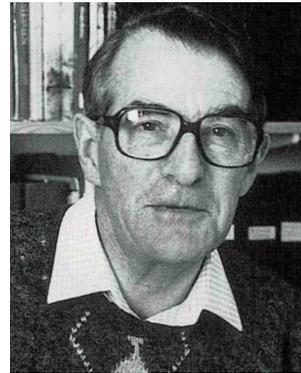


## John Harwood Andrews, 1927-2019

John Harwood Andrews, who died at the age of 92 on 15 November 2019, made a major contribution to the development of Irish geographical studies over almost seven decades. For thirty-six years a member of the staff of the Department of Geography at Trinity College Dublin, John Andrews was both an inspiring teacher and a much respected, insightful researcher with especially significant publications on Irish map history and in the broader field of Irish historical geography. He was a past president of the Geographical Society of Ireland, and, among many other involvements, had a crucial role in the 1970s Atlas of Ireland project and in the later Irish Historic Towns Atlas.



John Andrews was born in Streatham, south London, on May 27, 1927. His father was a chartered accountant, his mother was a teacher. When he was aged five, his mother died. Following a period at boarding school and the remarriage of his father, John's family moved to the developing suburb of Sanderstead near the south London centre of Croydon. John subsequently attended several schools in the Croydon area before matriculating from London University at the age of fifteen and subsequently entering Cambridge University in 1944 to take the three-year undergraduate course in Geography. In John's own testimony, his interest in geography was stimulated partly by the opportunities for independent study afforded by Geography as offered in his school, and partly by the scenery of the nearby North Downs.

In his final year at Cambridge (1947), John had the distinction of winning the Royal Geographical Society undergraduate essay prize for a submission on the theme of 'the arrangement and distribution of rural habitations'. The next seven years were absorbed by two years of national service with the British army ('where I was never required to read a map'), followed by more than four years of school-teaching at secondary modern level. During the latter phase, between 1949 and 1954, John was also registered as a part-time London Ph. D student working on the theme of the maritime trade of Kent and Sussex ports, 1650-1750. This latter activity introduced John to record offices, in particular the British Museum library and the Public Record Office in London.

In 1954 John was appointed a junior lecturer in Geography at Trinity College Dublin. He became the third member of the departmental teaching staff, his colleagues being the head, Joe Haughton, and the recently arrived Gordon Davies (later Gordon Herries Davies). In this small department, John had to be versatile, with an early teaching

portfolio that on occasion stretched to lectures and even courses on such diverse topics as China, economic geography, geomorphology and climatology. As he later related, the task of developing an Irish component to his course on historical geography was not made any easier by the absence of much relevant literature.

*for an English historian in Ireland the sheer physical reality ... of maps was a welcome antidote to the impenetrable obscurities of Gaelic culture and society.... for me, these paper artifacts played the same comforting role as did three-dimensional objects of material culture, one suspects, in the work of the famous Belfast geographer E. Estyn Evans. (John Andrews, 'My Life in Map History').<sup>1</sup>*

During the late 1950s, John explored several themes as he sought to find Irish research topics that he could pursue. Livestock statistics, historical aspects of ports trade, the iron industry, the Irish border, and the potential of the seventeenth century Down Survey as an indicator for contemporary socio-economic statistics were among the topics he investigated during this period.

A defining episode for John's future research work came in 1961 with the exhibition 'Ireland in Maps'. Organised by the Geographical Society of Ireland in association with the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, this event was held in the Long Room of Trinity College Library and ran for seven months. John had a central role in the exhibition, authoring a 36-page booklet that combined a commentary on the development of Irish maps with a catalogue of the 121 exhibits. The exhibition was when, as John put it, his 'life in map history' really began. It introduced him particularly to the resources of both the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and the National Library of Ireland. Contact with officials at the Survey led to John being given a free hand to sift through the Survey's remarkable records, dating back to 1824, which were then located at the Phoenix Park. He was to become a familiar figure at Mountjoy House, the Survey's headquarters, over the next decade. A future head of the Survey, Richard Kirwan, then only recently recruited, recalled later how he

*... often met this pale-faced man with thick-rimmed glasses emerging from the manuscript stores or ascending the stairs from the rat-friendly basement of Mountjoy House. I was told he was a researcher, but nobody seemed to take any notice of him. He was a serious man, engrossed in his work, who always seemed to be mentally juggling with some complicated puzzle or mining the depths of his mind for some lost scraps of information. John spent every minute of his available time searching the records in Ordnance Survey, the Royal Irish Academy, the National Archives and elsewhere, seeking information to piece together the story of map-making in Ireland ... (If Maps could speak, 2010, pp. 19-20)*

