



# THE CARTOGRAPHER

JOHN BARTHOLOMEW'S PRIVATE PAPERS

# DISCOVER

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## Lord Byron

His poetry in progress



# Leaving for a new life

The Scottish emigrants' adventures on the high seas





## The Bartholomew Archive

reveals the inner workings of one of Scotland's most significant cartographic publishers. But, as Karla Baker discovers, it also tells us much about the man who presided over its most productive period



**J**ohn Bartholomew & Son Ltd. is a name that instantly conjures up memories for many people. Whether it's using a Bartholomew atlas during a geography lesson at school or poring over a touring map on holiday, Bartholomew's ubiquity bestows upon it a certain authority. In terms of mapmaking it was at one time the name to trust, with publications such as *The Times Survey Atlas of the World* (1920) underlining Bartholomew's reputation for cartographic excellence.

Six generations of the Bartholomew family have each left behind them unique and lasting legacies. The first in the family line was George Bartholomew (1784-1871). At 13 years old he was apprenticed as an engraver to Daniel Lizars of Edinburgh. Following in his father's footsteps, George's son, John Bartholomew Senior (1805-61),

set up the modest engraving firm that eventually became John Bartholomew & Son Ltd. John Bartholomew Junior (1831-93) expanded the fledgling company by introducing printing and focusing the business on map production. However, it was with the coming of John Bartholomew Junior's son, John George Bartholomew (1860-1920), that the publisher entered what would be its most fruitful period.

John George Bartholomew was born in Edinburgh on 22 March 1860. He studied at the Royal High School and Edinburgh University, and at the age of 17 he was apprenticed to the family firm. Records from the Archive reveal the many unpaid hours the young John George spent learning the art of copper plate engraving. In 1888 he became head of the firm, aged just 28.

The legacy of John George Bartholomew is still held in high regard in cartographic



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circles, with an enduring respect for the man that is forged from his many significant achievements.

At just 24 years old he helped to found the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, of which he remained an honorary secretary for the rest of his life. He was also an ardent supporter for the creation of a Chair of Geography at Edinburgh University, a post that only became realised after his death. He was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, a Royal Geographical Society Victoria Gold Medal winner and, from 1910, Geographer and Cartographer to the King.

While it is for these achievements that John George Bartholomew is principally remembered, research into the extensive number of documents held by NLS as part of the Bartholomew Archive has uncovered personal items and written accounts that show this remarkable man in quite a different light. It is seldom commented upon, but John George Bartholomew possessed a romantic temperament. This is most evident in the way he documents his relationship with wife Janet (Jennie) Macdonald.

In his private journal he records the exact circumstance of their first meeting: 'Feb. 1888. Many evenings with Whites at 22 Duke Street. There first met Jennie Macdonald', while their wedding day a year later is boldly underlined in red ink. The journal also records a boating trip the young couple made to Loch Lomond on their engagement. There is a story that during the expedition he christened two



**A romantic, John George named Loch Lomond islets to mark his engagement**

unnamed islets 'St Winifred's' and 'St Rosalind's'. Quite why these particular names were chosen remains a mystery, but thanks to John George's unique position, they were included in the next edition of Bartholomew's half-inch series of Scotland and the islets have remained St Winifred's and St Rosalind's ever since.

The Bartholomew Archive suggests that not only was John George a romantic, he also possessed a certain

creative flair. His artistry is reflected in his professional life through the maps Bartholomew & Co. produced during his years as its head. For example, he perfected contour layer colouring, a technique pioneered by his father that shows height and depth as a succession of subtle colour changes. To this day it remains the most familiar method of showing relief.

But creativity spilled over into John George Bartholomew's personal life too. His private diaries contain portraits, sketches and watercolours, the majority of which date from a trip he took to Australia when he was 21 years old. Entries of that time include poems on themes such as sailing, the sea, boats and storms. One such piece, 'Night at Sea', is particularly effective:

*Night on the waves: and the moon is on high.  
Hung like a gem on the brow of the sky;  
Treading its depths in the power of her might  
And turning the clouds as they pass her to light.*

Upon his return from Australia, John George settled back into life at the family firm. Here he set about consolidating his various talents and beliefs – and in the process entered a period of significant achievement. However, as his personal papers reveal, self-doubt and worry plagued him his whole life. Aged just 19, John George wrote simply: 'Dissatisfied with life' (although on a more positive note he followed this proclamation with the update, 'moustache beginning to grow!')

As the years went by expectation and pressure continued to weigh upon John George. In 1893 his father died, and with the head of the family gone, the full burden of responsibility landed on Bartholomew's 33-year-old shoulders. An entry in his private journal during that time tells of his concern:

*Year opened dismally with Father unwell... Many business difficulties with Trustees about carrying on of work. Situation becoming impossible, striving for freedom.*

It is not clear where John George felt this 'freedom' could be found, but a small, plain-looking pocket book contains scores of handwritten and carefully pasted motivational and uplifting quotes such as 'Happiness is an attitude of mind' and 'Strength is shown in restraint'. These were presumably intended to help him rise above despair in his moments of need.

