Kyffin: The London Years

Kyffin joined Highgate School in north London in September 1944. Much of the School had previously been evacuated to Westward Ho! in Devon but art had not been on the wartime curriculum so a teacher was needed on return to the capital. After working full-time (six days a week) for the first two years, Headmaster Geoffrey Bell suggested that Kyffin should find a colleague to share the job so that he could do more of his own painting and so the elusive William Cole, a friend from the Slade days, took over half of his timetable. Cole only lasted a couple of years though. Kyffin soldiered on alone for a further twelve months but his epilepsy wasn’t under control, so on the advice of his doctor and with the agreement of the School Governors he was awarded a sabbatical from the summer of 1949. This provided an opportunity to start travelling and in 1950 he visited Italy, the first of many trips abroad during the ensuing decade. His replacement was another acquaintance from the Slade, Antony Kerr, whose wife was the artist Elizabeth Rendell. On his return to Highgate Kyffin taught alongside Antony for nine years. Tom Griffiths, mentioned in ‘A Wider Sky’ and yet another Slade graduate, was tempted into teaching for a year, as subsequently was CF Ware. Then stability returned as Kyffin’s former pupil Anthony Green (1951-56) joined the Art Department in 1961 at the age of twenty-one. He was the last of the ‘Slade brigade’ to help Kyffin out – A Dear and JL Lowe from the Royal Academy Schools were his ‘other halves’ from 1968 until his retirement in 1973. Patrick Procktor, who had also studied under Kyffin from 1948-52 chose not to enter the profession. By the time Kyffin returned to Anglesey in 1974 a full-time Director of Art, Gordon Tweedale, had been appointed in his place.

Of course Kyffin had enjoyed another six months off in 1968-9 to travel to Welsh Patagonia on a Churchill Fellowship, an event that was probably responsible for his being nominated to be an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1969 and elected the following year, following an unsuccessful first attempt in 1961.

His becoming a full Academician four years later was proof, if any was needed, that he could finally make a living as an artist. Kyffin had first been accepted at an RA Summer Exhibition as early as 1946, though it wasn’t until 1959 that his work became an annual feature for almost forty years. His first show in a commercial gallery was at Colnaghi’s in 1948 and the Leicester Galleries were soon representing him too. It
wasn't until after he had left Highgate that the Thackeray became his main promoter in London. Kyffin lived in or close to Highgate for his first twelve years in London, most famously as a tenant of Miss Mary Josling on Bisham Gardens in Highgate Village, a period that is vividly described in 'Across the Straits'. During that time he recorded many local scenes and personalities, such as the former School cricket coach and groundsman Albert Knight. Albert, in his seventies when Kyffin painted his portrait, had played for England in the 1903-4 Ashes series in Australia, which was won by the visiting side. Brief residencies in Hampstead followed, including a stay with Fred and Diana Uhlman on Downshire Hill, before he spent a few years further west in Holland Park. When his artist friend David Smith moved from Finchley with his wife Elizabeth Hawes, Kyffin occupied one of the flats that they had created in their house for a year before learning that 22 Bolton Studios near the Fulham Road was vacant from Jane Richards, and old acquaintance from North Wales. The eight years he spent on Gilston Road, his last London address, also received a colourful rendering in his first volume of autobiography.
To mark Kyffin’s centenary and celebrate his ‘London years’ to some extent, two exhibitions under the banner ‘Kyffin Williams: Paper to Palette Knife’ are planned in Highgate in the autumn – one at the Highgate School Museum on Southwood Lane and a second in the Gallery of the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution (HLSI) on Pond Square. The former will feature the School’s collection of oils alongside paintings borrowed from private collectors and small loans from the National Library of Wales and Oriel Môn on Anglesey; while the HLSI will be displaying a substantial loan of (mostly) works on paper from the NLW. Together the two exhibitions will possibly constitute the largest ever retrospective of Kyffin’s work to be shown in England. They will run concurrently from 14th September to 7th October with opening times: Tuesday to Friday 1-5pm, Saturday 11am-4pm and Sunday 11am-5pm. On Monday 10th September at 7 pm I will be giving a lecture about Kyffin’s London years at the School. Tickets can be booked online nearer the time here: https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/highgateschool Then on Friday 21st September at 8 pm Rian Evans, co-author of ‘Kyffin Williams: The Light and The Dark’, will be giving a talk at the HLSI. Tickets can be booked by e-mail: admin@hlsi.net or by phone: 020 8340 3340.

