Parish Boundaries Project

East Midlands

NOTES ON THE PARISH BOUNDARIES PROJECT

GENERAL COMMENTS

1.   Parishes first came into existence during Anglo-Saxon times and were variable in area depending on changes in land ownership until the late 12th C when the church fixed the boundaries. There was some revision in parishes in the mid 17th C, but it was not until changes in the law regarding local government during and after the 19th C that there were major changes. We now have three classes of parish: modern civil, modern ecclesiastical and ancient. In the early 20th C about half of the ecclesiastical parishes did not coincide exactly with the civil parishes. In many of them the original ancient boundary is replicated in the modern boundaries, so which ever version of the parish boundary you may follow there will be in it information of archaeological and historic interest.

2.   These notes are a version of the ones provided to help you carry out a survey of your parish boundary. They are meant to give you the sort of information required to enable you to decide whether or not you want to take part.

3.   The project has two parts. In the first part you will do a field survey of the archaeological and historic features that define the parish boundary and enter this information into a cloud-based database that we provide. In the second part you will be able to manipulate the data to give graphic illustrations of the survey results using a geographic information sytsem.

4.   The project is aimed at local groups and individuals who have an interest in their parish and would like to contribute to a regional study of the archaeological and historical features that define parish boundaries. This way a small contribution by a local group can help build up a large database of a region, which then will be an important research resource for use in the future.

 5.   Assembling the database will take time. Thus this project is designed for the long term. The project has been set up using open-source software so that the costs to you are minimal. The database is cloud-based, managed by CBA EM and structured so that anyone can enter data into it, but only if it conforms to the standards set for the whole project. This is done through the provision of standard data input sheets which you can access once you have declared your interest in doing the survey.

6   You will be able to plot maps showing the results of your survey using QGIS, an open-source geographic information system. This you will have to download onto your own computer, but a library facility will be provided by the

project manager so that any maps you plot can be stored for future use and reference.

PARISH MAPS

7   Two types of parish map are currently available in digital form. These are the modern civil parish and the modern ecclesiastical. The ecclesiastical map is held in the UK Data Services. The modern civil parish map is held in a Boundaries database on the O.S. website and it is free to download. These are good to start your research with. In addition you will need a topographic map. A 1:25,000 scale map is available free to download from the O.S. site, but you may also need to see a large-scale map, say at 1:10,000 or 1:2,500 scale

8.   If you want to download the maps from the OS the two sites you need to go to for the 1:25,000 topographical map and the civil parish boundaries are:

http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/business-and-government/products/vectormap-district.html
http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/business-and-government/products/boundary-line.html

Alternatively you may want us to provide you with the maps. The CBA EM has an account with the O.S for this purpose.

We also have an account with UK Data Services in order to provide the ecclesiastical map boundaries. They are difficult to access if you are not a member of an accredited group.

9.   Only the modern civil parish is registered against the national grid. We suggest that you use this as your reference map. An examination of the ecclesiastical map will show how the boundary has been modified. Overlaying the civil parish map on the ecclesiastical map will almost certainly show an offset. This is because the older map would have been plotted before the national grid was invented. Where the ecclesiastical boundary more or less coincides with the civil parish then use the representation on the civil parish map. Where there are major differences then transfer the line-work from the ecclesiastical map onto the modern topographic map using any recognisable topographical markers that still exist for guidance.

10.   It is important to decide which of these three types of parish you are surveying.
- Most modern civil parishes are shown on the OS 1:25,00 map, though in many parts of the country, particularly the urban areas, the civil parishes have not survived local government reorganisations.
- Information on the ecclesiastical parish will be available from UK Data Services and this may be the closest you will get to the ancient parish.

- If you wish to test the ecclesiastical map to see it it is the ancient one you may have to do some research using the tithe map, usually dated some time in the 1840s and any earlier estate maps that may exist for your area.

THE SURVEY

11.   Survey the boundary by walking it and recording what you see on a Feature Record Sheet that CBA EM will provide. Describe it as it is. Historical information indicative of change can be mentioned in the Historical notes section of the Feature Record Sheet.

12.   Each parish shares its boundary with the adjacent parishes, but the boundary will be surveyed from one side only. To accommodate this the feature (see below for a definition of a feature) being described will have a unique reference number that includes reference to both of the parishes.

13.   Long features such as a road or a hedge may be a boundary to several adjoining parishes. In this case the segment adjoining each of these parishes will have its own unique record and be regarded as a feature.

14.   Where there are two or more coincidental features marking a boundary, such as a ditch along a hedge along a road use a separate feature record sheet for each.

15.   Each feature will be surveyed only once. When one parish is completed the adjacent parish, when it begins its own survey, will not need to re-survey the boundaries in common with already completed surveys.

SUMMARY SHEET

16.   A Summary sheet is provided to record general information about the parish and the survey that may be of use when the project is finished. It should be filled in at the end of the project. The Summary sheet will ask you:
- The name of the group doing the survey
- When the survey was done
- If any part of the survey was previously surveyed by another group.
- Whether permissions were obtained by all the land owners. In some places, particularly in urban contexts this may not be necessary or possible and the boundary can be surveyed without any intrusion into the rights of the landowner or tenant. This should be indicated here.
- Comments on anything that should be said about the survey that is not covered anywhere else.

FEATURE RECORD SHEET

17.   On the feature record sheet first enter the name of the parish being surveyed and then the parish that is adjacent to it along the feature being

described. The feature will then be given a unique Feature Reference Number (FRN).

