

Rodney Ousbey 1949 - 2020

Rodney Ousbey was a Warwickshire member of The Milestone Society and a regular attendee at the early Warwickshire Group Milestone Society Meetings. He had a wealth of road transport and turnpike-related knowledge and more particularly about horse-drawn coaches and carriages. He ran a business restoring and maintaining an impressive variety of coaches, carriages and traps in his rather ramshackle workshops which belied their amazing and often beautiful content in the form of the superb horse drawn vehicles from pre-motorised times. The exemplary work he undertook on these vehicles was a testament to his skill and craftsmanship.

Every time I and other members met Rodney he would tell us stories about the old coaching and turnpike era. He could tell you all about the coaches traversing the roads out of London to the Midlands and beyond as well as other parts of the UK during the height of the coaching period. Just as an example he'd tell you about the history of the express coach "Tantivy" (London-Birmingham), the fitness, durability and welfare of the horses, coach construction, frailties of the braking methods and so forth.

Rodney also spoke about his enthusiasm for modern horse-drawn coach driving. He frequently drove bridal carriages at weddings and took part in carriage races including competing against the Duke of Edinburgh.

Rodney was instrumental in rescuing the 'gaslamp-style' milepost just south of Newbold-on-Stour, where he lived, when a wayward verge grass cutter, who he reckoned was operated by an individual who had had a very liquid lunch, managed to smash it with his machinery and just left it in pieces in the verge. He and a friend took all the pieces to his yard where, with our knowledge, it was safely kept for several years until, in 2017, we came to take it to Leander Architectural, near Buxton, for restoration along with the other five mileposts. The Newbold mileposts' continuing existence is because of Rodney's care and interest.

Rodney initiated the Warwickshire Group's discovery of the seventh gaslamp-style milepost in a front garden in Kenilworth which culminated in the milepost being donated to the Milestone Society for erection on the Long Compton-Stratford upon Avon turnpike road where it once stood. (This project is in abeyance because of the Covid-19 pandemic.)

Rodney was delighted that The Milestone Society had facilitated the restoration of all the then known 'gaslamp-style' mileposts from Newbold on Stour to Long Compton and was proud to have been able to advise us about the existence of the seventh. You can read more about the restoration projects Rodney was involved in on two websites :

<https://warwickshirewayside.co.uk/restoration-project/> and
<https://www.findingtheway.org.uk/restorationproject.html>

Rodney will be sorely missed in Warwickshire.

RIP Rodney.