

THE ENCLOSURE ACTS

The Enclosure Acts of the early Nineteenth Century created significant changes in road designation. Much of the Forest was already in private hands and roads designated accordingly. In general, roads of 40 feet or over were designated as public carriageways whilst those of thirty feet in width were defined as bridleways and drift roads. The road names reflect the rural economy of the area: Drift Road was an important route for driving livestock, Hazelwood Lane from coppicing for hurdles, etc., Hog Oak Lane after the thousands of pigs that roamed for acorns on common land in autumn and Spinning Wheel Lane, reflecting the importance of the fine quality wools spun and exported from Berkshire to Europe.



COMMEMORATING A GREAT MAN

The significance of Wellington's victories over the French was celebrated by planting the magnificent Wellingtonias to become known as Wellingtonia Avenue. These were planted in 1863 and are therefore still young trees, despite their stature of over 100 feet.

It was not until motor transport in the Twentieth Century that the roads system as we know it was established. The rivers, canals and railways have all had their heyday as important transport systems and now it is the time of the roads. Many questions are asked about the management of our transport system but it is true to say that transporting both ourselves and our goods has never been so efficient as it is today.

Bracknell Forest Borough Council would like to hear of any early roadside pumps or milestones that you have seen.

Other leaflets available on local history, include the histories of Sandhurst, Crowthorne and Easthampstead Conservation Area, The Coming of the Railways, The Great Forest, and The Making of Bracknell New Town. Leaflets are also available on local churches and countryside parks and country walks.

For a full list ring 01344 354124 or visit our Website at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Leisure Services
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Time Square Market Street
Bracknell Berkshire RG12 1LR
Tel: 01344 354124

Compiled by Linda Carter

Printed by Bracknell Forest Borough Council's In-house **Design & Print Services**

Printed on Recycled Paper

First printed 1999 Reprinted 2000

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk

This leaflet is available in large print, braille, or on audio tape on request, please contact 01344 354124 for further details



BRACKNELL FOREST
THE GREAT FOREST

COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

T

HE ANCIENT HIGHWAYS

Today we take for granted that roads will take us where we want to go. In the past, even the recent past, this was not the case and nowhere more so than in the Bracknell Forest area. The great London to Bath Road ran to the north of the Borough, the Great Forest of Windsor extended for miles and the population was small, all resulting in a limited road network.



The Devils Highway

THE ROMANS

The earliest great road builders were the Romans. Their route from London (Londinium) to Bath (Aquae Sulis) was via Silchester (Calleva) just south of Bracknell. The Devil's Highway is the route of the original Roman road, but later generations thought: who but the Devil himself could build such a flat road? There was a small Romano-British settlement at Wickham Bushes, Easthampstead, and the origin of Caesar's Camp is before the Roman occupation.

THE GREAT FOREST

In Saxon times Windsor Forest was the hunting ground of the Royal Family and remained so through the Middle Ages. The Great Forest was divided into compartments or 'walks' denoted by 'rides' or wide tracks. These made administration of the Forest possible and an easier passage for riders and foot travellers. The Forest was an important source of timber, crops were grown and livestock provided for the nearby towns of Windsor and Reading, so it was essential to keep the rides open. Long straight roads such as Nine Mile Ride and King's Ride follow this historical pattern.



Spinning Wheel Lane

REPAIRS AND THE TURNPIKE TRUSTS

An Act for mending the highways came into force in 1555 making each Parish responsible for appointing a surveyor to demand four (and later six) days' unpaid labour from each Parishioner to work on road repair. This was extremely unpopular and yet persisted into the Eighteenth Century when local entrepreneurs set up Turnpike Trusts, the terms agreed by local Acts of Parliament, to meet the cost of road maintenance. Each turnpike or tollgate required the traveller to pay a fixed sum to pass. The early 1800s was the heyday of the coaching era and coaches travelled between Reading and Staines along the London Road, which was turnpiked with a tollgate at Lily Hill Park. Pumps were installed to lay the dust and milestones set up along the route. Many public houses along the route served as coaching inns, with a lucrative trade in horses as a side-line. Travelling through the Forest was also renowned for its dangers, with highwaymen on horses and footpads gaining a living by theft from travellers, becoming cult figures even to this day.

McADAM'S MODERN ROADS

The real improvement in road maintenance came with McAdam's ideas for efficient drainage, with small, carefully graded stones through all levels, the smallest stones on top to be ground down by wagon wheels and horses' hooves, making a strong surface that would drain by proper cambering. The roads in heaviest use were tarred. Few roads in Bracknell Forest received such treatment and when Wellington College was opened in 1859 the railway service was essential.