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“Lord Salisbury and disagreeable countries”
Richard Oliver

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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.

Lord Salisbury and disagreeable countries

Readers of J H Andrews, *A paper landscape: The Ordnance Survey in nineteenth century Ireland*, will no doubt have been intrigued by a quotation at the very beginning, attributed to Lord Salisbury in 1883: ‘The most disagreeable part of the three kingdoms is Ireland, and therefore Ireland has a splendid map.’¹ Unfortunately, no source is given for this! I can now remedy the deficiency: it was spoken in the House of Lords on 12 June 1883, in the course of a debate following a question on the Ordnance Survey, and the future three-times-Prime Minister was reported in full as follows:

THE MARQUESS OF SALISBURY said, he could also bear testimony to the enormous amount of inconvenience which had been caused by the delay that had taken place in the publication of the 6-inch map. Any envy expressed of the superior facilities that foreign nations had of transferring land with little or no expense or difficulty was really hypocritical, as long as no measures were taken to furnish the maps which must be necessary for such purposes. They seemed to have gone on the principle of serving first those parts of the Kingdom which were the most disagreeable to the Government, and which were not in so much need of the maps as England. The most disagreeable part of the Three Kingdoms was Ireland, and, therefore, Ireland had a splendid map. Next to Ireland, Scotland was the most disagreeable part of the country to the Government, and, consequently, Scotland had a map; but poor, meek, humble, submissive England was necessarily left to the last.²

(Note that indirect was translated into direct speech.) ‘Disagreeable’ here can be roughly translated as ‘bolshy’!

Richard Oliver

¹ J H Andrews, *A paper landscape: The Ordnance Survey in nineteenth century Ireland*, Oxford University Press, 1975: reissued Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003, p.[v].

² *Parliamentary Debates* [‘Hansard’], series 3, vol. 280, cols 329-32: quotation on 332.