

COACHING

Much of Northallerton's character is derived from its location on the Great North Road, and particularly its development as a staging post for the coaches that travelled it between London and Edinburgh, carrying the Royal Mail and private travellers. Famous coaches such as the Telegraph, Wellington and Queen Charlotte called at its coaching inns: the Old Golden Lion, the King's Head, the Black Bull, and the Golden Lion.

The Golden Lion surpassed the others in its size and its fame, and was renowned for the capacity of its stables: its horses were all washed in Water Pond, where the prison was later built. The coaches supported a wealth of local industries: hospitality was provided for travellers, the coaches themselves needed regular servicing, and the horses that drew them had to be fed, washed, stabled and shod. The average speed of the coaches was usually 7-8 mph in summer and about 5 mph in winter, rising to 10 mph by the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, as road surfaces improved.

The advent of the railway, however, revolutionised travel, and long-distance coaches quickly fell out of use; the last to operate in Northallerton was the Wellington in 1843. Coach-building businesses continued to operate in Northallerton, however, with gigs, carts and horse-drawn omnibuses all running locally, meaning that coach-building was a feature of Northallerton life for at least 250 years.

