

# CAIRT

Issue 10  
Jan 2007

*Newsletter of the Scottish Maps Forum*

## In this issue:

- **The Edinburgh gibbet**
- **Images for All**
- **An unusual surveying instrument**
- **Map-related talks, exhibitions, publications and website news**

## SCOTTISH MAPS FORUM

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

- ♦ *To stimulate and 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 & 17<sup>th</sup> century Scots for map.

*For further information, or to be added to the mailing list, please contact:*

**Scottish Maps Forum  
Map Library  
National Library of Scotland  
33 Salisbury Place  
Edinburgh  
EH9 1SL**

**Tel: 0131 623 3970  
Fax: 0131 623 3971  
E-mail: [maps@nls.uk](mailto:maps@nls.uk)**



ISSN 1477-4186 © 2007 NLS  
Editor: D. Webster Technical editor: J. Parkerson

## ESTATE PLANS & THE LANDSCAPE OF IMPROVEMENT

**Seminar at Blair Castle, Wednesday 4 April 2007**

The next seminar in the Scottish Maps Forum series explores the theme of the age of improvement and the role of estate plans. Blair Castle offers a most appropriate venue, and a rare opportunity to see several of the estate's splendid collection of plans which will be on display.

Historiographer Royal, Prof. T.C. Smout will start the day, with an insight into '*The improver's mind*'. Christopher Dingwall has volunteered to share his extensive knowledge of garden history in three different guises. Firstly he will give a talk on aspects of the designed landscape, *For beauty, effect and profit: landscapes by design*. During the lunch break he will discuss the estate plans on display and the local improvements. Finally after the seminar, he will be on hand for an optional walk to see the restoration work on the Hercules Garden, with which he has been involved. The morning will round off with a talk by Diana Webster on surveying instruments and methods.

In the afternoon Prof. Bruce Lenman will consider improvements in the Lowlands, particularly clearance of bog lands, and Christopher Fleet reveals his research into the land surveyor James Stobie, who worked for the Duke of Atholl and produced the well-known printed county map of Perthshire. Further information and booking forms are available from the Map Library (see contact details in the panel on the left).



'Atholl House' (or Blair Castle) from James Stobie's map 'The counties of Perth and Clackmannan' 1783.

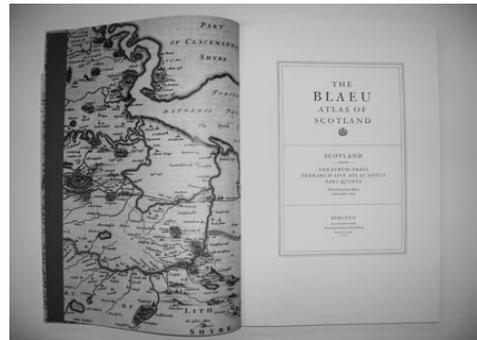
## Blaeu Atlas Launch

On 14 December the National Library held a reception to celebrate the launch of the facsimile of the Blaeu maps of Scotland from the *Atlas Novus* (1654). Published by Birlinn, delays with the Spanish printer made for an anxious few days, but the volumes arrived in the nick of time, and were able to be mailed to subscribers before Christmas.

The volume offers a more permanent record of the first English translation of the text and the maps which are available on NLS's website [www.nls.uk/maps](http://www.nls.uk/maps).

This atlas represents the culmination of Project Pont, initiated in October 1996, and rounds off ten years of cooperation with many scholars and enthusiasts, to make these important maps and texts more accessible.

But particular thanks must go to Ian Cunningham, formerly Keeper of Maps, Manuscripts and Music in NLS, whose retirement years have been enriched – or blighted – by rashly volunteering to translate the Latin text into English.  
(*More information is below & page 8*)



### Military Mapping Collaborative Studentship

Carolyn Anderson began her 3-year Ph.D research studentship in September on *Constructing the Military Landscape: Board of Ordnance Maps and Plans of Scotland c.1707 - c.1815*. This is part of the AHRC-funded 'Landscape & Environment' programme, with research supervised by Edinburgh University Institute of Geography and the NLS Map Library. One of the main initial ongoing tasks is the compilation of a finding list of 18th century military mapping relating to Scotland in the collections of NLS, the British Library, The National Archives, and the Royal Library, Windsor.

