox's watercolour painting, **"***Pass of Llanberris, Caernarvonshire, Wales"*, ca. 1836, is at the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester.

2. Road Improvements

The Industrial Revolution created a vast increase in road transport, which inevitably further damaged the already fragile physical condition of the roads. The system of statute labour did not really provide any innovative engineering developments to the maintenance of the road network. As there was no uniform standard of construction and maintenance the state of the roads varied considerably across the country. The main problem was poor drainage that resulted in extremely muddy and dangerous road conditions in periods of poor weather. However, some thought was being given to improving the method of road construction as engineers applied their skills to tackling this problem. In due course three people emerged as pioneers of improved road construction.

The first was John Metcalf (1717-1810) of Knaresborough in Yorkshire, or 'Blind Jack' as he was known, who had been a musician, soldier, pedlar, fish dealer, horse dealer, and had his own carrier business that eventually made him realise that something had to be done about the terrible state of the Yorkshire roads. He recognised the need for a solid foundation and good drainage for successful road building. His simple but effective solution was to lay a firm foundation of bundles of heather upon which he would place uniform pieces of stone. On top of the stone, he arranged a surface of gravel cambered to carry off surface water into ditches dug alongside. In many respects his method of road construction was not dissimilar to that employed by the Roman army who built the well-preserved section of Ryknield Street that runs for 1½ miles through Sutton Park and Dr. Mike Hodder has described its construction thus: *"It consists of a dump of unsorted compacted gravel or gravel and pebbles, with a gravel capping but never any sort of paved surface. In places it had a foundation layer of larger stones."* Metcalf first successfully used this technique in 1765 on the 3 miles long turnpike road from Harrogate in Yorkshire and went on to extend his design on up to 180 miles of turnpike roads in that county. His pioneering work was to form the engineering developments that were introduced in the second decade of the 19th century by two exactly contemporary engineers, Macadam and Telford.

John Loudon Macadam (1756-1836) was a Scotsman who had spent several years in America, raised by an uncle after the deaths of his parents. He also spent time in Europe and Scandinavia and was acquainted with many different road-making techniques. He returned to Scotland in 1783 to research highway design and by 1810 was publishing plans for improved roads. His specification for a roadbed required that a foundation of earth, raised above the surrounding ground, be built to ensure proper foundation drainage. The foundation was then covered with a layer of stones weighing no more than six ounces each and no larger than two inches in diameter. The roadbed consisted of several layers of stones uniformly spread and rolled, with a depth of fifteen inches at the centre. He postulated that, provided the road surface was made waterproof by the attrition and compaction of properly graded stones, a thickness of 6 to 10 inches should be enough, and the natural soil beneath would support any weight likely to pass over it. His name is remembered in our language by the noun *macadam* that describes a road covered in small broken stones so as to form a smooth surface.

In 1816, aged 60, he was appointed Surveyor General to the Bristol Turnpike Trust, of which he was already a trustee. This put him in charge of around 149 miles of road on which to put his theories into practice. Macadam's roads were twenty feet wide that allowed vehicles to pass each other from opposite directions at the same time. Much of his fame arose from the fact that his system was cheaper and easier to build than others

and could be built by the employment of women, children and men too old and fragile for heavy physical work.

Thomas Telford (1757-1834), son of an Eskdale shepherd, was born in August 1757 at Glendinning, in the Parish of Westerkirk near Langholm, Dumfriesshire. His father died the same year and he was brought up in great hardship by his widowed mother. Telford attended the local parish school where he obtained a basic education before becoming apprenticed to a stonemason in 1770. He learned his trade as a journeyman mason, where he built bridges, like the Langholm Bridge, over the fast-flowing streams of the Lake District. He left for Edinburgh in 1780 gaining further practical experience as a mason but determined to study architectural styles and methods. In 1782 he moved to London to be employed as a mason on Somerset House before Samuel Wyatt employed him in 1784 to superintend the building works at Portsmouth dockyard. His professional skill, energy and competence quickly earned him a reputation which opened the way to a career in civil engineering. In 1787 he obtained the post of Surveyor of Public Works for the county of Salop, a post that he was to retain for life. From 1795 he began his long association with canals that included a realignment of the Birmingham Canal.

All of this experience meant that he had a fine understanding of the strength of stone as well as the power of water. He developed a system of road building based on a trench laid with a foundation of heavy rock. The foundation was then built up with a base of large stones, carefully pitched and cambered to assist drainage, and then overlaid with broken stone to a depth of seven inches with a final three-inch layer of gravel on top.

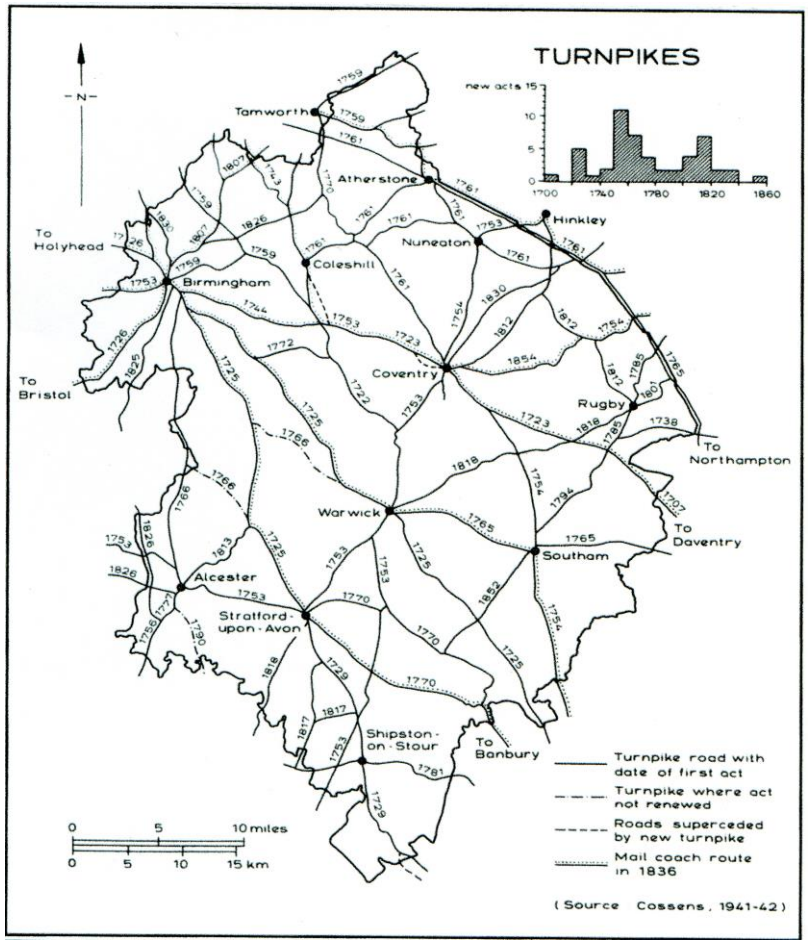
While both men considered drainage to be very important, and they both kept gradients to a minimum, Telford relied on the strength of his foundations whereas Macadam relied on the strength of his surfacing. It has been suggested that Macadam in contrast to Telford could be viewed as an amateur using both common sense and observation, whereas Telford was one of the first to qualify for the title of civil engineer.[7] Mainly because of the accidents suffered by Irish MPs travelling to London on the Shrewsbury to Holyhead Turnpike after the 1801 Act of Union with Ireland, the Government was forced to employ Telford to survey the road and his report was published in 1811. It took until 1815, after repeated complaints, for Parliament to authorise Telford’s survey and grant £20,000 for road improvements, including the construction of a new route through North Wales, and appoint Telford as resident engineer. Under his direction work continued until 1830 to realign and improve the road.

Telford had the support of the Postmaster General, for whom cost was not a prime factor, and his method of construction was more expensive than that of Macadam who was favoured by the turnpike trusts because of his cheaper solution. However, the improvement to roads brought about by Telford and Macadam meant that journey times could not only be reduced but also that they could be achieved with an accuracy hitherto unknown.

3. The Turnpiking of Major Roads around Birmingham

The Highways Act of 1555 laid the responsibility for maintaining roads upon the inhabitants of each parish through which the road passed. Every parish had to appoint and pay a surveyor and an orderer who were to be responsible for overseeing the work. This arrangement remained in force for 280 years. All householders and every labourer in a parish had to perform a certain number of days work on the roads each year, or alternatively send one sufficient labourer in their place. It was apparent that some parishes lacked the resources to carry out this statutory requirement of maintenance particularly those small parishes with a stretch of one of the major highways running through it. Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs led in time to the introduction of turnpike trusts.

