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“Ha-has – the last laugh?”

David Andrews and Paul Bishop
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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.

Ha-has – the last laugh?

David Andrews and Paul Bishop reach a happy conclusion

David : I should have mentioned before¹ that the specification for the depiction of slopes is that they are only mapped when they are associated with other topographical features (eg railway, road, embankments, coastal cliffs, etc). If this were not the case then every steep hillside in the country would have to be depicted by slope hachures.

With regard to the Hopetoun House example, whilst the vertical height of the slope shown appears to be almost two metres, and the horizontal extent appears to be possibly more than five metres, the gradient in my judgement is not steep enough to meet the ‘rule of thumb’ I previously referred to as ‘*too steep to walk down easily*’. If I had been the surveyor in this example I would certainly not have mapped the slope, only the wall.

I accept that there appear to be inconsistencies in the mapping of ha-has, and it is probably due to the lack of definitive instructions to the surveyors on the way in which these features should be depicted. The surveyors’ instructions contained specifications for mapping walls, hedges, fences, banks, baulks and slopes but no specification expressly for ha-has. The surveyors therefore had to fall back on the depiction of a ha-ha treating the wall and the slope as separate features, and relying on the specification for each of these in isolation. The lack of a precise instruction on the degree of gradient at which normal ground becomes a ‘slope’ meant that the somewhat subjective judgement of the individual surveyor in each case was relied upon.

If you want an even better example of inconsistency in OS large scale mapping then look no further than the mapping of complex multi-level structures such as the Highcross shopping centre in Leicester or the Eagle Centre in Derby. The rule is that the mapping should show the features on the ‘Upper Level of Surface Communication’. Next time you are in your local ‘mall’ you try to work out what the surveyor should be depicting!

Paul : The new Bill Bignell book on windmills² has made me think a little more about this. It struck me that the ha-ha (a ditch with sunken wall opposite the slope of the ditch) is an entity and ideally would have been mapped as such. To separate out the wall from the slope breaks that ‘unity’ and following the individual rules for mapping walls and for mapping slopes does not make sense in terms of the unity of that entity. Bill Bignell’s discussion demonstrates that the OS did at times recognise slopes as part of other entities, when he notes (p.37) the continued mapping of a mill mound after the windmill had disappeared (ie the continued mapping of the slopes, the key point we made about the ha-ha slope *per se* – not that the ha-ha disappears, but that the slope is mapped when identifiable as an element of some larger entity).

¹ *Sheetlines* 96, 31

² Bill Bignell, *Mapping the windmill*, Charles Close Society, 2013

David : The slope around the demolished windmill would still be shown because it was originally surveyed at the same time as the windmill. When the actual windmill had been demolished it would have been deleted from the map in the course of revision. However another rule then comes into play and the slopes would not be deleted because features shown on the map and still in existence at the time of the revision were not to be deleted. If you understand the logic of that, please explain it to me!

Paul : This is a real minefield and really pretty illogical, as you yourself indicate, David. But I still don't get it: if this latest rule you have invoked applied, why was the mapping of the slope of the Dougalston doocot ha-ha then deleted from the second edition six-inch map (compare figures 7 and 9 in our original paper)? I suppose there might be another rule to be invoked here? Remembering as well, of course, that you are assuming that the practice you knew and are invoking is what pertained in the mid-nineteenth century (but maybe it did).

David : The (possibly unwritten) rule I mentioned applied to 1:2500 and 1:1250 scale revisions. There may have been different 'rules' for the revised six-inch mapping which was derived from the 1:2500 survey sheets. This was an office based exercise, and as a field surveyor I was never involved in it. My experience was mainly in 1:1250 and 1:10,000 scale resurveys and 1:1250 and 1:2500 scale revisions. You are correct in stating that I am assuming that my rule pertained in earlier eras, but as far as I am aware most of the general principles for survey of large scale mapping stayed relatively unchanged except when new features (multi storey shopping malls for example) had to be mapped and new rules had to be written to incorporate them. The other explanation for the anomalies is of course, different surveyors applying the rules in different ways. For instance, the 'rule of thumb' I quoted applying to how steep a slope had to be to be depicted on the mapping was a ruling by a North Region controller in the 1970s. It is possible that other Regions devised different rules of thumb.

I do remember that the North Region controller's rulings sparked an article along the following lines in the Region newsletter:

Note found on the body of a field surveyor in a disused quarry

To Whom it may concern.

On surveying this disused quarry I was uncertain about how to depict the outer limits at this point.

If I recall my Region controller's recent comment on the depiction of slopes and cliffs correctly:

A cliff is a slope that is high and precipitous.

A precipitous slope is one that is too steep to walk down without slipping.

A high slope is one which, if slipped down, would result in injury or death, and in this case it should be depicted by cliff symbol.

Since you are reading this note please ensure that the slope which I am lying at the foot of is depicted by a cliff symbol on the published map.