

Return to Larkhill



Preparing the map on page 6 of *Sheetlines 71* for publication caused the editor¹ to wonder whether the Larkhill Military Railway was shown on contemporary one-inch mapping. Paul Laming kindly searched his comprehensive collection and found that although the line is not shown on any printing of Popular Edition sheet 122, *Salisbury & Bulford*, it does appear in fine detail on the *Salisbury Plain* Popular Edition District map of 1920 (*above*).²

Early printings of regular sheet 122 are based on 1913 revision, before the railway was constructed. Given the detail with which railway and camp are shown on the one-inch district sheet, one can understand the need to tighten security in the 1920s.³ It would be reasonable to conjecture that this new policy, rather than any disuse, led to the omission of the railway track and other military data from the 1927 and subsequent printings of the regular sheet.

Meanwhile Rodney Leary was checking his half-inch maps and found the railway shown on the 1926 edition of sheet 33. This is marked as 'revised 1912-14' and shows the line terminating at the buildings⁴ just north of Fargo Plantation, with all the track south of that

¹ Who apologises to all concerned for not being able to spell 'hangar'.

² For another example of information shown only on a district map see *Sheetlines 71*, 52.

³ Yolande Hodson, *Popular maps*, London: Charles Close Society, 1999, 157-168.

⁴ Annotated 'HOSPITAL' on the map in *Sheetlines 71*.

point omitted. The *British Association topographical map for the Bristol meeting 1930* (compiled from parts of half-inch sheets 27, 28, 32 and 33) shows the railway in the same form, but on Rodney's 1935 printing of sheet 33, the railway, the words 'Rollestone Camp' and the camp roads, but not buildings, have been removed.

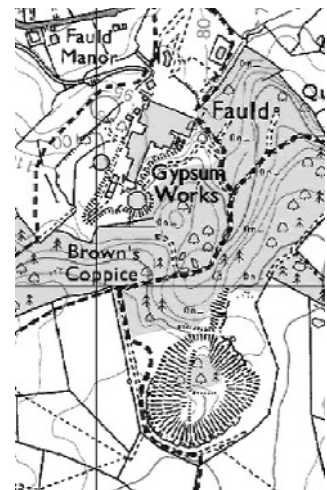
Again we see the effect of the change in security policy for Rodney notes the suppression of other military information elsewhere on the sheet and, as Gerry Jarvis remarks, "I am a little surprised to see the words Rollestone Camp omitted. I camped there in the 60s and you will have noticed the substantial camp still there."

Roger Eckersley had also been studying the one-inch district map and adds that the line to Bulford was railway owned (London and South Western), as was the branch from Ludgershall to Tidworth (Midland and South Western Junction) and both had scheduled passenger services. He points out, for future visitors to Larkhill, that between Stonehenge and Amesbury there is a series of copses which were planted by the then landowner, a retired Admiral, to portray the disposition of Nelson's fleet at the Battle of the Nile in 1798.

Roger Eckersley's letter to Gerry Jarvis concludes with information about other military sites which Midlands members may like to follow up:

I recently did some research for an article on the Ashby to Derby Branch of the Midland Railway, which was on my boyhood stamping ground. During the 1939-45 war this was handed over to the War Department and operated as the Melbourne Military Railway. Many thousands of British and American troops were trained there for railway operations in the Middle East and Europe. Extensive warehousing, accommodation and sidings were built in the north of Melbourne, but I discovered that the New Popular and Seventh Series OS maps (sheet 121) are not accurate in portraying what happened. The 1946 map just reproduces what was on the 1921 Popular map (sheet 53), namely a tiny engineering siding (SK 389280), though this had completely disappeared by that time. I have three editions of the Seventh Series, 1954, 1962 and 1971, and these show in some detail the growth and subsequent demolition of the barracks at Weston-upon-Trent and the extensive sidings at Kings Newton, south of the River Trent. None of them shows the development of sidings north of the Trent, between the two railway lines, known as Chellaston Quarry. This consisted of up to twenty tracks and had its own signal box; it certainly survived until the 1960s, when steam locomotives were stored there awaiting scrapping. Its 'disappearance' from the one-inch is the more remarkable because it is featured in the contemporary six-inch map. It set me wondering how many other instances there might be of selective omission? Elsewhere other large depots are shown in some detail, for instance Donnington (Shropshire) and Bicester, but one wonders how accurately?

Another railway-based American depot was constructed not far from Melbourne at Marchington, near Uttoxeter, and this appears on maps right up to *Landranger*, though I have not checked the latest edition. There is an unusual wartime feature south-east of here at Fauld (SK 183277). There was a large underground ammunition depot here in a former gypsum mine. Towards the end of the war this blew up (I heard the explosion). There was loss of life and several buildings on the surface disappeared. I have never heard an explanation of the cause but a crater was left several hundred metres across. This has appeared on Seventh Series and *Landranger* maps without any caption or explanation.



Current 1:25,000 mapping
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