

Transportation through the Ages in Castle Rising.

In this chapter, the land and water routes between Castle Rising and the outside world are examined from Roman times to the present. Castle Rising probably owes its existence to its proximity to the sea. The story of transportation from Castle Rising is essentially a gradual change from a predominantly water-based system to a completely land-based one. Although small communities, such as Castle Rising were largely self sufficient for most of their history, they also depended on connections with neighbouring communities and beyond. For the earlier part of the history of the village, we must necessarily be speculative about where these connections were. However we can make a number of generalisations based on the known ancient routes nearby and what we can predict of human behaviour throughout the ages. We know that many present-day roads were probably established long ago, since unless there were conscious plans to change (such as recent bypasses), there is no reason to deviate from a previously established route. Examples of this will be shown later in the chapter.

WATER ACCESS

Rising (Hrisinga), at the time of its Saxon establishment was a coastal settlement, with an inlet of the Wash, into which the Babingley River flowed, on its northern boundary. The major known transportation routes of the period, the pre-Roman Icknield Way and the Roman Peddar's Way were some distance to the east. Movement by land would have been more difficult west of the chalk escarpment. Rivers were rare on the chalk-land but several crossed the less permeable Lower Cretaceous strata to the west where Rising is located. They had the potential to obstruct land movements along the coast. The Babingley River was one such West Norfolk river which would have restricted land travel but was wide and deep enough to enable people to use the river itself as a transport route. A further barrier to travel at that time would have been the as yet un-drained and unhealthy Fens, restricting land travel to the west. The Great Ouse would however have provided an access route to the farmlands of Cambridgeshire to the south.

Although there is no evidence of any major Romano-British settlement in Rising, Roman artefacts are not uncommon and clearly there were many visitors to the area during that time. Extensive Roman iron-workings occurred in the vicinity and there was also a fort near the top of Knight's Hill. If Rising was not

a major settlement in Romano-British times, it has recently been shown to have been important to the Romans in other ways. Excavations at the castle in the nineteen seventies and eighties showed evidence of Roman field edges, within the boundaries of the present castle, suggesting the area was farmed during Roman times.¹ More importantly J.R.L.Allen (2004)² has shown convincingly that Silver Carr, a grey sandstone-like material, was a valuable building stone to the Romans. It occurred naturally in the Leziate Beds close to Castle Rising and **nowhere else**. East Anglia is notoriously short of good building stone and it was obviously valued by the Romans who used it for building.

Silver Carr was quarried by the Romans to build the coastal fortress of Branodunum (near the present-day Brancaster) and also a major structure near Reedham (close to Great Yarmouth and at the mouth of the River Yar). The exact location(s) where the Silver Carr came from within the parish of Rising is not known, although pieces of the consolidated sandstone can still be found in the sands of the Leziate Beds close to the village, and two map locations referred to as White Hills are thought to refer to places where the stone came from. The Rising area was valuable to the Romans as a source of building material, (so would have been thought of as an important industrial site) and the Babingley River would undoubtedly have been the corridor used to transport the stone between Rising and the coast from whence it would have continued by sea. We know that the river was later used by the Normans to bring decorative stone from Barnack (in Lincolnshire) and Caen (in Brittany) to build the castle and St. Lawrence church, but the findings of Allen point to an even **earlier** use of the Babingley River as a transportation route.

As mentioned in the chapter on Castle Rising and the Sea, part of the Babingley River was diverted at some early stage in our history into a side-stream by the digging of a ditch between the Babingley River and a side stream to the south. This ditch was later at the site of a Saxon Mill close to the present-day Stone Bridge. The parish boundary between Castle Rising and Babingley in general follows the Babingley River but at this location follows the ditch and side stream until the latter joins the Babingley River again somewhat downstream. This strongly suggests that the ditch was dug prior to the setting up of the parish boundary which occurred in the Saxon period. This is illustrated on the aerial photograph taken in 1946(Figure 1).