The original publications stemming from this long episode of primary research included two books: a 64-page guide booklet, *History in the Ordnance Map: an introduction for Irish readers* (1974, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1993), and a wide-ranging organisational history, *A paper landscape: the Ordnance Survey in nineteenth century Ireland* (1975, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2002). Other material included two chapters for a more general history of the Ordnance Survey in Britain and Ireland (1980), and a much-respected article in *Irish Geography* (1973): 'Medium and message in early six-inch Irish Ordnance Survey maps: the case of Dublin city' The latter consisted of a painstaking review of the twenty or more versions

of the Co. Dublin Sheet 18 (central Dublin) area that were produced by the Ordnance Survey between 1838 and 1897. Here was an early expression of John's interest in town plans.

Although unknown to Richard Kirwan, John's energies in the 'post-exhibition' era were by no means exclusively devoted to his Ordnance Survey research. Earlier periods, and other sources of map records, also commanded his attention. One line of enquiry focussed on some of the earliest maps of Ireland made directly from first-hand field knowledge, namely the 1567-71 surveys of southern and central Ireland undertaken, at the request of the authorities in London, by the English engineer and surveyor, Robert Lythe. John was probably the first to appreciate Lythe's significance for understanding the late sixteenth century maps of Ireland. Following a conference paper in 1964, he published an article on Lythe in *Imago Mundi* (the international journal for the history of cartography) in 1965 and followed this with contributions on Lythe in *Analecta Hibernica* (1967) and in *Long Room* (the journal of the Trinity library) in 1970. In the latter he explained how the map of Ireland created by Lythe can be seen closely replicated over twenty years later in the printed maps published by, among others, Mercator, Boazio and Speed. Lythe and other Elizabethan-era mapmakers continued to interest him for the rest of his life. It was a disappointment to him that their role in clarifying the map of Ireland has yet to be fully appreciated by many historians.

An interest in late sixteenth century maps meant that John would explore record repositories in England as well as in Ireland, among them some he had first explored during his Ph.D years. Lythe's maps were all in England, in London and at Petworth House in west Sussex. Work by another later mapmaker who was influential in shaping the map of Ireland, General Charles Vallancey (ca. 1726-1812, also a celebrated antiquarian and a founding member of the Royal Irish Academy), was to be found in both England and Ireland. While researching at the Ordnance Survey, John was to see the great 'Royal' map of Ireland, that Vallancey made about 1785, which was in 1961 transferred from the Royal Engineers archives to the custody of the Survey in the Phoenix Park. This vast map (almost three metres high when fully open and now in the National Archives of Ireland) became the focus for another of John's 1960s studies and was, like Lythe's work, further reviewed thirty years later in his seminal *Shapes of Ireland* (1997). Once again, as with Lythe, John was the first to really position Vallancey in relation to the history of Irish cartography.

Yet another area of enquiry centred especially on, but was not confined to, the map resources of the National Library of Ireland. The remarkable collection of roads maps, most notably those made for the mail coach roads of the early nineteenth century, provided the basis for 'Road planning in Ireland before the Railway Age', published in *Irish Geography* in 1964. A year later, John focused on the rich trove of estate and farm maps, most of them dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which are one of the great strengths of the library. His 1965 presidential address to the Geographical Society of Ireland, on the theme 'The farmer's maps: three centuries of Irish estate surveying', offered an initial synthesis of John's first forays in the world of Irish estate maps. Those sallies had also involved him in a remarkable purchase. Eight volumes of

elaborately coloured estate maps that had been compiled for the earl of Kildare between 1755 and 1760 were auctioned in London in November 1963 and subsequently offered for sale by a London bookseller. These were the work of John Rocque (ca. 1705-1762), a celebrated maker and publisher of city and county maps, a cartographer with a European reputation. Dismayed that no repository in Ireland was showing interest in acquiring such significant material, John bought one of the volumes for the then not inconsiderable sum of £100. Many years later he donated it to Trinity library. More immediately, however, Rocque's Kildare estate maps became a central element in a more general survey of Irish estate maps. John's article on 'The French school of Dublin land surveyors' was published in *Irish Geography* in 1967.