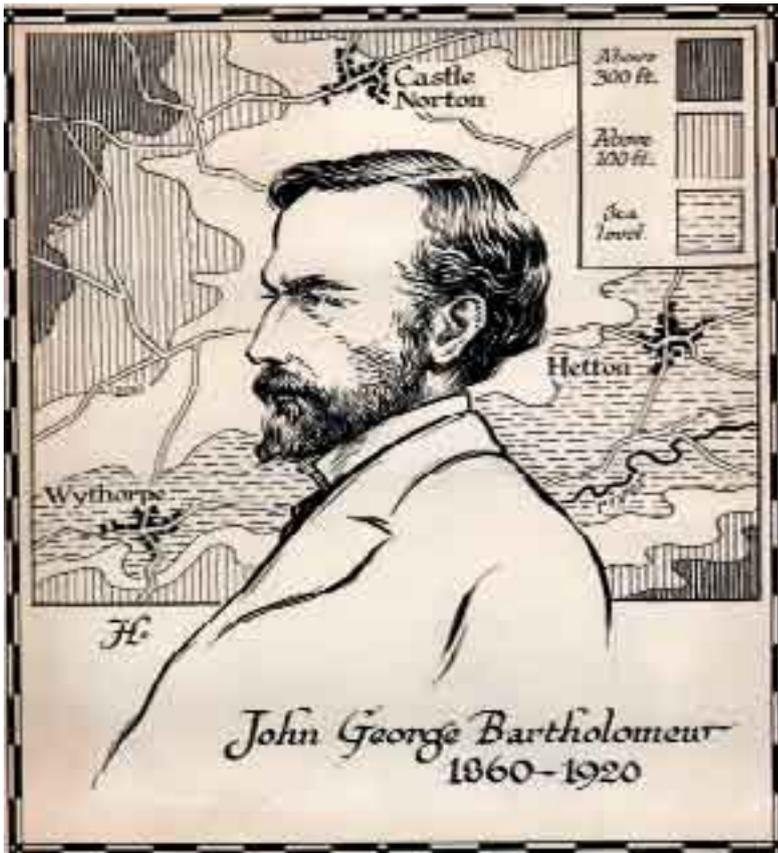
That he should struggle with anxiety and doubt is perhaps not altogether surprising. John George was a perfectionist, and many of his problems arose as he tried to meet his own exacting standards. A brief note in his journal tells of the difficulty he felt when

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**John George wrote in his meticulously kept private journal simply: 'Dissatisfied with life'**

## Bartholomew's hidden gem

Although it could never be described as the most important item in the Bartholomew Archive, this 1930s advert stands out nonetheless as a whimsical gem. It is a rare example of Bartholomew's advertising which uses photography, and there is something about its bold aesthetic, dramatic use of light and strong narrative that really appeals. Not to mention the clothes, the hair, the car and, above all, the wonderful sense of mystery that the advert evokes.





working with those he considered to lack ideals: *Determined to end the T. N. (Thomas Nelson) partnership at any cost. To continue would mean ruin to the business and a breakdown on my part – It is impossible to work with so much unpleasant friction & jealousy.*

John George did seem to deliberately place himself in difficult and challenging positions, though. The notes for some of his speeches reveal as much. Indeed, one such speech on patriotism begins with what reads as a deliberately

**This pen and ink portrait of John George reflects both his expertise and creativity in mapmaking**

provocative challenge to the audience:

*Patriotism has so long been classed among the noble virtues, that it seems almost treason for anyone to attempt to be-little it. I feel conscious therefore that my contention this evening is an unpopular one...*

Other speeches address equally controversial subject matter. A mammoth 21-page discourse summarises the Evolution of Civilisation and concludes by postulating that the process hasn't been entirely satisfactory. Quoting from Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* in his concluding remarks, John George suggests to the audience that:

*Things will not be well until all men be good, and that will not be, yet this great while...*

Another speech tackles what could be argued as the fairly modern preoccupation of 'Our Attitude to Life, to the World, to our Environment' – subject matter that suggests John George was never one to simply accept the status quo.

Stricken by the debilitating effects of tuberculosis, John George strove also to improve his health. It was during a recuperative trip to Portugal in 1920 that he finally succumbed to illness and died, aged 60. A letter of condolence sent by his lifelong friend George Adam Smith reassured John George's family that: *His example of diligence, self sacrifice in the interests of his science and of patience and courage through all the weakness which ailed him... he has been an inspiration to many.*

In his lifetime John George Bartholomew expanded the family business beyond recognition. His personal legacy includes the *Survey Atlas of Scotland*, two volumes of *Bartholomew's Physical Atlas* and the naming of Antarctica.

Today the Bartholomew brand persists as Collins Bartholomew, part of publisher HarperCollins. That John George's work endures to this day is a great achievement, yet as the Archive shows us, he was much more than the sum of his professional successes. He leaves behind tantalising glimpses into his life, his mind and the world that he grew up in.

## How have maps changed since John George's time?

Over the last century, aerial reconnaissance, satellite imagery and a plethora of new ground surveying devices have generated ever more accurate source information for mapmakers.

From the 1960s, the ability to integrate this information has been dramatically assisted by computers. At the same time, printing techniques have changed beyond all recognition – the intricate copper plates of the Bartholomew Archive seem a world away from today's instant digital output.

Yet technological change is only part of the story. We must also consider how society has changed since John George's time. This is because maps are not simply mirrors of the real world, but are the result of selection, omission and distortion.

If we look beyond any map, then it is possible to reveal information about the values, customs, and ideology of their maker.

What makes maps so interesting is that they do not just represent a place at a point in time, but more



A map engraver before the days of computer technology

importantly, they illustrate wider social values. Viewed in this light, cartographic technology may not have changed as dramatically since JG Bartholomew's time as the broader context of society in general.

As a result, whilst the Bartholomew Archive allows us to explore the development of cartographic technology from the 1820s to the present day, it also presents us with a powerful insight into the seismic shifts that society itself has made over the last two centuries.