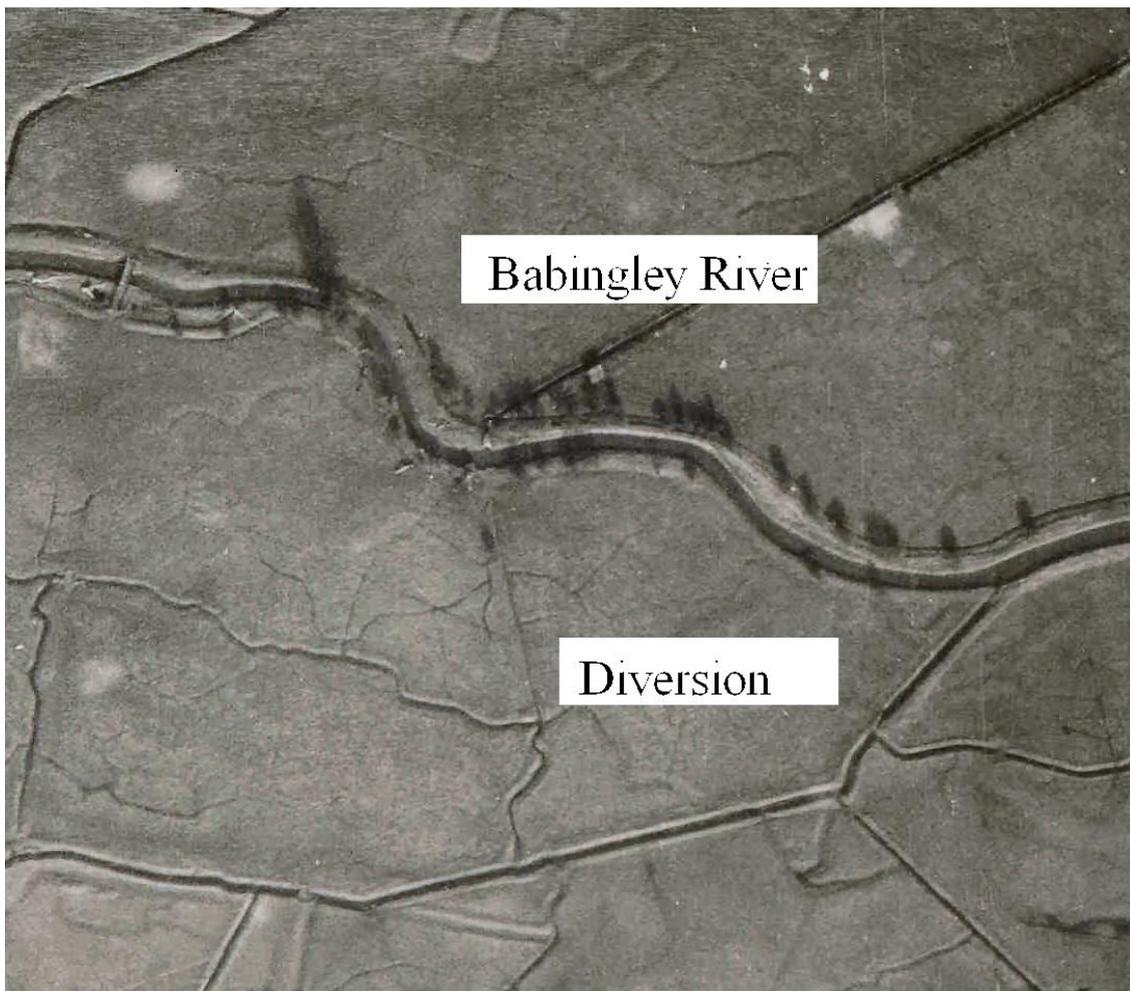


Figure 1. Ancient Diversion from Babingley River to a side stream.

It shows that a channel running from north-east to south-west has been cut from the original Babingley River, which flows west (left) to one of the tributaries which originally ran down from the spring to the east of the village and then ran parallel to the Babingley River until the two streams merged about 1 kilometre downstream. The effect of this diversion would be to have increased the flow into that part of the river which had closest access to the village, although that was not necessarily the purpose of the diversion. However the effect would have been to improve the access by river between the village and the sea.

There is no documentary evidence as to who dug this ditch, but there are two reasonable explanations. 1) The Romans dug it in order to improve their water access to the sea. The increased flow of water along the southerly stream would have increased the water flow in that part of the stream and thus have improved access between the quarry and the sea. Later the Saxons may have

utilised the ditch as a leet for their mill. 2) The Saxons built the ditch as a leet for a mill, which we know was still present in the sixteenth century. If this is the case, then the Romans used the river without any increased flow. A variant of this idea is that the Romans established the mill which was later used by the Saxons. If this is true then the ditch may have had a dual purpose.

From the perspective of navigation, the Babingley River was the best of the five rivers which flowed towards the east coast of the Wash. The Heacham and the Ingol were both short and the Nar and Gaywood Rivers had many meanders and marshy areas at the sea-ward ends. This may be the reason why tradition links the Babingley River to St. Felix and his arrival into west Norfolk from Burgundy in the mid-seventh century. Interestingly Felix, who is said to have brought Christianity to East Anglia is also thought to have visited Reedham, where the Romans had transported the Silver Carr from Castle Rising³. He may well have used the same coastal route as the Romans. The Babingley River was also of suitable size and flow for the establishment of mills, and several are recorded in Domesday (see Chapter on Mills). It is not surprising therefore that by the time of Domesday, Rising had become one of the more important communities in the region. It is probable that because of the importance of its water access, it had been granted *Burh* status.

Water transport was clearly important to Castle Rising especially at a time when land routes were poor and heavy goods were carried by pack animals or primitive carts. However, by the time of Domesday there was also a network of Saxon communities throughout the area, on average 2-3 miles from one another. These communities would have had trackways or footpaths between them, probably in many cases along the same routes as present-day roads.

ANCIENT TRACKWAYS

At the time of Domesday, the parishes of North and South Wootton, and Roydon were under common ownership, although South Wootton became separate in the early medieval period. The other three parishes have been largely under common ownership until recently. A track to Roydon would also take Castle Rising residents towards Grimston, the closest access point to the Icknield Way. An additional reason for visiting Grimston appeared in 1251 when a market was established there⁴. The present road to Roydon and Grimston is probably on the same route as that established prior to the arrival of

the Normans, following the road east out of the village and along Keeper's Lane, past Short Trees (mentioned on the Elizabethan 1588 map of the Chase).

South Wootton is *en route* to Gaywood, then close to the shores of the Wash and an important source of salt. It is interesting that to the present day, the road from Castle Rising to King's Lynn still goes in the direction of Gaywood before turning right into the former East Gate of King's Lynn. It should be remembered that King's Lynn (then Bishop's Lynn) was only established in the late eleventh century as a westerly expansion of Gaywood⁵. This road had to cross the Gaywood River, and the bridge there is frequently mentioned during perambulations of Rising Chase, during the 16th to 19th century⁶. Gaywood River was the southern boundary of the Chase. The road would also have crossed the small stream between North and South Wootton, an inconspicuous stream today but more of an obstacle in medieval times. The villages of Castle Rising and North Wootton were separated by a shared common, where villagers had the right to graze animals and collect fuel etc. The route as shown on the 1732 map leaves the village at the west end of the Lower Road. Such tracks across common land may not have followed a fixed route and certainly were not fenced. The 1812 map shows several unfenced tracks across the common (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Several unfenced tracks across the Common between

N Wootton and Castle Rising; 1812⁷

Roads across former common land, unlike those that originated from tracks in areas of old enclosures which often followed field boundaries, were often straight tracks as is the present Ling Common Road. So too is the road from the west end of Castle Rising to the east edge of South Wootton, which also crosses former common land.

