guide stoops
of derbyshire

Before the spread of turnpike roads in Derbyshire from the mid 18th century and the subsequent establishment of milestones and signposts at junctions, travellers had to rely on Guide Stoops (stones) to help them find their way, often across lonely and difficult terrain. These stoops were introduced in, or shortly after, 1709 to suppliment existing navigational aids such as cairns, crosses, waymarkers and poles.

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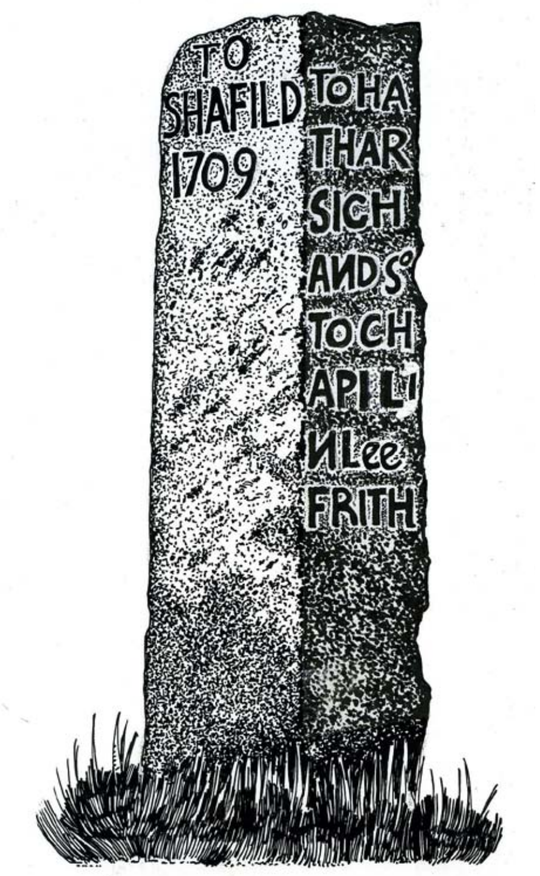
E1 Longshaw Gate
Sheffield - Chesterfield - Dronfield -
Stoney Middleton - Tideswell - Dronfield



E2 Longshaw Park
Chesterfield - Sheffield - Tideswell - Hathersage

E3 White Edge
Bakewell - Dronfield - Sheffield - Tideswell

E5 Big Moor: close to A621
Sheffield - Bakewell

It was left to the discretion of the parish surveyor as to the design and siting of the stoops - there was no standardisation - but most stand between 1-2 metres above ground and measure between 250 and 350 mm square. Occasionally stones local to the site were pressed into service whatever their shape or size. Most were made from local gritstone or hard dolomitic limestone and weighed around 360-410 kilos. Stones would have been carried to site by horse and cart or dragged on a sled before being lowered into a hole about 600mm deep.

