

ROADS AROUND CHATSWORTH PAST AND PRESENT

Chatsworth Bridge



The etchings by Johannes Kip c1712

David Dalrymple-Smith

ROADS AROUND CHATSWORTH

*George the Third said with a smile
Seventeen sixty yards in a mile*

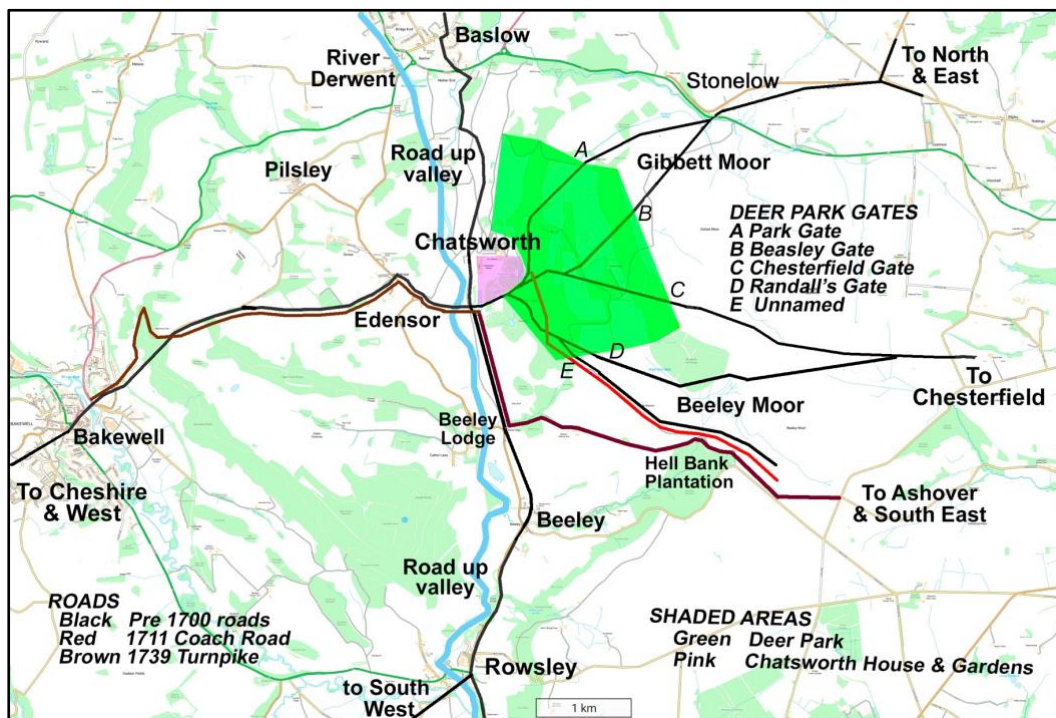
1. Introduction

This is the story of the roads around Chatsworth and how they have changed over the years. Chatsworth is on the east bank of the river Derwent in North Derbyshire, nestling below a long steep escarpment with crags at the top and moorland beyond.

It has been the home of the Cavendish family since the mid 1549. For over three centuries they were leading members of the aristocracy, rich with much political and social influence at local and national level, earls from 1605 from and dukes from 1694.

Their commitments meant that they and their staff needed to travel, sometimes by coach to Hardwick their other house near Chesterfield and to London. The route took them up through the wood and over the moors which were often boggy and sometimes impassable. Roads were important for them.

Roads through Chatsworth in use before 1760



The Roads before 1760

Chatsworth was originally a community on the east bank of river Derwent, connected by a bridge to the ancient village of Edensor. It was also at the crossing point of two roads. The first was from west to east, one of a limited number of long distance routes from Cheshire through to Chesterfield and beyond. Long lines of packhorses would have been a common sight, many carrying salt from Cheshire. Wheeled traffic was less frequent, especially in winter. The other road was the main way up the Derwent valley connecting all the main villages.

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These early roads were not planned. They were originally created centuries before by travellers finding the best way to their destination. In due course those in regular use became established public rights of way protected by law. Most were maintained by local parishes, some well others badly.

