

The library has benefitted from a dedicated area for researchers to view collections and a new, environmentally-controlled, archive store in the basement that will ensure that the Library's collections are stored in secure conditions for generations to come. The store provides the Library with room to expand and develop its collections, and also guarantees easier and quicker retrieval of items for researchers. The benefits are already starting to be felt and the Library has experienced a substantial increase in visitor numbers since reopening. A flexible learning space on the lower ground floor for schools and community groups has been added, along with the formation of a department dedicated to developing outreach learning programmes using the Library collections. The Lottery Fund has also created three additional posts for staff to develop a variety of heritage programmes.

Elsewhere in the Institute there is now a new café; refreshed body, exercise, and performing arts studios for the courses run by the Institute; new lifts to improve disabled access; and the cleaning, repair and illumination of the façade.

The library has also extended its previous opening hours and is now open on Saturdays from 10am to 5.30pm, alongside its regular weekday opening (Monday to Thursday, 10am-5.30pm, Friday, 10am-2pm). It is open to all and no membership or reader's ticket is required. Much of the book collection is on public display but rare volumes and archives are kept in store and produced on request, so it is worth making contact beforehand. For further information and enquiries telephone 020 7392 9270 or email library@bishopsgate.org.uk. Bishopsgate Library is at 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4QH.

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2500 MAPS AND GROWING – the Alan Godfrey series of historical maps

Alan Godfrey

We recently published our 2,500th map, a milestone reached so quietly that it passed without notice. So there were no great fanfares, no parties, no celebrations at all – in fact, it is difficult to identify to which map the actual honour fell – and these few words will have to serve.

More than 20 years ago I wrote an article for the Western Association of Map Libraries' *Information Bulletin* (Vol 17 No3, June 1986) in which I suggested that there were 3,000 possible titles for the series. If that were to be accurate then I have just another 500 maps to go but, as the series has progressed, it has become clear that the number of potential titles is almost infinite;

after all, at that time I didn't really consider maps for the 1930s and 40s, but these are now an integral part of the series. Perhaps, as the years pass, the simple fact of my age might eventually put a cap on its growth, at least under my steerage.

Work on the series, from the outset known as 'The Godfrey Edition', began in 1981. At the time I ran a small business dealing in secondhand Ordnance Survey maps and it was a chance remark from my then bank manager in Dunston, Tyne and Wear that led to the experimental publication of a photocopied leaflet of OS maps for *Chopwell*, near Gateshead. The choice of this old mining village was really dictated by my friendship with the composer Bill Hopkins, who had just bought a house there, and with whom the first discussion of the series took place – though sadly he would die before any further progress could be made. Photocopying meant that the print run could be small (200 if I recall correctly) most of which was quickly bought up by Gateshead's education department. That autumn I brought out the first of the individual map reprints, for *Gateshead East 1895*, a good printer having been recommended to me by the Tyneside Cinema, quickly followed by other titles for the Gateshead area. Good quantities – effectively guaranteeing my printing costs – were taken by the education department, while the library, which had helped by lending me the originals, also bought some for sale. The mailing list for my secondhand business brought me some custom, but I quickly learnt that bookshop response would be patchy. Education advisers in Newcastle, South Tyneside and Sunderland were also now asking me to bring out similar maps for their areas and the series began to grow, while requests from Scotland's Central Region for maps of Clackmannanshire and, soon, Stirlingshire took me north of the border.

An illness in early 1983 gave me an enforced pause for reflection: it was clear that my publishing business was more resilient than that for secondhand maps, so I decided to wind the latter down. From 1984, therefore, I was concentrating entirely on reprinting OS maps, using what had become, and has remained, a standard format: an OS 25" map, reduced in scale to about 14 inches to the mile (so that it could fit on A2 paper), with an introduction and some extracts from a contemporary directory on the back. In the early days the introductions were short, about 400 or 500 words, but over the years they have been developed and today we ask our authors for 3,000 words, space to give an informative overview of what is, after all, quite a small area (typically one and a half square miles). Maps at other scales have been introduced, including some 'Five-foot' town plans for London and some northern cities, and an 'Inch to the Mile' series which will soon cover all of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but the 25 Inch maps remain at the heart of the series.

