

COAL POSTS

by Gwyneth Fookes and Robert Warner

AROUND the Bourne Society's area are a number of cast-iron roadside posts, square in shape, with a pointed top, and about four feet high overall, bearing the arms of the City of London, and the inscription either '24 VICT', '4 & 24 VICT CAP 42', or '24 & 25 VICT CAP 42'. The inscription '4 & 24 VICT CAP 42' was in fact a manufacturing error; it was discovered and rectified in many instances by fixing a correcting plate over the erroneous inscription and bearing the correct '24 & 25 VICT CAP 42'. The plates were fixed with four studs; some survive (e.g. 14. Bug Hill) but many have been lost. On the front of the base, visible where uncovered with earth, is an oval



Coal Post (no. 23) at Coulsdon Road

maker's inscription, 'Regents Canal Iron Works London', encircling the maker's name, Henry Grissell, and the date, either 1861 or 1862. These are 'City Posts' or 'Coal Posts', and mark the boundary of the Metropolitan Police District, at which point - about 20 miles from the City - duties became payable on coal and wine coming into London.

By an Act of Parliament of 1694 the City of London were entitled to levy duties on all coal and wine entering their square mile 'for the relief of orphans and other creditors of the City of London'. These duties were continued by various statutes but the orphans' claims having been long since satisfied, the charge by the Corporation was applied to various public improvements.

By the London Coal and Wines Duties Continuance Act of

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22nd July 1861 the area covered by the earlier Acts were extended to the Metropolitan Police District and by Section 4 of this Act boundary stones or permanent marks were to be erected on the point where any canal, railway or any turnpike or public road first entered or came within the Metropolitan Police District. At that point duty became payable on any coal or wine brought into the district.

Around 200-250 cast-iron posts bearing the City of London's arms and a reference to the 1861 Act (24 & 25 VICT. cap 42) were erected around London on the boundary of the Metropolitan Police District as it was in 1861. This boundary ran through the Bourne Society's area and many of the posts are still to be found.

Arms of the City of London

as shown on the sign boards to the City's various local commons (this one at Coulsdon Common)



It is of interest that the money derived from these duties, which were abolished in 1890, and which amounted to 1s.1d. a ton on coal and 4s. a tun on wine, were applied to the 'Thames Embankment and Metropolis Improvement Fund', and paid for such things as the Victoria, Chelsea and Albert Embankments, the Holborn Viaduct, Clerkenwell Road, and the approaches to London Bridge among other public works. It has been reported that in the reign of Victoria the coal trade alone paid £15,000,000 in these duties.

In 1957 the Bourne Society published a list, largely the work of Dr J P S Robertson and Mr D Dawe, of the coal posts in the society's area (Bulletin 8 & supplement), and this was updated by information in Bulletins 11 (1958)

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and 27 (1962). In Bulletin 43 (1966) was published a concise list of coal posts in the society's area from information compiled by Mr Martin Nail of the Nonsuch & Ewell Antiquarian Society. A minor correction appeared in Bulletin 44. Nail described some types of posts as being dated 1851; this appears erroneous and inconsistent with regnal year 24 Victoria (1860-61) and the date of the Act of Parliament.

We have surveyed the posts again, and combined and condensed the information from earlier sources, as well as photographing all the posts found. Most are in reasonable condition for their age, but many are in need of de-rusting and re-painting. Some have been repainted apparently by enthusiastic amateurs. In many instances the City arms - the red cross of St George and the sword (also in red) of St Paul on a white shield - have been repainted as red on a black shield, and other colour variations occur! Some posts are at risk by modern developments, and a number have been lost from such cause. The survivors, all historical monuments, are all worthy of preservation and care.

In compiling our list, we have followed and updated that prepared by Robertson and Dawe in 1957. For uniformity, their posts 1 and 2 have been retained, although they are outside the Bourne Society area; posts 31 and 32 have been added. Numeric references are the O.S. grid references, all prefixed TQ.

