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“Milestones and other distance markers and  
the Ordnance Survey”

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The Charles Close Society was founded in 1980 to bring together all those with an interest in the maps and history of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and its counterparts in the island of Ireland. The Society takes its name from Colonel Sir Charles Arden-Close, OS Director General from 1911 to 1922, and initiator of many of the maps now sought after by collectors.

The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.

## ***Milestones and other distance markers and the Ordnance Survey***

***Richard Oliver***

The Milestone Society was formed in October 2000, to study and facilitate the upkeep of milestones and other waymarkers.<sup>1</sup> Its activities have gradually widened to embrace not only distance markers, but also boundary markers and guide posts. Maps are essential for historical investigations, particularly of ‘lost’ distance markers. I have published two articles for the Society, one in 2002 on Ordnance Survey maps as sources for milestone study, and another in 2017, in which maps, mostly OS, were used to trace the pattern of mile marker provision in Lincolnshire, and to demonstrate how judicious use of maps might enable text on ‘lost’ mile markers to be reconstructed.<sup>2</sup> To date, mile markers, whether on roads, canals or railways, have had rather summary treatment in Charles Close Society publications: some recent researches make further publication opportune.

I am concerned here with mile markers along roads, railways and canals, rather than indications of direction and distance at road junctions – colloquially ‘sign posts’, ‘direction posts’ or ‘finger posts’, though the standard OS term has been ‘guide post’ – which are for exploration on another occasion, as is a wider consideration of boundary markers.<sup>3</sup> It also concentrates on Britain: when the six-inch Townland Survey of Ireland began in the mid 1820s it was decided that distance markers would not be shown, as they often used Irish miles of 2240 yards, rather than statute miles of 1760 yards.<sup>4</sup> However, distance markers were shown along railways, no doubt because they used statute rather than Irish miles.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Some definitions and context***<sup>6</sup>

The term ‘mile marker’ is used in preference to ‘milestone’, as there are two basic types of distance marker, though colloquially they are referred to as ‘milestones’. These are the milestone in the strict sense of the word, fashioned from living rock (*Figure 1*), and the milepost, usually cast iron, though there are wooden, concrete and plastic examples (*Figure 2*), which are produced by manufacture of some sort. A variation is the ‘plated stone’, where the text is on a metal plate attached to the stone (*Figure 3*). Late examples of the ‘plated stone’ are the so-called

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<sup>1</sup> [www.milestonesociety.co.uk](http://www.milestonesociety.co.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Richard Oliver, ‘Ordnance Survey maps as sources for milestone study’, *Milestone Society Newsletter* 3 (July 2002), 16-21; Richard Oliver, ‘Lincolnshire mile markers: maps, metal and the missing’, *Milestones and Waymarkers* 10 (2017), 25-33.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Finger post’ and ‘direction post’ were both used on six-inch mapping of the 1840s in Lancashire and Yorkshire: ‘guide post’ seems to have been standardised by the late 1850s.

<sup>4</sup> I think the source for this is somewhere in the writings by J.H. Andrews, but have been unable to locate it.

<sup>5</sup> Irish practice differed from that in Britain: thus, for example, on County Dublin sheet 18, the railway added in 1849 has *1<sup>st</sup>. Mile post, 1¼*, etc: styles unknown on OS mapping in Britain.

<sup>6</sup> The best introduction to mile markers remains Carol Haines, *Marking the miles: a history of English milestones*, [Norwich:] the author, 2000; it stands up quite well to two further decades of mile marker research.

'Bradley stones', erected in Worcestershire in the early 1930s, which are in fact concrete, and therefore technically 'mileposts'.



Figure 1 (left) Milestone, Daljarvock, Ayrshire, NX 196883, with angled faces, 2004. Figure 2 (centre) Milepost, Navenby, Lincolnshire, SK 988583, 1994. Figure 3 (right) 'Plated stone', Clarencefield, Dumfriesshire, NY 09406805, with bench-mark, 2004.