Support from education departments helped launch the series, but changes to the role of education advisors meant that this completely dried up within a few years and has never returned. However, by the mid-1980s a host of local studies libraries were involved. Encouragement from Guildhall Library in London and the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh had arrived almost from the outset, while 'out of the blue' requests for me to move into their area came from several librarians, one of the most productive being from John Maddison at Sandwell, leading quickly to an enduringly popular group of maps for the Black Country. At around the same time a meeting with Sally Shepard of Rotherham Library at a map conference led to the development of a group for South Yorkshire, its progress often discussed over a drink after work at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre with librarian and archivist colleagues from Rotherham, Sheffield and Doncaster libraries and Sheffield University. In Scotland Barbara Morris, from Edinburgh University, and I would travel over to Glasgow for lunch with archivists and librarians from Strathclyde Archives and the Mitchell Library. A trip down the Durham coast to Hartlepool brought me my first real bestseller, with one shop reporting a queue stretching out into the street. Again these maps were helped by the support of a librarian, in this case, Mary Hoban, and by this time it was joked that I only published maps where the library made me a coffee – though a drink outside work has always seemed rather better!

Best of all, in many ways, was the help I received from London's Local Studies librarians and archivists, many of whom, from Brent to Bexley, Hammersmith to Newham, helped not just with sourcing the maps and cover photographs but also with writing the introductions. At Brent's Grange Museum Judy Knight brought a new fluency to the historical introductions, while at Hackney David Mander, the archivist, took things a stage further by asking me to cover the borough in all three principal editions – c.1870, 1894 and 1914 – something we have since repeated (occasionally along with the 4th edition) across much of London's central core. At Barnet one of the archivists, Pamela Taylor, apart from improving the quality of the introductions still further – I think she, perhaps more than anyone, pushed them towards their current length, something welcomed by most authors – acted as my Assistant Editor on her non-Barnet days. It is very much through the help of librarians and archivists that we have developed the London series so far, now some 500 titles and still growing.

The decade and a half from about 1983-98 was perhaps the halcyon period of Local Studies support. Many libraries bought the maps for resale, in handsome 3-figure quantities at good discounts. They welcomed the maps, not just because of their value as historical tools, nor as a useful 'money-earner', but because they saved wear and tear on the originals. Several hosted launching parties for new titles. At one stage I calculated that I visited some

70 libraries a year, becoming something of an expert on library staff-rooms in the process. So many librarians contributed to the series that it would be impossible, and inappropriate, to name them all. One memory, which must serve for all, is of Marianna Maguire, of Fermanagh Library, giving me a walking tour of Enniskillen, seemingly impervious to the rain, turning to sleet, which constantly stung our ears.

I am a member of the British Cartographic Society, and of its Map Curators Group, and through this I inaugurated a prize, The Godfrey Award, "for a librarian or archivist who has furthered the use, appreciation and understanding of maps". The prize consisted of a specially commissioned wood carving of a bird (signifying the great travellers) by the sculptor Ralph Williams, plus a cheque for £300, enough, I thought, for a weekend break! It seemed to me a nice way of giving something back to a profession which had given me so much. It was awarded annually (latterly biennially) at the BCS Symposium, and five deserving winners are possessors of various carved birds. I hope it also reflected some prestige on their institutions. Sadly the award died a natural death when it proved impossible to get enough nominations. I have never understood why.