David Smith, Heritage Officer, Highgate School – djs@highgate.demon.co.uk

Posted - 03-08-2018

Collections / Digitisation

Revealing the Objects: Travel Books

As of October 2018 the Library will share a number of additional items from its collections on Europeana, a European digital cultural platform. We are currently working with 12 other partner institutions on a project entitled The Rise of Literacy which aims to explore the history of reading and writing in Europe. In this weekly blog series – Revealing the Objects, some of the Library’s contributions will be disclosed on a thematic basis.

Here's a selection of travel books that will be digitized as part of the project.

Thomas Pennant – A Tour in Wales (1778)

Eight unique volumes of the travel book 'A Tour in Wales' were produced for the author's own library at Downing, Flintshire at the end of the eighteenth century. However, the series above was condensed for public sale and two volumes were printed, one in 1778 and the other in 1781. These chronicle the three journeys Thomas Pennant made through Wales between 1773 and 1776. The volumes contain a number of original drawings by Moses Griffiths, Ingleby and other well-known artists of the period. Pennant is recognised today as the finest Welsh travel book writer of his time.
W. E. Jones (Cawrdaf) – Y bardd, neu, y meudwy Cymreig: yn cynwys teithiau difyr ac addysgiadol y bardd gyda rhagluniad (1830)

W. E. Jones was a known printer, writer and poet. In his Welsh romantic prose ‘Y bardd, neu, y meudwy Cymreig’ or ‘The Bard, or the Welsh Hermit’ Jones presents a host of imaginary descriptions that depict various international travels. The author describes his journey along with specific locations. The volume has been referred to as the first Welsh novel, yet it does not possess the attributes of a novel.

George Borrow – Wild Wales: Its people, language and scenery (1862)
George Borrow was born in Norfolk in 1803. His father was a soldier, and as a result the family moved around the country frequently. He was educated in Edinburgh and Norwich. Borrow trained as a lawyer but soon took to literature and wrote novels and travel books, drawing on his many journeys around Britain and Europe. 'Wild Wales' describes a stay in Llangollen in the summer of 1854, with many hikes through North Wales, followed by a longer tour to and through South Wales. Borrow was a noted linguist; he spoke Welsh and had a particular interest in the origins of place-names.

WILD WALES: ITS PEOPLE, LANGUAGE, AND SCENERY.

CHAPTER I.

I ARRIVED at the hostelry of Mr. Pritchard without meeting any adventure worthy of being marked down. I went into the little parlour, and, ringing the bell, was presently waited upon by Mrs. Pritchard, a nice matronly woman, whom I had not before seen, of whom I inquired what I could have for dinner.

“This is no great place for meat,” said Mrs. Pritchard, “that is fresh meat, for sometimes a
#LoveMaps – Shaun Evans

Dr. Shaun Evans is Director of the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates, an all-Wales research centre based at Bangor University which explores issues relating to the history, culture and landscapes of Wales, through the prisms of estates and their cultural heritage collections. @YstadauCymru

Trees and woodlands

The historian and ecologist Oliver Rackham (1939-2015) asserted that ‘woodland by its very nature can be understood only in terms of historical processes’. In a Welsh context, the understanding of these historical perspectives is not as advanced as it could be, and remains heavily dependent on William Linnard’s seminal work on Welsh Woodlands and Forests: History and Utilization (1982).

Prior to the 20th century the overwhelming majority of woodlands and trees in Wales were located on lands belonging to landed estates. A map of the Bodrhyddan demesne in Flintshire, included in an estate atlas of 1756, gives some indication of the primacy of trees and woodlands in estate landscapes. Here, trees constitute a key aspect in the gardens immediately surrounding Bodrhyddan; they are seen lining the main driveway to the house and other paths and avenues; large standalone trees (probably oaks) feature in the parkland; there are small areas of woodland and wood pasture; there are indications of trees demarcating old field boundaries; and they feature as part of the hedgerows.
Since medieval times, woodlands formed important features in elite recreational landscapes; medieval ‘forests’ were inextricably linked to hunting. Later on, trees and woodlands often played essential roles in the creation of ‘designed’ landscapes, with emphases on the picturesque and sublime. This is clearly suggested in John Davenport’s 1791 plan of intended improvements at Nanteos, the Cardiganshire seat of Thomas Powell. The plan was never implemented, but shows the sites and species of trees which were to be planted or retained to create the desired landscape aesthetic.
On many estates, individual trees could be vested with significant symbolic weight. The Ceubren yr Ellyll, a large hollow oak on the Nannau estate in Merionethshire, provided the vessel for a legend which was at the heart of the Vaughan family’s identity. This was held to be the resting place of the skeleton and spirit of Hywel Sele (ancestor to the Vaughans) who was slain by Glyndŵr after an act of treachery. After the old oak fell down in 1813, the timber was used to create a range of family heirlooms for the Vaughans, including a set of six acorn-shaped toasting cups, which symbolised important links with ancestry and land: a deep-rootedness in the locality. There are numerous examples of this type. It is indicative that in his 1774 map of the Bachymbyd estate in Denbighshire, Meredith Hughes ensured that the three sweet chestnuts known as ‘The Three Sisters’ were depicted in the grounds below Bachymbyd. According to a family legend, the trees were planted in the late-17th century by three sisters of the Salesbury family in recognition of their mutual love and affection. As with the Nannau Oak, it is an example of the owners of the estate affixing parts of their identity to trees within their landholdings.

