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“The 'shading' of buildings on the 1:2500,
1893-1912: its 'meaning'”

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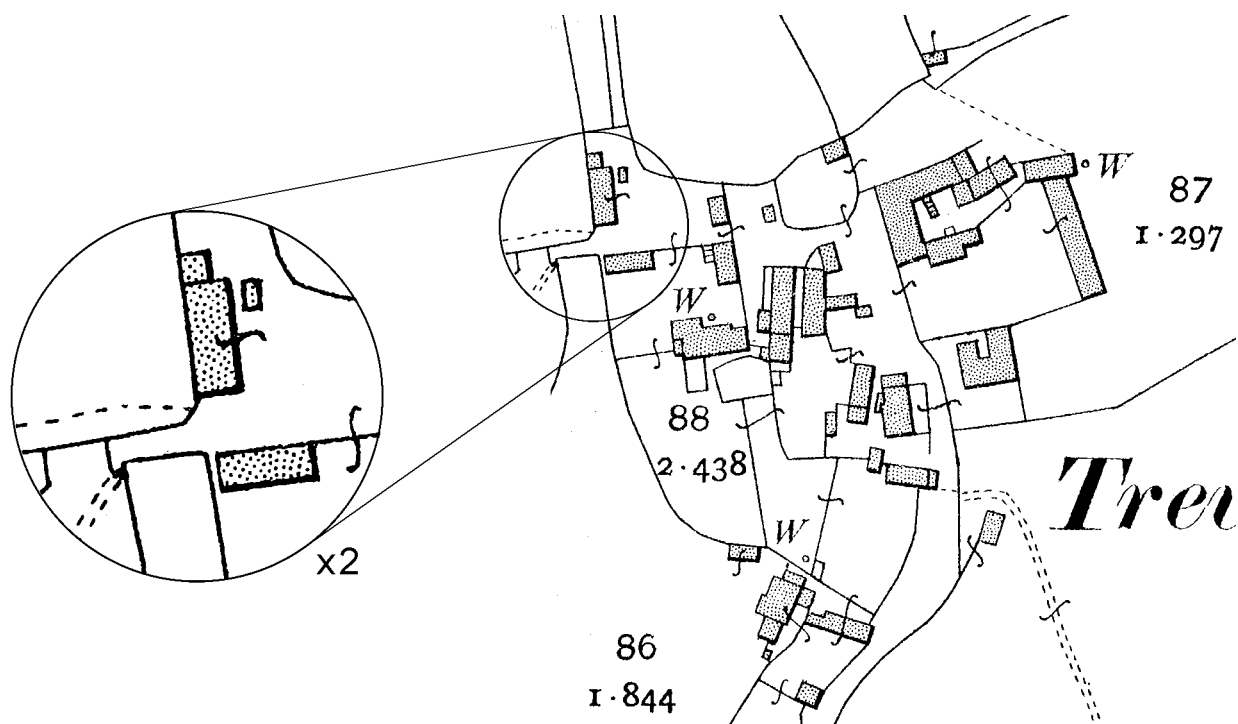
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*The 'shading' of buildings on the 1:2500,
1893–1912: its 'meaning'*

Richard Oliver

Recently Rob Wheeler and I were looking at an early twentieth century OS 1:2500, and we remarked on buildings which had south-and-east 'shading', *i.e.* emphasis of the bounding line, and others which did not: local knowledge suggested that, though this was a cross-hatched 1:2500, nonetheless it might be possible to use the shading to distinguish brick and masonry buildings from wood and iron ones: it has, of course, always been known that this was the meaning of the carmine and grey on the first edition 1:2500s.

A few days later, as a result of looking through the OS 'Southampton Circulars' for quite another purpose, I came across the following passage, in Circular no. 406, of 21 Oct 1893: '... brick and masonry houses will be back-lined, *i.e.*, shaded on the south and east side, on all cross-ruled 1/2500 scale plans.'



Section of Cornwall 61.10, second edition 1907, with 'shaded buildings'

I naturally come to wonder how I overlooked this when compiling my *Concise guide*.¹ On p.79 of the 2005 edition I do refer to the discontinuing of the shading in 1912, and of the continuing into the 1930s of recording the material of construction on the examination traces, which struck me as odd and unnecessary. On pp 60-61 and Plate 13 of H S L Winterbotham, *The National Plans* (London: HMSO, 1934), the colouring and shading conventions are noted and illustrated, but there is no reference to the use of the shading after 1893 to distinguish brick/masonry buildings from wood/iron ones.² The change of drawing practice in 1912 was, like the introduction of finer linework and text, designed to facilitate photo-enlargement to 1:1250 when required. Evidently by that time the need to distinguish building material was no longer felt to be sufficiently important on the published maps, though one may wonder why the information continued to be collected after 1918 when that for arable-pasture land use ceased to be collected, as an economy measure. However, it is equally a question, to which at present there is no satisfactory answer, as to why the land-use information continued to be collected after 1879 when it was no longer being published in the 'area books' and the OS was under continual pressure to minimise costs.³ Serendipity?

The belated realisation of the 'meaning' of the 'shading' potentially makes the 1:2500 of 1893-1912 more useful to historians, though the depiction of an apparently 'wooden' (or corrugated iron?) terrace of houses in Pembroke Dock makes one wonder whether it was 'strange but true', or whether the shading is occasionally fallible.⁴

¹ Richard Oliver, *Ordnance Survey maps: a concise guide for historians*, London: Charles Close Society, 1993 (second edition 2005).

² Winterbotham, *The National Plans*, London: HMSO, 1934, pp 60-61 and Plate 13.

³ J B Harley, *The Ordnance Survey and Land-Use mapping, 1855-1918*, (Historical Geography Research Series, no.2), Norwich: Geo Books, 1979, 22.

⁴ Pembrokeshire sheet XXXIX.8, Second Edition 1908.