



Between the Lines

Land of Oak & Iron Mapping Project Newsletter

January 2021

We continually look at new ways of working and this month give a further update on how virtual meetings continue to be held. With exploration of the local area in mind we also bring news of a project to develop a national network of footpaths and how you may get involved whilst walking in our area.

If you didn't complete the quiz last month the questions are reproduced at the foot of this page. The answers are given on page 2, but try the quiz before you scroll down (or flip over) the page.

Mapping meetings

Meetings in January continued to be held using the MS Teams platform. In addition to the Core and Key volunteer meetings smaller get-togethers, using Teams or Zoom, are taking place. The Mills team are having regular meetings and a new team looking at collieries held their first meeting. This team have a huge project to work on arising from centuries of coal mining activities in the area. The MS Teams platform will make sharing information much easier, and whilst it is not the same as sitting at a table and discussing maps, the ability to share screens and files will allow research and discussion to continue. These new ways of working may become the norm for much of the coming year and if you would like to help the Coal Industry Team, or just find out what they are doing, please access their "channel" on MS Teams.

To be able to access any of the MS Teams groups please ensure that you have completed and returned the LOIT volunteer application form, which you will find [here](#), and [e-mail it back to us](#) if you have not already done so. If you previously completed a form when you joined the Mapping Group we must ask you to complete a further form to become an LOIT volunteer. The original was for the, now dissolved, Land of Oak & Iron Partnership operated by Groundwork. Unfortunately due to GDPR legislation this cannot be transferred to LOIT.

Slow Ways Project

The UK has thousands of miles of public footpaths and tracks. This nationwide project, the brainchild of Dan Raven-Ellison, was started in February 2020 and seeks to organise these paths into a coherent and comprehensive country-wide network of routes between settlements. Supported by Ordnance Survey and others, routes covering 60,000 miles (100,000km) and connecting 2,500 settlements have been plotted and the project is now preparing for the next stage of checking the routes.

Each route has its own name, comprising the first three letters of the settlements it connects. The example they use is "The Slow Way from Winchester to King's Somborne is called Winkin". Locally perhaps a route from Ryton to Winlaton (Rytwin or Winryt) would not roll off the tongue quite so easily, but it is clearly a logical system of naming. Each route is also assigned a code number.

The Project is now seeking to recruit 10,000 volunteers to test-walk the routes. Originally planned for January 2021, the start has been delayed due to Covid-19; a new start date is yet to be announced.

If you would like to find out more about Slow Ways, and perhaps volunteer to be a local route test-walker, more details can be found on their website <https://slowways.uk/frequently-asked-questions/>.

End of Year Quiz - Questions from last month

Where, around the Land of Oak & Iron, can you?

1. find a maze?
2. drive through the site of a Roman Fort?
3. find the start of the River Derwent?
4. see valleys carved out by the hammer of mythical giants?
5. walk across the oldest surviving railway bridge in the world?
6. look up to a Liberty Statue?
7. visit the earliest and most complete steel-

making furnace in Britain?

8. find a stretch of water where a popular amateur rowing club thrived for almost 100 years?
9. visit the site of a 1640 battle?
10. find chalk grassland fauna and flora typical of southern England?

If you could answer all of the questions without difficulty, well done, you really know the Land of Oak & Iron. However, we hope that many of you will have been able to win the valuable prize: discovering a little more about the Land of Oak & Iron.

See how well you did - answers overleaf.

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Where, around the Land of Oak & Iron, can you?

1. This was an easy one, just to get you started, as the answer is given in the [November 2020 issue](#) of Between the Lines (BtL). The maze can be found adjacent to the A692, near Leadgate, OS grid ref: NZ13445204.

Commissioned by Sustrans it was constructed in 1989 on the site of the old Eden Pit. The earthwork maze was designed by artist Andy Goldsworthy and lies on the Sea-to-Sea (or C2C) National Cycle Route no.7.

