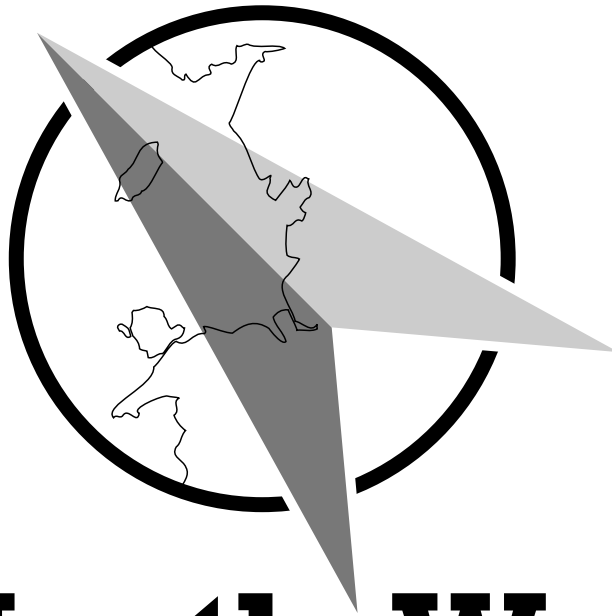


ISSN 1476-1580



# **North West Geography**

Volume 2, Number 1, 2002

# North West in Maps

## Thomas Donald's map of Cumberland, 1774

Paul Hindle

Manchester Geographical Society

This map was part of one of the most important steps in the mapping of England. Many new county maps were encouraged by the offer of prizes by the Society of Arts (from 1759) for new and accurate surveys. The Society stipulated that the maps must be based on a trigonometrical survey, have accurate road distances, correct latitude and longitude, that the survey should be completed in one, or at the most, two years, and that a scale of at least one inch to one mile be used.

There was also a strong local demand for new maps, and most maps were funded by subscription, subscribers paying part of the cost of the map in advance, whilst others paid extra to have their names inserted on the map. A total of 96 names are engraved on the map; two appear in the extract (*Brownrigg Esq* and *Mr Leathes*). Most of those named are rural landowners, as the scale of the map militates against subscribers in the towns being named. A valuable source of urban revenue was clearly missed, suggesting that the map was aimed at rural landowners rather than urban buyers. This is reflected in the title of the map, which is inscribed '*To the Nobility Gentry Clergy and Freeholders*' of the county.

### Production

The map is one of three in northern England, devised in the late 1760s by the famous London cartographer and publisher Thomas Jefferys. His maps of Westmorland and Yorkshire were published in 1770 and 1772. Jefferys went bankrupt in 1766, principally because of the costs of new survey work for county maps, and his business was taken over by William Faden after Jefferys' death in 1771.

The survey must have begun with the precise measurement of a base line, and then other locations fixed by the use of triangulation. Filling in the topographical detail would have been done by the use of a mixture of theodolite, compass and plane table; the road distances would have been measured by a perambulator. Cumberland was surveyed in 1770-71 by Thomas Donald (perhaps assisted by John Ainslie), and it was published by Joseph Hodkinson.

The map was republished three times at the same scale (Hodkinson 1783, Faden 1802, Fryer 1818), and twice at half-inch scale (Hodkinson 1783, Faden 1810); in addition Faden and Donald produced an 'Environs of Keswick' extract (clearly aimed at the tourist trade) in 1789.

### The map as an historical document

Despite the restrictions of time, money and scale, this map is far superior to any maps of the county produced before. Nevertheless, it should be used with care as an historical record; it depicts some features better than others. Perhaps the maps are best read alongside the contemporary descriptions in *Gray's Journal* (1769), *Arthur Young's Tour* (1770), *Hutchinson's Excursion* (1776) and *West's Guide* (from 1778).

The map has north-west almost at the top, so that the coast from St Bees to Drigg is parallel to the left hand edge of the map; thus the county fills the six sheets as well as possible. There are town plans of Cockermouth, Whitehaven and Carlisle.

