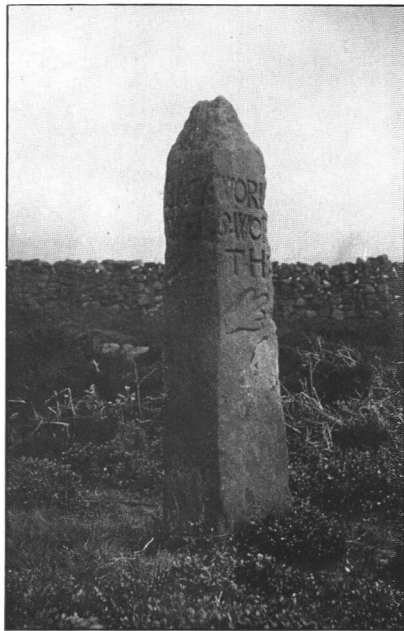
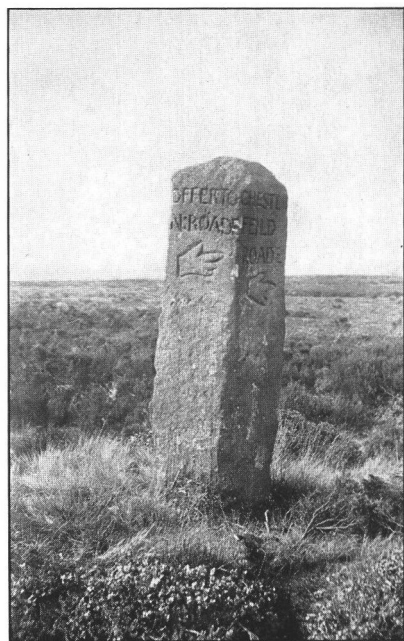




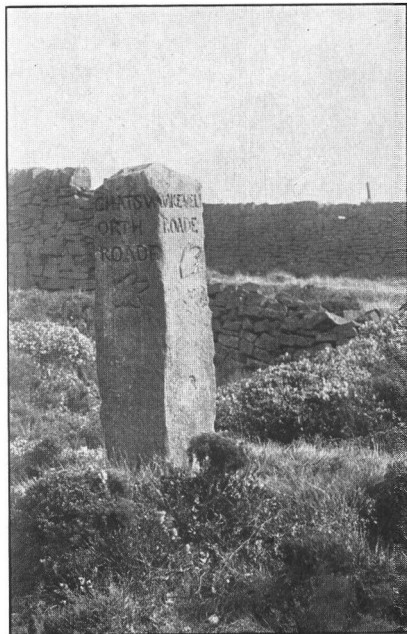
No. 1.



No. 1.



No. 2.



No. 2.

## Ancient Guide-Posts.

By JOHN SIMPSON.



N the wilds of Beeley Moor, "far from the madding crowd," there stands a most interesting relic of by-gone days; one of those ancient crosses, or guide stones, set up to enable travellers to find their way over the almost trackless wastes and moors. And it remains as a guide to us, to enable us to realize to some extent the difficulties and dangers the wayfarer had to face in the days when these stones were set up, long ere any systematic effort was made towards the construction of roads as we know them. In *English Wayfaring Life*, by Jusserand, it is said that the Roman roads "remained in use during the Middle Ages." And in *Our Roman Highways*, by Messrs. Forbes and Burmester, it is recorded that: "Owing to the difficulty of distinguishing the road from the open heath and fen on either side at night, travellers frequently lost their way." "In bad weather they were liable to be detained three or four days by the state of the roads, as in the case of Ralph Thoresby on a journey from Leeds to London in 1705." "On the roads of Derbyshire travellers were in constant fear of their necks." In these few simple extracts there is a world of meaning.

It is indeed difficult for anyone at the present day to realize that most, if not all, of our present excellent roads are the creation of the last two centuries. The "first Turnpike Act was passed in 1663," and the "first great English roadmaker was a blind man, John Metcalf," known as "Blind Jack of Knaresborough," and the "first road he made was in 1765."<sup>1</sup> There seems to have been very little done in the way of construction before. Prof. Thorold Rogers has recorded the opinion that

<sup>1</sup> *Our Roman Highways*, by U. A. Forbes and A. C. Burmester.

between 1583 and 1702 "there is no reason to believe that, except near London, any attempt was made to construct new roads, and that those in use had been probably traversed from very remote times."