Perhaps this simply reflected the change coming over libraries, which certainly affected us from the late 1990s. Increasingly librarians would tell me that they "were looking for early retirement" – and with depressing regularity they found it. A few of those who had helped me took retirement at the normal age, but sometimes it came shockingly early and local studies departments lost some marvellous talent. In universities the situation would become even worse, as many map libraries were simply closed down; in one major northern city a map collection is believed to have been thrown in the skip. Questions also began to be raised about the merits of paper maps when so much could be digitized on CD, or put on-line. Many a librarian proudly showed me the latest project to scan information and make it available to 'a wider readership' – and then, before I left, would ask me to sign the visitors' book because footfall into the reading room was falling so much. Others looked sadly at me, suggesting that a publisher of paper maps had no future in the modern world.

In 2000 I was asked to write a chapter for R B Parry & C R Perkins' *The map library in the new millennium* (Library Association Publishing, 2001) and I waxed lyrical on my hours let loose in library stacks: "What treasures I have found here, and what dross; maps stacked five foot high on pallets; plan chests that tear your fingernails to shreds; maps whose only reader these last 40 years has been a squashed spider; maps (horror of horrors) rolled so tight they spring shut the moment you unravel them, bashful to the light; maps covered with the dust of ages, or fading beyond recall; maps

so grossly misfiled they must have been given up for lost a lifetime ago. Into such catacombs librarians have shut (even locked) me away, with a rueful comment of 'you know where to find me'....and a pitying shake of the head. And here, so often, I have done my most rewarding work". I suspect that many (most?) librarians would today scoff at such romantic nostalgia, but I still maintain that maps are best seen on paper, rather than in the restricting view-space of a computer screen, and I stand by my closing sentences to that article a decade ago, that "for most of us, paper maps will continue to be our core cartographic resource, and for them we will still, of necessity, visit libraries. Map librarians who ignore this simple fact are in danger of consigning their profession to oblivion".

This change in our libraries affected me in various ways. Until the mid-1990s most of my authors were archivists or librarians, but increasing numbers were retiring, or had less time available for writing; and, of course, I was also moving into areas where I had fewer contacts. Amateur local historians were seldom the answer as many would only be willing to write for the one map, that on which their interest lay, and to find and edit 100 authors for 100 maps each year would be a logistical nightmare. As I grow older, so time becomes more precious. So we began to build up a nucleus of two dozen or so regular authors, who would undertake the notes for several maps, and write them quickly. Some have written large numbers of introductions - Derrick Pratt, Barrie Trinder and Pamela Taylor more than a hundred each - and have added greatly to the series. I hope, too, that I have learnt from my work and that my own contributions are no longer the embarrassment that perhaps they were back in the early days.

We were also forced to become self-reliant in other ways. We source most of our cover illustrations from fairs or ebay today, as obtaining photos from libraries is a more bureaucratic, slow and often expensive business than it used to be in the 1980s, when I often just borrowed a postcard. We have also built up a good collection of directories, for these entries remain a popular feature. Library photocopiers are seldom in perfect condition and we can obtain better copies in-house - and, perhaps, be a little more cavalier with the spine than we could with a library copy!

The changing, if not declining, footfall into libraries was also having an adverse effect on our sales there. I now visited reference rooms filled by young people gaining free internet access; fine in its way, but scarcely the readership for my maps. In the mid-1990s around 40% of our sales were to libraries, archives or (to a lesser extent) museums but today that figure is probably less than 10%. Interestingly the former figure was almost entirely made up of maps being bought for resale. It has always been a mystery to me that so few libraries actually buy our reprints for their own collections. Apart from

the copyright libraries and a handful of specialist collections, I don't know of a single public library today that subscribes to the maps of their area. The few that did buy them generally stopped when a local studies librarian retired. Hopefully they are being bought quietly from other suppliers, but I hope it isn't arrogant of me to be surprised at how many local studies staff have never heard of our maps, even when we have published several for their town. (Few, I trust, rival those in one local studies library who knew nothing of our maps, even though the information desk downstairs was selling them!) Perhaps the reason is summed up by a Birmingham librarian who told me, several years ago, that they wouldn't buy my maps "because they had the originals", oblivious to the fact that his colleague, who was standing beside us, had written several of the introductions. Yet where our maps have been acquired as a collection and placed on the open shelf they are well used – and retrieval is a great deal easier than hoiking an original from the depths of an overfull plan chest.