Turnpike trusts, empowered by Parliament to erect barriers and exact tolls on a given stretch of road in return for maintaining it, brought local improvements. Trusts were rare until the late 18th century, but by the 1830s they controlled over 20,000 miles of road. The remaining 100,000 miles or so of road remained in the variable care of the parishes. Maintenance was performed under a surveyor, usually untrained and reluctant, with the use of forced labour. As a result of this grudging effort the interests of the locals frequently did not coincide with the interests of travellers passing through their region. Unfortunately, turnpike trusts were usually under-funded, lacked uniform control, and had scant regard for neighbouring trusts.



Map of Warwickshire Turnpikes by Cossens (1941-42)

In 1726, a petition to the House of Commons for permission to introduce a turnpike bill alleged that a ten-mile stretch of the road between Birmingham and Wolverhampton had become 'dangerous and almost impassable by reason of the great number of carriages constantly employed in the carrying of iron, and goods, and coal.'

At this time there were two turnpike roads running south from Birmingham, the Stratford highway from its crossing at the River Rea and the Warwick highway which connected with the Stratford highway just south of the Spark Brook. They were acquired by a single trust in 1726 as the Birmingham to Edgehill and the Birmingham to Warmington Turnpikes. The road to Coventry was turnpiked in 1745 when all three roads were said to be 'in a ruinous condition'. In 1768 the Coventry Turnpike was described as 'exceedingly bad and even dangerous.' Early turnpikes had merely sought to improve existing highways by filling in the worst holes and digging drainage ditches. A fourth highway to Alcester was turnpiked in 1767.

In his "History of Sutton Coldfield", W.K. Riland Bedford states, *"The Corporation…in 1792 paved the streets (with cobblestones) at the expence* (sic) *of £350, but the high roads from Watford Gap to Chester-road, and from Canwell to Sutton were placed under trustees, and toll-gates were erected at the north end of Sutton, at Ashfurlong and at Collet's Brook."* (see photo on page 30). If such a private trust was established, it would have pre-dated the first Turnpike Act for this road by 15 years. The Minutes of the Warden and Society of Sutton Coldfield for 1792 include a reference to the felling of timber at Stretly Hurst (sic), in Sutton Park, to the value of £350 a sum of money that paid for the paving of the streets in Sutton Coldfield.

5. Methods of Travel

During this period there were a number of ways that one could travel by hired vehicle in Britain. You could purchase a place in either a stagecoach or in the more expensive and generally more reliable mail coach; or for a more exclusive form of private travel one could travel 'post' by hiring a post-chaise.

The name 'stagecoach' was derived from the system of dividing routes, according to their specific gradients, into stages of about 10 to 15 miles where horses were changed at inns and posting houses and sometimes passengers were allowed time for meals. If we look at the 1791 *Guide from London to Holyhead* it states that over a total distance of 278 miles there were 23 stages of which the longest stage was 18 miles (Shrewsbury to Oswestry) while most were 10 to 14 miles.

Stagecoaches:

These were vehicles that followed a regular schedule carrying fare-paying passengers and date from the Restoration period (1660); a stagecoach company was set up in 1706 to provide a regular coach route between York and London. These coaches were referred to colloquially as 'flying coaches' but such a description would nowadays be described as an 'advertising-puff' since their speed was severely limited by the appalling road conditions of the time. However, such scheduled services were extremely rare before the late 18th century and the coaching business did not really gather momentum until the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

What made coaches different from other horse-drawn vehicles was that they had a fixed roof and the body, in the early days, was unsprung which guaranteed the passengers a most uncomfortable ride given the condition of the roads. Later the bodies were suspended on leather straps, which were called 'thoroughbraces', and these tended to give the coaches a swaying motion that frequently caused the passengers to suffer nausea.

The development of laminated iron springs in the 1750s provided a great improvement in the comfort-level of coach travel despite their vulnerability to fracture. However, the biggest technical advance in coach suspension was provided by Obadiah Elliot's design for elliptical springs. This form of suspension was called 'Telegraph' springs, named after the 'Telegraph' coach that first used them in 1804, and was a combination of crosswise and lengthwise semi-elliptical springs. Their introduction enabled coach bodies to be set lower so lowering the centre of gravity of the coach.

Stagecoaches were subject to a tax that was imposed in 1775 following the taxation of private carriages. This was a duty of one ½d per mile run by the vehicle and this was doubled in 1783 and further increased to 2d per mile in 1797.

Post-chaises:

For those wishing to travel longer distances privately, but did not possess their own carriage, the post-chaise was the answer. The post-chaise was a small, usually open carriage pulled by either two or four horses and could be hired from posting inns. They were usually bright yellow in colour that earned them the nickname of 'Yellow Bounders'. There was no seat for a coachman so they were driven by a postboy who rode postilion on the nearside, or left-hand 'wheeler' horse, using the whip on its offside companion to steer the carriage. The postboy would drive to the next posting inn where the horses would be changed as well as the postboy. Postboys were colourful characters who wore white breeches and short red jackets with brass buttons, top boots and top hat or beaver. Lichfield post boys had their own special colours (see p.16 of Howard Clayton's book "Coaching City").

6. The Royal Mail

Prior to the introduction of mail coaches, the mails were carried in relays from inn to inn by postboys on horseback at a speed of "not less than five miles per hour". The postboys could be any age from 16 to 60 and provided an extensive system. However, this system proved too slow and insecure and people began to defy the Post Office monopoly and illegally send their urgent mail by way of the existing network of stagecoaches that was much quicker and more reliable than the postboys.

It was a John Palmer from Bath who in 1784 successfully submitted a proposal, *A plan for the Reform and Improvement of the General Post Office*, to William Pitt, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, for the Post Office to exploit the existing system of stagecoach services in order to speed up the conveyance of mails. He used specially made, light and strong coaches that at first carried only four inside passengers but later accommodated four outside passengers also. Innkeepers along each route supplied the carriages and horses under contract to the Post Office, and the Post Office demanded a high standard. The driver was an employee of the contractors but the guard, who was in charge of the coach and mail as well as being responsible for the timekeeping, was a Post Office servant and was issued with a blunderbuss, a brace of pistols and a cutlass to defend the coach and its passengers against the perils of the road. In addition, he was issued with a watch in a sealed case that was carried in a leather pouch slung over his shoulder and a bugle to warn that the King's Mail was in the vicinity. He was also supplied with an assortment of tools and spare parts so that urgent repairs could be made in the event of a breakdown. Should a coach not be able to proceed any further, for whatever reason, the guard was required to take one of the horses and ride on to the next stage with the mails, or if they could not ride then they were expected to take it to the next stage on foot. The guard's rate of pay was 1 penny per mile, 2d for a double mile, i.e. a return journey.

In its day, the mail coach was the aristocrat of the road, and all other traffic, including the army, had to give way to the King's Mail. Unlike stagecoaches they did not have to pay duties and had right of way at all tollgates where tollkeepers were expected to open their gates as soon as they heard the guard's bugle so as not to hold up the Mail. It was a point of honour that Mail ran to time so much so that people would set their clocks by it. Dozens of routes covered the country, providing a service, which became the envy of the world. Yet this brilliant epoch was a brief one – the coaches were introduced in 1784 and after 1838, with Parliament's authorization, the main routes had been transferred to the railways.

Hundreds of vehicles were built to a standard Post Office specification. Many were built to a patented design of John Besant by John Vidler of Millbank who for many years held the exclusive contract until it expired in 1836. Although the coaches bore the royal arms, they were owned by Vidler who serviced and repaired them daily after their arrival in London, returning them in time for their 8.00pm departure. In 1792 Vidler had one hundred and twenty coaches for which he charged 2½d per double mile, including maintenance and repair. By 1834 the number of patent mail coaches had increased to two hundred and sixty-one. At first the livery was blue and orange, but soon they were painted in a standard livery of maroon and black with 'Post Office Red' wheels and undercarriage. On the fore boot was the royal cipher *'GR'* in gold while the *Royal Arms* were painted on the door panels and the four upper quarters carried the stars of the senior orders of chivalry. Each coach carried on the hind boot its own discreet number.

Royal Mail coach in blue & orange livery at Quinton.
(Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery**)**

Regular mail coaches between London and Birmingham began as early as 23 August 1785 but by 1837, when the government authorised the carrying of mails by train and the London & Birmingham Railway had opened, it was clear that their days were numbered.

Samuel Bradford's 1778 map of Birmingham shows the Post Office opposite the Grammar School in New Street, Birmingham. Later it moved up New Street to a cottage between Temple Street and Bennett's Hill but was replaced in the 1820s by a more commodious building at the foot of Bennett's Hill opposite the *Theatre Royal* in New Street. Pigot's Directory for 1835 lists Miss G.M. Gottwaltz as Post Mistress and the office hours as 8.00am until 10.00pm. Later still, the Post Office moved to the *New Royal Hotel* in New Street opposite the Town Hall.

