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In Watling Street at the corner of Malt Lane there's a cast iron post, about a metre high, painted white, on which appears the coat-of-arms of the Corporation of the City of London, and the simple inscription: 'Vict.24'—that, and no more.

Few people seeing this post know that it is a coal duty marker or boundary post. There is another further north on the other side of the road just opposite Oakridge Avenue.

The Corporation of London acted as the measurer of all 'sea coal', as it was once called, that was brought into the Port of London, and extracted a tax on it. This is said to have dated from the time of Richard II and the relevant Acts of Parliament were not formally repealed until 1889, when the duty stood at 1/1d per ton [that's about £7/ton today].

Among other things, the money raised was used for repairing the ravages caused by the Great Fire of London in 1666, rebuild-



Coal Marker post in Radlett;
photo: Graham Taylor

ing St Paul's, and the Guild-hall.

When the collection of the duty became more difficult on inland routes, an Act of 1851, allowed for boundary markers to be set-up at points around 25 miles from the General Post Office in St.Martin's-le-Grand. These posts showed the points at which the duty became payable.

Eventually, around 250 coal markers encircled London and, by further Act of Parliament in 1861, these

also denoted the boundary area of the Metropolitan Police.

One hundred years later, in 1961, the City Corporation repaired and repainted all those markers listed for them by local authorities, including the one in Radlett.

This article is based on Philip Eastburn's notes—the full version can be found on our web-site.

Graham Taylor

