

Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales



Preparing for the Global Citizenship Mini Challenge



SOURCE PACK



We can learn a lot about the issue of poverty and inequality by studying Welsh history.

Study these sources about opposition to toll roads and toll gates in West Wales in the 19th century and modern India. The sources will help you to understand why toll roads have been built and why they have been opposed. The sources will help you to investigate the links between poverty, inequality and road tolls.

If you would like to know more why not visit St Fagans National History Museum near Cardiff? You can also research websites such as the BBC Welsh History site, which has resources about the Rebecca Riots. You can find more on the National Archives website and on the Welsh Government learning resources hwb.

ISSUE: POVERTY
FOCUS: INEQUALITY

OPPOSING ROAD TOLLS PAST AND PRESENT

Protest against tolls levied on roads is nothing new. In the 19th century people in West Wales protested against the high tolls they were charged to pass along the roads. Some, known as Rebecca rioters, used threats and violence, even attacking

and destroying toll gates. In the 21st century people are still protesting about tolls, sometimes peacefully and sometimes as violently as they did in West Wales in the 1830s and 1840s.

OPPOSITION TO ROAD TOLLS IN 19TH CENTURY WALES

SOURCE 1: Adapted from an article about the Rebecca Riots from the school history resources website *NGŷl Cymru* (2008)

Turnpike Trusts were companies allowed to charge tolls in exchange for improving roads. In 1839 Welsh farmers grew angry when they heard that the English businessman Thomas Bullin had gained permission not only to charge high tolls but to place more tollgates on the road. These new tollgates increased the cost of bringing in the lime that they needed to fertilise their land. Extra tolls also reduced the profits that they made when selling their produce at the local market.

In the summer of 1839 the farmers decided to take action. On the night of May 13 1839 a group of them set fire to the tollhouse at Efailwen. A few weeks later they destroyed the tollgate at Maesgwyn. In both cases the farmers wore women's clothes. Eyewitnesses claimed that the leader was a tall man who the others called Rebecca.

SOURCE 2: An artist's impression of an attack by the Rebecca rioters, *The Illustrated London News* (1839)



SOURCE 3: From an article by a reporter writing in *The Carmarthen Journal*, a local newspaper that supported the authorities (16 December, 1842)

The leaders of the mob were disfigured by painting their faces in various colours, wearing horse-hair beards and women's clothes. The mob stopped all drovers coming in the direction of Carmarthen and levied a contribution from them, stating they had destroyed all the toll gates.

SOURCE 4: A letter sent to the vicar of Llangrannog in Cardiganshire who had been forcing Non-conformists in the area to give money towards setting up a local church school (19 June, 1843)

Now, if this is true, you must give the money back, every halfpenny of it, otherwise if you do not, I with 500 or 600 of my daughters will come and visit you, and destroy your property to five times the value of it, and make you a subject of scorn and reproach throughout the whole neighbourhood. You know that I am the foe of oppression. Yours, Rebecca and her daughters.

SOURCE 5: A contemporary print (from the 1840s) entitled '*Rebecca and her Daughters assembling to destroy a Toll Gate*'



(IMAGE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES)

SOURCE 6: From the Glamorgan Family History website (2003)

On 19 June 1843 a crowd of 2,000 with Rebecca at the head surged into Carmarthen and were joined by many poor people of the town. They seemed to have persuaded the farmers to attack the hated workhouse....They attacked the Master, broke up the contents of the workhouse and ordered the inmates outside. They were preparing to burn the workhouse when a rumour spread that soldiers were approaching...The rioters panicked at the approach of the soldiers and ran away. In the stampede chase that followed around sixty rioters were seized by the troops.

SOURCE 7: The South Gate tollhouse from Aberystwyth in 1842, now rebuilt at St Fagans and showing the very high toll charges for poor farmers

AMGUEDDFA CYMRU, ROSS THOMAS



AMGUEDDFA CYMRU, ROSS THOMAS

RATE OF TOLL TO BE TAKEN AT THIS GATE

	£	s	d
For every Horse or other Beast drawing any Coach or such like Carriage	0	0	6
For every Horse or other Beast (except Asses) drawing any Waggon or such like	0	0	4
For every Ass drawing any Cart, Carriage or other vehicle	0	0	2
For every Horse or Mule, laden or unladen and not drawing	0	0	11/2
For every Ass, laden or unladen and not drawing	0	0	1/2
For every Horse or other animal employed in carrying lime to be used for manure	0	0	2
For every drove of Oxen, Cows or Cattle, the sum of Ten Pence per Score , and so in proportion for any greater or less number			
For every drove of Calves, Hogs, Sheep or Lambs, the sum of Five Pence per Score , and so in proportion for any greater or less number			

SOURCE 8: A 19th-century photograph showing living conditions in Cardiganshire in the mid-nineteenth century



SOURCE 9: The causes of the Rebecca Riots, historian Ross Thomas (2015)

Toll gates were not the only cause of the Rebecca Riots but were the final straw for the poor farmers and labourers of West Wales. The real cause of the riots was poverty and starvation in the Welsh countryside the late 1830s. Wages were very low and there was high unemployment among farm labourers. A series of very bad harvests in the late 1830s made the situation worse.

