The Weston Tapestry Maps

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a map of 1448 an extensive land is represented south-west of Cape Verde, it being, therefore, for me much more rational to admit that the event took place as I have just hypothetically described it, than to suppose that, by mere chance, all the following facts coincided :—

(a) In a map of 1448 appears the sketch of a land (named *authentic island*), the relative position and shape of which essentially corresponds to the north-east point of South America ;

(b) At the same time (middle of the fifteenth century or before) a map existed (the same or another) known in Portugal, at least, during the first months of 1500, with land represented in the same position in which, that same year, Brazil was found ;

(c) Among numerous explorations and attempts to the west, made during the whole fifteenth century, we have traditions or news of lands found to the south-west of the Azores, and to the west and south-west of the Cape Verde islands, in 1444, or before 1447, in 1473 and 1474 ;

(d) Before 1486 the King of Portugal supposes the existence of land to the south-west ;

(e) This was, in Columbus's opinion, the cause of the differences between the King of Portugal and the Kings of Castille ;

(f) Before 1498 an island is supposed to have been seen south-west of the island of Fogo, to which the king intended to send an expedition ;

(g) Canoes were, at that time, known to have gone from Guinea to this south-western land ;

(h) On a globe of 1492, an island, essentially in the position of this land, and in that of the *authentic island* of the 1448 map, is represented ;

(i) In 1498 the King of Portugal actually plans to send an expedition to look for land to the south-west ;

(j) In 1500, an expedition of the same king, in fact, finds land—South America—which a cosmographer recognizes as the land represented on the map mentioned in (b) ; this land, as we can now see, occupying the same position and possessing the same shape as the *authentic island* sketched in 1448.

The greater probability is, therefore, in my opinion, in favour of the supposition that the north-east corner of South America had been seen on or before 1448, although this cannot be affirmed with the same historical certainty with which we can affirm that, in 1492, Columbus landed on some of the Antilles.

It appears to me (if I dare express my whole feeling on the subject) that to answer questions like this with an unconditional affirmative or a rigid negative, is not to realize, in all their true conditions, historical problems—not to realize, in fact, what real life is, and how history ought to be studied and written.

Almost all the historians of geographical discoveries consider it their absolute duty to arrive at a radical conclusion in the study of problematical questions, answering with a *yes* what only deserves a *perhaps*, or, more frequently, dismissing with a *no* what ought to be held as probable.

THE WESTON TAPESTRY MAPS.*

By the Rev. W. K. R. BEDFORD, M.A.

WILLIAM SHELDON, of Weston and Brailes in Warwickshire, and Beoley in Worcestershire, was a worthy constituent of that forceful generation which gave us Shakespeare and Bacon, Raleigh and Drake, Willoughby and Camden. He was not

* Paper read at the Royal Geographical Society, December 10, 1896.

content to be like his neighbour Lucy, "a parliament member, a justice of peace," but he sought out for himself some outlet for his energy which should benefit posterity, as well as yield dignity to his own name. He determined to introduce into England the art of tapestry-weaving, and sent to the Low Countries one Richard Hickes, of Barcheston, to study the process, and to bring back workmen to the looms which set up at Weston and Barcheston. What success his project attained I can hardly say, but that the looms were in exercise fifty years after the death of William Sheldon (1570), I shall have occasion to mention; in fact, the tapestry maps are none of them apparently of as early manufacture as his (their founder's) time, although the name of Hickes and the arms of the Sheldon family and its alliances are indisputable evidence of their origin. They are five in number, and their history and description are as follows, three being preserved in the Museum at York, and fragments of the other two (which I imagine to have been the earlier ones) in the Bodleian at Oxford. The Sheldons were strenuous Cavaliers, and injured their estate by their loyalty to King Charles. Successive generations after the Restoration did little to repair the damage, and the mansion at Weston was pulled down about 1774, when Horace Walpole purchased for the sum of thirty guineas ("I have made some purchases at Mr. Sheldon's very cheap indeed," he writes under date of September 12, 1781) the five maps in question.

