

## FINGERPOST PROJECT - The traditional fingerpost is a major part of Dorset's rural scene.



Early direction signs were wayside markers or crosses and their function was taken over by signposts or milestones in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century when Turnpike trusts were formed. Our familiar black and white fingerposts were erected at the beginning of the last century as a result of the 1903 Motor Car Act. There were no guidelines about how they should look and councils developed signs with their own identity. This makes traditional fingerposts unique to their own area and an important part of our local character.

In 2010 Dorset AONB embarked on a survey of the county's fingerposts. The parish council were already aware of the extent of the deterioration of our village posts and had alerted West District Council. Although financial resources were being squeezed the most dilapidated posts was

eventually work to restore and repair the most dilapidated posts was undertaken in 2011.

In 2013 Dorset AONB set up a scheme to provide some financial help for those parishes who wished to restore and repair their fingerposts. By this time financial resources from the WDDC had almost disappeared and the parish council had to rely on the support of councillors and the goodwill of our parishioners to aid in the restoration work.



A working party from Lodgers Parish Council, together with local volunteers embarked on a project to refurbish the two main fingerposts in the villages of Lodgers and Uploders. Martin Stones from Minster

Joinery in Uploders kindly supplied five hardwood 'fingers' for the project. The existing metal lettering was removed and restored, the posts were renovated and the fingerposts were brought back to somewhere near their original appearance.



Most of our village fingerposts were originally topped by 'roundels' carrying a map grid reference, the county name and the fingerpost opposite Lodgers primary school also bore the name of the village. This roundel had been missing for years but we were fortunate in acquiring a new aluminium roundel from the Bridport depot of the WDDC which was painted to resemble the original.

We were also lucky to find an old Victorian cast iron roundel in a garden in Bridport that had been rescued from the scrapheap by Mr. Geoff Rumsey together with other discarded fingerpost hardware. He was pleased to assist in our project and asked if we could honour this donation by way of a small plaque in memory of a recently deceased friend Albert Oscar Gale who was born in Willow Cottage Uploders. This can now be seen on the fingerpost at the end of Yellow Lane on the road to Bradpole, our most recent renovation.



The maintenance and repair of the village fingerposts is now the sole responsibility of the Parish Council. It is estimated that some renovation work will be required annually and Lodgers Parish Council aim to continue maintenance so that the need for complete restoration can be avoided in the future.

*If anyone is interested in becoming involved they can contact Councillor Hilary Nadin on 01308485488. Full details of the AONB's Dorset Fingerpost Restoration Project can be found on [www.dorsetaonb.org.uk](http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk).*