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“A map in my collection”

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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.

A map in my collection

Aidan de la Mare

Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland, Lough Erne, Activity Map 1:25,000

Well, it is actually part of my 'accumulation of maps'¹, as it was bought in 2009 for a cruise on Lough Erne this year, but it is such an interesting and satisfactory map that it is now a valued addition to the collection. Being the OSNI's take on the 1:25,000 tourist map, it invites comparison with the OS *Explorer* and *Outdoor Leisure* series; a comparison that is generally, but not entirely, in favour of the OSNI.

Lough Erne is in two parts separated by a stretch of the River Erne that follows more than one channel, and this river is straddled by the city of Enniskillen in the southwest corner of the province of Northern Ireland. The map is double-sided with Lower Lough Erne in the northern half in a landscape format of 121 by 80 cm area of map, and Upper Lough Erne to the south-east in a portrait format of 81 by 120 cm. The maps join conveniently at the bottom right-hand corner and the top left-hand corner respectively so there is little nuisance when changing from one side to the other, but there is a minor criticism that Enniskillen is on the corner of one side of the map, but the inset plan at 1:5000 is on the other side. Both sides also have insets for integral cover, notes, legend etc. but have commendably small margins and cover approximately 30 by 20 kilometres. It is printed on what is described as 'water resistant paper', and, although it did not get rained on, it returned from a week of continuous use in an open sailing boat without any signs of suffering. The map is copyright dated for the Crown and for the Government of Ireland 2008 and costs £7.20.

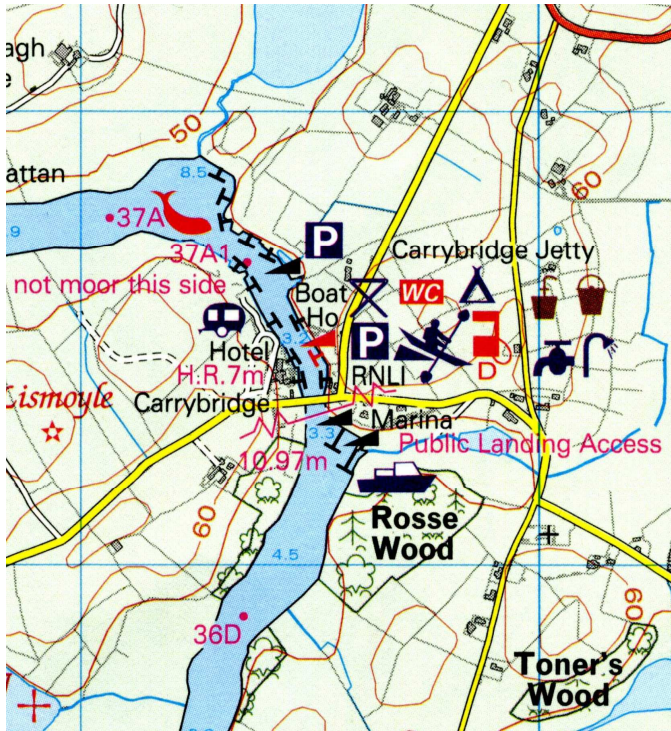
The waters of the river and Lough Erne are 42 metres above sea level. The map has bathymetric layers in three shades of blue: less than 1.5m, up to 15m and over 15m. The lowest contour on the map is 50m, then at 10m intervals; the layer colour is pale green up to 100m changing to a slightly darker green up to 200m, to a pale brown up to 300m and a slightly darker brown above that. There is no ground higher than 370m. The roads are conventionally coloured red (A), brown (B), yellow (unclassified) and white (minor untarred roads),² these latter also seem to represent footpaths as there is no single pecked line for them. Green and pecked green roads also appear in the small area of the Republic of Ireland, and there is blue for motorway in the legend although there are none on the map. National Cycle Routes, waymarked walks and scenic routes are marked by green, red and purple dashes respectively alongside the road or track; otherwise there are no rights of way shown. In the country areas individual buildings and groups of buildings are meticulously shown, but curiously towns and other built up areas are completely generalized

¹ *Sheetlines* 81, 54 and 87, 37.

² There is an error in the French translation of minor untarred roads in the legend, OSNI please note.

as areas of screened black only interspersed by coloured roads. But public buildings are shown in red and churches by conventional symbols in black.

All this is quite straightforward, but then we come to the differences. There are thirty symbols of tourist information and a further nine features notated by initials; this compares with thirty-nine and twelve respectively on *Explorer*



OL29, but there are a further seventeen symbols for water features that were particularly welcome to me, as that is one of the reasons why I bought the map. So not much difference in numbers, but quite a lot in favour of OSNI as their symbols are generally smaller and being, apparently indiscriminately, coloured red or dark blue, they do not seem to overwhelm the local detail, even when used in amazing density, as at Carrybridge at ref. 2937 (left) where eighteen such symbols and a further ten annotations fit into a one kilometre square! OSNI condense most of what I might call the recreational symbols into a single 'centre of interest', which thins out

the tourist list and leaves room for café/restaurant (knife and fork), shop (supermarket trolley), hire-cruiser base, fishing stages, showers and laundry without starting on the water features list. But surprisingly not public houses, though roadside filling stations are annotated and waterside ones have a pump symbol. Antiquities are indicated by a cross or a mound symbol and are annotated with a description in each case.

But it is the water features that are the real departure. Air heights of bridges and overhead cables are shown, public and private slipways and jetties are separately shown, and navigation beacons are comprehensively shown with their numbers.³ Depths of water are shown to one decimal point of a metre throughout the navigable waterways, but not on isolated lakes. There is quite a lot of annotated information useful to the boat owner as well, including the rather obvious note that 'Lough becomes rough in strong winds'. To take up a point made by Gerry Zierler,⁴ as he found with his map of the Scillies, this map can certainly be described as 'fit for purpose'. Did I, in the last few years, see a reference somewhere to a plan to produce a sort of combined OS map and

³ And I know they are correctly placed, because I spoke to the men who had been round in their boat with a GPS receiver and supplied the coordinates to OSNI.

⁴ *Sheetlines* 88,45.

Hydrographic Office sea chart? If I did not dream it, this map has done just that, and very satisfactory in use it was.

A footnote on Foot Sticks: The legend of this map has 'fs' for fishing stage and they are much found along the river banks but also 'FS' for Foot Stick. This rang a bell and I looked up the references in *Sheetlines*,⁵ but these were on nineteenth century maps so their appearance on a 2008 map seemed remarkable. I found three marked on the map and went looking for two of them, but after quite a long walk on a hot afternoon I found neither. One at 383264 was supposedly on the site of a farm bridge over the stream, so obviously had long been superseded. The other at 388268 was in a patch of derelict land with no sign of a path or foot stick (the third one at 312252 was not sought). From this small amount of evidence and the present state of general prosperity of most of the land I draw the conclusion that these marked foot sticks owe their presence on the map not to the diligence of the surveyor, but to information derived from obsolete larger scale maps. As the French and German translation of foot stick is the same as for footbridge, it suggests that the translator knew what they were, but then he may have just been guessing.

⁵ *Sheetlines* 63,55 and 64,57. According to Richard Oliver: a tree trunk or pole forming a very narrow crossing of a stream, just adequate for someone on foot, rather than a flood gauge.