

A Rich Source of History

One of CDR's recent projects has just gone live at www.sheffieldarchivemaps.co.uk

Having a basic appreciation (love) of maps, Tom and John attended an evening presentation at Sheffield Central Library last year on the historic map archive held there. And having undertaken other map scanning projects, perhaps CDR could help. So a dialogue was started.

However, the current brick wall of a lack of budget to undertake any paid work was soon encountered. Yet, amongst our discussions and the acceptance that scanning the archive had many merits, there was also the requirement to provide full-size copies for individual requests. So CDR put forward the proposal to scan the large-scale 1:500 scale archive at zero cost, with a view to recover those costs through the sale of full-size reproductions – and with a proportion also returned to Sheffield Archives.

Once this proposal was accepted and finalised, batches of maps were taken to CDR's offices in Hope for scanning. There is a collection at both the Archives office and at Central Library of the first edition of extremely detailed large-scale maps of Sheffield between 1890-1904. Some are black and white and some are coloured. The amount of detail is fascinating with gas lights and urinals marked. The capacity of seating is marked on every church and the industrial purposes of buildings are recorded from breweries to tobacco manufacturers to cutlery works. Many sheets are repeated but may be of a different quality or revision, and some have additional annotations – all maps were scanned. Nearly 250 map sheets are represented by over 650 images.

CDR then applied rectification and de-skewing programs to “tidy-up” stretches and imperfections to result in a rectangular map. All of the scanned maps of this series are now available to purchase from the website. Users can browse the selection of maps and choose their map of interest. Each map that is used for reproduction is over 200Mb of storage to capture the fine detail, which is not suitable for web use. So lower resolution images are presented for browsing and identification purposes and they do appear rather grainy in places. A sample higher definition map is available to view on the website showing a portion of Kelham Island and Mowbray Street.

These maps are from an era when Sheffield was in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Barkers Pool and Fargate existed but there was no Town Hall and Peace Gardens that we see today. You can still study the originals at Central Library, when it is open, but now you can explore at any time and without damaging those originals.