



## Historic Maps and Plans

This leaflet gives a general introduction to the major map collections of the Northumberland Archives.

Although some maps were drawn in the Middle Ages the majority of maps in county record offices date from the seventeenth century onwards. Until the introduction of ordnance survey maps (1791 in Kent) anyone wishing for a map of a particular area had to commission a surveyor to survey and map the area. This could be very costly. Early maps and plans of individual areas and villages are usually found in the papers of landed estates.

**Printed county maps were** produced commercially from the sixteenth century onward. They show the main physical features such as rivers, hills, road patterns and the names of the main settlements. Used in date order they can show changes in communications and settlement patterns. As an example of this Bothal appears on early maps with its castle and church and the town of Ashington does not as it developed round the colliery in the nineteenth century. On some older maps the spelling of the place names gives a clue to the original pronunciation and origin of the name. Later maps show changes brought about by the railways and the development of the coalfield.

**Printed town maps** appear in the nineteenth century and there are maps in c.1826 for Alnwick, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Hexham and Morpeth.

**Enclosure maps and awards (c.1700-1869)** record the fencing in of the land for farming and usually consist of a map with an accompanying text, which records the legal details, and names all individuals involved with the award. Roads, local boundaries and quarries are described. They do not generally have village plans.

**Deposited Plans (1752-1952)** are plans of public works or major developments in the county, which were deposited with the Clerk of the Peace at the Quarter Sessions even if the scheme was later, abandoned. Thus plans survive for a canal between Hexham and Newcastle that was never built. Many of the plans trace the line of a road or railway and an accompanying booklet lists the relevant landowners.

**Plans of Highway Diversions** were also deposited at Quarter Sessions.

**Tithe Awards and Plans (c.1836-1850)** are the awards and plans produced as a result of the Tithe Commutation Act 1834. They consist of a rolled map with an accompanying text that gives details of land ownership and tenancies. There are tithe awards and plans for most villages in the county. The scale of maps is often given in chains (22 yards) to the mile.

**Specialist map collections** include the collection of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne. This collection contains plans of villages and individual farms from estate surveys and some draft plans for tithe awards.

**Building plans (late nineteenth century onwards)** have been deposited by District Councils.

They give plans of individual properties and may still be **within copyright**.

**Ordnance Survey Maps** (1850's to date) were originally drawn by army surveyors and the earliest ones for Northumberland date from the 1850's. The scale was given in inches to the mile and in the nineteenth and early twentieth century the commonest scales in use were: -

- 1 inch to one mile.
- 6 inches to one mile.
- 25 inches to one mile.

Some town centre maps were produced on a scale of 10.56 feet to the mile and these very large scale maps give details of individual properties. Maps on this scale exist for Alnwick, Bedlington, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Hexham and Morpeth.

A complete set of six inches to one mile first edition (1855-1865) for Northumberland is held. There is not a complete set of the first edition on the 25 inch scale.

The dates for the first four editions of the Ordnance Survey are as follows: -

First edition:	c.1855-1865.
Second edition:	c.1894-1898.
Third edition:	c.1920-1926.
Fourth edition:	c.1938-1940.

Searchroom catalogues have detailed lists of maps held. Six inch and twenty five inch maps are held for all these and later editions, but there is incomplete coverage of the county for every edition.

**Current editions** of Ordnance Survey maps are held in the relevant county library. Ordnance survey maps give a detailed picture of any area, but inaccuracies do occur. A new edition of a map does not always mean that the area has been resurveyed for example the 1924 six inch map of the Catcleugh area omits the reservoir (built 1900) because the new map was a reprint of the 1898 edition. The date of survey is usually printed in the bottom right hand corner of the map.

Maps of North Northumberland can be found in the main map collections, but there are also maps held in the Berwick-upon-Tweed Record Office. These include town maps of Berwick and a 1792 map of Holy Island.

Northumberland Archives is committed to providing a quality service to all its users and therefore this information is also available in Large Print and via the Internet. The Internet address is

[www.northumberlandarchives.com](http://www.northumberlandarchives.com)

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