



# *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*

In September, the Ordnance Survey sent me a questionnaire as part of their deliberations on the future of the 1:50,000 Second Series maps (marketed as *Landrangers*). The first section asked whether the maps would benefit from changes to scale, accuracy, content, packaging etc and I ticked YES to most items without any real thought, believing that improvement is always possible. The second section brought me up short when it asked what changes I would suggest to scale, accuracy, content, packaging etc. I spent a long time thinking about each item and realised that for such things I did not really have much to say, as I had never previously considered them. I use modern maps infrequently, and for my purposes they are fine. I keep four very tatty local 1:50,000 First Series sheets in the glove compartment of the car and buy a modern motoring atlas in a remainder book shop every couple of years. Whenever we go away for a few days, I use the local 1:50,000 and a couple of 1:25,000 Second Series (*Pathfinders*) from stock. *Landrangers* are only used to find the way on minor roads, and sometimes footpaths, both of which have been no problem. Having decided that I did not know what I was talking about, I opened a recent 1:50,000 sheet and studied it, legend first.

The symbol for telephones was the first to catch my eye, blue for motoring organisations and black for public telephones. I have never heard anyone say that they have used a motoring organisation telephone and cannot think when one would. The initial response to a breakdown is not to open a 1:50,000 map to see where the nearest blue telephone symbol is. Today, one would normally stop the first passing child and ask to use their mobile phone, or in remote areas, one stops the first one-handed driver and uses the phone clutched in their other hand. In the year 2000, instead of being frantic to find the nearest telephone, many people would be asking where the nearest public computer terminal was in order to check their email. It might be more useful to show cyber cafes and public libraries with Internet access rather than telephones.

Golf courses have a small black flag and CH shows a clubhouse. What is so important about golf and the nineteenth hole? Gone are the days of open cockpit aeroplanes and the need for pilots to land on golf courses in order to have a quick brandy in the club house to fortify them for the next leg of the journey. Surely scout huts are as important as clubhouses. Better still, show bus shelters in rural areas.

Public conveniences are shown only in rural areas, where there are plenty of bushes, but omitted from built-up areas where there are far more people in need of this information. On the map we get PC, why not WC, which has almost universal recognition? The symbol is the smallest pink square imaginable. How boring. Surely the Ordnance Survey could come up with a better symbol for toilets. I suggest little pairs of elbows for men and knees for women, hoping that better suggestions are sent to the Editor for the next issue. Another improvement would be to add to the symbol for motorway service areas an indication of the toilet

provision, so that Charnock Richard on the M6 would rate miserably, whilst Chorley outside Coventry would be added to a holiday itinerary.

It seemed that I had objections to most of the legend. Many symbols are as uneven in distribution as toilets. Post Offices, pubs, telephones and toilets do not exist within most urban areas, yet places of worship and schools all seem to be present. With litigation so prevalent, I am amazed at the absence of a tiny let-out clause on each map to the effect that a policy of selective accuracy is followed.

For my part, all the blue symbols such as nappy changing facilities, frog crossings and charity shop trails can go (even if they are in three languages). I would not miss town halls and churches, but would keep hospitals (noting accident and emergency departments) and add police stations and car parks. Why do police stations not appear on maps? So much of the legend seems plain old fashioned, and it seems, geared up to providing markers for helping aviators find their way (glasshouses, windmills, windpumps, chimneys...). If the idea is to mark things that will help to sell maps, then the OS should consider adding the position of traffic speed cameras.

Why show milestones? I can see that cyclists might find them useful; for walkers they are so depressing and motorists cannot read them, even if they are free of vegetation. I wonder whether all of those shown still exist? When did the Ordnance Survey last check them? No, I think that the OS should justify each symbol it proposes to use from now on, and tradition is not a justification.

In my opinion these maps desperately need a little cup and saucer symbol for good teashops. Put this on any map and sales will rocket. What is the highlight of an afternoon walk? The tea shop. What is at the back of your mind when planning a long journey, but where to stop for tea and the facilities. Motorways have a symbol for service areas so why not the same for major roads and footpaths? More people go into tea shops within the area of a single 1:50,000 sheet in one day than the combined annual total for all 204 sheets of people using them to find club houses, golf courses or AA telephone boxes.

Perhaps the time will come when an individual will not be obliged to have anything on a map they do not want. The Ordnance Survey could put the whole of the 1:50,000 (plus extra features and symbols) onto their website and charge customers for the detail they extract. One could have any feature, symbol or text in any colour, and vary the size somewhat, perhaps with the ability to add one's own detail.

So, what would my specification for a 1:50,000 or similar scale map be like? Roads, footpaths (marking muddy sections), water, contours, buildings, deciduous woods, parks, all toilets, teashops and some text. I am undecided on railways; maybe have only the stations marked and then map purchasers would have the fun of joining the red dots together as they saw fit, taking either the leisurely coastal route or the bumpy ride across the mountains. To appeal to the young, skateboarding areas, kite-flying spaces, cyber cafes, sites of annual rock festivals, cash-point machines and such might be of interest, though I am showing my age as skateboards have probably long gone.