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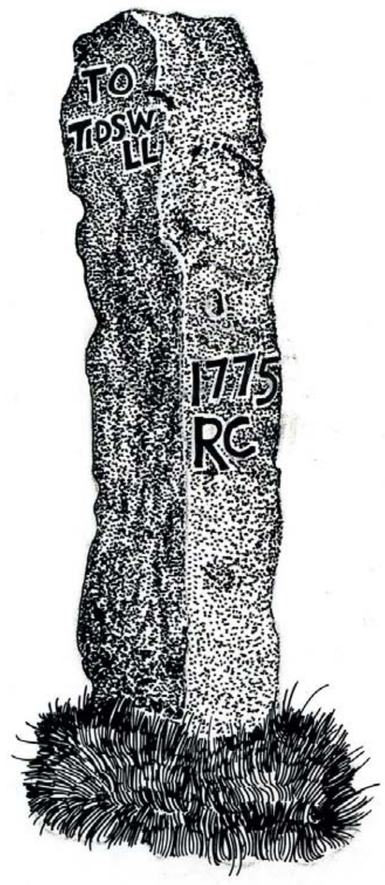
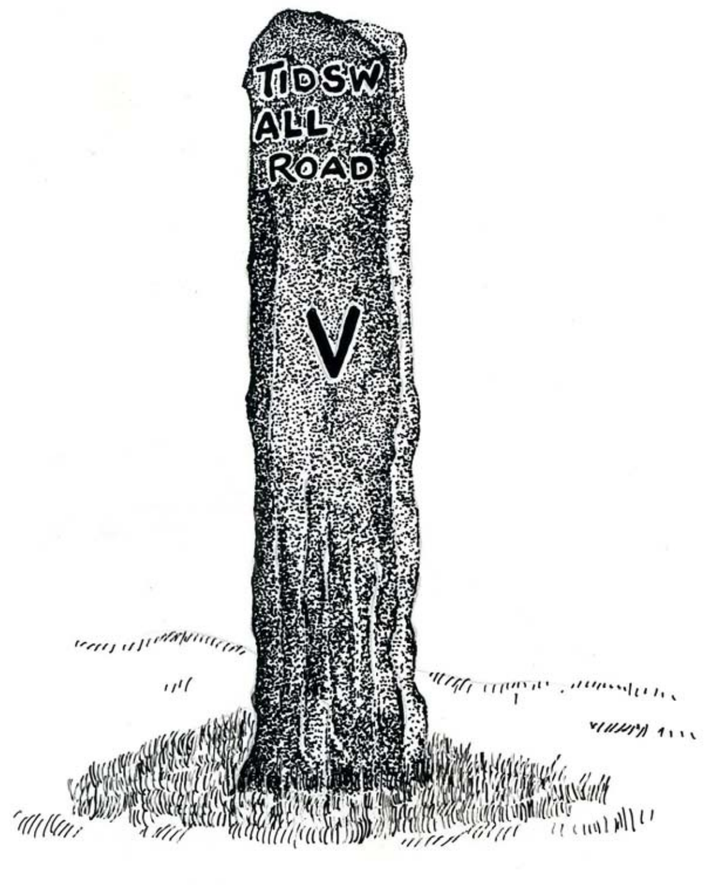
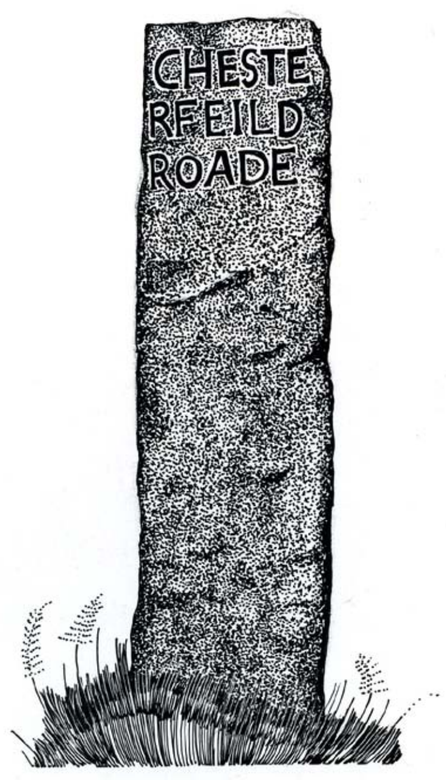


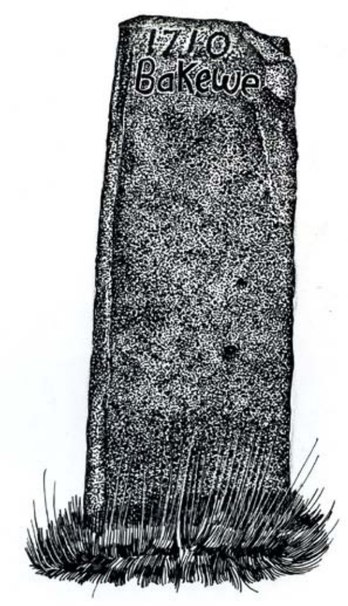
E6 Deadshaw Sick
Tideswell - Sheffield - Bakewell



E7 Curbar Head
Sheffield - Dronfield - Tideswell - Chesterfield



E8 Eaglestone Flat
Chesterfield



E9 Shillito Wood
Bakewell - Chesterfield - Dronfield

Text was incised on the stones with 50-60mm letters, usually capitals, and deployed ingenious solutions to problems of tight layout. Spelling was equally varied, preserving early 18th century local vernacular. CHASTERFIELD, OFFERTON and DARBY were common destinations. On many stones, fingers or hands show the direction of travel. Where these are missing the convention was to go to the right. An intriguing exception is at Goatscliff where the mirrored BAKEWELL ROAD indicates a turn to the left.

