

Somerset Archive and Record Service

Information Leaflet

MAPS



Introduction

Britain's earliest maps were drawn by the Romans in AD150, but it was not until the later 16th century that English map making really developed. From 1574 Christopher Saxon started to produce county maps showing topography, villages and coastline, but no roads. At the same time John Speed produced maps showing the hundreds in each county, and by the end of the 17th century John Ogilby was creating strip maps, showing routes from one town to another. However, it was not until the 19th century with the formation of the Ordnance Survey that standardised series of maps became widespread.

The Somerset Record Office holds four distinct series of maps: estate maps, tithe maps, Enclosure awards and Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. We also hold other plans, such as town plans and plans of public undertakings (eg. the building of roads, railways and canals). All catalogued maps are identified in the online catalogue under the Category field as 'Maps or Plans'.

Estate Maps

Estate maps developed from written surveys of estates and manors. They were drawn for a purpose and usually paid for by the landowner, so they often show some features more clearly than others and omit what is not required for their purpose.

Maps were drawn by a variety of surveyors, and vary greatly in scale, size, extent, content and detail. At a minimum they usually show part or all of a single landowner's holdings; at times one farm, sometimes a whole parish, at others a whole estate extending over several parishes.

Estate maps typically show individual fields with access routes, and often give field acreages. At times names of the tenant or farmer are provided. Most estate maps are concerned with land so depiction of settlements and houses can be unreliable. Therefore, if something is not on the map it does not mean it was not there at the time.

The Somerset Record Office has separate map catalogues available in the searchroom, which list all estate maps alphabetically by parish.

Tithe maps (D\D\rt, D\P\...)

By the early 19th century the longstanding payment of tithes (1/10th of produce) to the church by the lay population was a variable and unfair system. The Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 aimed to solve the problem. It calculated total tithe payments and rent charges from the previous seven years, and apportioned the total among landholders depending on their acreage and quality of land.

For each parish a map and survey (known as an apportionment) were created. On the tithe map each field was to be precisely measured. However, local surveyors often had little experience and no standardisation of scale or detail was set, so maps vary from parish to parish.

Each field on the map was numbered, and cross-referenced in the apportionment, providing details on the landowner, tenant, name of the property or land, state of cultivation, acreage, and amount of tithes payable. **Entries are organised alphabetically by landowner, not numerically by tithe number.** On some maps villages are drawn separately at a larger scale and buildings are often coloured pink.

Three copies of the tithe map were produced: one was held centrally (now at The National Archives), one was held by the Diocese and the third by the parish. The Somerset Record Office holds the Diocesan copies and a percentage of the parish copies.

Microfiche of the maps are available in the Orchard Wyndham Room, as the originals are often very large. Apportionments need to be ordered separately from the strongrooms.

Enclosure Awards (Q\Rde)

Enclosure of individual fields has been a feature of the English landscape since medieval times. Early enclosures were piecemeal, and few records survive. Most came about by local agreement or due to a landowner imposing his will on his tenants.

Enclosure by Act of Parliament began in 1760. This was usually of arable land, but from 1795 included common or wastelands. Local promoters of enclosure placed a bill before parliament which when passed became an Enclosure Act. The Act allowed promoters to nominate commissioners who would reallocate land into coherent units, so that each landowner would have the same value (not acreage) as before, usually in the form of a single field. A surveyor was appointed to draw up a plan of the lands to be enclosed, which survive as the Enclosure Awards.

The Awards show field boundaries and roads. Each plot is numbered, described and located, with details of ownership and acreage. They also show land already enclosed, roads which have been stopped up, and at times buildings and industrial sites.

The enclosure awards are listed in *Somerset enclosure acts and awards* by W Tate, available in the searchroom.

Ordnance Survey maps

One inch to the mile was the original scale used by Ordnance Survey, and maps were published from 1809 onwards for Somerset. In rural areas, large houses stand out and most farms are named. Towns are shown with their complete street layouts. Reprints of these maps are available in the searchroom.

From 1840 **six-inch** maps were produced, and from 1880 **25-inch** maps. Both were based on a county grid system, whereby Somerset was divided into ninety-four squares for the six-inch (each square then divided into four: NW, NE, SE and SW). For the twenty-five inch the ninety-four squares were sub-divided into sixteen smaller squares.

The Somerset Record Office holds a complete set of the 1st edition 6", patchy coverage of the 1st ed. 25", an almost complete set of the 2nd ed. 25" (c.1903) and some of the 2nd ed. rev. 25" (c.1930). Keysheets are available in the searchroom, showing which maps are held. The 1st and 2nd edition OS maps are also available to view on our website.

Other maps

A variety of other maps are held, including plans of **public undertakings (Q\Rup)**, which relate to public utilities such as canals, turnpike roads, railways, tramways, water supply, harbours, docks, gas, electricity and light, extensions of borough boundaries, etc.

Town plans are listed in the map catalogue folders along with the estate maps. They exist mostly for the large urban areas, such as Bath, Taunton and Bridgwater.

Building control plans, archaeological plans, local plans, development plans and maps of the 1911 Inland Revenue Doomsday Survey (**DD\IR**) are also held. Catalogues for these are available on the online catalogue, or please ask staff for details.

When requesting maps in the searchroom, please state the parish, date and reference code on your request slip. This helps with locating the correct document.

Contact details

Somerset Record Office
Obridge Road
Taunton
TA2 7PU

Tel : 01823 337600 (Appointments)
01823 278805 (Enquiries)
01823 325402 (Fax)

Website : www.somerset.gov.uk/archives

Email: archives@somerset.gov.uk