- (1.) SHEEPBARN LANE. 398611. On left-hand side facing cross-roads in Westerham direction, in bank beside road near holly trees. Well set in ground but rusty.
- (2.) FAIRCHILDES AVENUE. 396610. About 25 yards south of cross-roads on left-hand side facing towards them, on bank beside road. Well set in ground, rather rusty, with City arms in red on white shield. Cast '4 & 25 VICT CAP 42' without correcting plate.
3. KING HENRY'S DRIVE. 395613. On left-hand side facing cross-roads in Addington direction outside Addington High school and just before housing estate. Beside maple trees. Deeply set in ground, very rusty.
4. FEATHERBED LANE. 385610. Missing - described in 1957 as 'on left-hand side of road going towards Croydon, at eastern extremity of "Fairchildes" and slightly more than ½ mile NW of White Bear cross-roads. Placed beside boundary stone, in grass bank. Badly set in ground, tilting over with base exposed, very rusty.'

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5. LANE NEAR SCOTSHALL FARM. 382602. Lane is only an unfrequented footpath now. Post is on a field boundary, next a stile and an iron gate. The post is in generally good condition, but very shallowly set, on a sandy mound, with its feet exposed. The City arms are incorrectly shown on a black shield. Inscription '4 & 25 VICT CAP 42' without correcting plate.

6. SCOTSHALL LANE AND FARLEIGH COURT ROAD. Missing. Described in 1957 as 'At commencement of Farleigh Court Road on verge of Great Farleigh Green, on left-hand side going towards Croydon. In grass bank by side of road. Well set in earth but very rusty.' Nail (1966) does not list it.

7. GREAT PARK WOOD. Missing. In 1957 described as 'Believed to be along the footpath which runs beside fence of Warlingham Park Hospital beside a holly tree. May have become covered with earth and foliage. This post was not shown on the original placement map, but is one of three boundary posts shown on the 2½" O.S. map, but these have not been actually located. These three posts may not have anything to do with the subject of this survey.'

8. FARLEIGH ROAD AND OLD FARLEIGH ROAD. 365597. At commencement of Old Farleigh Road, just beyond the Harrow Inn in grass verge of Little Farleigh Green a few feet from the road. Well set in earth, and in good condition. City arms on black shield. It appears to have been fitted with a correcting plate, but neither plate nor inscription are now visible.



No. 5 - Lane near Scotshall Farm

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9. LITTLE PARK WOOD. 368596. Opposite former sewage farm on verge of wood under an oak tree at the entrance of the bridle path leading towards Warlingham Park Hospital. Well set in earth, very rusty. '4 & 25 VICT CAP 42', without correcting plate. Described as 'slightly rusty' in 1957.

10. HARROW ROAD AND CHELSHAM ROAD. 371591. In bank beside ditch on left-hand side going towards the Harrow Inn. Well set in earth, but rusty. City arms on black shield.

11. GREEN LANE AND CHELSHAM ROAD. This post was known to have existed sometime before 1957, but was not found in that survey, and was described as possibly buried under the earth bank. We could not find it. Nail (1966) does not list it.

12. SUNNY BANK AND CHELSHAM ROAD. 366584. In grass beside pavement next to the Sunny Bank road name. '4 & 25 VICT CAP 25' with holes suggesting a correcting plate. Slightly rusty, with City arms on black shield.

13. LIMPSFIELD ROAD AND CHELSHAM ROAD. 365583. In prominent position in the pavement on the corner. Leaning over somewhat, rusty with traces of paint. City arms on black shield.

14. BUG HILL. 358577. On right-hand side going towards Warlingham, on bank beside road outside house 'Watendlath'. Almost completely out of the ground with feet well exposed, rusty. City arms on a pale blue shield. Correcting plate intact.

15. STUART ROAD AND WOLDINGHAM ROAD. 354570. On left-hand side of road going towards Woldingham in bank just beyond railway viaduct. Half buried, rusty. Signs of studs for correcting plate.

