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“Map art on Irish covers”

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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.



Map art on Irish covers and other material

Michael Richardson

The map cover art of Ellis Martin and Arthur Palmer is well known on Ordnance Survey maps of England, Scotland and Wales, but the only known use on Irish covers has been the 'standard' half-inch (12.2a) and one-inch (10.2) Ellis Martin covers.¹ Following partition in 1922, the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) no longer had ready access to the design and graphics facilities at OS Southampton and their first 'home produced' cover featured the arms of the four provinces in a Celtic interwoven border with the initials SE (Saorstát Éireann) and featuring a small sketch of Glendalough beneath the details of the map (*figures 1 and 2*). It was quite some time before I noticed that this sketch includes the initials 'A. E. N.' at the lower right corner and I was intrigued to find out more about the artist concerned.

Enquiries made to other Charles Close Society members interested in Irish mapping shed no light on the matter and I therefore turned to the OSI archives² held by the National Archives in Dublin. The correspondence files for the years immediately after partition soon revealed a number of references to Civil Assistant (C/A) A E Nolan, but there was no mention of the 'Glendalough' cover design. A listing of OS staff in March 1922 included Nolan as an Established Officer and it is recorded that he was born on 1 April 1885 and had 21 years service, suggesting that he had started work on 1 April 1901 at the age of 16; he had qualified for the Civil Service Certificate on 20 July 1916. From records held at the General Register office I found that Albert Edward Nolan was born at Castleknock, Co. Dublin on 1 April 1885 to John and Rose Nolan. His father's occupation was given as 'surveyor' so it seemed likely that he also had been employed at Phoenix Park. Indeed, there is a reference in the OSI archives for March 1886 of C/A John Nolan having

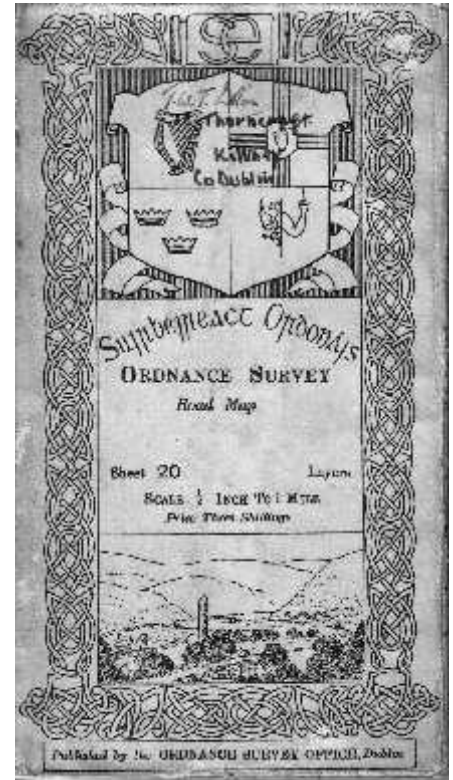


Figure 1. OSI cover

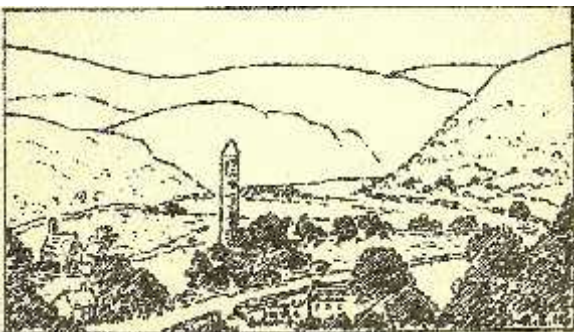


Figure 2. Glendalough enlarged

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¹ See Roger Hellyer's list of covers in John Paddy Browne, *Map Cover Art*, Southampton: Ordnance Survey, 1990.

² Correspondence registers and indexes can be found under general heading OS/2, while individual files are listed under OS/5 for 1847-1890 and OS/6 for 1891-1934.

been reported to Southampton for being drunk on duty while engaged on a survey for the Land Judges Court. In a letter to Col Sir C Wilson KCB (the then Director General) Nolan says that he 'will most anxiously pay all costs arising from the incorrect survey'. Nolan senior died on 12 February 1899 and the 1901 census lists 'Bertie' Nolan living with his widowed mother Rose in Castleknock. He is described as 'temporary civil assistant, Ordnance Survey' on what would have been his first day of work; in the census for 1911 his occupation was recorded as 'Draughtsman, Ordnance Survey Office'.

