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“Review: Cassini map teaching set”

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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.

Cassini map teaching set (CMTS), Cassini Maps, 2010, (no ISBN), £49.95 + VAT

The first thing that must be stated about this teaching set is that it comes as a digital resource and that it is only available to schools. It matches the other commercial products available from Cassini. In buying this resource a school is able to create a matching set of historical Ordnance Survey maps from five periods over the last two hundred years, centred on any point they choose. All maps exactly match each other in scale, projection and area of coverage. As well as the maps CMTS comes with background notes, a set of twelve worksheets and a lifetime licence for the school.

In practice, most schools will use their postcode for centring the maps which can be printed out A3 size, and also projected onto an electronic white board. Each map covers an area of approximately 19 km by 12 km (some 230 sq km). For all the maps both the scale 1:50,000 and the projection is consistent with present day OS map, and the National Grid has been added together with a simplified map key which allows direct comparison between each map.

²⁰ References in Victorian fiction are admittedly not common: see [R S Surtees], *Handley Cross* [1854: London: Methuen, 1911 [1950]], [p.641], Chapter LXIII (where it is unclear whether a fictional or real newspaper report is being cited), and Anthony Trollope, *Phineas Redux* [1874: Oxford University Press [The Worlds Classics series], 1983], [p.139], Chapter XVI. There seem to be no references in Dickens and Thackeray, but then, unlike Surtees and Trollope, they were not hunting men. F W Maitland's famous reference is in *Domesday Book and beyond* [originally published Cambridge University Press, 1897], [London:] Collins/Fontana, 1960, 39. [This Collins/Fontana edition, by the way, is a minor 'collector's piece', in that whereas the original edition of 1897 duly used reproductions from the Old Series, it uses the first edition of the New Series for the Berks-Oxon border extract (fp 32) and, *mirabile dictu*, the *Advanced Edition published by Photozincography* for the Devon-Somerset border extract (fp 33). Either Old or New Series make Maitland's point, though the Old Series rather than the New Series would be essential were one to illustrate Maitland's point further down page 39 on open fields in Cambridgeshire.] There are three references by Conan Doyle in Sherlock Holmes stories to OS maps ('The engineer's thumb' (written 1891-2), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-2) and 'The Adventure of the Priory School' (1903-4), but they are not what might be termed *technically reliable*.

The maps are taken from the following series:

Map 1	Old Series	survey 1791-1874	First pub. 1805-1874
Map 2	Rev. New Series	revised 1842-1893	First pub. 1896-1904
Map 3	Popular Edition	revised 1921-1923	First pub. 1919-1926
Map 4	New Popular	revised 1931-1948	First pub. 1945-1948
Map 5	1:50,000	revised 1953-2010	First pub. 1974-1976
Map 6	Blank reproduction of the grid for the above maps		

Obviously the further north in Great Britain a school is located then the time period of coverage is less. Apart from Map 1, all the maps are in colour. The background notes to each map series used explain the context of their production including the historical setting, cartographic style and the social and economic changes taking place between each printing.

Generic worksheets are provided as blanks and also with suggested answers, covering a range of basic map skill topics, such as scale, distance, compass points, keys, hills and contours, and grid references. (All of these topics are already well covered in standard Key Stage 3 textbooks). Further topics in the worksheets compare historical maps, urban and transport development and place name change, all of which are well suited to KS3 and beyond. Extended learning opportunities are also provided for KS4 (GCSE) and 'A' level. Inevitably these themes would all need to be developed further by teachers making use of their local knowledge.

These maps provide a resource in both geography and history for local studies and the study of the changing environment. By being able to directly compare the maps, it enables the student to gain a perspective of change over time whilst making use of technology, which is familiar to students. One great advantage is the ability directly to compare each map at the same scale and the addition of the National Grid is certainly a great help to less experienced students.

