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“Poetic licence”
Richard T Porter

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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.

Poetic licence

Richard T Porter

‘Nimble spirits may, of course, entertain themselves as pleasantly with Mercator’s Projection as with an Ordnance Survey imprint of six inches to the mile, in which one’s neighbouring haystack and brook make as fair a show as Baghdad and the Amazon’, wrote Walter de la Mare.¹

In a revised and expanded version (not used for the 1953 reprint) he enlarged his scale and modified his topography: ‘... an Ordnance Survey imprint of twenty inches to the mile, in which one’s neighbour’s haystacks and duckpond make as fair a show ...’.²

While OS has occasionally shown some non-permanent detail, such as fences around an archaeological excavation,³ where they replaced established features but were never intended to ‘remain in position for at least 10 years’,⁴ the only circumstance that occurs to me where a haystack might inadvertently appear on a printed map is on a photomap, where incomplete field checking might cause it to appear as a hut or shed. And a scale of 20 inches to 1 mile or 1 inch to 4 chains (1:3168) is more for estate maps, or even town plans,⁵ than for ‘Ordnance Survey imprints’, I fancy?

¹ Leading article: ‘Maps in fact and fiction’, *Times Literary Supplement*, **654** (30 July 1914), 361-2. Reprinted with a few minor differences in Walter de la Mare, *Private View*, London: Faber and Faber, 1953, 59-66.

² ‘Maps actual and imaginary’ in Walter de la Mare, *Pleasures and speculations*, London: Faber and Faber, 1940, 335-347.

³ For example at SE 8582 6417 and 8584 6425 on Ordnance Survey National Grid plans, scale 1:2500, Plan SE 8464-8564, revised July 1976, Edition A, 1977.

⁴ *Ordnance Survey Technical Manual module 3*, Surveyors Instructions, section A, 1:1250 and 1:2500 scale maps: paragraphs 1009, 1014 (Amendment No. 12, March 1989).

⁵ e.g. Lincoln by J S Padley; cf. *Sheetlines* 69, 3.