Another ancient route was likely to be that from Rising to Dersingham and Snettisham. At the time of Domesday, Rising and Snettisham were under the joint ownership of Archbishop Stigand, with Snettisham being the larger community. This route passed the ancient Butler's Cross marked on the 1588 map and mentioned in several perambulations of the Chase. The base of the cross is still *in situ* today beside the present-day A149 at the West Newton turn-off (Figure 3). The road later became part of the Turnpike Road between King's Lynn and Dersingham, and is still the main road between King's Lynn and Hunstanton.



Figure 3. Butler Cross (base of.)

Three other ancient tracks need to be mentioned. The first links Bawsey with Babingley, two villages that have since almost disappeared. A series of landmarks are all located roughly on a straight line which runs north – south. These are: the ruined church of Bawsey, Bawsey Bridge, Blakeley Cross, the old church in the castle grounds at Rising, Babingley Bridge and the ruined

church at Babingley. Blakeley Cross is no longer in evidence but is shown on the 1588 Map and is located at the place where the parishes of Rising, Roydon and Grimston meet. It seems likely that a track existed between all the locations mentioned above and may have been used as an old pilgrim route. Parts of the route are still in existence, such as the road north of Bawsey Church past the Bawsey Bridge. Another section would have been the road which later served to connect the castle with the Lodge. The Lodge, (now Knight's Hill Hotel) was the administrative site for the Chase itself in medieval and Tudor times and it appears that a track between the castle and the lodge would have been a necessity. The Normans may have made use of part of this ancient route. This deeply indented little road is now lined with a hawthorn hedge, this is however of recent origin. Another part of this track which was used until recently was that between Castle Rising and Babingley village. Babingley to the north of Castle Rising has now disappeared apart from its ruined church, but an ancient bridge which was only finally demolished during the huge winter floods of 1953, can be seen on many of the older maps and aerial photos (see Fig. 1 left hand side). Currently there is no public access to this area and evidence of the former track has disappeared.

A second track at the south end of the parish connects South Wootton with Pott Row. It is still used by hikers and in places forms the southern boundary of Castle Rising parish. Importantly it intersects the track described above at the site where Blakely Cross was located, suggesting that these two routes were more important in medieval times.

The third track went directly from South Wootton to the Lodge (now Knight's Hill), where it forked, the northern track then leading to Hillington and the more southerly route to Grimston. It avoided Castle Rising itself but passed the Lodge of the Chase at the top of what is now Knight's Hill. Perhaps this road became more prominent when the use of the Chase was at its height. This road continued to be important, is shown on the 1588 map, became a turnpike road and is now mostly on the route of the present-day A148.

THE NORMAN VILLAGE

The routes described so far were all likely to have been present when D'Albini built his castle and the new parish church in the middle of the twelfth century. One imagines that the extensive Silver Carr deposits, discovered by the Romans influenced the Normans in choosing the site of their castle. According

to Liddiard⁸ William D'Albini not only built the castle but also created a "planned village" with a lattice of streets running north - south and east - west (Figure 4) in a grid-iron plan.

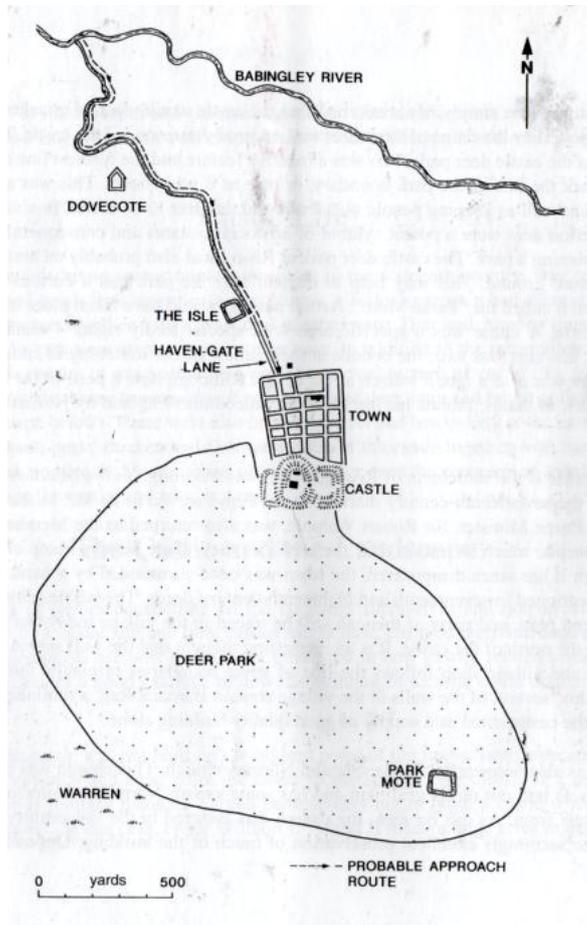


Figure 4. Planned Village as proposed by Liddiard⁹. The dovecote is located in the wrong place.

