

THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY

www.hundredparishes.org.uk

It is easy to take for granted the helpful signposts to be found at many of our road junctions, yet they are part of our culture and heritage. Early road signs were erected by cycling and then motoring organisations as ordinary people began to enjoy the freedom afforded by ownership of a bicycle or motor car. Standards for signage on main roads were redefined in the 1960s to satisfy faster traffic and night visibility. Fingerposts that indicate direction and distance from rural junctions are frequently much older and can merit further investigation.

Fingerposts, with arms pointing in several directions, are white with black lettering, and generally made of wood or iron. Many local examples, some almost 100 years old, were made of iron in Essex at Maldon Iron Works. The manufacturer's name is now usually obscured by many layers of paint.

Personal favourites include the fingerpost at Matching Green indicating the mileage to London – precisely 26¼ - and one north of High Roding that points to Takeley Station which closed 60 years ago. On the B1039 between Chrishall and Great Chishill, a finger points to a non-existent GREAT CHISHALL. A Henham sign shows the way to the pub, Ugley Chequers. This and all other signposts were removed for the duration of WWII lest they should aid the enemy.

Some signs at T-junctions have information on the back, albeit hidden from view. Usually this is the same as the visible side, but not always: the southerly finger of one on the B1051 in Broxted points to Broxted and Bps Stortford, but the back reveals that it has been recycled and once pointed to Wimbish Green.

As you travel along the lanes, please take time for a second look at our humble, ancient fingerposts.

Ken McDonald, Secretary

Photos:

Matching Green

High Roding

Chrishall

Henham

Broxted

Elmdon in front of church

Wendens Ambo – old and new

Maldon Iron Works