

[From Year Book R.S.E., 1961-62]

**John Bartholomew, C.B.E., M.C., J.P., M.A.,
Hon.LL.D. (Edin.), F.R.G.S.**



Like his father, it was at an early age that John Bartholomew took over the control and direction of the great firm of mapmakers that has brought renown to Edinburgh. His father John George Bartholomew, LL.D., F.R.S.E. the fourth generation of cartographers, succeeded his father, John Bartholomew in 1888 when only twenty-eight. He died in 1920 and by then John Bartholomew of the fifth generation, recently returned from over four years' active service in France and Flanders, had virtually taken control. At the age of thirty he fell heir to the steadily increasing responsibilities and soon showed himself to be a leader in his craft and a pioneer in everything that goes to the making of maps.

John Bartholomew's first major production was *The Times Survey Atlas of the World* published in 1922, a work on which his father had embarked and for which he

had prepared the majority of the plates. Like his forebears, John Bartholomew always put the user of the map in the forefront of its construction. But in the twenties a much wider vista of users was opening out as the Machine Age developed by land, sea and air.

It was his grandfather who introduced layer, or hypsometrical, colouring for relief representation and it was his father who developed this technique, of which the outstanding example was the Royal Scottish Geographical Society's *Atlas of Scotland* which appeared in 1895 and included special maps on geology, physiography and meteorology. John Bartholomew extended these developments and made some fundamental contributions to modern cartography.

In 1949 he read a paper to the Royal Society of Edinburgh on new projections for the earth's surface specially designed to show circumpolar relationships in the Northern hemisphere. It was this thinking that was the basis of his maps for air travel which have been widely copied.

Another major contribution was the wholehearted adoption of the principles enunciated by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use. These were embodied in *The Times Survey Atlas* of 1922, and later productions.

In yet another field John Bartholomew pioneered. It was in the mechanics of production, and it can be seen developing in the successive works published under his direction. The printing techniques were perfected using modern offset printing presses. The style of lettering was improved and by the use of a blue plate for coastline and rivers greater

clarity and legibility of the names was achieved. He also gave much thought to the paper on which the maps are printed, and, in order to reduce expansion or contraction under varying weather conditions, introduced air-conditioning to the printing plant.

He maintained and extended the inheritance of the Geographical Institute, an organization for the assembly, co-ordination and revision of a great deal of statistical and other material far beyond the mere revision of topographical surveys.

All this skill and craftsmanship lay behind the production of the firm under John's direction. In his time the major works published were *The Times Survey Atlas* in 1922, *Handy Reference Atlas*, *Citizen's Atlas of the World*, *Survey Gazetteer of the British Isles*, *Times Handy Atlas*, *Advanced Atlas of Modern Geography*, all culminating in that magistral work *The Times Atlas of the World* published in five volumes between 1955 and 1960. Nor should we forget the immense amount of work done by Bartholomews, chiefly for the Ordnance Survey, during the Second World War from 1938 to 1945.

Beyond the work of his firm John Bartholomew had many interests. It was largely due to him that not only was the Geography Department of Edinburgh University provided with better library and laboratory facilities, but also with a professor. Like his father he was devoted to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society of which he was Honorary Secretary for thirty years, succeeding his father and being succeeded by his son, John. He was President for four years.

In addition to his geographical interests, he was one of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland. He served on the council of the National Trust for Scotland and, through his boyhood acquaintance with Canon Rawnsley, was able to bring to this much of the experience gained south of the Border. He was a Member of the Council of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and for many years the Treasurer of the Royal Society Club where he had the rare distinction of being elected an Honorary Member.

Amongst his other honours were, LL.D. from the University of Edinburgh, the Gold Medal of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and The Founder's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society for his outstanding contributions to cartography. In 1960 John Bartholomew, the Cartographer Royal, was appointed Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

To the tangible products John Bartholomew added ideas, inventions and indeed vitalized cartography throughout the world, making geographers and others realise that cartography can rightly claim a place as an art.

All that, however, is but one facet of his character, the one which brought him the fame he never sought. To turn to the other we must revert to the name of *Ian* by which his family and intimates knew him, and which served to distinguish him from John of the fourth and John of the sixth generation.

Ian had a great zest for life, a useful inheritance chiefly from his mother, herself the epitome of Highland hospitality. And this was reinforced by his marriage to Minou (Marie Antoinette) daughter of Dr Leon Sarolea and niece of the famous bibliophile, Charles Sarolea, who was Professor of French at Edinburgh University.

Ian's spirit of adventure was early exercised, even before going to Merchiston, on the hills of Scotland, which, starting with the Pentlands, always had a very great attraction

for him. Many a night he slept with his friends amongst the heather, especially after entering Edinburgh University and between his visits to study cartography at the Universities of Leipzig and Paris.

When August 1914 came Ian immediately joined up and, having been a sergeant in the Officers Training Corps, was straightway commissioned into the Gordon Highlanders. November found him serving in France and Flanders with the 1st Battalion. He continued to serve in the battalion and became the company officer with the longest continuous service. For his outstanding leadership and gallantry he was thrice mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Military Cross.

After being wounded he was posted to serve on the staff of Sir Douglas Haig, first at St Omer and then at Montreuil, where he was able to use his skill. After a spell at Le Havre he returned as Staff-Captain Intelligence to St Omer where his talents found full scope in decoding and deciphering enemy messages. All this time he kept in touch with his many friends in the fighting line and never spared himself in getting information home to their relatives. Many a letter that Ian wrote brought the greatest comfort to a sorrowing home. His understanding and sympathy in such letters was matched by that of his brother, Hugh, who was mortally wounded in October 1917 as Company Commander in the 14th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

After the war, as the arthritis, which had started in the trenches, developed, his movements became restricted and his zest for adventure had to find outlet in the deeds of others. He knew every explorer of note in his seventy years of life, and was the friend of most of them. A contemporary of James Wordie, and largely through him, he knew most of the young men who took part in the Spitsbergen, Greenland and other expeditions. These two great friends, born within the year of each other, died within the month.

In his four sons he found expression of his own talents. The two eldest, John and Peter, served in the last war, the former in the Sappers in survey work and the latter in the Scots Guards, winning, like his father, the Military Cross. With their third brother, Robert, they carry on the direction of the Geographical Institute.

Ian possessed in high degree the military virtues. The courage and fortitude which he displayed in the face of the illness of his latter years were no surprise to those who had served with him in the trenches during the first winters of the 1914 War. They matched his steadfastness by which he proved the motto of his regiment, *Bydand*. An old friend, Douglas Allan has summed this up very vividly in the words: "He was ever mindful of his men, who loved him, and his particular mixture of kindly, though slightly wry philosophy and Scottish 'piety', gained him a place both as leader and confidant".

This gives point to the fact that the expression of his talents, of his qualities of character and of his nature, sprang from his strong personal conception of his duty to God and to his fellowmen.

Born in 1890, he died in Edinburgh on February 9, 1962. He became a Fellow in 1921.

ALICK BUCHANAN SMITH