

OLD ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPS: THE GODFREY EDITION

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Until relatively recently, if a historian wanted to consult an earlier edition of an Ordnance Survey map, it was necessary to visit a library or record office and consult it there and photocopy those parts one was interested in. This began to change when the first edition of the 1 inch to 1 mile maps were reproduced in the early 1970s, but for many people, the larger scale maps were the ones they required because of the detail which they showed. In the Greater Manchester area, the larger scale map was published by Neil Richardson. This was the first edition of the 6 inches to 1 mile map of the 1840s, but it only covered Lancashire and the reprint was only of those sheets around Manchester. It was not until the 1980s that historians were able to obtain copies of the larger scale 25 inches to 1 mile maps.

In the early 1980s, a Gateshead map dealer, Alan Godfrey, had the idea to reprint the 25 inches to 1 mile Ordnance Survey



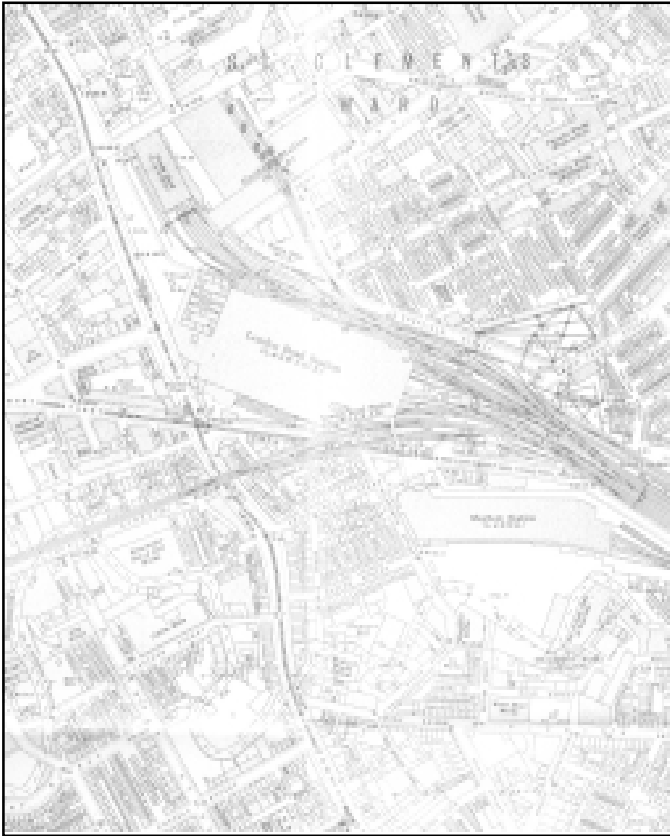
Detail from *Manchester City Centre, 1849*

maps for the beginning of the twentieth century. His idea was essentially a very simple one, take the 25 inches to 1 mile map of an area, photographically copy it and reduce the size so that it would fit on an A2 sized sheet. On the reverse he decided to add notes about the sheet and an extract from a directory that was published about the time the map was issued. Photographically reproducing the map meant that it could be accurately scaled down to approximately 14 inches to 1 mile whilst at the same time ensuring that the quality of the reprint was of the highest standard. Even today, with the advent of digitisation, the maps are photographically copied as the resultant product is of a much higher standard than those produced digitally.

The other important ingredient that has made the maps so successful are the notes and extracts from directories. The notes, or increasingly, short essays written by local historians or experts in a particular field, make a valuable contribution to the usefulness of the map as they often provide information that is not easily available and sometimes draw attention to features on the map which might not be noticed by the casual observer. The extracts from the directories are also very popular. It is surprising how many people actually find relatives listed in the extract.

The first maps which made their appearance were for the north-east, around Newcastle-on-Tyne, but it was not long before other areas began to be covered such as Lancashire, Yorkshire, London and the Midlands. The target was to try and cover all the major towns and cities of the country with at least one sheet and where possible, if there were several sheets, to eventually do them all. The possibilities were endless. By the end of 2002, all the English counties had at least one map published of one of their towns or cities. The only problem was the finding of good, clean, flat sheets that were of the correct date and which could be borrowed by the publisher to be copied. Fortunately, several libraries, both public and academic as well as several record offices were prepared to co-operate, seeing the reprint as an alternative to using the original maps which were beginning to suffer from increased handling.