This pattern resembles the more extensive planned village of Castle Acre, and many of the proposed streets are mirrored in the present lay-out of the village. Liddiard (op. cit.) also refers to the fact that the village may have once been surrounded by a bank and ditch, presumably to provide some protection, and was apparently mentioned in some 17th and 18th century deeds. This concept is somewhat speculative and it is hard to imagine that it would have been easy to re-design a village which at the time of Domesday had a population of around 250-300 people. What is more certain is that three tracks ran from the village north to the Babingley valley. All three of them are present to a lesser or greater extent today. These show the importance of the river valley to the village in

earlier centuries. The western track, called Havengate has an obvious Viking name and is one piece of evidence of Danish influence in the pre-Norman village. It was the route used by those visitors who came up the Babingley River by boat to visit Castle Rising and disembarked at the foot of Havengate. Liddiard refers to a number of features – a dovecote, paradise, (a medieval garden) and the Isle (a moated enclosure) and the elaborate west wall of the church, all of which were designed to impress the visitors to the castle. Bloomfield¹⁰ reported that a ship's anchor had been discovered in Havengate, a sign of Rising's past association with the sea. Havengate is no longer accessible to the public. It was a continuation of the road which heads north from the Market Cross and passes to the left of Number 20, Castle Rising on the Low Road. The middle track is Nightmarsh Lane. It was widely used in previous centuries for the people of the village to take their animals to graze on the two communal grazing areas – Nightmarsh and Daymarsh. The easternmost track left the village past the Hospital and skirted the ancient woodland and proceeded to the Stone Bridge over the Babingley River. It eventually became part of the Turnpike Road system and until the opening of the Bypass in 1968 was the main road between King's Lynn and Hunstanton.

Rising was by no means an isolated place during the medieval period. With the rise of Lynn as one of the major ports in England, with its strong connections to the Hanseatic League, Rising shared something of its cosmopolitan life-style, with connections not only with other parts of England and Scotland, but also ships sailing to Bergen, Bremen, Bordeaux and ports in Norway and Holland¹¹. There were wide maritime connections within the North Sea. Most of the exports from King's Lynn were cereals and wool, but also beans and peas, so some of this may well have been shipped to the port from Castle Rising. Despite this, Rising suffered relative to Lynn itself and remained a small community while Lynn expanded. The Babingley River access to the sea gradually silted up and the village became increasingly dependent on its larger neighbour, This led to a continuing rivalry between the communities and irritation at the partitioning of the Tolls generated by the trade.

When Queen Isabella resided at Castle Rising in the 14th century, she was frequently visited by her son King Edward III and his retinue. The Chamberlain's records for King's Lynn, which document royal expenses associated with the King's expenses in the King's Lynn region records the following, in the year 1335, "*xxid. given for carriage of sand towards the east*

gates [of King's Lynn] *and for a hakeney to Risinge,*"¹². This is interesting in two respects. A Hakeney probably derives from the French *haquenée*—a horse of medium size recommended for lady riders, and may even be the origin of the word Hackney Carriage. It may have been sent for Isabella to ride. The reference to sand suggests that the sand pits may have been active at this time and sand was being sent to Lynn. This is one of the earliest references to the local road system. Presumably the route via Gaywood and South Wootton was used.

THE 1588 MAP.

Much valuable information about the roads comes from the 1588 map of Rising Chase. However it is surprisingly inconsistent in its depiction of the roads in the area. The village itself is well covered, but only some of the roads that we know must have existed at the time are shown. The road from Gaywood via South Wootton, passing the Lodge and on to Hillington is well marked, but the way north towards Dersingham is shown from the village as far as Onion Corner, is missing from there to the Stone Bridge and then continues only as far as Butler's Cross. Only the first half mile or so of the route from Castle Rising to Roydon is shown.

One particularly interesting feature of the map however concerns access to the marshes and the coast. By 1588, access to the sea via the Babingley River would have been more difficult than in Norman times due to the silting up of the river. There were however several ways down to the North Wootton marshes which began as track-ways but changed into inlets of the sea (see Fig 5). Presumably those people visiting the marsh, or going out into the Wash, would first travel by road, then transfer to a boat.



Figure 5. 1588 Map of North Wootton, showing track from village which becomes a creek.

The road system in place during the medieval period probably changed little over 500 or more years, but as trade expanded and travel became more common-place, the pressure to maintain the roads in a usable condition must have increased. Additionally, as Manorial Courts were weakened, it became increasingly difficult to make the peasants work on the roads¹³. A statute of 1555 made parishes responsible for repairing roads within their bounds¹⁴. An examination of parish records such as the Leet Court documents, and letters between agents and owners reveal little or no evidence of the administration of the roads, even though there are numerous references to farming practice, leases, flood control measures and regulation of the common land. The only records we have found were in Norfolk County Records from King's Lynn dated from 1650 to 1695. They appear to be judicial records levying charges by the county on the parish for road repairs. They are entries from the Quarter Sessions: ¹⁵

“Castle Rising Inhabitants. To be levied in respect of indictments for the repair of highways” July 1658.

“ Ryseing Bridge – Repair Monies” July 1658

“Castle Rising Highways Rate” Oct. 1691

A small community like Castle Rising had a network of roads and tracks to maintain and with largely absentee Lords of the Manor, it is not surprising that some of the tracks were in very poor condition. However the County had a

way of fining the parish if the roads were not maintained. Fortunately most of the local tracks were on well drained sandy terrain, so should have been passable even during the wetter parts of the year. Many modes of transport would have been used. Local people would walk if they needed to, but generally did not travel far. Farm carts and wagons were used for carrying heavy loads. Wealthier members of the community would use horses and carriages. There is abundant evidence that the various Lords of the Manor travelled among their various estates and visited Castle Rising at least during the parliamentary elections. Mary Howard in the 19th century had her own carriage and postillion and regularly moved among her estates of Castle Rising, Ashted (in Surrey), Levens (in Westmoreland) and Elford (in Staffordshire). Henry Howard, the 12th Earl of Suffolk in 1756 often had game shipped to his main residence in Surrey "*Paid carriage of Game from Lynn to London 7s 6d.*"¹⁶ However the local people seldom travelled far. Marriages were almost always between couples from within the same village or with spouses from villages within a few miles away.

