

## 14. Conclusions

These boundary stones, although not ancient, are clearly important historical and landscape features of Bodmin Moor and have been neglected for many years. Right at the outset of this project it has become clear that few landowners or commoners knew what the stones represented or how many there were and further research is required to asked many of the questions that remain unsolved.

### 14.1 Boundary stones discovered

When this project was first considered in 2004, it was suggested that there were no more than fifty boundary stones on Blisland Commons, and the project was developed around this estimate. However, by the time the project was well under way and the desktop survey was completed, it was realised that, on paper at least, there were almost three times as many. The final total numbered 145, plus one modern waymarker/boundary stone and of these, 101 have been found and recorded, while 44 remain missing. Furthermore where we anticipated perhaps 10 fallen boundary stones to re-erect, we have found twice as many: 21 were discovered either lying down or at an acute angle. The problem of this has been that the unexpected large numbers of boundary stones have increased the time element at all stages, requiring more recording, photographs, survey time and research; but the positive side is that the increase in numbers discovered has helped to make more sense of who they represented.

### 14.2 Losses

The greatest number of losses have been of those that were set up beside the A.30 trunk road. During the last century sections of this highway have been widened on a number of occasions, with little consideration for the protection or survival of these historic markers. However, in recent years far more considerable has been afforded these stones, and this was shown during this project when contracting staff for the Highways Agency gave their support for the project and agreed to re-erect one of the stones at Temple crossroads, while working there. As well as the A.30 losses, many boundary stones have also been lost in the marshy valleys of Blisland Commons. It is still possible that further boundary stones may come to light if areas of common are cleared of gorse.

### 14.3 Reasons for erecting the boundary stones

For many years, it has been commonly assumed that many of the boundary stones on Blisland Commons were set up to mark mineral or mining bounds. Certainly, it is clear that many of the landowners, during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, on Blisland Commons, held mining interests. Davies Giddy (alias Gilbert) was at one time the Bodmin member of the Lords, Bounders, Adventurers and Tinnors, while Gregor is recorded as attending these meetings. Sir John Morshead was the Lord Warden of the Stannaries, while John Wallis was at one time Vice Warden of the Stannaries. The Revd. Edward Collins is recorded as encouraging China Clay prospecting on Blisland Commons, while James Hayward, the Molesworths and Sir Henry Onslow allowed their land to be used for prospecting or China Clay extraction. Lord Clinton and the Trefusis family were prominent landowners in the Redruth area and held mineral rights in west Cornwall, while Francis Hearle Rodd of Trebartha was a partner in a copper smelting works in Swansea. All these landowners, whose marks or initials are carved on the boundary stones at Blisland Commons had some mining connections. This was the age of Cornwall's industrial revolution, of which mining was a major player.

However, the evidence collected during this boundary stone survey suggests that none of these boundary stones were set up to mark mineral or mining bounds, although the ownership of the associated mineral rights may have been a motivating factor in that ownership. Their main purpose was to denote land ownership in the following ways:

- To mark the boundary between manors, for example the boundary stones across Emblance Downs mark the boundary between the manors of Blisland and Hamatethy, while at Trehudreth Downs, between the manor of Barlendew and Trehudreth.
- To mark the boundary between individual areas of common land, for example between Greenbarrow Downs and Newton Downs, or Manor Common and Menacrin Downs.
- To mark smaller areas of land that were cut out of the common, and in separate ownership or attached to a particular farm or holding. For example at Manor Common the area around the Trippet Stones was held by Bedwithiel, while the land cut out of Manor Common on the western side known as Nailbarrow was held by Deacons Farm.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, many of these boundary stones were later adopted to mark commoners rights in the 1965 Commons Registration. Therefore, they do not only represent landscape features of an earlier age, but many still have a function in the twenty first century.

From the evidence discovered during the survey, it is clear that these boundary stones were erected by land agents and stewards representing the landlord or manor. While some of the landowners did play an active part in overseeing these moorland areas, by far the majority were too busy in positions of power to have the time to make decisions about these large tracts of wasteland. Some held vast areas of land throughout Cornwall and England and would have left the day to day running of their estates to their stewards or land agents. We do, however have evidence to prove that Sir Arscott Molesworth beat the bounds of the manor of Blisland on horse-back in 1816, and that John Hayward and his neighbouring landowners viewed the Hayward land holdings in Blisland in 1866 and that this viewing subsequently resulted in a number of additional boundary stones being erected. We even have the name Josiah Stevens, as the person responsible for erecting these stones. Was Stevens responsible for quarrying the boundary stones, or carving the letters, or for just organising the work?