### Year Of Highland Culture Exhibition

Over twenty maps as facsimiles, as well as three original military maps, will form part of the *Fonn 's Duthchas (Land and Legacy)* exhibition to commemorate the Year of Highland Culture (2007). Organised collaboratively, with material drawn from the collections of the National Museums of Scotland, the National Galleries of Scotland, and the National Library of Scotland, the exhibition will be in Inverness Museum and Art Gallery (13 Jan-19 Mar); Glasgow Kelvingrove (6 April-10 June); Edinburgh Museum of Scotland (29 June-2 Sept); and Stornoway Museum nan Eilean (20 Sept -14 Dec). A book and a website accompanies the exhibition.

## Comparisons are odious; or, You wait 350 years for a Blaeu atlas and then two come along at once...

*Diana Webster offers a not unbiased comparison of two recent facsimile publications.*

The excitement of National Library of Scotland (NLS) staff, that the maps and newly translated texts relating to Scotland in Blaeu's *Atlas Novus* (1654), were to be published by Birlinn, was tempered by the news earlier this year that Taschen, the well-known art publisher, was also about to publish a UK volume in their series on Blaeu's *Atlas Maior* (1665). Now that both are available, it might be useful to prospective purchasers to highlight some similarities and differences. This is not intended to be a review, as an independent perspective would be needed (an independent review would be welcome).

- **The source of the maps.**

Birlinn's facsimile derives from vol. 5 of the 6-volume 1654 edition of the *Atlas Novus*, often described as the first atlas of Scotland. These maps were scanned from a well-used NLS copy, which has mainly outline colour (ie coloured along boundaries).

Taschen's source is a magnificent, spectacularly coloured, pristine copy of the French edition of the larger 1665 *Atlas Maior*, from the National Library of Austria (sunglasses required!).

The map content in the two Blaeu editions is the same, although the later edition has additional ornamentation, with ships in the sea.

*Continued on page 8.*

## THE EDINBURGH GIBBET



Timothy Pont's map of the Lothians includes an unusual pictogram which has not previously attracted attention, representing the gibbet or gallows on Edinburgh's Burgh Muir. Whereas Pont is normally concerned with carefully graded settlement and economic activity – as if his underlying task had been to map the country's taxable assets – this seems to fall into a different category, because Pont has not annotated it to explain its presence, nor does its shape readily allow its function to be deduced. Instead it seems that it may have been included because it was an unavoidable landmark for travellers on the principal approach to the City.

It appears on Pont's *'New Description of the Shyres Lothian and Linlithquo'*, which may date from near the start of Pont's survey work in the mid-1580s, and which was engraved in Amsterdam by Jodocus Hondius for publication by the Edinburgh book-seller Andrew Hart before 1612 (when Hondius died). It was re-issued by Henricus Hondius for atlases in the 1630s, and a copy appeared in the fifth volume of Joannis Blaeu's *Atlas Novus* in 1654. Not only is this the only Pont map to have been produced in his own lifetime, it is also unusual in being the only one to show roads (presumably a reflection of the earlier sources used).

The Burgh Muir was originally dense forest land granted to Edinburgh in the twelfth century, and it stretched a mile beyond the Burgh Loch (the present Meadows) down to the Pow Burn, and extended from Morningside in the west to the King's Park and Arthur's Seat in the east. It was crossed at its eastern end by the two roads to London and the south shown by Pont – one by Dalkeith and Kelso, and the other by Carlisle.

