

Tithe Maps and Apportionments

Background

A tithe or one tenth of the yearly profits from farming was an ancient payment to the Church and originally was paid 'in kind' with crops, livestock or other produce. Tithe barns were built to store the produce handed over. From the 17th century it became increasingly common for landowners in an individual parish to pay an agreed sum or 'modus' in cash. These private arrangements continued into the early 19th century, so some parishes don't have a formal tithe map and apportionment. The whole system was rationalised by the Tithe Commutation Act, 1836 and all remaining tithe payments in kind were converted or 'commuted' to cash.

Under the terms of the Act new parish maps and apportionments were drawn up to establish who owned or occupied the land, its value and the tithes payable. Copies were sent to the Diocese, the individual parish and the Tithe Commission Office in London, now held in the National Archives; sometimes copies were made for local landowners. For this reason, there is often more than one copy of the same map. Although they should be same, there may be slight differences, e.g. in colour or scale.

What information do they contain?

Tithe maps vary in size, scale and accuracy. The maps generally cover the whole parish and individual fields or plots of land, are numbered. Roads, rivers and other major landmarks are shown; sometimes the name of the field is given. The numbers on the maps refer to information in the apportionments. These list the name of the landowner, the occupier, the land use and value, and how much was to be paid in tithes. The apportionments are arranged alphabetically by the name of the landowner.

Tithe maps are often one of the earliest detailed maps of an area. They can be used with other maps to track changes in the landscape and land ownership over time, establish when houses were built and chart the development of towns and villages. Tithe apportionments can tell you where your ancestors lived, the land they owned or occupied and how they used it.

How to find and access them

The tithe maps (but not the apportionments) have been digitised by the Know Your Place West of England digital mapping project. They can be viewed via the KYP Gloucestershire (<https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp/?edition=glos>) and South Gloucestershire (<https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp/?edition=southglos>) webpages, where they can be compared with other historic maps for the same area. The tithe apportionments are best accessed by using the tithe apportionment database on our website. You can search the database by name (of landowner or occupier) or by place (parish, hamlet, plot name, plot number). The database is available at: <https://ww3.gloucestershire.gov.uk/GROTithe/TitheSearch.aspx>

Find out more

See the National Archives' research guide, available at:
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/tithes/>

Research Guide: Tithe Maps

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