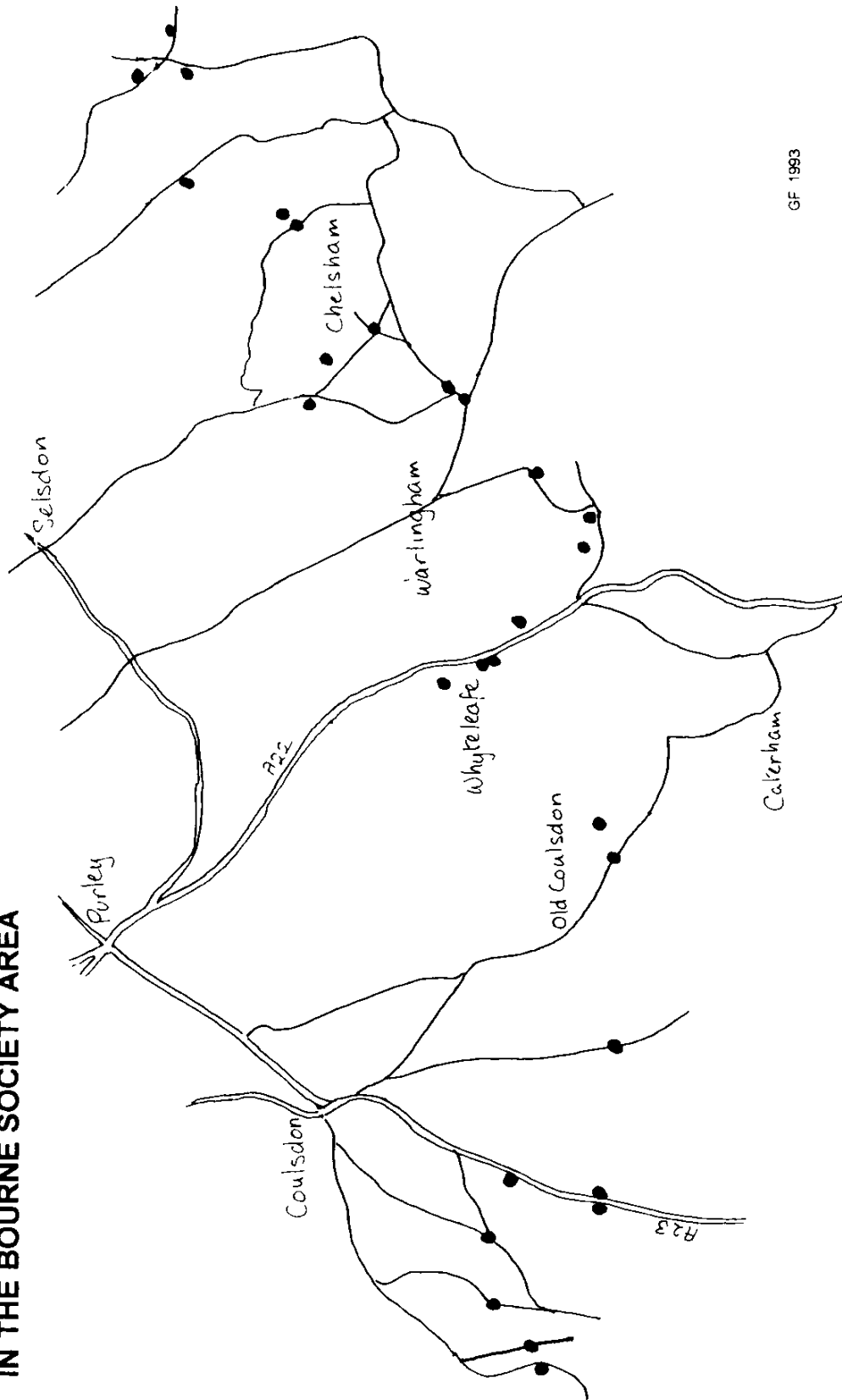
15a. STUART ROAD RAILWAY. 353570. Cast iron obelisk type. This is on railway property, and we were unable to confirm its existence.

16. GODSTONE ROAD AND SUCCOMB'S HILL. Missing. The 1957 survey noted 'This post was shown on the original placement map but cannot now be found.'

16a. WELL FARM ROAD. 344577. In the hedge opposite the vehicle entrance to The Rank Organisation's offices. Buried up to its top.

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THE DISTRIBUTION OF COAL POSTS IN THE BOURNE SOCIETY AREA



GF 1993

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No. 14 - Bug Hill

Showing almost the full height of the post and with the correcting plate intact

17. GODSTONE ROAD. 341580. In privet hedge outside 376 Godstone Road. Well set in earth, rusty, but showing signs of 'refurbishment'. Correcting plate missing, but '24 & 25 VICT CAP 42' touched in black paint. City arms on black shield.

