LIME, TOLLS, ROADS AND REBECCA

by   Nicola Beechsquirrel

Up until approximately the eighteenth century, roads in Wales were mostly simple unsurfaced tracks, and there was very little wheeled traffic. Travel was mainly undertaken on foot or by horse. Each parish was responsible for the repair of its own roads, and this was facilitated by a system called the 'corvee'. Under this system each parishioner was required to contribute to the upkeep of the road for four days a year, later extended to six. Those who held land within the parish had to supply a cart with horses or oxen and two able men for this purpose, while every other householder or cottager was required to spend the same amount of time working on the roads themselves, or to supply a deputy. These simple roads eventually became inadequate to cope with increasing amounts of traffic and larger numbers of wheeled vehicles, which inflicted much damage to the roads. Turnpike Trusts began to be formed in various regions by local gentlemen, for the purpose of obtaining loans for the improvement of roads, which would be repaid via the collection of tolls from users of the roads. To set up a Turnpike trust, it was necessary to submit a petition to Parliament, requesting an Act of Parliament to authorise the setting up of the trust (Williams 1955).

The Llandovery and Llangadog Turnpike Trust was set up in 1779 "to link the uplands beyond Llandovery with Llangadog and the Amman valley by way of the Black Mountains" (Williams 1955:165). The area to be covered by the Act of Parliament obtained to facilitate this included "...the roads leading from Ludlowfach in the county of Carmarthen to the town of Llandovery and from thence to the town of Llangadock to the river Amman, and several other roads in the county communicating therewith." (Glasbrook GB/B9, 19 June 1779). This road would provide a route for lime to be brought out from the various quarries on the Black Mountain. Lime was much in demand by farmers and smallholders who used it to improve their soil. Farmers in the upland areas particularly needed considerable amounts of lime, as their land was poor and suited more to the raising of sheep than to growing crops (*The Welshman* 1843:4).

WHERE WERE GATES SITUATED?

(All references to gates in this section are taken from the minutes book of the Llandovery and Llangadog Turnpike Trust (henceforth LLTT) (Glasbrook GB/B9), accessed at the Carmarthenshire County Archives.) The minutes cover the period from June 1779 to July 1800.

After an initial meeting on 19 June 1779 to appoint trustees, the Trust lost no time in organising the construction of new sections of road. An early entry in the minutes book of the LLTT dated 8 July 1779 records ".. six gates and styles (sic) ordered to be made from oak timbers.." . (N.B. A local resident of Gwynfe, recalls that the farmyard gate at Cwmcoy, Gwynfe was one of the old toll gates between Llangadog and Brynamman, possibly by the old Three Horse Shoes pub).

The minutes also record the ordering of repairs to the road "...from Rhydy Cair to Llansewin if parts are narrow, deep or needing repair. Also roads from Pontarsawthey to Rhydsaint by Pontarlleche towards Gwinfe Chapel". Roads began to be built in sections of one mile in length at a time, starting with a section "...from the backparts of Cwmllwyd south towards Amman...". On 23 September 1779 it was decided that "One mile of road to be made from River Bawddr by Llanvairybryn Church towards Glan Bran. Also one mile of road from the foot of Pontarlleche Hill towards Gwaun Gwinfe. Also one mile of road from the river near Llansevin mill leading towards Kilgwynne." On 8 December it was decided "One mile of road to be built from Clodfwlch to Rhydysaison."

At the meeting of 23 September 1779, a turnpike house was ordered to be built "...at or near Glansawthey House..." and another at Waunystradmeris. The minutes of the meeting on 30 October 1779 mentions a gate and turnpike house at Cwmllwyd, and also a house to be built at Llanfairybryn turnpike. On 16 October 1780, two more gates were ordered, one to be placed at Towybridge near Llangadog and the other at Cwmllwyd, Gwinfe. Chains were ordered to be placed on the crossroads near Coed-yr-Arllwydd for the purpose of collecting toll at the fairs at Llangadog and Penybont.