For much of the medieval and early modern period there was a widespread network of carriers and pack-horses for the transport of goods by road. With the development of King's Lynn as a major English port, Castle Rising was not far by road from reaching valuable coastal and river transport. This may have contributed to the success of the local sand pits as the 1335 reference above to sand being carried to Lynn indicates. Local farmers often acted as the carriers in villages and we have evidence of this in the 18th Century in Castle Rising. Records from the Hospital show two references in the 1770s that. "*Richard Elmer paid for 'waggoning chalds of coals'*".

Richard Elmer (1738-1818) was a local farmer who was active in the village for much of his life, married twice in the village and had 8 children. He was active in the Leet Court and his eldest son John married the daughter of a future mayor Habbakuk Englestown. His farm cart was obviously useful for bringing coal to heat the Jacobean Hospital in the village.

Although by this time Castle Rising was dwarfed by its larger and more prosperous neighbour, King's Lynn, it nevertheless benefitted greatly from the success and wealth which this prosperous port brought to the region. Its sand could be readily shipped to other parts of the country and exotic products,

such as spices were readily available. Coal would have been relatively easy to obtain, because of the coastal traffic by boat to Newcastle.

TURNPIKE ROADS

As time passed and traffic increased, there was pressure from local communities to change the way in which roads were maintained. Larger communities produced more traffic, and travel distances increased, but it was often the smaller communities which had the higher relative maintenance costs. In the late seventeenth century the concept of Toll Roads developed in England, with users being charged for the upkeep of the roads. Most Turnpike Roads however were not developed until the mid to late eighteenth century. The Turnpike Acts allowed groups of citizens to maintain roads and charge for their use. They flourished in this area for about a century, before the arrival of the railways. The development of Turnpike Roads in our region is well documented in a book "**Lynn Turnpike Acts**"¹⁷, whose sub-title is "*An Act for repairing and widening the roads from East Gate in the Borough of King's Lynn into the parish of Gayton and to the gate next Hillington on Congham Common and to the North end of Babingley Lane to Babingley in the County of Norfolk.*" This Act was passed in 1770.

The route is more completely described and transcribed below in full. It is also illustrated in Figure 7 superimposed on Faden's famous map of Norfolk produced in 1797¹⁸. It can also be followed on a present-day Ordnance Survey Map

*"Whereas the Roads leading from the East Gate in the Borough of King's Lynn to the Corner house in Gaywood and from thence through the parishes of Mintlyn, Bawsey and Leziate, then to the guide-post where the road from Hillington to Swaffham crosses this road in the Field of the Parish of Gayton in the County of Norfolk and from the said Corner house in Gaywood to the south-east end of a certain bridge in Gaywood aforesaid called Double Bridge and from the north-west end of the same bridge to Wootton Gap in South Wootton and from thence to Rising Lodge in **Castle Rising** and from thence through the parish of Roydon to the NE corner of a Close or Piece of land called the Saffron Close in Grimston in the said County and from the said **Rising Lodge** to the west end of a certain Bridge in Congham called Congham Bridge; and from the east end of the same Bridge to the Gate near Hillington on Congham Common*

*in Congham in the aforesaid County; and from the said Wootton Gap through the Parish of **Castle Rising** aforesaid to the south end of a certain other Bridge called Babingley Bridge in Babingley, are in a ruinous Condition and in many parts narrow and incommodious and cannot be effectively amended, widened and kept in good repair by the ordinary Course of Laws*

May it therefore please your Majesty[George III]that it may be enacted and be it enacted by the KING'S most Excellent MAJESTY that the acting Justices of the peace for the said County of Norfolk”

There then follows a list of around 150 citizens, comprising the “great and the good” of the time, and several who are leading members of the Castle Rising elite. These include Philip Pyle the Rector; Richard and Thomas Fawssett Agents for the Estate and Crisp Molineux, one of the sitting Members of Parliament for Castle Rising, Other recognisable names included the Bagges of King’s Lynn and Hammonds of South Wootton and West Acre.. None of the people who were regular attendees at the annual Court Leet of the village and therefore members of the local community, were represented.

This document not only describes the roads to be converted into Turnpike Roads but also mentions something of the state of the existing roads with terms such as “ruinous” and “incommodious” being used.

