



Sheetlines

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

“Kerry musings”

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Sheetlines, 82 (August 2008), pp.56-58

Stable URL: <http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Issue82page56.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

Trigonometrical. What a lovely word. Trigonometrical, the sort of word that one can roll around one's mind as brandy is rolled within an oversize glass. But like coffee, which smells far better than it tastes, trigonometrical fails completely when pronounced. Far too difficult a word. So just read it, this word that we are so lucky to have in our chosen field. For me, it is certainly the nicest word associated with Ordnance Survey maps. The nicest amongst a whole range of attractive words which we use constantly. Most, if not all of the smooth, classy words and phrases are of pre-twentieth century origin. Trigonometrical, hachured, zenith and zincograph. Meaningless to most of the population, and probably only vaguely understood by many of us, but fine sounding, strange, distant words all the same. Colby, Ramsden's theodolite, Whatman, Dunnose and St Paul's. Slip case and strong impression are both wonderful pairings of words. The cream on the top of a catalogue description: A fine strong impression, dissected on cloth, within marbled boards, folding into a red slip case with gold lettering. Must have, just for the words in the description. Slip case, one can imagine the satisfying ease with which a folded map glides into it, whilst strong impression is just so descriptive of a crisply printed black and white map oozing quality.

Many of our words such as graticule and Bloggoscope are strange, whilst northings and eastings are just odd. In isolation, the words graticule, zenith and Bloggoscope do not give even a hint of what they mean, unlike contour. When we first come across them, we have to look them up in a dictionary (and fail to find Bloggoscope). Some of our more common words are unfamiliar to the general public. Curiously, it appears that the most unknown is the word dissected. I frequently have to explain to people what this means and worry that I might put them off when I say the map has been "cut up into small rectangles and pasted on a cloth

⁷ *Sheetlines* 62.

⁸ *Sheetlines* 64 gives a brief account of this method.

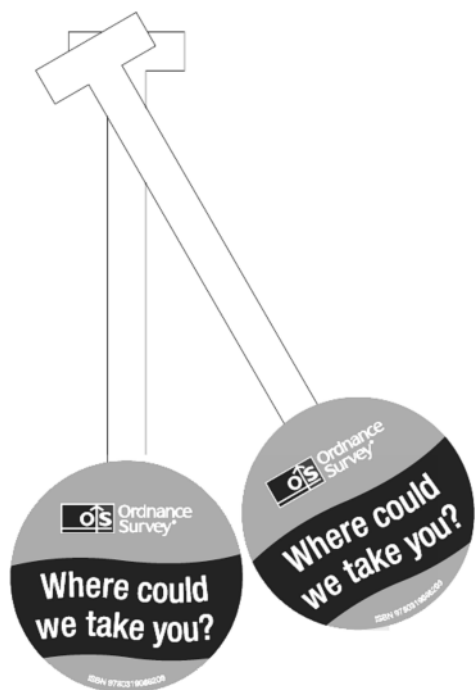
backing". A bit like tarred and feathered. I then hasten to add that dissected maps have always been the top end of the market, and that for a long time, it was rumoured that the only known examples of dissected Seventh Series maps were in the Queen Mum's library. Even booksellers have trouble with dissected maps. I have seen a dissected Old Series sheet referred to as a set of twenty four maps mounted together, 8 by 3 panels. I assume that if one such section was put in front of us, we would all agree that it was a map, and then a few of us would say no, it is a part of a map. Or is it a part of a part of a map, if we were only to consider the whole set as one map? But I digress.

Although neither strange nor unusual, a lot of words do confuse the public. A reference to a watermark in the paper of an Old Series map can be taken two ways. It is a good description of a feature, but some people take it as a fault, and imagine a stain on the map surface. Mention of a dated watermark seems to help. It all depends on how one uses certain words, as a word can have different meanings for different people. I refer to the white waxy covers on Third Edition and half-inch maps, but so many non-map people see them as brown covers. When I referred to other maps as having buff covers, I often sensed a distinct hesitation at the other end of the telephone, so I now call such covers envelope coloured, which seems to work. Personally, I think the coloured border on Populars is burgundy, but have never had anyone question my calling them red, which is what the public always uses. To describe New Populars and some Seventh Series as having red and cream covers often leads to misunderstandings, but red wavy lines for the New Populars never fails to clarify what is meant, even though a case can be made for calling them cream coloured wavy lines. The 1:50,000 maps were much easier to identify when they were all pink, whereas orange is most certainly the word everyone uses for Explorer map covers. Conduct a survey of current map buyers, and most would say that OS maps come in orange covers. (And a good proportion would then go on to complain bitterly that they are impossible to use outdoors, unlike the user friendly, and much smaller green ones.)