In addition to their aesthetic and cultural significance, trees and woodlands played important economic roles in the functioning of estates. From an early period they were often subject to intensive management, largely through pollarding and coppicing – to provide a huge range of products, fuel and food – ranging from charcoal, to architectural timbers, acorns for animal fodder and bark for tanning. Woodlands could form valuable economic assets for estates and were often fiercely protected by landlords and their agents. Their economic significance is evidenced by the decision of some families to commission maps dedicated to woodlands in their ownership. A good example is the 1774 map of Canaston Wood, associated with the Slebech estate in Pembrokeshire.
Particularly from the 19th century, forestry became a big part of the business of some estates, signalled by huge schemes of afforestation, the employment of increasingly professionalised foresters (especially from Scotland) and the establishment of large estate sawmills.

Estate records, including estate maps, potentially have a crucial role to play in enhancing understanding the ‘historical processes’ underpinning the Wales’ woodland assets. At the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates at Bangor University, we are beginning to explore some of the research opportunities linking ecology, history, forestry, land management and archives – connecting research to policy and practice. Earlier this year we partnered with Bangor’s Forestry Students Association (BFSA) and the Woodland Heritage charity to organise an event focused on the Past, Present and Future of Woodland Management; in essence, how can an enhanced understanding of the historical framework of woodland management on Welsh estates be used to promote principals of sustainable woodland management in 21st century Wales?

One important way that estate maps might be able to contribute to this agenda relates to the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI), managed by Natural Resources Wales. This dataset identifies areas in Wales that have had continuous woodland cover since c.1600, thereby producing ecosystems which tend to be more ecologically diverse, culturally significant and worthy of protection. Thus far the AWI in Wales has been primarily based on the woodlands marked on 19th century OS Maps. There would appear to be real opportunities for exploring how earlier estate maps (and related estate records) can be used to enhance the accuracy, coverage, depth and detail of the AWI, including the identification of changing woodland boundaries over time and the marking of ‘veteran’ trees.

This is just one of the ways in which old estate maps can be employed as a useful resource for Wales’ land futures.

Posted - 27-07-2018

Collections / Digitisation

Revealing the Objects: Children’s Literature

As of October 2018 the Library will share a number of additional items from its collections on Europeana, a European digital cultural platform. We are currently working with 12 other partner institutions on a project entitled The Rise of Literacy which aims to explore the history of reading and writing in Europe. In this weekly blog series – Revealing the Objects, some of the Library’s contributions will be disclosed on a thematic basis.

Here’s a selection of children’s literature that will be digitized as part of the project.
During the end of the eighteenth century children in Wales were taught to read at the circulating schools of Griffith Jones and at Sunday-schools. Both of these placed a great emphasis on the importance of understanding the Bible in order to save an individual’s soul. This volume by Robert Richards should be considered within this particular context. It was amongst the earliest Welsh spelling books for children, most of which were not designed or formatted with the tender years of the pupils in mind. The volume’s purpose is clearly stated within its title – ‘A reader, that is a simple and clear instructor to teach the reading of Welsh, intended as a first spelling-book for children, containing a wide selection of lessons, set out in a suitable order to lead the young from step to step from the easy to the difficult’.

