



# *Sheetlines*

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“Testing the enhancement (part 1)”

*John Cole*

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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.

## *Testing the enhancement*

*John Cole*

In May 2004 the opportunity arose to compare for linear accuracy an overhauled 1:2500 map last revised in 1985, with the 2004 version produced in accordance with Ordnance Survey's accuracy improvement policy announced in January 2001.

My qualification for undertaking such an examination was that I had been the 1985 reviser and, in spite of considerable effort before and during that revision, would have been the first to admit that the standard of the map, even if it met the overhaul accuracy criterion, left much to be desired. However I had saved the resulting plastic continuous revision document from destruction when the local office ceased to use such – as a souvenir, if nothing else.

Although enhancement is used in the title and was used by Ordnance Survey in 2001, the map concerned is in fact one of the original 2252 km<sup>2</sup> comprising minor town and peri-urban (again the OS term) areas. These were programmed for resurvey to bring them to 1:1250 accuracy standards.

The new map is on a superior paper, smooth on the face; slightly roughened on the reverse. My initial action was to compare the grid of the plastic document concerned with others I hold and then with the 2004 map: a slight but not serious discrepancy was apparent overall. I lacked the means to test the National Grid re-positioning, but an overall comparison with the 1985 map indicated differences of between one and two metres which is very similar to 'shifts' observed between two 1:1250 upgrades and the original overhauled 1:2500.

Next came a rigorous comparison of the detail positions and note taken of discrepancies which could be easily checked by tape measure without needing to visit private property. These ranged from one to three and a half metres. At the same time various other aspects of map content were looked at, including certain things recalled from 1985 when neither the time nor opportunity facilitated improvement – an example being shapes of detail which dated from the 1906 revision.

Visits were made on two afternoons about a week apart, in the course of which about two thirds of the map was inspected and confidence very quickly built up in favour of the 2004 version. Every linear discrepancy proved the 1985 map wrong and indeed it was a case of the 2004 map scaling exactly, as far as it was possible for me to read a 1:2500 scale, to just under half a metre. In the older part of the town's main street not only had poor shapes all been corrected but such items as bay windows abutting the right of way shown dimensionally correct. In my experience, if and when these were shown on the original 1:2500, they were usually exaggerated. It was also possible to inspect a certain amount of 'back garden detail' from the road or other vantage point. My expectation had been that there would be generalisation or mis-identification (on air photos). Not only did this prove unfounded but in one instance undersized (according to the rules as I understood them) detail had been accurately depicted.

Lest this should appear that I viewed the 2004 map through very rose-tinted spectacles certain problems did come to light. Two of these affecting digitising were of some importance, which led me to make a report to OS. One spelling error (correct on 1985 map) was noted whilst the detail errors perceived seemed relatively trivial and pointed to a minimum of ground validation.