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## **WHERE EXACTLY IS MALDENS AND COOMBE?**

An October 2020 update, by David Henry, of Julian McCarthy's paper of 9th March 2014 (Coombes & Malden Heritage Society)

### **Preamble**

Julian's paper provided a very interesting and quite comprehensive account of the boundary of our former borough but did acknowledge some gaps in his investigation eg the waterside boundary, and included speculation on the boundary within Richmond Park. This paper addresses those matters, provides up-to-date information on the current state of boundary markers, and presents new findings.

### **Methodology**

Julian's paper, particularly his annotated map and photographs, provided the main basis both for our preparation and field-work. In addition, reference was made to the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 map. The boundary was explored entirely on foot and in four walks in October 2020. On each walk, the boundary markers found by Julian were photographed and we also made a diligent search for further boundary markers.

## Findings

### 1. Motspur Park boundary post



The boundary markers found by Julian are still in place with one exception. The northern parapet of the road-bridge over Beverley Brook at Motspur Park has been demolished and the metal boundary post found there by Julian is no longer there. The area is fenced off, presumably for repair. (Perhaps the Society should contact the Council to gain an assurance that the boundary post will be reinstated in situ, having first, of course, established whether it is Kingston or Merton which bears the responsibility!)

## 2. Additional boundary markers

### a. Railway Fence near Hogsmill and Sheephouse Way





Julian discovered a boundary stone on the north side of the path down to the Hogsmill where the path meets the Sheephouse Way.

As this was some distance East of the river (which we presumed was itself the boundary) we speculated that there might be others, too, away from the river. We searched by going due South from the boundary stone he found, along a garden fence until we met the the railway fence which we then followed towards the river. We discovered a boundary stone just outside the railway fence near a small building that was behind the fence. The stone's inscription faced the fence but we cleared rubbish and ivy and managed to photograph it.

## b. Church Lane









Descending in a westerly direction along Church Lane, Old Malden, a Kingston Boundary sign will be seen on the left (South) side of the road. Directly opposite on the North side of the road, there is a Malden and Coombe boundary post. It is part-buried at the end of the fence of Boundary Lodge. (It was discovering this post that initiated Abigail's interest in the Boundary).



c. Beverley Brook







In our search along the Beverley Brook we found a large stone inscribed "Parish Boundary 1861" on the eastern bank of the Brook about 100 yards South of the playing fields south of the A3 bridge over Beverley Brook near Robin Hood Gate to Richmond Park. Could this also have served as a borough boundary marker? Alongside it was a horizontal slab which we turned over: it had no inscription.

### **3. Anomalies**

#### **a. South-East boundary**

Towards the South-East of the map in Julian's paper, the boundary goes around three sides of a square of land between Beverley Brook and Merton Cemetery. However, on the Ordnance Survey map, the boundary is shown as following the Beverley Brook with the square of land being part of Sutton Borough. Has the boundary been redrawn or is there an error? If the latter, which map has the error?

#### **b. Boundary within Richmond Park**

Julian's map shows a roughly square area that formed part of the borough yet lay within Richmond Park. Julian speculated that the eastern border of that area ran from Ladderstile Gate to the metalled road that cuts East to West across the Park, that the boundary then followed the road West to Ham Gate, then turned southwards, following the wall of the Park.

There are two issues that arise:

i. the eastern border, as can be seen on Julian's map, does not strike northwards directly from Ladderstile Gate but, instead, first goes a little way West along the Park wall before striking northwards. We spent some time along that wall in an unsuccessful search for some marker of this change of direction;

ii. the extent of the speculated northwards stretch of the eastern border is disproportionate if the metalled road were to be its limit. I did a scaled comparison with the length of Warren Road and found that the eastern border should strike westwards some way short of the metalled road. To validate this, I also compared the areas of the in-Park borough and the triangle formed by Warren Road/George Road/Kingston Hill: they are roughly equal.

If the eastern border ran to the metalled road, the in-Park borough area would need to be shown as far larger on Julian's map. The cartographer seems to have drawn the map with some care so there is no reason to doubt accuracy in this part of the map. My speculation is supported by the Ordnance Survey map where a Boundary Stone (B.S.) is shown adjacent to the West wall, roughly due West of Thatched Cottage.

To try to find evidence of my speculated in-Park border, we first searched for boundary markers in a line parallel to and to the West of a small stream that runs North from a pool North-West of Ladderstile Gate. We found nothing. We then searched the area around Thatched Cottage for any marker for the slight change in direction - a kink - in the North in-park boundary. We found nothing. Finally, we searched for some considerable time for the Boundary Stone at the West wall but found nothing. The supposed location is shown below.



There is a pillar which once was topped by a sundial at Thatched House. Could this have been the "kink" point? See below.



## **Confirmation of the continued existence of boundary posts and stones found by Julian**

With the exception of the Motspur Park Bridge boundary post, all markers found by Julian remain in situ. We photographed them all as seen below.

