

Magnesian Limestone ALSF National Mapping Programme project



The Magnesian Limestone in South and West Yorkshire NMP project mapped an area of 800 square kilometres. It recorded features from the Neolithic to the 20th century. This included piecing together cropmark evidence from thousands of photographs showing the remains of Iron Age and Roman settlement and farming. The project was carried out in partnership with [West Yorkshire Archaeology Service \(WYAS\)](#) [↗](#). It was funded by the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF).



Cropmarks of an Iron Age/Roman polygonal enclosure in South Yorkshire photographed on 11-JUL-2006 (NMR 20550/24) © Historic England

Air photo mapping

The project aimed to provide a better understanding of the archaeology of the Magnesian Limestone belt that runs up through this part of England. This geology is heavily quarried in places, resulting in the destruction of archaeological sites. Another aim of the project was to inform future archaeological work done in advance of extraction.

Small areas of South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire had been mapped in the late 1970s by Derrick Riley. He published his results in *Early Landscape from the Air* (1980). Riley coined the term 'brickwork fields' to describe the coaxial pattern of parallel linear boundaries and short cross boundaries that are common in this region. However, no mapping had been carried out since Riley's and there had been a further two decades of aerial photography.



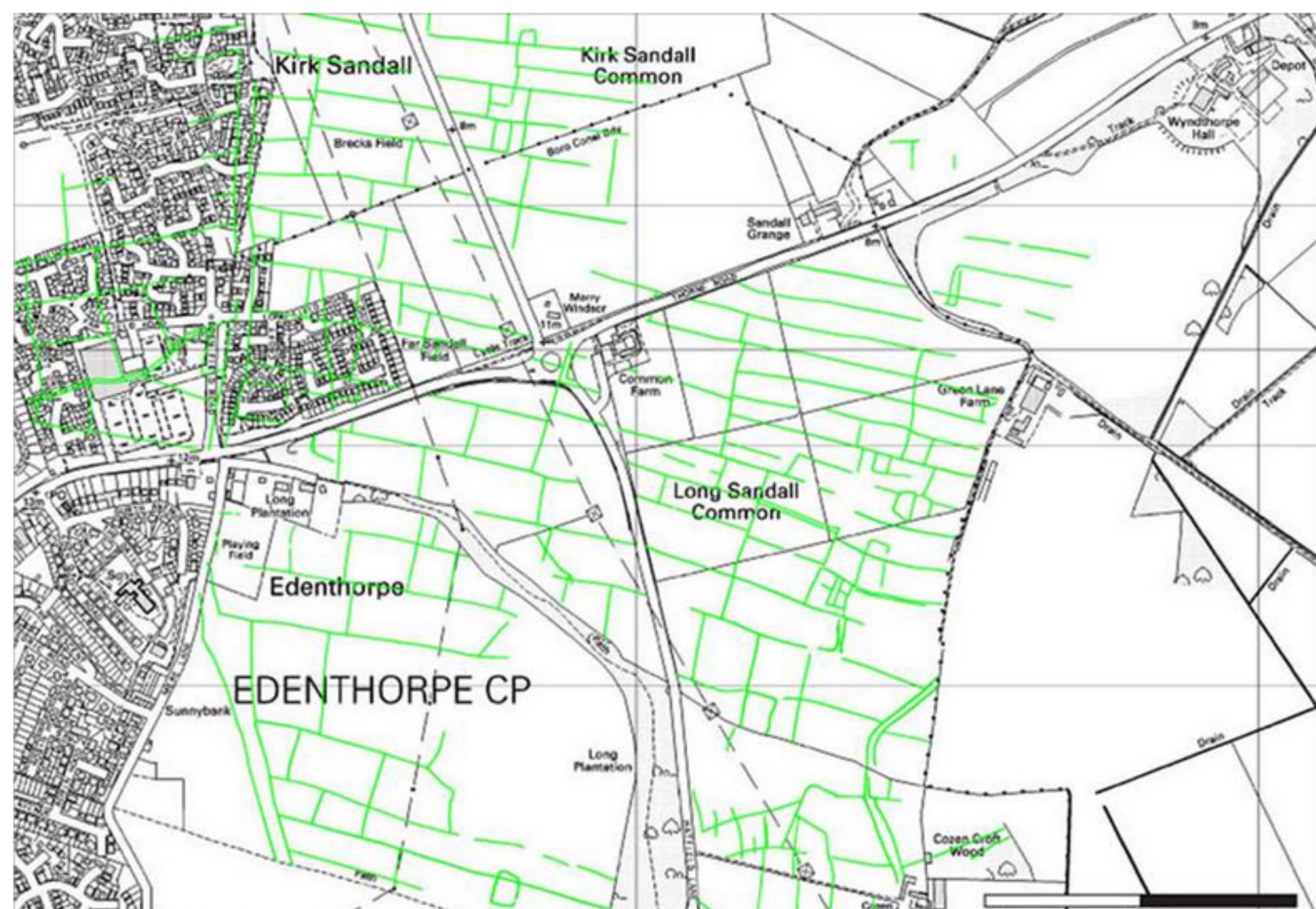
The Magnesian Limestone belt is under pressure from aggregate extraction. In this photograph, taken on 10-JUL-2007, both current and disused quarries can be seen with the town of Conisbrough in the background (NMR 20649/22) © Historic England

The Iron Age/ Roman landscape

The NMP mapping has made a very significant contribution to our understanding of Iron Age/ Roman settlement and land division in this region. It has shown that it was a landscape of field systems, trackways and enclosures.

Extensive areas of coaxial field systems are visible as cropmarks, in places several hundred hectares in area. These usually divide the landscape into long strip fields, but more irregular land division can be seen in places. Fragmentary remains of trackways often relate to the field systems. These can be traced for distances of over a kilometre in places.

Numerous ditched enclosures are embedded within these field systems. It is likely that most related to stock management. Other larger enclosures have evidence of multiple circuits of ditch and some contain round houses, indicating that they were settlements.



NMP mapping of the coaxial field systems and enclosures around Edenthorpe, South Yorkshire. Air photo mapping © Historic England. Base map © Crown Copyright and database right 2015. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019088. 2009.

The Magnesian Limestone in South and West Yorkshire Archaeological Mapping and Assessment Project

The Magnesian Limestone NMP was part of a wider project called The Magnesian Limestone in South and West Yorkshire Archaeological Mapping and Assessment Project. This aimed to combine the results of past excavation, geophysical survey and field walking with the information from high quality air photograph mapping.

The project used the results from the Magnesian Limestone NMP as well as existing mapping from the [Lower Wharfedale](#), [Vale of York](#) and [Nottinghamshire](#) NMP projects. The results of the wider project were published in 2010. The book includes a detailed discussion on the results of the NMP mapping.