The gibbet had been a grizzly sight at the bottom of the Dalkeith road until it was replaced by a new and more permanent structure at a highly visible position further north (at the end of the present West Preston Street) in 1586, when the City began feuing off portions of the Burgh Muir. Pont has shown it alongside the enclosed grounds of Grange house. No other illustration of the gibbet is known, but from a contemporary description it comprised two or more stone pillars connected by

cross-beams from which criminals and malefactors were hanged. They were joined by the chained and often dismembered corpses from other city execution sites, so a stone wall was required to keep out scavenging dogs.

This noisome spectacle was dismantled fifty years later in case it should cause offence to Charles I, who would have passed the site on his journey north for his formal entrance to Edinburgh in 1633. The Burgh Muir gibbet – so different from a simple gallows – has clearly been depicted by Pont (and in turn represented by Hondius) from personal observation, and his purpose may have been no more than to record a gruesome but topical signpost for the main road.

**Allen Simpson**



T. Pont: *A new description of the shyres Lothian and Linlithquo*. Jodocus Hondius caelavit sumptibus Andreae Hart. [Amsterdam : H. Hondius, 1630].

### NLS MAPS WEBSITE - URL changes

All URLs\* for the maps within the NLS Digital Library have changed. The main home page <http://www.nls.uk/maps> remains the same, but other addresses within this section have been simplified to remove the "/digitallibrary/map" component. Automatic redirection will remain in place for the foreseeable future to minimise inconvenience. These changes are because of an overall reorganisation and simplification of the NLS website, and to optimise URL lengths and content to improve search engine rankings.

\* URL = Uniform Resource Locator, ie. a website address

## IMAGES FOR ALL

*Meg Hunter describes how this Lottery Funded project will open up access to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society's early map collection*

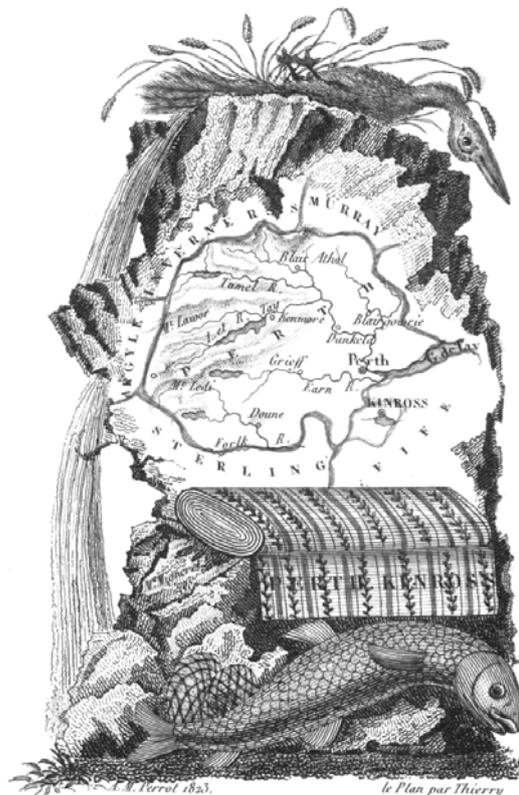
The Heritage Lottery funded 'Images for All project' of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) aims to carry out essential conservation on the Society's collections, improve access to these valuable geographical resources, and will promote the Society's early map collection to a wider audience.

The Society is host to over a thousand early maps and atlases dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Among them are maps by famous cartographers such as: Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598); Gerard Mercator (1512-1594); John Leslie (1527-1596) and Herman Moll (1654-1732). The Society is also home to an original copy of volume 5 of Blaeu's '*Theatrum orbis terrarum; sive atlas novus*' (1654).

