





# MAPS AND HISTORY IN SOUTH-WEST ENGLAND



Edited by 

KATHERINE BARKER  
AND ROGER KAIN



**MAPS AND HISTORY**  
**IN SOUTH-WEST ENGLAND**

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***Katherine Barker and Roger J.P. Kain***

*on behalf of the University of Exeter Centre for South-Western Historical Studies*

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## The Contributors

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*Graham Haslam* received his doctorate in Tudor/Stuart history from Louisiana State University. From 1975 until 1991 he was employed by the Duchy of Cornwall as an archivist. He has recently joined The Yale Center for Parliamentary History, University of Yale, to work as an assistant editor.

*Roger Kain* is Professor of Geography, University of Exeter and a Fellow of the British Academy. He has written a number of books and articles on cadastral maps, especially tithe surveys, and is currently working with Richard Oliver on a descriptive and analytical catalogue of the tithe maps of England and Wales.

*Richard Oliver* is a graduate of the University of Sussex where he wrote his doctoral thesis on The Ordnance Survey in Great Britain 1835-70. He has published a number of articles on the Ordnance Survey and has collaborated with Professor Brian Harley on the Harry Margary Ordnance Survey Old Series facsimile project. Dr Oliver is editor of *Sheetlines*, the journal of the Charles Close Society for the Study of Ordnance Survey maps, and is Leverhulme Trust Research Fellow in the History of Cartography, University of Exeter.

*William Ravenhill* is Emeritus Reardon Smith Professor of Geography in the University of Exeter. He has written extensively on the archaeology and historical and regional geography of south-west England and, from the mid-1960s, Professor Ravenhill pioneered the scholarly study of the history of cartography in Devon and Cornwall. In 1965 the Devon and Cornwall Record Society and the University of Exeter published his *Benjamin Donn: A Map of the County of Devon, 1765* which was followed in 1972 by *John Norden's Manuscript Maps of Cornwall and its Nine Hundreds*. For the future, he is writing on English mapping for an international *History of Cartography*, and, nearer home, he is preparing a facsimile edition of Joel Gascoyne's 1699 *Map of Cornwall* for the Devon Record Society and is co-editor with Roger Kain of the Centre for South-Western Historical Studies' *Historical Atlas of South-West England*. Professor Ravenhill was the University's Harte Lecturer in Local History in 1990.

# Preface

## *Maps and History*

This collection of six essays on the theme of maps and history in South-West England is based on five papers read at a conference in Sherborne, Dorset which Katherine Barker convened in May 1990 on behalf of the Centre for South-Western Historical Studies. In addition it prints the text of Professor Ravenhill's 1990 University of Exeter Harte Lecture in Local History.

Maps are one of the oldest forms of human communication, not as old as speech but in many pre-historic societies graphicacy (the ability to communicate by maps) predates literacy. Although maps are relatively simple iconic devices, much of the research and writing about early maps has been concerned with the increasing accuracy with which maps could be made. Such studies focus on the ways in which developments in mathematics from the Renaissance onwards were applied to surveying, how scientific knowledge improved the instruments with which survey was accomplished, and on changes in the techniques by which survey data were converted into maps and then published. The essays in this book do not directly address such matters which more properly concern the history of the art and science of cartography. Our contributors are concerned more with the practical and political purposes for which maps were used, about the symbolic and ideological roles of maps in the history of South-West England, and about the ways in which map evidence can be used to retrieve facts about the past for use in the writing of history. Indeed a number of the different epistemologies of map history are represented in this book:

*History of maps*: an approach which views maps essentially as artefacts and is concerned with unravelling the origins of particular maps, dating them, finding out about those who constructed them and (with printed maps), of searching out and listing various editions in cartobibliographies, cataloguing and valuing them, and providing a service to collectors. Such are the concerns of Professor Ravenhill in the text of his 1990 Harte Lecture (Chapter 1).

*Maps in history*: assessing the roles and uses of maps by their contemporary and subsequent users, the knowledge that they stored and the power that knowledge imparted and the control over land and property that possession of maps provided. This focus on the social significance of the map in the past is very much the approach of Mrs Barker and Dr Haslam in their essays on estate mapping (Chapters 2 and 3).

*History in maps*: the idea that historical maps are repositories of information about the times at which they were compiled and so can be used to reconstruct components of the history and geography of those past times. It is a view which sees historical maps as historical sources and is espoused, for example, by Dr Chapman in his essay on parliamentary enclosure maps (Chapter 4) and by Professor Kain, Dr Oliver and Dr Baker with respect to the tithe surveys of the mid-nineteenth century (Chapter 5).

