



CAIRT

Issue 32
January 2018

Newsletter of the Scottish Maps Forum

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SCOTTISH MAPS FORUM

The Forum was initiated by the National Library of Scotland in 2002:

- ♦ To encourage multi-disciplinary map use, study and research, particularly relating to Scottish maps and mapmakers
- ♦ To disseminate information on Scottish maps and map collections
- ♦ To record information on maps and mapmaking, particularly in a Scottish context
- ♦ To liaise with other groups and individuals with map related interests
- ♦ To build on, and to continue, the work of Project Pont

CAIRT

The newsletter is issued twice a year. "Cairt" is Gaelic & 17th century Scots for map.

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New acquisition - Ferguson's Astronomical Rotula

A paper model with five movable revolving discs is a fragile thing. To find one in good working order, with just a couple of minor repairs to its outer edges is remarkable.

One such volvelle has recently been purchased by the Library, with thanks to the Graham Brown Trust.

The astronomical rotula shewing the change and age of the moon, the motion of the sun, moon and nodes, with all the solar and lunar eclipses by James Ferguson is a rare survivor. It depicts a spiral of years from 1752 to 1800 and shows the ecliptic with its twelve signs through which the sun travels over the course of the year. By rotating the discs the days of the new and full moons can be calculated.

James Ferguson is an interesting character. He was self-taught in astronomy, and managed to make a successful career out of it. As a boy he was set to watch sheep about the farm near Keith in Banffshire, being too young and weak for any hard manual labour. He would lie in the fields at night, wrapped in a blanket, and devised a system of sliding beads along thread to measure the distance between the stars. He used the length of thread between the beads to mark the relative positions of the stars, creating a map.

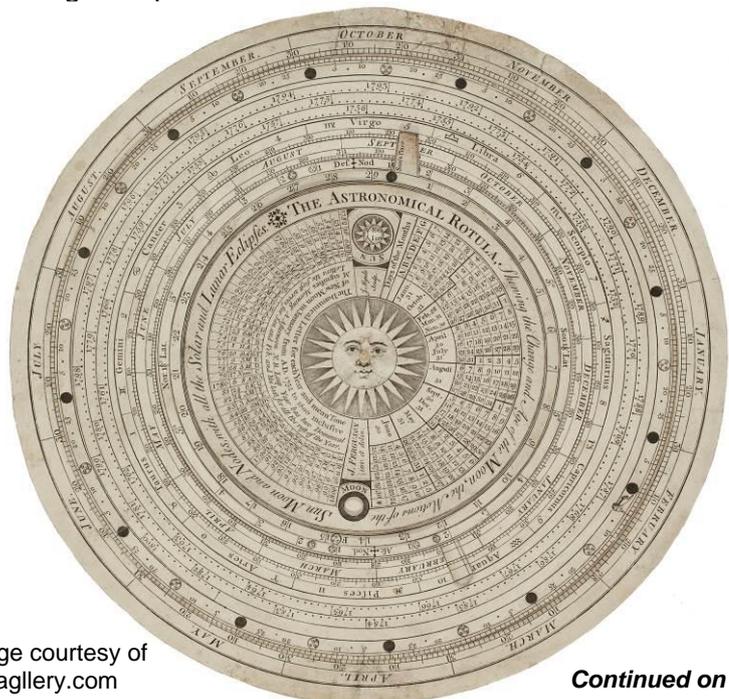


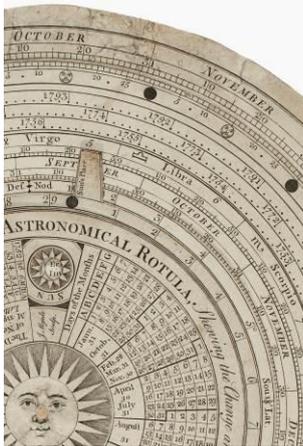
Image courtesy of
ateagallery.com

Continued on p.2

Ferguson's Astronomical Rotula (contd.)

Moving to Edinburgh in 1734, Ferguson made orreries and other models. He supplemented his income by giving private lessons in the use of globes and painting portraits. Nine years later he moved to London where he taught astronomy at the Royal Society. He published extensively on astronomy, contributed star maps to James Guthrie's *Geography* (the leading Scottish geographical grammar of the day) and continued to produce globes.