Within the early maps holdings is a particularly stunning collection of 300 items gifted to us in 2000 by the widow of the late Perth solicitor, William Cuthbert. William Cuthbert collected not only maps portraying the whole of Scotland, but also maps of a number of the old counties and regions of Scotland, charts of parts of Scotland's coasts, the occasional town plan, and a further motley collection of some 100 maps and charts relating to England, to Europe, and to occasional far-flung geographical parts such as '*the Scots settlement in America called New Caledonia* [i.e. Darien], A.D.1699, a sea chart of Archangel in Northern Russia in 1670, and a chart of the island of Java around 1750. While his collection did not encompass all the known early, printed maps depicting the whole of Scotland, it contains some important, though not unique, items.

In date the collection spans some 400 years. The items, dating from the latter half of the 16th century, extend from a map of Scotland in 1573, drawn in what is today perceived as an unfamiliar and erroneous form, angled at 90° degrees to England and Wales, and produced for the *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, or world atlas of the eminent Flemish mapmaker, Abraham Ortelius, to a 20th century facsimile of an early map of Scotland in 1635, printed around 1971 by the Edinburgh firm of John Bartholomew & Son Ltd.

Close behind Abraham Ortelius' map of Scotland in William Cuthbert's first portfolio was a more correctly portrayed map of Scotland - in terms of its geographical outline and angle - also produced in Antwerp, by Ortelius's close friend and rival, the great mathematician and geographer, Gerard Mercator in 1595.

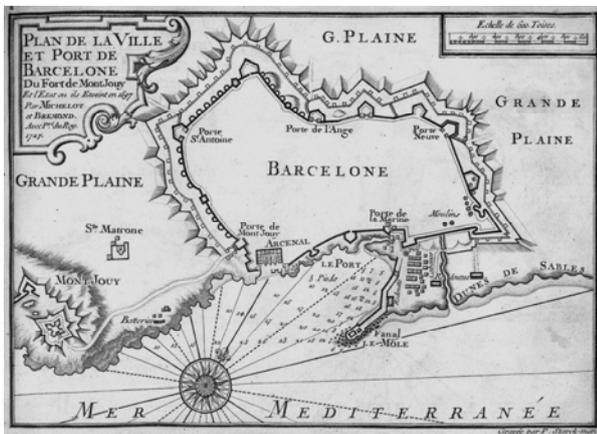


Aristide, Michel Perrot, [Map of Perthshire and Kinross-shire]. 1823. 10 x 6 cm.

Other important maps and charts of Scotland too can be found in Mr Cuthbert's portfolios, produced by French, German, Italian, English as well as Scottish map and chart makers. For example, a superb, hand-coloured sea chart of the east coast of Scotland from near Berwick upon Tweed to Aberdeen, published in the Low Countries by Lucas Jansz. Waghenaer around 1589, contrasts in style with Robert Dudley's Italian-produced chart of the same stretch of coastline published some 70 years later. The same stretch of coast is depicted again on a chart by an Englishman, Captain Greenville Collins, published in 1693 and can be compared with two further charts covering the same area by the Scottish map and chart maker, John Adair, published ten years later in 1703.

Perhaps the finest gem in William Cuthbert's collection is the one closest to him geographically, a large, beautifully wrought, ornamented and detailed plan of his home town of Perth, produced by William MacFarlane in 1792, and finely engraved by James Kirkwood, initially a Perth watch maker before becoming an engraver in Edinburgh.

These items along with the rest of the collections are receiving some much needed attention, involving their re-housing within new metal plan chests, with each map being placed in individual Mylar folders. Cataloguing of the early maps into a new specially designed database system is complete, and will enable listings of the Society's early map collections to be made available on the Web.



Michelot & Bremond. 'Plan de la ville et port de Barcelone...', 17 x 25 cm. in *Recueil de plusieurs plans des ports et rades de la Mer Mediterranee...* 1727.

A significant proportion of the collection is undergoing conservation and cleaning at the Carronvale Bindery in Larbert. This process has been ongoing throughout the project, and a number of tranches have already been received back. The conservation carried out ranges from, enclosing fragile items in specially made boxes, to cleaning, and repairing of bindings and pages. All this work has been carried out with the aim of preserving the original appearance of the item.



