



# Between the Lines

Land of Oak & Iron Mapping Project Newsletter

November 2020

This month we bring you updates on our progress with moving to MS Teams as a video meeting platform and news about the release of new versions of our digital maps on the LOIT website. There is also news about a digital model of the Consett Steelworks site being construction by a local community group. We take a look at some art installations along the route of the C2C cycle route as it skirts the eastern edge of the Land of Oak & Iron and have details about a collection of digital images, including maps, being made available on-line by the British Library.

## Mapping meetings

Towards the end of November we held our first video meeting with volunteers using the Teams platform, having spent several days setting up the required system for the Land of Oak & Iron Trust and running a number of trial runs with volunteer members. We will be offering the facility for all active volunteers to take part in these MS Teams meetings and may even be able to get nearer to our face-to-face style of meetings using the technology available. To be included please ensure that you complete and return the LOIT volunteer application form, which you will find [here](#), and [e-mail it back to us](#) if you have not already done so.

## Digital maps update

In December we will be releasing new versions of our digital maps and making them available for public viewing on the [Land of Oak & Iron Trust website](#). In addition to our base map; which now includes settlement areas as well as topographic details, rivers and roads; there are separate maps for mills, waggonways and townships. We plan to add maps showing toll bars and the roads they served and principle river crossings in the new year.

This version of the base map shows the industrial and residential areas as depicted on the 1st Series 1:25000 maps which were published in the in the early 1960s. With road numbering added for the major routes it provides plenty of easy reference points to aid location of features on the “topic maps”.

The first such “topic map” features mills and mill locations overlaid on the base map, with the date the mill was established, where known. Although not available at present we are working on the next level of information which will include more details about each mill.

The next “topic map” is waggonways; featuring their names and routes from the areas they served to the staithes along the rivers, where coal would be transferred to barges or ships. Where the routes are clearly understood a solid line is used, where there is some uncertainty about the route a dashed line is used, and where there is more uncertainty the route is indicated by a dotted line. Again further information is being collated and will be released at a later date.

Our next “topic map” features townships; where the township name and a line indicating its extent are shown. The Townships are one of the oldest established administrative divisions of land and are often useful for locating records when researching an area.

To access the maps go to the [Land of Oak & Iron Trust website](#). In the menu at the top of the page select “Projects” and from the dropdown menu click or tap on “Mapping Project”. This leads to the Mapping Project page where you can either read information about the project or, using the link, jump straight to the “topic map” list at the foot of the page. Selecting the topic of interest, by clicking or tapping on its name, takes you to the topic page. Here you can use the links at the top and bottom of the page to read more about the topic; go to the map for the topic or access the research information that has been used in developing the material presented.

The maps are fairly large files so may take several seconds to load to your screen depending on the speed of your internet connection. The maps will load and occupy the full width of the browser window where they may be zoomed and panned using your mouse buttons and scroll wheel on a PC. On a phone or tablet drag with one finger to pan, and pinch or stretch with two fingers to zoom in or out. Controls in the top left corner can also be used for zooming. The icon with a square symbol is used to reset the map to its initial view. On PCs the browser controls may be used to hide the browser bars and maximise the screen space available for using the map.

These maps and associated information represent the present state of development for the project and are available thanks to the hundreds of hours spent by our mapping volunteers over the past two years. If you would like to get involved please contact us using the link at the foot of this page.

## History of Consett Steelworks - 3D Site-mapping project

The Consett Steelworks closed in 1980 and a series of activities has taken place through 2020 to commemorate the works and people who worked there. The History of Consett Steelworks Project community group was formed and has been very active on social media as well as having its own [website](#).

One of the projects they are working on is creating a 3D virtual model of the steelworks site. It is envisaged

*(continued overleaf)*

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that, ultimately, people will be able to take a virtual tour of the steelworks.

Even though the area of interest is not that extensive the levels of detail the group is aiming to include represents a massive project and is likely to take several years to come to full fruition.

