



# *Sheetlines*

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

“Following Alan to Looe”

*John Cole*

*Sheetlines*, 72 (April 2005), pp.48-49

Stable URL: <http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Issue72page48.pdf>

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Published by  
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY  
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps  
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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 map in my collection: following Alan to Looe*

*John Cole*

I admit to a hefty collection of Godfrey Edition maps widespread over England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Certain cities are extremely well covered, all the major ones plus central London, and certain areas such as the Black Country. So the map chosen, the 1907 second edition of 1:2500 scale Cornwall LIII.2 depicting the twin ‘towns’ of East and West Looe as they were at the time of the 1905 revision, may not figure in a ‘top ten’ – about three quarters being fields and sea, but it does have the following in its favour: it is the only Godfrey Edition I have actually taken with me on a visit. Alan himself has written the notes (so much for his claim that colleagues send him to the back streets of industrial towns!<sup>1</sup>) and the location itself has been a firm favourite of mine since childhood.

I’m certainly a little biased if Alan has written the notes himself. He did the honours on the very first map I obtained, that for Hanley. So, whether it be the former smoke and grime of the Potteries or the delights of the Cornish coast, his style makes any map come alive and even in Looe’s case, where I was reasonably well informed, there was, as usual, a lot to learn from the Godfrey Edition history.

Although I did not revise either East or West Looe, I attended to much of the surrounding area: Portlooe and the Trenant Wood area (NW area of Godfrey Edition) in 1968; Looe Island and eastern half of the Godfrey Edition in 1971. But my very first visits would have been in the late 1940s as a passenger in an uncle’s Morris Eight. In 1950 came my first, and what is still my favourite, approach by railway – one of Cornwall’s still surviving (if precariously) branch lines. Geographically Looe has not been easy to reach from the Plymouth direction. The main roads are not exactly ‘fast’ and until 1961 necessitated a ferry crossing, whilst railway meant a change of train (and even station, albeit a short walk) at Liskeard. The 1939-45 war put paid to an intended more direct line which would have included two viaducts and three tunnels, and a less convenient station on the high ground at East Looe.

My modern approach is from the west and roadwise this again is hardly straightforward. Possibly I make it harder still by using miles of twisting, narrow country lanes between Lostwithiel and West Looe. But summer visitors seem to like that, so it was something of an afterthought that I shoved the Godfrey Edition in with my swimming kit on such a visit last summer.

Visiting vehicles are rightly not encouraged south of East Looe Bridge. There is restricted parking on Buller Quay but alas no sign of the railway sidings where once cargoes

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Godfrey Newsletter, November 2001.

of stone from the Cheesewring on Bodmin Moor were loaded into windjammers. However little of the building detail has altered dramatically and I was reminded of the accuracy of the 1905 map being praised by the 1968 reviser. On his version the names do appear in the narrow streets: the sole advantage (apart from house names and numbers, of which few could be included) over the Godfrey Edition.

Whilst the womenfolk secured our obligatory lunchtime pasties, my old school friend and myself had opportunity for a fairly heated discussion over the value of the bench mark on the Guildhall. He likes to take issue with me over most things OS – a throwback to a 1950s holiday when I navigated him over highly unsuitable Devonshire lanes with the aid of the New Popular.

Tempted by warm sunshine to spend much of the afternoon on the beach or in the sea, there was not time to examine the older part of West Looe but I made sure we returned that way taking the long, steep, cottage lined street to Portlooe.

The 1968 and subsequent revisions, not least the low tide line, were greatly assisted by air photography. Not so the original 1881 survey, or the 1905 revision, and one cannot but marvel, as is the case with all Godfrey reprints, at the work effort in production. The added value that Alan brings to these maps is well worthy of the original.

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