



# Between the Lines

Land of Oak & Iron Mapping Project Newsletter

November 2018

This edition of Between the Lines gives a brief background of the Ordnance Survey, and explains the first steps of the mapping project, which we will start looking at together in December. There is also a taster for some of the sources of information which we may need to explore over the coming months.

## Ordnance Survey - what's in a name

We will be making extensive use of Ordnance Survey maps during the mapping project. Have you ever considered the origins of the name? Possibly not; everybody knows that Ordnance Survey equates to .....Maps.

The origins of the name date back to the late-1700s, when the Government instructed the Board of Ordnance (the Ministry of Defence of its day) to survey the South-east coast. There was a fear that the French Revolution could extend across the Channel and affect England. Military maps with sufficient detail to allow planning of troop movements and military campaigns, were required. The birth of Ordnance Survey is officially recognised as 21 June 1791 and followed earlier military mapping of Scotland. The first triangulation of the south coast from Sussex to Dorset was completed in 1794. The name Ordnance Survey was first used in print in 1810.

Disused warning beacons were used as principal triangulation (trig) points with secondary points being marked by piles of stones (cairns) placed by the surveyors or by using features on landowners' estates.

By Victorian times the need for maps had increased and eventually the following scales were agreed:

mountain and moorland	6 inches to the mile; (or 1:10,000 scale)
rural areas	25 inches to the mile; (or 1:2,500 scale)
built-up areas	126 inches to the mile. (or 1:500 scale)

(note: as noted on some older maps, inch to mile values are approximate, maps are drawn to scales indicated)

World War I saw the surveyors posted overseas to allow maps to be prepared. Ordnance Survey printed 20 million maps over the course of the war. After the war a range of 1 inch to the mile maps was produced for outdoor enthusiasts and the general public.

In 1936 the retriangulation of Great Britain was commenced to improve the accuracy of, and update earlier maps. Over the next 27 years more than 6000 triangulation pillars were positioned in prominent locations, with many remaining today, and the country was remeasured.

World War II saw an increased number of maps being needed with 342 million being produced, including 120 million for the Normandy Landings. Following the war work began on creating a new national map using the following scales:

mountain and moorland	10,000;
rural	1:25,000; (about 2½ inches to 1 mile)
urban areas	1:1,250 (about 50 inches to 1 mile).

In 1974 the position of Director General of Ordnance Survey became a Civilian position; in 1983 the last military staff left and it became a fully civilian organisation.

Visit [Ordnance Survey](http://www.ordnancesurvey.gov.uk) for further details and to read a more detailed history.

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## *The mapping project: first steps*

### **The Outlines of the Landscape**

We want the key features of the Land of Oak & Iron landscape to stand out, so we will begin by tracing some of its basic topographical and administrative features, of which the first will be rivers and streams. Our area is bounded by the Tyne and centred on the Derwent, both of which have numerous tributaries. Each river system will have its own 'layer' when the digital map is prepared; together they create a skeleton that reflects the basic topography. Add some contour shading – we do this by tracing three or four chosen contour lines (perhaps 200ft, 400ft and 600ft), filling them with a translucent filter – and suddenly a fundamental model of the terrain emerges: hills and river basins.

By the time of the first workshop in early December those layers will be largely complete and redrawn in Adobe Illustrator. The first goal for mapping volunteers will be to trace the historic township boundaries and woodlands. Historic township boundaries are very ancient means of dividing the land into areas containing fundamental resources like woodland, pasture, water, arable land and settlements. Some may go back as far as the Bronze Age, four thousand years ago; but they also tell us about the development of church parishes and dioceses, the evolution of property rights; of the great landholdings of the medieval lords and Prince Bishops of Durham, and of later population expansion. On the *First Series* 1:25000 maps that we will be using, township boundaries are marked with a series of black dots, relatively easy to follow most of the time. In some places these coincide with county or borough divisions, and these are marked with a series of alternating dots and dashes. When these are traced it will become apparent that some townships form strips butting onto rivers, while others seem to be fragments of originally larger holdings. Each one should contain the settlement after which it was named: the *vills* and *tuns* of early documentary sources.

Since the Derwent Valley is one of the woodier areas of the North-east, plotting surviving woods and finding out how long they have been there is a key opportunity for the group to investigate. The *First Series* maps gives us the starting point: woods that existed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We can check to see if they also appear on the original 1860s Ordnance Survey maps and on Greenwood's survey of about 1827. If we want to know whether those woods are really ancient, we have to use more subtle evidence – but that is part of the exciting learning journey for which these first layers are the starting gun.

In parallel, we will start to look at some of the key documentary sources that will flesh out and corroborate the evidence of the historic maps. The first text references to the area, aside from very brief mentions in Late Roman sources, come in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, a 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup>-century record of the landholdings of the Community of St Cuthbert, formerly the monastery of Lindisfarne but relocated to Chester le Street in the Viking period. Individual townships come down to us in *Boldon Book*, the late 12<sup>th</sup>-century list of rents and services due to the Bishops of Durham; and then the *Book of Fees*. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's epic county survey provides a more accessible source, which volunteers can use to plot the buildings he recorded and start to explore local histories from the County History volumes. For the Industrial period, a primary source is the history of the Crowley ironworks, currently being prepared for a long-overdue re-publishing. These are rich veins to tap.

#### **Coming up in December:**

Our first full mapping meeting will be held on 12th December 2018, 19:00 to 21:00.

Venue: Land of Oak & Iron Heritage Centre, Winlaton Mill

Please register to attend [here](#).



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