Whilst it is a completely separate project from the Land of Oak & Iron a couple of members from the mapping Core Team are interested and actively involved in the early stages of the project. A locally based expert in digital technology is supporting the project and had, over a period of years, already built up a map of the steelworks and surrounding area; which includes the buildings that stood on the site in the 1970s.

The site map is being developed using the GIS (Geographic Information System) software QGIS rather than the Adobe Illustrator platform we are using. Recordings of the launch event for this project and the subsequent events involving volunteers are available on the group's website for those who would like to know more.

There are certainly overlaps in interests and great opportunities to share information between our two groups. These will be developed through the course of our respective projects, and we will be keeping you informed about the items that may be of interest.

#### **A-mazing what you don't find (easily) on maps**

How many people travel a road daily during their working lives and remain totally unaware of the hidden gems that they are passing? I suspect that it may well include a large number who use the A692 on their journeys from the Consett area to the commercial areas of Gateshead and Newcastle or the industrial sites further to the east. Having travelled a section of that road for many years I was surprised to come across a maze like structure that runs alongside it a short distance south-east of Pontop Pike, near Leadgate; right on the south - eastern edge of the Land of Oak & Iron.

Commissioned by Sustrans (a nationwide charity that has a mission to "make it easier for people to walk and cycle") it was constructed in 1989 on the site of the old Eden Pit. The earthwork maze was designed by artist Andy Goldsworthy. It lies on the [Sea-to-Sea](#) (or C2C) National Cycle Route no.7, and has the official title of "The Jolly Drover's Maze". A second earthwork by the same artist, locally known as "The Lambton Worm" just to the north of Chester-le-Street was built in the same year.

Less than a mile away to the east of the maze, this time alongside the C2C cycle path, west of Stoneyheap Lane, work of another artist David Kemp may be found. Also commissioned by Sustrans and constructed from scrap industrial equipment, including large electrical transformers, it was completed in

1992. Known as the "OLD TRANSFORMERS", "IRONMASTER" and "COAL MINER"; they stand, it is claimed, *overlooking the site of the old Consett Steelworks*. There is a fair amount of poetic licence applied here given the actual direction their eyes face, however, it is a nice sentiment. A further "head", called "KING COAL", by David Kemp may also be found atop the remains of a slag heap near the cycleway as it crosses Pelton Fell, just west of Station Lane.

The above art installations are absent from standard printed OS maps. Topographical details can be found on the digital versions of the higher resolution maps with a premium subscription to OS maps and on aerial images in the free version. Typing the name of the installation into Google maps will also locate the works and is the easiest option of finding exactly where they are.

Of course works of art in the landscape are not new. The style may have changed but we only need to look at the Column to Liberty at Gibside, completed in 1757, to see that these modern installations continue a tradition of mankind making its mark.

If you have found time to explore the local area and been surprised by what you have discovered we would be pleased to receive details and potentially share them in a future edition of *Between the Lines*.

#### **British Library Maps**

In a recent press release the British Library announced that 40,000 images from the King George III collection were being made available for viewing on-line. The first batch, of 18,000 images, were available from 13th October 2020.

The images are from the Topographical Collection which, as part of the [King's Library](#), were presented to the Nation by King George IV in 1823. Dated between 1500 and 1824 they have been catalogued and digitised over a period of seven years and are available to view on the British Library's Flickr Commons Collection.

Whilst very few relate to our area they provide a fascinating insight of the maps, landscapes and architecture during the early period of the British Empire. Included are military maps of the English south coast harbours dating from the 1780s which are considered one of the forerunners of the Ordnance Survey (along with the maps of the Scottish Highlands).

The images can be viewed online using the British Library's digital [Flickr Commons collection](#). There is a search box at the top of the page which, on a very quick test, seems to require a careful wording to get a focussed search. The image quality is generally good and images can be zoomed by clicking the magnifying glass icon which appears when your cursor is hovered over the image.



#### **Coming up:**

**Physical meetings are suspended until further notice.**

**Get in touch with us at [volunteering@loit.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@loit.org.uk) if you would like to join us in a virtual meeting.**