There were several authorized receiving houses for letters in other parts of the town. On 27 August 1793, the inhabitants of Birmingham would read with pleasure an announcement in the *Gazette* of the intention of the Postmaster-General to establish a local penny post in the town. The notice ran as follows:

> POST OFFICE, BIRMINGHAM
>
> *August 27, 1793*. – His Majesty's Post Master General having been pleased to settle and establish a Penny Post, for the Convenience of this Town, the suburbs thereof, and Places adjacent – Notice is hereby given, that Offices are opened for the Receipt of Letters and Packets, (not exceeding four Ounces in Weight) from Seven in the Morning till Nine o'clock at Night, at the following Places:
>
> Mr. Hewitt's, Grocer, No. 48, Smallbrook Street.
>
> Mr. Steven's, Grocer, No. 72, Digbeth, near Deritend Bridge.
>
> Mr. Murcott's, Grocer, Coleshill-street, opposite Market-street.
>
> Mr. Lutey's, Grocer, Steelhouse Lane, the Corner of Whittall-street.
>
> Mr. Smith's, Grocer, Church-street, Ludgate Hill.
>
> From which Places Letters will be sent to the principal Office, opposite the Theatre, in New Street, four Times a Day, viz. –
>
> At Eight o'clock in the Morning, for the first Delivery, and in Time to be forwarded by the North Mail, via Lichfield;
>
> At Twelve o'clock at Noon, for the Second Delivery, and in Time for the Mail going to Shrewsbury;
>
> At a Quarter before Two in the Afternoon, for the London Mail; and, for the Third Delivery, at Half-past Three o'clock;
>
> And at Four o'clock in the Afternoon, for the Mail going to Bristol;
>
> On or before which Times Letters should be put into the above Offices, in order to be sent by the earliest Conveyance; for which One Penny will be charged in the Town, and Twopence for the Suburbs and Places within the Limits of the Penny Post, to be paid on putting in, or on Delivery, at the option of the Writers; except Letters intended to be forwarded by the London and Cross Road Mails, with which one Penny must be paid on putting into the above mentioned Receiving Offices.
>
> Letter Carriers will be dispatched every day (except Monday) with the Letters to and from Solihull, Knowle, **Sutton Coldfield**, Hales Owen (sic), Dudley, West Bromwich, Tipton, Wednesbury, Darlaston, Willenhall, Bilstone (sic), and to the intermediate and adjacent Places.

In Sutton Coldfield, the site of the Post Office is given in Pigot's Commercial Directory for 1828 as "near the Town-hall". In 1828 the 'Town Hall', known as the Moot Hall was sited at the top of Mill Street at the junction with High Street and Coleshill Street. Norman G. Evan's street map of the Parish Church Area c.1800 indicates the Post Office to have been on the western side of Mill Street opposite the Moot Hall, a position it was to maintain for the next 170 years.

Wrightson's New Triennial Directory of Birmingham for 1818 lists the Mails that left the Post Office in Birmingham. The one that we are particularly interested in was the *Sheffield Mail* which left Birmingham each morning at a quarter past eight and took all the letters for Lichfield, Tamworth, Atherstone, Uttoxeter, Rugely (sic), Burton, Derbyshire, Leicestershire Nottinghamshire, Gainsborough, Brigg, Barton, Kirton, Caistor, Coltersworth (sic), Grantham, Grimsby Lincoln, Market-Raisin (sic), Sleaford

and Stamford, in Lincolnshire, Rutlandshire, Sheffield, Barnsley, Wakefield, Leeds, Halifax, Rotherham, Bradford, Huddersfield, Keighley, Otley, Doncaster, Ferry Bridge, Howden, Bawtry, and Selby, in Yorkshire.

Other Mail Coaches that departed from the Post Office were "the *Manchester Mail* every morning at half past nine, the *Holyhead Mail* every morning at eleven o'clock, the *Walsall Mail* every day at eleven o'clock, the *Shrewsbury Mail* every day at twelve at noon, the *Bewdley Mail* every day at twelve at noon, the *Oxford Mail* every day at half past two o'clock in the afternoon, the *London Mail* every day at three o'clock in the afternoon (except Saturday), and the *Bristol Mail* every day at half past four o'clock in the afternoon."

In 1800 there were six daily Royal Mail Coaches advertised as operating from Birmingham, three from the *Castle Inn* in High Street being those to Lichfield at 9.00am, Coventry at 3.00pm and Bristol at 5.00pm, two from the *Dog Inn* in Spiceal Street opposite St Martin's Church to Shrewsbury at 1.00pm and London at 3.00pm, and one from the *Saracen's Head Inn* in Bull Street to Walsall at 11.00am. A Birmingham Post Coach was also advertised arriving at this Inn from London every day at 10.00am and departing to London from this Inn every evening at 7.00pm.

By 1803 the number of Royal Mail coaches had increased to eleven. By 1808 the 'Mails' were diverted to operate from the Post Office in Birmingham where the mail was collected before calling at the various inns for the passengers.

The Victoria County History states that by 1827, 24 coaches a day passed through Sutton Coldfield.

Royal Mail Coach No. 105 used on the London to Bristol route
(The Postal Museum)

7. Coaching Inns

Coaching inns were a vital part of the coaching tradition. They were open twenty-four hours a day and not only provided food and accommodation for travellers who arrived by coach but they also looked after the stabling and welfare of the horses and provided a change of horses for each arriving coach. They also provided rest and provision for passengers awaiting connecting services and many had 'posting' facilities to hire out post-chaises or other carriages to enable passengers to finish their journeys if their destination was not on a coaching route. The head yard porter was in charge of the stables and ran his yard as a benevolent dictator, so it was important for the regular traveller to be on the right side of him if favours were required and so a generous gratuity never went amiss. He, in turn, was answerable to the inn proprietor if the horses and harness were not turned out to perfection. In some instances, inn owners became coach operators themselves like William Waddell in Birmingham and Isaac Taylor in Shrewsbury. By the end of the 18th century, it became the fashion to refer to 'inns' as 'hotels' probably because it was thought to give a more up-market impression of these establishments, so it is likely that directories and written accounts will add either inn or hotel inconsistently to their names.

As well as their role in coaching, the larger inns offered other facilities. They became centres of social life, with balls, parties and entertainment by travelling showmen. Before offices became common, businessmen would meet in local inns; a good local example was the *Talbot* in Stourbridge where the Black Country glassmakers from smaller neighbouring towns like Wordsley, Amblecote and Brierley Hill would hold their meetings and this gave rise to the term 'Stourbridge cut-glass' regardless of the fact that such glass was never manufactured in Stourbridge.

As the coaching industry grew it brought quiet prosperity to remote villages by introducing work where there had been little or none before. The creation of new inns, usually converted from former mansions, large houses and farmsteads, increased across the countryside. They were often in isolated locations but by the main road. In some lesser towns where there was no special local industry and little market trade, the road network and the coaching inns were economically essential.

Changing horses at these inns was always the most difficult and expensive part of the coaching business. Even the bigger coaching contractors or proprietors were in the power of the innkeepers on their routes, who were paid an annual fee to provide suitable horses. In areas where there were many inns contractors could negotiate the best terms but if a remote inn had complete control over a section of road the innkeeper could charge what he wished.

Coaching Inns in Birmingham:

Pigot's 1835 National and Commercial Directory of Warwickshire, etc. listed among many others the following coaching inns that had a connection with the coaching trade from Birmingham to Lichfield, Tamworth and the North. They were:

Albion Hotel (posting), Ann Hicks, High Street.
Castle Hotel (commercial & posting), William Chapman, High Street.
Nelson Commercial & Family Hotel (& general coach office), Robert Gooden, 1 & 2 Spiceal Street.
Saracen's Head (commercial), Sarah Croxhall, 25 Bull Street.
Swan Hotel, William Waddell, 148 New Street, entrance in High Street.
St George's Tavern, Ann Burbidge, High Street.
Union Hotel, and Commercial Inn, John Machin, 21 Union Street.