For the poor and unemployed there was little help available. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 established a new system of support for the poor. Under the new system, if you did not have enough money to support yourself you had to go into one of the new workhouses where conditions were meant to be worse than the worst paid labourer outside. Families were split up; husbands separated from wives and sisters from brothers.

As well as unemployed farm labourers, tenant farmers also reacted angrily to the new system. In the past, they had often given food and help to the poor but now they were expected to pay for building the hated workhouses. This new tax was on top of having to pay high rents to the landlords. The farmers also had to pay tithes (worth a tenth of all their produce each year) to the church, to support the local vicar. But most

people who went to religious services regularly went to non-conformist chapels rather than the Anglican churches, so they didn't think these taxes were fair.

In the 1830s and 1840s the gentry (landowners) held all the political power West Wales and controlled local government. Most Justices of the Peace (magistrates) were local landowners and this gave them responsibility for law and order, the poor laws and issues of poverty. All too often they cared little for the poor and manipulated the system in their own interest.

Already facing poverty, near starvation, high rents and taxes the poor farmers of west Wales were now faced with expensive tolls and what seemed to be an unfair increase in the number of hated toll gates.

Most people in West Wales at the time were very religious and took the Bible very seriously. When someone found this verse in the Bible, it seemed to some of the farmers that God was telling them to rise up against the toll gates. 'And they blessed Rebecca, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let their seed possess the gate of those which hate them.'

SOURCE 10: Part of the sentence passed on two of the Rebecca rioters by the judge at the *Carmarthen Assizes* (27 December 1843)

The sentence of the court is that you John Jones will be transported beyond the seas for the term of your natural life, and that you David Davies be transported for twenty years.

SOURCE 11: Adapted from an article on the riots, *Wales Online* (7 May, 2013)

Towards the end of 1843, the government conducted an inquiry into the causes of the riots. A report on the Turnpike Trust in South Wales was drawn up, and as a result the Tollgates Act, passed in 1844. While the tollgates were not abolished, a greater degree of control was imposed on the Turnpike Trusts, and the numbers of tollgates were restricted to no more than one every seven miles.

OPPOSITION TO ROAD TOLLS IN MODERN INDIA

SOURCE 12: Report in the US newspaper the *Washington Post* (23 March 2014)

India's quest to build modern toll roads hits a pothole

As drivers lined up at a toll plaza outside Mumbai one recent morning, they were stunned by a bizarre sight. Dozens of protesters armed with sticks and stones had descended on the tollbooths, shattering the windows and smashing computers and lights inside. The toll operators fled.

The assault was part of a broad protest in which dozens of tollbooths were attacked and set ablaze across the industrial state of Maharashtra.

Tollbooths have become unlikely flash points as India tries to build more and more roads using private investment. The country's burgeoning (growing) middle class is demanding quality roads and expressways. But many Indians have yet to fully accept the notion that they will now have to pay for them. The toll roads are part of an ambitious mission in the past 15 years to greatly expand India's highway system. The government traditionally built the country's roads. They were often in a woeful state but were free to use. With the economy slowing, however, the cash-strapped national government needs

private companies to fund almost half of the total investment in building roads and bridges, up from about 30 percent until two years ago.

Citizens have voiced a variety of complaints about the toll roads.

- Car owners say they already pay road and vehicle taxes and should not be forced to hand over more cash
- Some residents feel they are being fleeced by the private companies that build and operate the roads
- And some rural dwellers fret that they can no longer walk with their animals along the bustling highways. Villagers in the state of Rajasthan have asked for separate byways for their cattle and camels

The anger over the tollbooths has occasionally flared into violence. In 2012, a Member of Parliament — who is exempt under Indian law from paying the toll — flashed a gun when a tollbooth attendant demanded to see his identity card. A year earlier, an attendant was fatally shot by an unemployed young man who refused to pay the toll.

