

## History of Milestones and Waymarkers



Roman waymarker

The Romans laid good metalled roads to move soldiers and supplies quickly across their Empire: they measured distance to aid timing and efficiency, marking every thousandth double-step with a large cylindrical stone. 117 still survive in the UK. The Latin for thousand was 'mille' and the distance was 1618 yards; the eventual British standard mile was 1760 yards, although 'long' miles

also existed into the 19th century. After Roman times, roads developed to meet local community needs: in 1555, an Act of Parliament made local parishes (or often townships in the North) responsible for their upkeep and boundary markers became important.

In 1697, the Justices were ordered to erect guideposts at cross-highways and on the moors. At this time travel by road was slow and difficult. The sunken lanes became quagmires in wet weather and occasionally both horses and riders were drowned. It took 16 days to cover 400 miles from London to Edinburgh. So Turnpike Trusts were set up, by Acts of Parliament from 1706 to the 1840's. Groups of local worthies raised money to build stretches of road and then charged the users tolls to pay for it.



1697 guideposts

The name 'turnpike' comes from the spiked barrier at the Toll Gate or Booth. The poor bitterly resented having to pay to use the roads and there were anti-turnpike riots.

From the 1840s, rail travel overtook road for longer journeys and many turnpike trusts were wound up. In 1888, the new County Councils were given responsibility for main roads and rural district councils for minor routes. As faster motorised transport developed so the importance of the milestones waned.

'Milestone' is a generic term, including mileposts made of cast iron. Such waymarkers are fast disappearing; around 9000 are thought to survive in the UK. Most were removed or defaced in World War II to baffle potential German invaders and not all were replaced afterwards. Many have been demolished as roads have been widened, or have been victims of collision damage, or have been smashed by hedge-cutters or flails. Nowadays, roadside milestones generally fall within the remit of the local Highways Authority or the Highways Agency and their contractors.

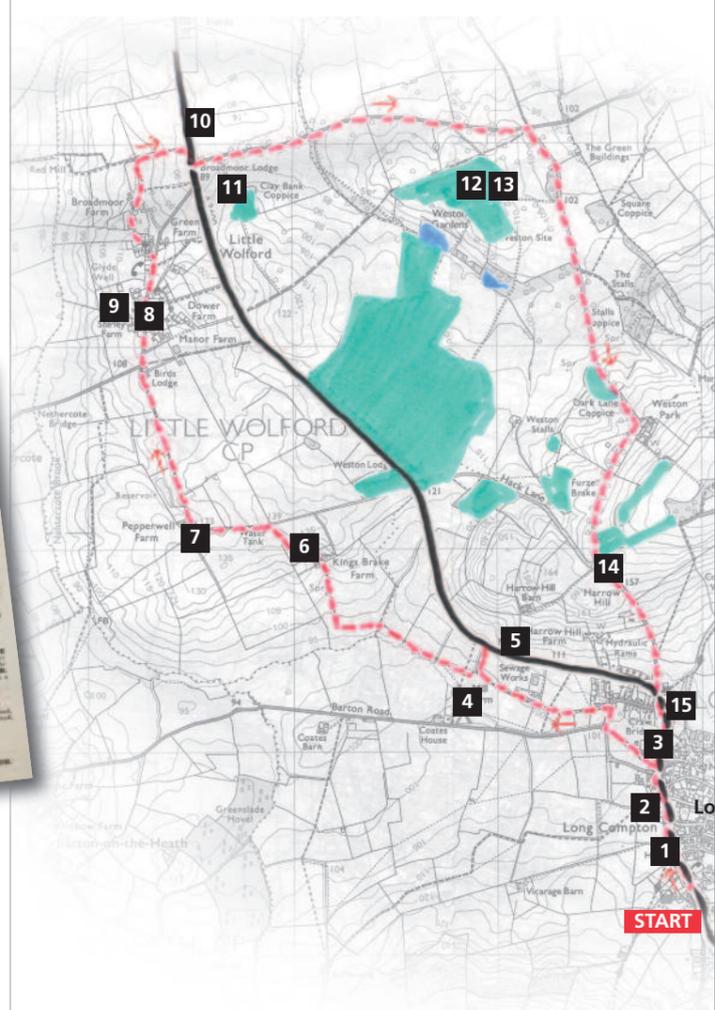
### The Stratford upon Avon to Long Compton Turnpike Trust

The Turnpike Trust was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1730, one of the earliest Trusts. It was modified by subsequent Acts. The last Act (1818) included provisions for the length of the Turnpike to be extended from Long Compton to the Inn at Chapel House, just south of the Banbury- Chipping Norton crossroads along a new stretch of road also sanctioned in the same Act.

By coincidence, one of the contractors for the new road, completed in 1825, was one John Roe (or Rowe), who was also a contractor for the Moreton in Marsh to Stratford on Avon Tramway, constructed at around the same time. He received large sums from the Trust, recorded in the Accounts but without any detail. Did his work include providing and erecting the new mileposts? There was certainly much communication between the Turnpike Trustees and the promoters of the Tramway since they shared some of the route.

Another helpful pointer has come from the Victoria and Albert Museum, who have dated the acanthus leaf design of the decoration on the mileposts to 1810 to 1840.