18.   The Feature Reference Number is made up of two three-letter codes and a sequential number that runs for the whole of the parish. The three-letter codes will be issued by the project co-ordinator and will indicate the two parishes that meet at that boundary. The code will be written in the style:

BIN.ASL24

where BIN represents the parish being surveyed and ASL represents the adjacent parish on the other side of the boundary. The number is sequential and will be issued by the database software when the feature is entered in the database.

19.   The name of the group doing the survey will automatically appear under Group name.

20.   A feature is either a length of the parish boundary characterised by a common set of characteristics or a unique object that may be characterised by a single grid reference.

21   Identify the type of feature being described from the drop-down menu on the data entry sheet or by ringing the appropriate word or describing it against Other on printed versions. Public R.O.W. covers roads, tracks, bridle paths, footpaths etc. Say which it is in the description. There is no universally accepted definition of the difference between a pond and lake. One commonly used is that a pond is a body of water smaller than 2 hectares. However, a pond has also been described as a body of water that is shallow enough for light to penetrate to the bottom. When describing a pond or a lake give an indication of its size. All the other features listed are self explanatory.

22.   You will be asked to say which boundary type you are surveying, whether it is ancient, modern ecclesiastical or modern civil.

23.   The database requires you to say whether the feature is linear or a spot.

24.   Provide a grid reference for the feature. Use the full twelve-figure numeric reference NOT the alphanumeric version. For example write 440920. 343610, not SK40920.43610. If you make a mistake here you will get a red warning when you press the submit button. Keep eastings and northings separate for use with the GIS. For a single feature like a tree or a pit put a grid reference against Spot. The other two boxes will be blocked off so that you cannot use them. For linear features give a grid reference for each end of it. Do not try to describe the shape with a number of grid references. You will define the actual shape by digitising the feature in QGIS later in the project. Some features on boundaries may be large, such a tumulus or a Roman settlement. Do not try to define these with grid references. Give the NGR for the centre point only.

25.   Enter the altitude recorded for the same parts of the feature as those described by the grid references. Always use metres.

26.   For each feature attempt to give it an age. A drop-down menu will allow you to choose the appropriate age from a small selection. It is necessary to do this in order to ensure consistency throughout the region. It may not always be possible to do this. Roman roads are well known and later roads may have documentary evidence of when they were built. Streams and rivers being natural, should be recorded as such. Man-made structures such as walls and railways might have documentary evidence of age. Archaeological features like earthworks, ridges and stones may not be easy to date. Hedges are the most difficult to date. The process of carrying out a hedgerow survey is described below. For the purpose of dating them there is little choice but to follow the Hooper method with all its failings and use the numbers derived from it to categorize the hedges as ancient or pre-enclosure, general enclosure or modern. These options will be presented to you in a drop-down menu.

27.   When doing a hedgerow survey there are several references available on line to help you. These are listed separately if you wish to follow them up.

28.   The preferred methodology is to survey the whole hedgerow in a number of 30-metre lengths and take an average of the number of species in each 30-metre length for the whole hedge. This is the number required in the box labelled *Number of species per 30m*.

29.   The method is described in the BHTA website, which can be found at: http://www.binghamheritage.org.uk/natural_history/surveys/binghams_hedges/index.php
It was devised by Dr Max Hooper, who recommends that only the woody trees and shrubs are studied and that they are recorded as species per 30 metres of hedge. He recommends that you ignore species that grow at gates and ones that have clearly been added later for various reasons and are apart from the hedgerow. Do not include climbing plants except for wild roses.

30.   In doing a hedgerow survey identify the species observed and list them in the box marked Flora. They often can provide additional information of historical value. For example, hazel is often associated with the margins of woodland that is no longer present. Wild privet was often used for hedges during Tudor times. Many shrubs were planted among the hedges for medicinal purposes, like purging buckthorn. Crab apple was planted for food. Ash was often planted for coppicing while oak and elm were used for timber. Spindle would have been planted in a hedge for a supply of wood used in the weaving industry.

31.   Useful guides for identifying trees and shrubs include the *Reader's Digest Field Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of Britain.* And *A Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe* by Alan Mitchell, published by

Collins. An online guide is provided by the *Sussex Hedgerow Woody Species Identification Guide* available on:
www.sxbrc.org.uk

32.   While the hedgerow survey counts only trees and shrubs there are several other plants that it may be useful to record. These include plants growing along the hedgerows that are known to be indicators of ancient woodland, for example. Record these if the appropriate expertise is available in your group and list them in Flora box.

33.   Describe the features as fully as you can in free form English. Give heights, depths and widths in metric measurements. Say here whether the feature being described coincides with another and whether or not they are the same length. Say also if a feature such as a hedge or ditch is a continuation of another that has been described separately. It may be that a current hedge feature to a modern field once was a boundary to several small fields that have now lost their identity. If these original fields can be recognised say so here.
Give the girth of a tree at chest height. This may be converted into an approximate age. The way to do this is given on the BHTA website (see above).

34.   A section is provided for you to make any historical notes that are relevant and which provides additional enlightenment on the evolution of the boundary.

35.   In the event of any problems arising you may contact the CBA EM project co-ordinator by email via the website.

NEXT STEPS

36.   After the information you have collected is entered into the database you will be able to manipulate it and show it on maps using QGIS. Currently, the procedure for doing this is being tested and as soon at the methodology is proved further guidance notes will be posted on this website.

CBA EM

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