With these changes the balance of our readership has changed. If our first market was the school, and our second the local historian, so from the 1990s the importance of the family historian began to grow. In 2002 we started to take orders on-line, and this has proved our saviour. Today about 40% of our sales are made directly on-line, while another 10% or so is made on-line with various traders via ebay or Amazon. Genealogists have been keen users of the internet from the outset, and so are perfectly attuned to buying on-line, while family history fairs provide the ideal shop window, especially where the redoubtable Chris Makepeace – sometime Manchester librarian – has taken a stall, selling the complete range of our maps. Family historians also spread their tentacles wide. A Northampton local historian, for instance, might buy our map for *Northampton*, and perhaps, even, *Northampton (North)* – but that will be it. Orders from family historians, by contrast, cover the country, and a typical one might request Andover, Ballymena, Chelsea or whatever, perhaps with one of the D-Day maps thrown in, for the Uncle Arthur who landed there. They are helped, of course, by our modest prices, £2.50 for most maps.

I no longer visit 70 libraries a year, but retain close working relationships with several larger ones, and often visit smaller branches when I am out 'on the road' researching the notes for a map. These can be the most enjoyable to visit, examples over the last few months being Ballyclare and Westhoughton, with a good shelf or two of local material eagerly presented, and a relaxing atmosphere in which to work; while trips to Edinburgh's NLS Map Library or Newcastle's Mining Institute Library remain as enjoyable, and rewarding, as ever. The really bad news comes in a library where computers have completely taken over, and I have to sit on a chair in the corner, with books balanced on my knee.

I was asked to confine these notes to my British experience, but a visit to Gelsenkirchen, in the Ruhr, is so crucial that it must be mentioned. It came in 2008, just after my 65th birthday when I was wearily considering retirement. A chance meeting there, at an opera dinner, led to a series for the Ruhr – based on War Office maps from 1944 – that completely rekindled my enthusiasm. Researching, with my schoolboy German, is another experience again! Far from being an indulgence, the maps have covered themselves. Many might think them irrelevant to British readers, apart from a handful of industrial archaeologists or railway buffs, but consider my next map, for *Duisburg (South)*, where a large barracks is shown near Wedau. An anti-aircraft regiment was based here, but after the war it became our Glamorgan Barracks; just imagine how many thousands of British servicemen will have served there over the years 1945-93.

A similar spur has been given by the development of a series for Northern Ireland, where we are now reprinting the 1" maps. These will cover all the Ulster counties. As yet I cannot say that sales are as encouraging as in Germany, but the research is enjoyable and rewarding. These 1" maps, as in England, give us the chance to put a village or small town on the reverse, enabling coverage of places like Ardglass or Carlingford which could not be justified otherwise.

The article mentioned earlier from the *Information Bulletin* in 1986 suggested the project would take me some 30 years, so perhaps I can take retirement in 2016, maybe on my 73rd birthday. Let's hope my creaking knees will take me that far, for I would be lost if I could not go out and research some of the maps, alighting from the train ready to pound the streets of Accrington, Bochum, Chingford, Dewsbury or wherever. I do not visit local studies libraries as often as in the past - partly because we have built up a worthwhile reference collection of our own - but they still play a major role. So do librarians and archivists. It was a librarian - in Scotland - who suggested the maps of the Ruhr, an archivist who accompanied me to Buckingham Palace when I went to receive my MBE, a librarian who brought out the picnic hamper as we explored the shores of Carlingford Lough, a pair of archivists who joined me for dinner at the Buxton Festival – and I could go on! They have contributed to the series and helped me, but above all they have made it enjoyable, made it fun, and that is why I continue to develop the series and - God willing! – will continue to do so for many years to come.

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