The Early Roads

Note in this article the term “early roads” means roads in general use before the year 1600.

The west to east route came through Bakewell, across Bakewell bridge and up the steep hill to Ball Cross then descended through Edensor village to the old Chatsworth bridge over the river Derwent. This was well downstream from the present bridge and opposite the present Canal Pond. Here it was joined by another road from Rowsley bringing in traffic from the south and southwest. It continued up the hill as Holmes Lane for about 500 metres before dividing into three branches about 100 metres north of the present Grotto Pond. The first headed to the site of the present Hunting Tower or Stand and on towards Sheffield and the northeast. The second continued steeply uphill to the Souter Stone, the prominent overhanging rock above the (present) aqueduct, and on to Chesterfield. The third went south-east up through Stand Wood to reach the top of the Edge. Here it divided. Tracks on the moor, well seen on arial photographs, show that one branch went through Randall's Gate (the present Park Farm) to Hob Hurst House and on to Chesterfield, the other went along the Edge to Hell Bank Plantation and on to Ashover where options included Hardwick Hall and London. They all had to go through the Chatsworth Deer Park, leaving it through gates named on the above map.

The local part of the main road up the Derwent Valley connected villages of Matlock, Daley Dale, Beeley, Chatsworth, Baslow, Curbar and Froggatt and Hathersage, all on the east side of the river.

These early roads long preceded the arrival of the Cavendish family. When the present garden was first created the roads provided a natural border to the south and east. In 1703 Holmes Lane had to be re-routed to the south to allow the construction of The Canal Pond.

New roads built between 1700 and 1760

Until say the late 1600s most roads in the country had been in place for centuries. The first record of any new road in the area was in 1711 when the 2nd Duke built a private coach road from Chatsworth House up through Stand Wood onto Beeley Moor and along the Edge to join up with the existing roads beyond Hell Bank Plantation. It is significant the House had just been rebuilt and the gardens renovated; it was a showpiece ready to be admired. But the approach was miserable, a public road that was very steep and possibly impassable in winter weather.

It is featured in the Ombersley Court painting which shows a coach and horses descending the road as it reached the garden walls near the Cascade House.

The next new road was the 1739 Turnpike from Bakewell to Chesterfield. Like other early turnpikes it often took the same route as existing roads. This one followed the early road from Bakewell through Ball Cross and Edensor to the bridge at Chatsworth, then south along the riverbank towards Beeley. At Beeley Lodge it probably turned uphill to Hell Bank Plantation and on to Holymoorside and Chesterfield, though it may have taken a slightly longer route through Beeley. The road would have made travelling in the area much easier. It also gave Chatsworth better connections to Bakewell its local market town and Chesterfield the nearest major town. It is likely that the Duke was an influential shareholder in the turnpike trust.

2. The years around 1760

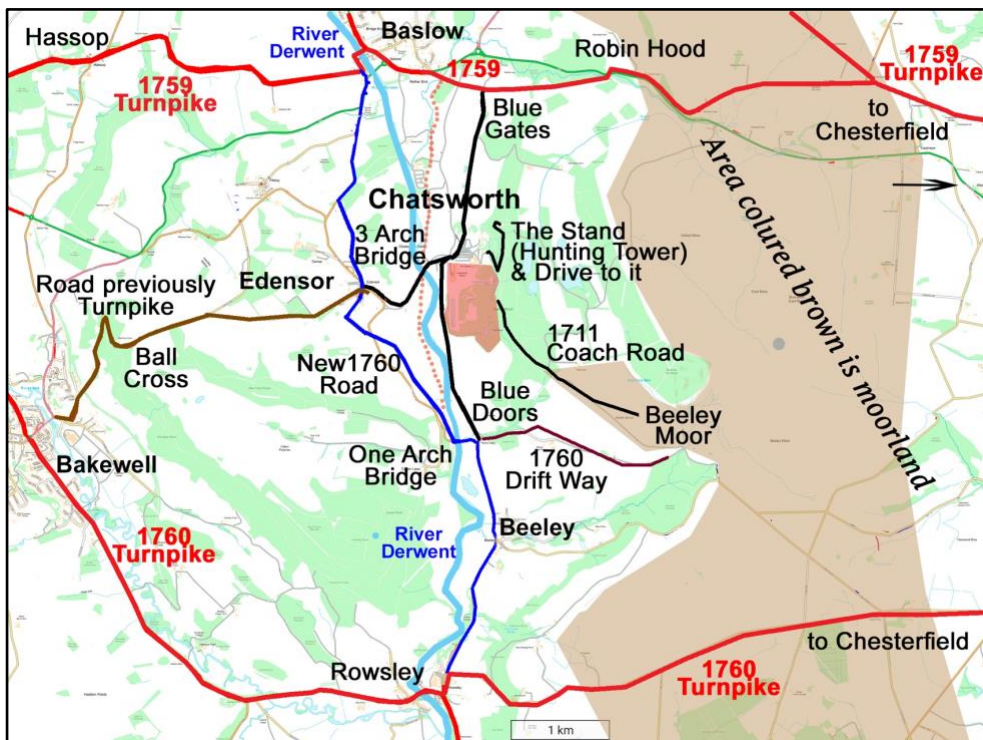
Note. Dates may be approximate. Also projects will have been considered and known about for several years before the date of the final decision. Subsequently there could be a delay before work started and completion could be years later.

