

Devon Record Office Tithe Map Project Volunteer Apportionment Transcription



The Devon Record Office is looking for
Volunteers

across Devon to transcribe the tithe map
apportionments for each parish.

These, with the associated maps, will provide important
information about properties and the landscape
in mid-19th century Devon.

For Details & Information Sheet

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Tithe Map and Apportionment Digitization

The tithe was an annual payment of an agreed proportion (originally one-tenth) of the yearly produce of the land, which was payable by parishioners to the parish church, to support it and its clergyman. Originally tithes were paid 'in kind' (wool, milk, honey, fish, barley etc). By 1836 tithes were still payable in most of the parishes in England and Wales, but the Government had decided on the commutation of tithes—in other words, the substitution of money payments for payment 'in kind' all over the country—and the Tithe Commutation Act was passed in 1836.

A survey of the whole of England and Wales was undertaken in the decade or so after 1836, to establish boundaries of land, acreage of fields, and states of cultivation, and parish or district tithe maps showing all plots subject to tithe were produced. When an overall value for the tithe in a parish or district had been determined, the tithe rent-charge had to be apportioned fairly among the lands of differing quality and various uses in the parish, and for this purpose a tithe apportionment linked to the map was drawn up.

The process of creating high-resolution digital copies of Devon's tithe maps began with the East Devon Parishscapes project in 2008, and by the end of 2009 all 510 maps held at the Devon Record Office (plus a few duplicates and extras) had been scanned. The DRO also purchased from the National Archives greyscale digital copies of the 472 tithe apportionments. It is planned to publish the digitized maps and apportionments on the Internet in 2011, so that they can be viewed without visiting a record office. A second stage in the process will involve 'stretching' the maps over a modern map, so that they can form a layer in a Geographical Information System and be used to demonstrate changes in the landscape over time. The third and final stage will link the apportionment details to each field on the map, thus making information about ownership, occupancy, acreage, and state of cultivation instantly accessible.

For this final stage the apportionment information needs to be transferred to a spreadsheet in a standard format, and this can only be done by reading the original document, or an image of it, and keying in the separate pieces of data to a computer. This was accomplished very successfully by volunteers for a large part of East Devon during the Parishscapes project, and groups elsewhere in the county have produced transcriptions or are in the process of doing so. The challenge now is to extend transcription to cover the whole of Devon, and for this more volunteers are needed. The DRO can supply copies of apportionments on CDs (and they will soon be available online), along with detailed instructions for transcription. The documents themselves are generally written in a clear hand and are not difficult to read. Local knowledge of place and personal names is useful, though not essential.