18. BR, CATERHAM BRANCH. 340581. On railway property about a quarter of a mile north of Whyteleafe South station. Can be seen from a train. Tall stone obelisk type.

19. WHYTELEAFE HILL. 338583. Near the corner with Hornchurch Hill and opposite Whyteleafe School. Until recent building developments this post was deeply embedded in earth; it is now rather less so. Slightly rusty, with City arms on black shield and inscription, picked out in black, altered to '24 & 25 VICT CAP 42'. Perhaps this post has been transplanted a few yards from its original position.

20. BUXTON LANE AND HAYES LANE. No trace in 1957, 1966 or 1993.

21. LANE LEADING TO FORMER MERLEWOOD HOUSE. No trace in 1957, 1966 or 1993.

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22. STITES HILL ROAD. 325570. On verge of Corporation of London land, Coulsdon Common, just beyond house No. 22. Set in ground close to pavement. City arms in red on white shield. Rusty.

23. COULSDON ROAD. 322568. On verge of Corporation of London land, Coulsdon Common, at Caterham boundary, beside house 'The Boundary'. Set in ground close to pavement, with top of base exposed. Painted white with City arms in red on a white shield edged in black. Inscription, '4 & 25 VICT CAP 42' picked out in black but damaged.

24. DITCHES LANE. 304568. On right-hand side going towards Farthing Down, beside post (part of former stile?) leading into Devilsden Wood on raised bank beside road. Well set, but with top of base exposed. Painted entirely white. 1861.

25. NETHERNE LANE. Missing. Described in 1957 survey as 'By side of footpath opposite Park Lane leading to old Isolation hospital. Removed by Hospital Management Committee about 1949, disposal not known.' We would be grateful for any information.

26 & 27. BRIGHTON ROAD, HOOLEY. 289568. In 1957 the survey noted 'There are believed to be two posts in this vicinity; one relating to the railways and one to the road. Only one has been located. This is beside the little used railway bridge leading to a lane opposite the 'Star' Inn. It is on the left hand side of the bridge on the verge of railway land behind a barbed wire fence beside a sycamore tree.' In our present survey we also only found the 'road' one, well buried in the ground and in the hedge of the A23 at the foot of the lane, close to a substantial tree, rather rusty, with City arms in red on a white shield. The 'Star' Inn has gone.

28. WOODFIELD HILL AND BRIGHTON ROAD. 291576. On the left-hand side of Brighton Road (A23) going towards Redhill, about 150 yards past Woodfield Hill and just past Grassfield Close. Next to a lamp standard, in grass bank at side of road outside the railway fence. Deeply set in ground (about 27" showing), rather dirty, especially on the front, and slightly rusty. City arms in red on a black shield. Remains of red paint on top.

29. HOLLYMEOAK ROAD AND PORTNALLS ROAD. 286580. On grass island in centre of cross roads beside lamp standard and signposts. Not well set in ground, with much of base exposed, and tilted over somewhat. Rather rusty. City arms in red on white shield.

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No. 30 - How Lane, How Green

**Maker's inscription on base
of coal post**

(No. 24 - Ditches Lane)

30. HOW LANE, HOW GREEN. 279578. On a bank outside the golf course beside a hedge, opposite Yew Tree Close. Well set in ground, in good condition and well painted in white with City arms in red on a white shield.

31. BRIDGE WAY, CHIPSTEAD. 275578. Well set in ground, well painted, and with City arms in red on a white shield, this post bears half a correcting plate.

32. OUTWOOD LANE, CHIPSTEAD. 273576. Set in the verge next to a road-salt bin, this post is slightly rusty, painted white, and with the City arms in red on a white shield.



References

Bourne Society Bulletins **6** (1957); **7** (1957); **8** (1957) & supplement (Robertson & Dawe list); **11** (1958); **27** (1962); **43** (1966) (Nail list); **44** (1966).

Local History Records - mostly minor references, some with sketches - **ii**, (1963), 25; **vi**, (1967), 32; **vii**, (1968), 36,40.

An odd Piece of Centenary Research in the Green Belt. From a correspondent. *The Times*, 17th May 1961

Corporation of London Coal Posts. Surrey Arch. Soc. Bull. **275** (1993)

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