*Historical cartography*: the activity of constructing maps from data relating to the past. The Centre's *Historical Atlas of South-West England* is one such study.

*History of cartography*: narrowly defined this is the study of changes in the art, science and technology of map-making itself, the mathematics of projections, the science of land surveying, the use of conventional symbols on maps, the processes of reproduction etc. Dr Oliver takes us through the activities of the Ordnance Survey in South-West England in this manner (Chapter 6).

It is a basic contention of the contributors and editors of this book that maps are historical phenomena of great significance. They were important agents of change in history as well as being of interest as historical artefacts and of value as sources of evidence on the past. That is why the book is entitled: *Maps and History*.

Sherborne and Exeter  
June 1991

## *Acknowledgement*

We wish to thank Dr Jonathan Barry, General Editor of *Exeter Studies in History* for his most helpful and informed comments on our text.



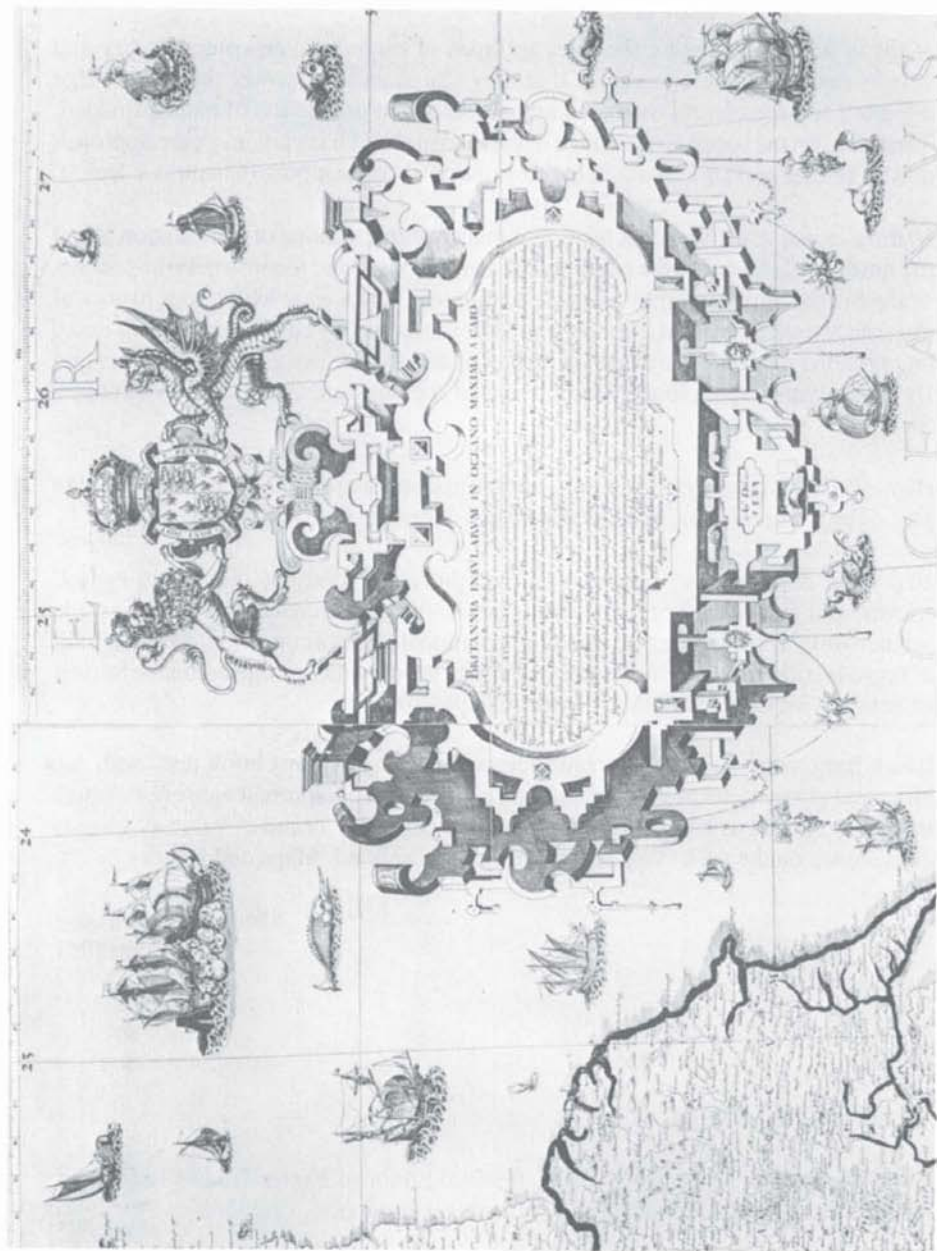


Fig.1.1 The 'strapwork' cartouche of Christopher Saxton's *Britannia Insularum In Oceano Maxima* blazoned with the Royal Arms of Elizabeth I. Two copies only of this map engraved in 1583 appear to have survived.

