

# The roads and tracks of Inkpen from 1761 to the present day

## Introduction

This study of maps of Inkpen shows how Inkpen's roads and tracks have changed since the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, using seven maps published over that period. Five of these maps have been converted to a format which demonstrates the differences occurring in the last 260 years. The tracks, paths and roads have been colour-coded in the derived maps where it is possible to reliably differentiate between them. Structures (houses, barns etc) shown on the original maps have been represented as dots – but no attempt has been made to represent their size, purpose or shape.

## Maps used in this study

They are;

- The Rocques Map of 1761
- *The Craven Lands Map of 1775*
- *The Inkpen Enclosures Map of 1812*
- The Tithes Map of 1842
- The first Ordnance Survey Map of the area of 1873
- The 1960 OS Map
- The present day OS maps available online

The maps shown in italics above were used to understand timings of changes between 1761 and 1842, but were not processed to the converted format since they focused only on land transactions and ownership, and omit significant parts of the parish in their geographic coverage. The five maps used are described below. The pre- OS maps are available on the Inkpen History Group website.

The Rocques Map of 1761 is the first detailed map of Inkpen publicly available; none of the earlier maps available (Speed 1611, Bowen 1754) have any useful coverage of Inkpen. It was published by John Rocques, a refugee Huguenot engraver who surveyed and printed beautiful maps of London and the southeast counties, as well as Dublin and other cities. Although the maps are beautiful objects, there are clear errors; for example on the Inkpen map, a waterway is shown from Lower Green up across Folly Road and over Great Common –flowing uphill! There is also considerable scale distortion, so this map was georeferenced, causing the curves in the map boundary as seen below.

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The 1842 Tithe Map is one of the maps produced nationally to form a basis for the commutation of tithes as legislated for in 1836. This is a much higher resolution map than the 1761 map, originally at a scale of 1:3168, with tracks and structures much closer to true scale. Structures are colour coded to differentiate between occupied and unoccupied. Maps were not necessarily oriented with North towards the top of the printed page.

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The first Ordnance Survey Map covering Inkpen was surveyed in 1873 and published in 1877. This was significantly later than the first OS maps which were of the southern counties of England (essentially to help with the defence of the country from the threat of Napoleonic France). This map

is the first to indicate a hierarchy of paths, tracks and roads, perhaps reflecting a broader use intended by the government for these maps.

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The next Ordnance Survey map is referred to as the “Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century” map. It was published in 1960, however the legend notes that the mapping of the area was “Revised before 1930” (and thus could date back many decades before 1960) and with revisions only for “major changes” in 1956.

The south-west of the four maps covering Inkpen is shown below.

MAP DELETED

The present day is depicted by the Ordnance Survey Map currently on the OS App. Published in 2016, it is thus 7 years old, but the revisions would be older. An example of the online mapping format is shown below.

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## Mapping Process

All the maps are at different scales, so the first step was to ensure, as far as possible, that they were reduced/enlarged to the same size on the computer screen. The 1842, 1873 and 1960 maps have Inkpen spread across two or more separate sheets, so the next step was to splice them together. Finally, using various tools on Powerpoint, an image of the roads and tracks was created

## Results

**Map 1 Rocques Map.** There is no differentiation of track types on this map. The upkeep of tracks shown here would have been the responsibility of the parish. There is a lot in common between the tracks shown and how the roads and other Rights of Way look today – see the area around both Upper and Lower Greens, Craven Road; even Bell Lane is as wiggly as it is today!

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However, some features are present but not in subsequent maps or configured differently.

1. The presence of northward tracks (toward Kintbury) from the Folly area reflects Inkpen’s close links with Kintbury (documented in the Domesday Book). There are field boundaries and other paths (not rights of way) on current maps which may be the routes of the tracks shown by Rocques. The Folly is marked on this 1761 map but there is no indication of a structure (e.g. a tower – it is on the high point facing north so a tower would be a typical folly.)
2. Folly Road, although starting and finishing in the same place as today, appears to be taking a more southerly route than in later maps, although one cannot be sure this is not just bad mapping in 1761!

3. Equal weight is given to the tracks leading away from Lower Green to Upper Green.

Buildings shown on the map are more dispersed than seems likely – almost certainly because of the style of cartography – their map footprint is much larger than later versions. But the main clusters known today – Upper and Lower Green, are clear. The Pottery Lane area has several structures, as does what is now Fox Hill, but they are not associated with clear tracks, and the Pottery Lane area is difficult to map consistently versus the present day. Many other isolated structures are clearly on the site of, or are the actual structures we see today – Kirby House, the Church, Totterdown, Balsdon, Manor Farm. Sadlers Farm is a significant cluster, all trace of which has gone today.

**Map 2. The 1842 Tithe Map.** The area covered is restricted to the parish. A number of the changes in the roads are known to have already been present by 1815, based on the 1775 Craven Map and the 1812 Enclosures Map. Although the general shape of the roads is present in 1761, by 1842, the entire network is visible.