Milestones were erected by the Romans, but their main object appears to have been the political one of glorifying the current emperor, with information for travellers distinctly secondary. Milestones seem to have reappeared in Britain from the sixteenth century, though very few survive from before the early eighteenth century. Today milestones tend to preponderate over mileposts in counties with good supplies of suitable stone, such as Cornwall and Devon, though significant numbers also survive in counties not so endowed, for example Norfolk and Suffolk. Wooden mileposts had the advantage of the relative ubiquity of wood, and any inscription could be painted on rather than incised, but they were prone to rot, and by the later eighteenth century cast iron came to be preferred. The set

of wooden posts installed between Bushey Heath and Aylesbury in 1764 were a late use of wood; some lasted until 1826, when they were replaced by iron posts.<sup>7</sup> The so-called 'Bow bells' mileposts between East Grinstead and Lewes in Sussex have been dated to the 1780s or 1790s<sup>8</sup> (Figure 4). After about 1800 milestones were sometimes replaced by mileposts; on stones all text had to be incised, and there were no short cuts when a run of stones was required, whereas cast iron could use some basic moulding, enabling an element of mass production. A common arrangement after 1800 was to provide two angled faces (see Figures 1 and 2),



Figure 4 (left) 'Bow bells' milepost, south of Isfield, Sussex, TQ 450156, 1985.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Gulland, 'Wooden mileposts', *Milestone Society Newsletter* 27 (July 2014), 33-5.

<sup>8</sup> Lionel Joseph, "Bow bells" mileposts', *Milestone Society Newsletter* 15 (July 2008), 14-15.

so that distances to places ahead were more easily visible at (relative) speed. Material may also have affected survival: in May 1940 the removal or rendering illegible of mile markers and guide posts was ordered as an anti-invasion measure, and whilst this was rescinded in 1942-3, many mileposts and boundary posts, in particular, were never reinstated: it is suspected that they were victims of the scrap metal drive. Consequently there is a great difference in survival between counties where stones predominated, such as Cornwall and Devon, and those where most markers were posts, such as Lincolnshire. Guide posts were presumably seen as essential adjuncts of road travel, whereas mile markers were expendable relics of a bygone age.

From 1697 Justices of the Peace had powers to order erection of mile markers and guide posts, to show the distance to the next market town.<sup>9</sup> Some of the earliest surviving 'mile markers' are really 'guidestones', in the Pennines (*Figure*



*Figure 5 Guide stone (dated 1740 on another face), Smallfield, Yorkshire West Riding, SK 245947, 2004.*

roads, and the county councils formed in 1888-9 had powers to adopt other roads similarly. In the 1890s and 1900s there was both considerable renewal of mile markers in some counties, for example Cheshire, Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, and also additions. The milepost at Navenby (*Figure 2*) seems to

5), and are as much direction markers as distance markers. From 1744 most turnpike acts required the setting up of stones or posts giving distances, and Acts of 1766 and 1773 effectively made this universal. A General Turnpike Act of 1822 added an obligation to erect boards at the entrances to towns and villages giving the name of the place (none seem to survive), and markers where parish boundaries crossed roads; such markers were also provided on many non-turnpike roads.<sup>10</sup> Mile markers also appeared alongside canals and railways, and were made compulsory for the latter in 1845.

After 1878 former turnpike roads were designated 'main'

<sup>9</sup> For more on legal requirements see Keith Lawrence, 'Milestones, guideposts and other street furniture in legislation and statute', *Milestones and Waymarkers* 1 (2004), 38-44.

<sup>10</sup> Boundary markers of various types were also erected away from roads, particularly on open moorland; such markers are outside the scope of the present article.

have been installed between 1906 and 1908, as part of a run on the direct route between Lincoln and Grantham, that was never turnpiked.<sup>11</sup>

Boundary markers also continued to be erected in the late nineteenth century, and indeed well into the new one. They were often very similar in general appearance to mile markers (*Figure 6*), but were distinguished by omitting mention of distances; conversely, mile markers often indicated the parish or township in which they were situated (*Figures 2, 17 and 19*).

Two types of distance marker appear along motorways and some ‘primary routes’: discreet posts every 200 metres and, from about 2005, much more conspicuous boards on posts, usually at half-kilometre intervals, but varied in the vicinity of junctions and bridges (*Figure 7*). Neither have been mapped by the OS. The total number of these markers probably comfortably exceeds the number of surviving ‘milestones’ along other roads.



*Figure 6 (left) Boundary stone, Blacko-Barrowford, Lancashire, SD 86254085, 2005. The slanting text is unusual, but the general resemblance to an ‘angled’ milestone is obvious. Figure 7 (right) Metric motorway distance marker, on M3 near Basingstoke, 2021.*

Mile stones and posts also appeared along canals and railways. In the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries there was extensive reordering of railway mile markers and, as few such earlier markers survive, older OS maps can be valuable guides to earlier usage.<sup>12</sup> Again, the total number of these probably considerably exceeds the total number of all extant markers along roads, motorway and other.

