

Kerry musings

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The sky is blue, the sun is shining and the birds are singing. You return home to your own little Blandings, humming a ditty and feeling quite pleased with your newest purchase, a map that will fill a gap in your modest collection. After a nice cup of tea and a study of the newbie, you go to put it away, only to find an identical copy sitting where there should be a space. Disappointment, annoyance and puzzlement. And so another map collector faces up to the reality that they really do need to carry a list of some sort. True, the odd duplicate will not break the bank, but one would prefer not to have the disappointment. If you are going to collect maps, do it properly, and properly does not mean buying everything you see in the hope that some will be needed. There is also the irritation of the duplicates, just seeing them reminds you that you made a mistake, and you begrudge the space they occupy. In some instances, a close examination of the two examples reveals small differences, and the collection heads in a different direction. Or, it might be decided to have a mini-stall at the society's AGM map market, sharing three feet of table space with a couple of other members. A stallette, as Kenny would have said.

Some people have very straightforward needs, only lacking certain sheets in a series, and are happy with any state of the missing sheets, in any format and any cover. A small folded piece of paper with the numbers 21, 54, 56 and 60 is a sufficient reminder and easy to carry around. But, you might ask, why should anyone need to carry a written list of four numbers? Surely they can remember what they need? With at least twenty per cent of those who read this not being able to remember their car registration, seen every day, why should others be expected to remember four numbers which they seldom have need to refer to? Like me, some members just cannot remember numbers. Or, they might be fussy about condition, and if they see a map and reject it, the next time one comes up, they cannot remember whether they bought the one they saw last month or left it. Having held it, it looks so familiar, so maybe they do have a copy? A prompt would be useful.

Yes, a list of some sort would help, not only to indicate what you are looking for, but to tell you what not to buy. Call any list a 'wants list' and most people will know what you mean, but the term is misleading, and in fact covers a range of lists. The basic form is a list of maps that the compiler wishes to own, and they should not buy anything not on the list, unless they are certain they do not have a copy, which is where we started. Others carry details of their whole collection, whilst some have notes of which maps they think might be of interest, and need to see a copy of a particular map state in order to make a decision.

At least one person uses a copy of Roger Hellyer's *Ordnance survey small-scale maps: indexes 1801-1998* with the index diagrams marked to show holdings, and another person carries pages 122 to 144 of *Map cover art*, suitably annotated. The only map list I carried until recently, was of Scottish Populars that on no account should I buy more copies of. So, later that evening, you sit down,

lick your pencil, jot a few numbers on a piece of paper and slip it behind a credit card in your wallet or purse.

An initial list will frequently be limited to a few maps needed to complete a block, not necessarily to complete sets. Once the gap filling nears completion, the boundaries of sought maps expand outwards and northwards. Never southwards from Scotland or 'the north'. Lists are organic, developing according to the requirements of the owner, and after a while, anything can happen. Some people decide to go back in time to earlier series, or want more detail and investigate large scale maps. Simple stuff to record, unlike the decision to have a set in the same format and condition; Seventh Series, paper maps in the long red and cream covers in above average condition. Here, a list can be a challenge. One has to record what is lacking, what is held in the desired format, and what is held and needs changing, and which in the desired format need to be in better condition. For many, when well on the way to having a complete set of a series, they become bored with fewer maps appearing and are tempted to start on variations. The slippery slope. Maybe a set of first printings would be nice, or a set in uniform format, or the dreaded aim of one of every printing. Serious stuff this. Especially when, for some series, they discover that the same print code can be found with different prices. Without a prompt nobody can remember whether they need a Sheet 96, code 9.11 with 2/6 price along with 47 similar needs. Yes, boredom, resulting from nothing new coming up, is a real problem for the collector.

In the final stage of searching, whether for series maps or district maps, there is a great similarity to the lists. All only need the scarce items. But any 'end game list' will always have at least one scarce map not listed, showing that most people are lucky at least once in a map collecting lifetime.

For some collectors, there comes the point where a wants list is meaningless. They want everything issued by the Ordnance Survey. Well, certainly issued in covers. Such collectors might well have sets of the main series, plus most of the tourist and district maps, all the odds and ends and a lot that most of us do not know about. They have been through *Sheetlines* and other publications noting all the really obscure items mentioned over the years. I call these dream lists. Their list should just say 'Anything I do not have', and they have so much. Or more to the point, they have so many versions of so many maps that they cannot remember what they do have.

