

THE MUSGHYLL GUIDE STONE

This guide stone was discovered in April 2000, by a gardener working in the garden of an old farm house near Newchurch-in-Pendle, it was face down and used as a garden step, myself as a local historian heard of the discovery and asked the owner if it could be given back to the village from whence it came. The owner agreed to give it on condition that he was not named nor its previous whereabouts disclosed to the general public or any publicity regarding its restoration.



The 'Musghyll Guide Stone' restored to its original location in June 2002

For just over two years it stood in my allotment garden where I restored the stone as some of the lettering had become very worn, so I re-chiselled some of the letters, painted the stone white and painted the lettering and fingers in black. In June 2002 I restored it to its former position at the junction with Cross Lane/ Mucky Lane and Salterforth Lane (formerly called- Musghyll Gate)



Musghyll Guide Stone restored to the junction of Cross Lane/ Mucky Lane and Musghyll Gate, 2002

While in the process of digging it into the ground an old gentleman (who's a member of the Barnoldswick History Society) walked by and stopped, he almost had a tear in his eye, he thanked me for putting back this lost guide stone and he related a tale to me that when he was a boy, he used to walk this way with his grandfather and he told him that a stone guide post once stood at this spot when he was a young lad and that during the 1870's the stone had been stolen during the cover of dark and it was never recovered nor was it ever known who had taken it or the reason why. I asked him not to have any publicity regarding the restoration of this guide stone on condition that I would supply what information I could to the Barnoldswick History Society. Two other villagers walking past- May Smith and Alice Wood also heard this old gentleman relate this tale to me. It felt like I was meant to replace this stone guide stoop and guided by fate to do so! Rather spooky don't you think?

It is thought that this guide stone with its strange reversal of the letters 'S' and 'N' was probably carved by the same mason who carved dated door lintels of the mid to late 17th century in the locality, if it dates from before 1697 then it may have been paid for by one of the lords of the manor and erected by the unpaid Surveyor of the Highways for the parish, this is because in 1555 parishes were made liable for the maintenance of the roads passing through them and parishioners were obliged to spend four days a year working on the roads, in 1563 this was increased to six days a year.

In 1697 an Act of Parliament authorised local Justices of the Peace to direct highway surveyors to put up a stone or post 'for the better convenience of travellers in places remote from towns and villages where roads meet', these stones erected from this time onwards are generally dated and are on square cut pillars of stone, our example has not got a carved date and is formed from a rectangular slab of stone, I think it's a fair guess to put its date to the period 1660-1690, if I'm correct then it is perhaps as old if not older than the Early Guide Stoop (moved from South Park to the Early Mines Museum) the lettering on the Early Stoop is in relief, not incised like the Musghyll Guide Stone, both stones are of similar shape and size. I doubt we will ever find out who carved them or when exactly.



Lifting the Early Guide Stoop into its new home at the Early Lead Mines Museum @ 6-20pm on Thursday 3rd June 1999 (Irvin Whitehead, Trevor Tattersall & Maurice Horsfield, photo by Nick Livsey)