



Local History: 8

ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPS



PRONI has the most extensive holdings of maps for Northern Ireland, including the published Town Plans for the major towns in the Province.

Before the nineteenth century various parts of Ireland had been mapped by landowners in the interests of estate management. Surveyors were employed to measure and plot each part of the estate in varying degrees of detail depending on the amount of money available. It was not until the early nineteenth century, when the idea of having a new land tax was introduced, that the Government decided that it required the whole of Ireland to be mapped on a large scale in order to show the land boundaries more accurately.

Maps on the scale of six inches to one statute mile were completed for the whole country by 1842 (**PRONI Ref OS/1 and OS/6**). This massive undertaking ensured that Ireland was surveyed and mapped with a degree of thoroughness and accuracy unique for its time in the world. It is particularly opportune that the mapping programme was undertaken shortly before the Great Famine when the country had its maximum recorded population.

By 1846, when the publication of the first edition of the six-inch map was completed, revision of the early six-inch maps had already begun. The Ordnance Survey maps are a faithful record of the landscape for this period of the nineteenth century. For the first time the boundaries of all townlands, civil parishes, baronies and counties were delineated. Man made items such as field outlines, roads and settlement features are shown on these maps. The nineteenth century interest in antiquities was reflected in the care taken to mark the location of such sites as castles, medieval and early Christian churches and raths. **OS/6**

After the 1950s the system changed, covering Ireland as a whole and not on a county basis. This new series has superseded the six inch county maps and is known as the Irish Grid (**OS/7**) For the index to the Irish Grid which shows both Ordnance Survey sheet numbers and the corresponding Irish Grid number consult the appropriate map in the Public Search Room.

Researchers interested in town plans should consult **OS/8**. The collection is made up of printed plans of 163 towns in Northern Ireland and two towns in the Republic; it complements **OS/9** a collection of manuscript town plans which frequently contain older unpublished maps of the towns found in the published maps in **OS/8**. For the index to the Borough of Belfast consult the appropriate map in the Public Search Room.

A copy of the 'Conventional Signs used on The Six Inch Maps of the Ordnance Survey' can be found at the end of **OS/2**.

Researchers interested in maps with valuation markings can locate these under the **PRONI ref VAL** as the Ordnance Survey sheets do not contain valuation details.

Opening Hours

Mon-Wed and Fri 9:00am-4:45pm
Thurs 10:00am-8:45pm
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late evening opening)

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