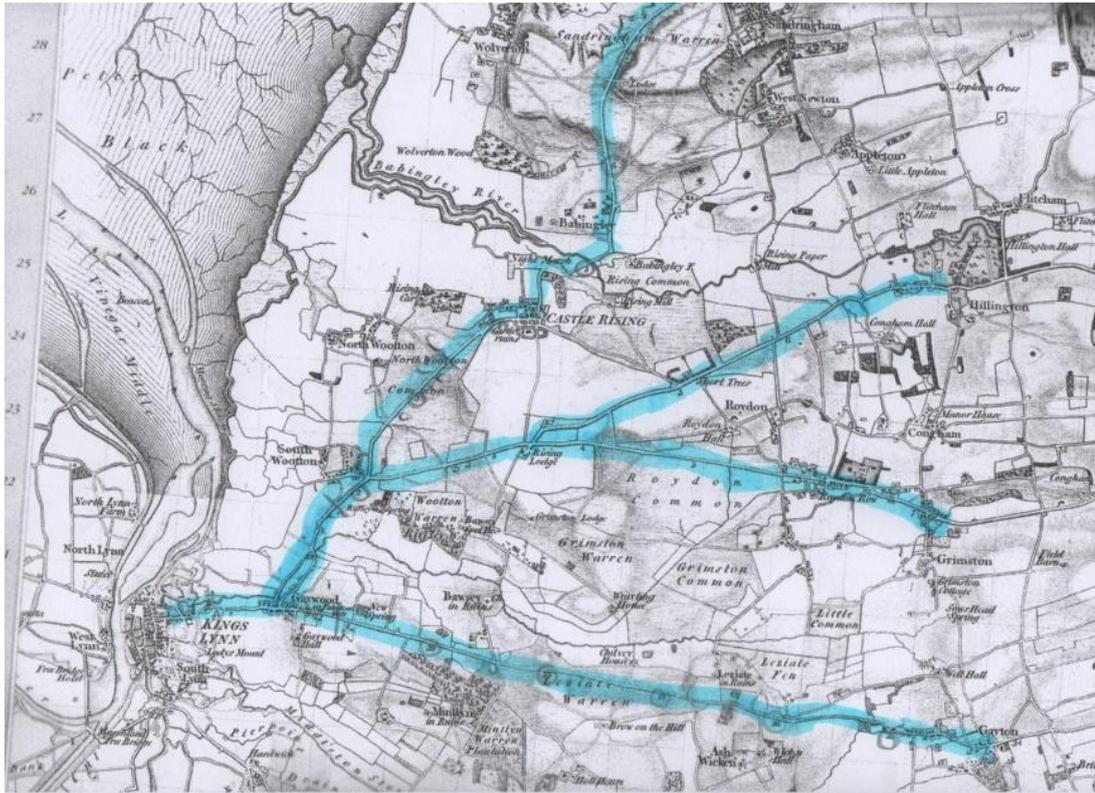


Figure 7 Location of the 1770 Turnpike Roads superimposed on the Faden Map of 1797.

Originally the Turnpike was planned to go only as far as Babingley Bridge but in 1790 it was extended to the village of Dersingham. There were a number of interesting additional exemptions mentioned in the original Act. There must have been some local concern that rubble from the Castle at Rising would be used to repair roads, because the following clause appears:- *“That this Act shall **not** extend to authorize or empower the said trustees, or any of them, to widen, divert, turn or alter the present course or path of so much of the said Road leading to Babingley Lane as extends from the cottage or outhouse late in the use of Robert Monomer to the NW Corner of the Wood in Castle Rising aforesaid or to dig, gather, take or carry away any gravel, stones, Bricks, Earth or other Materials from the Castle in Rising aforesaid.”* Building material from the Castle was regularly used to construct or repair houses and walls in the village itself, but clearly the owners of the estate did not want it to be used to repair the Turnpike Road.

A second exemption, enacted in 1811 is also telling, since Castle Rising was a parliamentary borough, and elections were held there periodically. This stated that *“Exemptions for payment of Tolls.”* were to be allowed for

*“Passengers on Horseback going to or returning from any **election** of a Knight or Knights of the Shire to serve in Parliament for the Counties of Norfolk or Suffolk, or any Burgess or Burgesses to serve in Parliament for the said Borough of King’s Lynn or for the Borough of Castle Rising, during the Time of such Election or Elections, or on the day before or the day after such Election or Elections shall begin or be concluded.”* There is nothing new about parliamentary perks!

The East Gate of King’s Lynn is no longer present but in the eighteenth century was the gateway to the walled town of King’s Lynn. The Turnpike Road of 1770 was not a single road from King’s Lynn but a network of three roads spreading radially from the town. It is interesting that the three major forks are still important intersections to this day. These are 1) Knight’s Hill, 2) Wootton Gap (where the traffic lights south of South Wootton are now located) and 3) the centre of Gaywood near to where the clock is located. There is another reminder of the old turnpike road. The road originally had a series of milestones along the side of the road. Most of these have now disappeared, but one still to be seen at Gaywood Bridge (Figure 8) may be an original milestone. There used to be one (Milestone 4) at the west end of Castle Rising but it has disappeared.



Figure 8. Old Turnpike Milestone at Gaywood Bridge.

The value of turnpike roads was in their ability to generate funds for their maintenance, and two toll-gates were constructed – one in Gaywood along the

road to Gayton at a place called Fairstead Gate, and the other along the Gaywood Road, just south of the Gaywood Bridge. These would collect tolls from travellers leaving and entering King's Lynn, but presumably if residents of Castle Rising were travelling to say, Dersingham, they would pass no toll-gates. The tolls allowed for improvements in the quality of the roads and in the nineteenth century, the road improvement techniques of Thomas Telford and John MacAdam allowed for considerably faster journeys¹⁹

Although turnpike roads greatly improved road travel, it was not without its hazards. Highwaymen were a constant worry for travellers as many contemporary travellers had noted. "*I was robbed last night as I expected*" said the then Prime Minister Lord North in 1774²⁰. More seriously Richard Fawssett, agent for the estate and one of the signatories of the Lynn Turnpike Acts (see above) was killed on another local Turnpike Road, that between Wisbech and Downham Market. The event is described in a letter preserved in the NRO.²¹ It was sent by James Bellamy who later succeeded Fawssett as agent of the estate.

The letter was sent to the then Lord of the Manor, Richard Howard Esq. Lower Brook St. Grosvenor Square. From James Bellamy 1798.

"He went with Mr Peynton a Surgeon of the place to Outwell village 5 miles distant in his Carte(?), to sell an estate there, being detained till between 9-10 at night, they determined to go home. The horse, going over one of the Bridges of a canal by some means took fright and at length ran the carriage backwards into the canal. It is supposed that Mr Fawssett received some violent contusion in the fall although instantly taken from the water and every means possible to restore animation, no indication of life appeared."

