

A Shared Objective Gives a Shared Gain – Collaboration in the Digitisation of the Early Survey Maps of Canterbury

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Since 2017 Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (TRONT), Environment Canterbury (ECan), Christchurch City Libraries and Archives New Zealand have contributed funds and shared the output in a project that has seen the bulk of the early survey maps of the Canterbury Land District photographed, giving the benefits of increased accessibility through online platforms, and preservation - with high quality digital surrogates negating the need for further handling.

The maps, held by Archives New Zealand's Christchurch office and dating from c.1850 – c.1880, were created to facilitate the legal



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purchase and sale of land parcels. While cadastral information was recorded (the legal description, boundaries and area of land parcels), topographical information was also captured. The maps' evidence of what the landscape was like prior to large-scale European settlement has made them a valuable source for TRONT and ECan.

While TRONT photographed the smaller flat maps in 2012, the larger roll maps (some approximately 7.5m x 2m), presented a problem with their size and fragility. As long ago as 1877 some of the maps were documented as decayed, soiled and considerably creased in the AJHR (Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives) report 'The Surveys of New Zealand'. In 2016 New Zealand Micrographics (NZMS) was engaged to engineer a camera rig that would allow the maps to be photographed safely, and after the largest and most fragile maps were photographed, a more efficient production line began.

With GIS (Geographic Information System) technology TRONT and ECan have been able to work with the images of the maps to overlay historical topographical data onto their own geospatial platforms, Kā Huru Manu - the Ngāi Tahu Cultural Mapping



A snip from Red Map. Chart of the River Avon. 1858. Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, Christchurch Regional Office. Reference: CAYN 23142 CH1031/ RM 157; R22668724

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Project (www.kahurumanu.co.nz) and the '19th Century Black Maps' application on ECan's Canterbury Maps website (<https://canterburymaps.govt.nz/>).

The preservation image files have been saved in the Government Digital Archive, and access images can be viewed on Archives New Zealand's online finding aid, Archway (www.archway.archives.govt.nz, series 23142).

As the digitisation of the Canterbury plans progressed, increased funding from LINZ, who contributed the bulk of the spend, allowed for the scope to expand to the capture of the roll maps of Westland, Nelson and Marlborough (also held by Archives Christchurch), and the Otago and Southland Land Districts (held by Archives Dunedin), extending free access to everyone.