

High Street & St Helens Road

High Street was originally known as 'Fazackerley Street'. It was built as part of the turnpike road from Liverpool to Warrington, to speed up the transport of Prescot coal, pottery and other goods to the rapidly developing port of Liverpool.

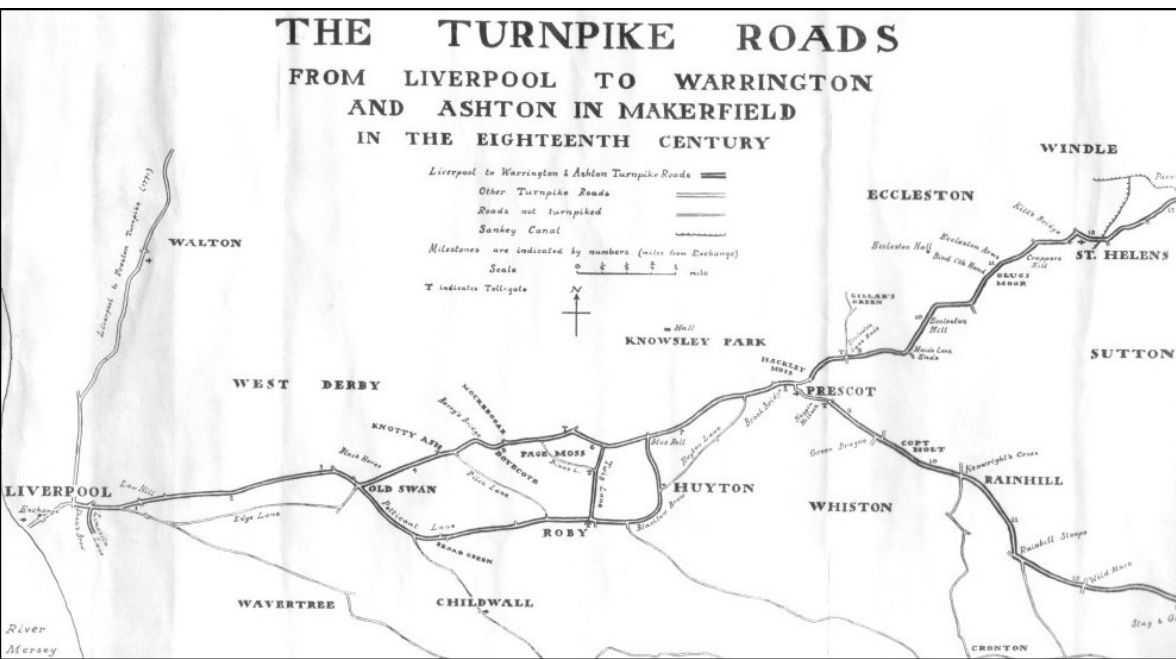


Horse and cart on High Street

The new road from Liverpool divided at Prescot, near The King's Arms, now the junction of High Street and St Helen's Road. One branch went through Whiston, Rainhill Stoops, Bold Heath and continued on to Warrington. The other continued through Prescot by way of Eccleston Lane Ends, Cropper's Hill and on to St Helens.

Before the turnpike road was built in 1726, the main highway was mostly a lane, with hedges or ditches on either side. A horse causeway ran along one side of the road and was paved with cobbles. Often the roads would be difficult to pass along due to ruts, holes and loose stones caused by pack-horses, carts and heavy wagons. In winter, and sometimes even in summer, the road from Prescot was almost 'unpassable through the great rains'. As early as 1663 the damage to Liverpool's streets by the 'frequent driving of carts laden with coales and muggs to the waterside' was noted. Liverpool Merchants petitioned for a Prescot turnpike, to repair and enlarge the road from Liverpool to Prescot, the petition included the following passage: "...several parts of the said road are so very deep and other parts so narrow that coaches, wagons and other wheel carriages cannot pass through the same."

<http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/things-to-see-and-do/galleries-and-museum.aspx>



The word 'turnpike', originally referred to the barrier placed across the road to prevent access until the toll had been paid. It would have been a cross-bar pivoted on a central post, or a conventional gate may also have been used. The term turnpike was soon applied to the road itself.

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Creating the turnpike roads resulted in wider and improved highways. The whole system was administered by a Turnpike Trust. Toll gates were installed, charging a levy on all wheeled traffic and farm animals. The proceeds were used to improve and maintain the highways in good order.

With more traffic travelling along the toll road through Prescot, High Street and St Helens Road became popular areas for shops and businesses. The Royal Hotel was one of Prescot's largest posting inns that served the toll road, it stood on High Street next to Tickle Hall and Cross, and was demolished in 1936.

In the early 20th century shops along High Street included a tobacconist, fishmonger, grocer, chemist, and fish & chip shop. James Gardner had his decorating shop here, which sold equipment for people to improve their homes. Mr Gardner also visited people's houses himself as a decorator.

Electric trams arrived in Prescot in 1902, running from Liverpool to St Helens. The town's terminus was at the junction of High Street and St Helens Road. Edward's Booksellers & Publishers stood nearby. Mr Edwards was one of the town's photographers and published some of the earliest picture postcards of Prescot, many of them showing the shops of the town.

At 25 St Helens Road stood James Lucas' Ironmongery. He started his working life as a watch wheel-cutter and followed this trade until about 1900 when he opened his shop. Further along at 29 St Helens Road was Seddon's Bakers, Confectioners & Grocers. The three Seddon brothers also had two shops on Eccleston Street and another at Lane Ends.

Between High Street and Eccleston Street were several narrow cobbled thoroughfares with small houses standing close together. Mill Street was the site of one of Prescot's early windmills which was destroyed by fire in 1908.

Stone Street is officially the narrowest named street in the country.

High Street with Edward's Bookseller & Publisher on the right

