

Old maps and plans

Using contemporary maps to locate your ancestors can be as useful and interesting as researching written records

Nowadays, many of us don't live in the same areas as our ancestors did. As a result, we may be somewhat vague about the geography of where our forebears were brought up and spent their lives. Researching these areas using contemporary maps can be a fascinating, and extremely useful, addition to your family history research.

Virtually all maps were developed or commissioned for specific reasons, and were not devised or intended with family historians in mind. That means we tend to ignore them in the early stages of our research. However, finding information from them is surprisingly easy, and can be just as important as looking at written sources such as certificates, census returns and parish registers.

The National Archives (TNA), the British Library, University libraries, county record offices, and many local studies libraries have large collections of maps and plans covering hundreds of years. Add to this vast resource shops selling historical maps, and the numerous websites that allow you to view them, and it isn't difficult to build a visual panorama of your ancestors' environments. Using maps in

your research can help to bring names, dates and places alive.

Locate a map

Maps generally fall into two categories: stand-alone maps, and those with supplementary lists or details, which are often as vital as the map itself. Either way, the trick to getting the most out of them is to use them alongside other sources. For example, when you're looking at an old street map, it helps to have a contemporary Post Office directory handy, as this will tell you who lived where, and which businesses were on each street.

In the early stages of your research, you may be tempted to use a modern map to locate an ancestor's parish. Be careful: since your forebears' time, street names may have changed, urban development may have sucked up rural areas, and whole villages and aspects of the landscape may have changed significantly.

A great starting point is the *Phillimore Atlas of Parish Registers*, which shows every parish in Britain. This atlas also reproduces a version of an old county map alongside, so you have some idea of the geography. All good record offices have copies.

In the larger cities, especially London, it's useful to use parish 'street maps'. These show the extent of streets within a parish. They're particularly important for establishing which church is nearest to where your ancestor lived, and therefore where they might have been married, had children baptised or been buried.

Overlooked Historic maps can help you trace your ancestors' movements



HOUSES

Find 20th-century homes

Use field books to find out about your ancestors' dwellings in the 1911 Census

The 1910 Land Value Duty Survey, known as the 'Second Domesday Survey', has become very important with the recent release of the 1911 Census. It's an easily accessible source for tracking down property in the early 20th century. Armed with your ancestors' addresses, you can use the survey map and field books to find out more about the properties they lived in.

The handwritten field books compiled at the time of the inspection often contain sketches of the layout of the accommodation. There's also detailed information about the owner and the

occupier, the condition and construction of the property, and its market value. These are the only comprehensive records that remain for many long demolished or significantly altered properties. Whether your ancestor was a labourer, tradesman or landed gentry, the survey paints a wonderful picture of how they lived.

When searching the maps, remember some properties may not exist today or the street names may have changed. You'll find copies of the survey at county record offices and also at TNA in class IR58, which has an index.

Historical map explained

Gain an idea of your ancestors' home town, and discover clues for further research

STREET NAMES

Over the years, street names may have changed and many roads have vanished altogether. Using an old and modern map to compare locations will enable you to identify where your ancestors lived

WORK PLACES

Many people lived in close proximity to their work places. Maps identify the locations and relative sizes of factories, timber yards etc and provide more information about how a family may have lived

REDEVELOPMENT

Maps may be the only record that shows the location of an ancestral home. In many towns and cities, redevelopment will have taken place and today there will be no remains of a property

DWELLING

The larger the scale of the map, the more detail you'll find relating to the extent of your ancestors' properties. Look at various editions to see how the landscape changed