Ferguson began work on the rotula as early as 1739, as a result of his calculations of the eclipses. He had a version engraved in Edinburgh in 1742 with four concentric rotating discs, and published an accompanying broadsheet giving instructions on its use.



This rotula is a later edition, with five discs. It was printed in London, probably around 1752, from the dating of the years on the spiral. Again, Ferguson wrote instructions to explain its use, with worked examples. These instructions benefit from his years as a teacher being clearer and more easily followed than his first attempts.

A two disc rotula was issued around 1760, with a revised edition published by Thomas Jones in 1817 more than forty years after Ferguson's death.

Paula Williams, Curator (Map, Mountaineering and Polar Collections)

References

James Ferguson, *A new globe of the earth*. London, circa 1750. (NLS: Map.Cur.b.015)
John R. Millburn, *Wheelwright of the heavens: the life & work of James Ferguson FRS*. London: Vade Mecum Press, 1988. (NLS: H4.90.990)

Maps Reading Room Relocation

As reported in the last *Cairt*, the Maps Reading Room moved within the National Library of Scotland's Causewayside building in September. It's now located on the third floor, close to the public entrance on Salisbury Place, and is open to anyone wishing to consult printed or digital mapping from the Library's collections.

The room is equipped with a large height-adjustable map table, as well as smaller height-adjustable desks. PCs are available for readers, and there are plug points if readers wish to use their own laptops.

Opening hours are 10am to 1pm, and 2pm to 5pm, Monday to Thursday. Access is by appointment, which can be made at www.nls.uk/using-the-library/reading-rooms/maps/appointments or by phoning or e-mailing the Maps team: **0131 623 4660** / maps@nls.uk.



Recent publications

- Paul Bishop, 'Gordon's Edinodunensis', *Sheetlines* 110 (Dec 2017), 50.
- John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels, 'Designs on the Landscape: Paul and Thomas Sandby in North Britain', *Oxford Art Journal* 40 (2017), 223-248. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kcx023>
- John Moore, *The Clyde: Mapping the River* (Birlinn, 2017).
- David Walker, 'The Ox Rock: missing from Ordnance Survey maps for 100 years', *Sheetlines* 110 (Dec 2017), 26-7.
- Although much broader than maps in its scope, Pat Dennison's *The Evolution of Scotland's Towns: Creation, Growth and Fragmentation* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017) includes maps as an essential documentary source, and will be of great interest to *Cairt* readers.

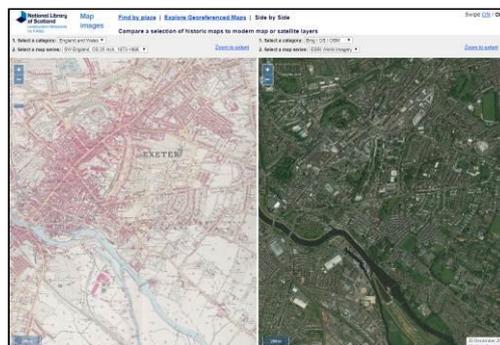
New Website Resources

OS 25 inch County Series mapping for England and Wales, 1841-1952

We have finally completed putting online all our holdings of this large series (89,818 sheets). Our georeferenced layer of this series using the second edition (ca.1900) now extends to cover all of England.

- <http://maps.nls.uk/os/25inch-england-and-wales/index.html>

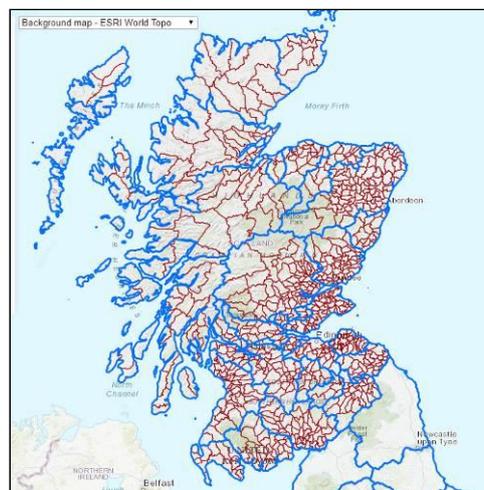
In a related project, we have been pleased to collaborate with the British Library, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to scan, georeference and make available OS mapping for Devon. The project has included first edition OS 25 inch to the mile maps covering the county, and more detailed OS town plans at 1:500 scale for all the towns in Devon with more than 4,000 people. The project has allowed us to fill gaps in our holdings for Devon with British Library maps, so our online presentation is now more complete.



