



Sheetlines

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

“Kerry musings”

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Sheetlines, 74 (December 2005), pp.48-50

Stable URL: <http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Issue74page48.pdf>

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Published by
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps
www.CharlesCloseSociety.org

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

At last, I have a copy of *Folk songs of old Hampshire*, fabled amongst our members for its two Ordnance Survey connections and without which, any serious collection of OS trivia is incomplete, though the folk song content is far from trivial. John Paddy Browne, compiler and editor (the first connection), chose some very nice line drawings as illustrations, including the upper panel from the front cover of the Land Utilisation Survey maps (the second connection). Ellis Martin's artwork appears at the foot of page 21, where we find the abnormally small ploughman in shirt sleeves, walking behind two oversize, heavy horses in a winter landscape. Perfect for a book of folk songs.

The lower panel on the Land Utilisation Survey covers is an industrial river-side scene with a townscape, spires, gas-holders and smoking chimneys, which Chris Bull has shown to be Southampton, viewed across the River Itchen from Chessel Bay. The two pictures combine to give a *feel* of what one will find on the map inside. (Chris notes that the two panels face the opposite way on the small LUS booklet describing the first maps issued, whilst those on the county reports, are extended and crudely redrawn, which to me, fail to reflect a feel of anything. A dishevelled trilby man is now ploughing. Surely no longer an Ellis Martin production?)

Ordnance Survey map cover art is not the only thing that helps create a period setting. What previous owners have done to a map or its cover, also gives a feel of the era in which they were used.

Just as some owners annotate the margins of books they read, so many map owners wrote on their maps. The most common sort of annotation (defacement? No) is the signature at the top of the front cover, evenly divided between the left and right sides. Probably found most frequently on Populars, Fifth Editions and some Thirds, one finds very few signatures on post-war maps – a totally different era with a totally different feel to it. Good strong signatures, in ink of course, placed with a flourish imply something, but what? A school tradition, similar to having small white labels with red lettering sewn onto clothing? A sign that the maps were often used in the company of others who also had a copy? Whatever it was, one seldom discovers the person's first name; surname and initials only was the rule. People seemed to hide behind their initials, just as men hide behind over large moustaches in early twentieth century photographs. But to me, it gives a very definite feel of the period. A major sub-group added a date to the signature, something I have never really understood the urge to do. Much better to have a place, which could trigger memories, but surely few people have such thoughts brought to mind by a simple date. Maybe they kept a diary with the place of purchase and all the sordid details noted therein.

Second in frequency, is the occurrence of a few train times, but written in pencil, not ink. These are usually on the plain inside cover surface, ninety-nine percent without the stations of departure or arrival being noted, only the times, preceded by *d.* and *a.* with great regularity. The era of using trains for transport, long before bios. Just so nineteen thirties. Thirdly, we have the maps with walks or drives inked in, which we will pass over quickly as they are too upsetting to all of us except Ian Mumford. A lot of people did like to keep a record of where they went, and marked roads and paths. I have a copy of Third Edition sheet 70 with a two-day route neatly marked in red dashes. On the inside cover, a note in the

same red ink reads: *Llanbister Road to Kerry 21 Sept 1912. Kerry to Llanidloes 22 Sept 1912*. A good long walk, which went past our door, and took the two unmarked short cuts to the village. How did they know? Keen cyclists however, did not annotate OS maps. For them, E J Larby published *The route marking map of England and Wales*, an outline map, which could be coloured to show the roads travelled. I understand that every life member of the CTC sleeps with their copy under the pillow, lest it be stolen.

Thirds and Populars of certain areas, especially Macclesfield and Manchester, frequently appear in a very sad, beyond well-used state. Far worse than other areas. Why? I have always assumed that they were owned by ramblers and used most weekends, in all weather. Again, maybe I am wrong, but whenever I see one of these I always think of factory and mill workers 'going for a tramp'. Not quite the expression favoured by today's *Guardian* I am sure.

Or, they might have been kept in saddle bags. A elderly gentleman once told me that when he used to go on a cycling tour, he would plan his route and send small parcels, containing clean clothes and maps for the next part of the journey to various Post Offices en route. The dirty linen and used maps were sent home from the same establishments.

Just as some people used maps until they fell apart, so others economised, bought flat sheets and mounted them as dissected maps. Over the years, I have seen a great number of these. A lot of examples consist of a good strong cloth, something like a fine sacking, onto which the cut up map sections have been pasted, with a small gap between each section. The whole thing is then simply folded without covers. And after more than seventy years, they are fine to use, if a little grubby. Good, strong, competent workmanship with no frills. To a southerner they appear so very northern, but in fact I have seen sheets from all parts treated in this way. Dissected and mounted maps have always been the classy end of the market. They look classy and cost more. But a lot of people just do not like them. They do not want to mind the gap. Whether you love or hate them, they are certainly the best way to preserve a paper map which is in constant use and liable to wear along the folds. I have also had, from different sources, bundles of map sections, flat sheets, cut ready for pasting on to cloth as a dissected map. A variety of series, often with a distinctive waxed paper band around them. That they are so wrapped, and have come from different sources makes me wonder whether there was someone who provided a service to guillotine maps ready for mounting? A search through the rambling or cycling press of the period could well produce an advertisement for such a service. Again, I have never seen post-war packs of dissected sheets.

Why do I consider that heavily used maps, home made dissections and train times give a feel of the era? Because they show that map users put so much effort into what they did. To go for a walk, many had to use a train to and fro, getting up very early and arriving home really late after a good long, often tiring walk. Today, we softies drive to a rural car park, choose between several way-marked circular walks, all of which end at the tea room, and then drive home. One does not need maps for this, merely a leaflet or recommendation. I know that such a sweeping statement is unfair to dedicated modern outdoor types, but they will not leave personalised maps that give the feel of 2005; only bulky, hermetically sealed, wipe clean all weather OS maps, which are bought, and not individually customised. This is only my impression of what went on, and like most impressions of the past, it is rather rosy.

To say that so many personalised pre-war maps just *feel* pre-war, as I have suggested, must show that I was born after 1945, and could well bring a flood of letters, notable for the frequency of the word 'nonsense'. I used the term 'pre-war' to a youngish sounding person on the telephone recently, and there was a deafening silence with question marks coming out

of the ear-piece, until this prompted me to continue 'pre-1939'. When we visited, 'before the war' was uttered by my grandfather at least once an hour until the early 1960s. I make no apology for using the term, as last week I paid nineteen shillings for a cup of tea, whilst four sausages cost me ten bob each. Each.

And I would appreciate it if anyone could tell me why *Folk songs of old Hampshire*, which has a publication date of 1987, states that John Paddy Browne was also the author of *Map Cover Art*, unpublished until 1991.

