

A STONE PILLAR BOX AT HORSLEY.

By E. B. HASSALL.

IN the centre of Horsley village stands an old stone pillar-box which was erected and brought into use on December 24th, 1869. This was thirty years after Sir Rowland Hill's penny postage scheme came into operation and fifteen years after the pillar-box idea was first introduced into this country.

It may be of some interest briefly to recall the manner of that introduction. Anthony Trollope, novelist and Post-Office official, has been credited — or perhaps one should say has claimed credit — for the introduction of the pillar-box, but there is little doubt that Rowland Hill was the real originator, that is to say, in this country. Be that as it may, there were no bright efforts of invention or originality: street mail boxes had been for years in use in France, Germany, Belgium and Austria.

When in 1840 Rowland Hill suggested the introduction of pillar-boxes similar to those he had seen in France he met with considerable obstruction. Officialdom was averse to letters, etc. being committed to an unprotected box. Public agitation increased, but it was not until twelve years later (November 23rd, 1852) that roadside letter-boxes were officially brought into use — and then in Jersey! Although successful there, it was deemed necessary to have a further try-out, and a box was installed at Cheltenham in March, 1854. It became impossible longer to doubt the success of these experiments, and in September of that year pillar-boxes were introduced in London.

Some of the earlier boxes were rather ornate in design: one, fluted and topped with dome and crown, looked something like a salt sprinkler. Another, of 1860, was quite a handsome elaborately decorated box, but one opines it was in use for a very short time — its posting aperture was in the dome. What a mess on the first wet day! It



Photo by C. E. Brown.

HORSLEY STONE PILLAR BOX.

facing p. 108.

was not until 1876 that the standard cylindrical boxes were established.

Horsley's "home-made" pillar-box, not now in use of course, still stands on its original site at the junction of Church Street and French Lane, so called, according to local tradition, from the number of prisoners from the Napoleonic wars who worked with the local stockingers in their cottages in that short lane branching from the main village street.

As the photograph shows, the pillar is of simple design but of good proportion and of a pleasing dignity. The following measurements are recorded:—

Height: To headstone 6 ft. Overall 8 ft. 7 ins.

Width: 3 ft. 6 ins. At base of headstone 3 ft. 10 ins.

Depth: 1 ft. 10 ins. Headstone 2 ft. deep.

The headstone weighs approximately $8\frac{1}{2}$ cwts., and it is estimated that the whole pillar with headstone weighs 63 cwts. (The modern round pillar-box weighs up to 10 cwts., the large oval box nearly 1 ton). The actual post-ing-box, an iron one eighteen inches high by ten inches wide was fixed slightly higher than the middle of the front wall. When this box ceased to be used — about 1887 — three large stones were built into the opening, leaving the pillar even at that time as something of a monument of the past.

Beyond the recorded date of opening we have no details regarding the history of the stone pillar, but it is fair to assume that it is made of stone from one of the nearby and now abandoned quarries in the immediate neighbourhood. Coxbench quarry is only half a mile away and I have been assured by a competent judge that the stone is undoubtedly from that locality.

About the end of 1951 the old stone pillar-box had become unsteady and was in a somewhat dangerous condition. The opinion was being expressed that it should be removed and scrapped. There were protests against this point of view with a reminder of what happened in 1828, when the old thirteen-tier stone village cross was "ruthlessly destroyed". Parish councils are nowadays more alive to the desirability of preserving old monuments and the Horsley council arranged for the

pillar-box to be taken down and re-erected stone by stone in the same form and the same place. This work has been very creditably performed.

Many enquiries have been made, but I have been unable to find that any similar stone pillar-boxes remain in the county, and it would appear that the Horsley pillar is unique in Derbyshire, possibly even in the country.

NOTE ON A PIG OF LEAD FROM CARSINGTON.

By R. W. P. COCKERTON, LL.B. (Lond.).

IN 1946 there was ploughed up on Owslovs Farm, Carsington (at National Grid Ref. 238533), a pig of lead, a photograph of which appears opposite.

The weight is 144 lbs. and the dimensions $20\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by 4 inches wide at the base, an average thickness of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches and 23 inches long by $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide at the top.

There is an incision visible on the base which Mr. R. P. Wright, M.A., F.S.A., the Editor of the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* reads as 210 (in Roman figures) librae. A libra was, as he points out, equivalent to a weight of 5050 grains (7000 grains equal 1 lb. avoirdupois) so that 210 librae should equal $151\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. The actual weight of the pig of lead is 144 lbs. which confirms this reading to within a 5 per cent. error. The discovery of such a pig with the weight marked upon it is almost unique.

The pig had been cast in layers, the final layer on the top, or longest, side leaving a very rough surface. It is very similar in appearance to the unscribed pig of lead in the Weston Park Museum, Sheffield, found many years ago when digging the foundations for the new Council School at Bradwell (National Grid Reference 172813). The Bradwell pig is much lighter, weighing 106 lbs. only with dimensions $20\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 3 inches.

I am indebted to Mr. Oldfield of Owslow Farm for permission to have the pig measured and weighed.