### ***Methods of indicating markers on the ground and on maps***

There are three basic methods of showing distance on markers:

- (1) By place and distance (see *Figures 1, 2, 3*)
- (2) By abbreviation and distance (see *Figure 14*)
- (3) By distance only (see *Figure 4*)

(2) is met with more in ‘upland’ Britain, for example Cornwall, parts of the Pennines and Galloway; (3) is most often met with on canals and railways. This has not always been so: method (2) might have been more common at one time on roads in ‘lowland’ Britain, perhaps on wooden posts long since replaced, and

<sup>11</sup> This post is absent from the OS large-scale mapping revised in 1904 and the one-inch mapping revised in 1906, but was illustrated in *The Bystander* in 1908: I am indebted to the late John V. Nicholls for drawing my attention to this.

<sup>12</sup> I owe this point to the late David Milbank Challis. There seems to be very little literature on railway mile markets, apart from D.W. Winkworth, ‘Milepost variety’, *Railway magazine*, May 1971, 236-9. (I am indebted to John Minnis for this); see also Richard Oliver, ‘Railway mileposts’, *Milestone Society Newsletter* 19 (July 2010), 28-30.

type (1) was certainly used on earlier railways, as attested by some unusual surviving examples from the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway.<sup>13</sup>

Three basic methods have been used by the OS to depict mile markers:

- (1) Implied, by distance figures (see *Figures 8, 9 and 10*);
- (2) Explicitly, by abbreviation (*MS* or *MP*), with distances (see *Figures 11, 15, 16, 18 and 20*);
- (3) By abbreviation only.

Only the third method has been used for boundary markers along highways (*BS, BP*).

Generally the six-inch scale is adequate for those seeking mile markers, but they may be omitted at this scale in urban areas in order to reduce 'clutter', and reference may be necessary to larger scales, when available. Mile markers have never been shown by the OS at smaller than the one-inch (1:63,360) scale.

The OS has used mile stones and posts for siting benchmarks (*Figures 3, 17*), but the burial and resiting of many mile stones during and after World War II mean that earlier levelling to them, being to 0.1 or 0.01 feet, was invalidated. Others, such as that indicated in *Figure 11*, were lost.

### ***The one-inch Old Series map***

(This is defined as sheets 1-90, south of the 'Preston-Hull line'.) Indications at present are that the earlier sheets of the one-inch Old Series, 'the original Ordnance Survey map', published up to about 1820 are not to be relied on as a record of what mile markers were in existence at the time of survey. Some may be shown on the parent Ordnance Surveyors Drawings that do not appear on the published maps. Where distances are shown, one is given; there seems to be a preference for showing them on routes radiating from London, though this has yet to be thoroughly investigated, and there are certainly exceptions.

The tightening up in procedures associated with the Lincolnshire survey in the early 1820s seems to have led to the more comprehensive indication of mile markers, though there was still a preference for distances from London, where they were shown on the markers, rather than to nearby towns. From 1834 multiple distances were sometimes shown, usually two (one often being that for London), in the style 6.15, 7.14, 8.13, etc, though there are a few instances of three being shown (*Figure 8*).



*Figure 8 Three-distance mile marker, and also a two-distance marker and an unusual depiction of a half-mile marker, near Chelmerton, Derbyshire, on one-inch Old Series sheet 81 NE, published 1840.*

<sup>13</sup> See *Milestone Society Newsletter* 23 (July 2012), 28-9 and 34 (February 2018), 21-2. A four-distance milepost is indicated east of Brechin on Forfarshire six-inch sheet 27.

Mileages appear along the Leicester and Swannington Railway, opened in 1832, and shown on sheet 63 as first published in 1835. Thereafter mileages were usually shown along railways, though after about 1860 they are sometimes omitted; it is unclear why. Sometimes lines were equipped with two sets of



markers, or the markers showed two distances, and both are shown.

Mileages along roads were very rarely revised after publication: there is an odd exception on sheet 84 at Louth, where a mileage '149', reckoned from London, has been added, apparently as a by-product of railway revision c. 1851 (*Figure 9*).