We have a description of them at this date in Gough's 'British Topography,' 1780: "Three large maps, near 80 feet square, in tapestry, by Francis and Richard Hicks, cover two sides of a gallery at Mr. Sheldon's at Weston, in Long Compton, in this county." The first of which he gives a detailed description is at York, and now before us. It is 13 feet high by 17 feet 3 inches broad, exclusive of a border of 17 inches, which appears to be of later manufacture than the map itself. The north of this map, which contains the county of Warwick, is to the east, and the uppermost name in the north-east corner is Swadlincote, in Derbyshire; on the south-east, Stonesfield, Oxon, is the corner name, and on the south-west Fulbrook and Sudley Castle, Gloucestershire. The recognizable names on the north-west are Hednesford and Sharshill, in Staffordshire, and in that corner are the compass and scale of miles, above which, in the north-east corner, are the Royal arms of England under the house of Tudor, with the garter and supporters, lion, and dragon. At the opposite corner, south-east, is a long inscription quoted from Camden's 'Britannia' in a square border adorned with bears (not, as Gough says, boars); and below this on the south-west, the arms of Sheldon with quarterings, impaling Markham also with quarterings.* The date, 1588, is to be upon this map.

The next map mentioned by Gough is also at York, and bears the inscription, "Oxonii et Bercheriæ comitatus locupletati per Franciscum Hickes." In this the north is, as usual at present, the top of the map, which is 13 feet by 17 feet 9 inches, and has a similar border to the last named, 20 inches wide. This map extends on the north from Bishopston, Stratford-on-Avon, to Temple Dinsley, Northamptonshire; and on the south from Chipnam (Chippenhams), Wilts, to Blechingly, Surrey. The arms here are those of Sheldon impaling Savage—argent, six lioncels rampant sable—which apparently carries its date into the seventeenth century, Ralph Sheldon of Beoley, who married Henrietta, daughter of Viscount Rocksavage, having been born 1623.

The third map described by Gough is also at York, and, having been unfortunately hung just above a row of gaslights, is almost obliterated by soot, but the inscription, "Wigornia comitatus locupletata, Richard Hyckes," can be made out,

* Edward Sheldon, son of Ralph, and grandson of William Sheldon, married Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Markham, of Allerton, Notts.

and the Sheldon arms without impalement at the top corner left, with opposite to them the arms of the county of Worcester. The dimensions of this are 13 feet 2 inches by 19 feet, and the border $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The explanation of our finding these maps on the walls of the Museum at York is this. When Walpole purchased them (in 1780?), he gave them to the then Lord Harcourt, who mentions in one of his letters to Gough his intention to erect a Gothic tower at Nuneham, "on purpose to receive that magnificent mark of the friendship of Mr. Walpole" (1783). These maps became, some twenty-five years later, the property of Edward Venables Vernon (Harcourt), Archbishop of York, who presented them to the Philosophical Society in 1827.

But the maps in the possession of the Bodleian, though sadly mutilated, are still more interesting. It is probable that this mutilation commenced at an early period, for Gough (1780) speaks of a piece of a fourth map about 5 feet square "shown for the freshness of its colours and beauty of a boar, and other emblematical figures upon its border," and says that it includes the east part of Surrey, and has the Sheldon quarterings with the motto, "Optimum pati." This fragment was sold, mounted as a screen, at the Strawberry Hill sale in 1842, seventeenth day, No. 59, to Strong of Bristol, for 12 guineas. "On one side a coat of arms, with a wild boar beneath; on the other, a map of part of the counties of Surrey and Middlesex; and Anthony and Cleopatra (Hercules and Omphale) beneath." Nor was this the only peculation. Mr. D. P. writes from Stuarts Lodge, Malvern Wells, June 26, 1869, to *Notes and Queries*, that in 1864-65 he "was offered at a shop in Davies Street, Berkeley Square, left-hand going north, a piece of a Sheldon map, representing west of Glostershire, for which he was asked £5."