AMENITIES

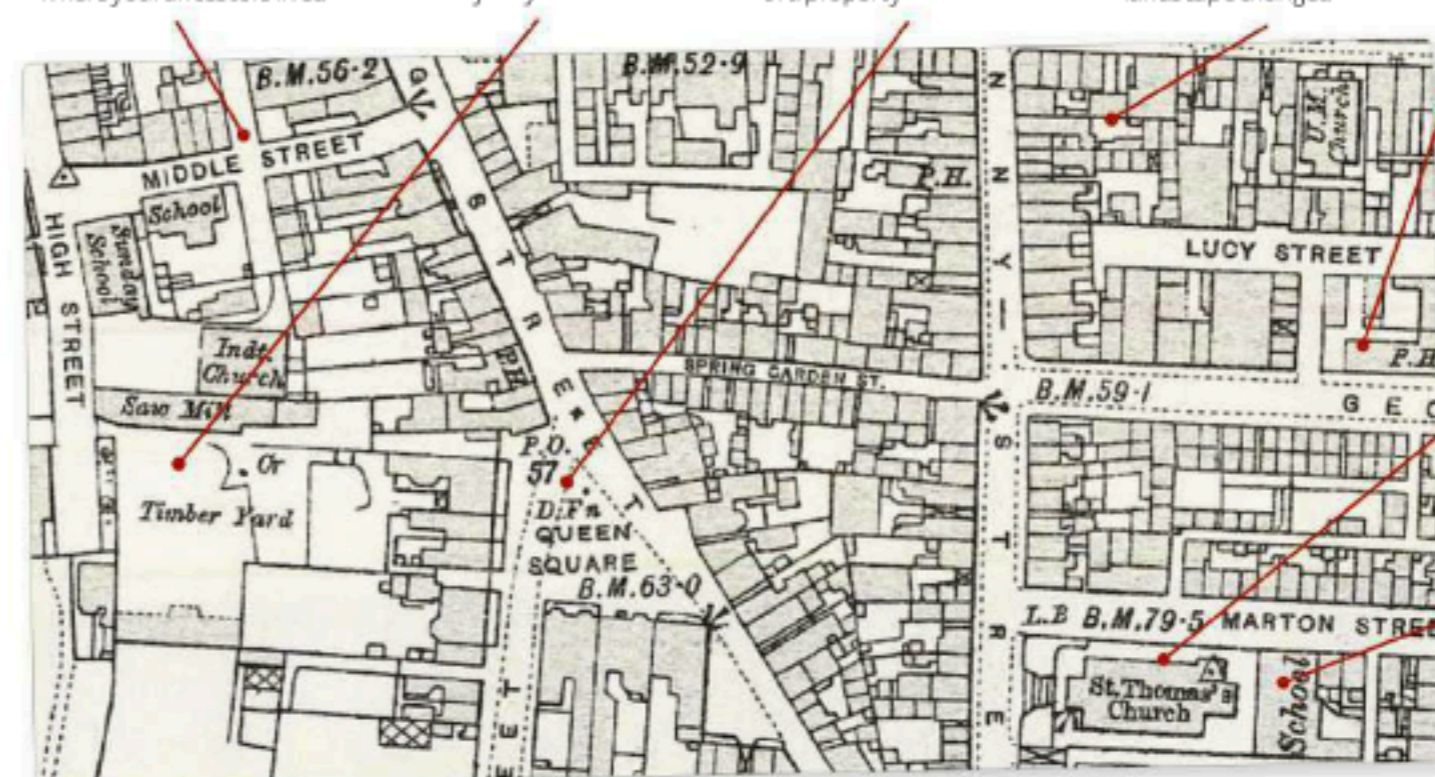
Maps translate what facilities were at hand for families to enjoy leisure activities. Public houses, music halls etc are often identifiable although many aren't named

CHURCHES

Families traditionally went to church for baptisms, marriages and burials and in larger towns this was often the nearest church to their home. Maps show locations of churches or nonconformist chapels and are a way to help find records of such events

SCHOOLS

Children usually attended the schools nearest to their homes. Many were administered by churches and were often located next to the church. A map will help identify schools and lead you to finding pupils recorded in admission registers



“Maps provide clues about roads, railways, canals and rivers, which will suggest your forebears' possible migration routes”

You'll usually find that local record offices have large collections of maps relating to their regions - simply ask staff to help you find one that's most relevant to your research.

Moving on

Soon you'll find that you're ready to move on to more specialised maps and estate plans. These can show detailed information about the relevant time period. For example, they might provide clues about roads, railways, canals and rivers (some of which no longer exist), which will suggest your forebears' possible migration routes. You can even use large-scale maps to pinpoint the exact position of the house in which your ancestors lived.

Most 19th-century (and later) maps are based upon the Ordnance Survey (OS). This organisation was established in 1791 and has its roots in the military mapping of the coastal defences of south east England due to the threat of invasion from Napoleon. Completing the whole country took the best part of 80 years, but what's left are the most accurate topographical and planimetric (showing cultural features) maps in existence.

There have been several series of OS maps produced over the years in various scales ranging from the popular 'one-inch' series (now Landranger) to the large scale 'ten-foot', 1:500 series, which shows significant detail. Most towns and cities are detailed



on larger scale maps but some rural areas are recorded to a smaller scale.

You'll often find old OS maps in your local record office. In addition, stores such as Cassini Maps (www.cassinimaps.co.uk) sell maps for a variety of years, scales and locations (Cassini offers a service allowing you to centre a map on a place of your choice). Most specialist maps are also overlaid on OS maps.

