

## ROADS AND ROAD MAINTENANCE

Few people consider how roads were maintained in the “old days”. The Statute of Winchester in 1285 made manors responsible for maintaining the King’s Highway and this situation continued for nearly 300 years in the absence of any other credible alternative. This was not particularly practical, when there were two or more manors in a parish. High Littleton parish was covered by High Littleton manor and Hallatrow manor but in later years, at least, High Littleton Manor held some detached land in Hallatrow (e.g. The Grange).

During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the responsibilities of manor courts gradually lessened as a credible alternative parish administration, in the form of the Vestry, assumed more powers. The Highways Act of 1555 transferred the responsibility for maintaining the main roads from manors to parish Vestries. Each parishioner owning a ploughland (equivalent to a hide) or keeping a plough horse or plough was required to provide a cart for 4 days a year for use in road repairs. Similarly, each able bodied parishioner was required to give 4 days “statute labour a year” (increased to 6 days in an Act of 1563) or pay a fine in lieu. The Act also established the office of Surveyor of Highways (also called Waywarden) and made the churchwardens, constable and some parishioners responsible for selecting such an officer. From 1662 the selection was made by the majority of parishioners. Finally in 1691 the Vestry was expected to produce a short list of suitable candidates from which the Justices of the Peace selected a Surveyor of Highways, who held office for 1 year and was not paid. His job was to organise whatever work needed doing and ensure that it was carried out properly. Repairs usually consisted of filling potholes with stones, which were quarried from one of the quarries in the parish. Less frequently the work might consist of repairing a bridge. At the end of each year the Surveyor had to draw up an Account of his income and expenditure and submit it to the Justices for approval.

Wheeled vehicles were rare until the mid sixteenth century and they caused far more damage to the roads than horses. As coaches and carriages became more commonplace the cost to parishioners rose and statute labour was not always sufficient to effect the repairs. The Highways Act of 1691 authorised the levying of a Highways Rate. For the next 140 years the cost of repairs was covered by a combination of statute labour and a highway rate.

High Littleton parish appointed 2 Waywardens, one for the tithing of High Littleton and one for Hallatrow. As with all parish offices, women landowners were also liable to take their turn. Although no copies of the Waywardens’ Accounts have survived, the oldest book of Vestry Minutes records the names of the appointees from 1735 onwards. Unlike other parish officers, who were appointed at Easter, their period of office ran from Christmas to Christmas.

	<u>High Littleton</u>	<u>Hallatrow</u>
1735	George HODGES	Walter BRITTON
1736	ditto	ditto & John PURNELL ( <i>both entered &amp; then deleted</i> )
1737	ditto	John BRODRIBB
1738	ditto	John DANDO
1739	( <i>blank</i> )	( <i>blank</i> )
1740	George HODGES	Widow DANDO of the Batch
1741	ditto	William SKEY
1742	ditto	Joseph BRODRIBB
1743	William TYLER	ditto
1744	George HODGES	John PURNELL
1745	ditto	Richard LANGFORD
1746	ditto	John BLINMAN
1747	ditto	Thomas DANDO of Brick House
1748	ditto	William DANDO
1749	ditto	Richard LANGFORD
1750	ditto	John PURNELL
1751	ditto	( <i>blank</i> )
1752	ditto	Simon DANDO
1753	ditto	John BRODRIBB
1754	John EVANS	Robert COOPER
1755	George HODGES	John BRODRIBB
1756	ditto	ditto
1757	ditto	William SKEY jun’r
1758	ditto	Joseph BRODRIBB

1759	ditto	John BLINMAN
1760	(blank)	(blank)
1761	George HODGES	Thomas DANDO the tanner
1762	Cornelius HARRIS	Richard LANGFORD
1763	George MAGGS	Abraham COOK

Appointments after this date were not minuted in the Vestry Minutes and were presumably recorded in a Waywardens' book, which has not survived. In the next period of 60 years only one waywarden is mentioned in the minutes, namely George Treweeke SCOBELL in 1827/8.

