Burton-on-Trent Borough 1878 – boundary markers. A partly desk based study.

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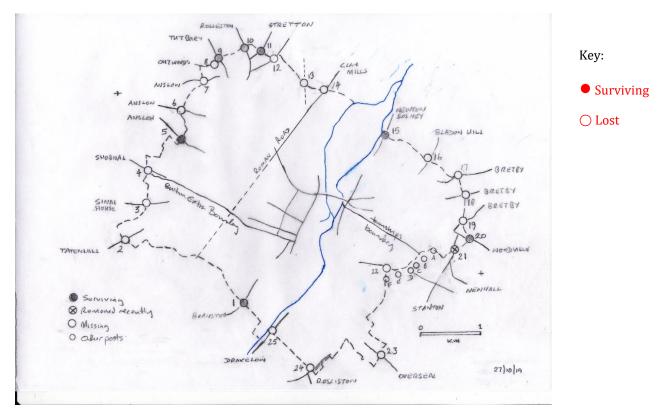
Burton first became a borough under Nigel, the Abbott of Burton[1] at the end of the of the12[th] century. The abbey had been established by Wulfric Spot, Earl of Mercia in 1002[2]. Abbott Nigel laid out the basic street plan, establishing burgages along the main street from the 'new' River Trent to the bridge at Horninglow. The surrounding villages remained detached from the settlement, although Abbey property[3].

At the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII, the abbey lands passed to Sir William Paget in 1546[4]. The rise of the brewing industry gave rise to a sizable population for the town and outlying villages of 9,768 in 1851, of which over a thousand were brewery workers. Parliamentary Acts were passed in 1698, 1779, and 1853 to enable improved administration of the town and a further act of 1878[5] which relates to the subject of this short account of the newly established boundary. This date also saw the inclusion of Winshill and Stapenhill into the town. Branston and Stretton remain separate parishes[6].

Cast iron posts[7] were erected at the intersection of the boundary with all the roads, tracks and paths exiting the town (fig. 2). Each post stood 3 ft (0.92m) from the ground, 5 x 5in (12cm) at the base and 6½ x 6½in (16cm) at the top (fig. 1). Made by Philip Halbard of the Britannia Foundry[8], each one carried the same legend 'BURTON UPON TRENT – BOROUGH BOUNDARY' on two lines, with the makers details at the base. Given their location when placed, they would have been seen easily by travellers.

Figure 1 maker's mark, post no.9

Key:

● Surviving

○ Lost

Figure 2

The posts today.

I undertook a survey in 2015 to see how many of the posts survived (fig. 1) by consulting large scale Ordnance Survey and locally published mapping[9], creating a table with the results numbered clockwise from the River Trent south end of the town[10].

The first post (no. 1, fig. 3) is on The B5018, next to 139 Branston Road against the northern edge of Leicester Line railway property. Post nos. 2 and on routes leading to Tatenhill, Sinai House and Shobnall are missing, now being within Branston Locks housing development and properties by Shobnall Brook (alongside the B5017).

Post no. 5 (fig. 4) on the footpath to Anslow is hidden in the bushes by the track to Anslow.

Post no. 6, leading to Upper Outwoods was visible until a few years ago but was lost during work at the nearby hospital. Nos. 7 and 8 were probably removed as a result of housebuilding. No 8 stood by Horninglow Brook. The most visible of the entire series stands in Tutbury Road by the bridge over brook (no. 9, fig. 5). Today painted white, but with the characters unhighlighted, it can be seen from some distance along the A5111[11].

Further along the brook at Rolleston road, post no. 10 (fig. 6) is set in a low wall, but not in its original position, which was on the west side of the road. The culverted brook then leads

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

to post no. 11 which, due to landscaping and the culverted watercourse, now stands alone in Horninglow recreation park (fig. 7).

Post no. 12-14 by footpaths to Stretton and by Derby road are all missing. Post no 13 was removed following construction of the Burton to Tutbury Railway line[12]. Similarly, post no. 14 by Horninglow Brook was removed during culverting work below Derby road.

Figure 9

Figure 10

The next post is to the east of the Trent in front of a garden wall by the B5008, near Dale Brook[13] (no 15, fig. 8). Post nos. 16 and 17 by the lanes to Bladon Hill and Bretby are missing, probably removed during house building. No. 18, a parish boundary *stone* by the lane to Common Farm is missing[14] as is Post no. 19, removed during housing work. Meanwhile post no. 20 is located on Ashby road (fig. 9, A5111) by the hedgerow[15].