O. M. Edwards was a renowned editor, writer, historian and educator. From 1888 onwards he devoted his energy to publishing popular books and journals, especially volumes concerning the history and culture of Wales. From 1896 to 1930 he was a professor of History at Aberystwyth University, however Edwards would continue to write, edit and proof-correct out of his official working-hours and often in the early hours of the morning. One cannot overestimate his service to Wales, and indeed, Edwards’s influence reached extensively further than the university lecture room. He wrote many books for children, including ‘Llyfr Del’ and ‘Yr Hwiangerddi’: a book of Welsh nursery rhymes. These books were attractive, packed with illustrations and their texts easy to read. Edwards’s books for children were unique in the sense that they provided age appropriate content for a young target audience through the medium of Welsh for the first time.
Hugh Evans was a noted writer and set up his own press, Gwasg y Brython in 1897 in Liverpool. However, his children’s book ‘Y Tylwyth Teg’ was published posthumously in 1935. This volume was also packed with illustrations and the tale was later republished in several editions.
The records relating to these transactions form part of the Whitlera Estate Archive and they provide useful context for why the map was created. A number of other landscape features are depicted, including Afon Sannan and 'the hie waye'. Some of the fields feature rows of markings which may be an attempt to show that they had been ploughed. Other areas include clumps of 'furrs' [furze or gorse], suggesting uncultivated wasteland. A number of trees are also depicted, ranging from what looks like a patch of small woodland, to a large tree standing alone in the middle of one of the fields and a number of smaller trees forming part of one of the hedgerow boundaries. These spikey hedgerows (perhaps resembling Hawthorn) enclose every field; and there is a clear attempt to depict a more established hedge to the east.

Some of the field-names are marked on the map, such as ‘kae dan y ty’, ‘kae trwynvain’, ‘wayn bwll’ and ‘kaer ddintir’. Most of these fields are marked as 'whitleras lande' – indicating their association with the house. However, the lands included on the map were not consolidated under the ownership of one individual or estate; the 'whitleras land' was intermixed with the land of 'Owen ap Hennri & Mallt verch Wallter ap Thomas', 'Kae Koch, being the lande of Ieuan Lloyd ap Gwillym Vychan' and bounded to the south by 'the lands of Sir William Thomas, Knight'.

The main purpose of the map was to depict the extent and boundaries of the lands associated with Whitlera. Compared to Robert Johnson's 1587 survey of Crickhowell and Tretower, there is less emphasis on display. Indeed, the map was folded up and retained as part of a collection of deeds and documents relating to Whitlera. It is these associated records which provide some indication as to why the map might have been created.

Since at least the beginning of the 16th century the ownership of Whitlera was the subject of contention and legal proceedings. In 1604 Richard ap Rutherch and others brought an action in the Court of the Council in the Marches of Wales to settle the title to the messuage and lands of Whitlera. Six years later the Court of Great Sessions was making judgement on an allegation of trespass into lands around Whitlera. By the 1620s the house of Whitlera and some of the adjoining lands were in the ownership of Thomas ap Richard ap Ruddergh and his son and heir William Thomas ap Ruddergh. In 1627 they appear to have sold the lands to Griffith Lewis, an alderman of Carmarthen, who a couple of years later sold the lands to Thomas Newsham of Abersannan. Over the next few decades the lands were mortgaged on a regular basis, until they were eventually acquired by Nicholas Williams of Rhydodyn (Edwinsford) in the 1670s.

The records relating to these transactions form part of the Edwinsford Estate Archive.
During the 16th and 17th centuries, it was not uncommon for maps to be commissioned as evidence to support legal proceedings relating to the ownership of land. It is possible that the map was produced as part of the cases heard by the Council in the Marches of Wales or at the Great Sessions. However, given the past uncertainties surrounding the ownership of the lands, it is more likely that the map was requested by either Griffith Lewis, Thomas Newsham or Nicholas Williams to append to the deeds evidencing their acquisition of the lands. In either instance, it is clear that the map cannot be fully understood without reference to the wider body of records relating to the ownership history of Whitlera. Context is key.

The National Library of Wales hosts the second Wikipedia languages conference

On July the 5th and 6th, The National Library of Wales hosted the second Celtic Knot Wikipedia Language Conference.

The conference is quite unique in its ambitions – with the focus on how small and minority languages can grow and develop Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects in their language.

Wikipedia has nearly 300 language editions but some have just a hand full of editors and a few thousand articles. The challenges faced by these communities are often very different to those faced by much bigger Wikipedias. The Celtic Knot conference focused on discussing and addressing some of these issues, such as technical support, community building and partnerships.