In March 1921 a request for re-classification of C/A A E Nolan was made, recommending that he be promoted to Special Draughtsman as he had held the classification of Draughtsman Normal since the scheme was first introduced and had extensive experience of all aspects of the Department's work. The request was turned down as there was no vacancy at that time but Nolan appealed and was granted an interview with the Director-General Sir Charles Close when he visited Dublin in September 1921; again he was told that promotion would depend on there being vacancies. In his letter requesting an interview with the Director General, Nolan mentions 'having done all the ornament work of the Publication Department prior to the war, and since my return have been employed in writing duties and have done all classes of drawing'. No details of his war service are known, but a further study of the archives may shed some light on this. Following the establishment of the independent OSI in 1922, it appears that Nolan was at last successful in gaining promotion and forms for re-classification of several members of staff, including A E Nolan, were submitted in 1923. He married Christina McCormick on 16 June 1925 at St Agatha's Church, North William Street; her father's occupation was given as 'book seller'.

In an effort to promote sales of their maps, the OSI regularly took a stand at the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) shows. From correspondence in April 1926 we find that Nolan and another employee were granted 'time in lieu' for work on preparation of posters for the Spring Show, but they appealed against this decision and he was eventually paid overtime for this additional work. A few months later, in June 1926 the Superintendent of the Printing Department wrote to say that 'he is now ready to begin the preparation of the colour plates for the one inch Curragh District map' and asked if Mr A E Nolan could be transferred permanently to the printing department so that the work could be proceeded with continuously; his transfer took place on 1 September 1926. In May of the following year designs were invited for two small leaflets advertising OS maps for circulation at the RDS Spring Show but there was insufficient time for them to be ready for that year's show. The leaflets were to be in not more than two colours, in bold type and using as few words as possible. One would advertise the small scale maps – quarter-inch, half-inch and one-inch whilst the other, aimed at farmers and landowners, would promote the 1:2500 scale maps. The designs submitted were considered by the Director (Capt. Mew) and he awarded the prize of two guineas for the small scale leaflet (*figure 3*) to Nolan, who wrote to Mew on 11 July 1927 'Sir, I wish to express thanks for having been awarded the £2.2.0 for the design submitted and feel encouraged that my effort was considered

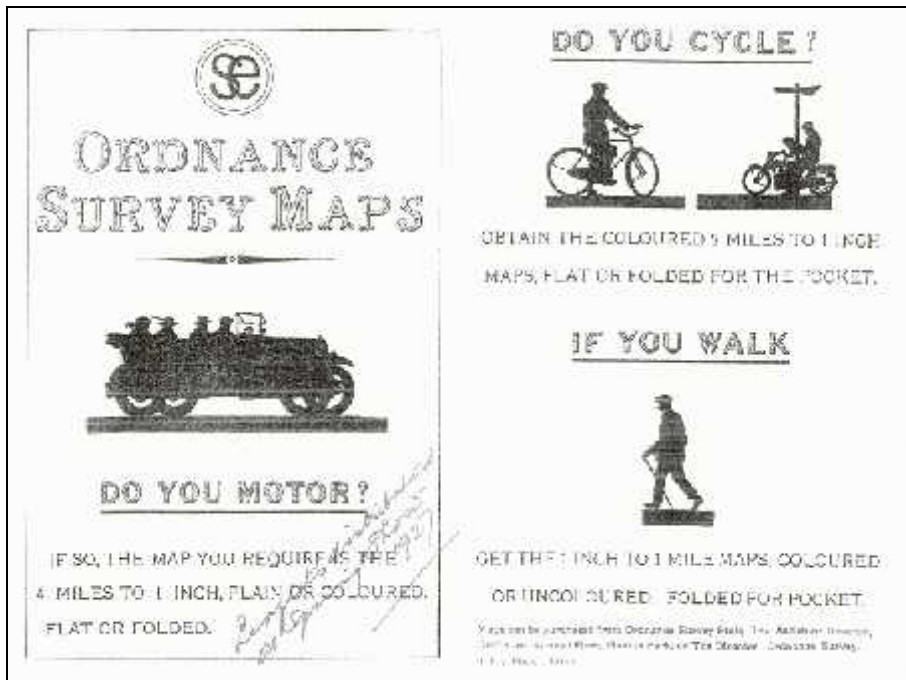


Figure 3. RDS Leaflet, 1927

satisfactory'. I am indebted to Paul Ferguson for pointing out that certain elements of the design such as the car, cyclist etc appear to be based on OS Southampton material.