At the corner of High Town and New Street stood the old *Swan Inn*, already popular in 1553, and in the early days of coaching in Birmingham was to become the town's main inn and coaching centre. It was the only one shown on Westley's 1731 plan of the town centre, where it appears in "High Town", later to be known as High Street, above the Market Cross, and about where the present Rotunda building stands. It was situated at the top of the Bull Ring at 148 New Street but the entrance to its yard was from High Street. This was where Nicholas Rothwell's *Birmingham Stage Coach* commenced its journey to London on 24th May 1731 for what was to become a regular service leaving the *Swan* yard every Monday morning at 6.00am. Rothwell's boast was that the journey would be performed in *"Two Days and a half…if God permit"*. A contemporary handbill read as follows:

BIRMINGHAM STAGE-COACH

In Two Days and a half: begins May the 24th 1731

SETS out from the Swan-Inn in Birmingham, every Monday at six a clock in the Morning,
Through Warwick, Banbury and Alesbury to the Red Lion Inn in Aldersgate-Street, London, every Wednesday Morning; And returns from the said Red Lion Inn every Thursday Morning at five a clock the same Way to the Swan-Inn in Birmingham every Saturday at 21 shillings each passenger, and 18 shillings from Warwick, who had liberty to carry 14 Pounds in Weight, and above all to pay One Penny a Pound.

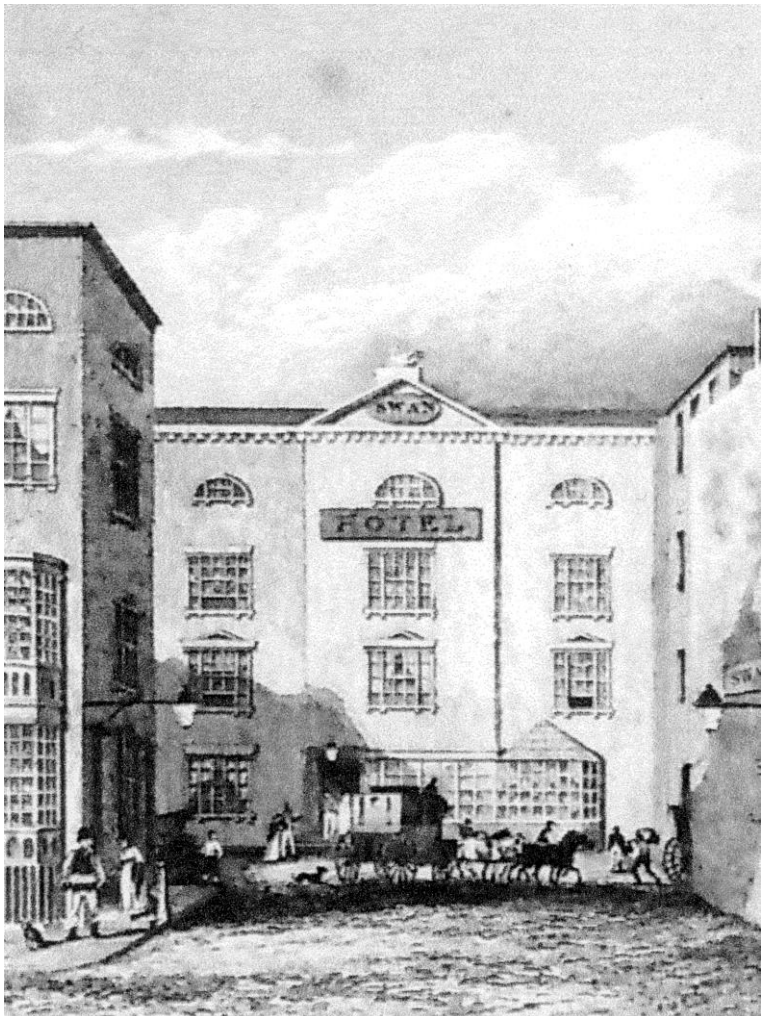
Performed (if God Permit)
By Nicholas Rothwell

The coach travelled at the modest speed of three miles per hour which is a reasonable fast walking pace and was undoubtedly good at the time taking into consideration the terrible state of the roads and the fact that the coaches were not sprung. However, passengers demanded a service that was not so sedate and competition was not long in presenting itself. So Robert Coles entered into competition with Rothwell and announced in *Aris's Gazette* in May 1742:

> "The Birmingham and Warwick Stage Coach Begins flying for the Summer Season in two days, on Tuesday, the 5th May, and sets out every Tuesday morning at Three o'clock from the Swan Inn in Birmingham, and from the George Inn in Aldersgate Street, London, every Friday morning, and returns to Birmingham on Saturday."

In 1742 this was no doubt still regarded as a speedy rate of travelling, if we take into account the weight of the coach drawn by three horses over intolerably rough roads.

The *Swan Hotel* was later rebuilt so that horses could be stabled, and for the first time an arch gave access to the yard from High Street. Nicholas Rothwell of Warwick based his coach at the *Nag's Head* in Birmingham from where he also ran a carrier service – a Weekly Wagon – to the *Red Lion Inn* in London. In 1825 John Hart was running mail coaches from the *Swan Hotel*. It ceased to be an inn and became Steven's Bar in 1939. Twenty years later it was demolished in the Bull Ring development of the 1950s and 60s.



The Swan Hotel in High Street, Birmingham.

The other Birmingham coaching inn of major importance was the *Hen & Chickens*. The original had a short history having been built by Robert Corbett in 1724 on land situated on the west side of High Town. It was an old-established, most respectable inn and posting house with stabling for seventy horses and a capacious bowling green at the rear. The gateway to the stables was in Scotland Passage. There was a winding alley running alongside the inn that was called Corbett's Alley until the *Union Tavern* was built in 1791 after which it became Union Street. This alley led to Corbett's Bowling Green[†] which is shown on Samuel Bradford's 1751 map of Birmingham and which was

[†] Corbett's Bowling Green is also shown on Westley's map of 1731. In 1779 the Birmingham library was established and in 1781 moved to premises in the *Swan* Yard. In 1775 Dr William Withering settled in Birmingham and by 1779 had purchased the freehold of some 3,500 square yards of land in Corbett's Alley, which included Corbett's Bowling Green. In 1787 he built a house there called the Stone House, which he intended to use as his town dwelling having just taken a lease on Edgbaston Hall. There is no evidence that he ever lived there but his wife is known to have lived at the Stone House whilst he and his son were in Portugal in 1793-4. In 1792 he proposed that the Birmingham Library move to a site on his land, adjacent to the Stone House, and the Library moved there in 1797 in what became known as Union Street. Here it stayed until 1899 when it moved to its present site in Margaret Street as part of the Birmingham and Midland Institute. The *Union Tavern*, built in 1791 was on the other side of The Stone House. In 1820 the whole estate was sold by William Withering Junior at auction.

formerly part of the pleasure grounds of the Old Priory. Prior to 1740 the inn was known as *The Angel* and *Hen and Chickens* (*The Angel Inn* had a much longer history dating back to the 16th century) but the sign of *The Angel* was dropped in 1740 by the then owner, John Bradley of Stourport, and the inn was called simply *The Hen & Chickens* until it was demolished in the early 18th century and a replacement built. The following advertisement appeared in Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* on December 14th 1741.

> "To be Lett and entered upon at Christmas, in the High Street, Birmingham. A Very Good Accustomed Inn the Sign of the Hen and Chickens, with Stables, Brew Houses and all Conveniences for Publick Business. Enquire at the said Inn. N.B. There is a very good Bowling Green joining to it".

In 1742 the new proprietor appears to have been Mr Francis Cox. We do not know the names of the occupiers from this time until 1770 when a widow named Thomas was the hostess. In 1784 Mr Richard Lloyd occupied the inn and when he died it came under the ownership of his widow, Mrs Sarah Lloyd.

The *Hen and Chickens Hotel* at 130 New Street, Birmingham which was adjacent to the 'Free School', King Edward VI Grammar School.

Mrs Lloyd sold the inn in 1798 and bought a piece of land adjacent to the old Free Grammar School in New Street where she commenced the erection of a new hotel.

She opened it as *Lloyd's Hotel*, and *Hen and Chickens Inn* and it became Birmingham's most important coaching inn. Over the years many famous people stayed there including Charles Dickens, Charles Thackeray, William Wordsworth and Wilkie Collins. As early as 1819 about 30 coaches per day left the *Hen & Chickens* yard and by the 1840s something like 60 coaches a day were pulling into the yard.

Birmingham's foremost man in the coaching inn business was William Waddell. In the 1790s he formed a business connection with Mr Piper at the *Castle Inn* in High Street and very soon came to manage his posting business. In 1796 Waddell successfully applied to operate a mail coach service from Birmingham to Walsall. When Piper died in 1802 Waddell took over the *Castle Inn* and two years later he had leased the *Hen & Chickens.* Waddell was an ambitious man and keen to expand his business interests.

