Distance markers on the B833 Rosneath Peninsula road and on the A814 Helensburgh road to Milton.

Tam Ward 2020

Introduction

Distinctive mileage posts survive on the B833 and the A814 roads along the north Clyde coast. Normally described as ‘milestones’, these examples are all cast iron panels with place names, finger pointing hands, distances, and destinations in raised letters, numbers and motifs. They are given on various issues of OS maps as ‘MP’ (Mile Posts) but are not given on the 1st Ed OS maps indicating that they were installed later than circa 1860.

The examples on Rosneath Peninsula are of the same style while the five others recorded on the A814 are different castings, the hand indicators being especially different in style.

It is likely that the mileage panels were originally installed as a complete sequence, as a near complete run around the southern tip of the Peninsula between Coulport and Kilcreggan shows, where distances are given as 29, 28, 26, 25 and 24 miles to ‘Dunbarton’, it would appear than one panel (27 miles) is missing. If that is correct, then a considerable number are now missing, especially along the Gareloch where only three are still to be seen; one at Rosneath (No 7), one near Rahane (No 8) and the other at Garelochhead (No 9). The early editions of OS maps do show ‘MP’ and some of the distances from those positions indicating that panels were installed every mile between Coulport and Dunbarton.

Interestingly, the early OS maps give the spelling Dumbarton for the town showing that in the mid-19th century there was no hard and fast rule regarding the naming of the County and town.

The panels have been numbered here according to actual sequence as found from Coulport to Garelochhead. Some of the missing panels may be buried nearby in the ground or obscured by overgrown vegetation, but a careful search has been made for them.

Note the spelling “Dunbarton” on most of the panels in this report, which is often described as the correct spelling for the County while Dumbarton is given for the town. That said, the panel at Milton is spelled with Dumbarton.

The modern OS Explorer Map No 347, Loch Lomond South, gives some of the markers presented here while other positions are given as MP = mile posts.
Fig 1. Rosneath Peninsula and Rhu showing milepost positions actually located (numbered) and others not found. Positions of some of the former five between Rhu No 10 and Garelochhead No 16 will have been lost in the present Faslane Base area.
Fig 2. Milestone and milepost north of Rhu.

Fig 3. Milestone and milepost at Rhu Marina, No 10 this report.

Mileposts found on Rosneath Peninsula.

No 1: Coulport, B 833, NS 21333 86922.

Dunbarton 29 miles: Kilcreggan 5 miles: Coulport ½ mile. Given of OS Map (above).

No 1, nearest to Coulport before re-painting. No 1 painted.
No 2 North Lodge, B 833, NS 21582 85362
Dunbarton 28 miles: Kilcreggan 4 miles: Coulport 1½ miles.

No 2, near North Lodge.  No 2 painted.

Bellcairn, B 833, circa NS 2140 8380 (Given on OS Map above but not found)
No 3 Linn Gardens, B 833, NS 22246 82464
Dunbarton 26 miles: Kilcreggan 2 miles: Coulport 3½ miles.

No 3. As found.  Painted with ‘Hammerite’  Final painting.
No 3 location.

No 4  
Cove, B 833, NS 22286 80984

Dunbarton 25 miles: Kilcreggan 1 mile: Coulport (number below ground level).
No 5 Kilcreggan, B 833, NS 23697 80252 Given on OS Map (above).

Dunbarton 24 miles: Garelochhead 8½ miles: Coulport 5½ miles.

No 5 before. | No 5 after.
No 6   Portkil, B 833, NS 24954 81249 Given on OS Map (above).
Dunbarton 23 miles: Garelochhead 7½ miles: Kilcreggan 1 mile.

No 6 before.  No 6 after.

Rosneath, B 833, circa NS 2590 8235 Given on OS Map (above) but not found.
[Dunbarton 22 miles: Garelochhead 6½ miles: Kilcreggan 2 miles] [old OS Map]
No 7   Clynder, B 833, NS 25081 83666 Given on OS Map (above).
Dunbarton 21 miles: Garelochhead 5½ miles: Kilcreggan 3 miles.
Hatton Burn, B 833, circa NS 2440 8510

[Garelochhead 4½ miles: Kilcreggan 4 miles] [old OS map].

No 8   Meikle Rahane, B 833, circa NS 2380 8660

Dunbarton 19 miles: Garelochhead 3½ miles; Kilcreggan 5 miles.

The base of this post has “No 4”.

Rahane, B 833, circa NS 2324 8820

The above is given on old and new OS Map (above) but not found.

Presumed between No’s 12 and 14 in area of Altnabui.
No 9 Garelochhead, B 833, NS 23586 91198 Given on OS Map (above).

