



Between the Lines

Land of Oak & Iron Mapping Project Newsletter

August 2020

August is traditionally one of the busiest holiday months. This year it is somewhat different for many of us. We have exciting news on the progress made on publishing the maps on-line and we share news from our sister LOIT publishing group about one of their projects. A second article on bridges and river features, this time about the eastern part of the mapping area, adds interest to what at first may seem an insignificant stream.

Mapping meetings

Video meetings have continued in August. Whilst people taking a holiday has reduced attendance we continue to make good progress and work on narrative texts for mills and waggonways continues. We are pleased to report that we have overcome a technical obstacle which was preventing us publishing the maps in a usable format. The purchase of some additional software has allowed us to include the maps on the Land of Oak & Iron (LOIT) website without resorting to employing a web design specialist to help us do this. More details are given in the article below and we would appreciate your feedback.

Mapping volunteer Michael M is learning how to use the graphics and svg editing programme, *Inkscape*. He has been able to add many of the early turnpike roads and toll bars to a copy of the master digital map and is now working with the digitisation team on the method adding the narrative texts. Whilst, as a group, we only have limited knowledge of using *Inkscape*, if you would like to learn how to do something similar for another topic area, we would be very happy to share the online resources we have identified.

The river features project has also progressed, and traces will be submitted for digitisation starting in September.

Digital map release on LOIT website

You may recall that in the [November 2019](#) edition of *Between the Lines* we shared our thoughts on the challenge of getting our maps, then in a SVG format, into HTML format for publishing on the internet.

Since then a number of obstacles have been overcome. Firstly, we needed somewhere to publish what we had produced. In May 2020 we were able to obtain a sponsored charity web-hosting package and were able to establish our own website for LOIT (www.loit.org.uk).

Our tentative investigations into obtaining web designer support resulted in a “ballpark” cost estimate of around £5,000 for its development. Clearly this was not a feasible option and we had to come up with another plan. Developing the website ourselves was a daunting task, however, after some investigation we decided that it may be possible by basing it on one of the major web development packages; WordPress.

The website has to cover all aspects of the LOIT areas of interest with our activities coming under the *Project sub-menu* of [Mapping](#).

After trialling several of the add-on packages for handling maps in WordPress, known as plug-ins, we found one which seemed to fit the bill. The software developer only allowed a short free trial of the package. Having obtained positive results from this we purchased it.

Using this technology we have been able to launch our (rather your) first maps on the internet. Currently maps are in a BETA version which may be viewed, areas zoomed in on and panned. We are now working to develop the interactive features to display the narrative texts. Additional information will appear when a location is hovered over by the cursor (tool-tip). Clicking or tapping on a location will open a text box (pop-up) with further details and may include a link to where yet more details may be found. All this is going to take some time but having overcome the problem of publishing the basic maps, and knowing that the software should give us the ability to add the interactivity, we feel we have made a major step towards our goal.

Please take some time to view the maps (on PC, tablet or phone). The password is “*showmemore*”. We know, at this stage, they are not perfect and we have already identified a number of improvements required. Your feedback will help us further refine the maps as we develop them and release future updates.

Thread of Iron book launch - 12th September 2020

News from another LOIT Project: the date for launch of a new edition of the book is now scheduled. In the announcement posted on the LOIT website they say:

We are delighted to join with the History of Consett Steelworks Project, to have the launch of a new edition of Thread of Iron included in their events programme, during the afternoon of Saturday 12th September 2020.

Although this is not a mapping project the information contained will be of interest to everybody interested in the industrial history of the Derwent Valley. We may be a little biased, but we would certainly recommend reading it. (Find out more [here](#)).

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Bridges and River features of the Land of Oak and Iron Part II - The east of the area; catchment of the Team valley and tributaries.

The River Team starts its journey to the Tyne as the Kyo Burn- rising in the shallow valley between Annfield Plain and Catchgate. It flows eastward, gathering water from slopes surrounding Stanley, Beamish and Tantobie.

Some of these tributary valleys are steep sided and their little streams are misfit to their valleys. These had been over-deepened by meltwater from the Cheviot ice sheet some 40,000 years ago. Clough Dene above Tanfield Lea being a recognised example.

