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“Kerry musings”

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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.

Kerry musings

David Archer

Many years ago, before Mr Wilson made New Year's Day a bank holiday south of the border, our art master was forever complaining about car designers. They created wonderful, sleek, expensive models, which were delivered to local show rooms, where a cretin (his word, not mine) would randomly drill two holes front and rear and bolt a rectangular number plate on to the vehicle. He bore no malice towards the cretins, only towards the designers, who did not allow for the inevitable number plates in their design, and offended his eye tremendously.

Although cars now have little niches for the offending rectangle, designers in other areas appear to ignore similar inevitable occurrences. When bar codes were first introduced, the white rectangle and black bars design was just dumped onto a piece of attractive packaging, almost at random, obscuring part of the design, as if a square had been cut out. Over time, things have got a little better, in that most designers now leave a space for the bar code, making no attempt to incorporate it into their work. Alas, the Ordnance Survey follows the crowd with this. Even on the latest maps, the bar code is shunted into the corner of the back cover, and text is fitted around it. In fact, the rear covers appear not to have been considered by designers at all, with text and graphics placed anyhow. Turn the map over, and the front cover is wonderful. A brilliant design, based on rectangles and top class photographs, with a superb range of colours and shaded lettering. For the first time in over fifty years, the OS have a very strong and distinctive house style for map covers. Not since 1951, when maps such as the New Populars, ten-mile and quarter-inch had covers with wavy lines around the edge, has there been such a feeling of tidy togetherness in OS cover design. Compared to front covers of even ten years ago, they have advanced so far that it is unbelievable. But don't mention the back.

Wondering what other map publishers do, I looked in our local Smith's and found that the Philip's range of maps and atlases have a neat house style whereby the bar code is surrounded by a box with the company name above and website address beneath it. Other useful information, such as the price and map series is around the outside of the box. The bar code is still there on a rectangular white background, and has been taken into the artwork, rather than the artwork being surprised by it, as on OS maps. A far superior design appears on the back of the *Rough Guides*. This is as classy and satisfying as the front covers on current OS maps, and is again based on a rectangle divided into smaller rectangles, one containing the bar code, and the others having various bits of consumer detail tidied into them.

Another form of near vandalism that offends the eye is the prominent use of the symbols ®, © and ™ in both artwork and text. Like number plates, they are simply bolted on to the end of a word or grafted to the right of a logo that has probably cost a lot of money to 'develop'. Just like cars of old. The Ordnance Survey is forever telling us that "Ordnance Survey, the OS symbol and Landranger are registered trademarks and OS is a trademark of Ordnance Survey, the national mapping...". Not only telling us on the rear cover, it also welds the ® symbol onto its name. A series of symbols in the middle of a phrase is even worse, Dell™ recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional, making it almost impossible to understand a sentence. Ugly beyond belief, even to those of us who are not art

masters. The Ordnance Survey doesn't do this very often, you ask? 'Fraid so. Look at the OS website and in addition to Ordnance Survey[®], we find Get-A-Map[™], Code-Point[®] Polygons, OSCAR Traffic-Manager[®], Siteplan[®] Data, Boundary-Line[™], Integrated Transport Network[™] Layer, OS Street View[™], and Haenen Topograffig OS MasterMap[®] yw'r data a ddangosir. Yes, they even vandalise in Welsh. The Crown Copyright Reserved statement is similar, but not so upsetting. It is the aggressive use of a symbol saying mine, mine, mine that irritates, especially when well known organisations do it. Surely the Ordnance Survey does not need to disfigure everything with Ordnance Survey[®]. Nobody is going to try passing themselves off as our beloved OS.

Not wishing to be thought restricted in my prejudices, I shall confess to my other pet hate in this vein, which is the even bigger lack of feeling for words, shown by the popularity for using one word when two would do fine. My biggest hate used to be 'sweat shirt' (the phrase, not the garment) which made me cringe and which I saw as being akin to smelly socks and bad breath. But worse has arrived. Look in the shops and these comfortable jumpers are now called sweats (I feel sick typing it), so I assume that current party talk includes "I like your sweat", or "That's Fred with the green sweat". Pulls were once pullovers, whilst my Xmas pyjamas had a label saying "Matching gown available", making me think of Harry Potter and French masters, not dressing gowns.

Having reduced its name from three to two words by dropping the definite article a few years ago, Survey wouldn't partake in this name shortening silliness, would it? It certainly would. In the 2001 OS Trade Catalogue (the latest I have), we find products called *Touring maps*, *Road maps* and *Routeplanner maps*. By 2004, these have received the wonderful new style front covers, but down the right side, all three series are called *Travel maps*, and above this, the individual series are given as *Tour*, *Road* and *Route*. When I first saw this, the words *Tour* and *Road* caught my eye and I started steaming from the ears with this certification that the end of the world had arrived. But glancing at other map covers, I realised that I have accepted the single words *Explorer* and *Landranger* to mean *Explorer maps* and *Landranger maps* since they came out, with no irritation at all. So why object to *Tour* and *Road* as if they were in the same category as sweats and pulls? Probably because these words seem meaningless in isolation. I cannot imagine anyone being understood if they say "Look on a *Tour*" or "Look on a *Road*", but I often say "Look on a *Landranger*". Thus, besides being prejudiced, I am also inconsistent, or selectively prejudiced. I like to pick and choose what annoys me. And the thing that would probably annoy me most is if the OS were to shorten its name to either Ordnance or Survey or OS. Worse still, if it were to adopt an entirely new one, as did the Post Office for a short while, a couple of years ago. Memorable, wasn't it?