Long ago, every such person found a map that they were unhappy with. It was not on their list of wants, they certainly had a copy, but somehow this copy felt different. Some did not buy the map and have regretted it since. Others bought the map and found it to be significantly different from the copy at home. Anyone who has been in this situation realises the need to compare maps found against holdings. But it is impossible to carry a collection around. So, they jettison their wants list, buy a small pocket book and attempt to catalogue their collection. A holdings list is born. There are two major snags with such a list. The first being that even a small book is far too large to carry around all day long. So, one must anticipate when one might stumble across some maps and must remember to slip

the book into a pocket. Yes, I know, one finds maps in the most unlikely of places. And even if you know maps are to be examined, one can so easily forget to take the book. I will not upset a good friend by dwelling on this point. The second snag again involves the word anticipate. One must anticipate what differences one might come across, and usually has to wait for the first occurrence. I have a small collection of the modern Ordnance Survey town plans, some of which have different covers, as if this matters. The A/* printing of *Inverness* has a yellow splodge stating 'with updated road information', as has the A/* printing of *Falkirk*. Having seen one splodge, one knows to record and look for it. Easy. But *Lancaster and Morecambe* has two photographs on the front. On the 1987 first printing, one is a swimming pool, whilst on the 1990 reprint it has changed to yachts on the sea. Can one reasonably be expected to anticipate such a change? With the Ordnance Survey, yes one should anticipate a change of some sort, but few would like to predict what sort of a change. These days, the solution would be to have a collection catalogued on a computer, with images of the map and covers. If this were always on-line, when out and about, it could be accessed via a mobile device to compare holdings and maps found.

Is it defeatist or good tactics to have a list? If you cannot remember you need it, is it important? Of course nobody would have the really scarce items listed as anyone would know whether they own them or not. And if you cannot remember having such items, perhaps you don't deserve them. Such items are not to be found, bought, ticked and put away. They need to be cherished and appreciated. I suppose that a list is really an aide memoir, a little reminder when things get confusing. You see a map, but do you have the version with or without the sticker? Or you need to know the sheet numbers needed for a seldom looked at series that you are collecting for some obscure reason. Which begs the question of why do people collect series that they are not really interested in? Usually because they came across a good chunk of the series at a bargain price, could not refuse them and now feel the need for completeness.

But of course the really scarce items will be on a wants list, as the list complements the collection at home. List plus collection equals totality. No gaps. Rather than being a negative thing, items not owned, a wants list for someone in the final stages of collecting (if there were such a person) can be seen as a trophy list. Bag a really good map and there is tremendous satisfaction in crossing it off after all these years of searching. Also, if shown to another knowledgeable collector, the few remaining items on the list, by implication tells of just how wonderful the collection is. These are the only ones I need, so I must have the rest, yes, even that, that and that map. Here, a wants list is not 'I am missing these', but 'Look at what I do not need, see what I have already'.

Christopher Fleet, Margaret Wilkes and Charles WJ Withers, *Scotland: mapping the nation*, Edinburgh: Birlinn, in association with the National Library of Scotland, 2011, ISBN 978-1-84158-969-5, hardback, £30.00

Although no-one can complain of a shortage of writing on the history of cartography in these islands over the past forty years, nonetheless much of the activity has been in detailed studies rather than more general syntheses. For Ireland, there is JH Andrews's *Shapes of Ireland* (1997), which concentrates on the topographical mapping on the country; and Jacinta Prunty's *Maps and map-making in local history*, which goes beyond what might be implied by its title. Catherine Delano Smith and Roger Kain's *English maps: a history* (1999) treats the mapping of England and Wales, thematically rather than chronologically, and now we have something along the same lines for Scotland.¹

There are thirteen chapters, mostly self-explanatory: Putting Scotland on the map (which introduces some general principles); Maps of Scotland before c.1595; A kingdom and a nation depicted, c.1583-1700; Scotland occupied and defended; Towns and urban life; The changing countryside; Islands and island life; Seas and waters; Travel and communications; Mapping science (including geology and land-use); Open spaces – recreation and leisure; Popular culture; Maps at work – working with maps (a conclusion); and a Guide to further reading.

The general approach is very much that developed by J Brian Harley: maps as instruments of power, maps as social documents, and so on. It is thus more aligned with Delano-Smith and Kain than it is with Andrews. Whilst there is some merit in the theoretical approach, and there is no lack of social context – the highland clearances are merely the most notorious – it can lead to fragmenting of some stories. This is not a volume for anyone wanting a coherent account of the development of the Ordnance Survey in Scotland, and indeed discussing its nineteenth-century urban mapping before discussing that of the countryside, and that in turn before discussing the geological impulse, is reversing not only the cart but a team of horses. Nor does it really cover the development of such firms as Johnston and Bartholomew, which were Scottish enterprises with a far wider reach, similar to, say, Clyde shipbuilding. Whilst the 'great man' is an unfashionable concept in history, institutions can help to provide a framework and reference points for discussing certain types of mapping.

A paradoxical effect of concentrating on Scotland is that the nation's contribution to wider cartographic developments goes largely unremarked. It is true that Scotland is considered to be one of the best-mapped countries in the world in the later seventeenth century, but we are not given the proper, British, context of Roderick Murchison's condemnation of its topographic mapping in 1834. Similarly lacking is acknowledgement that the greatest contribution that Scotland made to the development of the Ordnance Survey was not the Military

¹ JH Andrews, *Shapes of Ireland: maps and their makers 1564-1839*, Dublin: Geography Publications, 1997; Jacinta Prunty, *Maps and map-making in local history* (Maynooth Research Guides for Irish Local History number 7), Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004; Catherine Delano-Smith and Roger JP Kain, *English maps: a history*, London: British Library, 1999.