

The Milestone Society's Restoration projects in Worcestershire

At its peak, the Worcester Turnpike Trust controlled 126 miles of highway, which meant 126 milestones after these were made compulsory on the turnpike roads in 1767.



The early examples were of engraved sandstone, which being soft, did not wear well, so cast iron plates were introduced, with the legend 'To Worcester Cross n miles'. These plates were often attached to the old milestones and an example of the original backing stone can be seen on Newtown Road, although re-plated by the Worcestershire Group of the Milestone Society a decade ago in a wide-ranging restoration initiative.



The turnpikes were superseded by the railways from the 1840s and the Trusts were wound up by 1870s. However some new milestones were commissioned after responsibility for the major routes had passed to the new County Councils in 1880s, with minor routes becoming the responsibility of the Urban and Rural District councils; those commissioned by Martley RDC are examples.



Many milestones were removed by Government edict in WWII, to baffle any enemy invaders. These included the 100 unique T-shaped concrete posts designed by Deputy Surveyor Harold Brook Bradley in the 1930s, 'fit for the motor age'. Many were re-instated after the war and over 50 still remain. In 2012, the Milestone Society produced a Jubilee tribute replica of a Bradley stone, which has stood the test of time on the A449 north of Claines. Explanatory plaques describe its importance and its civic unveiling; the Society's projects have been supported by Worcester City Council, Worcestershire County Council and the Highways Contractors.



Another example of the Society's work stands on Newtown Road opposite the Royal Hospital. This is made of concrete with a similar plate to the 'To Worcester Cross 1 mile' stone described above.

Various styles of lettering were used by the Turnpike Trust and the project carried out by Society members in 2018 employed a more attractive script; six mileplates were installed on walls around the city, all close to the sites of the original 'To Worcester Cross 1 Mile' milestones, as in this example:



The Society's mission is to encourage the public to appreciate these wayside artefacts, which may be classed as 'listed buildings'. A number of initiatives have been run to tell young people about their significance, so that the milestones are less likely to be vandalised or thrown in a skip during building works.

The 2020 proposal is to install five replica plated milestones around the Heritage Trail being devised by Worcester Civic Society: the locations would be on the Bath Road near the Ketch roundabout, at RedHill near the Royal Oak pub, on Woodgreen Road in Warndon, at Claines opposite the church and at Northwick by the interpretation boards: the 'milestones' would be cast by The Building Block as a community engagement project and erected by Ringway, the County's Highways Contractors.