



Between the Lines

Land of Oak & Iron Mapping Project Newsletter

June 2019

This month's newsletter contains information about an interesting PhD research project which you may be able to get involved with, an update on the progress being made in the mapping project topic teams and an introduction to the Boldon Book with a few of the fascinating facts hidden between its covers.

Volunteer meeting June 2019

We were delighted to welcome Philippa Carter, who is a PhD Researcher from Newcastle University to our meeting on 18th June. Her research is concerned with "Landscape and intergenerational memory in NE England". She explained it as being:

Concerned with the past but not 'history' as such.

Interested in your people's experiences, shared places and what makes places valuable or special.

How this is passed down or shared (or not) through generations.

The research is based on the villages of Chopwell and Winlaton, with a possible addition of information from Consett. The Chopwell element has been completed, with Winlaton and Consett due to be completed during summer/autumn this year and completion of her PhD thesis in 2020.

Using extracts from interviews to illustrate her findings she explained that in Chopwell she found people with rich and vivid memories of times spent with family and other members of the village community, and a very strong attachment to Chopwell Wood. There was a sense of loss over the more urban elements of the village - loss of the village shops particularly, and in addition, sadness that "sense of community" had reduced. Perhaps surprisingly there seemed little nostalgia for the lost mining industry.

A number of people from the mapping group offered to take part in the next stage of Philippa's research. If you are interested in finding out more there is [further information here](#). She expressed her appreciation for this offer of input from the group and **will** be contacting relevant people in the near future. We wish her well and look forward to welcoming her to present her completed findings at a future date.

Work continues on preparing the digital map video slide show and it will be made available for public viewing in the near future.

Topic interest groups continue to implement their plans. Waggonway team have made good progress

mapping the routes of The Western Way and have the outlines for routes I, II and III defined. The inevitable anomalies found between different sources need to be resolved next.

The Mills team's database has progressed and is now being rigorously validated and rationalised. Again anomalies between sources are a common feature; they are seeking to eliminate any inaccurate information and ensure that the database is correct. Leisure and Recreation team continue planning with a strong emphasis on how to present a wide range of information; on things to see, things to do and services in the area, to a variety of visitors in an easy to use manner. The Early Roads Development team have decided to use Greenwood maps (around 1820s) as a base and work back through earlier maps, including Armstrong (around 1760), to gain an understanding of how the early road system developed.

Following the article about place names BR is compiling a list of the townships and the name derivations from the three recognised reference works. He hopes to complete this in the near future and we will make it available to the group.

We also had good news from The Institute of Mining in Newcastle. Although they are in the midst of their building undergoing a major refurbishment, and have limited access to records, they have confirmed that maps showing the underground mine workings are available for all areas of interest to Land of Oak & Iron. This would seem to be a fascinating topic for us to include in our project. If you are interested in getting involved please let us know. There are some logistical issues to resolve which we will tackle when we understand if there is a team who would like to progress the topic.

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Boldon Book – so much more than a list

'In the one thousand one hundred and eighty third year of the Incarnation of our Lord at the feast of St Cuthbert in Lent, Lord Hugh, Bishop of Durham, caused to be written down in his and his men's presence all the returns of his whole Bishopric, fixed rents and customs as they were then and had been before.'

Thus read the opening lines of *Boldon Book*; on the face of it a dry, dull list of what the Bishop of Durham believed the tenants of his extensive estates in the North owed him. Because the Domesday surveyors of the 1080s did not provide returns for lands north of the River Tees (we don't quite understand why), *Boldon Book* is our first solid glimpse at how lands were held and what they yielded at the level of the township – a unit which survives into the present. Patchy as it is, it yields precious information about communities whose histories we can trace from then onwards. Consett is here: held by Arnold the baker, who pays 24 shillings to the Bishop annually. Winlaton, the cradle of the Industrial Revolution, is leased out by the Bishop to men who pay £15 a year for the privilege and who also have to mow his meadows for two days and cart his hay. The remaining marshes, meadows and woodlands remain in his private hands.

We learn that Ryton has a mill and fishery; its men have to cart the Bishop's wine from Crawcrook; that the pinder – a man who rounds up stray livestock and holds them in the village pound (for a fee) – has to pay 30 hens and 200 eggs for the privilege. Stanley, at this time, is not yet a township at all.

If all this seems a little dusty and barely relevant to the mapping group, remember that these are the earliest historical notices of many places. Early spellings of township names provide clues to their meanings and origins (Urpeth is 'Uri's path, for example). Mentions of mills and woods are clues to places that might still be identifiable on the ground and a sense of the value and productivity of each landholding presages the great Land Utilisation survey of the 1930s. Even more fascinating, perhaps, is the intimacy of some of the detail: The *Dreng* of Urpeth keeps a dog and a horse and goes on the annual Great Chase, or hunt, with the bishop. He brings two greyhounds (for catching deer), 15 ropes, carts and a cask of wine. He also sits as a juror; has to supply a millstone for the mill at Durham, carry-out repairs to the mill house and pond at Chester (le-Street) and, more mysteriously, 'goes on missions'. A mosaic of duties, rights, rents

and fines paints a vivid, interconnected picture of communities in the medieval period, each one owing what seem like onerous taxes and services. The Bishopric is like a small independent state (as it was right into the 18th century).

Behind *Boldon Book* are intriguing clues to how the North was organised before the Conquest. The mention of people like *drengs* – a class of wealthy Anglo-Saxon farmers above free peasants but below knights – tells us that the Normans inherited and had to try to interpret existing customs and functions that they didn't really understand. One of the dues mentioned is *metreth*, perhaps a Celtic word, which means 'cow tribute' and which takes us back to a very ancient time when cattle formed the principal tribute owed by thegns to their lord or king.

That the Bishop was owed so many dues is a reminder of how Durham acquired its enormous territories and power in the first place. In 635 King Oswald granted Aidan, an Irish bishop, the island of Lindisfarne on which to build a daughter house of St Columba's Iona. The monastery needed land to support its community, so successive kings gave it ever larger estates in return for a permanent tenancy in heaven and support for their dynasty. By the Viking Age Lindisfarne possessed great swathes of the old kingdom of Northumbria; what we see in *Boldon Book* is a record of what they were left with after the Viking wars.

If you would like to explore *Boldon Book* further we have put a copy of the scanned pages on the internet where it can be accessed using the following link "[Boldon Book](#)". The book is arranged with the original text (in Latin) with a translation on the following facing page. Starting at page 80 there are notes concerning translation, units and terminology that may be useful for the present day reader to look at first and use as a source of reference.

Coming up in July/August:

Tuesday 9th July 2019, [Clara Vale Village Hall](#), Clara Vale, Ryton NE40 3SY

Tuesday 13th August 2019, [The Lodge](#), Laburnum Avenue, Blackhill, Consett, DH8 5TA

Details of meetings September will be in the August newsletter. Dates for your diary are: Tuesday 10th and Tuesday 24th September

Please register to attend using the links above.