#### 14.4 Dating

When all the boundary stones were identified in the desktop survey and checked against the parish tithe maps for each parish it soon became apparent that only a third of the stones existed in 1840. Furthermore those that existed were on the western side of the Blisland Commons, on land at a slightly lower level and that which is closer to farms and smallholdings. The parish tithe maps do not show any boundary stones on the remoter eastern areas of common land, like Menacrin Downs, Shallow Water Common, Brockabarrow Common and Sprey Moor. This suggests that the latter may not have been so intensely worked during this period, or only used for transhumanance during the summer months.

In chapter 5, an argument is put forward to suggest that some of the boundary stones on the Trehudreth and Greenbarrow boundary were erected prior to 1809. A document referred to in chapter 9 records the presence of a boundary stone at Temple Water in 1817. Unfortunately, with the absence of large scale maps earlier than the parish tithe maps of the

1840s, or additional documentary evidence, it is not possible to give a precise date when boundary stones started to be erected on Blisland Commons. It seems likely, however, that some of the boundary stones may have been set up by the end of the eighteenth century, while the latest at Ivey's Plain may have been set up during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

By the late eighteenth century, Cornwall saw the introduction of turnpike roads and with them a small industry producing granite milestones. It is recorded that on the turnpike between Launceston and Camelford, the Revd. William Phillips, rector of Lanteglos by Camelford, cut with his own hands the figures on the granite milestones. Considering the large number of both milestones and boundary stones in Cornwall, the carving of these must have been a regular requirement.

All the boundary stones have been carved from 'grass rock' or surface weathered granite, which would have been obtained locally, perhaps around the Carbilly Tor area. Several of the stones display the remains of drill holes indicating that they were split using the post 1800 method, rather than the earlier long grooves associated with the use of wedges.

#### 14.5 Re-use of earlier boundaries

By far the majority of these manorial boundary stones were set up on earlier boundaries, some man-made and others natural. On Emblance Downs, Trehudreth Downs, Kerrow Downs Metherin Downs, Greenbarrow Downs and Lady Down, boundary stones have been erected on or beside medieval earth banks and ditches the remains of old hedge lines. Furthermore many more boundary stones reinforce natural boundaries, often streams and rivers, at Kerrow Downs, Menacrin Downs, Greenbarrow Downs, Newton Downs, Broakabarrow Common, Shallow Water Common and Sprey Moor.

So were they really necessary? They were clearly more visible from a distance: the earth banks between Kerrow Downs and Metherin are very indistinct in places and have been eroded away through time with extensive grazing. Furthermore, those boundary stones marking boundaries along streams were sometimes necessary as tin streaming, especially below Shallow Water and Brockabarrow Commons, necessitated the diversion and or division of a stream, creating a confused site where boundaries would have been less defined. Nevertheless, some boundary stones may have been erected purely as a

statement by the gentry and landowners, to warn those whose land they were on, a statement of who was in charge. The number of boundary stones erected during this period reflects the growing importance placed on landownership and the potential for exploiting minerals beneath it.

Out of the 101 boundary stones discovered, only one was found to be a parish boundary stone, marking the parish boundary between Blisland and the modern parish of Bolventor. Although there are further boundary stones marking the parish boundary, for example at Menacrin on the Blisland and Temple boundary, these stones have manorial or landowners' letters rather than parish marks. This appears unusual when compared to the neighbouring Davidstow Moors, where the majority of the boundary stones are parish stones, displaying an **A** for Advent or a **D** for Davidstow, or on East Moor, where they are carved with an **N** for North Hill and an **A** for Altarnun. The absence of mineral or mining boundary stones is also surprising considering that so many of the landowners were so actively involved in mining activities of one sort or another.

#### 14.6 Recommendations for future preservation and research.

At present, these boundary stones have no statutory protection, and have never been considered worthy of preservation. However today, with the foundation of a national Milestone Society that campaigns for better protection for milestones, fingerposts and a wide array of roadside furniture, a place for some of the boundary stones is already afforded. Although boundary stones on the open moorland are more susceptible to damage and erosion due to cattle, rather than vehicles, routine checks are needed.

Recommendations for their future preservation include:

- A regular monitoring system - to assure their continued protection.
- The boundary stones should be listed, to give some statutory protection.
- More research on the boundary stones is required, as many questions remain unanswered.
- Extend the survey to other parts of Bodmin Moor.