

David Pannett's History of Bicton Part 48

Roadside stones and their stories

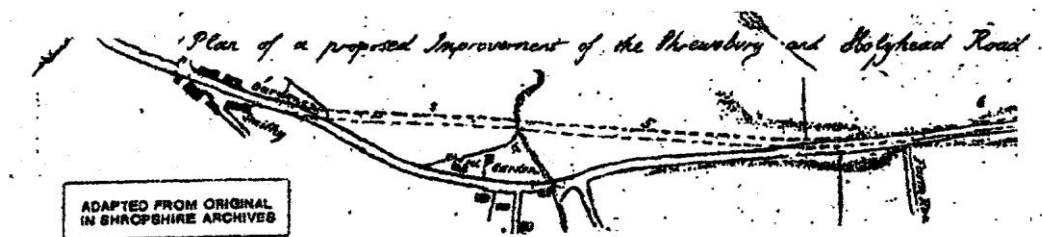
In winter and early spring our bare hedges can sometimes reveal some special stones, normally hidden by summer growth. Each have their own story to tell about the development of our landscape and road system.

Most obvious are the mile stones along Telford's Holyhead Road, locally represented by two examples, near the Four Crosses and on Grange bank. This improved road was a government sponsored project in the 1830s to speed up the link between London and Dublin. As a result, Thomas Telford was able to design work far superior to any found on the average local Turnpike Road of this period. His milestones between Shrewsbury and Holyhead are a reflection of this, consisting of a uniform pattern of iron plates mounted on hard limestone blocks from Anglesey. The bold easily read figures could be changed simply for each individual casting.

The iron work was by William Hazeldine, ironmaster of Shrewsbury, probably at his works in Coleham, where Coleham Hardware still occupies a surviving part. It could be argued that the artwork as the head of Mardol should really be a memorial to this teamwork of Telford the mason and Hazeldine the ironmaster on so many road and bridge projects!

One by-product of improving Grange Bank was the isolation of Drury Lane, where the old road had once acted as the local parish boundary (St Alkmond - St Chad). The actual line ran down the centre, but now the Preston Montford Estate enclosed its half with gardens, leaving only a narrow lane on the Bicton side. At the same time, at least one boundary stone was inserted where it still stands hidden.





Another set of stones relate to the story of the heath enclosed in 1768. The creation of this new landscape not only involved field hedges but also drainage ditches and public roads, including Calcott and Shepherds Lanes. At first the new road were financed by a levy on each of the eight landowners involved, raising the total of £50. However, almost 30 years later, when perhaps more maintenance proved necessary, a new type of agreement was worked out whereby each landowner would be responsible for a particular length. The roads were therefore carefully measured again by another surveyor, William Hitchcock of Alberbury, (father of Americus Hitchcock who later made a fine map of Shrewsbury in 1832). Appropriate lengths were duly allotted and their boundaries marked by stones where these did not coincide with convenient road junctions.

These stones, bearing the initials of the landowners and their allotted lengths in yards each way, were supplied by John Carline, the leading stonemason in Shrewsbury at the cost of 10 shillings each (50 p). John's father, also John, had first come from Lincoln to help build the English Bridge in 1776. John II then stayed on to set up a home and business in Abbey Foregate on land newly available thanks to those bridge works (Wakeman School site). He also took a lease on quarries at Grinshill, from which our stones also came.

supplied nine, but we only know of two surviving in situ, by the Isle Court in Isle Lane and near the northern end of Calcott Lane. Others have disappeared, mainly through the redevelopment of original hedges around residential development, as along Shepherd's Lane, where possible original sites can only be worked out from the old documents. These same records suggest that this whole process stretched over several years, during which time some landowners changed. The multitude of changing landowners was indeed a characteristic of Bicton Township, in contrast to neighbouring parts each dominated by a single long-standing estate, such as the Clives of Montford, Sandfords of the Isle and Wingfields of Onslow and Preston Montford. For this reason these old boundary stones were something very special to Bicton and may not have been needed elsewhere.

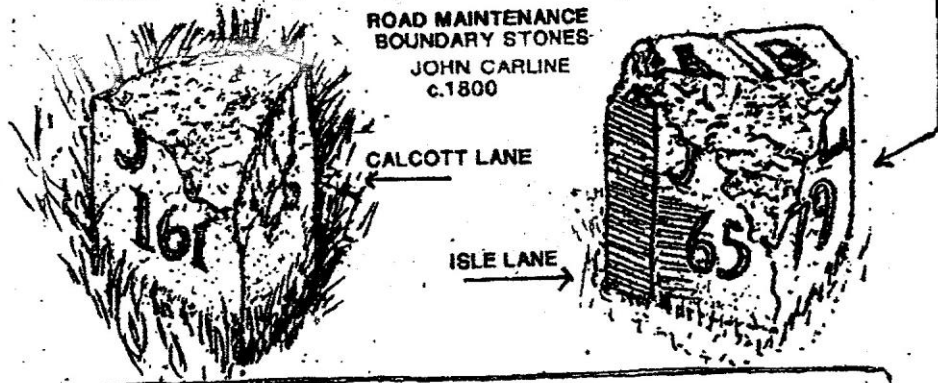
1787 ROAD AGREEMENT

These Bickton Heath Roads divided into such portions as are to be kept in repair by the under mentioned Persons their successors and Representatives respectively, being first put in complete repair.

John Jones
Richard Bromfield } The North End of the Road leading from the Dewbury Road to Ropshall Heath marked in the Map by the Letter (A). 13 1/2 fms } 65 Yards

Edw. Lea Esq
The Representatives } Part of the last mentioned Road adjoining at the North End to the portion allotted to John Jones and at the South End by a portion to be allotted to James Smith Esq } 70 Yards

Wm Smith Esq } The remainder of this Road ending at the end of the 11th



SHREWSBURY SCHOOL LIB.

Received of Joseph Cardale Esq the sum of Four pounds Ten shillings for seven Boundary Stones laid later to the said, and letters signed and sealed to Bickton. A 10/ each had 1000 to 10.0 For Cardale & Co. J. John Cardale
4-10-0

When land between the Mount and Shelton was being developed for housing, a set of stones marking the complex boundary between the parishes of St Chad and St Julian was simply swept away. Fortunately, one was rescued by the Lewis brothers and now stands in the garden at Merton. Perhaps our seven missing road boundary stones may have been 'recycled' in a similar way - do keep your eyes open.