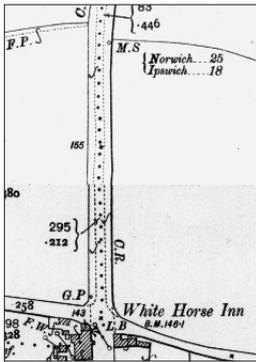


## NOTES FROM THORNHAM

### A MILESTONE

Of the 200 or so milestones that once stood in Suffolk, about half survive. This is a good rate when we remember the ravages of road works and weather and also that, to confuse invaders, all road signs were removed or obliterated in 1940. This made travel difficult, particularly as locals were discouraged from giving directions to strangers. By 1943 the threat of invasion was less pressing and signs were returned to their old positions, subject to labour being available and someone remembering where each one went.

You have probably noticed the milestones along the A140. This one is in Stoke Ash, but only by a few yards as the border with Thornham Magna runs down the middle of the road. It stands between the White Horse and the



27½	Brockford Street, Griffin	83½
	To Eye, by Thornton, 5½ m. 	
	London to EYE 89 m.	
26½	* Thwaite	84½
25	Stoke	86
24½	Old Black Bull	86½
	At the 4 mile-stone from Brockford,	
	To Eye 2 m. 	
	London to EYE 89½ m.	
23	Yaxley	88
	1¼ m. further,	
	To Eye 1¼ m. 	

chapel, and in summer is hidden by vegetation. Its position and inscriptions are shown on this large scale Ordnance Survey map of 1885.

The stone therefore probably dates from the days when the road was a turnpike and knowing distances was vital for, among other things, locating potholes, giving directions and calculating tolls and fares. The extract from *Patterson's Roads* of 1829 shows the mileages and uses our Stoke stone. Distances from Norwich are on the left and from London on the right.

Turnpike trusts were set up to borrow money to build and maintain their roads and in exchange levied tolls. The Ipswich to Scole trust was formed in 1711, but Scole to Norwich not until 1768.

There had been earlier irregular coach services, but in 1785 the Norwich to London Royal Mail coaches began running both ways, six days a week. But conditions could be bad, and Harry Rose told how his forebears had rescued a coach carrying Lord Nelson when it became stuck in the mud in Stoke Ash.

The golden age of the turnpike and stage coach, when speeds of 10mph and more could be reliably achieved, was short: from the 1820s when Macadam's principles of road construction were adopted until 1849 when the railway arrived and overnight took away so much of the traffic. Major roads were then quiet and neglected until the arrival of the petrol engine.