SOURCE 13: Report in *The Times of India* (12 January, 2014)

4 Toll booths vandalised in Kolhapur City

Suspected Shiv Sena activists on Sunday vandalised four toll booths in Kolhapur city as the agitation against toll collection on nine roads in the city took a violent turn. Shiv Sena has called a bandh (protest) in Kolhapur tomorrow against the toll collection. Police said in Kolhapur, about 400 km from Mumbai, that they have detained some of the protesters who ransacked the booths. There is no report of anybody having been injured during the attack on booths, police said.

Some protesters vandalised the office of IRB Infrastructure Developers, a private company, which manages the toll booths on nine roads leading to the city. As the protests showed no signs of abating, Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan appealed to the agitators to remain calm. "The law and order situation should not be disturbed. We are trying to find a way out (over the toll issue)." The city residents have been agitating against the toll collection at the booths on nine roads for the last three years. About dozen members of anti-toll action committee launched a hunger strike six days ago, saying that they would not call it off unless the toll collection was stopped.

SOURCE 14: Report in the *Mumbai Mirror* (18 January, 2014)

The toll rage manifesting in destruction of booths is caused by the suspicion of toll scam. Three years ago, the Maharashtra Navanirman Sena proclaimed that as per their study, toll operators were fleecing motorists, because they had more than recovered their costs. Moreover, the road maintenance was also very poor. Hence they demanded that toll booths be removed and collection stopped.

Since its commencement in 2004, in about eight years the total toll collection would be 500 per cent of the cost of building that highway. That was the basis of their demand...for removal of tolls. This toll anger then spread to other highways and other political parties.

SOURCE 15: Extracts from a report in the *Deccan Chronicle* (20 April, 2015)

Villagers run riot, wreck toll booths in Hoskote

A group of over 300 villagers rioted, vandalised toll booths and burnt one of them at Budigere toll plaza on National Highway 4 in Hoskote on Sunday morning after a local resident was allegedly dragged into a toll booth and beaten up by toll plaza employees. Bengaluru Rural police rushed to the spot and resorted to disperse the angry mob, even as employees of the toll plaza fled from the spot.

The victim, Manjunath (20) and his family came near the toll booth around 9.45 am. The family has a local pass to use the toll plaza every day, but had not carried it on Sunday.

The situation turned ugly when the toll plaza employees abused Manjunath and his father, and threatened them. A furious Manjunath allegedly slapped one of the employees, and immediately the other toll staffers dragged Manjunath into one of the booths and assaulted him with a wooden log.

The alarmed family members informed their relatives and friends at the village. Soon, a crowd of over 300 villagers had arrived at the spot and went on the rampage. They blocked the National Highway 4, disrupted traffic for and vandalised 11 toll booths.

SOURCE 16: Adapted from a report in the *Indian Express* (4 February, 2015)

Maharashtra was one of the first few states to privatise construction of roads. The government says roads are desperately needed and the government does not have enough money to build them.

Why the resistance to toll in the state?

- The government and business companies who are given the contracts to run the tolls are secretive about how much can be charged and how long the companies can collect tolls before handing the roads them back to the government
- The lack of maintenance of the roads and highways by the companies
- Poor facilities on the roads, especially clean toilets, parking bays, ambulance services
- Allegations of corruption, including favours being granted to private toll collection businessmen
- Roads are only improved where they are cheap to construct and where companies can make profits, not where they are needed most
- There are environmental issues with the roads, such as the destruction of wildlife habitats and dangers to wildlife crossing roads in country areas

SOURCE 17: Report in the *Indian Express* (9 October, 2014)

The construction of the proposed toll plaza on the Sion-Panvel highway has hit yet another hurdle. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has recently ordered the appointment of a judge to visit the area of proposed toll plaza and inspect the construction work and state whether the process is causing any harm to the mangroves in the area.

The tribunal ordered that no work on the toll plaza shall be executed in the meantime...The proposal for the toll plaza project comprised an 18.8 km road that passes through a Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) area. The earlier proposal for the toll plaza was dropped because the project involved removal of mangroves and a motion was filed before the Bombay high court against the project.

SOURCE 18: Report in *The Times of India* (22 February, 2014)

MUMBAI: Environmentalists and forest department officials' site visit of the Mira-Bhayander coastline earlier this week reportedly found large-scale destruction of mangroves. The site visit was carried out on instructions of the high court. A Bombay high court order and other laws prohibit construction activities within 50 metres of mangroves and bans construction on the Coastal Regulatory Zone-I. India's Wetland Rules laws (2010) prevent reclamation of mangroves.