



Sheetlines

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

“Nor any drop to drink”

Peter Warburton

Sheetlines, 100 (August 2014), pp37-39

Stable URL:

<http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Issue100page37.pdf>

*This article is provided for personal, non-commercial use only.
Please contact the Society regarding any other use of this work.*

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.



Nor any drop to drink

Peter Warburton

Some previous owners have deplorable habits. They mark with circles the locations they hope to find and commemorate with crosses places with romantic associations. They ink in their routes and dates. They undertake partial revisions. What these embellishments have in common is that they are indelible and almost always unwelcome. The rare exception is when the additions prompt the well-behaved new owner to spend pleasant hours in Record Offices and libraries satisfying his curiosity. It is a bonus when the artwork exhibits exemplary draughtsmanship.

The early history of this copy of part of Third Edition sheet 51 *Llangollen, Oswestry and Wrexham*, published December 1921 (labelled *Llangollen and District*) is writ large and bold on the front and back 'Return to Eng. Dept 31 Sub Ground'. Neat lettering in the bottom right margin reads 'Warrington Corporation Water 1923'.

Local Authority minutes tend to be frustratingly laconic in style. Decisions are noted but not reasons or debate, dissent is only recorded when some troublemaker insists. The first hint of the Ceiriog scheme in Warrington Council minutes is an unexplained item on 24 January 1921: 'the Engineer be authorised

to arrange for the placing of five rain gauges in the Ceiriog Valley at a cost of £5 per annum for each gauge'. Research has failed to reveal whether local activists sabotaged the gauges, but no readings are recorded in the minutes. On 24 March 1921 the Town Clerk reported that 'the surrounding Authorities were pressing the [water] Committee to proceed with the proposed augmentation of the water supply and he was requested to arrange for the formation of a Joint Committee in connection therewith'. Over the next two years there are references to the fixing of dates for meetings but never any report of their deliberations. The reason for the diplomatic silence became apparent in 1923.

Warrington's need for an additional water source was not in question. Demand was growing and not only was the yield from local bore holes in slow decline, but water quality was deteriorating with a significant increase in hardness. The great weakness of Warrington's case for the Ceiriog scheme was that the borough had an existing legal right to draw two million gallons a day from Liverpool's Lake Vyrnwy undertaking, but any deal with Liverpool was apparently regarded as out of the question. Planning went ahead with the appointment of outside engineers and successful meetings were held with the Ministry of Health. In July 1922 the Town Clerk was empowered to take preliminary steps 'with a view to the promotion of a Bill in the ensuing Session of Parliament' and Agents and Counsel were engaged.

Opinion in the Ceiriog valley was vehemently opposed to the flooding and the restrictions on the use of 13,000 acres of the Berwyn range. The Ceiriog Valley Defence Fund organised the resistance, partly financed by the proceeds from 'Evicting a Community', price one shilling, a slim pamphlet which was widely available. There were no agreed statistics on the numbers of people and buildings affected by the scheme. It depended on whether all structures were included or only habitations and whether buildings above the water line but affected by road diversions or land loss were counted. A feature of the opposition case was concern over damage to local culture and tradition and to the reputation of the valley as the home of poets. This aspect of the defence drew wide support elsewhere in Wales. 'Ceiriog', the highly-regarded lyric poet John Ceiriog Hughes (1832-78),¹ also known as the pianoforte poet, the railway poet (his occupation) and the Robert Burns of Wales, was the best known of the local writers.² His birthplace, Pen-y-Bryn (close to HENDRE on the map), would have remained comfortably above the water line and just outside the catchment area, a point treated rather deviously by his defenders.

Opposition was not confined to Wales. Among the 39 formal petitions to Parliament against the Bill was one from Chester on the doubtful grounds that diminution of the flow of the Dee would be damaging to the salmon fishery. Cheshire probably had a wary eye on the need for an aqueduct across the county if the scheme went ahead: Warrington was then in Lancashire. The Ceiriog

¹ Ceiriog's best known piece 'God save the Price of Wales', set to music by Brinley Richards and well timed for the Prince's marriage in 1863 is not typical of his work.

² The two other Ceiriog poets represented in the Oxford Book of Welsh Verse are Huw Morus (Hugh Morris) (1622-1709) and Rev Robert Ellis (1812-75).

anglers had no salmon to defend but petitioned on the grounds of inconvenience to their trout. Many of the petitions were lacking in substance, although not in feeling. The weightiest was from Denbighshire County Council. Due deference was paid to the poet Ceiriog lobby and to the danger to the cultural and literary heritage of the valley although a slight ambivalence emerged with the assertion that Ceiriog water might in the future be needed to meet growing demand in East Denbighshire, not in 'a borough so far distant as Warrington'.

The second reading of the Bill in the House on 13 March 1923 was well attended. Neville Chamberlain, the Minister of Health, opened for the Government. His Ministry was not concerned with the subject of Welsh rural life and culture, but with the proven need for additional water for Warrington and the practicality of the proposed scheme. On these grounds they were in favour. R Richards, the local Member, claimed the support of all Welsh MPs for his opposition to the Bill. He quoted figures of 26 farms and 16 cottages as being affected. On the unanimity of local opinion he said: 'It has been suggested that some of the men in the Ceiriog valley are in favour of this Bill. As far as I can understand there are just two men in favour and they do not happen to be Welshmen. They are publicans, as a matter of fact'. In a maiden speech the Warrington member, Capt Reid, spoke competently in favour. The Member for Chester, less convincingly, was against. The last speaker was Lloyd George with a nicely judged blend of Robert Burns of Wales material and reasoned argument. The motion to send the Bill to the Committee stage was passed by 276 votes to 91.³ All seemed to be going Warrington's way, but appearances deceived.

Although the Ministry considered that 'the scheme is well suited, both as regards location and capacity, to supply the needs of Warrington and adjacent districts, [they] would regard it as unduly large and costly for Warrington alone'. They therefore suggested that 'a Water Board should be formed for the purposes of carrying out the scheme, upon which Warrington and adjacent districts should be represented'. A conference, convened by the Ministry, was held on 10 April to consider the matter.

On 28 May 1923 the Town Clerk reported that 'the negotiations for the formation of a Joint Water Board having fallen through, the Water Bill was withdrawn on 13 May 1923. It is a matter of great regret that it has not been possible to secure active co-operation from our neighbours'. Warrington had been beaten, not by fervent resistance in Glyn Ceiriog, but by Ministerial prudence and South Lancashire politics. By the end of 1923 negotiations with Liverpool for the supply of Vyrnwy water were well advanced.

³ The Conservatives held 345 seats out of 615 and their National Liberal associates 62 but this was not a whipped division.