If you have farming and rural ancestors, the National Farm Survey undertaken during World

Collections Your county record office will have local maps that cover hundreds of years

Step-by-step: Using maps and plans

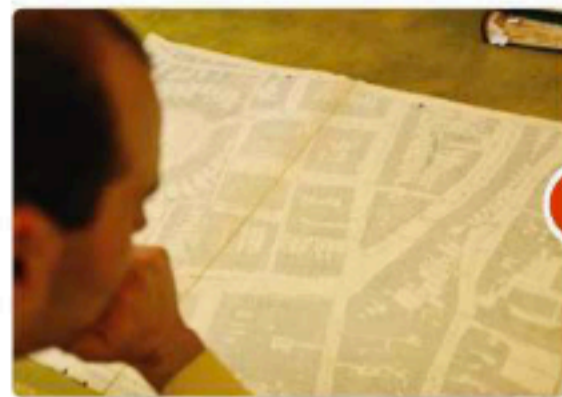
Find details of your ancestor's house at your local record office



1 Once you've found an ancestor's address, find out whether your local record office or library has a contemporary map compiled around the date of the document in which you've located it. Visit the record office and search the map catalogue, noting the call number and edition details so you can order the correct map for the period

2 Some maps will be in sections, so you'll need to use a master key to find the right section of the map. If there's no master key, you'll need to order all the parts so you can locate your property. This is particularly important when using larger scale Ordnance Survey maps

3 Fill out a document requisition slip or find the map in the fiche cabinet, replacing the fiche with a reader number card so it's not misfiled on return. If you're using an original, you'll need to view it on a flat map table. Original maps should be weighted to keep them flat, particularly if they're usually stored rolled



4 Use the map to ascertain how the street numbering system worked. At different times, some street numbers ran consecutively, some ran odds and evens on each side and if a street had been extended, the numbering system may have completely changed. You'll need to be careful to identify the right property

5 Once you think you've found the property, locate it in associated street or Post Office directories of the same time period, if they exist. Always double check the property located on the map is at the same address as the one you've found in the directory. Check it against your original document, too

6 Get a copy, either by printing from the microfiche or by taking a digital photograph (most record offices allow you to use cameras). Label the copy on the back with the date, map reference and a short note of what it relates to, or make a note if you're using a camera. Then return the map or fiche to the returns table or cabinet

War II is an excellent resource. It was taken on 4 April 1941 and is effectively a substitute for a national decennial census, which was postponed because of the war.

The survey was to help promote the better use of agricultural land and increase food and crop production during the war. The maps are fairly large scale for rural areas, and show the extent of the land owned by each person. Like most surveys, they come with supplementary information,

including the name of the owner or tenant, length of occupation, condition and extent of the buildings. You'll find the records of the survey at TNA, in series MAF 32.

In the city

Tracing your ancestors in London is often difficult, even in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Maps Descriptive of London Poverty 1898-1899, better known as the Charles Booth Poverty Maps, are a

great help. These are available for free online at <http://booth.lse.ac.uk>, where you can search them by name, street or occupation.

Similarly the Goad Insurance Plans, produced from 1885 to the 1970s, cover most of the important towns and cities of Britain and even some smaller places. The plans provide a record of people's buildings and businesses within any given street, and were frequently revised with overlaid information.

You can find copies at the British Library.

From the onset of the Industrial Revolution, people made applications to build canals, railways and roads, which required approval from Parliament or lower authorities. Their applications were usually supported by finely detailed maps.

Mapping the land

Two significant and very useful map series for the early to mid-1800s were produced for Land Enclosure and Tithe Redemption. For about 100 years from 1760, Acts of Parliament redistributed land to various large landowners, resulting in many small landowners losing their property. Large-scale maps were created to record this redistribution, with accompanying lists of landowners. You can find both at TNA and in

county record offices. The earliest maps are especially useful as these pre-date the modern OS Maps.

When the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 converted tithes to monetary payments, mapping surveys and schedules were carried out to calculate new charges. Most of these maps were made between 1840 and 1850. They are large scale, often 26 inches to the mile, and show buildings and land boundaries. This was the most detailed survey since *Domesday Book*, although it didn't extend to many urban areas. There are two copies of each map – one will be in the county record office, the other at TNA.

If your ancestor worked for an estate owner, you'll also find the estate plans in a record office. Detail and accuracy will vary, but you'll often find supporting information, such as tenants' lists. Most of these cease to exist after the 1870s as they were replaced by the larger scale OS maps.

War plans

As well as finding maps to locate your ancestors' homes, you can also use them to trace details of your military ancestors who fought abroad. Most of us will have ancestors who fought in WWI; alongside surviving service records and the regimental war

diaries, you can use a series of trench maps, which exist at either 1:10000 or 1:20000 scales. These give visual details of the trenches used by the British Expeditionary Force and provide a detailed picture of the terrain on which the soldiers fought. You can get copies from TNA's bookshop for a reasonable price, or see the originals in the Map Room.