J. Rapkin (engr.), 'Perth', 22 x 31 cm., in R.M.Martin. *The Illustrated Atlas...* London: John Tallis & Co., 1851.

The Society's copy of the multi-sheet 'Cary's improved map of England and Wales with a considerable part of Scotland', of 1832, has responded particularly well to cleaning and the results are astounding. The southern sheets of the map, which were blackened from years of grime, have been restored to former glory.

The Society also holds a large collection of more modern items dating from the nineteenth century to the present day, providing coverage of Scotland and the wider world on various scales. The Society has a good collection of Ordnance Survey and John Bartholomew maps as well as a large number of other maps and town plans, including early tourist, motoring, cycling and walking maps, all of which are to be catalogued into the new database system which will be made accessible to the public through the project website. A major aim of the project is to raise the profile of the Society's collections. As part of this, 'Images for All' contributed two talks to the Spring season of seminars at the Senior Studies Institute at the University of Strathclyde, where Margaret Wilkes, Secretary of the Project Management Group for 'Images for All', gave a talk on the use of early maps for the study of local history, during which, students were given the opportunity to examine original early maps at close range.

There is also an 'Images for All' mini exhibition, which will be touring the RSGS centres throughout the 2006-07 season of talks. The dates when the exhibition will be appearing at each centre may be found on the project website.

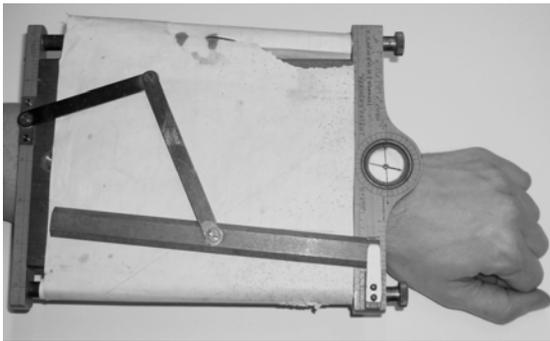
It is hoped, that after the completion of the project, the work carried out will facilitate greater physical access to the collections, which is temporarily restricted while the work of the project is carried out, however, a major goal is to place a complete listing of the Society's geographical collections on the Web, with a gallery of digital images of collection 'gems'. This will help to strike the delicate balance of allowing greater access to those both in Scotland and abroad whilst reducing the risk of damage to delicate valuable items by ensuring minimal handling.

Images for All website:  
<http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/rsgs/ifa/>

Email:  
[rsgs-imagesforall@strath.ac.uk](mailto:rsgs-imagesforall@strath.ac.uk)

## AN UNUSUAL SURVEYING INSTRUMENT

In 1992 the grand-daughter of Major General Ewen George Sinclair-Maclagan (1868-1948) deposited a small surveying instrument in the Map Library of the National Library of Scotland. Recently she donated her grandfather's papers and other memorabilia to the National Museums of Scotland and, following her request, the instrument, sometimes described as a continuous plane table or a surveyor's sketching board, has now been transferred to join the related items in NMS.



*The sketching board was strapped to the wrist of the bridle hand, for taking traverses from horseback, while holding the reins. A paper strip was rolled on spindles across the table, with a ruler for drawing lines and taking sights. A magnetic compass was built in.*

Sinclair-Maclagan was born in Edinburgh and was commissioned in the Border Regiment in 1889. In his early career he saw service in India and South Africa, before serving for many years with the Australian armed forces, including a leading role at Gallipoli. According to information from the family, the instrument is likely to have been used in the Boer War. This also corresponds with the dates suggested by the maker's name 'Elliot Bros London' which is embossed on the rear, and is known to have been in use between 1853 and 1916. It is also stamped Verner's Patent No 2787: Captain Willoughby Verner of the Rifle Brigade modified the instrument with patents registered in 1887 and 1891.

