



Between the Lines

Land of Oak & Iron Mapping Project Newsletter

June 2020

This month we explain changes that are taking place in the Land of Oak & Iron as the Landscape Partnership phase comes to a close and the Land of Oak & Iron Trust takes over some of the activities. There is important information for all volunteers, so we ask you to read it carefully. We also have news about a new system for meetings and the trials and tribulations of getting the digital map ready to publish.

Land of Oak & Iron Landscape Partnership

The Land of Oak & Iron; centred on the River Derwent, and passing through Northumberland, Durham and Gateshead before joining the River Tyne, includes much of the river catchment as well as part of the Tyne valley near Prudhoe.

In 2016 Groundwork NE and Cumbria successfully bid for Heritage Lottery funding to form the Land of Oak & Iron Landscape Partnership. During the following four years the Partnership succeeded in breathing new life into the history and heritage of the region for future generations to enjoy.

During these past 4 years the environment of the area has been improved through planting a new woodland and creating a wetland. Fish can swim further up the River Derwent thanks to a new fish pass. Woodland owners have been helped to access funding to better manage ecologically rich ancient, and more recently planted, woodlands.

Communities have benefited by having improved footpaths, enabling people to better explore the area on foot or by bike. The story of our internationally significant heritage is being told through three Heritage Centres, beautiful interpretation boards around the area, and specially commissioned music and drama performances.

The Land of Oak & Iron Landscape Partnership formally ended in March 2020 and Groundwork are in the process of completing final reports to the Lottery Heritage Fund.

Land of Oak & Iron Trust (LOIT) established

The Land of Oak & Iron Trust; now established as an independent registered charity, continues some of the work started by activity groups formed during the Partnership period, including Mapping, Young Persons and Publications. Other organisations involved in the Landscape Partnership continue their work more independently, however, the Trust is seeking to establish an on-going relationship with some of them.

The changes described above have implications for all of the existing Land of Oak & Iron volunteers who joined the project. When completing your mapping volunteer information form you gave permission for the Land of Oak & Iron to hold your details on record and contact you, in accordance with GDPR legislation. That permission is not transferrable to LOIT. In addition insurance cover for volunteers attending meetings and events, provided under the Groundwork

umbrella, ceases as do the volunteer group policies and procedures that were in place.

In order that LOIT can continue to contact you, hold your details on file and provide insurance cover for any LOIT activities you may get involved with, we need to ask you to apply to become LOIT volunteers.

During July you will receive an invitation to apply to become a volunteer for the Land of Oak & Iron Trust, a welcome leaflet and an interactive application form that can be emailed back to LOIT.

The form is similar to the one you completed previously, however, as it covers applying to volunteer for other activities there are a few additional boxes to complete. Many boxes have drop-down menus to make this as simple as possible.

We would urge you to complete and return the form promptly. We look forward to welcoming you and continuing the relationship that has been developed.

Land of Oak & Iron Trust Website

To support the transition LOIT has established a new website www.loit.org.uk. It will be a few months before the site is fully up and running. However, we are developing content and concentrating on making sure that the pages that support and provide information for volunteers are accessible in July.

This website will be the future home for the LOIT activity groups and it is where we will be able to publish information which you have researched and created.

As part of developing the website we have established new email addresses, including volunteer@loit.org.uk which will be the new point of contact for all matters related to volunteering with LOIT.

The address (landofoakandiron@groundwork.org.uk) will remain active but will be phased-out for those areas taken over by LOIT.

Through the period of transition we are aiming to keep most aspects of our operation consistent and you should see little difference in day-to-day activities.

Contact:

Email: volunteer@loit.org.uk

Website: www.loit.org.uk

Portal: <http://www.landof oakandironlocalhistoryportal.org.uk/index.asp>

Mapping Group meetings - update

Last month we told you that face-to-face meetings were cancelled until September and that remains the case. However, through June we have been experimenting with other options, such as video conferencing.

At the first Core Team video meeting on 3rd June we considered how we might restart volunteer meetings and decided that video conferencing for a larger group was worth a try. We, therefore, invited some of our topic team leaders and other regular meeting attendees to join us.

We have now held three meetings and thanks to the combined efforts of the expanded group have established the basis of meetings for the next few months.

Where there is a topic team established, such as the Mills team, the team leader reports on progress, having held a video meeting with the team a day or two earlier. The feedback and any requests for support are discussed then next actions are agreed. Solo topic volunteers, follow the same process but without needing to have the team meeting.

We have been using the video conferencing service provided by Zoom. This works reasonably well, however, the free service is limited to 40 minutes per meeting. Surprisingly, this has been just about adequate, however, we are investigating alternatives due to some concerns about potential security issues with Zoom.

Currently we have the following topics being tracked using these meetings: Mills; Waggonways; "Greenwood Roads"; River Features; and Built-up areas. We are also working towards setting up one or more topic groups for the Coal Industry and there is interest in reviving the Land Usage topic either as a solo or a team topic. We also report progress on the Digital Map at these meetings (see below).

We will keep you informed, through "Between the Lines", of matters discussed at these meetings. Please contact us if you would like to get involved with any of the topic teams mentioned above, or are interested in forming a new topic team, whilst we are using this temporary "new normal" way of holding meetings.

Digital Map - Update

The restriction in movements for many of us during May and June has brought a hidden bonus for us. Whilst on fine days it has been very enjoyable to explore our local areas, as part of our daily exercise routine, there have been wet days when we have been able to tackle some of those projects that have been in progress for some time.

In our February 2020 newsletter we explained that we were looking into using a PowerPoint slideshow, as an interim measure, to launch an on-line digital map. A

lot has happened since February and the Covid-19 pandemic has had an influence by slowing progress. However, having established the LOIT website, we are taking a further opportunity to progress launch of the map. After a number of trials we concluded that using a slideshow based approach on the website did not produce a result that could be released for public access. Our target of April for the launch had unfortunately come as gone.

We have now completed preliminary trials and are reasonably confident that we can launch the first phase of the digital map in a different format in the coming months. We still have some further software evaluation to complete and a considerable amount of work will be required to complete the web pages that will support the map and associated data. We have set a new target to release the map by the end of August. For the first phase of the map we are aiming to have the base map which includes the following:

- Contours
- Rivers
- Roads
- Woodlands
- Built-up areas

plus the following topics that have been produced by the volunteer group:

- Mills
- Waggonways, selected routes
- Roads shown on the 1826 Greenwood map

The main digital map section of the website will focus on historic mapping topics and offer access to the extensive research work resulting from the efforts of the mapping volunteers.

In addition to the main digital map section we are producing a map showing the top attractions for visitors to the area. This will include some locations in the nearby surrounding area which, whilst not within the Land of Oak & Iron, are significant to its development.

We are also looking at how we may best provide information on the website for leisure and recreation options, for visitors and local people. By extensive use of links to existing recently published sources of information, which are currently widely dispersed, and creating a comprehensive entry for each location, we are aiming to avoid duplication of the mapping effort that has already been expended by others.

Secure Messaging Service - update

The Guild messaging service for mapping volunteers is now fully available for those who have registered. It offers a means of sharing information with other group members without using e-mail or social media sites. Please feel free to start a conversation. If you haven't signed up yet please contact us on the email address below and we will send an invitation to you. For more details see "Between the Lines" No.18,

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.