The first maps for the north-west were published in the mid 1980s and since that time, the number has increased dramatically. The first Lancashire map to be published was that of Burnley as a result of an approach by the local library. It was this approach that encouraged Alan Godfrey to embark on the publication of the Lancashire maps in the series. The first maps for Manchester made their appearance in 1986 when the sheets for Salford Docks and Old Trafford were published and these were quickly followed by the ones for Gorton and Belle Vue and Openshaw. Since then, the number of sheets for Manchester has steadily grown so that most of south and central Manchester and Salford has been covered. Other towns followed in quick



Detail from *Manchester (SE)*, 1915

succession so that towns like Bury, Bolton, Wigan, Stockport, Oldham and Altrincham have at least one sheet and several of the towns have three or four sheets available. Coverage has not been restricted to the larger towns and cities of the Manchester area. Many of the smaller towns have been covered like Atherton, Sale, Leigh, Walkden and New Mills.

As well as the 25 inches to 1 mile maps, the Godfrey edition old OS maps also include the large scale maps published in the middle of the nineteenth century for places like Manchester and Liverpool. These were originally 60 inches to 1 mile and show an immense amount of detail including the interior layout of churches, prisons and railway stations as well as the location of street furniture such as lamp-posts and fire hydrants. These maps have been reduced to approximately 36 inches to 1 mile. Already 14 sheets at this scale have been published for Manchester and Salford, the format of map on the front, notes and extracts from directories on the reverse, has been followed again. Recently, a start has been made on reprinting the maps of Liverpool at this scale, the first one being Hanover Square.

Both the 25 inches to 1 mile and 60 inches to 1 mile maps are very detailed. There are occasions when historians want to be able to look at the wider scene. There are also areas that are very rural with very few towns and villages for which reprinting the larger scale map would not be practicable. Hence, since the beginning Alan Godfrey has reprinted the 1 inch to 1 mile maps published around 1900. These maps are much easier to read than the first edition. In the case of the 1 inch to 1 mile series, on the reverse, there is the usual essay, but instead of the directory extract, there is a village or small town at 25 inches to 1 mile, thus enabling places that might not otherwise be cov-

ered to be so. Like the larger scale maps, this series is being added to regularly. At present four maps cover most of the northern part of Greater Manchester. These are 'Manchester and District', 'Rossendale', 'South Lancashire Coalfield' and 'The Dark Peak'. Further afield, the 'White Peak' and the 'High Peak' cover a large part of the Peak District and Derbyshire.

There are still many gaps in the coverage of the Manchester region, especially to the north and east of Manchester and Salford. Attempts are always being made to find suitable sheets to fill these gaps, but even when suitable sheets are found, it takes time to prepare them and it has to be remembered that there are other parts of the country to be covered. The Manchester area has been very fortunate in that so many maps have been published in that there are now over 100 sheets covering an area stretching from Wigan in the west to Rochdale in the east, from the Rossendale area in the north to New Mills and Macclesfield in the south.

It is not possible to list all the maps which have been published in this series, there are far too many of them. A catalogue is published regularly with monthly up-dates. Very recently a separate catalogue has been issued for Greater Manchester which shows very clearly the sheets which have been done and the gaps which still exist. Copies of the catalogue can be obtained from the publisher, Alan Godfrey Maps, Prospect Business Park, Leadgate, Consett, Co. Durham DH8 7PW or consult its excellent web site, the address of which is www.alangodfreymaps.co.uk If you want to see the maps themselves, Gibbs Bookshop in Manchester has those for the Manchester area or if you visit a local or family history fair, Chris Makepeace has a full range of the maps covering the whole country whilst several family history societies have those for their own areas.



Detail from *Manchester (SE)*, 1915

Map details reproduced courtesy of Alan Godfrey Maps.