Whatever period you're researching, always enquire at your record office to find out what contemporary maps are available and use them alongside other documents. Knowledge of the geography of an area in a specific period can frequently help you resolve the challenges in tracing the movement and migration of your ancestors, or simply to learn more about their homes and community. ■

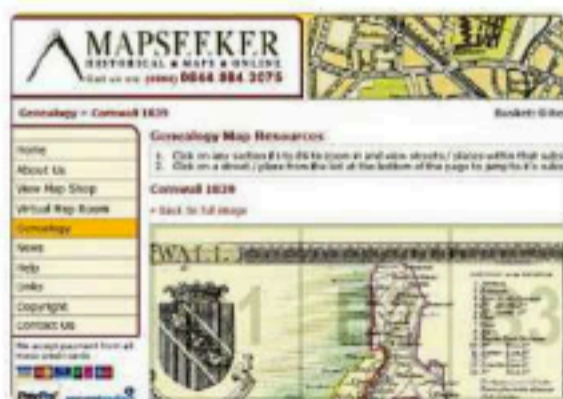
Top three: Map websites

Make use of these online resources in your research



Charles Booth

1 A valuable resource for those with London ancestry, <http://booth.lse.ac.uk> has original maps and notebooks produced by a survey of life and labour between 1886 and 1903. The 'Then and Now' maps include the originals, showing the occupiers' status



Mapseekers

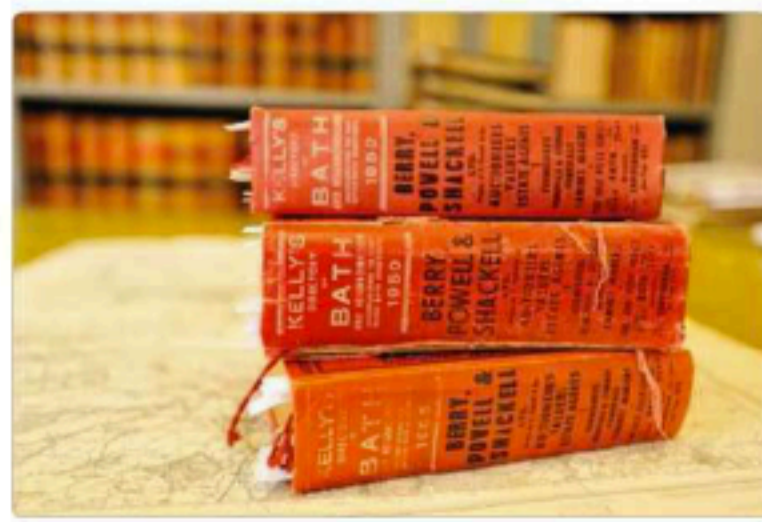
2 www.mapseeker.co.uk is a free and searchable genealogy map resource. You can search street, place and county maps including London and many provincial areas from the 17th to the 19th century, as well as a comprehensive collection of British maps



Old Maps

3 A comprehensive mapping site backed by Ordnance Survey, www.old-maps.co.uk covers the whole country. You can search the site by place name, co-ordinates or by a place of interest. You're then given a choice of map editions for chosen areas

Tip You can use other sources in conjunction with maps to find where your ancestors lived



CONTACTS

The National Archives
Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

WEBSITES

British History Online
www.britishhistory.ac.uk/maps
London Ward and Parish Maps
www.londonancestor.com/maps
National Library of Scotland Map Collection
www.nls.uk/maps

MAPPING *your family*

Placing your family using historic maps helps you understand their lives better and may break down those tricky brick walls says **Anthony Adolph**

Over 30,000 years ago, near Pavlov in Moravia, one of our Ice Age ancestors took a piece of mammoth tusk and scratched on it a series of symbols – jagged lines for mountains, the wiggling course of a river and a series of rings.

It is probably the oldest map in the world, and it works, because the landscape depicted matches the one in which it was found and the rings correspond well to known camp sites from the time when it was made.

The purpose of this, and most later maps, was to stop people getting lost. And, just as they work well for people travelling on the

ground, they are also essential for us time-travellers, as a means of stopping us from getting lost as we delve back into the past to try to track down our ancestors.

