



Sheetlines

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“Kerry musings”

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The Charles Close Society was founded in 1980 to bring together all those with an interest in the maps and history of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and its counterparts in the island of Ireland. The Society takes its name from Colonel Sir Charles Arden-Close, OS Director General from 1911 to 1922, and initiator of many of the maps now sought after by collectors.

The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.

Kerry musings

David Archer

Just as Yo Hodson¹ and Brian Adams² can remember their first maps so can I remember the first few maps in my life.

When I was nine we moved to Roehampton, and for about three years I spent most of my free time in Richmond Park, wandering about studying the wildlife. Just inside Roehampton Gate, next to the keeper's hut was a coloured map in a glass case. This showed the whole park, all the gates, roads, ponds, plantations and the few buildings in the park.³ We looked at it on every visit, either to plan our day or to see where we had been, and it was only a few years ago that I realised the map must have been the Ordnance Survey's *Royal parks – Richmond Park*.

At about the same time I was very interested in the Romans (at that age it was either Romans or Vikings). My father bought me the Ordnance Survey's *Map of Roman Britain*, which was quite a lavish thing to possess. Inside the nice pictorial cover, were a booklet, which was boring, a gazetteer, which meant nothing, and a map, which was rather disappointing as anything of interest was depicted only by dots or symbols. The best bits were the roads. Long straight lines, which caught the imagination and could be traced on the family atlas, the *AA Handbook*.

At some point in the early years of secondary education, I took the Underground overground from Putney Bridge to Southfields. Even though I had a season ticket, it was worth queuing at the ticket office at least once a week in order to pick up London Transport *Underground Diagrams*, as they sometimes changed. Don't ask me how I discovered it (nobody told me) but I knew that identical diagrams had different print codes and hence were of interest. Yes, I have been a ticker as well. Nice crisp diagrams are a wonderful thing to hold, so satisfying.

When I left school, a friend and I went camping in Cornwall for a week. We bought a booklet on twenty historic Cornish pubs and decided to visit two a day. The family atlas was still the *AA Handbook*, and was decidedly unhelpful in identifying exactly how to find our daily tourist attractions. So I bought a cloth backed map in a blue and cream cover, which was perfect for the purpose. Thus, sheet 15 of the *1:250,000 Fifth Series Map of Great Britain* must have been the first Ordnance Survey map that I bought. What was yours? It was good fun plotting the pubs on the map, pairing them and arranging our itinerary.⁴

Nothing much followed until one lunchtime in Mr Collins' Triangle Bookshop in Upper Norwood, in about 1973-4. Several times each week I would visit Mr Collins, looking for nothing in particular. One day, as I was talking to him I saw a *One-inch Popular Edition Map of England and Wales* with a large border in super condition lying on the counter,

¹ *The map collector* 54 (1991), 10-15.

² *Sheetlines* 40 (1994), 7-16.

³ Including the White Lodge, which housed a ballet school. We never saw any of the girls, even though, as I have since discovered, there were escapees.

⁴ *Down from the hill* by Alan Sillitoe describes a cycle touring holiday closely connected to an atlas. The cover of the Panther paperback edition is illustrated with a *One-inch Popular Edition Map of England and Wales* sheet 54, Nottingham. Well worth looking for.

picked it up, looked inside, saw the light, bought it and became an Ordnance Survey Map Collector. As simple as that.

Mr Collins and local jumble sales became my main, very small source of maps and nothing of note happened until I changed jobs and started to frequent Woolwich Reference Library once or twice a week at lunchtimes. Beryl, the reference librarian knew that I was interested in maps and one day produced four or five which her husband no longer needed and sent with his compliments. One looked very familiar, yet not so. It had a blue border and the man on the hillside had a rucksack. This was the first *One-inch Fifth Edition Map of England and Wales* I had ever seen (two and a half years after the road to Damascus?).

A fortnight later, I was rummaging in a box under a stall in Whitechapel and emerged with another rucksack man, but with a bright red border to the cover and an ER cypher at the top. Without noticing the word *Relief* on the cover, or looking at the map, I decided that the OS must have changed the colour with the change of monarch.

So, just as I know exactly where I was when told that John Lennon had been shot, I can remember when I saw certain maps for the first time. Can you?