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“A Kesteven road atlas”

Rob Wheeler

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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.

A Kesteven road atlas

Rob Wheeler

Mention a 'large-format road atlas' and most readers will think of the sort of floppy volume they carry around in their car. The item I describe here weighs about 10kg, and measures some 60 x 45cm, so would hardly be convenient for the motorist. It is worth describing, both for the indication it gives of one of the ways in which OS maps were employed, and for putting back the origin of C-roads by a couple of years.¹

The atlas² consists of a rigid loose-leaf binder containing a set of OS six-inch maps covering the Parts of Kesteven, which prior to 1974 was an administrative county.³ The purpose of the volume is indicated by a barely legible annotation on the inside cover: *RRD Act*. The Restriction of Ribbon Development Act, 1935, gave county councils the power to restrict development along roads. But to take advantage of these powers, the authority had first to publish a schedule of roads to which the provisions would apply. Ribbon development was hardly a problem in Kesteven, but the council seems to have been apprehensive of the mere possibility and to have determined that the act should apply to *all* roads for which they were responsible. This atlas seems to have served in lieu of a schedule.

Before anything else was done, the maps seem to have had a boundary alteration marked in red ink: the boundary with the Parts of Holland against Hart's Grounds (TF1952) had been moved to run consistently along Kyme Eau. The Kesteven boundary was then shaded in a greyish blue, and roads maintainable by the county were marked in five different colours. There is no key, and the pencil road numbers may have been added later, but the five categories appear to be: trunk roads in slate-grey, 'A' roads in red, 'B' roads in green, 'C' roads in yellow, 'D' roads in brown.

For all categories, the zone prescribed by the Act extending 200ft from the edge of the road was outlined in red ink. This was carefully drawn, to the extent of using an arc of radius 200ft at bends or where a road terminated. At least, that is what was done initially. About halfway through the volume, the red ink appears to have been abandoned and all we have is a rougher pencil line; on some sheets even that is missing. It seems likely that this laborious process was seen as unnecessary for the purposes of the volume; or perhaps it was undertaken as a background task which was dropped during the war.

Another colour of road, a purplish magenta, was used to mark new residential roads. These always lack RRD zones, presumably because they did not exist at the time of the relevant council resolution – although taking powers to control ribbon development on a built-up residential road would be somewhat nugatory.

There was evident uncertainty as to whether certain D-roads were indeed

¹ See Richard Oliver, 'C-roads on signposts and maps', *Sheetlines*, 59,40 for a good summary of early evidence.

² Lincolnshire Archives MISC DON 1138.

³ Joan Varley, *The Parts of Kesteven*, 1974, provides a useful administrative history.

maintainable by the county. This applied particularly to dead-ends, where the end-point was sometimes amended. This seems to have been an early process: RRD zones are added or deleted in accordance with the decision about the maintainability of the road. This close correspondence between coloured roads on the map and the marked RRD zones is strong evidence that the road colouring, and hence the two-fold division of roads below the 'A' and 'B' roads, dates back to the compilation of the atlas.

When was that done? The strongest evidence comes from the print codes on the maps. A sample of these is: up to 1933: 19, 1934: 0, 1935: 7, 1936: 7, 1937: 1, 1938-40: 0, 1941: 1.

I am inclined to regard the 1941 map (Lincs 60SE) as being a replacement: perhaps the number of alterations made it desirable to start from scratch, something the loose-leaf format will have facilitated. On that basis the atlas would appear to have been compiled in 1937.

The maps continued to be maintained until at least 1958, when a change to the Lincoln City boundary was marked. Over their life, they appear to have been used by the legal department as somewhere to note information of a topographical nature. Inspection of inclosure awards in the council's custody seems to be the source of notes on allotted widths ('AW') of highways, and on the stone and sand pits that were often allotted for the maintenance of highways. There are also field names and, in some areas many drains have been named. In Metheringham, certain footpaths have been named and in Navenby, a footpath is annotated 'Line of old Watery Lane'.

The pencil road numbers may possibly have been applied later as part of this process. 'A' numbers seem to be altogether absent, possibly being thought too well-known for numbering to be necessary. 'B' road numbers are often accompanied by a schedule number, eg '(Schedule 2(2))'; at one point a road changes from Schedule 1 to Schedule 2. 'C' numbers are applied only to yellow roads and 'D' numbers only to brown roads. The 'C' numbers (with up to two digits) seem to represent a Kesteven-wide numbering system and to correspond with those in use today. The 'D' numbers are preceded by a geographical designator (N/W/E) which represent divisions used internally, rather than corresponding precisely to Urban and Rural District Councils. Up to two digits are used, but it is possible that D1 is a catch-all. There is also an 'ED1(FP)' on Lincs 80SW: was this a surfaced footpath maintainable by KCC?

I hope this description may be of use if anyone should encounter a similar volume from another county. Whilst it does not provide conclusive proof that Kesteven employed 'C'-road numbers as early as 1937, it does appear to show that KCC employed a two-fold categorisation of roads below 'B' status as early as 1937, and that as late as 1958 the system had not been elaborated beyond 'C' and 'D' classes.