Stories of Journeys

For a start, maps are useful for working out how places mentioned in family memories, and in documents relating to your ancestors, fit together. A family tree stretching back only a few generations is likely to contain quite a number of place names, and it's essential to understand how these fit together. Are all the places mentioned very close together, for

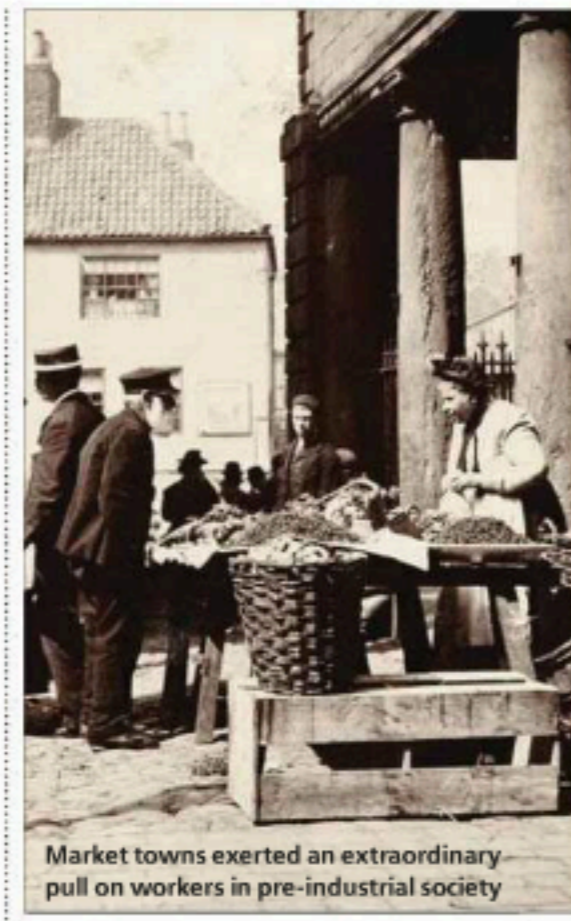
Historic maps can provide a great insight into the location where your ancestors lived



instance, or do they fall into groups, starting in one part of the country, then jumping suddenly to another? If they fall into several groups, do they make sense by revealing journeys, of agricultural ancestors migrating into industrial cities, perhaps, followed by their more prosperous descendants moving out into that city's leafier suburbs? Or do they perhaps reveal how a nautical family started in a fishing harbour in Cornwall and then migrated along the coast to the Cinq Ports of Kent and ended up, via a sojourn in Great Yarmouth, in the industrial port of Newcastle upon Tyne?

By understanding how a family tree works on a map, you can reveal stories of journeys which may otherwise have remained hidden which in turn make sense of those generations. You might also discover that what looks like a journey was nothing of the sort. Sometimes, you'll find two or three place names mentioned on a family tree, suggesting a lot of movement, but when you study a map you will find these places were virtually on top of each other. Your ancestor may have remained in exactly the same cottage, but went to church over there, was enumerated in the census under that township there, yet was registered under the parish over the hill under whose jurisdiction his home fell.

Maps help reveal not just what happened, but why. They might show that your kin moved from this village to



Market towns exerted an extraordinary pull on workers in pre-industrial society

that town specifically because it was the closest industrial area. Alternatively, there may have been a direct road, river, canal or railway leading straight to it, making it the most obvious route to take. Equally, David Hey wrote persuasively in *Journeys in Family History* about the extraordinary pull of the market town in pre-industrial society. Each one was effectively a sun amidst its mini solar system of villages, and most movement