The most frequently travelled route from the village was the road to King's Lynn and entries in various trade directories of the area document the methods by which people travelled and conducted business in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Pigot's and Co. Directory of Norfolk for 1830 states "*Letters to Lynn arrive by penny post every afternoon at half past four and are dispatched every morning at half past nine*" "*Carriers from Lynn to Brancaster and Castle Rising. Daniel Rolins' cart from the Black Horse Lynn every Tuesday and Friday and Smiths' cart from the Maid's Head every Tuesday.*" Note that Tuesday was and still is market day in Lynn.

According to White's Gazetteer of Norfolk²² of 1845, a **sociable** left the Green Dragon, King's Lynn every day at 4 in the afternoon for "Heacham, Snettisham etc. This certainly would have travelled through Castle Rising passing the village around 5 o'clock. Harrod's Directory of 1865 under the section on Castle Rising states that "A *sociable* passes through daily to and from Lynn." A **sociable** (Figure 9) was a four wheeled open horse-drawn carriage with side seats facing each other, perhaps an early version of a bus.



Figure 9. Sociable of the 19th century.

Kelly's Directory of 1874 notes that "*Carriers pass through the parish on Tuesdays and Saturdays*" both Market days in Lynn. By 1896 carriers were travelling between Castle Rising and Lynn 4 days a week, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday²³ The old Black Horse Inn advertised ostler and stabling facilities in the 19th century²⁴ and in Kelly's 1900 Directory at its present site it advertises as having "*Good accommodation for travellers, tourists, cyclists and picnic and pleasure parties.*" The Directory of 1937 tell us that "*Motor omnibuses run daily to Hunstanton and King's Lynn*".

Stage-coaches were widely used in the late 18th and 19th Centuries and in Figure 10, Victorian stagecoaches such as this were a regular feature between King's Lynn and London, but we have no evidence that they came as far as Castle Rising. The local people, who could afford them might use the sociable, and the gentry would have had coaches of their own. An elderly resident of the village, Mrs. E.J. Marsters, in a memoir written in 1972²⁵ recalls that the coachman of Lord Farquhar, (who lived in the mansion house at the turn of the 19th century) lived in the former Black Horse. Other residents at that time, such as Maud Plowright used to go with her parents to the Lynn Mart on a donkey cart, while her elder brothers walked or cycled.



Figure 10 Victorian Stagecoach in King's Lynn.

THE SANDPIT RAILWAY

There was another form of transportation at Castle Rising at least in the first part of the nineteenth century. From at least 1722²⁶ an agreement between a Mr John Skynner and the Hon William Feilding, current Lord of the Manor of Rising required that quantities of White Sand be delivered to boats near Lynn. The Castle Rising area is fortunate in having a large quantity of good quality sand, from the Lower Cretaceous deposits of Sandringham Sand. This was valuable for glass making and was shipped to various parts of England. This export of sand may have begun as early as Queen Isabella's time (see above) and was a valuable asset to the village. A note from the Agent of the Manor W Pearce to the then Lord of the Manor Richard Howard in Fulham on 29 March 1787²⁷ states

“Dear Sir, I have just learned that the person who applied to my uncle, W. Kent for the Sandpits at Castle Rising is a Mr. Turner, China Manufacturer near Bridgemouth, Shropshire. The gentleman came with a Mr Poole of Dorsetshire, an old acquaintance of Mr. Kent and I think they then meant to have taken it jointly.

My uncle who is at present in Norfolk will I am pretty certain be at the Salopian Coffee House, Charing Cross on Monday morning next from 10-1, if you should wish to have any conversation with him relative to this business.

Your most humble servant, W Pearce”.

The sand must have been valuable to the economy to the village and at some stage a horse-drawn railway was established between the sand-pit, (lying as it still does today at the boundary between Castle Rising and South Wootton near the Lynn Road) and the Wash. Although we do not know when the railway track was established, its route is still traceable today (Figure 11). It went west from the sandpit, passed through North Wootton and ended by the original east bank of the Wash in that parish, where it would be transferred onto coastal vessels.



Figure 11. Track of former Sandpit Railway in North Wootton Woods..

The Sandpit Railway has been described by Andrew Needham in 1989²⁸. If the railway was functioning in 1851 when the Marsh Cut was constructed it would have had to be extended two or more miles to reach the new shore of the Wash. The line was certainly no longer operative in 1862 when the King's Lynn to Hunstanton Railway was built. The embankment on which the Sandpit railway lay, was cut through when the KL-H Railway was built and no bridge or

tunnel was constructed. This certainly put an end to the Sandpit railway if it had not already stopped being used.

THE COMING OF THE STEAM RAILWAYS

The Lynn to Hunstanton Railway, part of the Great Eastern Railway, was completed at least as far as Heacham in 1862, and its development was closely associated with the establishment of a sea-side resort at Hunstanton. It did NOT pass through Castle Rising. The nearest station was at North Wootton so people in the village had to travel the mile to that station if they wanted to travel further. This decision as to where to locate the station (Castle Rising or North Wootton) may have had an important impact on the subsequent development of the two villages.

There are two interesting entries in the School Log of Castle Rising²⁹ which illustrate the impact of the coming of the railway to the village. In 1857 “*Annual Summer Trip to Hunstanton for children of school and church choir. Taken in horse-drawn farm wagons supplied by Messrs Ayre, Knights and Graystone [local farmers]*” Whereas in 1862, the year when the railway was opened, “*Gt. Eastern Railway built between King’s. Lynn and Hunstanton – party travelled by train from North Wootton. Fare 1/- adults, 6d children.*”

The Lynn to Hunstanton railway also provided access through the Wolferton station to some recently arrived but important residents to the region. The Sandringham estate to the north of the village had been acquired by the Royal family in 1861 and Prince Edward “Bertie” the heir to the throne was a frequent resident there.

The rail connection also provided access to a much wider geographic area in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. The rail line closed in 1969 as a result of the Beeching proposals³⁰. Most of the line in the area returned to private ownership although a few parts still have public footpaths and bridleways. The rail bridge across the Babingley River has been dismantled.