The Highway Act of 1835 abolished statute labour and permitted the levying of a highway rate. It also provided for the unification of parishes into highway district authorities and allowed the employment of a paid district surveyor. Under Clause 50 of the Act the Vestry elected Surveyors/Waywardens for the parish. This was done at Easter with the other parish appointments.

	<u>High Littleton</u>	<u>Hallatrow</u>
1836/7	William WEYMOUTH & John POW	John BLINMAN & Edward DOWLING
1837/8	George WYATT & Charles HALL	Thomas Collier DUDDEN & Jonas WEEKS
1838/9	John BEAK & James HALL	Thomas Collier DUDDEN & Jonas WEEKS
1839/40	Charles HALL & Hugh JAMES	Edward DOWLING & John BLINMAN
1840/1	John DUDDEN & Charles HATHWAY	Edward DOWLING & Jonas WEEKS
1841/2	Hugh JAMES (Salary £7 p.a.)	John BLINMAN & Thomas HARRISON
1842/3	John BEAK £5.15/- p.a.)	Edward DOWLING & Thomas HARRISON
1843/4	James HALL (£5 p.a.)	Edward DOWLING & Thomas HARRISON
1844/5	James HALL (£6.10/- p.a.)	Edward DOWLING & Thomas HARRISON
1845/6	John BEAK (£6.10/- p.a.)	John BLINMAN (Salary £1 p.a.)
1846/7	James HALL (£5.15/- p.a.)	John BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1847/8	James HALL (£6 p.a.)	John BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1848/9	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	John BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1849/50	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	John BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1850/1	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	John BLINMAN (no salary)
1851/2	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	John BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1852/3	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	John BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1853/4	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	John BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1854/5	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	John BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1855/6	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	George BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1856/7	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	Thomas HARRISON (£2 p.a.)
1857/8	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	Thomas HARRISON (£2 p.a.)
1858/9	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	George BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1859/60	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	George BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1860/1	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	George BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1861/2	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	James BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)
1862/3	William JAMES (£6 p.a.)	James BLINMAN (£2 p.a.)

The Highways Act of 1862 empowered justices to unite parishes compulsorily into highway authorities, thus rendering the Surveyor's job largely superfluous. From here on a single Surveyor of Highways was appointed for High Littleton parish.

1863/4	James BLINMAN
1864/5	James BLINMAN (died 2 Oct 1864)
1865/6	James COX
1866/7	James COX
1867/8	Mr JAMES (? James COX intended or William JAMES)
1868/9	James COX
1869/70	James COX
1870/1	James COX
1871/2	James COX
1872/3	James COX
1873/4	James COX
1874/5	James COX

1875/6 James COX  
1876/7 James COX  
1877/8 James COX  
1878/9 James COX  
1879/80 James COX  
1880/1 James COX  
1881/2 James COX  
1882/3 James COX  
1883/4 James COX  
1884/5 James COX  
1885/6 James COX  
1886/7 James COX  
1887/8 James COX

The Local Government Act of 1888 made the newly formed county councils responsible for main roads

1888/9 James COX  
1889/90 James COX  
1890/1 James COX  
1891/2 James COX  
1892/3 George BLINMAN  
1893/4 George BLINMAN & Frederick CARTER nominated. Poll took place but result not recorded.

The Local Government Act of 1894 made local authorities responsible for minor roads.

Specific mentions of roadworks in the Vestry Minutes:

Vestry Minute Book – Waywardens Chosen this 26<sup>th</sup> day of December 1755 for the year ensuing:

Geo. HODGES Esq'r for Littleton. Due to do. for the Balance of the last two years £7. 4. 1.

John BRODRIBB for Hallatrow. Due to the next Surveyor 3s. 11d.

Due to Geo. HODGES Esq'r for 58 Load of Stones raised at Grinstone at 1d. pr. Load for the use of Hallatrow Roads.

