John Harwood Andrews, 1927-2019
Richard Oliver

It is not often given to a writer to develop the map-history of a country almost from scratch, but that is what John Andrews did. After school in Croydon, graduating from Cambridge, and a short period of teaching, in 1954 he went to Trinity College Dublin as a lecturer in geography. At Cambridge he had combined both geography and history, and was well placed not simply as an historical geographer, but as an historian who could wear his geographical learning lightly. His first essay was a booklet, *Ireland in maps: an introduction*, published in 1961, which accompanied an exhibition at Trinity College. Further essays and articles followed, culminating in two publications: *History in the Ordnance Map* (1974), conveniently timed for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, and *A paper landscape: the Ordnance Survey in nineteenth-century Ireland* (1975). The reissue of the latter in 2002 contains an introduction that with characteristic modesty attributes inspiration to RA Skelton and JB Harley, though a close attention to dates suggests that Andrews was a good deal more original than he gives himself credit for.

History in the Ordnance Map built on what Harley had achieved a decade earlier in *The historian's guide to Ordnance Survey maps*, scoring with many more illustrations, and the advantage that survival of pre-publication materials is much better in Ireland than in Britain. *A paper landscape* appeared seemingly fully-formed out of almost nothing. It is certainly true that Andrews was approached by Skelton and Harley as one of the collaborators in the project that eventually emerged in 1980, edited by WA Seymour, as *A history of the Ordnance Survey*, but *A paper landscape* reads as something quite different from any expansion of the three Irish chapters in 'Seymour'. There is a focus that the apparently more comprehensive volume lacks.

Having shown that there was rather more to Irish Ordnance Survey history than such episodes as the measurement of the Lough Foyle baseline, Andrews turned his attention elsewhere, and indeed published little more on the Survey that covered new ground. However, he wrote two more substantial volumes on Irish mapping. *Plantation acres: an historical study of the Irish land surveyor and his maps* (1985) includes a final chapter 'Mapping without surveyors', describing the coming of the Ordnance Survey. In 1997 he published *Shapes of Ireland: maps and their makers 1564-1839*, which was a general history of the topographic mapping of Ireland and, again, with the Ordnance Survey appearing in the final chapters. At the same time he was concerned with the substance of, and reaction to, Brian Friel's play *Translations* (1981), and what he saw as the play's misinterpretation (some would say misrepresentation) of the Survey's place-name collecting in Ireland between 1825 and 1842. Andrews published several pieces on this, but, as a meticulous worker, he found it hard to produce a completely satisfactory rebuttal.

Also from the late 1980s Andrews was concerned with approaches to map history, more particularly the school of theory-based writing espoused by Brian

Harley. A short-term verdict may be that Andrews did not make much headway against the prevailing orthodoxy; a longer-term view is that his much more empirical approach will better stand the test of time.

John Andrews' last substantial work was *Maps in those days: cartographic methods before 1850* (2009): an elegantly-written 500-page book pithily summarised in its title. It was an apt summing-up of his career.

John Andrews told me, on the last occasion that we met, that he did not enjoy writing – to which a just riposte is that a lot of people have enjoyed reading him, as well as profiting by it. In fact he took huge pains, effectively concealed in his fluid, witty style. He was a man of considerable interests outside cartography, exemplified by his official farewell lecture in Dublin being on – modern jazz. He will be very greatly missed.