On 28 November 1781, a chain was ordered to be placed on the road leading from Glanaroth to Llangadog for the purpose of taking toll on Penybont fair. Presumably these chains were a temporary measure, only to be in use for collecting toll from the extra traffic present during

the fairs. The minutes of the meeting of 2 February 1781 mention a turnpike house on Sawthey Common. It seems that there may have been some difficulty in getting gates placed at Towy Bridge near Llangadog and also at Cwmllwyd in Gwinfe, because on 16 October 1781, the order was repeated. The gate at Sawthe Bridge was however ordered to be taken down until further notice. Chains were once again ordered to be placed at the crossroads near Coed-yr-Arllwydd for the purpose of collecting tolls at the fairs of Llangadog and Penybont. On 28 November 1781, a chain was ordered to be placed on the road leading from Glanaroth to Llangadog at Penybont fair. On 8 May 1782 an order was made for the "Gate or chain at Sawthe bridge to be kept shut and toll taken from this day". There is mention of several gates in the minutes of the meeting of 27 December 1782: at Llanvairybryn, Penyrhock, Gwaunystradmuris , Towy bridge, Sawthe Common and Sawthe bridge.

On 24 January 1783, a gate was ordered to be placed at the junction of the two roads near Talgarth above Glanbane in Llanvairybryn. There is also a mention of Abermarlos gate, on the road fron Llangadog. On the 12 March 1783 a gate was ordered to be placed on the new road from Amroth(?) River towards Llangadog, when the road was finished.

Gate-building appears to slow down from 1783 on. Only two were ordered in 1784, at the meeting of 3 December. This meeting specifies a gate for the road near Glanaroth, and a gate or chain on the entrance of the road from Sawthey common towards Rhydysaison. The next mention of a gate to be erected is on 19 July 1786, situated "...on the road going up the mountain adjoining David Rytherch's land, to prevent cattle coming off the mountain." No new gates were erected until 1788, when the meeting of 8 January ordered a gate for the entrance of the road from Sawdde Common towards Rhydysaison, another "...to be placed on the side of the road near Glanaroth where the road branches off for Llunymondis (?) and also a chain under the bridge at Glanaroth. Presumably this last means down river from the bridge at Glanaroth. The minutes of the meeting of 2 December 1789 mention Coed Shon gate on the road from Pontarllechau, and also mention that the road from Erwfawr gate to Erwfach gate needed widening.

No more gates are mentioned, but in the minutes of the meeting of 18 January 1793, a bar was "...ordered to be placed across the road at the smith's shop adjoining Newfoundland Farm on the road near Glanaroth...".All further orders mentioned in the minutes book are for bars or chains, not gates. The next is a chain or bar across the road at or near Panteg, ordered at the meeting of 20 April 1795. On 17 October 1795, a bar was ordered to be placed across the road at or near Coedbwlch (?)

26 May 1798 saw three more chains ordered, one on the road from Glanaroth to Rhydysaint near the entrance of the road leading to Pwntog (Panteg?), another at the entrance of the road from Sawthe bridge to Carregsawthe Common, and the third at the entrance of the road from Sawthe bridge to Coed-yr-Arllwydd.

The last entry in the minutes book of the Llandovery and Llangadog Turnpike Trust is dated 11 July 1800. No further records exist of the meetings of this trust in the Glasbrook documents.

OBJECTIONS TO TOLL CHARGES

Initially, lime for agricultural use was exempt from toll charges in some Trusts, and subject to a reduced charge in others. However, although the upgrading and maintenance of roads was to a large extent undertaken to facilitate the transport of lime, and although lime carts were responsible for much of the damage done to the roads, the eventual introduction of tolls for lime carts was not well received by farmers already finding it difficult to survive.

An article in the Welshman of 11th August 1843, attributed to 'a correspondent of the John Bull', states that for a farm of 100 acres, 300 loads of lime were required. To fetch this amount of lime from Llangendeirne to the farms in Lampeter, the cost of the tolls on these loads was almost as much as the lime itself - £61.10s for the lime and £56.5s for the toll charges. This example was stated to be the cheapest in Wales. Even so, it placed a considerable burden upon tenant farmers already struggling to make a living in the face of high rents and successive years of bad harvests.

