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“AIDU and UKHO”

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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.

### ***UKHO and AIDU – maps for seamen, maps for airmen***

The CCS autumn programme included visits to two member organisations of Joint Forces Intelligence Group (JFIG); UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton (UKHO) and No 1 Air Information Documents Unit at RAF Northolt (AIDU). The Society recently visited the ‘army’ member of JFIG, the Defence Geographic Centre (DGC) in Feltham.<sup>1</sup>

The two visits nicely complemented each other; at Taunton the emphasis was on the archive collection of Admiralty charts, at Northolt on the compilation, editing and publishing of modern aeronautic charts.

UKHO archive contains almost three million charts, documents and surveys, the earliest dating from 1795 when the Admiralty appointed its first Hydrographer, Alexander Dalrymple. The archive services manager, Dr Adrian Webb and his team laid out a display of selected items for inspection, including a chart of St Lawrence seaway signed by a junior surveyor named James Cook and bundles of correspondence between the Admiralty and Ordnance Survey from the 1820s, some signed by Thomas Colby.

The older items in the collection are in the process of being catalogued prior to being transferred to The National Archives, Kew. UKHO archive is open to the public by appointment; to arrange a visit contact [research@ukho.gov.uk](mailto:research@ukho.gov.uk).

At Northolt, Wing Commander ‘Slim’ Dyer welcomed the visitors and described the scope and objectives of the organisation. The data handled is defined as ‘information’ rather than ‘intelligence’; open not secret. AIDU’s role is to collect geospatial data from sources such as DGC, OS, NGA [USA], commercial publishers and national aeronautical services worldwide and to create a range of publications on paper and digital formats, available to subscribers, military and civilian, at home and abroad. AIDU also runs its own school of air cartography.

The products include Terminal Approach charts and topographic maps at scales of 1:500,000 and 1:250,000. These are published in traditional paper form (for which demand is rapidly declining – from about twelve million print impressions four years ago to about 4.5 million today) and in a range of digital outputs, suitable, for example, for aircrews to rapidly create a flight plan and view simulated fly-through. Latest developments include the Milflip website, from which authorised users can instantly download data anywhere in the world and – the ultimate in convenience and portability – an app for Apple and Android tablet computers.

***John Davies***

***To register your interest in joining future CCS visits, including Essex Records Office on 22 April, York and Belfast, please contact Bernard Anderson, Visits Co-ordinator at the address shown inside the front cover.***

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<sup>1</sup> *Sheetlines* 97,8