The National Library of Ireland was, like another of John's academic research points, the Royal Irish Academy, more or less directly on his walking route from his home in Leeson Park to his office in Trinity College. It could be easily visited, and John became a familiar sight in both the main reading room and the manuscripts room over several decades. Here he worked through much of the library's estate map collection and also combed the great assemblage of early Irish newspapers for references to maps and to land surveyors. The year after his official retirement (an event that had little impact on his publications output), in *Irish Geography*, 1991, 'The Longfield maps in the National Library of Ireland: an agenda for research' provided a review of the collection of working copies of maps and other documents which had been given to the Library in 1908 but which had subsequently received little attention from scholars.

John's intensive trawl of the NLI estate maps was further stimulated by his commitment to a collaborative project to develop a directory of land surveyors and local mapmakers operating in Britain and Ireland between 1530 and 1850. John was the chief Irish contributor to this ambitious project, which ran from the 1960s to 1997. Large numbers of local practitioners, many of whom might otherwise be largely unrecorded, were identified during this work, which was undoubtedly a stimulus for *Plantation acres: a historical study of the Irish land surveyor*, (1985). More than anything else he wrote in a very distinguished career, this book is a classic exercise in original scholarship, creating a coherent narrative and analysis from thousands of frequently quite minor passing references. It was an achievement that was accompanied by frustration. During the 1970s the NLI withdrew its map collection from public access for over six years, an act that significantly delayed John's work. Characteristically, he campaigned doggedly for the restoration of access, lobbying media and politicians and eventually achieving a result in 1979.

Alongside his work in map history, John contributed much to a broader field of historical geography and to geography as a whole. In the late 1960s, he provided the opening chapter 'A geographer's view of Irish history' to a book produced for an innovative RTÉ television series, *The course of Irish history* (1967). He later contributed three wide-ranging, scene-setting chapters to the protracted *New history of Ireland*: 'Land and people, c.1685' (1976), 'Land and people, 1780' (1986), and 'The geographical element in Irish history' (2005). More specific undertakings included 'Geography and government in Elizabethan Ireland' (1970), which highlighted the theoretical component in the

settlement planning for the Munster plantation. From the late 1960s, he also authored several authoritative introductory commentaries to facsimile map reproductions, some of the more significant being those involving William Petty's *Hiberniae Delineatio* (1968), Taylor and Skinner's *Maps of the roads of Ireland* (1969), John Rocque's maps of Dublin city and County Dublin (1978), and Alexander Taylor's county map of Kildare (1983). His Dublin-focused work also took in a study of 'Dublin's oldest map', the plan featured on John Speed's map of Leinster (1611), which was published in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (1983). Few areas of Irish map history went untouched by John. Not surprisingly, he came to be recognised as Ireland's leading authority on the history of cartography.

During the course of his career, John offered much service to the wider academic community. He acted as president of the Geographical Society of Ireland from 1964 to 1966. Following many years as review editor for *Irish Geography*, he served as its editor from 1979 to 1981. He was also the first editor of the *Irish Geographical Newsletter* (later *Geonews*). During the 1970s, John acted as secretary to the small co-ordinating committee, chaired by Professor Joe Haughton, which, against many odds, succeeded in producing the *Atlas of Ireland*, published by the Royal Irish Academy in 1979. He became a member of the Academy in 1978. At an international level, he served as reviews editor of *Imago Mundi* from 1979 to 1987. He was chair of the organising committee for the Tenth International Conference on the History of Cartography, held in Dublin in 1983 – an event which he considered may have been the 'high point' of his life in map history. He later contributed chapters (on 'Colonial cartography in a European setting: the case of Tudor Ireland' (2007), and on 'Irish plantation surveys' (2020)) to the massive multi-volume *History of Cartography* project organised by Chicago University Press.

In the 1980s, John gave much time to the nascent Irish Historic Towns Atlas, organised under the auspices of the Royal Irish Academy. With Dr. Anngret Simms, he served as a joint editor for over ten years, and later acted as a consulting editor. It was John who was the prime mover in drawing up the very detailed guidelines that continue to provide a robust framework for the project. He authored the first study, the 'fascicle' on Kildare town (1986). With Mary Davies, he was also author of *Mullingar*, which appeared in 1992. Some years later, he co-edited, with Anngret Simms, two Mercier Press paperbacks, *Irish country towns* (1994) and *More Irish country towns* (1995), containing RTÉ radio Thomas Davis Lectures which had focused on towns being included in the atlas project. He included observations on his experience of the atlas in his foreword to *Maps and Texts: exploring the Irish Historic Towns Atlas* (2013).