The cavalry sketching board was devised around 1880 by Colonel W H Richards, a topographical instructor at the Royal Military College, and the

design was used for over forty years. According to his text book it was *'intended to simplify the performance of rapid sketches on active service, a high degree of accuracy not being necessary... The board is constructed to contain a strip of drawing paper, about 7 inches wide and 2 or 3 feet long... To draw the direction of the road, or of any object –*

*1<sup>st</sup>. Turn the horse exactly in the direction of the object.*

*2<sup>nd</sup>. Revolve the board on the wrist until the meridian line corresponds with the [compass] needle...*

*3<sup>rd</sup>. By moving the arm to the right or left, bring the point from which the line is to be drawn on the sketch opposite the centre of the body. Now turn the ruler in the required direction, its edge corresponding with the point and draw the line...*

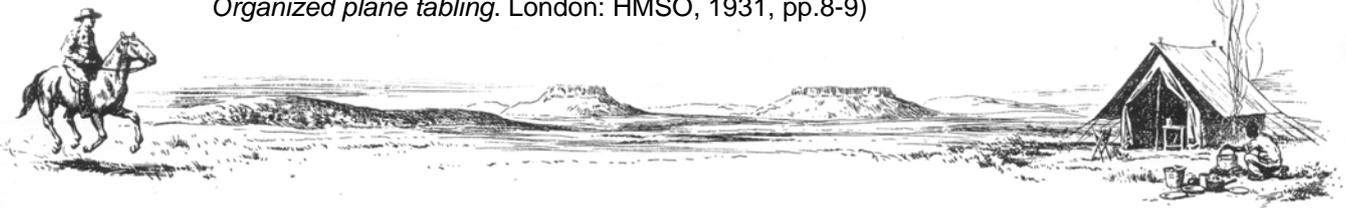
*After a little practice the whole operation may be accomplished in about 15 seconds, correct within 2°. A horse will generally stand still long enough to permit the direction to be drawn... Horses soon learn that they are meant to stand steady for a few seconds... but being generally fidgetty in company, they will do best when alone...' The scale was calculated by counting horse's paces.*

There is no doubt that practice was required: it is not surprising that the 'damnable cavalry sketching board' was not universally popular, yet it continued in use until the early 1930s with various modifications by different manufacturers.

In World War I the sketching board appears to have found a new use. In his recent publication *Mapping the world* Ralph Ehrenberg, formerly of the Library of Congress, illustrates an almost identical instrument. Described as a *'flying map with chart-holder'* it was used by early solo aviators to strap air charts to their arm or leg for navigation. Charts were specially mounted in strips to fit the rollers. The main difference between the sketching board and the chart holder is that the ruler has been removed. It seems likely that the first aviators, some of whom started their careers in the cavalry, adapted the sketching board for this new purpose.

**Diana Webster**

*Although thirty years later, this African scene cannot be far removed from that familiar to Boer War surveyors. (Ordnance Survey Training Series, 1. Organized plane tabling. London: HMSO, 1931, pp.8-9)*



## Sources

Ralph Ehrenberg. *Mapping the world: an illustrated history of cartography* (Washington DC: National Geographic, 2006), pp.194-5.

Insley, Jane. 'The damnable cavalry sketching board', pp 161-170, in *The Victorian Soldier: studies in the history of the British army 1816-1914* (ed. Marion Harding). London, 1993.

Richards, William Hamilton. *Text book of military topography*. London, 1888. pp 159-160.

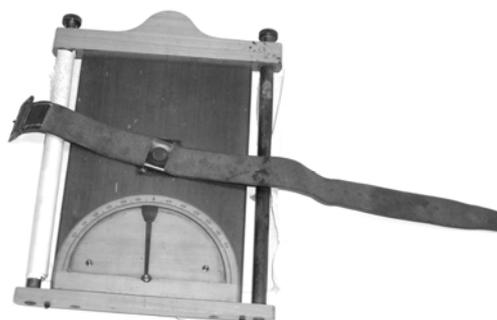
Verner, William Willoughby Cole. *Rapid field-sketching and reconnaissance*. London, 1889.