*Figure 9 Mileage '149' added to one-inch Old Series sheet 84 at Louth, c.1851.*

### ***The derived one-inch and 1:50,000***

All newly-published one-inch mapping issued from 1847 was derived from six-inch and larger-scale surveys. A few scattered road mileages appear, but these appear to be experimental, and as a rule up to the early 1880s no mileages were shown. They then began to appear along turnpike and main roads and their equivalents in Scotland: it was usual to show them on newly-published sheets, and they were added retrospectively to most of the sheets of England and Wales published from 1847, but not to previously-published mapping of Scotland.<sup>14</sup> Mileages were usually shown reckoning from the larger of two towns, and so, except in the vicinity of the capital itself, mileages from London rarely appeared. No railway or canal mileages appeared on this derived mapping.

The revision of the one-inch undertaken between 1893 and 1898 enabled the mileage information to be regularised between sheets and across Britain. One-inch revisers were instructed to record milestones, and the Third Edition (revised 1901-12) and Popular Edition (revised 1912-30) record additions, made by county councils. Mileages are usually given in whole miles between towns, running from the larger to the smaller; fractions are uncommon, and the eighths of miles, representing furlongs on the mile posts, on what was later A16 either side of Louth in Lincolnshire, are especially so. (*Figures 10, 11, 12*) However, mileages were only shown on the highest class of road: mile markers on lesser roads were almost invariably omitted. The treatment of mileages on 'first class' roads can also be inconsistent, particularly where there was an incomplete run of mile markers. Thus the incomplete series between Grimsby and Caistor was omitted from New Series sheet 90 as first published in 1890, but was added to the revised edition in 1898. The incomplete set from Louth to Alford was similarly omitted from sheet 103: it was evidently completed after 1906, and the complete run appears on the Popular Edition, giving the misleading impression, if only the one-inch is consulted, that the whole run dates from after 1906.

<sup>14</sup> The figure '4' added near Christmas Farm, south-east of Redhill, on sheet 286 is shown on six-inch Surrey sheet 34 as a 'G.Post' with mileages: an unusual if not unique example.



Figure 10 (left)  
Figure 11 (below)  
Figure 12 (right)

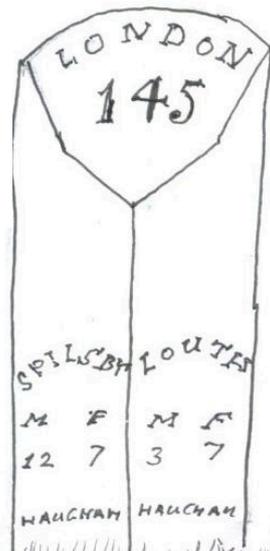


Figure 10 Mileage on one-inch New Series sheet 103, published 1891: the 'eighths' denote furlongs.

Figure 11 The milepost shown in Figure 10 with fuller text, on Lincolnshire 1:2500 sheet 56.10, surveyed 1888. (NLS).

Figure 12 A reconstruction of the milepost shown in Figures 10 and 11.

On the one-inch Fifth Edition and those New Popular Edition sheets in the same style, revised 1928 - c.1938, mileages were omitted. The other New Popular sheets, and post-war issues of the Popular of Scotland, were based on unrevised material, and are similarly of no use as records. On the One-inch Seventh Series, revised from 1944 onwards, mile markers on roads classified 'A' or 'B' by the Ministry of Transport were indicated by *MS* and *MP*, with no indications of mileages. As with the earlier concentration on 'first class' roads, this meant that a number of other extant mile markers were omitted. Nonetheless, the mile markers shown on the Seventh Series are a broad indication both of what was restored after 1942, and of post-war losses. There are also occasional additions, for example of posts and stones along B1165 on sheets 123 and 124, which had been shown as second-class on earlier mapping.<sup>15</sup> The policy of showing mile markers only on 'A' and 'B' roads was continued on the 1:50,000 *Landranger* series, but those on sections of road which were downgraded below 'B' were omitted when sheets underwent full revision, and thus, for example, the rerouting of the A17 in 1982-3 resulted in the mile stones on the former route between Sutton Bridge and Kings Lynn being omitted from sheet 131 when it was republished in 1992.

Whilst the one-inch is thus an incomplete record, it is nonetheless still a useful one, particularly over the large parts of Britain where there was no revision of the six-inch and 1:2500 between the 1900s and National Grid rural resurvey in the 1960s and 1970s.