In 1990, John retired, at the age of 63, from his post at Trinity, and moved to the Welsh borderland town of Chepstow in Gwent. He lived there with his wife, Doris, for the next 29 years. His last public lecture before leaving revealed to many an interest of John's that few had previously known, being on the development of jazz in America. Not surprisingly in retrospect, John the person and John the scholar did not fully overlap. As the latter, John had by then an impressive record. According to Professor Kevin Whelan, in his fulsome appreciation of 1992, John had produced 6 books or monographs, 78 articles or book chapters, 74 reviews and 10 introductions to map reprints. With that sort of listing,

he might justifiably have moved to another life in retirement, but his scholarly interests were passions that could not easily be put aside. His retirement period saw four more books or monographs, at least fifty more articles or book chapters, and at least 25 more book reviews – bringing the lifetime total of his publications to over 250.

In ‘retirement’, John continued to pursue a seemingly limitless agenda on Irish map history. His work was aided by various contacts in Dublin, including Beatrice Coughlan, Paul Ferguson, who sourced maps from the Trinity map library, Richard Haworth and his former Ph. D student, Matthew Stout. An early essay from this phase of his life, in *The Irish Review* (1993), was on ‘Notes for a future edition of Brian Friel’s *Translations*’. Following up an earlier debate and rejoinder (1981), this article appraised Friel’s well-regarded play (1980), set in an imagined Donegal of the 1830s, and sought to set straight what John regarded as its specious representation of the Ordnance Survey. *Shapes of Ireland* appeared in 1997, focusing on how a selection of around twelve of the most innovative single-sheet maps of Ireland can show how the map of Ireland was refined in shape and its content filled between the time of Mercator (1564) and the work of James Wyld (1839). As well as offering a narrative, the book uses measures of map accuracy, a topic in which John had for long exhibited an interest. Adapting a method developed by W.R. Tobler, John had explored this topic during the 1970s with the aid of his student, Joan Murphy, and in collaboration with Dr James Killen. Now he revisited the topic with the help of Dr Matthew Stout who further refined the test programme.

Over time, however, John increasingly reverted to early Irish maps, especially those relating to the period before 1630. As he did also with many of his personal research notes, he compiled a listing of regional Irish maps before this date and placed his work on CD-Rom (2005). He also wrote new articles on such themes as John Norden’s map of Ireland (2000), the post-Armada cartography of Galway (2000), and Sir Richard Bingham and the mapping of western Ireland (2003, focussing especially on the 1580s maps of two John Brownes). Other pieces reviewed plantation Ireland, the early mapping of Ireland’s physical and cultural landscapes, John Speed’s map of Ulster and the place-names on Robert Lythe’s maps. In collaboration with architectural historian, Rolf Loeber, John analysed the context for the famous c.1560 regional map of Leix-Offaly (1998). A study on the late Elizabethan mapmaker, Frances Jobson, was unfortunately never finished. Not so, however, John’s forensic exploration of the work of Richard Bartlett, the military engineer who accompanied the English army in the later part of the Nine Years War and whose life ended abruptly in 1603 when he was beheaded in Donegal. Bartlett’s maps of Ulster, hitherto unknown to scholars, had created something of a sensation when they came to light in the 1950s. John now added to an excellent 1960s study by G.A. Hayes-McCoy. *The Queen’s last mapmaker: Richard Bartlett in Ireland, 1600-3*, was one of the two books John saw published in 2009, when he was aged 82.

During his retirement years, John expanded his areas of enquiry to include some studies of the cartography of his new surroundings and also to explore the nature of maps at greater length. He published two articles on the English mapmaker, Christopher Saxton, and undertook an unfinished study of Gerard Mercator’s maps of England and Wales. As late as 2013, he made an uncharacteristic venture into the cartography of

the recent past, with a 20-page article in *Gwent Local History* on ‘Bryan Woodfield, a Chepstow cartographer of the late twentieth century’. However, it was his contributions on the nature of maps that were the more extensive and sustained. During the 1980s and 1990s, John became increasingly disenchanted with the growing trend among historians of cartography to favour structuralist ideas that espoused deconstructionist and strongly contextual approaches. Some of his reservations crystallised in a monograph in *Trinity Papers in Geography* on ‘meaning, knowledge and power in the map philosophy of J.B. Harley’ (1994), but he took issue too with the rather different approach of Denis Wood in *The power of maps* (1992). In the latter instance he registered his extensive analysis for a Trinity M.Sc. which he completed (1997) under the supervision of Dr James Killen. Articles related to this line of enquiry included two on the theme of ‘what is a map?’ and, in *Irish Geography* (2007), ‘Reflections on the Harley-Woodward definition of maps’. The need for philosophical rigour in the use of terminology and concepts is a theme that permeates his ‘map philosophy’ publications.