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General

By 1760 people were travelling more. Industry was developing and more goods needed to be transported. Packhorses were being replaced by wheeled vehicles. The roads were becoming increasingly inadequate especially over moorland. Turnpikes proved to be the answer and were

Roads and Drives in Late 1700s



- | | |
|--------------|--|
| <i>Red</i> | <i>New long distance turnpikes with dates</i> |
| <i>Blue</i> | <i>1760 Public road connecting Beeley to Baslow</i> |
| <i>Black</i> | <i>Chatsworth Drives including Stand Wood</i> |
| <i>Brown</i> | <i>Minor road to Ball Cross previously 1839 turnpike and 1760 Drift Road</i> |

becoming more widespread by the mid 1700s. Private investors provided the capital and tolls gave an income. This was rarely enough to give a profit, but the investors themselves were often major beneficiaries. The Duke of Devonshire would have been firmly involved in local projects.

Meanwhile fashion for country houses was changing, especially amongst the elite such as the Duke. The emphasis was now on open parkland resembling "ideal" countryside with splendid vistas and no people roads or houses in view. Privacy was important. By 1760 changes to this end were already taking place at Chatsworth. Amongst many other projects there had been an enlargement of the park north of the house and Capability Brown had started work creating the new West Park.

The New Turnpikes in 1760

In 1759 an Act of Parliament was passed for a turnpike from Chesterfield through Baslow to Peak Forrest. A year later another was authorised from Chesterfield to Rowsley with ongoing connections to Bakewell and beyond. At the same time the Turnpike Trust closed the 1839 road from Bakewell to Chesterfield leaving its roads open for the public. Access across the moors near Chatsworth was transformed making journeys easier and more reliable. The old public roads up

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Holmes Lane and over the moors along unimproved roads were no longer necessary for the travelling public.

Public Road Closures and New Roads in 1760

The Duke took the opportunity to close the public roads in the vicinity of Chatsworth House. First permission was needed and this was duly obtained in 1760 from the relevant legal authorities, but there was a condition. The Duke, at his own expense, had to build suitable alternative roads over his own land.

The roads to be closed were the road from Edensor to Chatsworth Bridge and its continuation up Holmes Lane and on to the south end of Stand Wood and Beeley Moor, and the road from Chatsworth Bridge to Beeley Lodge at the south end of Chatsworth property. It is not recorded when and how the early roads from Holmes Lane to the Hunting Tower and to the Souter Stone were closed to the public – but closed they were in 1760 or soon after.

