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The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.

Further observations on the map of East Anglia

Rob Wheeler

In *Sheetlines* 100, I put forward the idea that the information on the overprints in *Maps from the Past - 5* was not derived from actual survey by the OS but rather from data already held by other bodies or collected by local military forces. I observed that this hypothesis would lead one to expect significant variation in content from one area to another.[1] I have recently been able to inspect another sheet of the series, 109NE. This article describes the differences from the Cambridge sheet.

The four most obvious differences in the selection of data are as follows.

- The red disc, for bridges not capable of carrying 7 tons, is not used.
- The culvert symbol is extensively used, always in conjunction with annotation for material and width of carriageway. It seems to be treated as a variant of the bridge symbol, perhaps for use when the waterway being crossed was below a certain width.
- There are a good half-dozen watering places for traction engines. Most can accommodate only a single engine but a couple can manage three engines.
- The Camping Ground symbol does not appear – though this may be because the area covered lacks any country houses with parkland extensive enough to be used in this way.
- The gate symbol is not used.

Perhaps more important than these is a difference in the thoroughness with which streams and earthworks have been measured. To take streams first, almost every watercourse is measured. The utility of such annotations as "20' - 3'" can be questioned: one really needs to know how frequent and how usable the narrower places are. But one gains the impression that orders were issued to measure every stream, and every stream was duly measured. The only exception is in areas of coastal marshes, where the watercourses are so numerous as to render movement across the area impracticable.

Depths of channels are given in the estuary of the Blackwater, but not in that of the River Crouch. These normally take the form of depths at low tide (*L. T.*) up to the point at which navigation at low tide ceases to be practicable; from that point high-tide (*H. T.*) depths are given. Where streams have *H.T.* measurements, any width figures are followed by WIDE to avoid any misunderstanding.

In the case of earthworks, railway cuttings and embankments have been measured every 400 yards or so. Along the coast, the height of every bank is given. Just one section seems to have presented too much variability for this, leading to the annotation *SEA WALL BROKEN DOWN IN MANY PLACES FROM HERE NORTHWARDS*. In defence of the Cambridge map, it may be observed that the railway earthworks on that sheet are mostly insubstantial. However, there are flood banks against the Cam below Waterbeach and no attempt was made to

1 Rob Wheeler, 'Observations on *Maps from the Past 5*', *Sheetlines* 100 (2014), 53-58.

indicate their height.

The other aspect of Sheet 109NE that is really striking is that the compilers have gone out of their way to provide information they thought of military importance, even on matters regarding which (to judge by the Key) no instructions had been given. Thus a couple of causeways to islands are noted as *PASSABLE TWO HOURS BEFORE AND AFTER LOW TIDE*. Wharves and piers are noted with the depth of water (*L. T.*) as well as their plan dimensions. Certain areas which might be thought marshy are marked *PASSABLE FOR INFANTRY*. Dimensions (including depth) are given for the lock at the entry to Heybridge basin. Ferries have such helpful notes as "3 Boats 1 Raft (1 Wagon or 3 horses)". It appears to me that such information is far more likely to have been collected by an infantry officer than by a surveyor.

One further category of information is *BARGES LOAD HERE*, found at numerous creeks on the south side of the Blackwater, not just those leading to the Blackwater itself, but sewers facing the open sea. In contrast, the southern half of the map shows no interest whatsoever in barge traffic. It seems to have been a particular concern of whoever was responsible for one specific area of the map. Why might barges have been thought important? It could of course have been regarded merely as another aspect of communications infrastructure, like the dimensions of wharves. But in 1903, Erskine Childers had published *The Riddle of the Sands*, a novel which hinges on a dastardly German plot to invade this country by loading troops onto barges in a multiplicity of tiny creeks, where the concentration of forces would not be noticed. Perhaps we should see the map as reflecting a view, by at least one officer, that this was indeed a viable tactic; hence such loading / unloading places should be marked.