The Stratford on Avon to Long Compton Trust ceased functioning in the 1860s when responsibility for roads passed to Highways Boards and then to County Councils. It was wound up finally in 1877.



### Informatives

Please honour The Countryside Code. It is designed to help us all to respect, protect and enjoy our countryside:

[www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/countryside-code](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/countryside-code)

When you are walking, please be prepared for adverse weather conditions or slippery ground under-foot; wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear and always carry a drink and a snack. If you are standing by the roadside admiring a milepost, remember that vehicles may not see you easily, especially if there is long vegetation.

## Walk one – brief overview

This turnpike-era themed walk includes three restored mileposts, a former tollhouse, and evidence of an older turnpike route.

Starting at Long Compton the route briefly follows the former turnpike route northwards before heading west and then diverting to glimpse the second restored milepost. It then turns north to Little Wolford where, just beyond, lies the third restored milepost. Turning east the route is mainly tarmac road with wonderful views passing through Weston Park before descending from Harrow Hill back to Long Compton. In all it is approximately 7 miles.

Start: (the Red Lion car park by kind permission of the proprietors\* – you might like sustenance here too or later on. Note there are no facilities after this but there is a village store a few hundred metres north).

Lunch: The Red Lion, Long Compton; the Village Store, Long Compton has limited takeaway sandwiches but you can normally order in advance.

Getting There:  
by car-  
by bus-

OS map: OL45

\*yet to be confirmed

While every effort has been made to ensure that the details given in the Society's walks are accurate, no liability can be accepted by the Society for any inaccuracies or omissions; footpaths change over time, are re-routed or flooded, stiles are altered. But many milestones, waymarkers and toll-houses have stood the test of time – enjoy!

You can download each of the Milestone Society's walks as a printer-friendly pdf; if you wish to save coloured ink, remember to set the 'grayscale' option on your print preferences.

You are welcome to share these walks with other local walking groups or history societies, to encourage their appreciation of our highways heritage.

### Points of interest: Milepost theme – Walk one

**1** In the verge by the **Village Hall** is a restored cast iron milepost, aided by Heritage Lottery funding, which informed traffic on the former Stratford to Long Compton turnpike of directions and distances.

**2** Just south of the **village shop** is a drinking fountain above which has been preserved the base of the medieval village cross.

**3** **Long Compton church** is easily recognisable from the thatched lychgate formerly part of a row of cottages. It is believed that St Augustine preached on this site in 597AD. The present building dates from the c13th with significant additions and alterations over the years

**4** **Long Compton Mill**, by the Nethercote Brook, probably states on the site of the Mill mentioned in the Domesday Survey.

**5** The second restored **cast iron milepost** (dangerous to walk to directly because of narrow unpaved verge, so best to view from footpath gate by the A3400).

**6** The site of a post **Medieval post mill**, a type of windmill mounted on a post. The site is shown on c19th estate maps, and may be the windmill shown on the Sheldon Tapestry in Warwick Museum.

**7** At the beginning of the c13th the land at **Little Wolford** was apparently worked on a two-field system as a virgate. The constituent strips of a half-virgate include the place name Yperwelle (now Peppervell) and with other nearby names suggested a district full of small streams and ponds.

**8** **Little Wolford Manor House** has a probable c15th stone north range and a c16th west wing addition of two periods including a timber-framed upper storey. The house was occupied by the Ingrams from the c16th to the c18th but by 1840 was in extreme decay. It was bought and re-stored by Sir George Philips (Weston Park) and later the hall element became the village school-room.



9 Public drinking fountain

**9** In a wall on the road side by the **Manor House** is a **public drinking fountain** set in a recess partly made up of architectural fragments including pieces of c15th windows and a number of early c17th carved stones, one being a broken shield of (Ralph) Sheldon impaling (Anne) Throckmorton.

**10** The third restored **cast iron milepost**, a grade II listed building.

**11** The original turnpike road sweeping up to **Clay Bank Coppice**. A new route to the SW (now the present route of the A3400) was built in c1845 instigated by Sir George Philips allegedly because the original route enabled the peasantry views across the countryside to his new house at Weston Park which he wanted to prevent.

**12** **Weston Park** occupies the site of the depopulated hamlet of Weston-by-Cherington. The old seat of the Sheldon family was pulled down and a new Weston House was built by Sir George Philips about 1830 in the style of the Gothic Revival. It was pulled down in 1932.



15 Long Compton Toll House

**13** The **Sheldon Tapestry Map** of Warwickshire can be seen at the Market Hall Museum, Warwick. It was commissioned in the late 1580s by Ralph Sheldon (1537-1613) to decorate his newly built house at Weston Park. It was one of four tapestry maps, woven at Barcheston, showing the counties of Worcestershire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. These would have hung together to show a panoramic view of England from Bristol to London.

**14** A small section of the **original turnpike** road near the summit of its route over Harrow Hill prior to the construction of the new road around the base of the hill.

**15** **Long Compton Toll House**, Grade II Listed former toll house at Long Compton Gate, now Toll Cottage. The principal structure is thought to have been built for the Stratford to Long Compton Turnpike Trust in the 19th century in the form of a vernacular cottage.