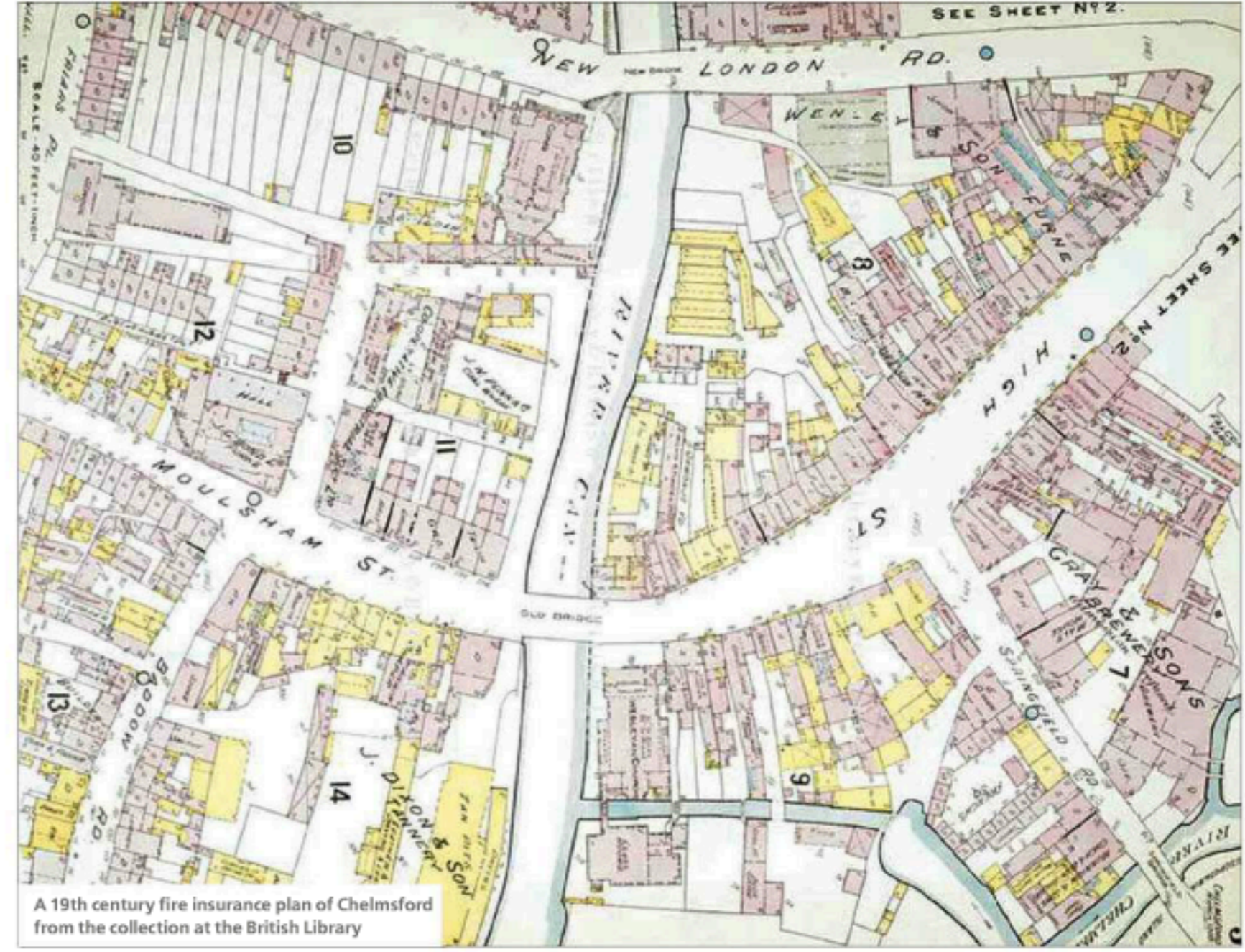
within the locality was not randomly from village to village, but into the market town and then out to another satellite village. For it was in the market town that servants and labourers were hired, that girls met boys and new leases of farm land were advertised and taken up.

Predicting the past

Just as maps explain what was going on in the sections of family tree you have already traced, they can also be incredibly useful, especially when combined with reading about local and social history, in helping predict where earlier generations are likely to have come from. Rural ancestors probably came, more likely than not, from one of the other villages in the orbit of the same market town in which their descendants lived, but not necessarily one of the adjacent villages – as David Hey showed – their origins could lie in one the same distance out of the market town in the other direction. Families in industrial cities may have come from other conurbations where similar trades were followed, or direct from the city's hinterland, probably following the transport links which existed at the time. This is where old maps really come into their own and time spent poring over these will never be wasted, as you will become ever more familiar with how things were in your ancestors' day.

A sense of place

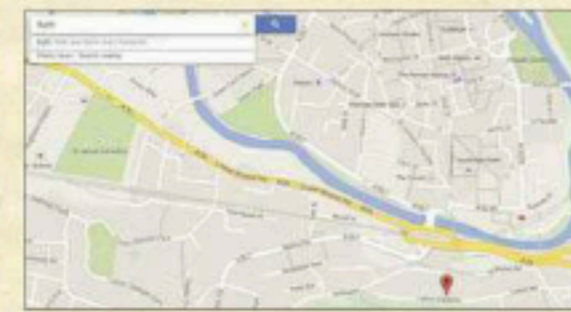
You may, for example, have two possible baptisms for your ancestor, found in



A 19th century fire insurance plan of Chelmsford from the collection at the British Library

Essential tools Google Maps and the Phillimore Atlas

These are the two sorts of map I use on an hourly basis. The first is the simplest, googlemaps.co.uk – you just type in the place name and the map enlarges itself over the place you want. By zooming in further, you can see road names and often locate the exact address given on birth certificates. By zooming out, you can see the wider area. A click of a button transfers you from a simple map to a satellite view of the landscape, so sometimes you can hone in on an ancestral home and see the field and woods on one side, and the high street and harbour on the other, and understand exactly why your ancestor was described as a fisherman in one document and a woodcutter in another. By typing in another place



name – perhaps the parish where a possible baptism for your ancestor was found in an index – you'll be sped away to that place, and see how far the two places were apart. You can see at once if they were plausibly close, or implausibly distant.