There were two public road replacements. The first was a “Drift Road” (more suitable for people and horses than wheeled vehicles) down from Beeley Moor past Beeley Hilltop Farm to Beeley Lodge. This provided an alternative way for pack horses that previously came through Stand Wood. The other road was a carriage way from Beeley Lodge through Edensor to the Baslow parish boundary. First there was a new bridge over the Derwent near Calton Lees, the One Arch Bridge. The new road from Beeley Lodge crossed the bridge and proceeded north through the very new West Park to enter the top of Edensor from the west at Jap Lane. Once through the village it continued north, behind (east) of the present Estate Offices and up the higher part of the present golf course. Near the top one branch went to Pilsley, the other branch went over the summit to Buston Wood where it joined the existing road to Baslow.

It is also not clear if the earlier road from Baslow to Chatsworth was closed to the public. In any case it or a replacement must have remained in place for those with business at Chatsworth. There is today a public footpath from Nether End in Baslow to the Three Arch Bridge (Paines Bridge) at Chatsworth. It continues along the west bank of the river to the One Arch Bridge and on to Beeley. A Chatsworth map of 1773 shows a path or track along the approximate route of this footpath. Public access may have been allowed at least for pedestrians ever since 1760.

The New Private Drives in 1760

At the same time three new drives – private roads - were necessary for access to the House. This included a new bridge, the Three Arch Bridge, over the Derwent upstream from old one designed and positioned by Paine for maximum scenic effect. The first new drive was from Edensor over the bridge to the House. Visitors are still awed by the view to the House from across the river. Another drive was made from Chatsworth House north to the new Baslow Chesterfield turnpike, joining it near Heathy Lea. It was hilly and much went through “ordinary” farmland. There were two lodges Wynnes Lodge at the Baslow Parish boundary and Blue Gates where it joined the turnpike from Baslow to Chesterfield: it is still in use as an unpaved estate track. A third drive to Beeley Lodge (now called Blue Doors) was completed by 1780.

In Stand Wood drives were maintained up to the Stand (The Hunting Tower). 1721 coach road through the wood remained available as a private short cut to the Rowsley Chesterfield turnpike but was also needed for general estate purposes.

When all was completed, Chatsworth House was secluded in its own grounds with wonderful vistas and private drives, and not a public road in sight. A few houses in Edensor were visible but even these were removed at a later date.

Changes to Beeley to Baslow Road after 1760

There were major changes around Edensor in the 1820s and 1830s. The Park was extended to the east and north of the village taking in agricultural land and the old rabbit warren. At the same time

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the Edensor itself was being developed into the “Model Village” we know today. Updating the roads was part of the process.

Alterations were made to the road from the One Arch Bridge to Baslow in three stages. In 1818 the first part of the roadway from the One Arch Bridge was rebuilt to the west of the original road at a higher level. A few years later the next section over the top of Lindup Hill was realigned in a similar fashion. Finally, the last part to the top of Jap Lane was closed. A new road was built from Lindup Hill around the south and east of Edensor before joining existing roads near the Church. When changes were completed in 1826 the main road from Beeley to Baslow passed around the main village rather than through it.

The minor road through the village to Ball Cross, originally the early road from Chatsworth to Bakewell then the 1739 Turnpike, continued to be a public road.

North of the village the new park had been extended over the area north of the present Estate Office and is now the golf course. The 1760 road to Baslow passed through the new park and had to be demolished. A new road was built to the west of it, from the front of the Estate Office to the top of the hill and down to the Baslow parish boundary at the top of Buston Wood. Two features stand out. The first was and is the prominent ha-ha between the road and the new park. The second was the deep cutting at the top of the hill where the road to Pilsley left the Baslow Road. This reduced the gradient and gave the junction its name – The Cuttings.

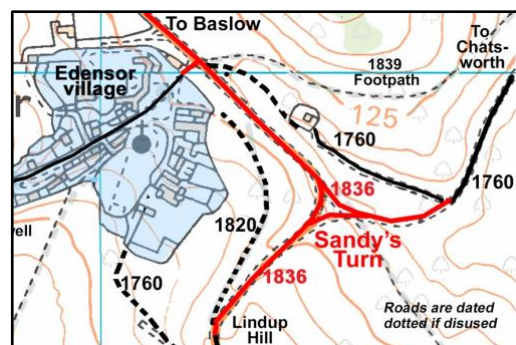
Sandy's Turn

Finally in 1836 the three roads in the area southeast of Edensor were re-arranged to meet at Sandy's Turn, a triangular junction with a large central grass area. Previously there had been a short steep sided valley at the site which had to be filled in.

