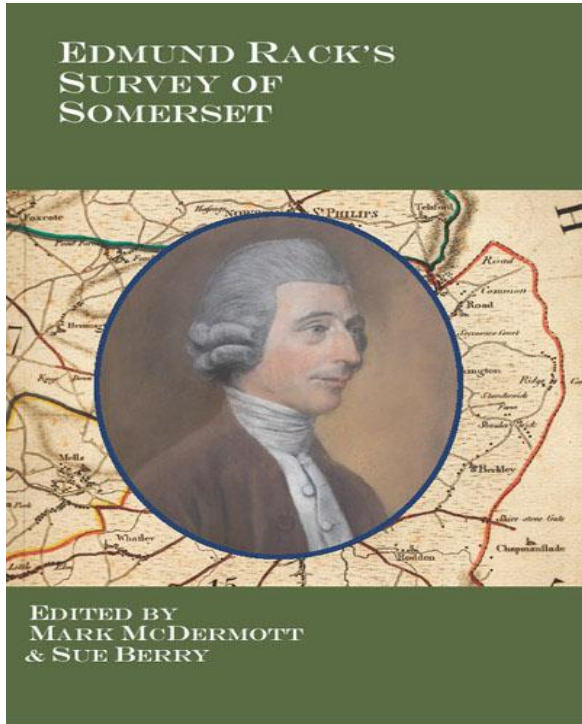


Edmund Rack's Survey of Somerset:

A transcription, edited by Mark McDermott and Sue Berry

Edited by Mark McDermott and Sue Berry



Published by the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, this is a monumental volume covering almost the whole of the ancient county of Somerset.

Containing 440 pages, 34 black and white illustrations of the period from the Society's collections, and a colour full size map of the county from the mid-eighteenth century, this volume offers a wealth of information.

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In 1781 Edmund Rack collaborated with the Reverend John Collinson in preparing the *History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset*, to which his major contribution was the 'Survey'. His principal task was to carry out a survey of the county hundred by hundred, which involved personally visiting each parish as well as collating information supplied by others, such as clergymen, including responses to questionnaires. At intervals over several years Rack sent Collinson his descriptions of parishes, hundred by hundred. He was also involved in marketing the proposed *History* by seeking names for the list of subscribers and collecting subscriptions. He visited the court of quarter sessions at Taunton, where he found 'near 40 Principal Gentlemen' enthusiastic of his efforts, although they insisted that they should see a printed account of a parish as a 'specimen' of the work.

The survey was undoubtedly an arduous physical undertaking, causing Rack to travel for days at a time, presumably in all weathers. He encountered a 'thousand' fleas at an inn at Compton Martin and for a man with a weak constitution the survey took its toll, as he frequently suffered from colds and a recurrent winter cough. On 10 January 1787 he informed Collinson, in handwriting fainter than usual, that for ten days he had been so ill that he could scarcely hold a pen, writing 'I must resign myself to the fury of the storm which will soon hide me for ever'. Unfortunately Rack died shortly afterwards and his death prevented his work from being completed. Fortunately some parts of the survey were undertaken by others who were interested in local history, such as Joshua Toulmin who contributed an account of Taunton and Abraham Crocker who contributed an account of Frome as well as providing much valuable information on eastern Somerset.

This has left us with a unique collection of material on almost the whole of the ancient county of Somerset. Expertly edited and made available to a wider audience, this volume is the product of a great deal of hard work and good will from volunteers, supported by some generous grants from individuals and institutions. Without this it is likely that it would never have been produced in this way. The Society hopes it will be used by generations of historians as a standard work on the ancient county of Somerset.

***An Improved Map of the County of Somerset
Divided into it's Hundreds***

by Emanuel Bowen, 1749

Approximately 75cm x 58cm folded colour print
included with this edition of the book

