



What's Beneath Your Feet?

How to Read an Inclosure Map

What is an inclosure map?

An inclosure map forms part of an inclosure *award*, the official document for the inclosure of an area. An inclosure award is a large, lengthy document that goes into huge detail about land ownership. The map is a pictorial representation of what is written in the award. For school purposes it is not necessary to use the award, as the map provides sufficient information for a class project on inclosure.

An inclosure map shows what an area looked like after inclosure. It is an image of the reorganised open fields, common land and wastes. It highlights who owns what and where. It indicates where the new boundaries are, where the hedges and walls were built. New roads were often built as a result of inclosure and therefore these will also be marked. The map does not show what the area looked like before inclosure.

Inclosure maps were produced by surveyors, who had been officially appointed to measure the area and record it by commissioners. Commissioners were appointed by Parliament.

It is important to remember that not every inclosure award has a map. In the early days of inclosure much of the information on the map was contained in the award. It was not until the late eighteenth century that inclosure awards have a map as standard.

Was there a standard format for inclosure maps?

There was no standard for inclosure maps; they could be in any size or shape. The surveyor responsible for making a particular map would have had his own methods and style, which could have been different from the surveyor in the next village. Scales can differ map to map and are not always given. Sizes for maps in Gloucestershire vary from the smallest scale of 8 inches to 1 mile (20 cm equals 1.6km) up to the largest scale at 80 inches to 1 mile (203cm equals 1.6km). A few sections on some maps are drawn at a very large scale of 1 inch to 1-chain (2.54cm equals 20m). All inclosure maps are hand drawn and many of them are hand coloured.

Map orientation

'North' is not always at the top of the inclosure map as is the convention today. The surveyors who created the inclosure maps often drew them to look good, as well as to be an accurate record of the award. If this artistic element meant that the map looked better orientated with 'North' to the left then this is how it would be drawn. Most maps have a 'compass rose' on them somewhere to indicate the direction of 'North'.



Woolaston inclosure Map P, 1815.



What features can I expect to see on an inclosure map?

Remember that all inclosure maps are different. However there are common features that you can look out for. The first thing you will notice when you look at an inclosure map is that the land is divided up into lots of different pieces. These are the individual plots of land that were created from the open fields.

Names

The names of individuals who owned each plot of land were often written on the map. The name could be written in large letters or in a small, often abbreviated script, depending on the size of the plot/s. The Lord of the Manor's name will dominate an inclosure map, as he was the principal landowner.

Numbers

It was typical for every portion of land on the map to have its own number. This number would be reproduced in the written award. The award would give details about who owned the portion of land and any other important associated information. Sometimes a map contains a reference table with the numbers and the corresponding owners of the land.

Roads

Roads will be depicted on the map; these are often drawn in a thicker line than the lines used to indicate the plots of land. If you are looking at a coloured map, it is likely that all the roads on the map will have been illustrated in the same colour.

When inclosure happened in an area, new roads were often created and old roads were often realigned. Some old roads and tracks were no longer used. This is sometimes indicated on an inclosure map, for example by the phrase, '*stopped up*' can be written on the disused road.

Buildings

Buildings are often illustrated on the map, including houses and cottages. They are often represented by the actual shape of the structure, for example an L-shape or a rectangle. The colour sometimes distinguished how the building was made. Red, for example, often meant the building was built of stone (or brick) while black was a timber building.

Significant buildings often have the name written next to them, for example *Possession House* on Woolaston Map P.

Churches might be shown on the map, for example on Woolaston Map P the churches of Woolston and Alvington are indicated by the words, *W. Chur.* and *Alv Ch.* Industrial buildings are also sometimes shown.



Natural features

Sometimes natural features are shown on the map, for example on Woolaston Map P, wooded areas have been indicated by individual drawings of trees. The trees make an interesting comparison how buildings have been drawn on the map. The trees are illustrated in the style of a picture, while the buildings are a symbol, shown as if seen from above. This combination of different styles is typical of maps during this period.

Areas

Different areas in the village, town or city might be written on the inclosure map, for example *Platts* and *Neverend* on Woolaston Map P. Similarly the direction of roads might be indicated, as on Woolaston Map P: *To Monmouth*; *To Gloucester* and *To Colford* (sic).

Parish boundaries can also be shown on the map, for example *Parish of Alvington* is written in a large, snaking script, on Woolaston Map P, showing where the line between Woolaston and Alvington lies.

When looking at an inclosure map for the first time:

- Take time to just look – become used to the way things are drawn and written; become familiar with the writing which can often be hard to decipher at first
- Locate places that are familiar to you – is there a road marked to a place you know, for example the road to Gloucester or Cheltenham?
- Can you find which way the map is orientated, i.e. where is 'North'?
- Can you find any buildings or natural features?
- Have any roads been 'stopped up'?
- How many names are written on the map?
- Do any names appear more than once?
- Is anything spelt differently to the way you would spell today? Places were often spelt differently in the 18th and early nineteenth century as people were less concerned about consistency and tended to spell according to the sound of the word
- What has changed since the inclosure map was made?
- Find something you think is interesting