The map opposite shows the road from the Beeley curving round Lindup Hill to reach the junction. The 1760 Drive from Chatsworth was diverted to it leaving original route up the small valley to Edensor to become a minor service road to the lone house known as Gardeners Cottage. Finally, a long straight road was built to the east of Edensor which joined up with the road to Baslow. The village got its boundary wall and gated entrance

Many of the abandoned roads remain visible today, an added interest for walkers in the Park.

Sandy's Turn



The 1812 Turnpike to Chesterfield

In 1811 the 6th “Batchelor” Duke arrived at Chatsworth keen to improve his new estate and with money to spend. The following year 1812 he decided to reroute the 1759 Turnpike from Baslow to Chesterfield. The reasons for this are not known, but perhaps the Duke was unhappy about the state of the 1759 turnpike over the moors. Local tradition says that he paid for it himself. The new Turnpike started at Blue Gates, the lodge where the private drive from Chatsworth joined the 1759 turnpike, then followed the route of the existing turnpike as far as Millstone Bridge. The 1759 turnpike crossed the Heathy Lea Brook as before and remained open to traffic. The new 1812 turnpike continued up along the south bank of the Brook, partly in the depths of the steep sided valley, to reach open moorland at Stonelow. It then took a new direct route to Chesterfield, passing south of Wadshelf and down the new aptly named Chatsworth Road to its destination in the Market Place. At least from Stonelow it was a great Improvement on the earlier way through Old Brampton. It is now the A619.

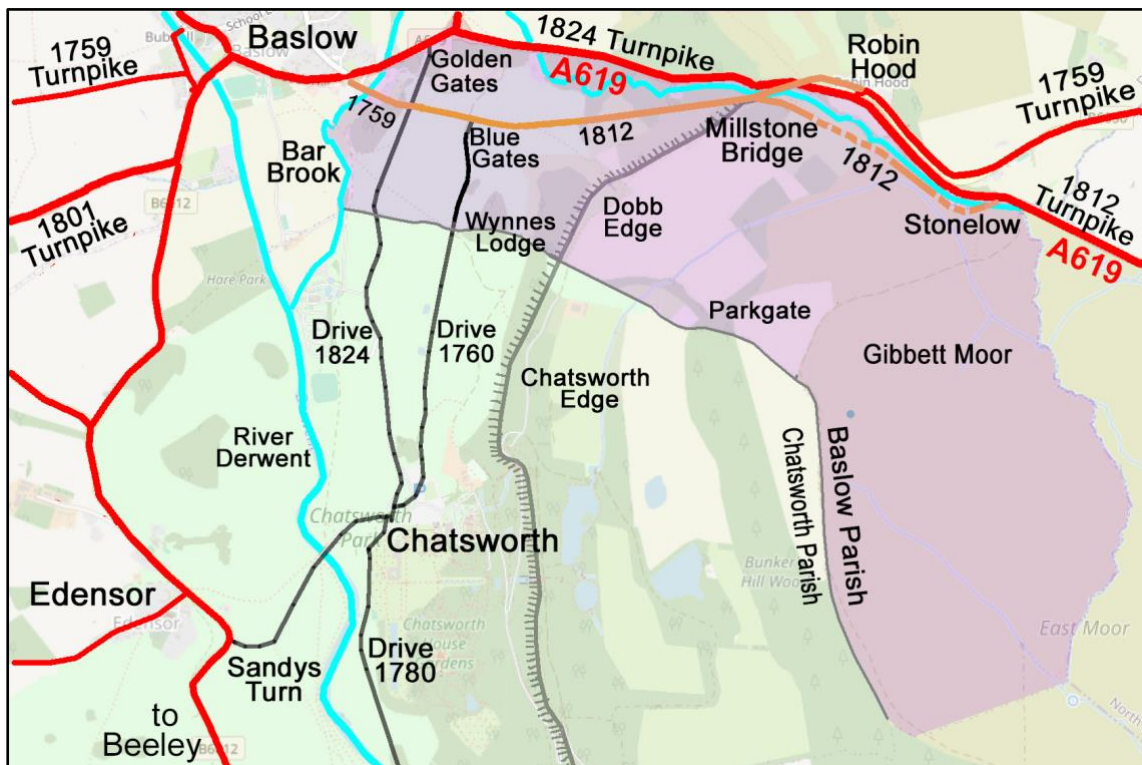
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1824 The New North Park and the A619

