

## Ufford Heritage Trail

### 16. Ufford Cross

St Edmund's Cross, a roadside shrine for travellers, once stood at the junction of the Yarmouth Road and Soneyeves Lane to Bredfield. Yarmouth Road, formerly a stretch of the Roman road from London to Great Yarmouth, was the coaching route from London to Great Yarmouth, via Ipswich, in the 1700s and 1800s; there was a turnpike in Ufford close by (see 1766 map of the route below)

It seems likely that travellers would have stopped at the shrine dedicated to St Edmund, who was King and ruled the Anglo Saxon realm of East Anglia between AD 855 and 869. St Edmund is the patron saint of the monarchy and also of pandemics. St Edmund is thought to have been given this latter title after the French city of Toulouse became ravaged by plague in the 17th century. Residents of the city are said to have prayed to the saint, after which the plague came to an end.

Note: Soneyeves is derived from two words; "soney" and "eves" meaning "the eaves of a wooded area facing westerly to catch the setting sun"

*Historical Note about travel and turnpikes (from Great British Life)*

In the 17th and 18th centuries, travel between cities was limited and uncomfortable because horse-drawn coaches were the only means of public transport. The early stage coaches, so called because the journey was done in stages, offered straw-covered flooring, open sides and loose leather curtains; summer travellers were choked with dust and in winter they had to struggle through mud and ruts, often up to a foot deep, as they negotiated large stones and fallen trees. If stuck, passengers would be required to assist the coachman to get the coach moving, getting wet and muddy in the process.

Since the cost of maintaining the roads was incumbent on the parishes through which they passed, the surfaces were often neglected and in poor repair. In 1700s, with increased volumes of traffic, toll roads were established, which enabled parishes to garner income for road maintenance. Turnpikes were later erected as a barrier to prevent evasion of payment by coach masters, who could speed past the toll collector without paying. The pikes were usually constructed with spikes that were fixed to a pole, put across the road and moved aside when the toll was paid.

*Extract from 1766 copper plate map by J Gibson from Gents Magazine showing the route from Colchester to Great Yarmouth.*

