

## Carlton - An Historic Landmark

I don't know how many times I have driven through Carlton without realising that I was driving past an historic landmark there on the roadside. The landmark in question is a mile marker, set there around 1800 to indicate the number of miles on the Burton Upon Trent to Market Bosworth turnpike. To be perfectly honest it had never occurred to me that the lane that goes from Bosworth, through Carlton, Odstone, Barton in the Beans and Newton Burgoland had once been a turnpike. But then I thought that turnpikes were those main roads like the A50 which went between bigger towns and cities and were frequented by highwaymen and footpads. It seems this is not quite the case.

What put me on to this surprising discovery was an article I read in the South Derbyshire Heritage News, a publication that was full of interesting tit bits and is now defunct, a victim of the cuts in local government spending. This article described an event where a resident had widened the entrance to his house which stands on the Burton Road in Overseal, a village on the A444 in Derbyshire. A cast iron column had been uprooted and thrown into a skip by the workmen carrying out the alterations because it stood in the middle of the pavement. It was seen there by someone who knew the significance of this thing that looked like the barrel of a Napoleonic cannon and he rescued it. He then set out to restore it because half of it was missing. This was the faceplate and most important part as it was this bit that gave the information that was so important to the traveller.

The template for the new faceplate was the only other milepost surviving on the Burton to Bosworth turnpike which was still standing, quiet and almost unnoticed, at Carlton. The new faceplate, drawing on the measurements and photographs of the Carlton milepost, was cast by a firm in the Black Country who had been working in cast iron for many years. The wording on the Overseal milepost was chosen after consultation with old Ordnance Survey maps which show the milepost position and state the distances in each direction to the next sizeable place. The style of lettering was copied from the Carlton post. Sadly the Carlton milepost itself is in need of some TLC as it has some damage to the faceplate possibly caused during hedge flailing.



The recreated distance marker at Overseal



Carlton's distance marker

So what about the turnpike itself? In 1696 Parliament gave powers to local justices to raise revenue to repair the roads in their parishes that ran from one village or town to another carrying travellers who were passing through the area. Before this it had been the responsibility of the parish and many of them had fallen down on their duty, unable to find the money or manpower to keep the roads in good order.

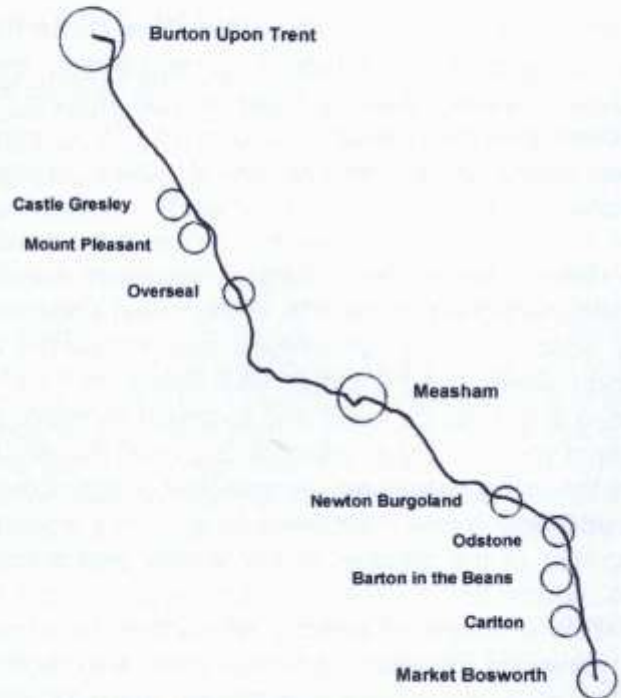
Further Turnpike Acts followed through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries which established Turnpike trusts, managed by Trustees who represented several parishes working together to maintain the highway. The first action of the Turnpike trust was to erect gates (The Gate Hangs Well in Carlton???) at which the fixed toll was charged. Acts of Parliament established the maximum toll for each class of vehicle or animal, e.g. 1s 6d (7½ pence today) for a coach and four horses. Some trusts erected toll houses for the pikeman or toll collector. Milestones were required to be erected to show the distance between places on the turnpike. Gradually the rules of the road began to be established, including for instance driving on the left hand side of the carriageway.

The reason for the establishment of a turnpike between Burton Upon Trent and Market Bosworth can only be guessed at. Was it associated with the rise of coalmining in the area? Did it link roads and the newly established railways and canals for commerce and trade?

And what of the name 'turnpike'? It comes from the similarity of the gate to the barriers once used to defend against attack by cavalry. A turnpike consisted of a row of pikes or bars, each sharpened at one end and attached at the other to a horizontal secured to an upright pole or axle on which the gate pivoted to be opened and closed.

The furniture of the turnpike were the gates, the toll houses or booths and the milestones or markers. Since 1888 when the Local Government Act transferred

the responsibility for highways to the County and Borough Councils the majority of these monuments to our past history have been lost, probably removed as their purpose was misunderstood and their value unrecognised. According to the old Ordnance Survey map the place we now call Woodville, which stands on the former Burton to Ashby de la Zouch turnpike (now the A511), was once called Wooden Box, presumably because a wooden toll booth stood there and formed the nucleus of the village that grew up around it.



The route of the Bosworth to Burton turnpike

With so much of our turnpike history having been lost over the years, it seems that we are very fortunate in this area to still have the milepost at Carlton.

Sue Styche