- [Georeferenced 25 inch first edition layer, 1873-1888](#)
- [OS Town Plans of England and Wales, 1840s-1890s](#)
- [Georeferenced Town Plan layer, SW England, 1880s](#)

Administrative Boundaries Viewer and Information

Our new interactive *Boundaries viewer* allows counties and parishes from the 1950s, and unitary authorities, districts and boroughs from 2017, to be viewed on a range of different map backgrounds. You can zoom in on any location, click on your point of interest, and the county, parish, or unitary authority that covers the point you have clicked on is shown. Many other family and local history records are associated with these administrative jurisdictions, especially parishes, and viewing their location and extents is often useful. The new viewer is accompanied by detailed information on the [history of these administrative units](#), significant [legislation](#) that has affected them, and [cartographic information sources](#) which show the development of these units over time.



- <http://maps.nls.uk/geo/boundaries>

Bartholomew's "Revised Half Inch Maps" of Great Britain, 1940-47

Bartholomew's beautifully layer-coloured half-inch to the mile maps were developed from the 1880s, covering Scotland as a series by 1886, and England and Wales by 1903. This new series in 62 sheets in the 1940s, their first to cover Great Britain at this scale, provides an attractive and useful snapshot of post-War Britain.



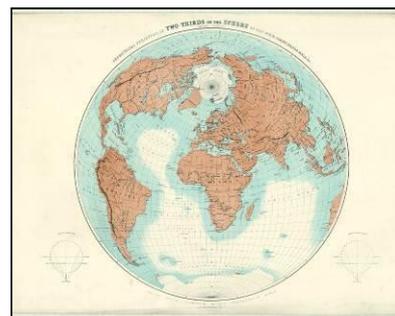
- http://maps.nls.uk/series/bart_half_great_britain.html

New Website Resources (contd.)

Maps of the World, 16th-20th centuries

This small set of 34 maps of the World has been selected for their historical interest, content, and aesthetic qualities. The maps show the many different ways that the World has been visualised and understood over time, and each reflect aspects of the society and culture when they were created.

- <http://maps.nls.uk/world/index.html>



Using the National Library of Scotland's open-source map viewers



If you would like to use any of the web-mapping applications at: <http://maps.nls.uk>, or are interested in creating a web-mapping viewer or application, you may be interested to know that the code behind all of our web-mapping applications is available for free and easy onward use on Github.

GitHub is a widely used code hosting platform and all our main map viewers are

placed in specific repositories. In each repository, you can easily download all the files to create an immediate working web-mapping application, and the Javascript code which drives all these applications is also commented for easy onward use.

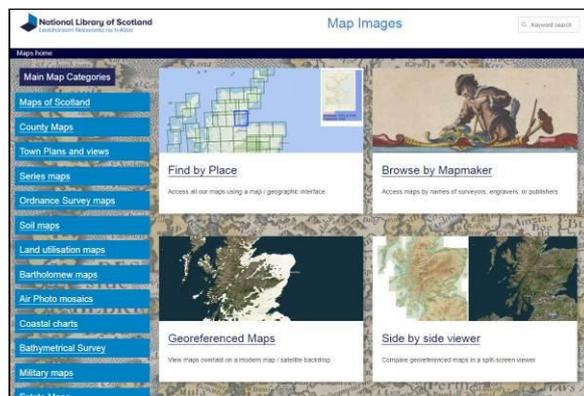
Geographic or map-based interfaces are a particularly useful and engaging way of making available library and archive collections online, and we hope that other institutions may find these applications useful in making their own collections available online. We also welcome comments or code to develop and improve our own viewers.

