



An accident outside Disbrey's (butchers), The Cross

Other measures involved lowering the kerbstones at the south-western corner of the Cross, opposite the Co-op, and lowering the fence and removing shrubs and trees at the corner of Mortlock Street. New kerbstones were laid around the grassy area by the War Memorial, to prevent motorists cutting the corner and wearing the grass away. It was also intended that they would discourage motorists from parking on the grass and up the church path. The consequence of laying the kerbstones was that safety at the corner was reduced, as motorists could not see them. The proposal to overcome this was to paint them white! The path outside the butcher's was widened and a wider curve was made at the corner to improve the angle of view.

Talk of a by-pass for the village was renewed in 1932, when two visitors from London started taking measurements, and photographs of the junctions between Water Lane and Drury Lane, and refused to discuss their reasons. Rumour was that a by-pass from near The Bury to The Bull's Head, Cambridge Road was under consideration. Further measurements were taken in April 1936 and this time the visitors admitted to being Transport

The fingerpost accident

Late one Saturday night in November 1836, an old stage wagon drawn by eight horses and driven by a sleepy wagoner, was travelling from Cambridge to London, and when passing through the village, the teamster drove his horses too near the fingerpost, when, in the words of a poem made up after the incident,

*The ornamental sign by tricks
Among the good ropes got firmly fixed.
Tearing the post from out its place
The sign suspended in good grace.*

The sleepy wagoner unconscious of the addition to his load reached Royston three and a half miles away where –

*In the very narrow streets of the town,
House after house was ripped and torn
Upon that fatal Sunday morn
Plant pots and plants alike were strown
And gilded names were overthrown.*

*One man wakened from his sleep
Upon the bedroom floor had leaped
With tasselled nightcap on his head
In shirt and hose he quickly fled
In his first fright he faintly said,
'Tis the resurrection of the dead!'*

Not until the wagon had completed its noisy and devastating journey through the whole town, breaking many windows and doing a great deal of damage, did the post part company with the wagon.

*It fell with a crash across the road, but
Still sleepy John made his way
Towards London at dawn of day,
Unconscious of the trouble wrought
Upon the poor Roystonians' hearts
Nor did he learn the strange affray
Till he returned another day!*

Officials. The possibility of opening Bury Lane to traffic was also considered. Residents believed that, whereas both plans would relieve traffic on the High Street, The Bury Lane plan would be the cheaper option. A survey carried out one day in October



South Cambs Electrical Motor Company in Station Road

1937 suggested that if Bury Lane were open to traffic, it would relieve the High Street of 27 heavily laden lorries, 33 cars and 47 cyclists.

A 30mph speed limit along the High Street was in place by March 1935. At this time HALT signs were also put up at the Cross. However, in 1936, they were removed and replaced with SLOW signs. Apparently, having stopped, the traffic was not sure when to go again! A traffic census, taken at the Cross in September 1937, raised hopes that perhaps consideration would be given to installing traffic lights. A count of 88 vehicles per hour was found on average.

Other road safety measures were introduced around this time, including central white lines and the imaginative invention of 'cats'-eyes'. It was said that, during the Second World War tanks travelling down the High Street caused the cats'-eyes' to be catapulted into the windows of nearby houses. These tanks were parked on a specially reinforced area at the bottom of New Road.

Ownership of a motor car was only affordable by a few people in Melbourn in the early-20th century – the main form of personal transport being the trap or cart, drawn by a horse or pony. Many who were unable to afford these, found whole new horizons opened up by the advent of the bicycle.