Moving on, there is no trace of boundary post no. 21 in Brizlincote Lane, it having been removed in 2017 and erected at a nearby private location. There is, however, a photograph in Geograph (fig. 10)[16]. A little further down the hillside the municipal boundary joined the Brizlincote Brook where it crossed over to Stapenhill[17].

There are no further boundary markers from this point back to the river Trent at Waterside. Construction of the Burton to Leicester Branch Railway through south Derbyshire in 1848 dissected the parish, leaving the rural part south to the Ryle Brook by Mares Yard Bridge alienated from the town.

Between here and post no. 23 are six posts (A-F) shown on OS 1:10 000 and 1:25 000 published mapping in the 1970s and 1980s. Although not relevant to this study, they none-the-less represent one of many boundary changes in 20th century Burton[18].

Post No. 22 is not depicted on any of the OS maps I consulted, but most probably existed due to the existence of a well-trodden track to Newhall crossing the county boundary at this point. Another on Stanton Road (A444, no. 23) was probably removed during council house building. There may have been two further posts, nos. 24 and 25, at the edge of Leicester Line railway property.

Discussion

I walked about a mile from home to school as a boy in the 1960s. Half way along my route the road passed over the local brook by which stood and old metal boundary post. Although it was rusty, unkempt and dirty I could just make out the the lettering. It was exactly half-way between home and school; I wondered if it might be more than a coincidence! The survey I undertook recently indicates, as I had suspected, the post survived along with only a few others that had originally encircled the town. The remaining posts seem to exist due to having been unaffected by later agricultural, settlement encroachment or theft.

The boundary markers were commissioned in the 1870s as a visible expression of local municipal pride. Earlier town expansion and town limit change had been depicted on maps commissioned by land owners and borough officials since the mid-18th century[19]. The 'Plan of the town of Burton upon Trent in the County of Stafford, 1836' by Thomas Spooner depicts the built-up environment with special attention given to the ward and borough bounds created in

1853[20]. At this date the western borough limit ran alongside the Tent and Mersey Canal from south of Shobnall Road to just north of Horninglow Wharf. The eastern limit rang along the eastern arm of the river Trent.

The 1860s to 1880s saw a dramatic increase in house building across the town, spreading further west towards the Needwood bluffs and spilling into the villages of Winshill and Stapenhill. The built-up elements of these settlements soon became incorporated into the borough in 1878. The Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale Staffordshire County Series sheets of the town shows further expansion.

The existence of the posts is not mentioned in either recently commissioned historic character assessment or parish neighbourhood plans[21] which suggest these heritage assets are not considered of importance locally. Being unlisted monuments, they have consequently suffered the ravages of time. The local large-scale Ordnance Survey County Series maps are the only reliable source for the markers, no doubt as the 1882 survey would have been undertaken because of the implementation of the 1878 Act.

No doubt there are other examples of town and borough boundary markers. Chester has many 'mayoral' boundary stones from the late Victorian period[22], but I'm not aware of any others. The Survey's record of those in Burton may be a rare reference to such heritage assets.

Bill > any more to add??