The following newspaper articles relating to Rebecca activity in the vicinity of the Black Mountain have been identified:

28th July 1843 -
"On Thursday night a gate situated at a place called Waunystradfris, in the immediate neighbourhood of Llangadock, leading to the seat of E. P. Lloyd, Esq., of Glasnevin, was destroyed, and intimation given that a toll-bar on the road near Llangadock, leading towards the Black mountains, would be taken down this week if not at once removed."

4th August 1843 -
"Pentarlleche gate between Llangadock and the Black Mountains, was destroyed on Tuesday night by a party of Rebbeccaites, who came from the direction of Llandilo. It appears that they had sent threatening letters before, and two constables were employed to guard the house and gate, but they were compelled to go home for tools and made to assist in the work of destruction. In about a quarter of an hour, both gate and house were level with the ground."

11th August 1843-
"TOLLS ETC – (Llandovery)
There are here two turnpike trusts which intersect each other in the usual way in which the trusts in this county do, the tolls taken on one not freeing the tolls demanded on the other. There is the Lampeter and Llandovery trusts, and the Llandovery and Llangadock trust. There is the same complaint against side bars without end, and illegal demand of toll by the contractors. On Wednesday, Lewis, the contractor of the tolls on one of these trusts, was fined 20s. at Llangadock, for demanding full toll instead of half toll on lime. The trustees of both these trusts met here on Wednesday, and have determined to take the whole question of the tolls demanded into consideration, and have appointed a commission to inquire into the propriety of every toll-bar and gate on the trusts, and to do away with those which may be considered unnecessary and vexatious."

15th September 1843 -
"FOUR MORE GATES DESTROYED – Last Wednesday night a party of mounted Rebeccaites, about 300 in number, visited 3 turnpike gates in the neighbourhood of Llangadock and completely destroyed them. Two of them had been before down and re-erected. The names of the gates are Wainstredverys, Pontarlucoe and Carig-Southey."

13th October 1843:-
"Meeting on CEFN-COED-YR-ARLLWYD. A meeting of the Freeholders, Farmers and others of the parishes of Llangadock, Llanddausaint, Llandilo, Llansadwrn, Cilycwm and the adjoining parishes, was held on Tuesday last, the 10th instant, at Cefn-Coed-yr-Arlwydd, a piece of waste land, near Llangadock. It was convened by printed handbills extensively circulated throughout the surrounding district; they stated that the meeting was called for the purpose of petitioning Her Majesty to listen to the public's grievances, and request her Ministers to devise some method of affording them relief...There were about 1200 people present, mostly respectable farmers."

29th September 1843:-
"NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN
That application will be made to the next session of Parliament for leave to bring in a Bill to exempt all waggons, wains, Carts and other Carriages, and all Horses, Geldings, Mares, Mules, Asses and other Beasts of Draught or Burden, passing or going upon, along, over, or across any Turnpike Road or Public Bridge, within the County of Carmarthen or the precincts thereof, laden with Lime or any other substance to be used for Agricultural purposes, from the payment of any Toll, at all, any, and every Toll-Gate, Chain or Bar, already erected or hereafter to be erected by virtue of or under the authority of any Act of Parliament, passed for the making, repairing or maintaining any Road or Bridge, within the County of Carmarthen, and the precincts thereof; and provision will be made in the said intended Bill for charging all existing Trusts within the said County and the precincts hereof, (to which such exemption does not at present extend) with the expenses of making and obtaining the said intended Bill in proportion, according to the several sums at which the several Tolls within the said several and respective

districts, and the said Bridges respectively let at for the year 1842.

John Wood, of Cwm, in the Parish of Mydrim, in the County of Carmarthen, a person interested. August 2d, 1843."

LOCATION OF TOLLGATES

Some locations of tollgates proved hard to pinpoint, one reason being that some of the names do not appear on modern maps. Such a location is Gwaunystradmeyrig (mentioned in the Trust documents variously as Waunystradfris, Wanystradmuris, Wainstredverys), which appears on a map of 1831-1834 in the Cassini historical Map Old Series in a position corresponding to grid ref E28 N72 on O.S Landranger sheet.160.Though not marked on this map, its position may be ascertained by its proximity to Tynylon and Llangadog, and its position on the road from Llangadog to Cilgwyn. Listed below are the names of places at which gates were situated, and the grid references.