The conference was attended by 55 delegates from all over the world, with people attending from as far afield as South Africa, Norway, Spain and Germany. The Celtic Nations were well represented too, with delegates from Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall, Brittany and, of course, Wales. We are grateful to the Wikimedia Foundation for funding a number of scholarships which allowed us to help volunteers travel to the event.
Day one featured a structured programme of presentations and workshops, and the conference was opened by the Welsh Government Minister for Welsh and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan AM, who spoke very positively of Wikipedia as a means of supporting the development of the Welsh language. And she spoke of the importance of the work that the National Library of Wales has done in this area, thanks in part to Welsh Government funding.
Eluned Morgan AM speaking about the value of Wikipedia in giving access to Welsh language information

Wikimedia UK’s Wales manager Robin Owain then spoke, as eloquently as ever, about the growth of the Welsh Wikipedia. The Minister, Robin and several others spoke in Welsh with simultaneous translation and the audience seemed to enjoy listening to the Welsh language, some hearing it for the first time.

We were treated to a number of inspiring presentations and workshops during the day. Ewan MacAndrew of Edinburgh University ran a translation workshop and there were a number of Wikidata talks and workshops led by Lea Lacroix of Wikimedia Deutschland. Presentations highlighting the use of Wikipedia for, or within education were particularly popular, with Aaron Morris of Wici Môn discussing the impact of his work with school children and Koldo Biguri of the Basque Wikimedia user group talking about the Basque Wikipedia for children, or ‘Txikipedia’. The great work of the Basque Wikimedia community in this area was further highlighted by Inaki Lopez deLuzuriaga who spoke about their wider education programme, which is supported by the Basque government.

Pau Cabot of Catalonia talking about using Wikidata to generate infoboxes on Wikipedia
After a long day, delegates were treated to a trip on the Aberystwyth Cliff Railway for food and drinks at Y Consti cafe. The National Library of Wales choir kindly sang us all some traditional Welsh songs before we had a Breton folk dancing lesson!

On the second day we kicked off with a presentation on the Irish Wikipedia and a journey through language gaps on Wikidata, by the library’s very own Wikidata visiting scholar, Simon Cobb. A personal highlight for me, was a video presentation by Subhanshish Panigrahi, a National Geographics explorer who works with Wikimedia India. His talk focused on the importance of recording and preserving endangered languages, and highlighted an Indian dialect which is has just one serving speaker. For me, this brought home the importance of supporting and encouraging the use of minority languages before their use drops to unsustainable levels.

After lunch we ran an unconference session, where delegates set their own agenda. There were data workshops, strategy discussions, lightning talks and even a tour of the library. Delegates from Cornwall were thrilled to view important Cornish language manuscripts from the library’s collection.
We all came together again for a productive group discussion before the National Librarian Linda Tomos closed the conference with a brilliant talk about the importance of the National Libraries work with Wikipedia and virtual tour through some of the libraries most treasured and important collections.

Feedback from delegates suggest the conference was a great success, and everyone indicated that they would attend the conference again next year. We will continue to work with interested parties to find a suitable home for the conference next year and Wikimedia Norge have kindly agreed to look at hosting the conference in 2020. We really hope the conference, and the worlds smaller language Wikipedia’s can continue to grow over the coming years, and we thank everyone who was involved in making this years event so successful.

Jason Evans
Revealing the Objects: Expatriate Literature

As of October 2018 the Library will share a number of additional items from its collections on Europeana, a European digital cultural platform. We are currently working with 12 other partner institutions on a project entitled ‘The Rise of Literacy’ which aims to explore the history of reading and writing in Europe. In this weekly blog series – Revealing the Objects’, some of the Library’s contributions will be disclosed on a thematic basis.

Here’s a selection of volumes by expatriate writers that will be digitized as part of the project.

Ellis Pugh – Annerch i’r Cymry iw galw oddiwrth y llawer o bethau at yr un peth angenrheidiol er mwyn cadwediageth eu heneidiau (1721)

Ellis Pugh was a Quaker emigrant and became a member of the Friends Church from the age of eighteen. In 1686 he, along with his family and many other Welshmen, began the lengthy voyage to Pennsylvania. Pugh settled as a farmer and minister in America during the summer of 1686. He left, in manuscript form, a work entitled ‘Annerch ir Cymru’ (‘An Address to the Welsh, to call them away from the many things to the one essential thing to ensure the salvation of their souls’). This particular copy was published in Philadelphia in 1721 and is accepted as the first Welsh book to be published in North America. As in Wales, printing became the most effective way of transmitting religious values and beliefs.
Owain Myfyr, William Owen Pughe, Iolo Morganwg – *The Myvyrian archaiology of Wales: collected out of ancient manuscripts* (1801-7)

