

Tithe and Asylum Plans

Overview

The Tithe Plans (circa 1840s) and the Asylum Plans (circa 1860) are two sets of records that depict the landholdings of private individuals on the Isle of Man in the early to mid-19th century.

These plans later became the basis of a more comprehensive series of maps collectively called Woods Atlas, compiled by local Manx surveyor James Wood in 1867.

1) Tithe Plans

Reference number: S3

In 1839, the Tithe Commutation Act was passed by the Insular Legislature. It stipulated that landowners must submit plans of their land to the Island's Rolls Office. This was so that state officials could assess each owner's land and property in order to establish their annual tithe contribution to the Island's clergy. Under other provisions of the Act, these tithes had to be monetary; in the past, they were paid in goods and services.



Most Manx properties were surveyed and drawn individually. The majority of the Tithe Plans date from around 1840, however, some landowners submitted plans that they already owned which were older.

All the Tithe Plans, along with their valuation information, were entered into 26 separate books, arranged by parish.

Detail of Patrick Tithe Map 115

2) Asylum Plans

Reference number: S4

In 1860, Tynwald passed the Lunatic Asylum Act. This legislation enabled the Isle of Man Government to levy a one-off tax on all Manx property owners. The money raised was used to pay for the Island's first purpose-built asylum, Ballamona Hospital, which opened to patients in 1868.

The Asylum Board, a Board of Tynwald established by the Act, oversaw the survey, valuation and collection of rates. The Board appointed John Thomas Clucas [1827-1887] as Land Valuer; he would later become the first Treasurer of the Isle of Man. The Asylum Board appointed James Woods [?-1897] as Surveyor to the Valuers. Woods would go on to use his knowledge of the asylum plans gained at this time to compile his own maps of the Island, collectively known as Woods Atlas (see 3, below). The plan submission and survey stage of the valuation was completed by 1864, enabling the collection of the rates to begin in that same year.

Like the Tithe Commutation Act twenty-one years before, landowners had to submit up-to-date plans of their land and properties. This enabled valuers to accurately assess each landowner's tax liability.

You will find that many of the plans are similar to their Tithe predecessors; where there had been no change in their situation, landowners often submitted copies of these earlier plans.

Mirroring the Tithe Plans, the Asylum Plans were divided up into 30 books, arranged by parish. Unfortunately one of the volumes for Rushen is not held by the Isle of Man Public Record Office. Copies of some of the plans from the volume are available.

3) Woods Atlas

The 'New Atlas and Gazetteer', commonly known as Woods Atlas, contains 17 comprehensive maps of the Isle of Man. The maps describe the civil and ecclesiastical boundaries of each of the Island's seventeen parishes. It was compiled by Manx surveyor James Woods and published in 1867.

The Atlas was compiled using both the Tithe and Asylum plans as a basis. Accompanying the maps in the Atlas is a set of valuation tables. Much of the information within the tables was derived directly from the Asylum Acts records. These tables not only contained each property valuation but also the name of the proprietor.

There is a copy of Woods Atlas available for consultation here at the Public Record Office.

4) Custodial History

In the 1840s and 1860s, landowners submitted their Tithe and Asylum Plans to the Isle of Man Rolls Office, where they were available for public consultation. In 1965, the Rolls Office was amalgamated with the Courts of Law, forming a new organisation: the General Registry. Here, the plans continued to be publicly available. The two sets of plans moved to the Isle of Man Public Record Office in the late 20th century and they remain publicly available although, due to the fragility of the originals, visitors may be presented with microfiche facsimiles to view.

5) Who the Tithe and Asylum Plans are Useful to

The Tithe and Asylum Plans are a key resource in the history of mapping the Isle of Man and as such, are useful for a range of research interests.

If you are interested in tracing the history of a particular piece of land, estate, building or landowner, these plans are an invaluable record. Comparing the names of the owners who commissioned the original Tithe Plans to those of the land's proprietors as stated in the Woods Atlas valuation tables is also useful for the study of land and property transactions during this period.

Researchers interested in the economy of the Island in the mid-19th century should also consider studying these records. The changes in value of landholdings between the two sets of plans is a useful indicator; the land values can also give some insight into the financial wealth and lifestyle of the residents and owners.

6) Accessing the Tithe and Asylum Plans

As mentioned above, access to the original plans is now restricted due to their fragile condition. However, all plans have been copied onto microfiche cards which can be ordered and viewed at the Public Record Office.

As some of the Isle of Man Public Record Office records are held on a separate site, it is advised that a prior appointment is made before visiting, so that any required records can be located ahead of time.

7) Further Reading

'Ballamona Hospital 1868-1968 Souvenir Programme' (1968). (Background to the Ballamona Asylum.)

David Craine, *The Potato Riots, 1825*, 'Manannan's Isle' (1955). pp 197-209. (Background to the Tithe Act.)

James Woods, 'A New Atlas and Gazetteer of the Isle of Man', (1867).

'Statutes of the Isle of Man', volume II (1824-1859), p 114.

Nigel Crowe, *A New Atlas and Gazetteer: an appreciation of James Woods's Atlas and its origins*, 'Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society Proceedings', volume X, no 4, pp 373-379. (Provides some background to the Asylum Act and the valuation, as well as the atlas.)

'Statutes of the Isle of Man', volume III (1860-1871), p 43 and p 109.

'Statutes of the Isle of Man', volume XII (1925-1929), p 13.

8) Contact Us

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