



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

The Biker's Retreat, Dolgellau: If you are looking for a good value biking package which includes stunning scenery, tasty food, stylish accommodation with brilliant riding, Biker's Retreat is the place for you ... Leading specialists in short biking breaks, accommodating 18 people ... three star Guest House ...

So runs a leaflet I recently picked up, reminding me of two ideas I have pondered for several years. In the first, substitute Ordnance Survey maps for biking. I have long had an idea for regular map weekends², based on a well-appointed small hotel or guesthouse. It would function as an ordinary establishment, but could also provide a retreat on any day of the week for individuals wishing to get away and immerse themselves in studying Ordnance Survey maps. The star facility would be a first class map library, with sets of all small-scale maps, examples of all large-scale maps and other Ordnance Survey products. A book library would include sets of Annual Reports, Publication Reports, any book written about the Ordnance Survey, *Sheetlines*, and as many internal documents as could be found.

Such a retreat would be aimed at anyone who wished to study OS matters in a comfortable and relaxed setting. Members often need somewhere to go in order to work out ideas and complete a project or article for *Sheetlines*. Here, they could spend all day in the library without having to worry about closing time, catching trains home or where to eat in

¹ I know of, but have never seen, a rather earlier half-inch map, *70 Miles about Birmingham*.

² I assume the idea came after the initial Shap weekend.

the evening. Friends and family could go along as well and pursue their own interests, meeting up at dinner.

Similarly, small groups of three to six might wish to meet for a day to thrash out a problem they had been jointly working on. So much more can be achieved face to face as opposed to other forms of communication.

Weekend meetings of twelve to fifteen would be the largest groups catered for, and would probably be short educational courses, exploring a particular subject or demonstrating how to tackle a research project on OS maps. Residential study is more attractive than day meetings which involve early mornings, travel and a not over generous amount of study time.

Over time, the idea was to extend the theme courses to military, railway, canal, geological, Bartholomew, and Cruchley maps etc, as supporting material was acquired. All material and information generated for and by courses would be held for future reference and visitor use, thereby increasing the usefulness of the library.

The second idea was that the Charles Close Society might have its own map library and a building in which to hold small meetings. It would be a better collection than the combined holdings of the copyright libraries, a true research library for Ordnance Survey maps. A 'completist' library with a copy of every state of every map, of every cover, of all the research notes compiled by members, whether single sheets of paper or bulky files of material yet to be written up, supported by our own database. Rooms for study and for larger meetings would be available, as would refreshments and possibly accommodation.

Conventional libraries are frequently unsuited to group study where everyone gathers round a map and discusses it, and can seldom muster every state of a particular sheet, the study of which interests a lot of our members. Map rooms seldom provide a strong supporting book section on Ordnance Survey matters.

The Ordnance Survey does not hold a copy of every map it has produced, and on the whole, the copyright libraries have been very passive with regard to legal deposition, usually receiving a first state of a sheet, but not rigorously seeking later states when published. Some attempt has been made to fill the gaps in recent years, but finance and staff time are in short supply.

Sheetlines and other publications mention specific maps that are only held in one or two locations, frequently not copyright libraries. The copyright libraries do not have identical holdings, although there is a tremendous overlap. If one wishes to pursue a subject, one often has to visit several of these institutions, if not all.

Should the society establish its own map library, a core collection of small-scale maps could be built fairly quickly. From then on, I am sure that donations, both in the form of maps and money would see it strengthen rapidly. Other learned and professional societies have a library, so why not the Charles Close Society? The aim would be to mirror the combined holdings of other public collections and to fill in the gaps where they are lacking, for example by gathering together all printings for each one-inch series, so that a member could study the development of a single sheet by having all states laid out side by side. No single publicly funded library will ever have the funds to pursue such a vision, so why not have it as a long term aim of our society?

The Royal Geographical Society has a fine building and a world class map library; one to equal any copyright library in terms of Ordnance Survey maps, so why should we not?

As it takes a lot of money to maintain a building and map collection, possibly with a paid staff, the project should be self-financing. The society could run day or weekend courses for which a charge would be levied (over and above the free members' meetings).

Gradually, the two ideas have become fused in my mind. The retreat would need a first class library, similar to that proposed for the society, and the society would need a building, similar to that at the retreat...perhaps the retreat could house and maintain the society's map library in return for use by visitors...if the society were to run weekend courses based on its map library, it would need a building with accommodation...maybe the society could set up the retreat to help finance its library ... The Mapper's Retreat, western mid-Wales, an ideal relaxing location with fresh air, sea, scenery, access to the National Library ...