This monumental publication consisted of early Welsh poetry and Brutiau, or Chronicles. It was published in three volumes, two in 1801, and the other in 1807. To many scholars, these publications symbolise the end of the Welsh language manuscript era. Owain Myfyr and William Owen Pughe were mostly responsible for bringing these volumes into print; they were also assisted by Iolo Morganwg in the process of compiling their contents. It must be noted that Myfyr’s fellow-contributors were eager to name the publication after him as he made extraordinary financial contributions to the enterprise, an estimated four to five thousand pounds. Iolo travelled the length and breadth of Wales in search of materials which Pughe structured and prepared for press. Unfortunately, the venture was not entirely a success and they face difficulties with the transcription process. In addition, the inclusion of Iolo Morganwg’s infamous forgeries did not do the publication any justice in terms of later circulation and sales.
Edward Williams (more widely known by his pen-name, Iolo Morganwg) was a poet, writer and antiquarian. He had strong connections with the London-Welsh societies of the late eighteenth century, and was particularly affected by the cultural and antiquarian developments of that period. In 1792 Iolo Morganwg held the first meeting of the Gorsedd of the Bards of the Isle of Britain in London. During the occasion he introduced a form of druidism, later discovered to have no true historical root. Morganwg is arguably the most controversial writer and poet Wales has ever known. He did not live to see his volume ‘Cyfrinach Beirdd Ynys Prydain’ in printed form. It was published in 1829, three years after his death. This truly unique thesis on the origins of the poetic art of Wales demonstrates Iolo Morganwg’s firm grasp on the subject. However, both his broad knowledge and extraordinary imagination are evident in ‘Cyfrinach Beirdd Ynys Prydain’. In this volume, he rejected the pre-standardised poetic forms introduced by Dafydd ab Edmwnd in the fifteenth century and proposed in their place old strict measures as well as newly formed ones. Morganwg supported his propositions with falsified examples, derived from ancient Glamorgan poets, which also served as proof of the literary excellence and authority of his home county.

Want to see more posts from this series? See below:

- Prose and Novels
- Religious Publications
- Poetry Volumes
- Plays and Interludes
- Ballads
- Children’s Literature
- Travel Books
- History Books
- Music
- Political and Radical Publications
- The Blue Book Reports
- Science and Mathematics
- Cookery and Lifestyle

Elen Hâf Jones – Digital Access Projects Officer

This post was created as part of the Europeana Rise of Literacy Project

Tags: @NLWales, Digitisation, Europeana Libraries

Posted - 19-07-2018

#LoveMaps / Collections / News and Events
Dr. Shaun Evans is Director of the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates, an all-Wales research centre based at Bangor University which explores issues relating to the history, culture and landscapes of Wales, through the prisms of estates and their cultural heritage collections.

Welsh estate maps 1: Property, Place and Power

In his influential book, Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape, the cultural geographer Denis E. Cosgrove (1948-2008) made the important assertion that:

‘Landscape constitutes a discourse, through which social groups historically have framed themselves and their relations with both the land, and with other human groups’.

This statement is entirely applicable to landed estates, which were dominant structures in the life of Wales from the late-medieval period, through to the early decades of the 20th century. From Mostyn, Penrhyn, Baron Hill and Nannau in the north, through to the sprawling Wynnstay lands, Powis Castle on the border, Trawsgoed and Gogerddan in mid-Wales and on to Bute, Tredegar, Cawdor and Plymouth lands further south – almost every corner of the Welsh landscape has at some point been influenced by the priorities of an estate. These estates came in all shapes and sizes, with their character and composition varying according to the interests, identities and influence of their owners and the nature of their geographical and community settings.

Estate maps which developed in England from the 1570s and became more widespread in Wales from the mid-18th century, formed part of the rich and varied accumulations of records which were generated by these estates over the course of their existence. Many of these records have survived in the hundreds of estate archives and solicitors’ collections which have been deposited in repositories such as the National Library, Bangor University Archives and local record offices across Wales.
These estate archives contain a huge variety of record types: title deeds, settlements, wills, surveys, rentals, leases, accounts, correspondence, receipts, legal papers, architectural plans, enclosure documents and official commissions – sometimes stretching across centuries. These records were produced as part of the acquisition, development and management of estates, and to ensure their transfer through inheritance.