Biographical information from:

[http://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/~rmallett/Generals/inclair\\_maclagan.html](http://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/~rmallett/Generals/inclair_maclagan.html)

*Australian National Biography*:

<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110633b.htm>



On the reverse is an inclinometer to measure angles of height.

This example lacks its leather case.

With thanks to staff at the National War Museum of Scotland for information supplied.

## PUBLICATIONS

A D C Simpson, 'Timothy Pont's Sixteenth-Century Survey of Scotland: a Case for His Use of Surveying Instruments', *Bulletin of the Scientific Instrument Society*, No. 88 (2006), pp. 10-16 (in a special issue celebrating Prof Gerard Turner's 80th birthday).

C Fleet. "Locating Trees in the Caledonian forest": a critical assessment of methods for presenting series mapping over the web'. ([www.e-Perimtron.org](http://www.e-Perimtron.org), 1(2), Spring 2006, 99-112).

physical landscape. Ian Cunningham's translation of the Blaeu Atlas made this available in English for the first time in 2004, and provided the basis for this attractive and useful publication.

James Irvine, retired from the shipping industry in 2000, has been a lifelong student of Orcadian history, and as well as several articles on the Islands, has also published two books: *The Orkney Poll Taxes of the 1690s* (2003) and *Trace Your Orkney Ancestors* (2004). With his local knowledge and thorough research on the texts and maps, this publication makes a valuable addition to our knowledge of this subject.

## REVIEW

**Blaeu's Orkneys and Schetland**, ed. by James M. Irvine. (Ashtead, Surrey: James M. Irvine, 2006).

ISBN 0954457129.

£14.95 + postage.

(Available from the author at: 11 Agates Lane, Ashtead, Surrey, KT21 2NG.

[james.irvine@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:james.irvine@ukonline.co.uk))



One of the finest regional descriptions published in the Blaeu Atlas of Scotland (1654) was the *New Chorographic Description of the Orkneys*. Along with its perceptive observations on rural life, health and customs, it also provides informative contemporary descriptions of the human and

First, the provenance and authorship of Blaeu's chorographies for Orkney and Shetland are thoroughly investigated, and a convincing case is made for Walter Stewart, Minister of South Ronaldsay, being the author of the *New Descriptions*.

Second, the descriptions themselves are reproduced and their content explained in a local context with helpful annotated notes. And finally, the history of the Blaeu maps of Orkney and Shetland, from Timothy Pont's original survey in 1592, to the engraved maps by Hondius and Blaeu's copy of this are helpfully explained, along with attractive clear colour reproductions of all of the maps.

The result is an enhancement and celebration of the original chorographies, of value both in a local context and to the general history of Scottish cartography and geographical description.

**Chris Fleet**

Cont. from page 2 **COMPARISONS ARE ODIOUS**

- **Coverage**

Taschen's two volumes cover the whole of the British Isles, with England and Wales in vol. 1 and Scotland, with Ireland, in vol. 2 (113 maps).

Birlinn's volume includes maps of Scotland only (49 maps on 48 plates).

- **Paper & presentation**

Birlinn's paper quality is higher than Taschen's. Both facsimiles are boxed.

- **Quality and legibility of reproduction.**

Both facsimiles are reduced in size from the original edition, but the Birlinn volume has a slightly larger format (closed volume 46 x 30 cm; map inside neatline 39 x 49cm) than the Taschen (volume 39 x 26 cm; map 34 x 45 cm).

- **Plates**

Birlinn's plates are the same size throughout, and all maps are legible. Taschen's volume displays maps at different sizes, some as a double-page spread (these are legible), some half page (these are not legible), some with hugely enlarged details, which appear to have been selected by a designer more for visual impact, than for historical or geographical significance.

- **Text**

Birlinn's facsimile provides the entire text of the first full translation into English from the Latin text. 126 pages of text are all together.

