



Sheetlines

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

“Error and Efficiency”

Richard Dean

Sheetlines, 101 (December 2014), pp48-49

Stable URL:

<http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Issue101page48.pdf>

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

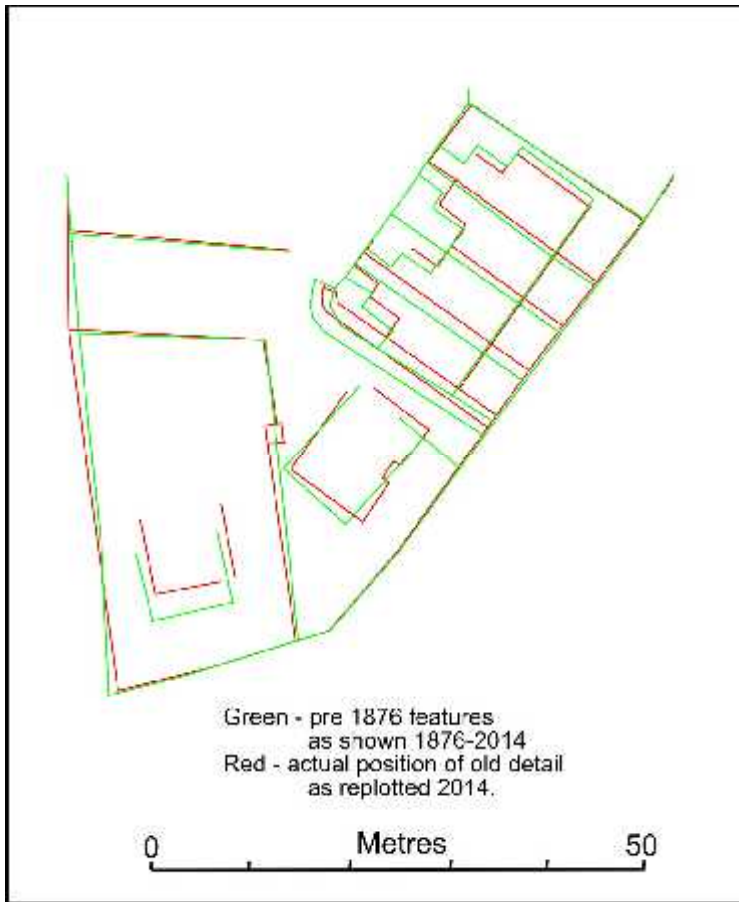
Published by
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps
www.CharlesCloseSociety.org

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.

Error and efficiency - a cautionary note on large-scale accuracy

Richard Dean



Comparison of original survey and modern revision

The reviser at work

Error

In his last year of office Major-General Sir Henry James dispatched his teams of sappers and assistants to Staffordshire for the preparation of plans at the 1:2500 scale, and my part of the county was surveyed in 1876 under the local direction of Lieutenant H Elsdale. On Sheet VII.2 my house and its neighbours, then about ten years old, were clearly shown, but I had long been aware of anomalies in the depiction of the building, mainly evident by a misalignment of the frontage.

This erroneous layout was carried forward in subsequent editions of the sheet, from there on to the National Grid plans, finally ending up on the current computerised large-scale database.

Earlier this year I sent an email to OS Customer Services suggesting that the issue might eventually be addressed in future years when revisers were next in the area.

Efficiency

Imagine my surprise when a matter of days later I opened the front door to a friendly young surveyor from OS who had been sent to investigate. After gentle ribbing about the absence of a theodolite, ranging poles, and team of chainmen,

he showed me his equipment which comprised a hand-held computer connected via satellites to a digital mushroom atop a six-foot pole. The computer showed the current survey, and the position of the mushroom was recorded on the screen by the cursor which plotted revisions in real time. The sensitivity was such that moving the pole just an inch or two was reflected in cursor adjustment. A quick walk around and the revised position of the building and its neighbours was instantly corrected on the database. How Sir Henry would have loved to have had such equipment at his disposal! (he would probably have claimed to have invented it...).

Conclusion

The plan above shows the relationship of the revision to the old survey, and the extent to which errors exist in the earlier work. I do not know whether this pattern is localised or general, but chuckle to yourself next time you read in the papers of neighbours disputing the location of a fence to the nearest six inches 'because the correct position is shown on old Ordnance Survey maps'.

A Clacton clanger?

Wanderer asks:

My copy of *Explorer* 184, Clacton, edition A1, 2006, has many instances of names and labels in Times Roman type (as shown right), rather than the normal *Explorer* sans serif face. More specifically, these instances are all in the area covered by the previous 1:25,000 map, sheet TM11/21. Has someone dropped a clanger?

Richard Oliver explains:

No, not a clanger! The mix of Times Roman and Gill Sans or Univers on *Explorers* is quite common in places where large areas were published in the Second Series between 1965 and 1972 (as it happens, TM 11/21 covering Clacton was one of the last); we have quite a lot of it in Devon. It comes down to the Times Roman not being replaced when they converted from Second Series / *Pathfinder* to *Explorer*: there were some piecemeal changes, but that's all.

