



# *Sheetlines*

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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*

What should we do with our ever-increasing Publications Fund? Spend it. But this invariably increases the amount in the fund. Try publishing maps, as well as fund increasing books. After all, maps should be of interest to members, and would sell at a lower price than double figure monographs. It would enable us to exploit our newly acquired ability to work in colour, and if they were successful, at least the fund would increase at a slower rate. Maybe.

So, what maps would we publish? Ordnance Survey maps of course. Less common, hard to acquire maps, which members would be pleased to have in some form or other. I am not thinking of the maps currently being photographed by the society, with copies lodged in various locations, but rather, dare I say it, slightly more desirable items which might sell more copies (well, we must try to retrieve a bit of the outlay, surely). There are a lot of very interesting and attractive little known OS maps, which I believe, some of the membership would appreciate having brought to their attention. A lot of people appear to collect covers rather than maps, whilst only a few pick up hints in *Sheetlines* as to the existence of maps

probably far more interesting than any cover. Due to the lack of coloured illustrations, quite spectacular maps, often issued in dull buff covers, or never seen in OS covers at all, are just ignored. Such items would give a vast amount of pleasure even if owned as a well produced facsimile. I really do feel that we have made little attempt to introduce the membership, especially those new to Ordnance Survey maps, to the wonders of what exists away from the mainstream OS series. Yes, a flavour exists in many places, but mostly given in descriptive text that only hints at the cartographic gems concerned. Maps are so obviously a visual thing and can only be appreciated when seen whole, not as extracts and not described in words. I have always found members of our society to be more than generous with information and help, never secretive, but sometimes I am uncomfortable when asked about a less common map. One could so easily say “Oh, yes, everyone knows about that”, but it would be cruel and untrue. A more accurate comment would be to say that some of the more knowledgeable members are aware of it, some have a copy, but that it has never been given prominence in the literature. It is not being kept a secret, just that it seldom gets mentioned. And the best way to publicise such maps is to make them available in a series of top quality, full colour reproductions: *Ordnance Survey's Classic Maps*.

For those of a nervous disposition, read no further, but I would put all such maps into glossy, brightly coloured, standard sized OS card covers. It would be wrong, in my opinion, to try and replicate the originals. Dull brown covers are not really very attractive, even with a nice illustration on the front, and I would hate to think that anyone was ever to be misled into thinking one of our maps was an original. So make sure they are not fooled. Each would have an illustrated essay about the reproduced map and where it fits into the OS story. Photographs, line drawings and sections of other editions of the map could all be used. Obviously, there would be details of the society, and I am certain that membership would increase through this method of advertising. The last issue of *Sheetlines* contained a review of *The Trafalgar Way*, a map along the lines of, but not really what I envisage, except for the cover. I bought a copy from the OS shop at the AGM and have been told that shelf stock ran out towards the end of the day. The map is contained within a colourful glossy cover with a picture of Nelson on the front, giving a feeling of what is inside. My idea would be to have cover designs based on the originals if possible, with a full sized reproduction of the map plus an introductory essay inside. A combination of the Ordnance Survey, David and Charles, Harry Margary, and Alan Godfrey approach.

Start with the 1920 six-inch town map of York. A beautifully clean, crisp, glossy cover design by Arthur Palmer (reinstating the red border, omitted from *Map cover art*, and unusual in not featuring trilby man). The map is a fine example of this series, with the clear depiction of detail and a super range of gentle colours. The street index could be on the reverse of the sheet and would be a certain bestseller in York, should we be looking for revenue. Then we could have the *War Department Land on Salisbury Plain*, 1898, at two inches to one mile. Lovely light, fingerprinty horizontal hachures, larger than usual lettering, and very wide, deep yellow roads combine to give the feel of a cartographic version of a large print book. A wonderful thing and possibly one of my top three all time favourites. Or, consider the *Glasgow District* experimental sheet from 1914. An irregular, black squid of a Glasgow is nicely centred on the paper, with red veins and black tentacles reaching out to all parts of the sheet. Other family members, *Dorking*, *Killarney* and *Ilkley* just cannot compete with it. So let us make it more accessible and everyone can enjoy a copy. I would not necessarily publish the rarest maps, but go for slightly more common examples, seeking

those which have an interesting history or deserve to be better known and are nice to look at. Although *Scotland in Roman Times* (cover title: *The Forth Clyde and Tay: Roman period*) and *The Solar Eclipse* are rare items, the actual maps are very boring, and would probably not be big sellers (I know that revenue is not the main point of the exercise, but neither is it the intention to exhaust the fund).

My current choice for the first ten maps would be:

1. *Map of the County of London*, 1926. 1:20,000. Coloured edition showing secret information for use during the General Strike.
2. *South Wales and the Border in the Fourteenth Century*, 1932, NE sheet. Two miles to one inch. From probably the most unusual set of civil maps printed by the OS.
3. *London Passenger Transport Map*, 1934. One-inch Popular Edition base maps with coloured roads and LPTB information.
4. *War Department Land on Salisbury Plain*, 1898. Two inches to one mile. Coloured edition, with contours and horizontal hachures.
5. *East Anglia*, 1914. 1:25,344. Coloured edition with super red, green and blue detail showing telegraph lines, material used for bridge construction and watering places for traction engines.
6. *York*, 1920. Six-inch town map.
7. *Aberystwyth*, 1904. Half-inch, small sheet series, sheet 50. The beige base colour and hill-shading give a lovely relief effect.
8. *Glasgow District*, 1914. One-inch Third Edition of Scotland, in colour. An experimental, multi-relief map.
9. *Marlborough*, 1931. One-inch Popular Edition sheet 112, unique in having hachures added.
10. *The Heart of Hardy's Wessex*, 1980. 1:50,000 First Series sheet 194, overprinted for Wessex Heritage Tours.

If it was felt necessary to really justify such productions, we could publish maps to coincide with AGMs, and hold our meeting somewhere on the map. In addition to a cartographic essay, details and location maps for the AGM venue would be shown, as well as places of interest and things to do in the area. After all, when we met in London, Brian Garvan set a precedent by producing a neat little AGM map and these would be in the same vein, but the funds now held would enable a much more ambitious project. A copy could be given free to every member and eventually a complete run of classic/AGM maps would be cherished. A decidedly inferior, but still acceptable product would have an integral cover, having the map one side with text and cover design on the reverse, folding to a standard size. And if they do not break even, why worry? If we were determined to be tight with the purse strings, we might decide to finance such publications from the annual interest earned on the fund, leaving the capital intact for book publications. Should the initial intention be to have a map every few years, my guess is that they would be a success, with annual productions following. But beware, for most of us any such map lacking the magic six words, 'Printed at the Ordnance Survey, Southampton', could only be a disappointment.