Taschen offers highlights of one or two sentences for each area, translated from the French edition; these are available in English, French and German, scattered throughout.

- **Navigation & ease of use**

Birlinn's edition includes a contents list and a useful graphic index or diagrammatic key (a map of Scotland showing the sheet lines and numbers). Indexes of personal names, subjects and placenames mentioned in the text are at the

end (this is not a gazetteer of placenames on the maps). Each map has a short title in Latin & English in the lower margin.

Taschen's volume is less easy to use, with only a brief index to area names derived from the map titles. There is a short Latin title in the upper margins of the full maps, but it is sometimes difficult to identify the source of the enlarged details. Also the full captions relating to the maps are often several pages removed from the maps and may be hard to find.

- **Ancillary information.**

Taschen's volume one (Anglia) contains a most useful introductory article on the history of the production of the Blaeu *Atlas Maior*. (This is also in the first volume of the series). The Birlinn volume has a Scottish focus, with an introductory essay by Charles Withers, a foreword by T.C. Smout. In addition, translations of the surviving Blaeu-Scot correspondence held in NLS are provided.

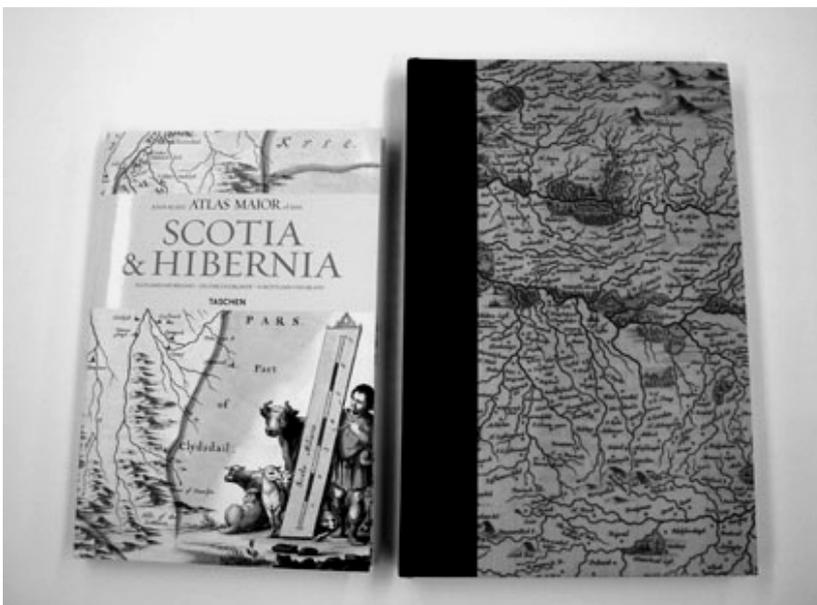
So what is the choice?

If you want to enjoy the maps as a visual feast, do not need all of them to be legible, and do not wish to read the full text, then Taschen offers quite remarkable value at around £30-£40, especially as it includes the whole UK.

For a definitive source for Scottish historical research, choose the Birlinn volume, although more expensive at £80-£100.

And if you already have the Studio edition (*Illustrated Maps of Scotland from Blaeu's Atlas Novus of the 17<sup>th</sup> century*) with commentary by Jeffrey Stone, published in 1991, both the new facsimiles offer larger, more legible, images. My home bookshelves now have all three; time will tell which becomes most worn through use.

Diana Webster



Far left:

*Joan Blaeu Atlas Maior of 1665. Vol. 1 Anglia; Vol. 2 Scotia & Hibernia.*

Hong Kong & London: Taschen, 2006. ISBN10-3-8228-5104-3.

Left:

*The Blaeu atlas of Scotland: Scotland from Theatrum orbis terrarum, sive atlas novus pars quinta.*

Edinburgh: Birlinn in association with the National Library of Scotland, 2006. ISBN 10-1-84158-585-8.