Mrs Lloyd sold the hotel on April 16th 1804 to William Waddell, including 26 horses, 5 post-chaises plus harness and fittings. He had transferred terminus coaches, previously using the *Castle Inn*, to the *Hen & Chickens* on 1st January 1804. By 1830 Waddell was in possession of both the *Hen & Chickens* and the *Swan Hotel* where, in partnership with his son, Thomas Waddell, he also carried on the coaching business and contracted for carrying the mails. At about this time he purchased the freehold of the *Hen & Chickens*, remodelled the frontage and erected a portico. The Hotel in the meantime had secured a reputation for its accommodation which necessitated frequent enlargements. He carried on here until he died in 1836 and it was shown at the time of his death that receipts for beds alone amounted to the large sum of £800 per annum. The *Hen and Chickens* ceased to be a hotel on the close of the lease on Lady Day in 1878.

The 16th century *Castle Inn* was at 39 High Street at the corner of Castle Street that ran to the rear of the hotel from Moor Street. It was a coaching inn much written about by Dr Johnson who liked its friendly atmosphere. In 1755 the Lloyd family held their club on these premises and a notable visitor was Edward, Duke of York, who dined there in 1765. The *Castle Inn* was demolished in the middle of the 19th century.

When, in 1729, Cherry Street was cut through Walker's Cherry Orchard from St. Philip's Churchyard, its progress in a direct line towards High Street was halted by a bend to the left where it made a junction with Crooked Lane. There was, however, a narrow passage leading from Cherry Street to High Street, which was known as Corbett's Alley. The eastern side of this passage was partially built upon, but the boundary on the western side was, for the greater part of its length, the fence of Corbett's Bowling Green, a large area surrounded by trees and having many pleasant arbours. At the end of the straight part of Cherry Street, but fronting to the south, in Corbett's Alley, was an old tavern known as the *Coffee-pot* reaching across most of the roadway. The grounds and gardens of this house extended westwards to Little Canon Street. The freehold of this tavern, and of Corbett's Bowling Green, was later purchased by the physician, Dr William Withering, who resided at Edgbaston Hall (now the clubhouse of Edgbaston Golf Club) and who is credited with the discovery of digitalis (the foxglove) as a heart stimulant.

A resident of Corbett's Alley, Edmund Goodbehere, conceived the idea that, by pulling down the *Coffee-pot* and taking a slice from the Bowling Green, Corbett's Alley might be transformed into a street which would connect Cherry Street with High Street in a straight line. In agreement with Withering, Goodbehere pulled down the old tavern and built a new and commodious inn, with its front now in a line with the houses already existing in Cherry Street. There was plenty of land at the rear, so that it was determined that as stagecoach travel was coming rapidly into vogue, the premises should be adapted for a stagecoach business, and that they should also be built with a view to accommodate the then increasing number of 'outriders' or 'bagmen', who were the predecessors of the later "commercial travellers". The hotel was to receive the name of the *Union* and was opened for business on Friday, 4th May 1790. The public notice read as follows:

UNION INN AND TAVERN

Cherry Street, Birmingham

EDMUND GOODBEHERE having completely rebuilt the above INN and TAVERN, and added thereto some excellent Stabling begs Leave to acquaint the Public that he has fitted up and Furnished the same in a genteel Manner with entire new beds, &c., for the particular accommodation of GENTLEMEN TRAVELLERS, has laid in a stock of rich Old Wines and other Liquors of the best Quality. He therefore Solicits the Patronage and kind Recommendation of his Friends, which he will always endeavour to merit by the most reasonable Charge and punctual Attention to the Commands of his Customers. For the Favours he has already experienced he thus publicly makes his grateful Acknowledgements.

The inn had extensive stabling and by June 1791 the coaching arrangements were so far complete that a notice was issued advertising a London coach from the *Union* to complete the journey in one day. The coach departed Cherry Street every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 4am to arrive at the *Castle and Falcon*[*] in London the same evening at 9pm. The fare was £1. 1s. and the service was operated by William Powers from Birmingham and Harris & Kay from London.

At about the same time a new route to Holyhead was arranged that avoided the dangerous Conway ferry crossing and this London to Holyhead service was advertised as stopping at the *Union Tavern*.

Shortly after this, the name of Corbett's Alley was changed to Union Street. There seems to be little evidence that the *Union* was ever a major coaching inn, so perhaps it concentrated on its core business of catering for gentlemen travellers.

In 1825, the Union was taken over by Mr John Machin, the landlord of the *White House* in Steelhouse Lane, who enlarged the inn by building a room over the gateway and extended the yard. The *Union* does not appear to have developed as a coaching inn. [See p.10 of *"Town & Country in the West Midlands"*]**.** The *Union Hotel* and several adjoining premises were sold by auction in one lot on Monday, 21st April 1879, and fetched £165; they were demolished to make way for the construction of Corporation Street[10].

The 1820s was probably the grand climax of the coaching era and this meant that the old coaching inns were still extremely important to Birmingham's prosperity. Apart from the *Hen & Chickens*, the other well-known coaching inn was the *Saracen's Head* in Bull Street, near its junction with Temple Row and backing on to the Old Square. However, the main concentration was along High Street and included the *Swan* with its large open yard, the *Nelson* in the Market-place which had just changed its name from the *Dog* because of its position opposite the recently erected statue of Nelson, the *Albion* at the junction of High Street and Carr's Lane, the *St George's Tavern* at Castle Chambers opposite Union Street, and the *Castle* at the end of Castle Street.

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[*] The *Castle and Falcon* was situated at 5 Aldersgate Street in London. Its forerunner on the site was the Elizabethan printing and publishing house of John Day who took as his trade sign the crest of Katherine Parr, wife of Henry VIII: a crowned falcon perched on a castle. Becoming an inn in the 17th century the proprietor sensibly retained that impressive sign. While the *Bull and Mouth* in St. Martin's le Grand was the premier coaching inn of this part of the city, the *Castle and Falcon* had its own distinct claims to fame. By the 1820s the inn was the departure and arrival point for coach traffic to and from Bath, Bristol, Ilfracombe and Birmingham and was said to be a favourite 'house of fashion' in those glory days of coaching.

Those hotels best adapted for the accommodation of *families* were the *Royal Hotel* in Temple Row, the *Hen & Chickens* in New Street, the *Stork* in the Square, the *Swan* and the *Albion* both in the High Street.

Coaching Inns in Sutton Coldfield:

In Sutton Coldfield the main coaching inn was the *Three Tuns* in High Street. It is one of Sutton's oldest buildings and is the oldest remaining inn in the town. The original building probably dates from Tudor times, or even earlier, but the present structure dates from the late 17th century and covers earlier foundations and cellars. At this period when Sutton was prosperous, along with many of the buildings in the High Street, the brick-built structure had its frontage remodelled in the Queen Anne style with sliding casement windows and a crowning cornice added for architectural effect.

High Street, Sutton Coldfield c. 1850, a watercolour and bodycolour over pencil by A.E. Everitt the Birmingham artist. In the painting, No. 38 High Street, the first house on the left has window pediments shaped like a bishop's mitre. Opposite stands a stagecoach outside *The Three Tuns* coaching inn. The Old Town hall with its first-floor Venetian window can be seen at the far end. This building was demolished in 1854. The three-bayed building on the right of High Street is now called Vesey House.

The *Three Tuns* is reputed to have been standing at the time of the War of the Roses, with the earliest visit of note being that of the Earl of Richmond – later to become King Henry VII – who lodged there on his way to the Battle of Bosworth Field. The likelihood of this being true is extremely doubtful. My research shows that Henry and his army on their route out of Wales travelled via Shrewsbury, Newport, Stafford, Rugeley, Lichfield, Tamworth, Merevale Abbey, Atherstone and Fenny Drayton.

It is claimed that many notable people have visited the inn during its history. Probably the most famous was Cromwell who is purported to have stayed here on August 7th 1643 when he was with his troops in Sutton Coldfield and eight years later, on September 3rd 1651, after the Battle of Worcester when he is supposed to have used it as a place to meet with his officers. The "evidence" for these visits is made in a letter now held in the Archives of the Salt Museum in Stafford whose experts claim that this letter and many others in the same bundle are 19th century fakes.

The building has also been used as a meeting place for local people in times of trouble and on 22nd April 1778 a meeting was held at the *Three Tuns* by protesters who had gathered to fight proposals to enclose all common land in Sutton Coldfield, including Sutton Park. None of them wanted to lose their rights of common and lot acres, or to see the park converted to farmland. Present at this meeting were the Warden and Society who allocated £500 to the 'Hands off Sutton Park' campaign. By 1824 the enclosure of the commons went ahead but the final award of the Commissioner did not appear until 1851, and because of the 1778 meeting the Park was left as common land for the use of the people of Sutton.

As a direct result of the Priestley Riots in Birmingham on 14th July 1791, William Hutton, bookseller and Birmingham's first local historian, was forced to flee with his wife Sally, and daughter Catherine on Saturday 16th July to Sutton Coldfield from their home at Bennetts Hill in Washwood Heath and they arrived in time for breakfast at the *Three Tuns*. After finding lodgings for the ensuing summer over a butcher's shop in the town they were later asked by the landlord that same day to move on because of fear of reprisals from the roaming mobs. The next morning the three of them plus Hutton's son, Thomas, arrived penniless at the *Castle Inn* at Tamworth before later seeking refuge near Castle Bromwich with friends.

