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North West in Maps

Review Article: The First Large-Scale Plans of Manchester

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Ordnance Survey 60 inch to 1 mile Town Plans of Manchester & Salford 1844-49.

Adshead's Twenty Four Illustrated Maps of the Township of Manchester divided into Municipal Wards corrected to the 1st May 1851.

Both published on CD by the Digital Archives Association, 3 Cedarways, Appleton, Warrington, WA4 5EW. spurr@zetnet.co.uk 01925-265794 £20 each plus £1-50 p&p

The publication on CD of the first large-scale plans of Manchester provides an opportunity to compare them, and to put them in their wider context. It has long been a curiosity that two such surveys were undertaken at roughly the same time, though they are different in terms of scale, content and coverage. Adshead's maps were the last of a line of privately produced plans, whilst the Ordnance Survey maps were one of the first of their large-scale sets of town plans.

The **Ordnance Survey** plans were surveyed slightly earlier than those by Adshead, from about 1843 to 1849, though the dates given on the printed maps are later. The clearest proof of this is that The Exchange is shown as it was before it was enlarged in 1845, though the map claims to have been surveyed in 1849 and published in 1851. This period was 'the Battle of the Scales' within the Ordnance Survey, and what probably happened is that surveying at the 5-foot scale had begun even though not officially sanctioned. So it is likely that the survey dates are earlier than stated for most of these maps; most survey work was probably done in 1844-46. Thus the maps were up to 8 years out of date when finally published in 1851. Nevertheless the maps are completely original, as there was nothing at this scale before.

They were published at the scale of five feet to one mile (1:1056) – they were never described as 60 inch maps. There were 49 maps plus an index sheet, and they covered an area north to Upper Broughton, west into Salford, east to Ardwick and south to Rusholme. The choice of this large scale was partly for reasons of sanitary planning; indeed a parliamentary bill of 1847 specified the use of this scale. But the 1848 Public Health Act allowed any scale to be used. Manchester Council decided to investigate the purchase a copy of the map in 1844, so presumably survey work was already in progress.

The original maps were roughly 3 feet by 2 feet, printed in black, without colouring. A curious feature is that the internal layout of many buildings is shown; for example churches, theatres, and the Town Hall. Most larger properties are named, and small details such as lampposts, pavements and even doorsteps are shown. The reason why such minute detail was shown is not clear; perhaps as this was one of the first maps surveyed at this scale the surveyors were experimenting. Obviously the map could have been used for sanitary planning; numerous spot heights along the main streets which would be important in planning sewers.

So why if Manchester had a new large-scale survey should a private individual undertake another survey, at an even larger scale, but covering only the wards of the township of Manchester, a much smaller area? Local surveyor Richard Thornton had begun a survey of Manchester and Salford in 1849, it was at 80 inches to the mile and was to comprise 75 sheets; the 25 sheets covering Manchester were apparently ready by 1849. **Joseph Adshead** became involved as the publisher; he was a businessman and Councillor, a social reformer, concerned with the labouring classes, education and prisons. We know nothing of why he went into map publishing (always a risky business), but it looks likely that he took over Thornton's survey, revised the sheets in 1850-1, and published them in 1851. Thus they were issued in the same year as the Ordnance Survey maps. They are technically 'ward maps', each sheet showing a ward or part of a ward of Manchester. They do not include Salford, or the outlying areas, though the larger scale of 80 inches to the mile requires almost twice as much map area to show the same area of land as the OS map.

There are 23 maps, most originally 45" by 33". The wards are orientated to fit the sheets; north is not at the top of any of the maps. The maps were printed in black with different shadings: public buildings (heavy cross-hatching), warehouses and places of business (thick diagonal shading), private houses (thin diagonal shading). But in addition the maps could be had with a colour wash: mills and works (yellow), hotels, inns and public houses (pink), water (blue), vegetation (green), quarries (brown) and streets (light brown). Street widths are shown, but there are no spot heights – thus it is likely that the maps were intended for political purposes rather than sanitary ones. But Adshead's maps cost a guinea each (or 15 guineas for the full set), whereas the OS maps cost only 2 shillings each, thus the much larger area covered by the OS maps could be had for less than £10, compared to Adshead costing over £15.