All of our words must have been thought up or adopted, applied to something and then accepted into general usage. The only trouble is that there are still a lot of words lacking. When jogging became popular, the Welsh refused to follow the French who have something like 'le jogging', and organised a competition for a new Welsh word, giving us loncian. So perhaps the Charles Close Society can come up with suggestions for some sorely missed words or phrases.

1. A map in good sound condition, quite nice really, but having little pinholes at the fold intersections, making it a slightly lower grade than an unqualified good clean copy.
2. Similarly, there should be a word for fairly common maps that everyone wants and are snapped up, and another for rare maps which attract virtually no interest from collectors.
3. Can we agree on a single word for those wispy, whiskery strands of thread that appear around the edges of folded pre-war maps? (And suggest why we never notice them when the maps are open?)
4. What should we call a map that was mis-folded soon after purchase, and when we now fold it correctly, will not lie right and waves its covers in the air?
5. Or dissected maps, mis-folded with map sections on the outer surfaces, so that these become grubby. A nice bright map with two grubby panels. What should we call them?

Of course, the Ordnance Survey is adopting new words all the time, many originating in marketing or computer technology. From the latest OS catalogue, retailers can order shelf wobblers, which sound more like offerings from the British Geological Survey than the OS.



Shelf wobblers – for retail displays

As did the Welsh, the Ordnance Survey organised a competition, and an OS employee came up with *Landranger* as the marketing name for the 1:50,000 maps. The only trouble with such marketing words is that the public do not look (nor need to look) beyond the names, and know not that a *Landranger* is a 1:50,000 Second Series map. Sometimes people do not delve too deeply, and even in the early days of our society, the one-inch Revised New Series was referred to as the Second Edition, with Popular Edition maps being known as Fourths, regardless of there being a true Fourth Edition (which even now, most members have never seen an example of). Then we read ‘What’s what with the New Series’ in *Sheetlines 5* and ever since have silently sucked our teeth when anyone uses these terms incorrectly. I find the modern computer-related words rather ugly: vector, raster, plot. And guess what, Sat Nav sends a shiver down my spine whenever I hear

it. This surely must be the ugliest sound currently uttered, except for underscore, which can even be heard on the BBC. Sat Nav itself is terrific, and in rural areas has almost replaced the god-sent mobile telephone for delivery drivers.

We all know that words take on different meanings over time, and different words are applied to the same thing. Thus we no longer have pupils in secondary schools, only students, and one assumes that when pupil replaced scholar it was regretted by some. The series cover on pre-war tourist maps is referred to as the hiker cover, after the man looking down over the bus and inn (looking at his map actually). But why hiker rather than Rambler? Might we have been using the wrong word all these years and have to change it? After all, it is the Ramblers Association, not the Hikers Association. Does he have a rucksack on his back, or is it a knapsack which sounds the sort of lightweight thing ramblers would have? A quick glance at Chambers Dictionary is reassuring. Ramblers wander, and walk for recreation, with no mention of carrying anything, whereas a hiker might carry equipment in a backpack; a knapsack is worn e.g. when hiking, and a rucksack is carried by a hiker. So, hiker is correct because he has something on his back, and whatever it is called, ramblers travel without them. Phew, close one. Even though the dictionary gives the hiker a backpack, I think that we are safe from having to adopt this word. Given the average age of CCS members, we need not fear our man’s container being referred to as a backpack, nor the cover being called the backpacker cover. But it might come. If our twenty-somethings start calling it this, then when we old fogies are no more, backpacker cover it will be. The Ellis Martin backpacker cover. More spine shivering.