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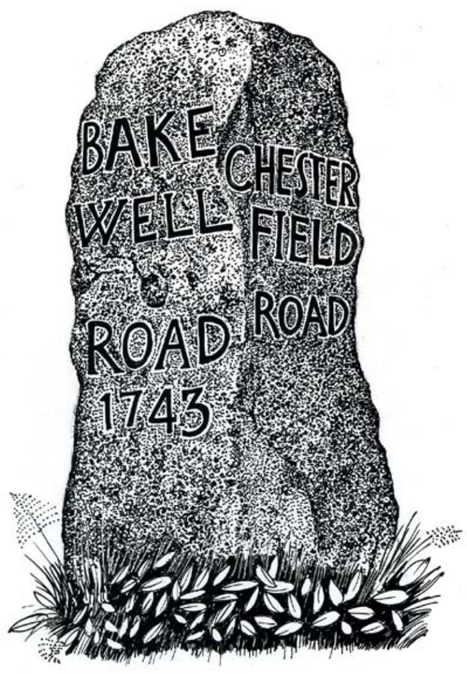
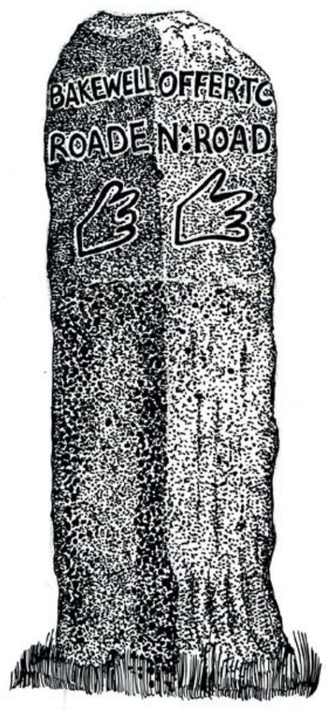


E10 Bleak House
Bakewell - Chesterfield -
Dronfield - Stoney Middleton

E14 Brampton East Moor (nr Hob Hurst's House)
Chesterfield - Sheffield - Bakewell

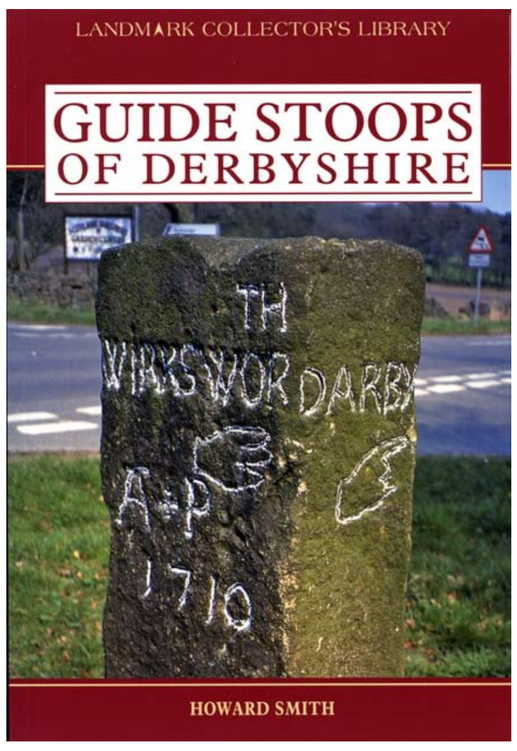


E16 Beeley Moor 2
Chesterfield - Chatsworth - Bakewell - Alfreton

W3 Ball Cross
Chesterfield - Sheffield - Bakewell

This exhibition is based on Howard Smith's classic study, the *Guide Stoops of Derbyshire*, itself one of the inspirations for *Companion Stones*. The book is available from good bookshops and the Moorlands Centre in Edale.

Illustrations in this exhibition are from the book and were created by Chris Bilton; the exhibition was designed by Charles Monkhouse.



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