

### **Taken from White's 1837 Gazeteer, History and Directory of the West Riding**

Two fatal Riots occurred here in the first half of the 18th century. The first in 1735, was occasioned by the dearness of provisions, and the allowance of a bounty on the exportation of corn. The rioters were so violent, that the King's troops were obliged to fire upon them, and 8 or 9 were killed.

The second in 1753, exhibited a painful instance of the ignorance and folly that often give rise to popular clamour. The public roads in Yorkshire then consisted of narrow lanes, fitted only for the transit of pack-horsed; carriages could only move in a single row, while an elevated causeway, covered with flags or boulder stones afforded a narrow path for pedestrians. The first law for making Turnpikes was enacted in 1663; but it was not till long afterwards that local acts were rendered available to facilitate the communication between the towns in the West Riding.

When the first turnpikes near Leeds were opened, the exaction of tolls excited an immense ferment among the people, and they determined to destroy the toll bars and the houses of the collectors. They demolished the gate between Bradford and Leeds, and also those at Halton Dial and Beeston. Three of the rioters were apprehended at the latter place, and conveyed before the borough magistrates then assembled at the King's Arms inn, in Briggate. The mob having in the morning rescued a carter who had been seized by the soldiers for refusing to pay toll at Beeston, assembled before the inn with the determination of liberating the prisoners, and they soon broke the windows and shutters of the house with stones which they tore up from the pavement. The magistrate ordered out a troop of dragoons but the mob furiously assaulted them as they had previously done the constables. Orders having been issued for the closing of the shops and for every family to retire as far as possible from danger, the troops were commanded to fire first with powder and this producing no effect, with ball. The people then fled in all directions, leaving in the streets about ten persons killed, and 27 wounded. Some of the latter afterwards died, and many others were injured.