Dunbarton 16 miles: Garelochhead ½ mile: Kilcreggan 8 miles.

<table>
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<th>No 9 before.</th>
<th>No 9 after.</th>
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This concludes the visible signs on Rosneath Peninsula, B 833 road.

A single sign has been noted at the Marina in Rhu on the A814 road at NS 27319 83554. It reads Dunbarton 10 miles: Garelochhead 5½ miles: Arrochar 15½ miles. It is in the same style as those on Rosneath Peninsula. This marker was recently repainted by someone other than the writer, it was practically invisible even though it was beside the bus stop, it is now highly visible as the only example left between Helensburgh and Garelochhead.
A single sign has been noted at the eastern end of Helensburgh on the old A 814 road and adjacent the modern road at NS 31263 81378 set into a small wall, the style of design differs from those described above. This one reads: Dunbarton Cross 7. Miles: Helensburgh 1. mile.

Of all the mileposts given in this report, this appears to be the only example which is maintained with fresh paint.

The only surviving milepost in Helensburgh.

At circa NS 3310 7882 near Ardmor an MP is given on modern OS maps, but not located.

A single sign is seen at Cardross village on the A 814 road at NS 34266 77751. It reads: Dunbarton Cross 4 miles: Helensburgh 4 miles. It is in the same style as the one given above at Helensburgh and is given on modern OS maps.

At circa NS 3540 7664 between Cardross and Ardoch an MP is given on modern OS maps, and now located, it is positioned on the grass verge on the south side of the road and leans somewhat on its side (not repainted as yet).

A single sign has been noted near Milton beside the whisky bond buildings on the A 814 road. It is similarly built into a small wall the same shape and size as the one at Helensburgh, it is at NS 41865 74281. The styling is the same as Helensburgh and reads; Glasgow Royal Exchange 13 miles: Dumbarton Cross 1 mile. Note the spelling of Dumbarton here and not Dunbarton as with the Rosneath Peninsula signs. It is not given on modern OS maps (not repainted as yet).
The early OS maps give ‘MP’ in Faslane Naval Base north and south respectively.

Arrochar 10½ miles: Dumbarton 15 miles.

Arrochar 11½ miles: Dumbarton 14 miles.

And south of Letrault road end.

Arrochar 14½ miles: Dumbarton 11 miles.

And in Helensburgh at the old Clyde Street School, now the Civic Centre.

Arrochar 17½ miles: Dumbarton 8 miles.

**Road stone at Finnart.**

A stone of some interest located at Finnart on Loch Long and on the A 814 road, opposite the access to the former mansion of Arddarroch (now in the oil tanker jetty complex) is not a mile marker but a notice regarding the builder of the road; The Duke of Argyle, (Argyll being spelled in the old manner). The caption on the stone is given in Fig – and is taken from an illustration in a local history book by the minister of Garelochhead (Maughan 18--). The Donald Fraser who erected the stone was a local farmer who probably lost most of his lands when the mansions of Arddarroch and Finnart were built in the 1830’s. The “Tenne Clauch” given in the inscription is at Arrochar ( A McIntyre, pers comm).
The Finnart stone and inscription.

Discussion

It is interesting that the OS maps give Dumbarton as spelling while most of the mile markers themselves give Dunbarton. It is often cited in written and oral form which spelling is correct and which is wrong for either town or county, given that these markers must have been installed by the county, the lie is given to one or the other. As far back as 1581 in the Abstract of Protocols for Glasgow (1897, see below for full ref”) part of an entry reads “lying in Rosneth in the shire of Dunbertane” and with the following footnote; “The first syllable of this name in protocols 1581-6 is contracted, and may be read either Dun or Dum”. Therefore it follows that users of the terms have merely followed whatever convention that suited their purpose, and there is no correct or incorrect usage of either.

The series of surviving distance markers between Milton and Coulport are of some interest as to their ornate styling and the fact they are made from cast iron. It is clear from the existing markers and the OS maps which were consulted that every mile on the route was marked thus. The date of installation is not established but it is some time after the 1st Ed OS maps circa 1860 as they are not given on the maps.

It is likely that over the years of road and roadside improvements the missing panels have been cast aside or taken away as scrap metal, sadly the fate of many such features on our rural roads.

Most of the surviving markers have been neglected and were rusty, illegible and in many cases near invisible features by the roadsides. A few have been painted and kept tidy. The writer has taken it upon himself to re-paint the remaining examples in the hope that they will become noticed as relics of a bygone age, when counting off the miles on a journey would have made travelling by horse or foot, just a little bit more bearable.

References
