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“Visit to Alan Godfrey Maps”

John Davies

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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.

Visit to Alan Godfrey Maps

John Davies

This year Alan Godfrey Maps celebrates two notable achievements: its 25th anniversary and the appearance of its 2000th map. Alan Godfrey, himself a founder member of the Charles Close Society, hosted a visit by the society on 25 April to help mark the occasion.

On a sunny spring day, Alan conducted a tour of the premises, a former school building in the old mining village of Leadgate; led a brief exploration of the locality guided by the reprint of the 1895 25 inch map and gave an entertaining account of the history and methods of the company.

The company produces reproduction Ordnance maps of local areas. At the heart of the operation is the camera, a huge contraption with sliding back plate and a separate darkroom for the operator's controls, acquired second-hand from the printers to whom the work was once contracted. Two series are produced, reproduction one-inch maps and reductions of 25 inch (1:2500) maps.

Original maps, generally dating from mid-nineteenth century to the 1920s, are borrowed from libraries or other sources. Once photographed, as many imperfections and blemishes as possible are deleted from the negative. Printing from the photographic plate is sub-contracted.

Three further ingredients contribute to the success of the series; the front cover illustration, the historical notes and the directory extract. Cover pictures are carefully chosen to represent, as far as possible, typical contemporary views of the area depicted on the map. These are usually old postcards from Alan's extensive and growing collection. Historical notes, about 3,000 words of well researched local history, are provided by a team of about twenty regular contributors, including Alan himself, who writes about twenty a year. The extracts from a local trade directory, typically a contemporary Kelly's Directory, give a flavour of the shops and businesses flourishing at the time.

What strikes the observer is the care and attention given to detail and quality to ensure that the finished product is of the highest standard. The price, however, is surprisingly low at only £2.20 each.

The maps show the growth of industrial Britain and its roads and railways and are of interest to a wide range of researchers, local historians, genealogists,



GERRY JARVIS

Alan Godfrey talks about his maps

industrial archaeologists, transport enthusiasts and so on. About 30% of business today is direct sales to individuals via the website, www.alangodfrey.com, or by telephone, and is handled by a small administrative staff. Other sales are through stockists or libraries.

We would like to thank Alan Godfrey for his hospitality, and his staff, Liz Atkinson, Annette Christie, Donna Fiddes and Keith Jamieson, for the warmth of their welcome.