It is further Agreed to allow Mr John BRODRIBB Ten shillings & Sixpence for serving the Office of a Waywarden and him to Close the Road that is between the Quakers meeting House to Joyn the Road at White Cross. [*This is somewhat confusing as there wasn't a Quaker Meeting House in Hallatrow at the time, the old Meeting House having been sold long since and a new one not built yet.*]

N.B. that Mr Robert COOPER have pd. Geo. WILKINS for Quarring of stones, which is now at Grinstone Quar. 7s. 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>.

Memorandum – that we hal'd 16 Load of the above stones from Grinstone and that Mr SKEY hall'd [*blank*] Load from do.

On 9<sup>th</sup> May 1808 “It was agreed that all Horses and Asses found running loose about the roads and lanes should be pounded in the parish pound.”

3<sup>rd</sup> December 1827 Capt. Scobell, the Surveyor of the Highways, reported that Gooseherd Lane is in a bad state of repair, but that as Mr Tho's JAMES, in the name of the Cowlease Coal Proprietors, did, in July 1826 at a Vestry, undertake the repairs thereof at £5 pr. year, with an undertaking that they continue the repair thereof at that rate as long as that Works might last, he now applies to the Vestry as to proceedings he shall take. The Vestry request Capt. SCOBELL to apply to Mr Tho's JAMES to know his intentions on the subject & to act in the case as he may think best.”

On October 27<sup>th</sup> 1829 [*Vestry Meeting to make arrangements for the better employment of the industrious Paupers, who may be from time to time out of work*].

“It was Resolved that Mr BLINMAN, the Assistant Overseer, be empowered to employ such Men or Boys, being Parishioners of High Littleton, as may be necessitous & unable to procure work, in quarrying & breaking Stone in Grindstone Quarry, or in the Quarry at Cross Ways. That in Grindstone Quarry the price to be paid for Quarrying shall be 4d. pr. yard & 8d. p. yard for breaking. That in the Cross Way Quarry the price for quarrying pr. yard shall be 3d. p. yard & for breaking not exceeding 5d. p. yard. That, when any stones are quarried & broken, the Overseer shall take measures for disposing of the same.”

On March 24<sup>th</sup> 1836 “The Surveyors are authorized to procure the Highway Act, one for High Littleton & another for Hallatrow.”

The approval by the Vestry of the Accounts of the two Surveyors of Highways was regularly minuted from March 1838 onwards.

On 14 March 1839 the Vestry “taking into consideration that the Parish Road from the Cross Ways towards Timsbury is very narrow & insufficient for the public traveller, & that it is desirable to widen the same, as far as or a little further as Brooks Cottages.

Capt. SCOBELL stated that if the Road was made of a legal width & a three foot Church Path made by the side, that he would subscribe towards the expense. [*SCOBELL had just started or was soon to start building Kingwell Hall at this time, so everyone gained from the arrangement.*]

Mr BUSH, the owner of the Ground on the east side, agreed to take seven shillings pr. Lug for what quantity of Ground may be required to widen the road.

Moved by Mr Jas. HALL & seconded by Mr WYATT and unanimously agreed to that the said piece of Parish Road be widened to 20 feet & a three foot Church Path by the side thereof; that the same be commenced as soon as possible & finished without delay.”

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 1840 “It was considered that Clay Lane [*not identified*] is Very Steep and resolved to be altered.”

On 11<sup>th</sup> June 1840 “It was resolved that Mr Elijah CHIVERS should have Liberty to build a Wall in Ratcombe Lane in the front of his Property, leaving the Road Twenty Five Feet Wide, and that he, his Heirs and assigns, should keep the wall and Water course in Repair at their Expence.”

On 24<sup>th</sup> August 1848 “Resolved that the Approach from the Turnpike Road up Littleton Hill into Langford’s Lane be Lowered, so as to Make a proper approach into the same, forthwith.”

