

Wychwoods Local History Society

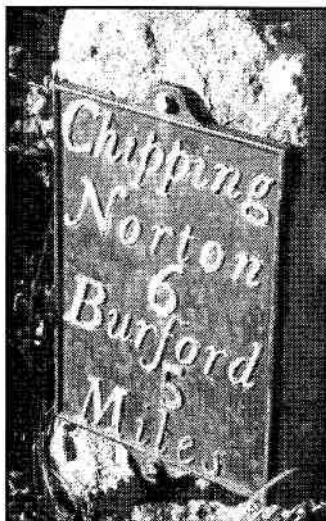
The Missing Plate

This is the first of a short series of articles about buildings, artefacts etc. which have vanished from the Wychwood villages.

This article concerns a metal plate fixed to a block of stone set in the ground at the side of the A361 road as a milestone, some 30m below and on the same side of the road as the entrance to Matthew's Mill. For most of its time in living memory it has been partially obscured by the overgrown hedge.

When the Burford to Banbury Turnpike road was set up in 1770, the local trustees had to place milestones or 'guide' markers a mile apart, indicating the distances of each from a town. Between Burford and Chipping Norton only two have survived, although both have experienced changes in the last 50 years. The one at Fulbrook was moved from its position by the roadside and built into the wall below the house called 'The House on the Hill' on the left hand side of the road as you travel to Burford, and Shipton's milestone plate has disappeared more than once.

Around 1970 the Revd. Ralph Mann, then housemaster at Kingham Hill School, found a cast iron plate in the long grass behind the classroom block. He calculated that the plate came from Shipton-under-Wychwood and took it to the local



The Milestone on the side of the A361

Oxfordshire Highways Department agent, with a request that it should be cleaned up and replaced. It is thought that this took some years.

It was back in place in 1987 when the late Norman Frost (then living in Station Road) witnessed an Oxfordshire County Council grasscutter hit the stone block which caused the metal plate to be wrenched off. Norman retrieved the undamaged plate and suggested that the County Council should refix it. The County Council

promised speedy action but it took more than a year of official letters from Shipton Parish Council and unofficial telephone calls from the Local History Society (of which Norman was the Honorary Secretary) before the plate was back in place.

Sadly in 2001, the metal plate went missing from its stone block and has yet to reappear. To have it renewed Shipton Parish Council and Oxfordshire County Council have had to spend £472 of ratepayers' money. In August of this year Isis Accord of Oxford fixed a new plate to the stone block so that anyone now removing the metal plate will only be stealing a replica. But where is the original?

John Rawlins