- <https://blog.nls.uk/using-the-librarys-open-source-map-viewers/>
- <https://github.com/NationalLibraryOfScotland/>

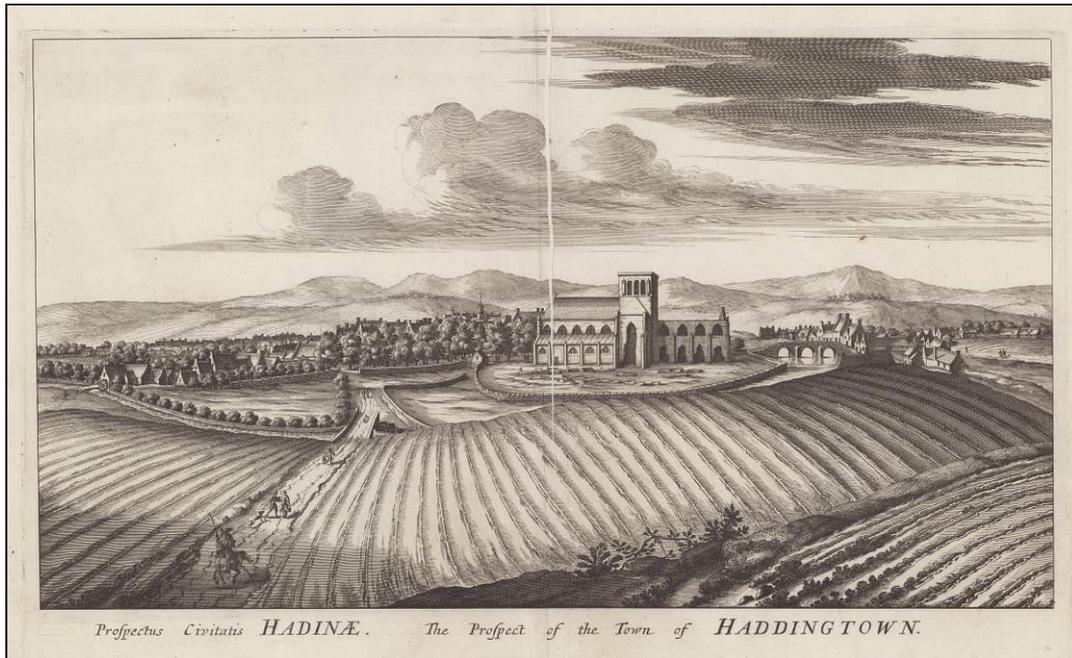
Map Images website wins CILIP award

We were delighted that the NLS Map Images website won the CILIP Knowledge and Information Management Group Award (2017) for an “Outstanding Electronic Information Resource”.

The judges praised the wide range of maps available on the website together with its ease-of-use. “Without doubt a most impressive and authoritative website,” said the judges’ citation, and “as the collection available on the site is continually growing... there are more gems to come” During 2017, the Map Images website saw 1.2 million users, 2.9 million user sessions, and 12.3 million page views. We now have 200,000 maps online, but this reflects only around 10% of our paper holdings, so there is much look forward to.



**Slezer's *Prospect of the Town of Haddingtown* (1693)
Reassembling the truth behind the view**



What appears to be a fine stone bridge over the River Tyne southwest of Haddington's parish church is depicted in John Slezer's *Theatrum Scotiae*, published in 1693¹. Slezer was a military engineer, and his book was a collection of splendid engravings of 'prospects' or views of important Scottish towns and buildings. His *Prospect of the Town of Haddingtown* shows three bridges. On the right is the Nungate Bridge with its three arches; on the far left is a little bridge across the mill-lade at the bottom of Poldrate; between them is a broad bridge with a dog bounding across it, and pedestrians and a horseman progressing to and from it.

The bridge with the dog on it appears to be crossing the Tyne, but this is deceptive. As local historian David Anderson realised, Slezer actually shows a bridge over the mill-lade, greatly exaggerating its size (pers. comm.). On the left of this bridge he shows the mill-lade, but on its right he shows the Tyne, flowing under the Nungate Bridge. The two waterways are made to look like one. As Chris Fleet, Maps Curator of the National Library of Scotland, observed: 'This tallies with Slezer's deliberate reassembling of reality to suit his aesthetics in other scenes too.' (pers. comm.) As Chris points out, Slezer's exuberant creativity is well illustrated in his picture of the Bass Rock, which was compared with the real thing in the recent National Library of Scotland photo competition².