### **The large scales**

Very limited areas of Devon and Kent were surveyed at the six-inch (1:10,560) scale in the 1780s, but were only published at one-inch, on the Old Series. Nonetheless, the example of this mapping inspired the adoption of the six-inch for the Townland Survey of Ireland begun in 1824, and this in turn helped bring about the adoption of this scale for northern Britain in 1840. The episode of 'the

<sup>15</sup> The evidence of the six-inch is that these were only installed after 1903-4, which seems very late for using stones.

Battle of the Scales' in turn established 1:2500 as the standard rural scale from 1854, with the six-inch continuing to be published as a derivative, and continuing as the basic scale in areas judged too open to justify the 1:2500. Larger urban areas were covered at 1:1056, 1:528 or 1:500. This mapping was on county sheet lines and is now known as the County Series; after 1945 it was gradually replaced by resurveyed or revised mapping on National Grid sheet lines, with 1:1250 as the 'urban' scale.

The principle followed with both the six-inch and the 1:2500 during the initial survey phase, up to the early 1890s, was to show everything that could be fitted in, and this included mile markers on roads, canals and railways, and guide posts and stones. The situation, type – *MS* or *MP*, and occasional variations – and mileages were shown.<sup>16</sup> Terminology in the 1840s and early 1850s seems to have been somewhat loose: there is evidence that guide stones in the West Riding of Yorkshire were treated as 'mile stones', with that shown in *Figure 5* described as 'Stone (G.P.)' on the six-inch revised' in 1892.<sup>17</sup> Up to 1883, all mileages were listed, but then it was ordered that only those to the two nearest towns be shown: this was symptomatic of seeking production economies wherever possible, in order to balance the pressure on funding with that to complete the survey.<sup>18</sup> The effects of this, and some apparent exceptions, are discussed in a separate section later. Further economies, effected in 1893 as the first revision of the 1:2500 got under way, led to the distances on railway and canal mile markers not being recorded, but road mileages continued to be, with the maximum of two, up to November 1959. Thereafter only abbreviations were used. Post-1914 funding restrictions meant that many areas of Britain were not revised at 1:2500 between the mid 1900s and the 1960s or 1970s: the resurvey on National Grid sheet lines begun in 1943 at first concentrated largely on urban areas. However, the six-inch was issued in two Provisional Editions, one on county sheet lines in 1944-53, and another on National Grid sheet lines in 1948-65: the latter included revised mile marker data. From 1954 redrawn six-inch mapping based on post-1943 National Grid resurvey was published; from 1969 the scale was changed to 1:10,000. The six-inch National Grid series continued to show all mile markers outside built-up areas; the 1:10,000 showed them only on 'A' and 'B' roads.

Markers at closer than one-mile intervals on roads have been unusual – a series at third of a mile intervals going south-west from Manchester is exceptional – but they have been usual in railway and canal practice. Early six-inch mapping in Britain shows mileposts with distances and terminals in whole miles, and

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<sup>16</sup> For example, *M.Tab.* – presumably 'mile tablet' – on a Leicestershire 1:2500 of c.1883. Steve Chilton and Ifan Shepherd draw my attention to 'M.S.' on a railway on the manuscript drawing Yorkshire 283B, at British Library Maps C.C.1.a.2 being changed to 'M.P.' on the published sheet: it is for investigation whether this is an example of a surveyor using the colloquial 'milestone', and it being corrected by an examiner. 283B seems to be one of only three such manuscript fair drawings surviving for the British survey.

<sup>17</sup> Other examples are reserved for a 'guide post' article.

<sup>18</sup> Southampton Circular, 31 May 1883: copy in Charles Close Society Archive (CCSA), IM\_401\_5.

others only as *M.P.*, with no further detail. It is unclear what practice was after 1854, and whether an absence of half- or quarter-mile posts denotes absence on the ground, or suppression from the map specification. Also, post-1893 reprintings of 1:2500 mapping that involved redrawing followed current practice in their treatment of mile markers, and thus whereas the original printings of such sheets will record the distances, these reprints will only show *M.P.* (and occasionally *M.S.*). This caveat does not apply to the six-inch first edition mapping, which was based on either copper plates or photographic negatives, and did not entail redrawing for reprinting.