## CHAPTER ONE

# **The South West in the Eighteenth-Century Re-mapping of England**

**(The Harte Lecture 1990)**

*William Ravenhill*

The eighteenth century was marked by an unprecedented surge in county mapping on what was, for the time, the large scale of about one inch to the mile, undertaken by private cartographers. The century opens with the first of these, Joel Gascoyne, producing his map of Cornwall. This primacy for Cornwall and indeed for the South West is viewed in this essay against the backcloth of what preceded and what was to occur in the sphere of map-making in the rest of the country. This re-mapping of England falls quite neatly between the cartographies which emerged as the result of the output from two official structures separated by two hundred years. The later of these structures is, of course, the Ordnance Survey. As a mapping agency it stemmed from the combined involvement of the Crown, namely George III, the Royal Society, and the Board of Ordnance in the years after 1783.

In 1583, Christopher Saxton's large general map of England and Wales, blazoned with the royal arms, was printed (Figure 1.1), for its time an outstanding achievement, and again the output from an earlier 'official structure'.<sup>1</sup> Those two last words are between inverted commas, because in Elizabeth's reign we should not be looking for, or expecting, a clear-cut and tidy structure. Nevertheless, official it was, if appearing to us somewhat indirect, but this is the way Elizabeth's administration worked. Let me recall to your memories that Christopher Saxton was surveying under the direct sponsorship of Thomas Seckford, Master of Requests to Queen Elizabeth; also deeply involved, and considered the prime mover, was her Lord Treasurer, William Cecil, Lord Burghley. The 'placart' or pass allowing Saxton to travel and to gain access to any part of the realm was signed by ten members of the Privy Council which declared him to be the Queen's appointee. There is no doubt

that this was an official survey promoted by the Crown on the advice of ministers, as an act of policy, and designed to produce maps for the purpose of national administration and defence, for a state which was increasingly forced by circumstances to become more interventionist in parish and county affairs.

Survey and mapping of this magnitude, nationwide in space and supported by government and the Crown was not to be repeated for over two hundred years (Figure 1.2). The prime reason for this change of policy at the very centre of our national administration resulted, and this may surprise you, from Saxton's overkill of success, which was in the course of time to the embarrassment of the Crown. The maps fulfilled their intended function of meeting the changing needs of central government but they were also used to enhance the royal image of the Virgin Queen, Gloriana, the temple of Eliza and its realm. To examine the portraits of Elizabeth is to witness the creation of a legend and a cult with the deliberate aim of establishing a symbol designed to hold together a people not only deeply divided by social hierarchy and religious beliefs, but also threatened by external enemies.<sup>2</sup> The portraits endeavour to transmute her from an aristocratic lady into a cosmic vision hovering over Her England. Gheeraerts paints the petite royal toes on a rendering of Saxton's 1583 map (Figure 1.3). We bear witness to a highly developed propaganda machine endeavouring to secure victory over reason.

In case our readers in Cornwall feel left out may I assure them that the painting has been reduced on both sides; before trimming the original would have extended to Land's End, and its impact would have been even more geographically striking than this truncated relic. Elizabeth is England, Queen and Country are one. This famous map, and more so Saxton's *Atlas* did much to assist in the enrichment of this image. The royal arms are there on every sheet of the *Atlas* to proclaim that these are the Queen's maps, this is the Queen's land, her Kingdom and, lest the point be missed, there is the well-known frontispiece; it bears no title, no reference to Seckford, to Saxton or to anybody, only the Queen enthroned, surmounted by her arms and an emblem of her rule, flanked by figures representing Cosmography and Geography, underscored by verses celebrating the accomplishments of her benign reign. Recently, the extensive and sumptuous wardrobe of Elizabeth, and how she indulged in an almost barbaric display of rich fabrics and jewellery has been well documented.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, she is pictured in the frontispiece wearing robes reserved exclusively for the state opening of parliament; in her long reign of 44 years she held only ten parliaments, so the significance of their being worn for this purpose should be duly noted as symbolically linking the land as portrayed by the map with the Queen's administration.

