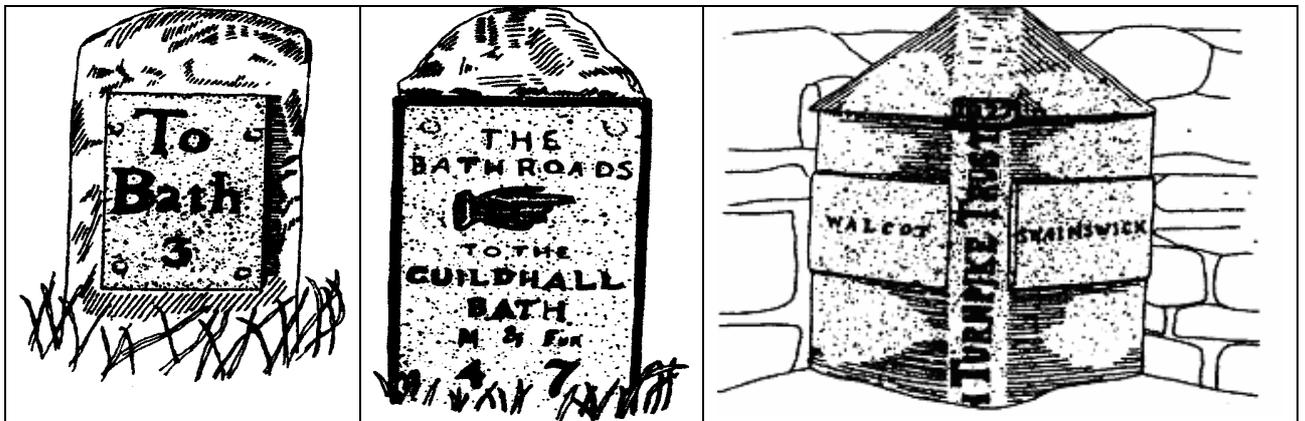


A note on the BATH ROADS

Angus Buchanan and Don Browning

The Bath Turnpike Trust was established under an Act of 1706 and for over 150 years it was responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads in the Bath district. Eight volumes of minute books survive in the Record Office of Somerset County Council, covering the proceedings of the Trust from 1757 to 1854, with a further incomplete volume down to 1875. Acts of Parliament consolidated and enlarged the powers of the Trust in 1793 and 1810, and at its greatest extent it was responsible for about 75 miles of roads. These included all the main routes into the city except the Stroud and Gloucester road through Swainswick and the Warminster and Frome roads, built by the Black Dog Trust. Improvements were frequently made in the Bath roads, particularly in the period from 1827 to 1836 when J. L. McAdam and his sons were engaged as Surveyor and Deputies to the Trust. Most of the toll houses of the Trust have disappeared, although a few late additions to the system such as that at the Red Post, Peasedown St. John, still stand.

Apart from these remains, the main relics of the Bath Turnpike Trust are roadside posts, of which there are three types. First are the milestones, which are normally in the form of a rectangular cast-iron plate attached by four bolts to a block of stone, with plain lettering stating simply: 'To Bath 3', etc. A remarkably high proportion of these survive, although a few have lost their plates and some are in a very neglected condition. The second type are 'terminus' posts, being a distinctive sort of cast-iron plate with a finger pointing towards the Guildhall in Bath and the distance in miles and furlongs. These were set at the termini of the principal routes out of the city, and at least seven of them still stand in position. The third type of relic are the triangular cast-iron boundary posts erected under the requirement of the General Turnpike Act of 1822 that Trusts should mark the points at which their roads crossed parish boundaries. A fair number of these survive in the Bath area, in varying conditions of repair, most of them bearing the dates 1827 or 1835. These posts carry the name of the BTT running up the leading edge, with the names of the two parishes on the front faces of the post, the back being hollow and frequently set into a wall.



The illustrations show examples of these three types of roadside relic. They are, first, a milestone in Newton St. Loe parish on the Lower Bristol Road, now the A4 (ST 667704); second, a terminus post at the end of the original London Road on the top of Kingsdown Hill in the parish of Box (ST 814671); and third, a parish boundary post between the parishes of Walcot and Swainswick near the present junction of the A4 and A46 (ST 763664)