From the 1890s the County Series 1:2500 only recorded whole-mile railway mile posts, but the post-1943 National Grid 1:2500 and 1:1250 also recorded quarter-mile posts. Whole-mile railway posts appeared on the six-inch Provisional Editions, but were not shown on the redrawn Regular Edition and 1:10,000 successor.

### ***The '1:25,000 family'***

This includes six groups of maps, the first four being military in nature. Three only covered limited areas of military interest: the 1:25,344 series, GSGS 3036, which covered part of eastern and south-east England; the 1:20,000 series, GSGS 2748, originally produced by direct photo-reduction from the six-inch, and later by redrawing; and a 1:25,000 series, GSGS 3906. In 1940-41 all these were replaced by a fourth group: a new version of GSGS 3906, based on direct photo-reduction from the six-inch. On this the indications for mile and boundary markers were practically illegible. Between 1945 and 1956 a civil 1:25,000 was produced, still based on the six-inch, but completely redrawn, and known as first the Provisional Edition and then as the First Series; the earlier sheets included much detail that was obsolete by 1945, and therefore show an anachronistic situation with regard to mile markers. (Distances shown in eighths, *i.e.* furlongs, on the six-inch are occasionally rendered as quarters.) All these earlier sheets were later republished incorporating revision made primarily for the one-inch Seventh Series, and this included mile markers on roads; those on railways and canals were not shown. This mapping was replaced between 1965 and 1992 by a 'Second Series', the linework of which was derived from the six-inch or 1:10,000.

On all these series, mile markers on roads were shown similarly to the contemporary six-inch, with up to two distances shown on sheets prepared up to 1960, and by *MS* or *MP* alone thereafter. In principle all road mile markers should be shown, though there may be some exceptions on the Second Series, particularly away from 'A' and 'B' roads. The First Series sheets using one-inch revision of 1947-58 are a more complete record of what mile markers survived or were reinstated after World War II than is the one-inch Seventh Series.

### ***Text on mile markers***

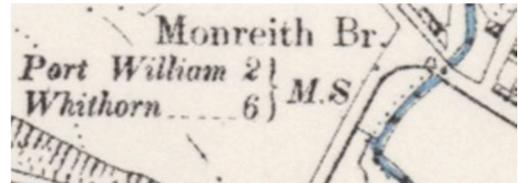
As was mentioned above, in 1883 it was ordered that, when more than two distances were recorded on a mile marker, only those to the two nearest towns were to be recorded; it might be inferred from this that, where only one distance was recorded, only one would be recorded and published on the map. This was

indeed the practice on the first edition of the six-inch and 1:2500, but it also appears to have been the practice with whole-mile markers that, where only a distance but no origin was given – which has certainly been the practice with railway mileposts in the twentieth century (*Figure 13*) – the origin was supplied. This is illustrated by the treatment of the milestones on the ‘coast road’ from Kings Lynn to Burnham Market, some of which survive, and some of which, for example the 10-mile stone at Ingoldisthorpe, show only a distance.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the six-inch and 1:2500 supply the origin. Full text for places was also supplied where the stone showed only initial letters (*Figures 14 and 15*).



*Figure 13 (far left) Railway mileposts at Chard Junction, Somerset, ST 34000470, 2009: a London & South-Western Railway half-mile marker, and a recent supplement, showing the mileage from Waterloo.*

*Figure 14 (left) Milestone with initial letters of places, Monreith, Wigtownshire, NX 35854105: 2004. ‘P’ is Port William, ‘W’ is Whitborn.*



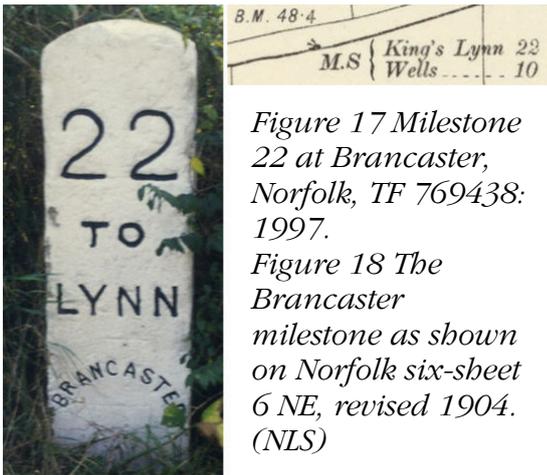
*Figure 15 The milestone at Monreith on Wigtownshire six-inch sheet 30 SE, revised 1894.(NLS)*