Estate maps and surveys should not be considered in isolation from the corpuses of related records found within estate archives. Analysed within this context, they provide vivid insights into how the owners of Welsh estates appropriated, fashioned and inscribed the landscape in ways which communicated their self-identity: their social, political, religious and economic values; their status, tastes, power and wealth.

These maps were often created as working documents, displayed and used in estate offices and country houses to assist with the management of a landed patrimony, providing the owners of estates and their agents with visual representations of the territory subject to their control. Writing to Owen Meyrick of Bodorgan in 1725, the multi-talented Lewis Morris (1701-65) referred to his recently-completed survey of the Anglesey estate, boasting that ‘he can scarce believe that ever a gentleman hath such an insight of his estates as he is likely to have from these maps’. The use of maps as tools of estate management can be seen in the additions that were often made to them over the years: pencil marks denoting boundary changes, sales, new tenants or references to other records held in the muniment room.
For centuries, ownership of land constituted a primary signifier of status and power in Welsh society. The ability to retain control of this land, add to it and then pass it on to future generations of the same ‘blood and name’ framed the existence of those dynasties which dominated Welsh society up until the demise of estates in the early-20th century. Together with records such as valuations and rentals, estate maps and surveys can provide indications of the territorial extent of an individual’s influence; and if part of a long chronological series of records, can show how a family acquired, expanded, consolidated, ‘improved’ or indeed lost their landed interest over a succession of generations. The maps were often commissioned at points of change: at times of inheritance, purchase or sale, or indeed to provide blueprints for future works. Estate maps were therefore fully bound up in a consciousness of dynastic pride and territoriality, expressed most assertively through the display of coats of arms and other heraldic symbols on the face of the document.

As well as giving an indication of the extent of an estate (or part therefore) these maps also provide valuable insights into how their owners moulded their dominions to enhance their wealth and to imprint their identities – their power and status – within the landscape. It is no surprise that the plas or country house is usually the most prominent feature depicted on estate maps – reflecting its importance in the locality and its status as the primary architectural symbol of its owner’s influence over the surrounding community. Indeed, detailed depictions of country houses are often included in the margins of estate maps.

In addition to the country house with its outbuildings, gardens and parklands, estate maps can also depict farms, fields, roads, woodlands, mills, churches, towns, walls, ponds, trees, boundaries, bridges, industrial sites such as mines and quarries and occasionally even livestock or hunting scenes. All of these physical features were shaped by the priorities of the estate to which they belonged and served, in varying degrees, to inscribe certain values and concepts into the landscape. Some estate owners invested significant money and energy in creating Designed Landscapes, or in schemes of ‘improvement’. A printed map of the Hafod estate, produced to accompany George Cumberland’s Attempt to Describe Hafod (1796), gives some indication of Thomas Johnes’ (1748-1816) efforts to draw out the picturesque qualities of his landholdings, with numerous ‘walks’ and ‘viewing points’ marked out on the map. All estate maps suggest ways in which estates contributed to place-making.
They also provide snapshots of the theatre on which the landholding elites of Wales developed and negotiated those all-important social and community relations – with tenants, neighbours, local-clergy, servants and employees – which underpinned their position in local society. The names of tenants or tenements are occasionally inscribed on the maps or feature in adjoining documentation (often missing), sometimes with details of leases, rents and services. The estate landscapes depicted by maps were *lived in*, with cottages and farms providing housing and the wider activities of the estate sustaining a range of work and employment.

In this sense the maps provide unique entry points for exploring that discourse between power, people and place which underpinned the creation of the symbolic landscapes and social structures talked about by Cosgrove.

Notwithstanding the excellent work of Bob Silvester, research into Welsh estate maps remains slight, despite the numerous insights they can provide into Wales’ landscape history. At the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates, we hope to play our part in addressing this deficit over the coming years.

Further reading:

- Colin Thomas, ‘Estate Surveys as Sources in Historical Geography’, *National Library of Wales Journal* 14, 4 (December, 1966), 451-69
- R.J. Silvester, Mapping Montgomeryshire: Estate maps from 1589 to 1840’, *Montgomeryshire Collections* 100 (2012), 149-80.
The Library has recently received a donation of letters written by Mildred Elsie Eldridge (Elsi), wife of R.S. Thomas, to Penny Condry of Ynys Edwin, Eglwys-fach. R.S. Thomas had met Penny’s husband, the naturalist and writer, William Condry, through their shared passion for ornithology, and both were involved in the Bardsey Island Trust. It was through a suggestion by William Condry that R.S. Thomas came to be vicar of Eglwys-fach in 1954. Their wives also enjoyed a close friendship which is evident in the letters written by Elsi to Penny between 1953 and 1988. A few of the letters were sent from Manafon rectory before the move to Eglwys-fach. However, the majority were written from subsequent abodes at Aberdaron vicarage and Sarn y Plas, Y Rhiw, Pwllheli, 1967-1988. The contents mostly concern the correspondents’ mutual interest in gardening, ornithology and other wildlife, and they are sometimes illustrated with delightful sketches of mice and plants, reminding us that Elsi was also a successful professional artist. This extract is fairly typical:

