



In our largely secular society this nicely painted and gilded roadside item in North View, one of at least three in Westbury Park, (two others are in nearby Berkeley Road), might be considered to be just another irrelevant item of ‘street furniture’. However it once had an important function as a boundary marker. In 1986 Temple Local History Group on behalf of the Bristol Civic Society and the City Museum carried out a survey of all the Parish Boundary marks in the medieval city which was published as a fully illustrated book. Included in the book were representative samples of marks seen in the new suburbs, this being one of them. As a result of their survey this one was restored and nicely painted in black and gold. However a few years ago one of the utility companies in an excess of zeal decided that this marked a water hydrant and repainted it in Day-Glo green so that it would be easily spotted by firemen should the need arise. A former work colleague and resident of North View, Paul Hamblin, who had a copy of our book and had alerted us to the bizarre ‘make-over’ was also instrumental in getting it restored to its former glory, (traces of the virulent green can still be seen on the left hand side just below the letter B). To understand why parish boundary markers were established, a brief explanation of their purpose may help. In the days when the parish church ruled people’s lives and the vestry determined the amount of tithes (taxes) you paid and to whom, it was important to know in exactly which parish you lived. The parish was delineated on the ground by markers at intervals, usually where the line exited a property or deviated from a straight line. Each Parish had its unique style of lettering or mark. Did you realise that there are still over one hundred in the old centre of Bristol? I will finish this month’s article with a request. If you know of any more of these WPB marks please let us know so they can be added to the survey.

Interested in learning about Parish life? For £5 our 56 page book has drawings, photographs. Learn about grisley practices such as the Tyburn Ticket and the farmers wife who had to give birth standing up. Contact enquiries@history4u.info or Cheque to Temple Local History Group, with A5 sized SAE to 33 Springfield Grove, BS6 7XE.