

DEGA HA'N DEGA MAPPYS KERNOW

TITHES AND THE TITHE MAPS OF CORNWALL

Article by **Barbara Bruce**

Tythe or tithes comes from the Old English word 'teotha' meaning a tenth.

Payments to the clergy, referred to as 'First Fruits', were introduced by King Ina of Wessex, in a law in 693. He went on to defeat the Britons and Geraint, King of Cornwall, in 710.

The first mention of Tythes in English written law, according to William Pulleyn in 1830, is in 786 when a constitutional decree was made in a Synod. "Where in the payment of Tythes in general is strongly enjoined..."

These tithes were payments made in kind, a proportion of the parishioners' annual yield from their land. Payments were not always paid to the local vicar, sometimes they were paid to the landowner.

At the time of the Norman conquest the Monks of St Petroc in Bodmin were one of the richest landowners in Cornwall. They managed to keep some of this land when William The Conqueror gave two-thirds of the county to his half-brother, Robert Count of Mortain. The monks continued to hold Treknaw (Tretdeno), but the smaller manor of Bossiney and many others were taken by the Count. In the middle of the 13th century the manor of Treknaw was granted to Earl Richard, who built a castle at Tintagel. Prior Baldwin managed to insure that the sheaf-tythe of the manor continued to be paid to the priory in Bodmin.

Tithes were difficult to collect and in 1836 The Tithe Act was introduced by the Whig government of Viscount Melbourne. The aim of the Act was to simplify the payments of each parish. Cash payments were to substitute the complicated payments in kind. All over the country parishes were valued and mapped. Cornwall was divided into 212 tithe districts; 61 tithe valuers and 58 map makers were used. Each map was produced with its own schedule, listing the landowner, occupier, name and description of lands and premises, number referring to the plan, state of cultivation, quantities in statute measure, amount of rent charge apportioned to the several lands and to whom payable.

On June 2nd, 1841 George Louis, the Commissioner appointed for Tintagel, issued his award, together with a definitive map covering the whole lands of the parish, a total of 4,280 acres, this included 3,200 acres of arable and pasture, 49 acres of woodland, 86 acres of furze, 187 acres of common and 187 acres of cliff. The vicar was entitled to the sum of £270, made up of payments which could be as little as 4d. for a garden plot to 12s. for a field depending on potential productivity. "The collection of which from his often unwilling parishioners must still have confronted the parson with a somewhat invidious task".

On some of the schedules, names of later occupiers or owners have been added in pencil. This can help with research into past ownership of different fields or tenements. Sadly many of the county's tithe maps are in a very fragile condition and with use will only deteriorate more.

The Cornwall Record Office, in order to preserve the collection has undertaken the massive task of digitising a third of the maps. A list of those

already digitised and available to buy on CD is available from the Record Office in Truro or details of the project are on The Cornwall County Council web site: www.cornwall.gov.uk/cro.

It is now possible to book a visit to the Record Office and view on their computer system the areas that have been copied. Eventually, you will be able to view present day maps on a GIS based on-line system and look at the same area on the 1836/40 tithe maps, a great aid to historical research.

Those interested in the project are invited to become involved and help transcribe survey books into a searchable electronic format. A volunteer application form can be downloaded from The Cornwall County Council website: www.cornwall.gov.uk.

In 1976 the government announced the end of tithe payments, as it felt that they were expensive to administer and no longer necessary. The final payments were paid in 1977.

*Thanks to the staff at The Cornwall Record Office for permission to reproduce the tithe maps and for all their help.
Cornish contribution by maggy Folley.*



top: "Deka Dekal! Was cried on the arrival of fishing boats with a catch, on which the Proctors or their agents came to receive their tithe." From 1938 Cornish Dictionary by Morton Nance.
above: 1842 Tithe map of Treknaw, near Tintagel. Each field and property has a number which corresponds to its owner, value, use and name.

Bibliography:

- The Tithe maps of England and Wales** - a cartographic analysis 1995 by Roger J P Kain and Richard R Oliver.
- The Parish of Tintagel some Historical notes** by A.C.Canner.
- A Dictionary of Biography** by Benjamin Vincent.
- The Etymological Compendium** by William Pulleyn, 1830.

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