The other maps that I use all the time are those in the *Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers*, produced by The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies in

Canterbury. For each county there is a map reproduced from 1834 as well as a map showing parish boundaries. Especially when working back before 1837, knowing the name of the hamlet or city street where your ancestors lived is only truly useful if you know under which parish these places fell, as it is in the register of the relevant parish that their baptisms, marriages and burial will be found – or, if not there, in the records of the neighbouring ones. The Phillimore maps also show the boundaries of the broader ecclesiastical jurisdictions, the regions controlled by archdeacons and bishops, which you need to know in order to look for the many records those offices generated, particularly marriage licenses, wills and bishop's transcripts (BTs). The more recent editions include Scotland, too.

familysearch.org. Examination of modern maps shows that one church is much closer than the other to where you know the family lived and there are direct transport links to both. However, a map from the relevant period may show the railway that now goes to that closer place arrived 50 years after the baptism there, whereas at the time a straight Roman road ran direct to the place further away – making that farthest place the one best explored first.

Sometimes, knowing where people lived makes an immense difference to how we think about and research our ancestors. Scotland is a good example, where trying to trace family trees without maps and a basic understanding of the country is almost a waste of time. Highland families lived under the clan system, or its vestiges, taking up tenancies from the clan chief; or being 'cleared' in the late 18th or early 19th centuries to unprofitable land on the chiefs' estates. They may have left altogether to go to the nearest industrial city in the Central

Knowing where people lived makes an immense difference to your research

Belt, or even emigrated. Lowlanders generally orbited around market towns with their hiring fairs, or clustered into the industrial towns. Yet those who lived in the burghs, wherever they were, led quite different lives which can be traced through burgh records. If they moved at all, it was generally from one burgh to another.

Town and cities

Besides old and modern maps made to stop travellers getting lost, there are also many specialist maps produced for specific purposes which we can use in tracing our family trees. They can be found in local archives, libraries, county record offices and the national archives of England and Wales (at Kew), Scotland (in Edinburgh), Northern Ireland (in Belfast) and Eire (in Dublin), as well as the National Library of

Ordnance Survey

The best maps covering the British Isles are those that are produced by the Ordnance Survey. However, you should beware of a few pitfalls that need to be considered.

The original surveys started in 1784 and updates, such as railways, were overlaid on later maps. Thus, a map may show a village as it was in 1790 with a railway built in 1850 running past it. A second survey started in 1840, with subsequent editions updated in the 20th century. These produced much less anachronistic impressions of places as they really were at the time.



This map of Waterford accompanies Griffith's Primary Valuation of Ireland (1831-1864)

Wales (in Aberystwyth), not to mention the British Library in London.

There will often be plans of towns and cities dating back surprisingly far, or reconstructions of them – the late Bill Urry's *Canterbury Under the Angevin Kings* (1967), for instance, contains incredibly detailed maps of the town showing specifically who lived in which house at certain points in the Middle Ages. In the British Library and Guildhall Library in London are 18th

For some cities there are maps produced in the 19th and early 20th centuries which chart and study poverty. The most famous are the *Maps Descriptive of London Poverty* produced in 1903 by Charles Booth and featured in last month's issue of the magazine. Every London street was colour-coded from black to yellow, ranging from 'Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy', down through 'very poor, casual. Chronic want', to 'lowest class, vicious, semi-criminal'. These maps are at the

succession of generations holding the same house or field. Irish and Scottish estate records are particularly useful when they predate surviving parish registers. Most remain in private muniment rooms or solicitors' offices, but there are plenty in national and county record offices, usually catalogued under the estate owners' name.

The tithe apportionment maps cover roughly three quarters of the English and Welsh parishes between 1838 and 1854. Their purpose was to regularise the payment of tithes, and they show and number each field and building. The numbers refer to corresponding tithe schedule books, which describe the land and its rentable value, and show names of owners and occupiers, providing you with a fine written and graphic description of where your ancestors were living. Copies are at county record offices and also at The National Archives (TNA) in classes IR 29 (schedules) and IR 30 (maps). Some county collections have been digitised (for example, Devon, Cornwall, Cheshire and Leeds) or are in the process of being digitised so it's worth enquiring about these at the relevant county record office. The collection at TNA is currently being digitised by TheGenealogist where the schedules can already be accessed with maps being added in 2015. The new

“In the countryside, estate maps started to be drawn up in the late 16th century”

and 19th century fire insurance plans, covering many towns around Britain, which include details of materials used to build the house concerned, how many storeys it had, and sometimes even names of the householders.

Prockter and Taylor's *The A-Z of Elizabethan London* (published by Harry Margary, a prolific reproducer of old maps, in association with Guildhall Library, 1979) reproduces maps so detailed that you can almost peer through your ancestors' windows and see them still living inside.

London School of Economics and searchable via the Charles Booth Online Archive at booth.lse.ac.uk.

