

Mayson's Ordnance Model of the Lake District (1875)

Overview This project used digital technologies to explore a physical landscape model of the English Lake District created by Henry and Thomas Mayson in 1875 which was displayed in Keswick, Cumbria. It is believed the model no longer exists but a large number of negative moulds were recovered from storage early in 2013. Whilst this collection could not be displayed to the public in a meaningful way it offered an opportunity to recreate elements of the original model to allow visitors today to appreciate the detail and scale of the original model and to think about more recent surveys of the Lake District.

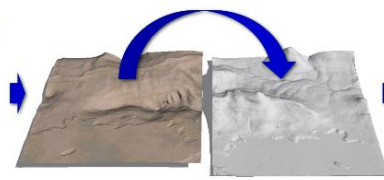


Creation of the Mayson model The arrival of the railway made Keswick a hugely popular tourist destination and soon afterwards in 1875 the Mayson brothers capitalised on this, commissioning a large physical landscape model to offer visitors an unprecedented view of the landscape they were about to explore. The model was constructed mathematically from Ordnance Survey (OS) maps which had recently been produced and measured 15 feet by 14 feet, at a scale of 6 inches to the mile horizontally and vertically. It was advertised heavily at the railway station and through posters and fliers distributed to hotels and guest houses around the town. It is believed the model itself was broken up some time in the 1970s but 142 negative moulds out of an original total of 210 were recovered from storage in Workington in May 2013.

Digital reconstruction A team from the University of Nottingham (School of Geography, Digital Humanities Centre and Centre for 3D Design) have begun to explore the collection of negative moulds. They were first laser-scanned in order to preserve the collection but also to enable reconstruction of parts of the model. The scanned data was tidied and then inverted to produce a positive digital model for each mould which then helped us to identify the geographic area to which each one related, as the location and orientation of most of the moulds was not known. In order to give people a sense of what the original model would have looked like a number of physical replica tiles are being created by sending the processed data to a milling machine which carves out the contours from a solid block of model board.



Laser-scanning



Digital Processing



Milling

Designing a new visitor experience The challenge for re-presenting this collection of historical objects is to convey the size and detail of the original model, and the part it played in the early days of mass tourism in Keswick. With the active involvement of Ordnance Survey we will be exhibiting the work undertaken so far on this project from 9th February to 17th May 2015 at Keswick Museum & Art Gallery.

The exhibition will tell the story of the model's rediscovery, display historical objects related to its creation, including some of the original moulds, and will present attempts to reconstruct parts of the model. Several digitally reconstructed replica tiles will be displayed over a newly designed Ordnance Survey floor map at the scale of the original Mayson model. A larger part of the replica model centred on Keswick, again over the floor map, will be enhanced with vertically projected maps and imagery. The capabilities of digital landscape models will be demonstrated through a virtual tour of the Lake District. Virtual models have their advantages but do struggle to give an overview of a landscape and we will be promoting the idea of revisiting physical landscape models but using modern data and techniques to help with their construction.

The Grandest Views
Models of Lakeland from Victorian Times to the Present Day

An Exhibition at Keswick Museum & Art Gallery

Monday 9th February - Sunday 17th May 2015