Ah! but no ministers, no privy councillors, well-meaning, loyal and sincere though they may be, can foresee all the consequences to their successors of the sentiments they have helped to crystallise and for which they have provided a focus and an

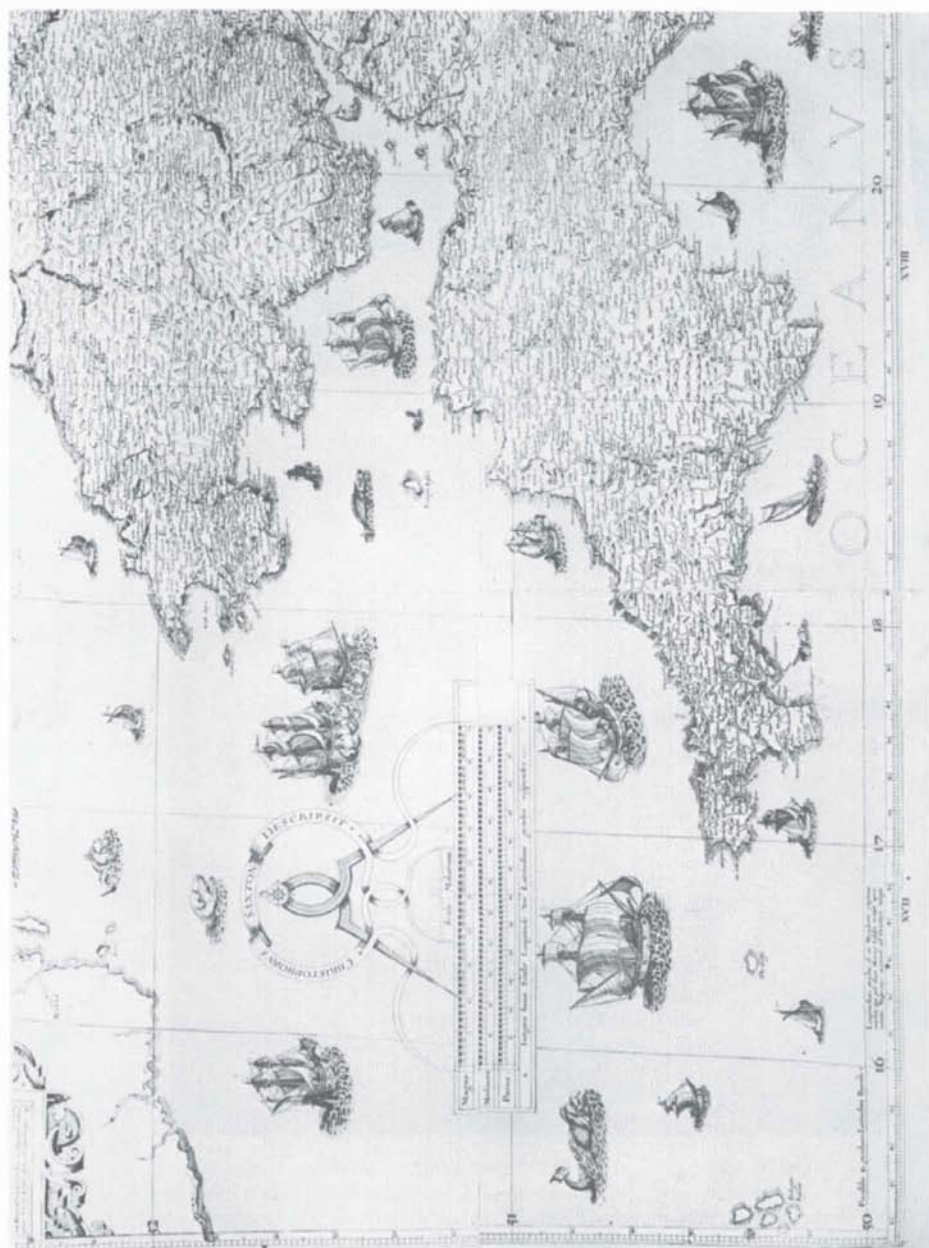


Fig.1.2 The south-west part of Christopher Saxton's 1583 map significant not only for a portrayal of a regional area of Britain, but also for the sophistication of the representation of scale and for its geographical location in relation to the global co-ordinate system. Note the statement in the extreme south-west corner relating the co-ordinates to a prime meridian running through the Azores.



Fig.1.3 The Ditchley portrait of Queen Elizabeth attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger. The trimming of the picture on both sides is revealed by the truncation of the sonnet on the right and the removal of a part of Cornwall in the west. The Queen is painted as if standing on a rendering of Saxton's map of 1583. Photograph supplied by the National Portrait Gallery London and reproduced by their kind permission.