Table

A	B	C	D	E	F
No.	**Grid Ref (SK)**	**Location**	**To**	**Side**	**County**
	2449 2107	*River Trent*			
1	2407 2152	Branston Road	Branston	W	Staffs
	2241 2242	*Trent and Mersey Canal*			
2	2212 2256	track near Lawns Farm	Tatenhill	S	Staffs
3	2249 2312	footpath to Sinai House	Sinai House (Tatenhill)	W	Staffs
4	2247 2373	Shobnall Road	Rough Hay	S	Staffs
5	2305 2422	footpath	Anslow	E	Staffs
6	2303 2466	Lower Outwoods Road	Anslow common	S	Staffs
7	2336 2520	Field Lane	Anslow common	S	Staffs
8	2360 2543	Kitling Greaves Lane	Upper Outwoods	N	Staffs
9	2366 2556	Tutbury Road	Tutbury	E	Staffs
10	2409 2573	Rolleston Road	Rolleston	E	Staffs
11	2436 2567	SW corner, Horninglow Park	Bitham Lane, Stretton	E	Staffs
12	2457 2554	footpath to Stretton	Stretton		Staffs
	2488 2538	*Trent and Mersey Canal*			
13	2510 2524	Horninglow Branch railway	Derby Road	E	Staffs
14	2542 2503	Derby Road	Clay Mills	E	Staffs
	2588 2484	*River Trent*			
15	2641 2427	Newton Road	Newton Solney	E	Staffs
16	2712 2389	Wheatley Lane	Bladon Hill	W	Derbs
17	2761 2360	Hawfield Lane	Bretby	S	Derbs
18	2775 2372	lane to Common Farm	Common Farm	S	Derbs
19	2769 2285	Bretby Lane	Bretby	S	Derbs
20	2782 2255	Ashby Road	Woodville	N	Derbs
21	2756 2238	Brizlincote Lane	Stanton	N	Staffs
22	2636 2211	end of Woods Lane	Newhall	S	Staffs
23	2632 2065	Stanton Road	Overseal	S	Derbs
24	2514 2044	Rosliston Road	Rosliston	N	Derbs
25	2455 2103	Waterside Road	Drakelow	N	Derbs
	2449 2107	*River Trent*			

Key to Columns:

A   Number of post on location map.

B National Grid Reference (all SK). Plotted either on 1:25 000 (Explorer Map), Ordnance Survey online mapping, or handheld GPS locator.

C General location of post.

D Destination of road, lane, track or path.

E Location of post beside route by cardinal compass point.

F Historical county.

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[1] He served from 1094 to 1114. Formerly of Winchester, he began building the west end of the church.

[2] For a discussion of the related boundary clauses see *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon Staffordshire: The Charter Evidence*, Della Hook, 1983, 97-101 and fig. 7.

[3] Colin C Owen, *Burton upon Trent. The Development of Industry*, (1978)

[4] Colin C Owen, *Burton upon Trent. The Illustrated History,* (1994).

[5] For the incorporation of the town as a Municipal Borough, later to become a County Borough (1901 to 1974).

[6] 'Burton-upon-Trent: Local government', in A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 9, Burton-Upon-Trent, ed. Nigel J Tringham (London, 2003), fig 5.

[7] With the exception of boundary *stone* no 18.

[8] 'Britannia foundry in Horninglow Street was established by Philip Halbard and Joseph Wright in 1850. The business was failing by 1870, and the foundry had evidently been closed by 1879.' *Burton-upon-Trent: Local government', in A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 9, Burton-upon-Trent*, ed. Nigel J Tringham (London, 2003)

[9] 1: 2,500 scale County Series sheets: Staffordshire XL.8, XL.11, XL.12, XL.15, XLI.9, XLI.13; and Derbyshire LVII.9, LVII.14, LIX.4, LX.1. Also 10,000 National Grid Series, 1:25,000 First Series, and East Staffordshire Website mapping (OS).

[10] I have not sought any *unpublished* sources.

[11] http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/3987097

[12] The North Staffordshire Railway, known locally as the 'Jinny' line.

[13] http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/4142107

[14] Probably of medieval or post-medieval date. It is depicted on OS County Series mapping.

[15] http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/4142126

[16] http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/4142112

[17] "When the municipal borough was created in 1878, the rest of Burton Extra (274 a.) was added, along with a further 840 a. from Horninglow, 25 a. from Branston, and parts of Stapenhill (769 a.) and Winshill (607 a.)" 'Burton-upon-Trent: Administrative areas', in A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 9, Burton-Upon-Trent, ed. Nigel J Tringham (London, 2003), p. 22.

[18] 10,000 National Grid Series. Sheet SK 22SE, published 1972; and 1:25,000 Second 'Pathfinder' Series, Sheet 852, edition A, revised 1950-74/81, published 1981.

[19] The earliest known example being William Wyatt's map of the manor of Burton, 1758 to 1780, comprising nine township maps. Staffordshire Record Office, D(W)1734/2/3/131 - /140. The township boundaries may be inferred from the individual sheets. See Lez Watson, A*n Historical Atlas of Horninglow Parish, Burton-on-Trent* (forthcoming).

[20] An earlier map of 1847 by William Wesley includes Burton township boundary (only).

[21] See *Burton-upon-Trent Historic Character Assessment*, Staffordshire County Council (2012) and i.e. *Horninglow and Eton Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2023* (2014).

[22] See https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/4834511.