The proof of the value of any resource such as this is its use by students, and so the maps have been tried out in my school with 'A' level (age 17-18), GCSE (age 14-16) and Year 7 (newly arrived first years, age 11-12). Their use has highlighted a number of advantages and issues of both a general and specific nature.

The initial reaction of students was a wow factor and the first thing they did was to try to spot where they live. This was far easier for the older students and more difficult for Year 7 students who had to grapple with not only recognising different symbols and styles but understanding a 'small scale' map covering an area often well beyond their local knowledge. By Year 7, students are expected to be conversant with OS maps and the scale of 1:50,000 but many are not. It should be noted that OS settled on the scale of 1:25,000 for their 'Free Maps for 11 year olds' scheme following consultation with teachers. Satterly, writing in

1964, commented that ‘maps of large areas on a small scale are not the best introduction to school mapwork’.¹

Older (GCSE and ‘A’ level) students found little difficulty in understanding and comparing the maps. However they were quick to spot a drawback of this particular map set for their own school located on the south-western fringes of London. The 75 year time period between Map 1 (1805/1822) and Map 2 (1897/1909)² misses out on some of the most significant changes in this particular area in terms of railway development and urban growth. By 1897 the railway network is almost complete and therefore the understanding of the urban geography would be significantly improved by the addition of a mid-nineteenth century map. The change between Map 2 and Map 3 (1897/1909 to 1920) covers a relatively short time period with only some minor urban change just before the housing explosion in this area of the 1920s and 1930s. Map 4 (1940-1947) amply shows this suburban development. Map 5 is undated and titled ‘Present day OS mapping’ (copyright 2010).

The length of time between maps could be an issue for teaching purposes as there may be parts of the country like SW London where there have been dramatic changes and the provision of more maps would be useful as a teaching tool. Likewise there may be parts of Great Britain where there have been relatively few changes and the themes suggested in the teaching notes are more difficult to identify on the maps.

In the late 1970s The Schools’ Council Geography project encouraged teachers to produce local resources. In my school’s case, we are fortunate to have a ‘Kingston in Maps’³ resource, and despite being published in 1979, still providing good service thirty years after publication. The map set, produced by teachers, is No. 4 in Archive Teaching Units ‘to introduce students to the use of local documentary source material in the study of history and geography’. Besides reproducing Rocque’s eighteenth century map and an early nineteenth century town plan, the great advantage of the set is the reproduction of six-inch (1:10,560) maps from the 1860s, 1890s, 1920 and 1932/33 which provides for the detailed analysis of urban and industrial change. These maps complement the CMTS by filling in some of the gaps identified above.

With the CMTS, both hard and electronic formats can be used although for the younger students the hard map copy proved more useful; whilst the ‘A’ level students enjoyed finding that they could overlay the maps electronically on each other – a most useful way of showing change. Likewise it is possible to print the maps on acetate sheets, which physically allows the maps to be overlaid and compared, helpful to the younger students. Strangely this was not suggested in the teaching notes provided by Cassini.

¹ D Satterly, *Skills and concepts involved in map drawing and map interpretation*, New Era, 45 (1964), 260-3.

² It is not clear whether the dates on each map refer to revision or publication.

³ *Kingston in Maps - Archive Teaching Unit No. 4*, published by Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 1979, ISBN 903183080. Now sadly out of print but copies are quickly snapped up if they are spotted locally.

Aimed at secondary and primary schools, the former will almost certainly have the ability to use the map set to its full potential whilst primary schools may not always have access to colour/A3 photocopiers or electronic whiteboards. It is not clear whether this resource will be available to the tertiary market. The background notes do suggest the possibility of selecting another area for comparison with the local region which would also be useful for any fieldwork study.

The CMTS certainly allows broad themes of study to be followed but inevitably students studying urban change will want to study larger scale maps (and exam board specifications will often point them to historic maps at larger scales such as Alan Godfrey's successful map series). The CMTS must be regarded as another useful (but relatively expensive for a school) educational resource which will have to be used alongside other local resources to realise its full potential.

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