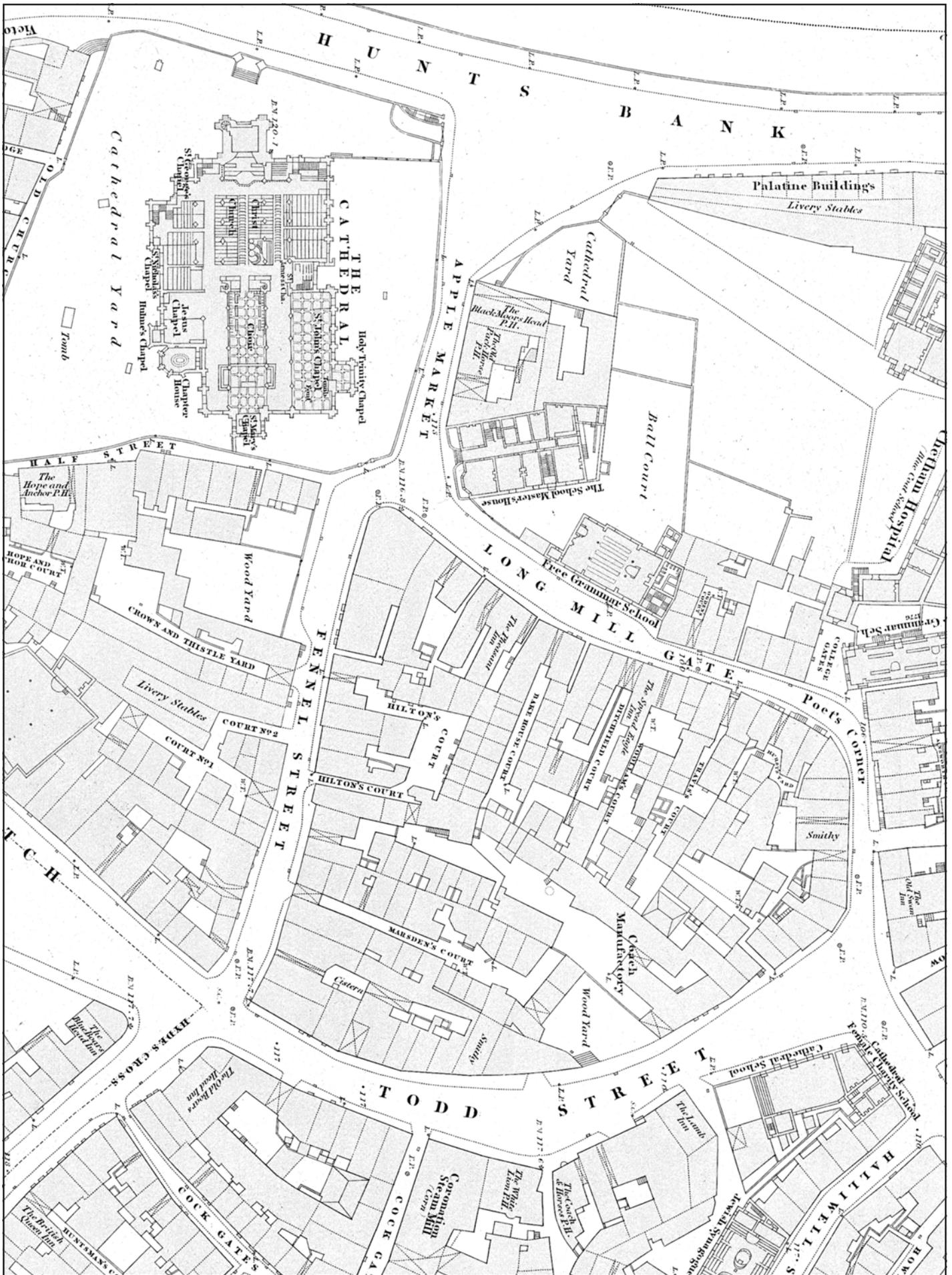
The publication of these two maps in the same format at the same times allows students of Manchester in the middle of the nineteenth century two different cartographic representations of the city. The slightly earlier OS maps cover a larger area at a smaller scale, but manage to include more detail. The Adshead maps cover only the Manchester wards (which are shown dissected), but give different detail, such as distinguishing between public, commercial and private premises, and naming mill owners. The Adshead CD has a useful 10-page introduction by Terry Wyke (Manchester Metropolitan University), and a (belatedly added?) street index. The OS CD has only a very short introduction. Both CDs allow the user to move about easily, zoom in and out, to select and print parts of the maps.

The Digital Archives Association has also produced the following CDs:

OS Lancashire 25" (1888-93) [1450 maps on 3 CDs] £20 each.

OS Derbyshire 25" (1896-1900) [850 maps] £25.

Yates' Lancashire (1786), Hennessey's Lancashire (1830), Jefferys' Yorkshire (1771) £15 each.



Extract from Ordnance Survey 60 inch to 1 mile Town Plan of Manchester & Salford, Sheet 23.



Extract from Adshead's Illustrated Maps of the Township of Manchester, sheet 11.