Heading for the country

In the countryside, estate maps started to be drawn in the late 16th century, often showing and naming fields, woods and buildings with precise acreage and including the names of neighbouring landowners.

They often accompanied rent rolls or rentals naming the tenants, and are especially useful when a series exists over a period of time, allowing you to trace the

Welsh project Cynefin (cynefin.archives.wales.org.uk) aims to digitise more than 1,100 Welsh tithe maps and link them to the relevant apportionment document.

Many landowners did away with the medieval open field system and its associated smallholdings and commons, and reallocated the land as hedged fields or created elegant deer parks or landscaped gardens. This process of 'Enclosure', as it was termed, generated detailed maps.

Dating from the 17th century onwards, the maps and associated enclosure awards, detailing which landholders were allocated what, can be found at county record offices and TNA while those carried out by Act of Parliament are at the House of Lords Record Office.

The Emerald Isle

Amongst Ireland's most useful maps are those accompanying Sir Richard Griffith's Primary Valuation of Ireland (1831-1864). The original records are in The National Library of Ireland and are now online. They have recently been added to Findmypast, but I use the version on askaboutireland.ie which links the results of Griffith's survey of all householders, however small and poor, with Google Maps and Griffith's own maps, on which the plot numbers relate to those in the written records. You can discover what land your family tenanted in the mid-19th century and see exactly where this land was on a contemporary map.

Also essential for Irish research are the parish maps in James G Ryan's *Irish Records: Sources for Family and Local History* (1997 and later reprints) which show the layout of the parishes within the counties, accompanied by lists of available registers for the different denominations.

Also useful are the surname-distribution maps in the various editions of Edward MacLysaght's *Irish Families*, which pretty much tell you where ancestors of a certain surname are likely to be found.

Not lost at all

The more you look, the more maps you will find. The more you study these and read about the areas where your ancestors lived, the better you will come to understand them, and how you came to be who you are now: and you will also grow much canner at fathoming out where they came from!

Anthony Adolph is a professional genealogist and the author of *Tracing Your Family History* (Collins) and *Tracing Your Aristocratic Ancestors* (Pen & Sword).

10 great map websites

Here are a few of the many useful websites containing maps for British Isles genealogy

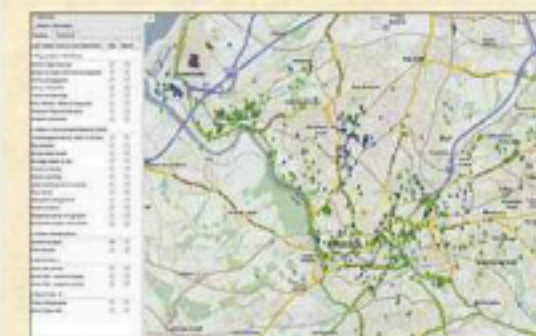


1 Britain from Above

britainfromabove.org.uk
Look down on your ancestors' early to mid-20th century homes from the skies.

2 British History Online

british-history.ac.uk/map.aspx
This website is crammed with background information on places, and includes the 1872 Ordnance Survey maps.



3 Know Your Place

maps.bristol.gov.uk/knowyourplace
This project, using historic maps of Bristol, is an excellent example of how archives can share their map collections online. A 'community layer' enables users to 'pin' their own comments, photographs or memories to the maps.

4 National Library of Scotland Map Library

www.nls.uk/maps/index.html
The website contains a formidable array of searchable maps of Scotland, but it's not just Scottish maps on offer here. Click on 'Recent Additions' for links to OS maps for London and the rest of the UK.

5 National Library of Wales

llgc.org.uk/collections/learn-more/introduction3
This page lists the library's magnificent collection and how to access it. Also, get involved in the new Cynefin tithe maps project (cynefin.archiveswales.org.uk).

6 Public Profiler

gbnames.publicprofiler.org
This very useful website produces surname distribution maps showing where names are found today and where they were in the 1881 census.



7 TheGenealogist

thegenealogist.co.uk
This site is adding numerous maps in 2015 including tithe maps from TNA linked to the records themselves.

8 Valuation Office map finder

bit.ly/1y80dEc
The Inland Revenue valuations were compiled between 1910 and 1920 and are held at TNA in IR 58 (field books) and IR 121-135 (maps) with comparable records for Scotland at the NAS. They list surveys and valuations of most buildings with names of owners and leaseholders.

9 Old Maps Online

oldmapsonline.org
This amazing portal is a gateway to historical maps in libraries around the world. Search for the area that you are interested in and find out what's online.



10 A Vision of Britain

visionofbritain.org.uk
Gives considerable historical background detail on places, with a fine collection of maps including the OS First Series.