Somewhat complementary to these ideas is one of John’s final books. Long in the making, the 576-page *Maps in those days: cartographic methods before 1850* was his second book to be published, with assistance in relation to the illustrations from Matthew Stout, during 2009. Its focus is expressed in the opening words to the publisher’s summary:

*For some years, the emphasis in map-historical literature has been either on traditional cartobibliography or on various cultural, social and ideological aspects of the mapping process. By contrast, few recent books have described what early cartographers actually did. Maps in those days addresses this question.*

This was a book motivated by a desire to describe, in some detail, all stages of the mapping process, from conceptualisation through the technical aspects of production to the final act of presentation. With a scope that extended far beyond Ireland, John’s wheel of cartography had turned almost full circle. The book’s title had been inspired by a question posed by a young enquirer at the ‘Ireland in Maps’ exhibition held almost half a century earlier: ‘How did they make maps in those days?’

John Andrews was made a Fellow of Trinity College Dublin in 1969; he was made an associate professor in 1978. The following year he was elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy. Those who knew John during his time in Trinity will recall him as an insightful, ever helpful, colleague who was as committed to his teaching as to his research. His lectures and field trips were meticulously organised, purposeful, and frequently with much original content. Lectures were almost always written out in full. After his early phase teaching widely, the courses he subsequently offered included political geography in the late 1950s and early 1960s and a contribution to a first-year mapping practical in the 1970s and 1980s. Students of the mid-1960s heard much about Britain and about contrasting approaches to historical geography, including the work of English ‘greats’ like H.C. Darby and Jean Mitchell. They heard about Sir Cyril Fox, and his division of Britain into upland and lowland zones, and they were asked to consider what ‘regions’ were. But students heard too about T.W. Freeman, E.E. Evans, Ireland and Dublin, and they were asked to contemplate how much Leeson Street had changed over two centuries, from being on the edge of the city in Rocque’s time (1750s). Typed itinerary notes offered

guidance for day field trips from Dublin by bus, but there were also longer sorties. During a week-long stay in pre-civil rights campaign Derry/ Londonderry, this writer remembers a survey of Strabane, organised according to a comprehensive checklist, and undertaking sample interviews in Bogside Derry as part of John's field programme.

John was a reserved – some might have considered him a shy – person. Yet those who knew him well found him to be congenial, incisive and forthright on occasion. As those reading his personal memoir, 'My life in map history', may especially appreciate, he had a keen sense of wry humour, and was acutely aware of both the privileges and some of the ironies associated with being an academic. He was a supportive colleague who gave generously of his time, to bodies such as the Irish Historic Towns Atlas and the Geographical Society of Ireland, and to many individual researchers and general enquirers. He was a rigorous, but also a constructive, supervisor who took the trouble to assimilate the issues faced by novice researchers and to mix criticism, if needed, with encouragement. He set high standards for writing and presentation, for both himself and others. His prose style was distinguished by its clarity, and fastidious almost to a fault. He was a good correspondent, and his opinions were widely sought and respected. In his eighties he continued to be interested in, and to encourage and comment on the ambitious project on the early maps of Ireland being undertaken by Annaleigh Margey in conjunction with the Irish Manuscripts Commission. In 2005, in an act of enduring generosity, he donated his collection of 670 books and 2300 pamphlets, plus some maps, to the library of Maynooth University. He thereby ensured that his near-lifelong concern for the map history of Ireland will produce a continuing benefit to a country about which he wrote so much.

John Andrews was buried in the churchyard of St. Arvan's, near Chepstow, on 6 December 2019. He will be remembered with great affection and great respect, as both a scholar and a friend. He is survived by his wife and long-standing support, Doris, whom he married in 1951, and by his half-brother, David.

*Arnold Horner,  
formerly University College Dublin*

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> A further bibliography, covering the period from 1991 and compiled by John Andrews, will appear in a forthcoming volume of John Andrews-related essays which it is hoped may appear in print during 2022.

For the purposes of this obituary, information has been drawn from the author's personal knowledge of John Andrews, from John's memoir entitled 'My life in map history' (to be published in the forthcoming Four Courts Press volume) and from an appreciation of the career of John Andrews before 1991, written by Dr Kevin Whelan, 'Beyond a Paper Landscape: John Andrews and Irish historical geography', which appears in pp. 379-424 of *Dublin City and County: from prehistory to present*. Thanks are due to Mary Davies, Paul Ferguson, William Nolan and former colleagues and others who commented on an earlier draft of this obituary.