It doesn't stay the Kyo Burn for long; becoming the Houghwell Burn as it passes through Tanfield Lea; then the Causey Burn (on some older maps described as the Causeway Burn); the Beamish Burn; then the Urpeth Burn, before becoming the Team as it reaches the broad, low, flat flood plain between Ouston and Kibblesworth.

Never a particularly wide or deep stream, the Team hardly warrants the term River. By the time it reaches Lamesley, it is roughly 3 metres across and generally shallow, but it crosses a wide flood plain and when heavy rain occurs the steep valleys lead to very rapid runoff and the water meadows of the area between Lady Park and Kibblesworth flood.

This wide valley floor, with its many communication possibilities, attracted the main roads and railway links from the south towards Newcastle; marshalling yards, cargo depots and later industrial development across the Team Valley trading estate, necessitated the culverting and canalisation of the Team below Lady Park; from which the river emerges in Dunston just before it reaches the Tyne.

There are few notable bridges or features along the course of the river.

Near Harperley Hall Nursery, the narrow side road crosses a very narrow bridge at a very oblique angle- numerous coloured grazes on the parapet attest to its unsuitability for modern traffic!

Downstream, some three miles, the most prominent feature in the catchment is the "Grand Allies" solution to the problem of getting coal from the collieries at Pontop and Tanfield to the Tyne. The scheduled monument and Grade I listed [Causey arch](#), with its attendant [abutments and embankments](#), crosses over the Causey Burn which itself flows through a deep misfit ravine; a meltwater channel as described previously.

The deep Boulder Clay deposits over the surrounding landscape resulted in a hummocky terrain, largely put down to permanent grazing, with Oak and Ash woodland filling deeply incised valleys. The sub- surface geology, though, was rich in coal measures so that bell

pits and adits, driven into the valley sides, began a long history of coal extraction in the area around Causey, Crookgate, Beamish Red Row, Marley Hill and Sunnyside.

The water of the river was utilised by several mills including Beamish Mill, Pockerley flint mill and Urpeth Forge, with a long mill race at Urpeth.

At Beamish Burn, Starling Bridge and Urpeth Forge, there are Grade II listed bridges - single span masonry arches. The bridge at Lamesley is reputedly dated to the 14th century but has been much renovated and widened in subsequent centuries. Below Lamesley there is little of note because the river largely disappears beneath the factories and warehouses of the Team Valley Trading Estate.

The trading estate was conceived in the early 1930s, and by 1936 the road plan was being laid out, as can be seen in an image on page 7 of the Gateshead council document:- [Team Valley Flood Alleviation Project Strategic Outline Case](#)

Today the culverted Team runs under a grating, disguised as shrubbery, along the middle of the Dukesway dual carriageway, from the Retail Park roundabout to the next roundabout northwards; then comes to the surface as a rather uninspiring canalised stream running alongside Queensway, behind the Premier Inn and under a concrete bridge that takes Lobley Hill Road up into Bensham. The banks are somewhat unkempt and infested with Himalayan Balsam, sedges, willow and other shrubby invaders. The Council strategy document proposes the "Daylighting" of the Team and the restoration of meanders as a flood alleviation plan. As yet, this has remained a strategic plan! "Daylighting" being an urban planning/ hydrographic term for the reintroduction and restoration of a natural flowing river in an urban fluvial environment. (This strategy has seen some success in Darlington and Chester le Street).

This lower course of the river flows through the site of the Gateshead Garden Festival, held during the summer of 1990, where 3 million visitors enjoyed the attractions that had been temporarily erected on an area of industrial dereliction. Very little of it, or indeed of the active industry of the Dunston area of the 19th century, remains. Large areas now being utilised for modern housing, with some garden/park areas and a wildlife reserve along an area known as Team Gut and St Omer's Haugh. Before industrialisation in the late 19th century this was an area of allotments and few houses, as shown at the top of OS map: [Durham VI](#). Surveyed: 1857 Published: 1862.

Leading down to the Team's discharge into the Tyne, just upstream of Dunston Staithes, there are still areas of "brownfield" land ripe for further development and landscaping.

(GH)



Coming up:

Physical meetings are suspended until further notice.

To join the secure messaging service please send an e-mail to volunteer@loit.org.uk requesting that we include you in the group.