



Sheetlines

The journal of
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps

“Kerry musings”

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Sheetlines, 63 (April 2002), pp.52-53

Stable URL: <http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Issue63page52.pdf>

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Published by
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps
www.CharlesCloseSociety.org

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

I was recently thinking about time capsules, and imagined one being filled with examples of great achievements from the last two hundred years. Someone telephoned and asked me to select a single item to represent the Ordnance Survey since its foundation. One item, no matter what size (well, within reason) or date. Something to be dug up a thousand years from now which would show what the OS was about.

A trig point would be fun, or maybe a copper plate or litho stone? One of the cannons illustrated in the last issue of *Sheetlines*? Yes, a pre-war *Small-scale Description* showing the range of maps available with coloured extracts. No, why not the whole of the current OS website? Yes, the little, bright pink aeroplane that the OS had a few years ago, that would be fun. And so it went on for a short while until I began to give some serious thought to the matter.

What do most people think of when they hear the words ‘Ordnance Survey’? Maps. For what reason would the Ordnance Survey be considered for the time capsule? Maps. Is there any problem in having maps as my chosen item? Yes, I am only allowed one. No ifs and buts. One map to represent the very essence of our beloved organisation.

I usually consider all things OS under one or more of five headings: large-scale, small-scale, folded or flat, and non-map material (books, ephemera etc). Although small-scale maps derive from larger scales, most people know, and always have known, the Ordnance Survey by their small-scale maps. And to most people, small-scale means the one-inch map. Architects, surveyors, estate agents and utilities all work primarily with large-scale detail, but the general public, if they have only a single map in the house, will usually have a small-scale map, folded into an OS cover. Most issues of *Sheetlines* are heavily weighted towards them, and most of our map collections are overwhelmingly small-scale orientated. Of the small-scale maps, the coloured one-inch to the mile map is king. We all know that Ordnance Survey maps have been produced for all areas of the British Isles, but again only one candidate is in the running for which area to select. England and Wales come top by nearly every measurement used. At any scale, they need more sheets for coverage than either

Scotland or Ireland, and have had more series issued for them. Maps of England and Wales have sold in greater numbers and are collected by more people.

So, which series would I choose? The example would have to be a nice clear map, which is easy to read. It would have to be a standard series that was on sale to the public, and would have to have been popular with the public, loved even. I am fond of the Third Edition but dismissed it because of the hachures, which distract the eye from other detail, overpowering the map and failing to show relief clearly. A Popular Edition was ruled out since much of the black detail on any sheet is poor and breaking up, as anyone who has studied a sheet knows (even without a magnifying glass). Although quite nice in open country, with some lovely colours, the Fifth Edition was never completed and can be so densely black in urban areas, that information is obscured. Details such as railway lines just vanish. The Fifth Relief Edition is also incomplete, and certainly not representative of the one-inch map over the last two centuries. The New Popular Edition is another series that I quite like, but does suffer from blackouts in urban areas as with the Fifth Edition, whilst the northern sheets were somewhat out of date when issued.

No, my main candidates come down to the Revised New Series and the Seventh Series, one at either end of the coloured one-inch date spectrum. The Revised New Series is one of my favourite maps, especially the early issues, as it has such lovely, subtle, old-fashioned colours. The red contours beneath the brown hachures are particularly attractive, and the whole is often set off by the boldness of the black or black and white railways. But as a good example of a clear, easy to read map it fails miserably. An additional snag is that it appeared when maps were first being put into covers, and those that it appears in are not really typical of Ordnance Survey map covers. The example must be in a representative cover, I decided.

The Seventh Series really is a very nice, extremely clear map, especially the early ten-colour states. It would be a good example as it is the culmination of features worked out in preceding series. It was up to date as far as revision went and continues to have a good following, fifty years after it began to be issued. The red and cream covers are fairly typical in that they have a small sketch map on the front and are printed in one colour plus black, as are the Third Edition, Populars, Fifths and New Populars, well, in general terms.

Yes, I think that an early Seventh Series would do nicely. But which one? Sheet 154 Cardiff of course. A ten colour printing. This is certainly my favourite sheet in this series. The northern half is truly wonderful, with valley after valley lying side by side, dense with closely packed railways, roads, housing and industry. The warmth given by the use of ten colours, (especially, somehow, the greeny-grey grid) on early sheets is a bonus. Nothing other than a map, a coloured map, could give such a vivid picture of this area. And in doing so, this map shows just how powerful mapping can be in portraying the landscape, as words or aerial photography fail to. In addition to the valleys, the southern half of the sheet illustrates a large urban area, open countryside and coastal features, so it is quite representative. Britain before the motorways. With industry, and before giant blue symbols started to appear in abundance across the countryside. Nicely in the middle years of the coloured Ordnance Survey map.

So, there we have it. An early printing of sheet 154 in the Seventh Series, folded in standard red and cream covers, is my choice of a single object that is representative of the Ordnance Survey in the last two hundred years. And your choice is?