This principle was taken further on revised mapping produced after 1893, where two distances were often supplied for single-distance markers, where the terminal not mentioned on the marker could be clearly inferred; some single-distance runs, such as the ‘Bow bells’, defeated this (*Figures 4 and 16*). Such ‘supplied’ distances seem to be in whole miles, and where a now lost marker has one distance in whole miles and another in fractions of a mile, it can probably be accepted safely as having shown two or possibly more distances, but it does not necessarily follow that the style of name on the map will follow that on the marker, as evidenced by the treatment of milestone 22 at Brancaster (*Figures 17 and 18*). Further east, milestone 29 has two distances, both in whole miles, but is treated in exactly the same way as milestone 22 (*Figures 19 and 20*) – or perhaps it would be better to say that milestone 22 is treated exactly as is milestone 29.

This poses the question whether it is possible to reconstruct lost mile-markers on the basis of map evidence. *Figure 12* shows a reconstruction of the milepost between Louth and Spilsby shown in *Figures 10 and 11*: the shape and

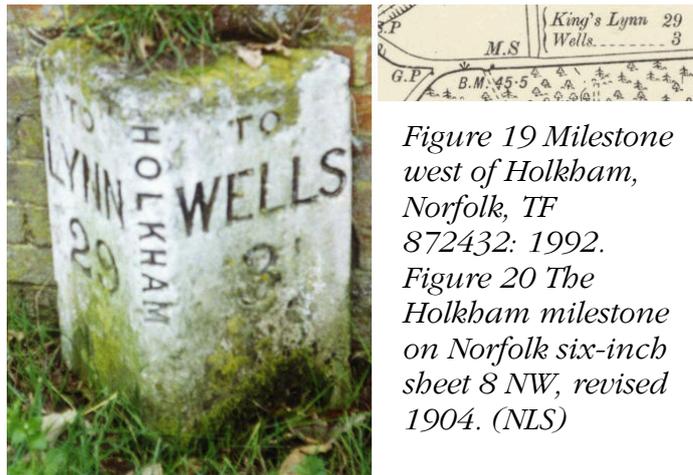
<sup>19</sup> This is illustrated in Haines, *Marking the miles*, 121.

layout of the post, with the parish name at the bottom on each face, is based on a surviving one at Wold Newton, the distances to Louth and Spilsby are supplied by the 1:2500 first edition (*Figure 11*), and the distance from London is conjectured from the mileage '149' shown in *Figure 9*, a mileage '145' at this point on Andrew Bryant's one-inch map of Lincolnshire of 1828, which appears a reliable source for milemarkers, and the unlikelihood, based on practice elsewhere, that a two-distance marker would have both distances in fractions of a mile.



*Figure 17 Milestone 22 at Brancaster, Norfolk, TF 769438: 1997.*

*Figure 18 The Brancaster milestone as shown on Norfolk six-sheet 6 NE, revised 1904. (NLS)*



*Figure 19 Milestone west of Holkham, Norfolk, TF 872432: 1992.*

*Figure 20 The Holkham milestone on Norfolk six-inch sheet 8 NW, revised 1904. (NLS)*

### ***Mile marker recording: dilution***

Two OS information papers issued in the summer of 2002 together indicated that lesser details such as new mile markers would no longer be recorded, but would only be deleted from the large-scale digital database when they no longer appeared on the ground.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that this was a codification or restatement of a general OS policy reaching back many years, as in a study of Somerset turnpike roads published in 1985-7 it is noted that 'the OS no longer aims to check thoroughly' minor detail such as milestones'.<sup>21</sup> It is possible that the decision was at least partly influenced by the OS never having recorded traffic signs, and by the distance markers along motorways and primary routes (*Figure 7*) being treated as a species of 'traffic sign'.

### ***Appendix: The text of some relevant instructions***

*Instructions to Field Examiners* (1905): 'The distances recorded on mile stones or mile posts along roads are given ... in full; if they have become obliterated, the word "defaced" will be written, when one of a series is defaced, but if the distances are known they should be given to complete the series.' 'Names and distances are not to be written to mile-stones or mile-posts on canals and railways. The initials M.S. or M.P. are to be written.'<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ordnance Survey Information Paper, 'Improvements to detailed data content', July 2002, and 'Revision policy for basic scale products', August 2002, formerly on OS website, but since removed; printouts at CCSA 627\_1\_14, 627\_1\_15.

