

NOTES: WEIGHING ENGINES & WEIGHING HOUSES

Ref: 'Wiltshire Toll Houses' by Robert Haynes and Ivor Slocombe

- The Turnpike act of 1741 allowed Trusts to charge tolls according to weight.
- The minutes of various Trusts contain frequent references to weighing engines and weighing houses.
- In order to implement the act, a Trust could erect 'any crane, machine or engine which they shall judge proper for the weighing of carts, wagons or other carriages'.
- Consequently, Weighing engines would have been a common sight along turnpike roads.
- Most were probably something like the modern weighbridge; however, surprisingly little is known about them.
- James Edgell of Frome was advertising such machines in the *Gloucester Journal* in 1774,
'These engines are of a new Construction, and may be placed where most of the old Construction cannot, a Space of Ground of 15 Feet Square, and four feet in Depth, being sufficient for erecting one of these. They will weigh from one Pound to nine Tons upwards, and the Weight used for weighing each Ton is only 14 Pounds. The scale hangs above Ground in the most convenient Part of the Turnpike or Weighing House, and a Quarter Guinea will turn the Beam. By these Engines a small Parcel of Goods as well as a loaded Carriage may be weighed with as a much ease and expedition as a small Parcel in common scales.'
- The Weighing House contained the mechanism upon which the (*counter-balance*) weights were placed as in Edgell's advertisement.
- There was an alternative model – more like a crane lifting a vehicle and its load from the ground, although probably most of the Wiltshire machines were of the weighbridge type.
- **QUESTION:** On page viii of the book, it is stated that a Toll Keeper/collector was a 'rather lowly occupation' – typically uneducated labourers who were paid a wage of 10 or 12 shillings a week. Would not being able to operate a weighbridge require a modicum of skill and calculation (e.g. adding up the total of counter-balance weights)?

Upton Scudamore (Thoulstone)

Black Dog Roads 1751 – 1879

ST 841 480 On the A36 Warminster to Bath road, half a mile south of the A3098 crossroads.

On the closure of the turnpike the tollhouse with its outhouses was sold for £40 to Charles Phipps of Chalcott House. The Trust accounts refer to repairs being made to a weighing engine at Thoulstone in 1825/6 and again in 1826/7.
TM (Black Dog) WRO 540/4.

Comment: So the Weighbridge referred to above was not situated at (or near) Black Dog Farm but at Thoulstone on the 'old' road – on the Chapmanslade parish (CP) border?