On 25<sup>th</sup> May 1849 “The Offer of the General Surveyor of the Bath Roads for the supply of stone from the Red Stone Quarry was taken into consideration, but it was the opinion of the Vestry that such offer ought not to be accepted, in as much as the Waywarden would not be able to find employment for Labourers of the Parish, it being proposed that the Work of the quarry should be done by the servants of the Turnpike Trustees.

On 22 June 1849 “Capt’n SCOBELL read an Agreement made between the Surveyor of the Bath Turnpike Roads and the Surveyor of the Highways of the Parish for the use of the quarry in Langford’s Way on the following terms, Viz’t: £3 per entres (sic), 10s. per annum for repairs of the Roads and £1 per annum to the Tenant of the field for damages, together with 1½d. per yard for Freeshare to the owner. Resolved unanimously that such agreement be approved and Confirmed and that the allowance for haulage per mile be 9d. and a proportionate rate for less than a mile, but the surveyor of the Roads is authorized to provide a man to help load the carts at the quarry.”

On 28<sup>th</sup> March 1851 “The waywarden’s accounts for High Littleton was examined and passed, shewing an expenditure of £59.17. 6¾, leaving a balance in hand of £3. 5. 7¼.”

“The waywarden’s accounts for the Hamlet of Hallatrow was examined and passed, shewing an expenditure of £18. 3. 5½, leaving a balance of £2. 2.10¼.”

On 10<sup>th</sup> July 1851 “The Waywarden Mr William JAMES stated that, in consequence of some dissatisfaction communicated to him by some of the Parishioners, respecting the haulage of stone from the quarry for the repairs of the Highways, that he was desirous that the business should be brought before the notice of the vestry for their decision. Moved by Mr William ROBBINS, seconded by Mr Isaac COWEN, that in future the haulage of stone from the quarry for the repairs of the Highways shall be 1s. 6d. per yard to any distance within the Tithing.”

On 28<sup>th</sup> March 1853 “Resolved that John REES MOGG be allowed to enclose so much of the wastrel belonging to the Parish and adjoining the direction post in the centre of the Village of High Littleton as is required by him, in order to inclose the same with a wall that shall not encroach on the highway.”

“Resolved that Mr John Usticke SCOBELL be allowed to re-erect the sign Post at Hallatrow in the centre of the three roads there, near the House, now occupied by Mr Thomas HARRISON and to protect the same by such inclosure as he shall think fit.”

On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1855 “Resolved that the Surveyor of the Highways of the Tithing of High Littleton be directed to apply to the owners of the Greyfield Colliery for some assistance towards the repairing the roads used by them in conveying Coals on narrow truck wheels to the Canal.”

On 8<sup>th</sup> November 1860 “The Parish Bridge at Ratcombe requiring repair and the parapet wall being dilapidated and thereby dangerous for Passengers, resolved that the same be repaired, and Captain SCOBELL, having also offered to straighten the road adjoining the east side of the Bridge, provided the work be completed by the Surveyor of the Tithing, which will occasion the necessity of altering about eight feet of walling, resolved that such alterations be carried out.”

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1874 [*Vestry Meeting for the purpose of taking into consideration the covering of the open drain (dividing the parishes of High Littleton and Farmborough) ordered by the Rural Sanitary Authority*].

“It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to, That the Parish of High Littleton will join the Parish of Farmborough in covering the Drain, respecting which they have received Notice from the Sanitary Inspector, as far as the end of the stabling of the High Littleton Inn, occupied by Mr Frank YORK, by paying a Moiety of the expenses incurred.”

On 25<sup>th</sup> March 1889 “It was moved by Mr C. GOOD, seconded by Mr J.S. BODY and carried unanimously, That the Highway Board be requested to commence as soon as possible a path in continuation from the Wesleyan Chapel to the Church at High Littleton, and the Chairman was requested to forward a copy of such resolution to the Clerk of the Highway Board.”

On 25<sup>th</sup> March 1890 “Proposed by Mr BODY, seconded by Mr Charles DOMAN and carried unanimously, that another letter be written to the Highway Board with reference to the path in continuation from the Wesleyan Chapel to the Church at High Littleton.”

MLB