The bridge over the mill-lade no longer exists, but appears on 18th and 19th century maps³. It linked a road from the town to the ford near the bottom of Poldrate. The road, of which only the northern part still exists, branched off south-eastwards from Poldrate at the bottom of Sidegate and continued to the bridge at the mill-lade: here it joined a track across the Haugh leading to the ford. By the end of the 19th century, the footbridge had gone and the road had been absorbed into the grounds of the mansion called Tyne Park⁴.

Liz Curtis

Note: This research was done as part of an investigation into the place-name Poldrate which will appear in a future issue of the *Journal of Scottish Name Studies*. The National Library of Scotland's maps website proved an invaluable resource. The second element of the name was thought to be from the Gaelic *drochaid*, 'bridge, causeway', but the research ruled out a bridge in the area at a sufficiently early date.

1. See <http://digital.nls.uk/slezer/index.html>; Keith Cavers, *A Vision of Scotland: The Nation Observed by John Slezer 1671 to 1717* (Edinburgh, 1993)
2. <http://www.nls.uk/photo-competition/bass-rock> and see over page (page 6)
3. Armstrong & Armstrong, 1773; Forrest, 1799; OS Haddington Town Plan, Sheet 2, 1853
4. OS Haddington Town Plan, Sheet X.6.15, 1893

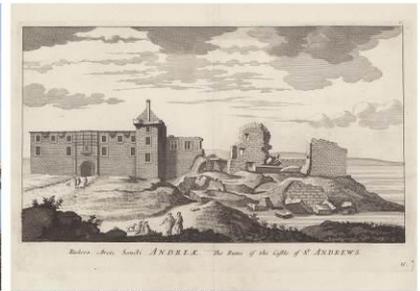
Slezer photo competition and the Bass Rock

In the last issue we commemorated the 300th anniversary of military engineer John Slezer's death by holding a photography competition, inviting photos which aimed to replicate (as much as possible) scenes in Slezer's *Theatrum Scotiae*.

We were thrilled with the response, and congratulations to David Weinczok, who took the photograph of St Andrews Castle (right). The winning photo and all the runners-up can be seen at: <http://www.nls.uk/photo-competition/>



Photograph by David C. Weinczok (2017)



Engraving by John Slezer (1693)

One of the main challenges to capturing similar views was Slezer's creative approach to landscape, vividly illustrated in his engraving of the Bass Rock. Slezer combines two views of the Rock, one from the coast to the west and the other from the south.

As **Liz Curtis** helpfully explained, seen from the west, the left side of the Rock has the dramatic cliffs and sloping summit shown in Slezer's picture. He reproduces that outline in an almost mirror-image on the right, eliminating the lumpy profile and most of the tail of the volcanic plug, and creating a symmetrical pointy shape. He then takes the fort from the southern view and places it centre stage, greatly enlarged.

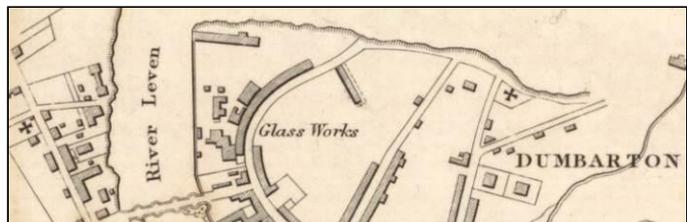
Embellished with gannets, boats and greenery, the final result has a fairytale quality, conveying something of the atmosphere of the Rock, if not its literal appearance.



CAIRT COMPETITION - two copies of the *The Clyde: Mapping the River* to be won...

John Moore's *The Clyde: Mapping the River*, published in October 2017 by Birlinn, is the latest book in Birlinn's Scottish Mapping series, combining high-quality colour images of maps with informed commentary. The book deliberately takes a much broader geographic perspective from John's *Glasgow: Mapping the City* (2014), and focuses on 100 maps, arranged thematically, which provide many insights into the Clyde environs over time (further details at: <https://www.birlinn.co.uk/Clyde-Mapping-the-River.html>).

To win a copy of *The Clyde: Mapping the River*, please provide details of the **map title** and **date** from which the extract shown here is taken from. Send or e-mail your answers, marked *Cairt Competition* to maps@nls.uk or to the address on the front cover by 31 March 2018.