The *Old Swan Hotel* was situated on the Lichfield Road in front of Bishop Vesey's Grammar School. In the late 19th century, it was known as the *Old Top Swan* to avoid confusion with the nearby *White Swan Hotel (Bottom Swan)*. The *Old Top Swan* was set alight by patriotic locals in a revenge attack on the pro-Boer landlord on Mafeking night causing considerable damage. The inn was never restored and in 1900 was demolished to make way for the old technical school that was erected on land belonging to it.

No. 27 High Street was built in 1751 as a residence. It later became the *White Swan Hotel*, was expanded and renamed the *New Royal Hotel* in 1896 when the nearby *Royal Hotel*, in what is now known as King Edward Square, became briefly a sanatorium, before becoming the new Sutton Town Hall, Council House and fire station.

The *Royal Oak Hotel* stood at the top of Mill Street at a spot behind the Moot Hall that was taken down in 1854. This inn was built about 1837 when its first licensee was Thomas Archer. It was demolished and rebuilt in about 1889. Its coach-yard occupied a position where the present Vesey Gardens are and was finally demolished in 1936 to make way for the Gardens.

The *Old Sun* stood round the corner in Coleshill Street and was also demolished in 1936 to make way for the Vesey Memorial Gardens.

Coaching Inns in Lichfield:

Although Lichfield must have had a number of inns from very early times, almost no records of them prior to the 18th century exist. However, we know that it was an important coaching city on the routes from London to Ireland and Bristol to York and that coaches plying this road were calling at Lichfield from the 1650s. The oldest inn was possibly the *Hart's Horn* which stood on St John's Street within the city Barr and

adjacent to St John's Hospital which was outside the city Barr. This juxtaposition might suggest that it originally served as a hostelry for pilgrims travelling to worship at the shrine of St Chad where it was claimed that miracles took place and many pilgrims had been cured of their ills. Snape's map of 1781 shows the inn as a collection of buildings surrounding a courtyard. It survived into the turnpike era and was one of four Lichfield inns where the Lichfield Turnpike Trust held their meetings, but it was demolished around 1790. Lichfield in the 18th and early 19th centuries had a sophisticated middle class and by the late 18th century had an increasing number of daily coaching services which inevitably demanded an increase in the number of hostelries to cope with this trade.

Four of the Lichfield inns cornered the market in this increasing business. The *George*, the *Swan* (formerly the *Lily-White Swan*), the *King's Head* (formerly the *Antelope*) and the *Talbot* all stood on Bird Street which was the main north-south street through which most of the coach traffic passed. The *George*, the *King's Head* and the *Swan* were all medieval inns converted in the 18th century to take advantage of the extra trade, while the *Talbot*, it seems, catered exclusively for 'gentlemen on horseback'. By 1835 the latter was listed in Pigot's Directory as the *Talbot and Commercial Hotel* (and excise office) with Ann Jones as manageress.

The two principal coaching inns were the *Swan* and the *George* both still existing and in recent years converted mainly into apartments. Behind the façade of the *Swan* fronting Bird Street lies a period core thought to date from around 1450 and some amazing internal features including medieval joinery. There are records dating back to 1535 when it was known as the *Lily White Swan*. It became a coaching inn with additional stabling to serve the busy coaching routes linking London with Liverpool and Birmingham with Sheffield. During the second half of the 18th century the inn was rebuilt in its present form with Georgian façade and is now a Grade II listed building. At the rear of the inn were extensive stables to cope with the large number of daily coaches, as well as providing them for the post-chaise traffic.

The inn became a popular stopover for some famous historic names including, of course, Dr Samuel Johnson, Lichfield's most famous son, and the writer George Eliot. Dr. Johnson's friend Mrs. Piozzi, formerly Mrs. Hester Thrale, stayed at the *Swan* when she visited Lichfield in 1774 with her second husband, the singer Gabrieli Piozzi, and her eldest daughter Queeney Thrale. In more recent times well-known film actors like Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Jean Kent and John Mills have stayed there.

The *Swan* also played a part in the Jacobite Rebellion of the mid 18th century when the "Butcher" Duke of Cumberland billeted his troops in Lichfield en route to crush the Young Pretender, Bonnie Prince Charlie, and his army on their advance south towards London. The Duke is reputed to have been billed by the *Swan* on 29th November 1745 for the supply of 'meat, bacon, pigs eares and feet, more meat, a calf's head and veale' for the sum of £10 13s. – tasty meat rations of the age.

As part of the 2005 redevelopment the traditional carved swan, that is a focal point of the newly renovated façade now restored to its original brickwork, was recreated from scratch using old photographs as a guide. It had hung there for 180 years before mysteriously going astray in the 1970s.

Competition between the *Swan* and the *George* was heightened by their conflicting political affiliations and feelings could run high between them to such an extent that during the 1826 election the *George* had all of its front windows smashed. The *George* was the meeting-place and local headquarters of the Whig party at election times while the Tories met in the *Swan*. This competition extended to the colour of the jackets worn by the respective postboys; the postboys from the *Swan* wore blue jackets while those

from the *George* wore buff jackets, the colours of the respective parties. The last coach stopped at the *Swan* in 1890 as rail travel superseded coach travel.

On the other side of Bird Street stood the *George* which had a similar history to that of the *Swan*. Its name referred not to a Hanoverian king but to the saint. The earliest reference to it is by George Farquhar, the playwright, who recalls that he stayed there in 1704 when he was in the Army with the task of recruiting and, indeed, he wrote his play "The Recruiting Officer" while staying at this hostelry. It had stabling for 54 horses. According to Pevsner it is one of the best late 18th century hotel buildings in the land with nine bays, stuccoed, with a five-bay centre, rusticated below, with Ionic pilasters above.

The *George* reached the peak of its importance during the Golden Age of Coaching, 1800-20, when its proprietor was Thomas Webb who became one of the largest horse-keepers in the Midlands. When he exhausted the stabling accommodation at the rear of the hotel, he acquired extensive extra stabling accommodation in St. John Street, opposite St. John's Hospital. He not only supplied horses for the coaches and post-chaises operating from the *George* but also for those operating from other hostelries in Lichfield.

The *King's Head* stood opposite the *George*. It is best known for being the place where, in 1705, the 38th Regiment of Foot was raised by Colonel Luke Lillingston. This eventually became the First Battalion of the former South Staffordshire Regiment based at nearby Whittington Barracks.

***The George Inn* at Lichfield**

Coaching Inns in Tamworth:

The *Castle Hotel*, which stands on the corner of Market Street and Hollow Way, was a premier coaching inn and former rival of the *Peel Arms* on the opposite corner. On November 2, 1838 the hotel suffered a disastrous fire and six maidservants perished as a result. It was here on July 16th 1791 that William Hutton and his family sought refuge from the Priestley Riots in Birmingham. He arrived penniless but gave as a guarantor

the name of his business friend, Robert Bage of Elford Mill, which gained him and his family acceptance at the *Castle Hotel*.

The *King's Arms* Hotel was in Market Street and in 1834 the landlord was James Carter Barton.

The *George Inn* stood in George Street which is a continuation of Market Street.

The *Bell Inn* was the chief posting house on the north side of the town and stood on the corner of Aldergate and Lower Gungate. It was demolished in the late 1960s.

9. Coach Travel between Birmingham, Lichfield and Tamworth

In *Walker's* (an early Birmingham newspaper which afterwards was incorporated in the *Birmingham Gazette*) the following notice appeared on April 27th 1742.

> "*The Litchfield and Birmingham Stage-coach set out this morning (Monday) from The Rose Inn,* Holborn Bridge, London, and will be at *The Angel* and *Hen and Chickens* in the High Town, Birmingham, on Wednesday next and goes the same afternoon to Litchfield; It returns to Birmingham on Thursday morning to breakfast, and gets to London on Saturday night and so will continue every week regularly, with a good coach and able horses."

Similarly, the following advertisement appeared in Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* in 1744.

