



Between the Lines

Land of Oak & Iron Mapping Project Newsletter

April 2019

April sees spring sunshine and some being lucky enough to take an early holiday after the winter months. Possibly due to such distractions the number of people attending meetings in April reduced, however, enthusiasm seen in those coming has shown a huge interest in the mapping project. Land use survey maps and the much requested place name articles are included in this month's newsletter.

Volunteer meetings April 2019

Meetings in April saw topic based activity take off with the Mills and Waggonway teams deeply engrossed in exploring and consolidating details from a variety of information sources they had found, planning what should be included in the mapping project, its priority and how it might best be presented. Our Early Roads team have also made a start of framing the basis of their activity which will be developed over the next few sessions.

Tracing based work on identifying the changes to woodlands between Greenwood's maps and the first edition 6" series maps is progressing well and a further opportunity to engage in a similar study of land use was prompted by the on-line release of the 1930s Land Utilisation Survey maps. More details of these and other land use maps are shown below.

Land Utilisation Survey maps

The on-line release of the Land Utilisation Survey maps of the 1930s potentially opens a new area for mapping by the group. These maps were initiated by L. Dudley Stamp, a Reader in Economic Geography at the London School of Economics after his being impressed, in 1929, by maps of the county prepared by Northamptonshire schools.

Over the following three or four years it is estimated that 10,000 schools and 250,000 children were involved with mapping England, Scotland and Wales. In addition volunteer college students were recruited to survey some areas of low population where there were insufficient schools to complete the work.

Land usage was recorded on 6 inch series maps. After checking, details were transferred to 1 inch series maps entirely by hand and prepared for printing. The last of these maps was published in 1949. Copies are available in major libraries, although a number of the original field maps and plates of the printed maps were destroyed during air raids on London. Digital maps may be accessed for [Durham](#) and [South Northumberland](#) on the *A vision of Britain through time* website..

In the 1960s a second survey was carried out for all of

England and Wales plus some areas of Scotland. Very few of the areas surveyed were progressed to printed maps principally due to the costs that would have been involved in printing, however, it is understood the field survey maps were retained.

In 1996 a further survey was planned. Rather than observing and recording every piece of land a strategy of sampling was devised. This approach had been developed for classifying rural areas by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (ITE). A modified form, which included urban areas, was to be used. In total 1,029 1km squares (500 rural and 500 urban plus 29 for Northern Ireland) were selected to obtain a representative sample (around 4% of the total) of land use across the whole of the UK. The exercise was completed in 1996 and involved 1,400 schools and 50,000 children, plus a specially formed Geography Task Force to survey areas where schools were not available.

The book *Land Use-UK* Walford, R. (ed.) (1997) *Land Use - UK, A Survey for the 21st Century*, Sheffield: The Geographical Association, explains the background to the 1996 survey, the practicalities of its organisation and the results with several comparisons to the 1930s survey.

More recent surveys (1990, 2000 and 2015) have been carried out using satellite images, although manual observation is still required to add some of the detail which cannot be observed remotely. More detail about these and many other surveys can be found at the [Centre for Ecology and Hydrology](#) (CEH) website.

If this brief review of the subject has sparked an interest with you and you would like to investigate further please make a proposal for mapping land utilisation for our area and we will offer all the support we can to help you explore another facet of how our area has and continues to develop.
(RH)

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Place names – where angels fear to tread

What's in a name? The British landscape is full of them, and they are one of our richest sources of history, the cumulative naming of places, settlements, landmarks and natural features over thousands of years. On the face of it, many names have easily identifiable origins: *Ebchester* is the Roman fortress (chester, from Latin *castra*) belonging to Aebbe (who was a Northumbrian princess, the sister of King Oswald), said to have been the founding prioress of a monastery here in the 600s. Newcastle rather speaks for itself – even if the 'new' relates to a building of the 1080s.

Our river names seem to preserve the oldest elements – you may have noticed how many east coast rivers start with a T: Thames, Tyne, Tees, Tay, Tweed, Team etc. Some linguists believe that this element contains the ancient Sanskrit *Tsavo*, 'river'. Very many of our rivers have names that come from the indigenous pre-Roman language of these islands, known as Brittonic: Derwent is the river in the oak wood, from Brittonic *derua* for oak. Other names are much more recent: Quebec in County Durham is named after the 17th century French-Canadian settlement. But other seemingly obvious names hide their origins. Hebron is not named in irony after the place in the Holy Land, but means 'the high burial mound', from Old English *hea* and *byrgen*. In fact, most of our settlements have Anglo-Saxon names, and the main period of formation of these names was the 8th century onwards.

Broadly, linguists divide place names into topographic and habitative names. OE (Old English) *leah* is very common, meaning a woodland pasture or woodland clearing. Lots of names ending in *ley* derive from it, and tell us something about the ancient landscapes in which it was formed. This part of north-east England retains an unusually high proportion of woodland and, as one would expect, there is a high proportion of *leah* names here. The habitative equivalent is *tun*, a settlement or central place. Where *leah* names predominate, *tun* names are a minority, and vice versa, and this general pattern tells us about areas of the country where land was cleared of forest early to provide farmland and spaces for village settlements to grow. The very many topographic and habitative suffixes known to exist are usually found in conjunction with an adjective or personal name: Acton is the settlement with the oak trees; Whitton might be 'white settlement' on chalk downlands; but Witton (*wudu* and *tun*) comes from 'timber settlement'. Many places start with a personal

name: Edmondsley, for example.

The study of place names – toponymy – is notoriously fraught, the special preserve of linguists trained in both onomastics (the study of names) and philology (how languages change through time). Because languages are not static but constantly evolving, there are well understood rules about how words are formed, and when; but many names, especially those not written down until the medieval period, still have obscure or questionable origins. The most important basic principle of place name study is that you must start with the very earliest written example of a word, and then look at all the subsequent forms in which it occurs, looking (listening, almost) for subtle variations that may lead to a proper understanding of the name's formation. Often, the earliest form of a name comes from the Domesday survey of 1086; sometimes from an Anglo-Saxon charter; occasionally from a Roman or pre-Roman name. In Durham and Northumberland there was no Domesday survey. We have to wait until Boldon Book (1183) for many of our earliest name references, which might be many hundreds of years after their formation. There is an English Place Name Society (EPNS) which produces thoroughly researched volumes on individual counties; but so far none has been produced for our two counties (partly because of the Domesday issue). Professor Diana Whaley is currently working on a new Northumbrian volume, but it'll take a while. Meanwhile, we need to fall back on one or two standard sources for our more important names: Victor Watts's *Cambridge Dictionary of English Place Names* (2010) and Eilert Ekwall's '*Concise*' (598 pages!) *Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names* (1960) are both excellent.

If you want to know more in general about this fascinating but tricky subject I suggest starting with *Signposts to the Past*, by Margaret Gelling (1978 and more recent editions). (MA)

Coming up in May:

Wednesday 8th May 2019, [The Lodge](#), Laburnum Avenue, Blackhill, Consett, DH8 5TA

Tuesday 21st May 2019, [The Winlaton Centre](#), North Street NE21 6BY (in Winlaton village)

Please register to attend using the links above.