The Sloane Street Decorative Needlework Society have them under repair this year. The first of the two Bodleian Maps (12 feet by 15 feet) is inscribed "Wigorn : Comi : Locupletata Ric : Hyckes;" and the "Scala Miliarum," south-west corner, gives 3 inches to the mile. A border of 21 inches has been cut off the north and north-east. At the west top corner is this inscription—

"On this side whiche the soune doth warme, With his declining beames.
Severn and Teme in channell deepe Doo run, too ancient stremes
Thes make the neibor's pasture riche. Thes yeld of fruit great store.
And do convey thro out the shire commodities many more."

Just below this a piece has been cut away across the whole map (from 20 to 24 inches wide) mutilating a figure of Judith with the head of Holfernes; in the border just below which is the word *Occidens*, and another inscription in panel—

"Here hills do lift their heads aloft, From whence sweet springes doo flow,
Whose moistur good doth firtill make The vallies coucht belowe,
Here goodly orchards planted are In fruite which doo abounde,
Thine ey wold make thin hart rejoyce To see such pleasant grounde."

At the south-west corner of the border are figures of Hercules and the Hydra under a canopy, and with Vases, Caryatides, and allegorical figures, another inscription between two human figures (one with a sphere and another with globe and compass), the word *Meridies* and—

"This southly part which hear below towards Glocester fall
Of corne and grasse great plentie yelds, but fruite exceedeth all."

Near this, however, a piece about 3 feet wide of the map, besides the border, has been cut away; as have the royal arms at the top, only leaving the heads of the supporters, lion and dragon, in use at the time of the Tudors.

The map has contained the whole of the counties of Worcester and Warwick, with as much of the adjoining shires as would complete the square. It is executed in colours, which have retained their freshness surprisingly, giving a kind of bird's-eye view of the country. At Hereford, for example, there is a careful distinction between the arched stone bridge over the Wye and the wooden tresselled bridge at *Fawnhope* and *Hamlacye*. All the villages are named, and many of the manor-houses (the park palings being all rendered), e.g. *The Bache*, *The Gilden Vale*, *Dorston Castle*; on a hill near *Kinaston Chapel* this inscription, "Whych was driven down by the removying of the ground."

The Vale of *Evesholme* is thus lettered, and the village of *Brodway* with its beacon. The *Rollright* stones are marked (seventeen in number), and many roads are indicated—notably, the *Rudgway* near *Alcester*. The rivers are blue, the borders of the county of Worcester red.

Still more interesting is the remaining map—the original, as I am inclined to think, of the second map I have described at York—and containing the valley of the Thames, and the counties of Oxford and Berkshire. Very large pieces have been cut away from its original surface of 12 feet 6 inches by 18 feet, and very little of the ornamental border is left, although, from a fragment representing two horses' heads (one biting the body of a man), it may be conjectured that among the various subjects represented were, as in the former map, the exploits of Hercules. More to be lamented is the fact that a small map of Africa at the centre of the lower border has been nearly all torn away, though the *Capo de Bona Speranza* and the island of Madagascar are distinct. Small pieces of celestial and terrestrial globes are still existent in the upper border.

Very little of the northern part of this map has escaped destruction. Fortunately, Oxford is spared, and with its castle on the mound, its spires and river, makes an interesting picture. A mutilated inscription recorded Camden's account of the "sixteen colleges and eight halls, with rich endowment of possions of all men without envy," to which is appended "Descripfit Willielmus Camdemus—Transtulit Willielmus . . . ;" the other name is missing, but possibly was *Sheldonus*.

Kingston Lisle and the *White Horse* are plainly to be seen in the lower part of the map, and the course of the Thames from Windsor to London Bridge.

The piece containing London is 18 by 36 inches, and is evidently on the same scale as that of the former map, viz. 3 inches to the mile. It went to the eastwards no farther than the piece now preserved, but we can see below how the portion has been cut away which Walpole made into a screen.