> The Birmingham and Lichfield Stage-Coach SETS out every Monday Morning from the Swan in Lichfield, and Mr. Francis Cox's at the Angel and Hen and Chickens in Birmingham, and arrives in Wood-street, London, every Wednesday Evening following; from whence it sets out the next Morning, and gets to Birmingham and Lichfield every Saturday Night.
>
> Each Passenger is all'd fourteen Pounds Luggage, and to pay Three Half-pence per Pound for what exceeds that Weight.
>
> All parcels carried at Three Half-pence per Pound. To be perform'd in Three Days, (if God permit) by
>
> ANTHONY JACKSON
>
> | | **l.** | **s.** | **d.** |
> |---|---|---|---|
> | The Passengers from Lichfield to pay | 1 | 7 | 0 |
> | From Birmingham | 1 | 5 | 0 |
> | From Coleshill | 1 | 3 | 0 |
> | From Coventry | 1 | 1 | 0 |
>
> One Half to be paid Earnest when the Places are taken, and the other on going into the Coach.
>
> N.B. He will not be answerable for Jewels, Rings, Watches, Plate or Money, unless the Carriage is paid according to the Rates of Four-pence for every twenty shillings Value.
>
> Coaches, Chaise, Mourning Coaches and Herse, with able Horses, to be Lett to any Part of England, by,
>
> A. JACKSON

Anthony Jackson, who was landlord of the *Coach and Horses* in Beacon Street, Lichfield, provided this coach service. The cost of such a trip was not cheap as passengers had to pay 27 shillings with a luggage allowance of 14 pounds. Should they exceed this allowance or carry expensive items that might attract the unwanted attention of footpads or 'gentlemen of the road', then they would incur an additional tariff. The *Coach and Horses* is now a private residence called "Whitehall".

This was probably the first regular stagecoach service to travel via Sutton Coldfield and must have created great excitement to those inhabitants who lived on or near to the

main Birmingham to Lichfield road. In her diaries, Helen Holbeche, who as a child lived in the High Street, records her childhood memories, *"The coach from York to London went through the town between 3 and 4am, someone was stationed on the hill to watch for it and the guard always blew his horn. Everybody was up, and on more than one or more occasion we were allowed to get up to see the start of which I remember most the brown bread toast and butter in our little parlour (as we used to call it) and the desolate dreary feeling when they were gone and the excitement was over."* She was recalling a time around the year 1825 and the coach would probably have been the London ***Express*** from Liverpool (not York as she remembers), which was scheduled to pass through Sutton Coldfield every morning at 4am.

18th century milestone outside Tamworth Health Centre
(Author's photo taken: 20/10/2008)

During the Golden Age of Coaching the number of coach services increased so that it is difficult to present an accurate record of the coaches that a resident of Sutton Coldfield could have witnessed passing through the High Street on any day but the following is a reasonably accurate account based on information gleaned from various trade and Post Office directories. However, the Victoria County History of Warwick states that by 1827, 24 coaches a day passed through the town.

The ***Express*** would have been the first coach of the day (see above). Another early coach was the ***Amity*** that left the *Albion Hotel* on the corner of High Street and Carr's Lane, Birmingham, at 5.30am each day (except Sunday) and passed through Sutton at 6.45am on its way to Nottingham via Lichfield, Burton and Derby.

Following this would have been the passing Sheffield ***Royal Mail*** from Birmingham at 7am. This mail coach would have left the *Swan Hotel* in High Street, Birmingham, every morning at 6am, travelling via Lichfield, Burton, and Derby.

For passengers wishing to travel to Lichfield there were ***Day Coaches*** departing the *Swan Hotel* in Birmingham every morning at 6am and 9.30am passing through Sutton at 7am and 10.30am respectively. The ***Union*** coach departed the *Albion Hotel* and *Hart's* office at 7am for Lichfield and would have passed through Sutton at 8am. Not all-day coaches ran with guards, probably because they took up the space of a paying passenger, so the coachman would have to do the work of the guard.

Sheffield was served rather well by coach traffic because the ***Royal Devonshire*** left the *Castle* and *Saracen's Head* hotels in Birmingham at 7am every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday and passed through Sutton at 8am before travelling an alternative route to Sheffield via Lichfield, Uttoxeter, Ashbourne, Bakewell and Baslow. Could this coach have been so named because the Duke of Devonshire lived at nearby Chatsworth House?

At the same time the ***Royal Express*** from London passed through at 8am on its journey to Liverpool via Lichfield, Rugeley, Haywood, Stone, the Potteries, Knutsford and Warrington. To complicate the record there was another coach called the ***Express*** that travelled to Manchester from Birmingham and passed through at 9am, while its return counterpart passed through on its way to Birmingham every evening at 6pm.

The first regular stopping coach was the Birmingham to Sheffield ***Accomodation*** that left the *Swan Hotel* in Birmingham at 6am every morning and stopped at the *Three Tuns* in the High Street at 9am.

The ***Royal Express*** left the *Hen & Chickens Hotel* every morning at 8am for Manchester and would have passed through Sutton at 9am on its way to Lichfield.

For locals wishing to travel to Birmingham there was a ***Day Coach*** from Lichfield that called at the *Old Sun* daily at 9am.

The ***Nottingham Royal Dart*** post coach, which carried four insides, left the *Castle* and *Saracen's Head Inns*, Birmingham, every day (except Sundays), at 9am and stopped at the *Swan* in Sutton Coldfield, at 10am before making its journey to the *King's Arms* and *George Inns* at Tamworth (11.30am) and onward to Ashby (the *Crown Inn*), Castle Donnington, Sawley and Nottingham. This service was advertised as meeting at Nottingham coaches destined for Newark, Lincoln, Hull, Doncaster, Wakefield, Sheffield, York, Newcastle, and all parts North.

At the same time, 9am, the ***Royal Express*** departed the *Hen & Chickens Hotel.* This was followed at 10.30am by a passing coach, the Birmingham to Sheffield ***Telegraph***, which left the *Hen & Chickens* and *Swan Hotels*, Birmingham, every day (except Sundays) at 9.15am. calling at Lichfield, Burton, Derby, Belper, Alfreton and Chesterfield.

To give some idea of the duration of journeys on local roads it is perhaps worthwhile referring to the *1845 Post Office Directory of Birmingham, Warwickshire and Parts of Staffordshire* which states that the ***Wonder*** departs the *Hen & Chickens Hotel* in New Street at 10am and arrives in Sutton at 11am. On its onward journey it arrives at Shenstone at 11.30am and Lichfield by 12pm. These appear to be very convenient time slots of one hour and half hour duration.

The middle of the day was a quiet period for coach watchers in Sutton but activity picked up from 3pm when the ***Royal Dart*** called at the *Swan* on its way from Nottingham to Birmingham every afternoon except for Sundays.

This service would be followed by the ***Royal Mail*** coach passing through Sutton from Sheffield to Birmingham at 3.30pm. It would have been accompanied by the ***Amity*** also en route from Sheffield to Birmingham at the same time.

By 5pm the ***Day Coach*** from Birmingham to Lichfield would have made its daily call at the *Old Sun* in Coleshill Street. There would also have been the ***Shepherd*** coach

that left the *Swan* and *Hen & Chickens Hotels* every afternoon at 4.30pm and passed through Sutton at 5.30pm.

From the *Albion Hotel* and *Hart's* office the ***Union*** coach departed every evening at "a ¼ before 5" to Lichfield. It would have passed through Sutton at about 6pm.

The Birmingham to Manchester ***Express*** passed through Sutton at 6pm daily.

The next passing coach was the ***Telegraph*** at 7pm from Sheffield on its way to Birmingham.

If it happened to be a Tuesday, Thursday, or Sunday then the ***Royal Devonshire*** would pass through Sutton at 8pm on its way from Sheffield to the *Hen & Chickens* in Birmingham, New Street. This was the final coach of the day on this route so the noise of passing stagecoaches would have ceased for the day as residents prepared themselves for the excitement of the following day!

A local carrier and maltster, Charles Smith, who operated from his house on the corner of Coleshill Street and Blind Lane (now Trinity Hill), ran a coach service from the *Cross Guns* inn in Dale End, Birmingham, to Sutton Coldfield every Monday, Thursday and Saturday. He also ran a carrier service to Birmingham daily at 12 noon.

This list of coaches approximately tallies with the number claimed by the Victoria County of Warwick to have passed through Sutton daily in 1827.

10. The demise of the stagecoach

The nature of coach travel, being very strictly regulated and unable to carry freight in bulk, meant that compared to other forms of transport it was unable to provide the mass transit system that industrial Britain required in the early 19th century. Also, it became increasingly unprofitable to operate. Thus, the *Coaching Era* in Britain, certainly between the major cities, appeared to decline suddenly even if this was not an overnight occurrence. The economics caused by the relentless introduction of new railway networks meant that coach businesses struggled on into the 1860s adapting their business strategy to suit the circumstances of diminishing trade.

Already by the 1830s it was becoming evident that the future of land travel would move away from horse-drawn vehicles to steam engines. There were one or two efforts to run steam-driven stagecoaches but these machines quickly proved not to be sufficiently robust for the road conditions and failed to win over the confidence of the paying passengers. On the other hand, the railway companies seemed able all too easily to attract the enormous investment required to establish new rail networks although at first noise, smoke, and sparks, not to mention the occasional serious accident, proved to be alarming to many travelling customers.

