

Dummer boundary and milestones

Although some milestones survive from Roman times it was not until 1698 when William III required parishes to place guideposts at crossroads as an aid to travellers. Many such posts were wooden or metal and have not survived, but the most enduring were made of stone. The term milestone was first used in 1746. By 1773 the government insisted that local trusts provided taller, more visible milestones along turnpike roads which could be seen by coach and carriage drivers and their passengers.¹

The western boundary of Dummer parish follows the line of the A30, which from Ganderdown Cottages lies on the route of the Silchester to Winchester Roman road. This was a turnpike road from 1756 to 1877. There are three Grade II Listed milestones along this stretch of road literally placed a mile apart (Figs 1-3). They are all badly weathered but mark the distances from London, Winchester, Stockbridge and Basingstoke. The most northerly is close to the entrance to Basingstoke Golf Club. The second is on the wooded traffic island separating the two carriageways at Ganderdown and the third is on the verge opposite a parking lay-by. There is a mystery free-standing stone in Dummer village itself near to the church but the engraving is illegible and it has most likely been removed from its original site.

Travellers would have welcomed the sight of these stones as the Wheatsheaf Inn on the turnpike road at North Waltham was a coaching inn and post-house and reputed to have been visited by Jane Austen who lived in the nearby parish of Steventon.

Smaller, but just as important, are stones marking the boundaries between different parishes (Figs. 4-7). These are often difficult to find or may not survive at all. Dummer has at least two which stand at either end of Popham Down Copse which display the letters 'D' and 'M' probably referring to Dummer (in Bermondspit Hundred) and Mainsborough Hundred. Mainsborough was made up of Brown Candover, Chilton Candover and Woodmancott and later became Micheldever parish.

Meresmen were appointed to walk the limits of their parish boundaries. A book of one such perambulation dated 1868 exists for Dummer and the neighbouring parishes of Wootton St Lawrence, Deane, North Waltham, Popham, Nutley and Farleigh Wallop (Fig. 8). This was updated in 1879 when Winslade and Kempshott were added to Dummer.² Notations in the book describe hedges, iron fences, 4ft. ditches, milestones, footpaths, woodland and buildings as well as notable landscape features which the boundary passed, such as Blind Man's Oak (Fig. 9).

James Eeles was the meresman for Dummer and reported that the 'owners and occupiers of property in the parish were at liberty when making their own boulder fences to enter the adjoining property and to clear out a ditch 4 feet wide from the stake and to use the soil taken out of such ditch or ditches for the making and repairing of such boulder fences.'

¹ *Country Life*, 2 Jan. 2019.

² TNA, OS 26/4702.



Fig 1. Milestone close to the entrance of Basingstoke Golf Course (SU 597483)



Fig. 2. Milestone at Ganderdown (SU 584472)



Fig. 3. Milestone opposite the parking layby (SU 575460)



Figs. 4 & 5. Boundary stone at SU 572444.



Figs. 6 & 7. Boundary stone at SU 575441.



Fig. 8. Dummer parish boundary 1868, revised 1879.

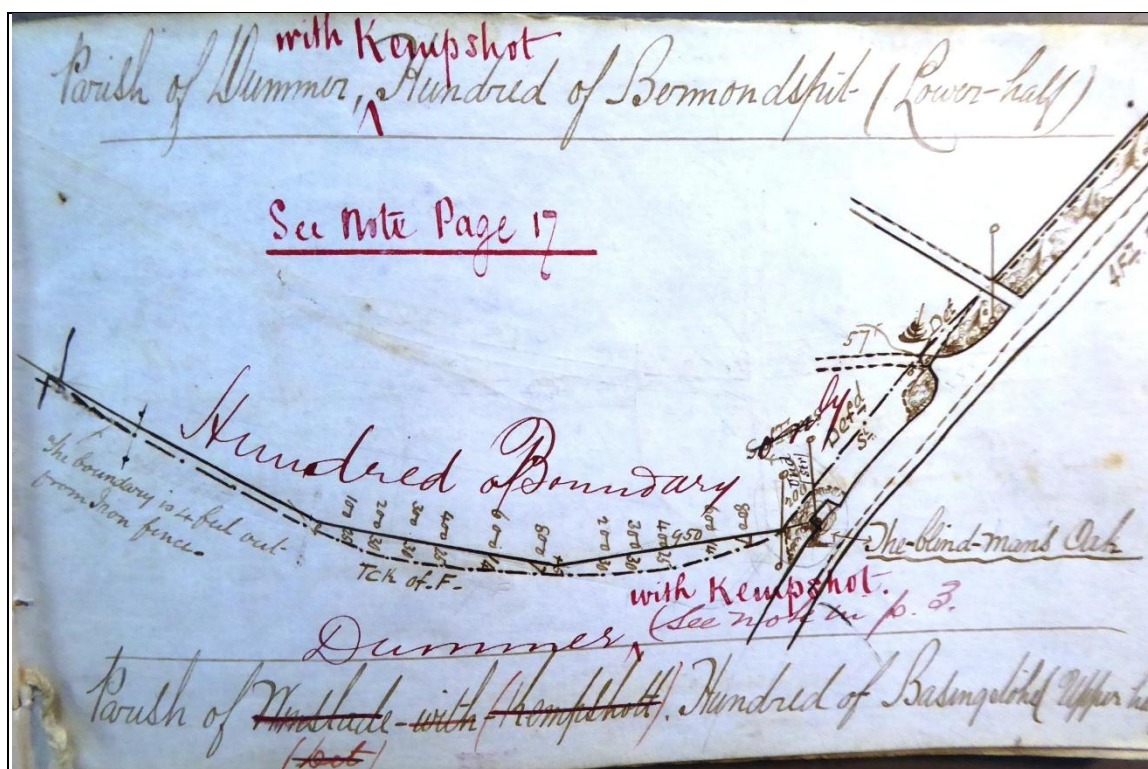


Fig. 9. Detailed annotation of the Dummer boundary book.