The coming of the railway to West Norfolk began in 1847 when a rail connection between London and King’s Lynn was established. In the long run this had a negative effect on the port of Lynn because coastal boat traffic was no longer the only means of shipping freight. King’s Lynn never recovered, despite the building of the Marsh Cut in 1851, which had the effect of improving access

of boat traffic to the town. Thus the effects of the railway on Castle Rising were both good and bad. Access to the outside world became much easier with a good rail link to London, but the relative decline of Lynn itself must have been felt in the village.

ROADS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

The 18th century road network remained unchanged until well into the 20th century, when development of the motor car and increasing affluence after the 2nd World War led to a vast increase in motor traffic, firstly by public transport and later by private ownership. This was paralleled by improvements in road quality. This allowed people to travel and commute longer distances to work and planners had to develop more and higher quality roads. This was the time when people could live in the village and work elsewhere. The main traffic from King's Lynn to Hunstanton and the North Norfolk Coast passed through Castle Rising village going north past Onion Corner, skirting the village's ancient woodland. During busy holiday weekends in the 1960s, the traffic through the village became increasingly heavy with frequent hold-ups. Plans were developed for a road by-passing both Castle Rising and King's Lynn. This provided direct access at the Hardwick roundabout to the road between Norwich and Newark, and was duly completed as the Queen Elizabeth Way in 1968. This was complemented by a roundabout at Knight's Hill and the change in the road position there, by straightening the main road between South Wootton and Hillington, cut off a small group of houses to the north-east of Knight's Hill from the main road. The old road (formerly the main road) to these houses still retains the cat-eyes installed on the original road. The by-pass brought welcome peace to the village, but did have the effect also of reducing business opportunities in the village.

An additional new road into King's Lynn (Edward Benefer Way) was built in 1972 on land which had been originally reclaimed after the diversion of the Marsh Cut in 1851. This allowed a more direct and convenient access to King's Lynn from Castle Rising which avoided the old Gaywood Road and which dated back to times even before the establishment of King's Lynn.

During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries private car ownership had increased dramatically, and ease of travel has resulted. A survey of the village in 2008 showed that of 131 residents of the village who answered,

only 10 had no use of a family car. This together with a regular bus service between King's Lynn and Hunstanton passing through the village enables residents of Castle Rising to enjoy the advantages of living in a pleasant rural environment despite its lack of many amenities. Many indeed commute daily to work and the influx of newcomers taking advantage of this has revived the village following a decline in numbers in the mid-twentieth century.

In conclusion, transport systems in the Castle Rising area have developed from pre-historic times to the present. The emphasis has changed over time from one mainly water based to an entirely land based system. Much of the evidence can be read from the landscape itself, but the wealth of documentary evidence has also enhanced our understanding of the connections between Castle Rising and its surrounding area and indeed much further afield..

¹ Morley. B and Gurney D (1997) **Castle Rising Castle, Norfolk. East Anglian Archeology Report No. 81**

² Allen. J.R.L. (2004) **Carrstone in Norfolk Buildings, Distribution, use, associates and influences. BAR British Series 371.**

³ N. Fahy pers. comm..

⁴ Find reference from Ann

⁵ Richards P. (1990) **King's Lynn.** Phillimore and Co. Chichester, W. Sussex.

⁶ Get notes on perambulations NRO

⁷ Map in British Library Collection.

⁸ Liddiard R (nd) Castle Rising King's Lynn – Norfolk. A short history of Castle Rising and its owners.

⁹ Liddiard R (nd) Castle Rising King's Lynn – Norfolk. A short history of Castle Rising and its owners.

¹⁰ Blomefield. F. (1808) History of Norfolk.

¹¹ 'Market Privileges 1391-1395', *Borough Market Privileges: The hinterland of medieval London, c.1400* (2006). URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=51630&start>

¹² 'The borough of Kings Lynn: Extracts from the Chamberlains' accounts', *The Manuscripts of the Corporations of Southampton and Kings Lynn: Eleventh report, Appendix; part III* (1887), pp. 213-231.

¹³ A Cossens (date needed) **The Turnpike Roads of Norfolk.** Norfolk Archeology vol 30. Pp189-212.

¹⁴ Davison A & Joby R (2005) **Early Roads and Turnpikes.** In **An Historical Atlas of Norfolk** Eds. Ashwin T & Davison A; Phillimore..

¹⁵ [Get NRO record.](#)

¹⁶ [NRO record needed](#)

¹⁷ **Lynn Turnpike Acts (1770)** printed by W & S Richardson London. [Copy in King's Lynn Library]

¹⁸ [Get details](#)

¹⁹ C. Hibbert (1987) **The English, A Social History.** Guild Publishing; London.

²⁰ C. Hibbert (1987) **The English, A Social History.** Guild Publishing; London.

²¹ NRO How 750.

²² **White's 1845 Norfolk.** A reprint of the 1845 issue published in 1969 Eds. David and Charles Reprints.

²³ Kelly's 1896 Directory.

²⁴ Reference is made to ostlers and grooms, usually young boys living in the village in the second half of the 19th century.

²⁵ Memoirs of the village of Castle Rising, collected by the Women's Institute 1972.

²⁶ Norfolk Record Office HOW 571

²⁷ HOW 771 349x3 **1787**

²⁸ Needham A. Journal of the Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society. Vol 4 No. 4 1989. "**Disused Industrial Tramways in the King's Lynn Area**". Pp143-148.

²⁹ **School log ref needed.**

³⁰ Joby R. "Railways" In "**An Historical Atlas of Norfolk**" (2005) Eds. T. Ashwin and A Davison.