<sup>21</sup> J.B. Bentley and B.J. Murless, *Somerset roads: the legacy of the turnpikes*, Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society, 'Phase 1', 1985, 'Phase 2', 1987, pp 105, 113 respectively.

<sup>22</sup> *Instructions to Field Examiners* (1905), p.18, s.50, p.20, s.107: there appears to be a copy at The National Archives (TNA) OS 45/3, but dated 1906.

*Instructions to Draftsmen & Plan Examiners* (1906): ‘Final dot to be omitted in “M.S.”, “M.P.”, “P.”, “W.” and in all similar cases where the object is represented ... by a dot.’ ‘The distance to the nearest town on either side of the stone or post should be typed on the plan. – The rule is to type the westward town on the top[,] the town lying east underneath.’<sup>23</sup>

*Instructions for the Revision of the Small Scale Maps* (1914): ‘Mile distances are shown along all main routes between towns, and should as a rule correspond with milestones on the ground. Where milestones do not exist, or where the sequence is broken, (as sometimes occurs at boundaries, and at places where two roads converge), the distances are inserted by measurement.’<sup>24</sup>

*Instructions to 1/2500 Scale Plan Examiners, Area Revisers and Draftsmen of the Drawing Division* (1937): Similar to 1906, with ‘... type the direct westward or northward town on the top, the town lying South or direct East underneath.’<sup>25</sup>

*Instructions for Detail Survey, Revision and Examination of Large Scale Plans (The Red Book) 1952*: [re railways:] ‘All mile,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile posts will be shown by a dot. The mileage will only be quoted on the field document if it appears on the post or stone in the form of figures and/or a convention of dots. They will be annotated MP or MS as the case may be.’ [On roads:] ‘Mile posts and mile stones will be shown by a dot and annotated “MP” or “MS”. \*The destinations and distances recorded will be given in full. If all the information has become obliterated, the word “defaced” will be written.\*’ [On canals:] ‘... milestones are treated similarly to those on railways.’<sup>26</sup>

*Instructions for Small Scales Revision (The Green Book 1961)*: ‘Mile Stones or Posts. Show on Class I and Class II roads only. Do not show on railways or canals. – Distances will not be recorded.’<sup>27</sup>

*Instructions for Detail Survey and Revision of Maps and Plans (The Red Book 1963)*: generally as for *The Red Book 1952*, as amended, with the intriguing addition of ‘kilometre posts’ on railways.<sup>28</sup>

*The Blue Book[:]* *Instructions to Draughtsmen, Examiners and Area Revisers*, Fourth Edition, 1969: Generally as earlier instructions: ‘Distance posts and stones on disused canals will be annotated “Post” or “Stone”; distances will not be shown.’<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Instructions to Draftsmen & Plan Examiners* (1906), p.9, s.25, p.17, s.65: copy at TNA OS 45/4.

<sup>24</sup> *Instructions for the Revision of the Small Scale Maps (Provisional)[:]* *Section dealing with drawing and examination (1" Scale)* (1914) pp 9-10, s.47: copy at TNA OS 45/12.

<sup>25</sup> *Instructions to 1/2500 Scale Plan Examiners, Area Revisers and Draftsmen of the Drawing Division* (1937), p.16, s.108: copy at TNA OS 45/28. The corresponding instructions of 1949 (*The Blue Book*: copy at TNA OS 45/46) are to similar effect.

<sup>26</sup> *Instructions for Detail Survey, Revision and Examination of Large Scale Plans (The Red Book) 1952* (n.p.), Section C, ss 44, 61, 95: the words between “\* \*” were deleted by Amendment 19, November 1959. (Copy with at least some amendments at TNA OS 45/54).

<sup>27</sup> *Instructions for Small Scales Revision (The Green Book 1961)*, Appendix ‘A’ (n.p.): copy at TNA OS 45/75.

<sup>28</sup> *Instructions for Detail Survey and Revision of Maps and Plans (The Red Book 1963)* (n.p.), Section B, ss 64, 110, 138 (railways).

<sup>29</sup> *The Blue Book[:]* *Instructions to Draughtsmen, Examiners and Area Revisers*, Fourth Edition, 1969 (n.p.), Section B, ss 14 (quote), 53: copies at TNA OS 45/87, OS 45/108.