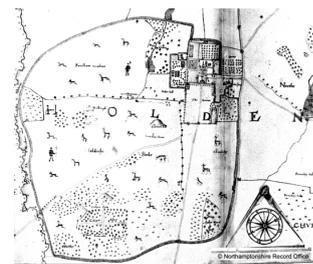


MAPS

The usefulness of maps to the family and local historian should not be overlooked. They can help us try to visualise what the parish looked like at various times, the changes to it, perhaps a canal or railway coming through and bisecting the village as at Stoke Bruerne or how the parishes were linked to each other through a network of lanes and footways. In the larger towns and cities, we can look for the addresses and then search for the nearest churches, chapels and schools to see where our ancestors may have worshipped or been educated.



Northamptonshire Archives has a vast collection of maps, many of which can be found on their online catalogue at <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/northamptonshire-archives-service>

To get the most from a map you often need to think about why it was made, who it was made for and what they were trying to ascertain or show.

You can use a map in conjunction with a census to try and locate whereabouts your ancestors lived, or look at a series of maps to see how a village has changed over time. Where were the nearest market towns, how did they travel from one parish to another – what were roads in their time may now only remain in the landscape as public footways. Did the village layout change due to enclosure? Were there quarries or ironstone workings nearby or forested areas where your ancestors may have been employed? What other clues can you find?

Listed below are some of the more common types of maps held at Northamptonshire Archives

Ordnance Survey: The origins lie in the aftermath of the Jacobite rising when the army realised it did not have good maps of the Scottish Highlands. Further work began in 1790 when the Board of Ordnance began a national military survey of England. There are various series and scales available. Historic OS maps can be viewed online at maps.nls.uk/os/6inch-england-and-wales/ and covers the periods from 1840s to 1950s. The Archives also has a detailed collection.

Tithe maps: These complement the tithe awards and most date from around the 1840s. Generally, they will only show in more detail the titheable land in a parish.

Enclosure maps: These form part of the Award when the parish was enclosed and changed from open field farming. They are very detailed and usually show old and new enclosures, any new roadways, footpaths, properties and farms. Use in conjunction with the written Award to find out details of landowners, freeholders and any allotments of land granted to them.

Public Works: There exists a whole plethora of maps for railways, canals, river navigation and turnpike roads. These are to be found within the Quarter Session records as legislation stated that all new Bills for these works must be examined by a Committee. These maps also include plans for bridges, aqueducts, embankments and so on. Plans with the Act of Parliament needed for the work are held by the House of Lords Record Office. Northamptonshire Archives has a catalogue listing all the plans within the QS records (includes those for the Soke of Peterborough).

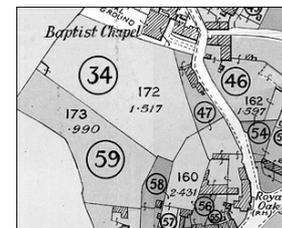
River Nene Navigation: As above – Northamptonshire Archives has a large collection of map relating to the River Nene and the draining of the Fenlands.

Estate maps: Such a valuable source! Within the Estate collections at NRO are a huge number of both parish and estate maps which include all the houses and farms and are often linked to a detailed survey showing the tenants and the land they occupied. Thus you may be able to locate the exact property where your ancestors lived!

The example, right, from the 1727 map for the Duke of Grafton, shows the centre of Roade with all the cottages – beautifully drawn and accurate even down to the number of chimneys and windows, many of which are still easily identifiable today.



Sale catalogues: These often include a location map for a property or where a whole estate is being sold (for example Duke of Grafton sales in 1913 and 1920); then there are maps showing the different Lots for sale, which also include the tenants and rent paid along with a description of the property. The image left shows a section for Blisworth near the Royal Oak pub.



Field Name maps: These can be useful for pinpointing particular fields or holdings within a parish.

Factories and other Works: Perhaps your ancestor worked within the shoe or brewery trade within one of the towns – if so, you may be lucky to find maps or plans of the buildings where they worked. An example is the front elevation and section plans for the 'New Brewery' (Phipps) at Northampton (ZA2339 from 1880).

A few more other examples taken at random from the NRO catalogue are:

P/2526 – photographs of a map showing the sw prospect of Northampton 1731

ZB1124/5 – a map of Collingtree showing the location of the line of bombs dropped 9 April 1941

ZA2690 – A list of people living in cottages in Barnwell 24 May 1904.

FH272/6 – a plan of Holdenby House and grounds (see below) – look carefully and you will see the deer and the keepers in the deer park as well as the formal gardens around the house.

National Archives

TNA, as to be expected, has a vast collection of maps, many of which relate to crown lands, parish boundaries, enclosure awards and other surveys. Of use for the 1940s are the maps which accompanied the National Farm Survey taken during the war. The 1910 Valuation Office Survey (see TNA guide for more information) has detailed parish maps which link to a survey that details each property including owner/tenant. For those studying WW1 then Trench maps are invaluable as are the smaller maps within the War Diaries. Search for these use Discovery – their online catalogue.

British Library

As the legal deposit office then the BL has many printed maps and other manuscripts – see the online catalogue. These include early road maps for motorists, cyclists and walkers as well as guides.

This article has only given a brief overview of the usefulness of maps for both the family and local historian. So why not get searching and see what you can find! Or just enjoy maps for works of art that they are and admire the skill of the surveyor and cartographer.