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“The treatment of works projected or in
progress”

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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.

The treatment of works projected or in progress

R C Wheeler

Ten years ago, John King asked whether the OS ever showed *proposed* constructions. A range of responses¹ resulted: in particular, Roger Hellyer noted the inclusion of railways in the first half of the nineteenth century on the basis of Parliamentary sanction, while I remarked on the almost pedantic manner in which the works of the London extension of the Great Central Railway were excluded from the Revised New Series sheets 156 and 170.

I have recently encountered three pieces of evidence from around 1820 that seem to throw some light on how the OS viewed the matter. The first is the *Mudge Circular* of 1816, whose prohibition on the use of privately-produced local surveys is well known, but whose exception clause has not received the notice it justifies. The prohibition reads:

Sixthly ... Nor are local surveys of any kind to be had recourse to except for the insertion of alterations and improvements whilst in progress.²

The implication is clearly that works in hand *were* to be inserted and on the basis of ‘local surveys’, which in this context can only mean the plans of the responsible engineer or surveyor.

Colby clarified the position in a letter to Charles Budgen of 10 August 1820, ‘Respecting the insertion of Alterations which are now making in the Country’:³

If the alterations making in your present district are according to regular plans, which are likely to be acted upon with Steadiness and without vacillation or the introduction of Whimsical alterations in their progress, you had better insert them from those plans in your work.

The district in question was the fenland north of Boston and Sir Joseph Banks was involved in some way in most of the improvements. It would be a brave surveyor who accused the President of the Royal Society of doing anything whatsoever in a whimsical manner, so Budgen was effectively being instructed to include all drainage improvements that had been commenced on the basis of their published plans.

Nor was the ruling limited to drainage improvements. The hill sketches for sheet 70 include a number of corrections: one is for a covert near Temple Bruer that had been added since the initial survey. In the margin it is noted that a further extension to the covert is planned and direction is given that this planned extension had better be shown too. The covert was on the estate of Charles Chaplin, who virtually ran Kesteven at the time and again was not a man to be accused lightly of whimsical conduct or vacillation. Note that in this case the plans concerned will have been neither published nor deposited with the Clerk of the Peace.

The inclusion of railways, once sanctioned, on the basis of deposited plans, is entirely consistent with these instructions. I suggest that what altered the policy was the change to the six-inch scale when survey re-started in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Plans which would enable a railway (for example) to be shown with tolerable accuracy at the one-inch scale would be inadequate at the larger scale. Indeed, for railways the plans specifically included limits

¹ *Sheetlines* 39, 44-45.

² PRO OS 3/260 (Ordnance Survey Letter Book (OSLB)) p226. The quotation of this in the essays with the Margary reproductions reads *situation for insertion*. The hand is not entirely clear but does not support the former reading.

³ OSLB p99.

within which deviation was permissible so predicting how a line would fit into the pattern of field boundaries was utterly impossible.

A change to the rules governing new surveys does not necessarily imply a change to the rules for revision at the one-inch scale. So perhaps John King's original question should be refined as: 'What is the latest date at which railway revision appeared on the one-inch map on the basis of plans alone?'