Some of our old country lanes are relics of the main thoroughfares of olden times; but even these, seldom used and neglected as they usually are, give us too rosy a view of old-time travelling, as may be seen from such a reference as the following: "On the best roads the ruts were deep and the descents precipitous. It was only in fine weather that the whole breadth of the road was available, and coaches daily stuck fast in the mud until a team of cattle from some neighbouring farm could be procured to drag them out." And, again, Defoe, in his *Tour through Great Britain*, written in 1724, states that in a village near Lewes he saw "a lady of good quality drawn to church in her coach by six oxen, the way being so stiff that no horses could go in it."<sup>1</sup>

If this was the state of travelling for carriage people, what must it have been for the traveller on foot or horseback, who had to leave these main thoroughfares and strike across the country? To stand at this old guide stone, and look across the trackless moor in the direction it indicates for "Shefeld," gives us some idea, and helps us to realize the difficulties of travel up to comparatively recent times.

The stone stands on the eastern edge of Beeley Moor, eight or ten yards from the present old road that leads from Two Dales by Holy Moor to Chesterfield. It is just at the bend of the road, under "Harland Sick," about three miles due north of Flash Dam, and one mile south-east across the moor from "Hob Hurst's House." The fact that it stands *on* the moor and away from the present road, no doubt accounts for its preservation. The lettering on the stone may almost be said to be archaic, both in character and spelling.

About half a mile from this stone there is another, which also stands several yards away from the present road. It is

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<sup>1</sup> *Our Roman Highways*, by U. A. Forbes and A. C. Burmester.

inscribed as follows, "CHATSWORTH ROADE, BAKEWELL ROADE, OFFERTON ROADE, CHESTERFEILD ROADE," in good block letters of quite a modern form, and the spelling, it will be seen, with the exception of the word road, and of a mis-spelling in Chesterfield, is quite modern. There is one somewhat similar to the latter, in the form and size of letters, standing at the junction of the road to Kirk Ireton, on the road between Godfrey Hole, and Hopton, near Wirksworth. This is inscribed as follows:—

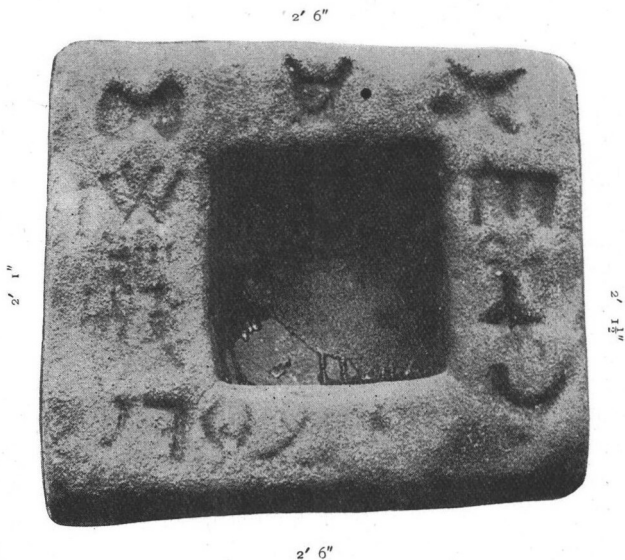
" . . RKS	BAKEWE	ASHBVR	DARBY
WORTH	LL 1705	N 1705	1705
1705	E H	F T."	

On this the date is given, and, comparing the modern character of the letters over 200 years ago, it seems probable that the one on Beeley Moor must be quite 400 to 500 years old.

In his article on "Plans of the Peak Forest" in *Memorials of Old Derbyshire*, Dr. Cox has recorded several ancient crosses, and on page 304 suggests that in the course of time an archæological map should be produced, on which the remains of crosses would be exactly defined, so that more mature conclusions might be arrived at with respect to their object and date. In more than one instance the cross has disappeared, leaving only the base, with the socket in which it stood. Dr. Cox describes such an one, namely, the base—all that is left of the Robin Cross, which formerly stood at the point where the three townships of Abney, Hazelbadge, and Bradwell converge, close to the gate on the Brough road and near the stile leading to Bradwell. Not knowing where to look for it, Dr. Cox had some difficulty in finding it, protruding as it was from the bottom of the stone wall on the left of the gate. Since then the owner of Abney has had the wall arched over it, so that it is now more visible in the place where it has probably always stood since it was first placed there. Mr. Seth Evans, in his book on *Bradwell: Ancient and Modern*, suggests that the remainder of the cross may be seen

in a portion of a stile higher up on the footpath leading to Bradwell. It has always been known as Robin's Cross, and is quoted as one of the boundaries of the manor of Abney in the MS. of 12 Edward II. (1317), published in this *Journal*, vol. xxix., page 132, at which time the manors of Abney and Highlow were being delineated. They were then owned respectively by Robert and Thomas Archer—Robert being lord of Abney. It is more probable that the cross was named after him rather than after Robin Hood.

The illustration below represents the base standing on Shuckstone Cross, above Lea, which has some very archaic characters inscribed round the top. The base (if any) to the one on Beeley Moor is buried; possibly, if unearthed, similar letters might be found upon it.



Base of Shuckstone Cross, between Lea and Wheatcroft.