

PART 3: 18TH CENTURY WORKSOP

In 1738 an Act of Parliament was passed to create a turnpike road from Worksop to Chesterfield. Additional turnpike roads went to Sheffield in 1763, Doncaster in 1765 and Newark in 1780. Before the setting up of Turnpike Trusts the roads were often impassable in the winter, or after heavy rain. On clay soils the ruts were axle-deep, with rocks projecting through the mud. Many of the roads were old pack-horse tracks, which were so narrow that coaches could not pass each other. The Trusts raised money for the upkeep of the roads by charging tolls. In 1822 Turnpike roads were built from Worksop to Mansfield and Worksop to Retford. John Piercy wrote in 1828, describing the work of John Macadam:

‘To the west likewise, the public are greatly indebted to the same gentleman for the superior manner in which he has completed the road from Retford to Worksop. The expenses attendant upon this undertaking were very great; but the road – though thirty percent more expensive travelling than formerly, is seventy-five per cent better, which those will acknowledge who have once ploughed the road when journeying with any vehicle across that part of the country’.

This extensive network of good roads, created so that the owners of the surrounding ducal estates could easily visit their properties, meant that Worksop became a potential centre for trade and industry.

Turnpike charges from Mansfield to Worksop, 1822:
 Horse drawn coaches and wagons, 6d per horse.
 Horse not drawing 1 ½ d. Ass drawn wagon 3d.
 Carriage propelled by other than an animal 8d per wheel. Cattle per score 5d. Sheep per score 2 ½d



The turnpike milestone on Mansfield Road, Worksop



Chapman’s map of Worksop, 1776, showing the turnpike roads to Chesterfield, Sheffield and Doncaster and the Chesterfield Canal



Turnpike regulations, 1823



A toll house at Beckingham

In the area of Slack Walk were some of the liquorice gardens for which Worksop was famous. First grown by the Priory for medicinal purposes, liquorice was used mainly as a sweetener. The industry died out around 1750 with the arrival of sugar cane from the West Indies. Mr Brompton, a Slack Walk nurseryman, was one of the last to grow it commercially. He was the originator of the flower known as Brompton Stocks.

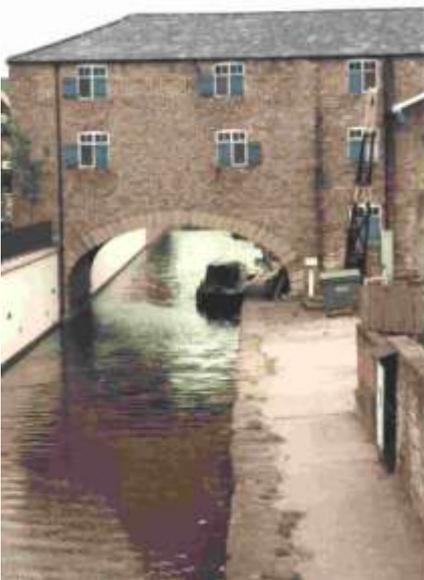
Tenter Green was an area used for drying cloth that had been locally woven. It was later renamed Lead Hill because pack horses from Derbyshire lead mines deposited their lead here, to return laden with malt. From Worksop, the lead was taken to the Trent for transport by boat to London. Some of the lead was found during excavations in 1859. In November 1722 there was a serious fire on Lead Hill, destroying many of the houses there.

Top hat making was carried out at Beaver Place using rabbit skins or 'beavers'. By 1840, beaver hats had gone out of fashion and were replaced by silk hats.



Lead Hill
about 1900

The Chesterfield Canal was opened in 1777, running from Chesterfield to West Stockwith and the Trent. This caused an expansion in trade and the population of the town. In White's Directory of 1832 the main trades were agriculture, malting and corn milling and timber.



Pickford's
Depository over
the Chesterfield
Canal in Worksop

The Chesterfield
Canal petition
addressed to the
Duke Of Leeds
dated 1770



In the 18th century the street layout had hardly changed since the survey of 1636. Most of the houses were small timber framed cottages with small gardens although there had been some additional building in Potter Street, Park Street and Bridge Street with several terraces of Georgian houses at the time when Worksop Manor was being rebuilt as a palace by the Duke of Norfolk.



Worksop Manor
in 1765



Georgian houses Potter Street in 1970



Bull Yard, Bridge Street 2008

Some of the larger houses had yards running behind where the poor lived in tenement buildings. The Ship Inn was not mentioned as an inn by John Harrison's survey in 1636, but may have been in existence then as a private dwelling house.



The Ship Inn: left in 1840 and right in 2008



Castle Street



Duck Row

To the west of Castle Hill was the site of the Lord's water mill. In 1792 William Toplis and Company built two textile mills here and the firm built Norfolk Street as mill workers' houses. They were constructed for multiple use by several families in each house. The company went bankrupt after three years and the water mill was returned to grinding corn, becoming known as Beard's Mill.



Norfolk Street



Beard's Mill

There were a number of mills in Worksop, using water, wind and steam. The oldest was the Priory water mill which had been on this site since early medieval times and is mentioned in the Priory Charter: 'near the church enclosed by its great ditch as far as Bersbrig meadow, also without the ditch, a mill, dwelling house and Buselin's meadow'.



The Priory Mill