I have just been doing the water colours for R.W.S. autumn exhibition – rugosa alba and a study of a very lovely common lizard which I found who had a very beautiful turquoise tummy and chin. …..The toadflax is 3ft tall in the hedges and the harebells in great drifts on the banks.

In addition there are descriptions of the Thomas family life, their son, Gwydion, William Condry’s work at Ynyshir, conservation and heritage issues in North Wales, particularly the future of Bardsey Island and the garden at Plas yn Rhiw. Not least, we catch a glimpse of R.S. at home, making impressively good jam or heedlessly clumping through the house in his heavy outdoor boots because it was the bird migration season!

Hiliary Peters

Collections / Digitisation

Revealing the Objects: Ballads

As of October 2018 the Library will share a number of additional items from its collections on Europeana, a European digital cultural platform. We are currently working with 12 other partner institutions on a project entitled ‘The Rise of Literacy’ which aims to explore the history of reading and writing in Europe. In this weekly blog – ‘Revealing the Objects’, some of the Library’s contributions will be disclosed on a thematic basis.

Below is a selection of ballads that will be contributed as part of the project.

Ballad-pamphlets were produced on a mass scale by the new printing presses in Wales during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hawkers often sang ballads aloud in the market-place or at the fairground. With regards to content; some were of a religious and moral tone and others discussed historic and current affairs; such as local and national crimes, riots and industrial accidents and incidences.

The ballad played an important role in the social and cultural life of Wales during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By the nineteenth century ballads were being printed at 96 towns and villages across Wales and were bought in their thousands, often by individuals of the lower classes. Their populist nature attracted and recruited many new Welsh readers.

Alban Thomas, ‘Cân o senn iw hên feistr Tobacco’, 1718

‘Cân o senn iw hên feistr Tobacco’ was the first ballad to be published in Wales by an official press. It was published by Isaac Carter’s Press at Trefhedydd in 1718. The ballad discusses the evil and immoral nature of tobacco.
Lewis Davies, 'Pennillion a wnaeth Lewis Davies o Lanrwst, i ffarwelio a'i wlad wrth gychwyn i America', 18??

Lewis Llanrwst Davies bids farewell to his fellow-countrymen as he begins his journey to America.
Ywain Meirion, ‘Rhyfel-gan, am wrthryfel yr India, a gorchfygu y gelynion, a meddiannau Delhi’, 18??

This broadside is a war-song. Meirion discusses the insurrection of India and the defeat of the ‘enemy’ as the British army take possession of Delhi.

Unknown Author, ‘Ymwellad y cholera, yngych à gawd ar bawb i ymofyn am gymod á Duw cyn eu symud i’r byd tragwyddol’, 18??

This ballad introduces two warnings with regards to the cholera epidemic in Wales. It informs of the disease, and it calls on every sufferer to seek reconciliation with God before moving to the eternal world.
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Elen Haf Jones – Digital Access Projects Officer

This post was created as part of the Europeana Rise of Literacy Project

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The series, four years in planning, began on 18 January 2010 and was broadcast over 20 weeks.[1] A book to accompany the series, A History of the World in 100 Objects by Neil MacGregor, was published by Allen Lane on 28 October 2010.[2] The entire series is also available for download along with an audio version of the book for purchase. In 2016, a touring exhibition of several items depicted on the radio program, also titled A History of the World in 100 Objects, travelled to various destinations, including Abu Dhabi (Manarat Al Saadiyat), Taiwan (National Palace Museum in Taipei), Japan (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in Tokyo, Kyushu National Museum in Daizafu, and Kobe City Museum in Kobe), Australia (Western Australian Museum in Perth. It's often said that true magicians never reveal their secrets. But in the era of technology, it's getting more and more difficult to hide a reasonable explanation from a skeptical viewer. We at Bright Side are ready to demolish all the illusions surrounding these 10 incredible magic tricks. 10. Turning coffee into coins.