What now remains gives the Thames from London Bridge, with its houses, to Brentford (spelt Brainford in the map). Westminster and its palace, Lambeth and the archbishop's gateway, the village of St. Giles, the windmills on Hampstead Hill, are all portrayed with picturesque fidelity, as are the parks at Kensington and St. John's Wood. The course of the Brent is plainly marked, with the villages on its banks, and the old turretted house at Osterley (spelt Oaxterley in the map). Hingat, Hakeney, and Wilsdon are other noticeable names.

We now come to the most interesting question, From what survey were these maps taken, embracing the whole of the midland counties of England?—Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire; with parts of Stafford, Derby, Leicester, Cambridge, Bedford, Hertford; nearly all Middlesex, Surrey, Buckingham and Northampton, Gloucester and Hereford; portions of Wiltshire, Hampshire, and Shropshire. Gough has noticed that certain inaccuracies of spelling in the names of places represented in the maps are precisely the same as those in Saxton's maps. He also observes that the figure of the compass in one of them exactly resembles

that in Saxton's map of Kent. The spelling, he admits, savours of Flemish artists, and the Orientation of the North in the map at York, which I described first, was also a prevalent habit with Dutch geographers. Still, I venture to adhere to his opinion that they were founded upon Saxton's survey, though the scale is so much larger, and the detail in many cases so minute and particular, that it is impossible to resist the conviction that personal observation played an important part in their formation. I noticed, in parts of the country with which I was well acquainted, that the churches were not represented by a uniform and conventional pattern, but that some had spires on their towers and others not—correctly agreeing with their present-day condition. I might instance many other proofs of personal knowledge on the part of the maker of the maps, and, could only the cartoons be discovered, it would be beyond doubt.

I believe that the actual credit of the maps will be found to rest with Francis Hicks, of Barcheston, son of the weaver Richard. He entered Oxford as a member of St. Mary's Hall, and studied at Oriel College, but did not graduate. From Wood's account he was a man of culture, and left divers historical works; one of which, at any rate, was published by his son, Thomas Hicks, M.A., chaplain of Christ Church, 'Certain Select Dialogues of Lucian, together with his True History.' He spent his life in the neighbourhood of Shipston-on-Stour, and died in 1630, at Sutton-under-Brailes, where he was buried. I trust that the counties thus early and picturesquely delineated will combine to have facsimiles of these most interesting documents preserved.

Before the reading of the paper, the President said: This being the first afternoon meeting of the session, I will take the opportunity of announcing the subjects of those which are to follow: On "Sand-dunes," by Mr. Vaughan Cornish; on "History and Geography," by Mr. Andrews; on "Distribution of Earthquakes in Japan," by Mr. Davison; and on the "Magnetic Pole," by Mr. Reeves. This afternoon Mr. Bedford will give us the history of five tapestry maps of the midland counties, worked in the sixteenth century, one of which has been kindly lent to us by the York Philosophical Society, and is now before you. I will now call upon Mr. Bedford to read his paper.

After the reading of the paper, the President said: I am sure that we have all listened with great interest to Mr. Bedford's account of these tapestry maps, and that we appreciate the trouble and research he has devoted to the elucidation of their history. From a geographical point of view, I think that the most interesting part of the subject to which Mr. Bedford has alluded, is the question respecting the survey on which the tapestry maps are based. I agree with him that the tapestry maps and the maps of counties forming Saxton's atlas were, in all probability, based on the same survey; but we should like to know more about it. Saxton's beautifully engraved maps were published in 1579, and the date of the tapestry map before us is 1588. We have a few details of the life of Saxton, and we know the name of his principal patron. We are also told that he was occupied for nine years in making the survey of England, on which his maps were based. I cannot help thinking that it must have taken a much longer time, unless he had numerous assistants. The discovery of the original surveys would be of great geographical interest, nor do I think that such a discovery is beyond hope, for I find, from Ralph Thoresby's diary, that, in June, 1710, he rode to Sir Henry Goodrick's house at Ribston, and saw there "the autograph and some original surveys of Christopher Saxton's."

It would be a worthy undertaking for a young geographer, who also has a taste for antiquarian research, to give us a history of the maps of England, or, better still,