In the decade after 1812 there was a small extension of the Park north of the House up to the Chatsworth Baslow Parish boundary. Beyond was Baslow farmland, fields and scattered houses all owned by the Duke of Rutland.

Then in 1824 three major events transformed the area.

The Exchange of Lands 1824



*The area shaded purple is new Devonshire property in Baslow parish
 Red public roads and turnpikes
 Black private drives
 Orange 1759 and 1812 turnpikes decommissioned in 1824*

1 Baslow Enclosure Award

Most of the moors above Baslow including Gibbett Moor had been previously Common Land. In the 1824 Enclosure Award The Duke of Rutland, the Lord of the Manor of Baslow acquired possession of all the Baslow moorland from Gibbett Moor in the south to Owl Bar in the north. As the legal owner he now had the right to close the old roads and to exclude the public. Soon it was all a Grouse Moor part of his extensive Shooting estate based on Longshaw Lodge.

2 New Turnpike Road to Stonelaw

A new turnpike was built in 1824 north of the brook from The Wheatsheaf at Nether End Baslow to Robin Hood and on to Stonelaw, where it joined the 1812 turnpike to Wadshelf and Chesterfield. This was a much better road with easier gradients than its predecessors. The new road now the A619 immediately became the boundary between the properties of the two Dukes

The earlier 1759 and 1812 turnpikes south of the Heathy Lea Brook, from Nether End in Baslow up to Stonelaw were decommissioned and closed to the public.

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3 Exchange of Lands

In 1824 The Dukes of Rutland and Devonshire “Exchanged Lands” in several parishes in North Derbyshire. As part of the deal The Duke of Devonshire became owner of that part of Baslow south of the new turnpike (A619) and east of the Bar Brook. It is shaded purple on the map. There were three parts, farmland and houses below Dobb Edge, the shelf of land with fields and Parkgate Farm between Dobb Edge and Birchen Edge, and Gibbett Moor. The latter newly privatised was ready for use as a grouse moor.

The New Park and Drives

For the Duke the most important part of his new property was the area below Dobb Edge. Except for a few houses near the Bar Brook and the Heathy Lea Brook, everything was flattened to be replaced by grassland and shelter belts of trees. The result was a grand extension of his Park north of the house, all hidden from the public eye by the belts of trees.

The new park provided an opportunity for a much better approach to the House from the north. The new drive started with two new lodges connected by gates and railings originally used in the 1st Dukes Gardens – the Golden Gates. It was laid out on the flat ground through to Chatsworth House. Visitors now had vistas of open grassland and carefully planted woodlands as they came through the Park, with welcoming views of the house as they got closer to it. A great improvement on its old hilly 1760 predecessor

The outline of the 1812 turnpike remains visible on the hillside in the Park east from Blue Gates (now a double gate). It continues as an estate tract to Millstone Bridge and beyond. The section in the deep valley upstream from Robin Hood is still there but is severely damaged. What does remain is the small bridge over the brook, Sheepwash Bridge, at Stonelow, a lovely example of an unaltered 1812 turnpike bridge. It is easily seen from the road and now is part of the access road to Gibbett Moor.

The old private drive from the House to Blue Gates remains in use by estate workers caring for the park and walkers enjoying the scenery.

There have been no further changes to the roads or drives in the area since 1824

Note

Much of the information in the article is based on a detailed knowledge of the history and geography of the area, and maps. Chatsworth - A Landscape History by John Barnatt and Tom Williamson and a memoir by Hugo Reid on the closure of roads have both been very helpful for further detail.

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