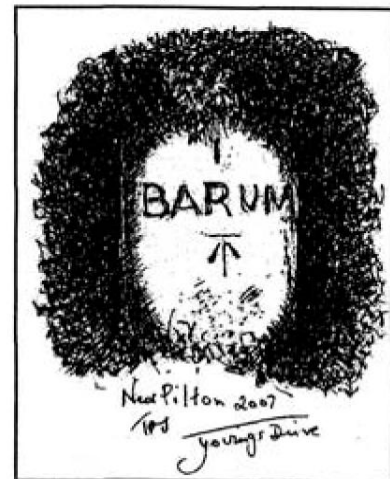


THE '1/BARUM' MILESTONES

The Barnstaple Turnpike Trust was formed in 1763 to manage all roads leading into the town.¹ At its peak the Trust covered an impressive 104 miles, making it the second largest turnpike in the county.² The network of roads included various routes from the direction of Exeter, Bideford, Ilfracombe, Bratton Fleming and Great Torrington. Just prior to its closure in 1879 Trustees agreed to set up a series of new milestones within the boundary that would be 'measured from a common centre of the whole of Barnstaple Turnpike Roads, at an expense not exceeding £200'.³ It is probable that a complete set of 104 stones was positioned at this time.

The contract for supplying the markers was agreed with J Easton & Sons of Exeter and 'a polished reddish granite quoin engraved in gilt' was inserted into the corner of the Guildhall from which distances would be measured.⁴ The quoin remains today and is inscribed with 'CENTRE OF BARUM/TURNPIKE MILE AGE/1879'. The Trust opted for a plain tombstone style of marker to be inscribed with a simple Arabic numeral and the Medieval Latin name of 'Barum' beneath. As a result a largely uniform set of stones were set at the roadside, many of which survive today but in varying states of repair. Unfortunately, further from the town the stones have suffered from decades of neglect with many succumbing to unchecked vegetation or buried in banks during road widening. Whilst a good number can still be found it is often with a great deal of perseverance.

However, in the urban aspect around the town it is quite a different story as at least seven stones are still extant at the various one-mile points. Each marker is inscribed with '1/Barum' with several sporting an OS benchmark below the inscription (see drawing). Some even retain residues of white paint in the numbers and lettering and to find such a remarkable collection still in evidence and so close to the town is certainly unprecedented in the rest of the county. Even the cities of Exeter and Plymouth can only manage three stones apiece. Is there anywhere in the UK that can better seven different markers still intact at the one mile point from a town or city? The stones can be found at:



SS 568321 Newport/Landkey Road (Barnstaple to Swimbridge)

SS 561345 Youngs Drive (possibly moved, Barnstaple to Ilfracombe)

SS 550343 Bradiford (old Barnstaple to Braunton Road)

SS 573333 Crookman's Corner (Barnstaple to Bratton Fleming)

SS 566320 South Street Newport (Barnstaple to Exeter)

SS 548323 Old Torrington Road (Barnstaple to Great Torrington)

SS 547323 Sticklepath (Barnstaple to Bideford)

References:

1. Albert, W: *The Turnpike Road System in England 1663-1840* (Cambridge, 1972).
2. Kanefsky, J: *Devon Tollhouses* (Univ. of Exeter, 1984).
3. Rogers, W H: Barnstaple Turnpike Trust, *TDA*, Ixxiv (1942), pp.139-67.
4. Rogers, W H: *op cit* (1942).

Tim Jenkinson (Devon)

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