The railway age began in part with the Stockton to Darlington Railway in 1825. Nearer to home in 1826, Warwickshire's first railway was horse-drawn, and the 16-mile line extended from the Bancroft canal basin at Stratford-upon-Avon to Moreton-in-Marsh with a branch line connecting to Shipston-on-Stour, 7 miles to the north-east. One of the railway's main shareholders and promoters was Viscount Dudley. Thus, coal from his Black Country mines could be carried on the Stratford Canal and distributed in south-west Warwickshire and the northern Cotswolds. On the return journeys stone, lime and agricultural products could be transported northwards. At first, the railways were seen simply as means for transporting heavy goods, something that stagecoaches could never do.

The railway age began in earnest for both freight and passengers in 1830 when the Liverpool & Manchester Railway opened with Stephenson's *Rocket* providing the motive power. The reaction of the coach companies was somewhat relaxed; they, like a lot of the travelling public, thought that railways were extremely accident prone and

that the future of land travel still rested with the stagecoach. In the late 1830s new railways began to open quite frequently and the usual result was that immediately a new line opened on a coach route the coaches were taken off. It is reported that in 1832 the Liverpool & Manchester Railway caused the closure of twenty-eight coach routes with the resultant loss of £8,384 in revenue.

In the Midlands the first significant railway to be built was the Grand Junction linking Birmingham with Liverpool and Manchester. The first train ran on 4th July 1837 from Birmingham Vauxhall to Liverpool, the line being extended at the Birmingham end to Curzon Street on 19th November 1838. Mail was already being sorted on this train which was a blow to the Royal Mail coaches.

On 9th April 1838 another major blow was dealt to the coaching industry with the opening of the London to Birmingham Railway (Euston to Curzon Street), except for a 38-mile section between Fenny Stratford (Denbigh Hall) and Rugby which was waiting for the completion of the Kilsby Tunnel. Passengers were transported to and from Denbigh Hall and Rugby by horse-drawn coaches. When the tunnel was eventually completed, the line between London and Birmingham became fully open on 17th September 1838. Later that year the Railways (Conveyance of Mails) Act was passed by Parliament which enacted that in future mails should be carried by rail wherever possible. The changeover from horse to steam was underway. On the 22nd May 1838 the Post Office announced:

> "The mails to Holyhead. Liverpool and Carlisle will be dispatched tonight for the first time by the London to Birmingham Railway. The coaches are to be drawn by horses to the terminus at Euston Square, and there to be placed on trucks and so run on the railway, retaining their coachmen, guards, passengers etc., and only requiring horses when they reach the end of the railway to proceed to their respective journeys."

The last stagecoach from London to Birmingham ran in 1839 and other major routes from London closed soon afterwards. In nearby Lichfield, which was adversely affected by the demise of the stagecoach, the only coaches running from this previously bustling and prosperous city were those in connection with the trains from Stafford and Birmingham.

As railway networks between the larger towns and cities were introduced – a slow process often taking up to twenty years or so due to the need to raise capital, the need for Parliament to be persuaded to pass an Act, the surveying of routes and the civil engineering associated with laying track and building stations, signal boxes and bridges - they took trade away from their respective coach routes largely due to economics and speed of operation. Despite the frequent early accidents, fires and the doom-mongers who predicted danger to the human body by travelling faster than the speed of a horse, passengers began to prefer the benefits of the railways as a means of fast and convenient travel. People's expectations of travel were transformed by the railways and as the railway network expanded people discovered that they could travel around the country to undreamt of destinations such that the public imagination had been captured. By the late 1840s it was the final curtain for the long-stage routes.

The short-stage routes continued longer in the suburbs and the more remote towns because coach proprietors were often resourceful with many of them cooperating with the railway companies to provide connecting services to those areas by-passed by the railways. In Scotland and Ireland, stagecoaches survived until the 1870s.

Innkeepers in remote rural areas were often less fortunate and the innkeeping industry went into recession. Those in large towns and cities were not so reliant on the coaching trade and were able to overcome the loss of this market.

Another market that was adversely affected by the demise of the stagecoach was the horse trade. Under the new trading conditions contractors were keen to dispose of surplus steeds as quickly as possible in order to reduce their overheads. Each unemployed horse represented a trading loss in that it had to be fed, groomed, shod, and stabled while not working. Suddenly the price of horses fell because there was a surplus.

Another side effect of the closure of so many stagecoach routes was that a surplus of coaches was building up which meant that fewer new coach-builds were required. In Birmingham and much of the Midlands the stagecoach was becoming a thing of the past. Coaches were abandoned, broken up and sold as scrap or converted into sheds. The following advertisement appeared in Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* for Monday 16th April 1838.

STAGE COACHES

> FOR SALE, 24 new and second-hand very good 4 pair-horse coaches, and one light van on springs, at Wilkes's Coach Manufactory Woodstock, Oxfordshire.

By 1850 only a handful of coaches were leaving Birmingham for other destinations. The coming of the railways meant that turnpike roads ceased to be profitable. The turnpike trusts that managed the toll roads found that their tolls declined remorselessly as long-distance travel was transferred from road to rail.

Many of these trusts had suffered financial difficulties for years. By 1838 the turnpike trusts in England were collecting £1.5 million per year from leasing the collection of tolls but had a cumulative debt of 37 million. Although trusts initially organised the collection of tolls directly, it became common for them to annually auction a lease to collect these tolls. Bidders would make a fixed payment to the individual trust for the lease and then organise the day-to-day collection of tolls, leaving themselves with a profit on their operations over a year.

The Sutton Coldfield Turnpike Trust in charge of the Birmingham to Sutton Coldfield and Lichfield turnpike road together with its branch turnpike road to Tamworth used this method in an effort to stay solvent. W.K. Riland Bedford informs us in his history of the town that in 1780 "no direct and well contrived communication existed either with Lichfield or Birmingham, but when a turnpike road was proposed a printed paper was circulated containing *"indisputable reasons"* why the poor farmers would be reduced to ruin if a turnpike were erected in the neighbourhood." In 1792 the Warden and Society spent £350 improving the streets of the town by paving them with cobblestones", and "the highroads from Watford Gap to Chester Road and from Canwell to Sutton were placed under trustees, and toll gates erected at the north end of Sutton, at Ashfurlong, and at Collets Brook". Unfortunately, no records exist concerning the setting up of this local DIY turnpike trust. For such a trust to function properly it had to be established as a Turnpike Trust by act of Parliament and this status was achieved in 1807. If one reads this act it will be seen that it opens by mentioning that the existing trustees had insufficient powers to improve the condition of the roads, which were in "so ruinous a condition as to be unsafe for the passage of cattle and carriages". The Act was renewed in 1817 allowing the trustees to make compulsory purchases of land to build a by-pass of Hill village and to reduce the incline of Mill

Street in the town. A further Act of Parliament was passed on March 22 1826 which enabled the Sutton Coldfield Turnpike Trust, once their existing debts had been repaid, to take out further loans to pay for the necessary repair of the roads.

Collet's Brook Farmhouse, Tamworth Road, Sutton Coldfield in 2020

During the 1850s and 1860s the condition of many turnpike roads deteriorated as trusts tried to pay off their crushing debts. As a result, disturnpiking soon accelerated and most of the trusts were dissolved in the 1870s with few surviving beyond 1885. The last in Warwickshire was the trust operating the group of roads centring on Tamworth.

About 1870 Parliament passed a law, known as the Annual Turnpike Acts Continuance Acts, closing down local turnpike trusts but for the Sutton Coldfield Turnpike Trust this was extended to 1st November 1871. The closure of the Turnpike Trust was unpopular with the trustees since the burden of cost for road maintenance would then become a financial burden on the local rates.

Of course, the end of the turnpikes did not mean the end of the stagecoach. People still needed to travel but the routes available to them were mainly from smaller towns to the nearest mainline railway station.

The care and maintenance of the highways reverted to parishes or groups of parishes called Highway Districts but in 1888 the Local Government Act set up County Councils which became responsible for maintaining all main roads in their respective counties. In the case of Sutton Coldfield, the maintenance of the town's main roads now came under Warwickshire County Council.

The only relic of the Sutton Coldfield Turnpike Trust still surviving is the tollkeeper's cottage, known as Collet's Brook Farmhouse, which is on the corner of Tamworth Road and Fox Hill Road in Sutton Coldfield, opposite the Crematorium and is the sole surviving tollhouse in Birmingham.

Roy Billingham, December 2022

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BCL LSD = Birmingham Central Library, Local Studies Department

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