GATES MENTIONED IN THE MINUTES OF THE LLANDOVERY AND LLANGADOG TURNPIKE TRUST:

Waunystradmuris – grid ref. E28 N72

Cwmllwydd: at entrance of road from Towybridge to Velindre over Carreg Sawdde:- grid ref. E28 N70 (?)

Near Llanfairybryn Church

Pont-ar-llechau:- grid ref. E25 N73

Towy Bridge

Crossroads near Coed-yr Arllwydd

Road leading from Glanaroth to Llangadog

Sawthey Common:- Grid ref. E29 N70

Glansawdde House:- Grid ref. E28 N70

Sawthe Bridge:- Grid ref. E27 N71

Penyrhock:- Grid ref. E33 N75

Junction of two roads near Talgarth above Glanbane in Lllanfairybryn

Abermarlais gate on road from Llangadog

New road from Amman river towards Llangadog

Road near Glanaroth

Entrance of road from Sawthe Common towards Rhydysaison

Road going up mountain adjoining David Rytherch's land

Side of road near Glanaroth where the road branches off for Llunynymondis(?)

Coed Shon gate on road to Pontarlleche

Gate at Erwfawr

Gate at Erwfach

Smith's shop adjoining Newfoundland farm on road near Glanaroth (a now derelict mansion)

Chain on road from Glanaroth to Rhydsaint near entrance to road at or near Panteg(?)

Coedbwlch (?)

Entrance of road from Sawthe Bridge to Carregsawthe common

Entrance of road from Sawthe Bridge to Coed -yr-Arllwydd

Penybont

Pen yr Heol Goy (adjoining to Gwaun Gwynvor)

Cross roads near house by Towy bridge leading to Sawdde Common

Gate at entrance of Heolycoedgwrthen (?) Lane into road near Abercrychan

Gate at entrance of road leading from Kylycomb into road near Talgarth House

Gate where old road from Ludlowbach enters turnpike road near Talgarth

Glansevin – a former mansion now marked as Hotel on map :- grid ref. E28 N74

Glantowy:- grid ref. E32 N75

Near Pontarsawthe, near Widow Moore's house.

Gate at road called Heolfolen near and adjoining to the smith's shop between Maeswasted (?) and Glansevin

GATES MENTIONED IN "The Welshman" 13 Oct 1843 p. 2 col 2-6

Pomprenarth

Garreg-Sawwde

Pontarlleche

Penybont

GATES MENTIONED IN "FORGOTTEN ROADS OF CARMARTHENSHIRE"

Penybont

Ty Pen yr Heol

Mountain Gate, above Cwmllwydd farm

Cwmllwydd

Rhiwddu gate

Gelly Veinon Mountain Gate

CLARIFICATION OF SOME PLACE NAMES

Many of the names mentioned as locations for gates are villages, but some are the names of mansions or great houses. Some of these are no longer extant, nor are they marked on up to date maps. However, it has been possible to locate the positions of the following:

GLANSAWDDE, Llangadog. Grid ref. SN 4320 1333. Described by Francis Jones thus:" Built on the site of an older home, the present building is a 19th century stone house, commodious and well-built" (Jones 1987:78).

GLANSEFIN (Glansevin), Llangadog. Grid ref. SN 7061 2783. The house is now used as a hotel.

(Jones 1987:78).

GLANTOWY, Llandingad. Grid ref. SN 1560 2085. This house is marked on Colby's map of 1831 as Glantowy-uchaf. (Jones 1987:79).

PENYROCK, Myddfai. Grid ref. SN 4253 1360. Home of the Jones family, who claimed descent from the physicians of Myddfai. (Jones 1987:160).

GLANARETH, Llangadog. Now derelict, only a few stones remaining. Situated near the north bank of the Areth, about three and a quarter miles south east of Llandadog. The site is owned by Dyfed County Council.(Jones 1987:73).

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