### **1 Sheephouse Way**







Following clearance of vegetation

## 2 Worcester Park





3 Near A3 pedestrian underpass





#### 4 On Beverley Bridge





5 At George Road/Kingston Hill junction



6 Near Boundary Lane on Kingston Road



7 Opposite Boundary Lane



## Red herrings!

In our quest for additional boundary markers, we particularly focussed on points where the boundary showed an abrupt change of direction or was an extensive length of roughly straight course.

Along Marsh Lane, the boundary suddenly cuts North at the sewage works so we searched hard there. We thought we had found a boundary post, toppled and behind the fence near the sewage works entrance but it turned out to be a concrete "DANGER" post: see below.







Along the bank of the Beverley Brook, we found a concrete slab which turned out to be a marker for an electricity cable: see below.



Where the path alongside the Beverley Brook emerges into the playing fields prior to Beverley Bridge, there was a concrete structure that turned out to be a corner-guard: see below.



## **Conclusions**

We feel we have:

added, if only a little, to Julian's work in identifying these relics from our borough's past by finding further boundary markers;

confirmed the continued existence of boundary markers found by Julian;

alerted the Society to the Motspur Park Bridge issue;

raised the matter of the South-East boundary; and

proposed an alternative to Julian's speculation on the in-Park borough boundary.

We also had a jolly good time doing all this: thank you Julian for providing the impetus through your 2014 paper.

**David Henry**

30 October 2020

## **SUPPLEMENTARY COMMENTS**

We sent our paper to Robin who responded with commendable speed. We laughed about the way our earnest concern and advice about the marker which stood on the bridge at Motspur Park had been efficiently pre-empted by him and about it residing in his back garden after being rescued: the Society acting proactively!

As to the markers themselves, a range of questions arise:

### **Date of erection**

On their likely date of erection, my supposition is that the proud new borough would have been keen to mark out its territory as soon as possible after its incorporation (dogs and lamp-posts come to mind!)

### **Who made the posts and "stones"?**

The posts are almost certainly made of cast-iron. While Sussex was once a major centre for that industry, it had declined there by the 1930's so I suspect that a firm in the Black Country was commissioned: the industry still survives there. We looked for an indication on posts but found none. However, Robin had merely to

go into his garden to do a comprehensive check! I suggested that he carefully examine the full surface area of the two pieces of the broken post as some casting firms include in their casts the firm's name and, sometimes, also a date. The "stones" are more likely to have been made locally, even, perhaps by the council itself.

### **Why posts and "stones"?**

A further question is why posts and "stones" (the latter are, of course, concrete castings). I suspect the answer is straightforward. Posts cost more, look smart and present no hazard so are ideal as part of street-furniture: "stones" are cheaper and are easily placed in non-street locations. It would be interesting to know whether posts and "stones" were erected in one operation or if priority was given to posts-erection.

### **Are there more posts and "stones" to be found?**

Are there any more markers that are hidden away elsewhere on the boundary, I obviously don't know. We estimated where they should have been erected, in particular where the boundary changes direction, and checked such points with particular care. My guess is that all posts have now been found but that some "stones" remain unfound and some may have been removed.

On possibly removed "stones", the missing boundary stone in Richmond Park is telling. It is shown on the latest OS 1: 25,000 map (the Six-inch map) and OS mapping is probably the best in the world. But they, like all works of Man, are not without error: as a consequence of one such error, I almost fell to my death on Cader Idris! I suspect that the "B.S." on the map is a legacy error ie it shows something that was once there but its removal has not been noted when updating the map. The apparent absence, from our fieldwork, of any other markers in the Park and certainly on the map of other "stones" which surely must once have been there, implies their deliberate removal. I'm assuming here that the "B.S." on the map marked our borough boundary but, of course, it may have had some other function.

Are there more "stones" out there? There may well be. There were areas on our walks which were covered by impenetrable vegetation and others which were on private property.

Of the former, further "stones" might exist in the woodland bordering the Hogsmill South of the A3 and, with the precedent of that we found by the railway there, perhaps another lies in the

impenetrable vegetation beside the railway fence running from the Hogsmill towards Berrylands Station.

On the latter, the area between Marsh Lane and Boundary Lane is the most promising. We searched Marsh Lane very carefully as the boundary turns North from it: surely that turn must once have been marked. But perhaps fence-erection and replacement by the sewage works has destroyed it. The sewage works area itself we were unable to check, but I did a solo foray into the grounds of the Chelsea Training area, walking the western fence but found nothing. From Julian's map, the line of the boundary as it runs from the Hogsmill to Boundary Lane, is very contorted and perhaps either followed a stream or former field boundaries.

The puzzling square area South of Motspur Park we've noted in our paper should also surely have been marked but we found nothing: did we miss some?

If the relevant archives still exist and are accessible, the work done by Julian, Abigail and I could be usefully supplemented by a search for answers to most of these questions. But we'll leave that to someone else!



## **In conclusion**

In The Village Voice in 2008 Robin proposed that people join him to "beat the bounds": he had one volunteer so the project was shelved. Perhaps it could now be revived. The boundary is, for the most part, a pleasant and interesting walk but, due to its length, best done in four or five sections.