For the modern map-reader, perhaps the oddest feature is the omission of so much detail in the Lakeland fells; many hills are poorly depicted, and many are unnamed. The reason for this is that the mountains were largely unvisited in the 1770s; the early tourists stayed on the roads in the valleys. The map shows settlements, from towns to individual cottages, though of course at the 1" scale much of the depiction is conventional, and must lack accuracy.

However, the depiction of turnpikes is one of the great values of this map, for it was surveyed immediately after the 'turnpike mania' in Cumberland, from 1739 to 1767. The map shows the original routes turnpiked, rather than any alterations made later. For example, the turnpike from Keswick to Penrith goes via the *Druid Stones* (Castlerigg Stone Circle), and then through Threlkield, Penruddock and Stainton, all avoided by later road improvements. The position of many toll bars is shown; they were often located just outside the main towns to collect maximum revenues, where it was difficult to avoid going around them. One is

shown on this extract, as *Turnp.*, just north of Keswick. Mileages are indicated along the turnpikes. The original Thirlmere, and the old road alongside it, are shown. This map is the first to give a clear depiction of the more important minor roads, though the full road network is far from being shown.

The map shows many mills, mines and industrial sites; on this extract there is a forge east of Keswick, and in Borrowdale the famous *Black Lead or Wadd Mines* are shown.

## Conclusions

This map can be seen in many ways: as a work of art, as a collectable item, as the product of map-making technology, or as a depiction of the topography of the county. But it is also important to be aware of the context of the time in which it was surveyed; in particular, it is important to look at the mapmaker, and the map-buyer. Donald was an innovative cartographer, producing a totally new county map, rather than copying other surveyors' work. It was not until 1823 that Christopher Greenwood published a new survey of Cumberland, and not until 1865 that the Ordnance Survey completed its maps of the county.

The map was financed by the map buyers, and what the map shows is related to their interests; thus it shows the

towns and main roads especially well, but lacks detail in the hills. At 1" scale it could not show individual fields; it could have showed parish boundaries, but did not. There is an old adage that is especially true of maps like this: 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence'. If the map does not show a feature, it does not mean it was not there; it means that the surveyor missed it, or that he was not concerned to map it in the first place.

Overall, this map, and those detailing the rest of England, are an extremely valuable record of the geography of England in the second half of the eighteenth century.

## Later Mapping

In the early nineteenth century further large-scale county maps were surveyed and produced, pre-dating the Ordnance Survey by many years. None has been reprinted, but copies can usually be seen in the relevant County Record Offices.

Cumberland: Greenwood 1823.

Westmorland: Greenwood 1824, Hodgson 1828.

Lancashire: Greenwood 1818, Hennett 1830.

Cheshire: Greenwood 1819, Swire & Hutchings 1830, Bryant 1831.

## Further Reading

**Hindle B P** 1998 *Roads and Tracks of the Lake District* Cicerone Press, Milnthorpe

**Hindle B P** 1998 *Maps for Historians* Phillimore, Chichester

## Reproductions

Donald's **Cumberland** and Jefferys' **Westmorland** have recently been reprinted by the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. Copies can be ordered from Ian Caruana, 10 Peter Street, Carlisle, CA3 8QP (£8.50, post free). A fuller description can be found in: **Hindle B P** 2001 *The first large scale county maps of Cumberland and Westmorland in the 1770s* *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 1 139-53

Yates' **Lancashire** has been reprinted by Neil Richardson, 88 Ringley Road, Radcliffe, M26 9ET (£3-50, plus postage). A full description can be found in: **Harley J B** 1968 *A Map of the County of Lancashire, 1786 by William Yates* *The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*

Burdett's **Cheshire** was reprinted in: **Harley J B and Laxton P** 1974 *A Survey of the County Palatine of Chester, P. P. Burdett, 1777* *The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*

