

# **BLHA Autumn Event Colmworth Village Hall Maps for the Local Historian**

**Presenter—Stephen Coleman  
(Historic Environment Information Officer, Central Beds Council)**

The 2012 BLHA Autumn event was held on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October at Colmworth Village Hall. We were very fortunate to have Stephen Coleman, the Historic Environment Officer at Central Beds Council as speaker and guide for the day.

This was the second event of this type that Stephen has presented for the BLHA, the first was held eighteen months ago at Maulden towards the south of the county. The format proved so popular that the event has been repeated, but this time in the north of the county at Colmworth where maps could be demonstrated in a different landscape.

The day was split into two sessions. During the morning we were introduced to a wide spectrum of maps. First, Stephen talked us through the county maps from the Ordnance Survey (OS). The first example were the 2 inch unpublished sheets of the 1820's which included accurate plotting of roads, but with fields and hills sketched in. The first 1 inch Bedfordshire sheet was published around 1834, but without field boundaries. The 6 inch series was started in the same year, but the first to be published in Bedfordshire was in 1878. Early 25 inch maps show the location of individual trees and buildings in significant detail. In the 1880's, 25 inch maps were drawn up in areas where the population exceeded 4000 and they show interior detail of public buildings and boundaries of individual properties, they usefully tie in with the 1881 census for family historians. After 1902, these maps were simplified with the location of individual trees dropped and less building detail.

Other maps shown during the first session included the Salford map of 1596 which shows strips and their associated ridge and furrow. Late 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Century Enclosure maps were primarily planning documents, not all of which actually came to fruition. Also Tythe maps, which are valuable records of the landscape as it once was.

We were also introduced to patterns and names in the landscape, for example funnel shape field features that represent boundaries created for driving cattle and sheep. Circular field boundaries that mark out Medieval Deer Parks. Names such as Tythe farm, which usually indicates a farm created from small tythes of land being given. Lamas Meadows, named after 1<sup>st</sup> August when animals were allowed to graze.

After lunch, Stephen led the party out and about around the fields and the village of Colmworth to identify some of the landscape features investigated during the morning. These included the dam, the nesting island and the fish ponds of the village. Property boundaries and tracks which may be seen on Colmworth estate maps were identified. Hedgerows could be traced on maps which were

introduced as part of the enclosure, as well as field boundaries and tracks cutting across pre-existing features.

The day came to a close at St Denys Church with refreshments and a tour of the architectural features of the building including the alabaster and marble monument to Sir William Dyer.

This proved to be an excellent day full of information about maps and how they relate to our present and past landscapes. If you are an historian and have cause to use maps then this is certainly an event not to miss in the future.

Thanks must go to Colmworth and Neighbours History Society for hosting the event and Stephen Coleman for giving us such an informative look at maps and their relationship with the landscape.

Clive Makin  
Secretary Bedfordshire Local History Association