

## September Geography Group Report

This month's meeting focussed on maps and two recent group visits. Les Knight took advantage of the Witham's Wi-Fi network to show us the wonders to be found on the National Library of Scotland website. The map images section is a treasure trove of historic and more modern maps and is well-worth exploring. Les focussed on the georeferenced maps which allow you to select an historic map overlay and superimpose it on a variety of base maps including satellite and LiDAR images.

Jane Harrison talked about the magnificent Pieter Goos' Sea-Atlas, seen by some of the group at Raby Castle. This English edition of the Dutch atlas was published in 1760. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch were world leaders in cartography as trade and exploration flourished. Such was the interest in cartography that wealthy Flemish households displayed maps as wall charts in their homes. Several of Jan Vermeer's paintings, including "The Geographer", feature wall maps and globes. Pieter Goos' atlases were probably aimed at this market and were the coffee table books of their time. How the atlas came to be in Raby Castle is unknown.

Ruth Samson then recounted August's successful visit to Blencathra Studies Field Centre. She illustrated her talk with Pete Redgrave's photographs. It was clearly an instructive and enjoyable day.

Gerald shared his vision for staging a map exhibition. One had been planned in 2020, but unfortunately Covid intervened. The Witham Gallery has been provisionally booked for spring half-term (20<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> February 2023). Four possible genres have been proposed - maps of the imagination, historic maps of Teesdale and the surrounding area, geopolitical/military maps and "our maps" – those treasured, or perhaps drawn, by ourselves. A fifth section on the physical geography of Teesdale could be added. Members have been approached to establish interest amongst the group.

Phil Johnson talked about "Maps of the Imagination" in more detail. We learned that these fictional maps and charts generally conform to the accepted norms of geography and climatology. Historically created in 2D to interpret events in printed media, such as books and newspapers, they can now also be computer-generated in 3D to show various fantasy lands. Phil showed us some examples of MOTI maps.

Report by Jane Harrison

### Next meetings:

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October. 2pm at The Witham. In a change to the programme, Professor Grenville Holland will talk about "Renewable Energy: Politics, Planning, and Building New Estates".

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November. 2pm at The Witham. Professor Peter Atkins, from Durham University, will speak on the "Historical geography of food with particular reference to cheese and the North East of England".