The winners will be picked randomly from the correct entries and informed by 15 April 2018.

Congratulations to Ian Gollifer and Jonathan Hogg who each won a copy of *The Scottish Maps Calendar 2018* from last issue's competition, and thanks to all who took part. The correct number of maps covering Ballater, dating between 1800 and 1900 in our *Find by Place - with Marker* application was then 82 (but has now risen!)

John Sleigh (1826-1918): the “Grand Old Man of Buchan”

Douglas Lockhart outlines the life of John Sleigh who died 100 years ago.

The surviving cartographic record for John Sleigh is one book containing fifty three plans of Strichen estate, Aberdeenshire, dating from the late 1840s. He shares a limited footprint with those of his profession who emigrated (Robert Ray, Elgin, 1816-42); died prematurely (Lewis Robertson, Peterhead, 1829-62) or moved into parallel activities such as civil engineering (Edward Esdaile, Banff, 1843-78). A lack of surviving plans for individual surveyors can also be linked to losses following the sale and break-up of landed estates. Our knowledge of William Whyte of Auchlee (Longside, early 19th century), known locally as ‘Pitfour’s measurer’, would be very different had the records of the Fergusons of Pitfour not been destroyed when their lands were acquired by the London-based speculator Edgar Creyke Fairweather in 1926. A year earlier, nearby Strichen had been bought by Fairweather who promptly began selling it off in lots to sitting tenants. Strichen’s records were more fortunate as many were deposited for safe keeping in the village library including two books of plans, one of the late 1760s and another compiled between 1846 and 1849. These have been copied and the facsimile volumes can be consulted at Aberdeenshire Library Headquarters in

Oldmeldrum, while the originals and related estate material are also held by the library (photocopies of the 1846-9 plan book are at NRS RHP 38059).

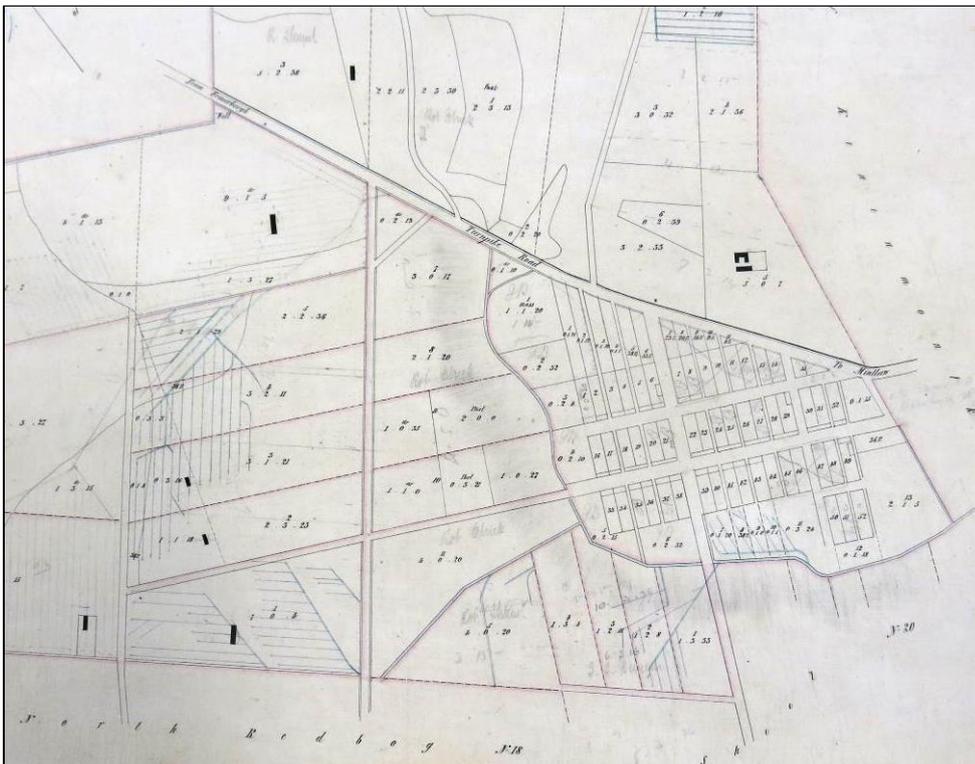
John Sleigh was born at Mains of Auchterellon a short distance from Ellon (Aberdeenshire) in 1826 and died only 15 miles away at Strichen Mains in 1918. He had first lived there in 1836 when his father (Peter Sleigh, 1786-1868) had taken up the post of farm manager. Sleigh went to Aberdeen to learn land surveying and agricultural engineering where he worked initially with Alexander Ogg (1811-65) before completing his apprenticeship with James Forbes Beattie (1804-77) whose business extended throughout the North East. The passing of the Public Money Drainage Act (1846) offered landowners loans to undertake drainage work on their estates and in turn created a significant amount of surveying employment. It seems likely that the Act was the catalyst for a comprehensive survey of Strichen by Sleigh in partnership with John Boulton (1788-1864), who had already surveyed the estate in 1831 (NRS RHP 1136). The book of plans is a typical example of the kind of reconnaissance that took place before

