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“Adding to Addington”

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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.

Adding to Addington

I was intrigued by Bill Henwood's remarks about the landing ground at Addington.¹ It prompted me to delve into the local history records to see if I could answer both his question and the doubt I had that the Addington landing ground was a touch-down field on the Croydon to Paris air route. (The route was out over Kenley; there would be no reason to touch down at Addington).

The most helpful commentary on the second subject was to be found in *Living History local guide No 2, Coombe Shirley & Addington*.²

“It is fairly well known that there was an airfield up here [at New Addington], but its location less so. The Air Ministry sanctioned its use from the spring of 1932. British Air Transport leased part of a large field on Fisher's Farm, its main purpose being for pilot training away from the very busy and developing Croydon Airport. It is not easy to locate accurately, as despite various Ordnance Survey revisions in various scales during its period of operation (1932 – 1944) it is not named. One that is helpful is the 1934 one- inch map with ‘Landing ground’ and a line drawn bisecting the large field that had stretched the length of Lodge Lane from the borough boundary back to the farm buildings.

Initial facilities were under canvas, but in the summer of 1932 a small wooden building was put up to house three trainers, and could be the building shown on the 1933 Ordnance Survey (though not named)... Flying usually involved landing from the East, as low as possible over Lodge Lane hedge. Taking off was best started from this same hedge, and heading west through a gap in the trees and out over Featherbed Lane. The steep drop of Hutchinson's bank below must have ensured that all became airborne.”

Interestingly this makes clear that the specific purpose for this landing ground was more to do with the burgeoning of commercial transport than the passenger route to Paris.

I do not have a copy of the LPTB sheet covering Addington and so cannot answer Bill Henwood's question about the change in name from ‘airfield’ to ‘landing ground’. However the site of the airfield in Addington was soon to be subsumed in the housing development that was first known as Addington Garden Village Estate, work on which began in 1935. This may explain why the notation of the airfield as a landing ground disappeared so quickly from OS mapping. Although the housing development stalled because of the war in 1939, by that date some thousand houses had been built.

Roger Byard

¹ *Sheetlines* 100, 45

² Brian J Salter (Second edition 1974), p40.