Apart from his work in the Printing Department at Phoenix Park, Nolan was active in the Ordnance Survey Staff Association and in July 1929 he wrote, as Honorary Secretary of the Association, to the

Director of OSI to plead for special treatment in the case of a fellow employee who had died from injuries received in a cycle accident. The unfortunate victim had become eligible for establishment a few months before his death but this had not been done, rendering his widow ineligible for a pension. In response to Nolan's letter the Department of Finance awarded a compassionate payment to the widow.

OSI published a 1:20,000 sheet of the Dublin area in 1931 at the (relatively) exorbitant price of six shillings, as part of their work on a series at that scale covering the whole country for military purposes, but disappointing sales led them to consider preparation of a five colour version with a cover design of Dublin Bay. This 'Dublin & Environs' sheet was launched in 1934 with extensive press coverage³ to bring it to the attention of the general public, and prices ranged from 1/6 to 2/6. Although the initial sketch of the cover design was produced by Col. Niall McNeill the final artwork was done by Nolan and cost estimates for the production of this map included three days work by him as 'colour artist'. The style of this cover illustration (*figure 4, reproduced with kind permission of the Board of Trinity College Dublin*) is similar to that of his earlier Glendalough drawing although it must be said that neither shows the artistic merit of Martin's and Palmer's work.

In 1940 several staff, including Nolan were promoted to fill vacancies arising from the retirement of Mr A E Woodnutt (who was listed in the 1911 census as 'Draughtsman, Ordnance Survey Board of Agriculture, England'). Then, in 1942 a number of senior staff were due to retire and a plan was proposed to amalgamate the Revision and Publication Branches of OSI with Lt. Gunn in charge and subdivided into a number of sections; Nolan was promoted to be Superintendent

³ See e.g. the Dublin Letter in *The Cork Examiner* for 21 August 1934.



Figure 4. *Dublin & environs*
1:20,000 (1934)

copyright issue and recommended that for the present the ‘reduced show card design’ would be best, though it is unclear which particular cover was being referred to. This idea never seems to have been revived (apart from the 1934 Dublin cover) and it would be another 60 years before photographs of local views appeared on the one inch District sheets for Cork, Dublin, Killarney and Wicklow.

Thanks are due to Roger Hellyer and Bob Lynch for helpful comments, to Leonard Hynes for the 1942 photograph of OSI staff and especially to Paul Ferguson for useful discussions and access to the Map Library, Trinity College Library Dublin.

in charge of Section D/2 (Printing), but on a Principal Superintendent’s salary scale; at this time he was recorded as having 31 years’ service (20 years earlier his service was recorded as 21 years!). A photograph of Ordnance Survey staff taken at the Phoenix Park headquarters in November 1942 shows Nolan in the front row, third from left (*fig.5*).

In 1950, as he approached his 65th birthday Nolan wrote to apply for his pension and he was awarded a lump sum of £914-6-0 and an annual pension of £334-10-0. I have been unable to trace any record of his death, but the General Register records are available only up to 1958.

Although Nolan’s drawings of Glendalough and Dublin Bay appear to be the only known examples of Irish map cover art, my search of the correspondence files has revealed that there was a proposal by Col. Craster (Director of OS Phoenix Park) in November 1921 to use illustrated covers for the Dublin and Belfast district sheets, ‘similar to those for the English District maps’, and views which might be reproduced for the two covers were submitted. However, in reply Southampton advised that there may be a

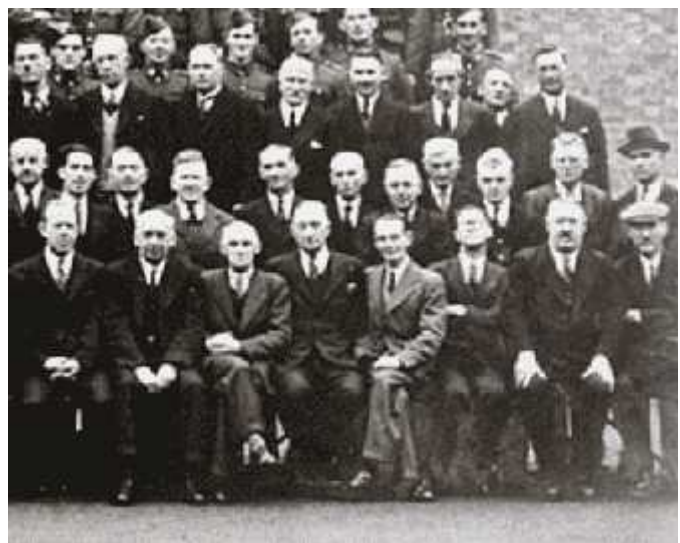


Figure 5. *OSI Staff, 1942*