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Changes (numbered on map) between the Rocques map and this one are

1. The “Triangle” south of the Folly has appeared – it actually existed by 1815.
2. Folly Road has “moved” north – also by 1815.
3. The northern of the two tracks from Lower Green to Upper Green has disappeared, although it’s pattern is reflected in some field boundaries. On the 1815 Enclosures map it was already shown as a footpath rather than road.
4. The road across the Common appears in the 1815 Enclosures map.
5. A new track is shown leading south from Manor Farm.
6. A track is now clearly present on Fox Hill (on the 1815 maps the structures are present but no track).
7. Pottery Lane appears aligned as today (also shown on the 1815 map).

It seems likely that many of the changes (especially 2 and 4) are related to the Enclosure process that took place in the late 18<sup>th</sup> / early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The more precise mapping shows dwellings more closely associated with tracks than the 1761 map. The main centres of habitation which we know today – Lower Green and the south of Craven Road, Upper Green, Pottery Lane and Fox Hill, are all clear.

**Map 3. The 1877 Ordnance Survey map,** surveyed in 1873 at a scale of 1:10560. Although these are really good maps, it is difficult to reliably tell which of the many tracks were significant thoroughfares, so the differentiation shown below is subject to uncertainty. Structures are shown in some detail. Many structures have names which persist to the present day.

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The “roads” in the 1873 map are virtually the same as in 1842. It is likely that some of these “roads” were surfaced by this time (the use of the MacAdam process started in the 1820s), however, one can only speculate which ones had been improved in this way.

The most eye-catching change between 1842 and 1873 is the depiction of a network of tracks, which go on to form the basis for the footpaths of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This network may well have been

present in 1761 and 1842, but the OS mapping was the first to portray it. One can imagine a need for many of these tracks, with mid-Victorian Inkpen residents walking or riding

1. from Sadlers Farm to the church
2. from Balsdon towards Lower Green
3. from West Woodhay House to the Crown & Garter
4. from the church to The Swan.

The purpose of others tracks is less obvious, but we can be sure that there was one – these were not for recreation. Some have remained as footpaths today, some have disappeared and some have become Byways or Bridleways.

The established settlement areas (Upper Green, Lower Green, Pottery Lane) had further structures built since 1842, increasing the density of housing there. Fox Hill and the area near the Crown & Garter were also areas of development, and the north end of Craven Road started to show more structures (presumably houses) being built.

**Map 4. Mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Survey Map** Roads are distinguished by their quality (as today, no A or B roads were present). Based on current status of the “Low Quality” roads – most are wide unsurfaced tracks- it is reasonable to suggest that the High Quality roads were surfaced and metalled. Some tracks are labelled FP – footpath – but there is a disclaimer saying that there is no suggestion that means it is a Right of Way (ROW). ROWs had legal status only after legislation in 1949 but there was obviously a lag between that date and the publication of maps with the ROWs clearly shown.

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No changes occurred to shape of the road system from 1873. The footpath network from 1873 is almost all still present.

Three new areas of structures appear - at the north end of Craven Road, on the road NE of the Crown & Garter, and the development of Robins Hill off Folly Road. The large industrial structure appears behind the site once occupied by the Olive Branch pub at the eastern end of Folly Road.

**Map 5 Present Day Ordnance Survey Map** (shown overleaf) Surfaced roads are shown according to their width – above and below 4 metres. Other Rights of Way (By-ways, bridlepaths, footpaths) are now shown explicitly. Other tracks are shown but they are specifically depicted as not being ROWs.

The only change to roads is the moving of the road through Manor Farm to avoid the farmyard. Approximately 75% of the “footpaths” shown on the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century map survive as formal Rights of Way footpaths, bridlepaths or byways. An example of a footpath present in 1960 but absent now is that between the site of Sadlers Farm (demolished after 1947 but only now shown as absent) and the church.

Structures are shown at high resolution. Folly Road and Old Sawmills saw significant residential development.

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## Concluding Observations

The maps available to us are a fascinating resource. It is clear they can be the basis for many more interesting stories at the local level than attempted here. They should be used to support all future surveys and archaeological work

At the regional level of study attempted here, the obvious conclusion is that there are many similarities between the tracks network seen in the mid eighteenth century and the roads and other Rights of Way on maps we use today.

All the significant changes to tracks and roads that have occurred since 1761 happened by 1815, perhaps driven the Enclosures. The construction of straight roads was a feature of the Enclosure process elsewhere, so it is likely therefore that Great Common Road is an example of this.

An extensive footpath network was identified by late Victorian times on the Ordnance Survey maps. Perhaps this is a reflection of the source of funding for the maps – none of the previous maps were concerned with minor paths and Rights of Way. By the mid-twentieth century, legislation led to a formalisation, and approximately 25% reduction in number, of non-vehicular Rights of Way.

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<sup>i</sup> This article is the basis for a presentation given at the Inkpen History Group on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024. A PowerPoint version of the presentation is also available at the Inkpen History Group website.