

# NORTH CHAPEL TOLL HOUSE

THE roads of Britain, after the Romans left, were neglected, and the old tracks with very little foundation were again used. Consequently, almost anywhere in the country, they were full of muddy ruts in wet weather and deep in layers of dust during dry periods.

The roads over the Weald of Sussex must have been some of the worst in the country owing to the thick clay subsoil. In fact, history records that at some time during the seventeenth century Prince George of Denmark visited Petworth House, and took six hours in going the last nine miles from London. The roads were so deep in mire that farm labourers had to prop and push his coach on either side.

A number of incidents of this kind caused efforts to be made to improve the surfaces, and toll-houses were set up at important points on the highways to collect money for the purpose.

One of these was the very fine brick toll-house at North Chapel. It is a single-storey building close to the road—too close, in fact, for in 1946 it was badly damaged by a heavy vehicle out of control; it has since been restored to its former condition.

There used to be a gate across the road by the house, and here all traffic was stopped for the collection of tolls. The money so obtained was used for the repair of the local roads. The establishment of turnpikes all over the country led to a considerable improvement in the conditions of the main roads. As vehicular traffic increased, and new methods of road-

making were found, other arrangements for their upkeep became necessary and two Acts in 1871 abolished most of the tolls.

At this time the North Chapel toll board was taken down; fortunately, it was preserved, and later found its way to Haslemere Educational Museum where it may still be seen.

A few extracts from the particulars on the board afford an interesting picture of the vehicles and animals passing to and fro on the roads of Sussex a century ago.

For every Horse, Mule, Ass or other Beast (except Dogs) drawing any Coach, Berlin, Landau, Barouche, Chariot, Charise, Chair, Gig, Hearse, Curricie, Whiskey, Taxed Cart, Waggon, Wain, Timber frame, Cart-frame Dray, or other vehicle of whatsoever description when drawn by more than one Horse or other Beast, the sum of Four-pence-half-penny (such Wagon, Wain, Cart, or other such Carriage having wheels of less breadth than four and a half inches).

AND when drawn by one Horse or Beast only, the Sum of Six-pence (Waggon, Wain, and other such Carriages having wheels as aforesaid).

For every Dog drawing any Truck, Barrow, or other Carriage for the space of One Hundred Yards or upwards upon any part of the said Roads, the Sum of One Penny.

For every Horse, Mule, Ass or other Beast laden or unladen and not drawing, the Sum of Two Pence.

For every score of Oxen, Cows, or meat cattle. The Sum of ten-pence, and so in Proportion for any greater or less Number.

For every Score of Calves, Sheep, Lambs, or Swine, the Sum of Five-pence, and so in Proportion for any greater or less number.

Considering the value of a penny in those days, a long carriage journey, passing several turnpikes, must have been quite expensive.—

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