2. Again the answer to this one can be found in a back issue of BtL; this time the [July 2020 issue](#). The modern village of Ebchester is intersected by the Roman road Dere Street. Around AD50 a roman auxiliary fort, Vindomora, was established adjacent to the road, which ran from York to Corbridge.

Today the A694 runs right through the site of the fort, OS grid ref: NZ13055551. The outline and ramparts of the fort, although partly obscured, are clearly visible on OS 25" map of 1890. An approximation of its layout is depicted on local display boards.

3. You won't find the answer to this one in BtL (yet). The River Derwent starts a short distance west-north-west of the village of Hunstanworth at the confluence of Nookton Burn and Beldon Burn, in the area known as Gibraltar Rock, OS grid ref: NY94434913.

On the 1896 OS 25" map the place where the burns meet is shown as Derwent Head, and the steep sided burn valleys as Gibraltar Banks.

4. An easy one if you know your Derwent Valley myths and legends. In one of these, three giant brothers shared a large hammer which they summoned by whistling it. The giants were known as Cor, Ben and Con. Due to failing eyesight Con let the hammer slip and it carved out Howden Dene.

The names of the giants live on in the names of Corbridge, Benfieldside and Consett. You can read more about these and other Derwent Valley giants in our book "*Tales of Derwentdale*", which is available from Heritage Centres, local stockists and "[The Trust Shop](#)".

5. Mentioned in BtL, [August 2020 issue](#), the Grade 1 listed Causey Arch sits near the western fringes of the Land of Oak and Iron, to the east of Burnopfield, OS grid ref: NZ 20125589.

Built in 1727 to transport coal, it is considered by Historic England to be "the first railway bridge in the world".

6. Sitting atop a 43m (141ft) column in the grounds of the Gibside Estate, near Rowlands Gill, stands a female figure representing Liberty, OS grid ref: NZ17955913.

7. Not far from Hamsterley Mill, along a small track, can be found the Derwentcote Furnace. OS grid ref: NZ13045651. After falling into disrepair when it ceased operations late in the 19th century the building was restored by English Heritage in 1990.

The furnace was used to convert iron bar into steel using the [cementation process](#). Converting a 10 ton batch of iron took 3 weeks, during which time it was heated to 1,100°C.

Now in the care of English Heritage, the furnace has until recently been open for visits during summer months. The site is open at all times but the inside is only accessible on event days.

8. Perhaps you were tempted to think of somewhere on the River Tyne for this one. Certainly that stretch of water has a fine history in the sport of rowing. We are, however, looking towards an unlikely stretch of water at Ebchester. Here, the weir, which provided water for the mills, allowed a 300yd rowing course to be established, OS grid ref: NZ10105539.

Around 1876 the Ebchester Amateur Rowing Club was formed and thrived until the mid-1960s when interest in rowing declined. A new club was formed in 2019 and competitive rowing returned to the river. Plans for a new boathouse are being progressed.

You can read more about the rowing club and the fascinating history of the village in our "Spotlight on Ebchester" article, in the [July 2020](#) issue of BtL.

9. The site of the Battle of Newburn Ford saw 20,000 Scottish troops defeat 4,500 English soldiers on the morning of 28th August 1640. The battleground extended from Ryton to Stella encompassing both sides of the River Tyne. Traces of the battle site can still be found, OS grid ref: NZ16536518.

The location of the Ford(s) is not shown on OS maps, however, maps and further information about the battle can be found on the [UK Battlefields Resource Centre website](#).

10. In 1941 the chemical Manufacturer, I.C.I. started work on a plant to make fertilisers in Low Prudhoe. A waste product of the process was chalk which was deposited, in the form of long hills, on an area of land known as "The Spetchells", OS Grid ref: NZ09196400.

The Spetchells now provide a home to chalk-loving plants and are noted for the numerous species of wild bees that have burrows here.

We hope you enjoyed the quiz and welcome any feedback you may have on the questions or subjects mentioned.



Coming up:

Physical meetings are suspended until further notice.

Get in touch with us at volunteering@loit.org.uk if you would like to join us in a virtual meeting.