



Maud Heath

Cyclists who course along the Western road to Bath, know well the Maud Heath monument at Chippenham. Maud Heath lived about four miles out of Chippenham, at a place called Wick Hill in the parish of Bremhill. She used to bring her eggs and butter into Chippenham, and, as the Saxon name implies, it was the 'market town'. Roads were very bad in Maud Heath's days, and she often slipped and fell, breaking her eggs and spoiling her butter. So in the year 1474 she left moneys which were spent in buying certain properties, the income of which is now about £120 a year, and this gift was the means of making, and ever since maintaining a causeway from what was her dwelling place to Chippenham, so that such disasters should not befall future egg and butter sellers. This causeway is about four miles long, and in 1698 a stone was placed just at the entrance to the town, on which was inscribed:-

“Here endeth Maud Heath's gift,

For where I stand is Chippenhm Clift.”

The cliff was probably a “gully hole” of which there are one or two in the neighbourhood. At Wick Hill is a pillar with an effigy of Maud Heath on the top, seated on a stone, with her basket by her side and an old-fashioned “poke bonnet”. At the base is inscribed:-

“From this Wick Hill begins the praise

Of Maud Heath's gift to these highways.”



On a short stone pillar, about halfway where the Causeway crosses the Avon, is inscribed:-

“To the memory of worthy Maud Heath, of Langley Burrell, Spinster, who in the year of grace 1474, for the good of travellers, did in charity bestow, in land and houses about eight pounds a year for ever, to be laid out on the highway and causey, leading from Chippenham Cliff. This pillar was set up by the Feofees in 1698. Injure me not.”



The deed of gift is on a very small piece of parchment, about ten inches long and two inches depth, with a seal attached to it. The present clerk to the Feofees is A J Keary, Esq, solicitor, Chippenham.

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OPC Note:-

The Memorial image at the top of this page accompanied the original article and is a sketch by the Rev. W. L. Bowles. The coloured images have been added to show the modern day marker stone at the start of the Causeway and the stone inscription on the pillar where the Causeway crosses the Avon.