underdraining by contractors. Sleigh was appointed factor in 1858, a post that he held until his death, and Strichen became a classic example of tenant-led agricultural improvement, embracing further drainage and new buildings that was said to favour farm tenants at the expense of crofters occupying the marginal lands.

Contd. on page 8

Left: Excerpt from *Plan XIX Village of New Leeds and Crofts in Book of Plans of Estate of Strichen ...* 1846-49.

Courtesy of Aberdeenshire Libraries.



The tenants honoured him with portraits of himself and his wife by Archibald David Reid (1890) and an illuminated address (1903) that includes a vignette of the village, a reminder that much of the two-storey housing in the main streets also dates from this time. John Sleigh was heavily involved in the community and like estate managers of the period held various public appointments, details of which are listed in his obituary in the *Buchan Observer*, 29 January 1918. He was succeeded in the factorship by his son Charles William (1863-1949) who shared his father's commitment to public service and who was almost certainly responsible for safeguarding the plan books and other estate records in 1925.



Right: Illuminated address to John Sleigh, 13 June 1903. Courtesy of Aberdeenshire Libraries.

Douglas Lockhart

Acknowledgement: Thanks to the staff in Local Studies, Aberdeenshire Library HQ, Oldmeldrum and Strichen Library for their assistance.

Maps Workshops

Would you like to learn more about the National Library of Scotland map collection, and the digitised maps on <http://maps.nls.uk>? The Library runs regular free workshops, which combine an introductory talk with a supported hands-on workshop exploring the maps website.

Discover Maps provides a general introduction to the map collection. This includes a brief history of the Library and highlights the diversity of maps and atlases in the collection. **Discover Maps for Local and Family History** will help you identify the maps and plans that will be most useful for your research. It covers the different types of mapping available, and the information each can provide. Both workshops look at the 200,000 digitised maps on our website, and give tips for how to search, view, compare, overlay and print these maps.

Workshops are offered at Kelvinhall in Glasgow, and at Causewayside or George IV Bridge in Edinburgh. You can find out more, and book a place on a workshop, at www.nls.uk/events

The maps team are also happy to arrange more bespoke workshops and visits to the Maps Reading Room for external groups. If you are interested, please e-mail maps@nls.uk.

Scottish Maps Forum Seminar - 20 April 2018 National Library of Scotland at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow

Constructing the paper landscape: recent research on historical maps of Scotland

This day seminar brings together a set of nine speakers who have all been working on new research or projects relating to historical maps of Scotland. In the morning, the focus will be on the 18th and early 19th centuries, looking particularly at surveyors and the practicalities of their work. How did they earn a living, where did they work, what were the main drivers behind their mapping, and which sources survive today which can shed light on their work? In the afternoon, the focus will shift partly to broader and more general themes, as well as on later 19th and 20th century map-making. These papers will consider the central value of maps in researching urban history and river boundaries, recent doctoral research on Bartholomew and their mapping of Edinburgh, and a look at current web-mapping and geographic technologies in Historic Environment Scotland.

The cost will be £25 for the day, including morning coffee and a buffet lunch. Please book through the flier included with *Cairt*, and available too at: <http://www.nls.uk/collections/maps/subject-info/forum>

