



Sheetlines

The journal of
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps

“Kerry musings”

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Sheetlines, 97 (August 2013), pp.51-53

Stable URL:

<http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Issue97page51.pdf>

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Published by
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps
www.CharlesCloseSociety.org

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.

Kerry musings

David Archer

It was not exactly *déjà vu*, but at the AGM in May I did have the feeling that forces were working to return the society to its early years. Having arrived and unpacked, we went for coffee and sat with friends, all of whom know a lot about Ordnance Survey maps. At one point, my neighbour referred to needing some 'fourths'. This really knocked me back, as I have not heard that word used in the given context for many years. He was referring to one-inch *Popular Edition* maps of England and Wales, which most people call 'Pops' or 'Populars'. Event number two was during the AGM, when it was suggested that we do away with the *Almanack*, and revert to having the component parts inconveniently scattered, as they were many years ago. And finally, after lunch, I saw a marker on a stall for 'Fourth Edition, Populars' or something similar. Twice in one day. In this day and age. I felt in my pocket for a copy of the morning's agenda to check that I had not just attended the 1992 AGM, when Yo was Chairman and I was Secretary. No, I am happy to confirm that the year is 2013, but that strange things do happen at our AGMs.

Does it matter what we call maps and map series? Should we demand a sort of political correctness, despite being able to live with a variety of names for the same thing? I knew what was meant by 'fourths' and 'Fourth Edition', so why worry? I suppose that it all depends on who we are trying to communicate with, and how clear we want to be. When the society was founded, there was no stigma to referring to 'fourths', it is what they were called amongst members, and even by the OS in years past. But since 1982, when Richard Oliver wrote 'This 4th edition is a distinct generation, belonging neither to the Third Edition, nor to the Popular Edition', we have tried to call a Pop a Pop. What puzzles me, is where a knowledgeable person picked up a term that was already archaic and shunned when he joined the society.

As in any area of life, we have preferred and common usage terms, but the important thing is that we all know a preferred or official term exists, and use it when appropriate. We should never use inaccurate terms, even in common usage. For England and Wales, there are seven small black and white maps of Kent, that say *Fourth Edition* in the top left corner; a term that never appears on a large coloured map with 'Popular Edition' in the map heading. Since Richard's article, Roger Hellyer has investigated the whole question of map edition and series titles, and many believe that his offerings should be used as standard terms.¹

Shortening a proper title can be dangerous. OK, in conversation, we can usually ditch the 'one-inch' and 'of England and Wales' bit, but 'Do you have a Second Edition map', could mean any of many series and scales, whereas 'Do you have a Sixth Edition map' is a possibility. Safely having dropped the boring bits, care is still needed, as *Revised New Series* cannot be shortened to *New Series*, which is a name of an entirely different beast. However, shortening *Third Edition, Large Sheet Series* to the very brief 'Thirds', does work, and most people think of the large sheet maps for England and Wales, even though there is a coloured small sheet series as well as Irish and Scottish Thirds. *Revised New Series* and *Seventh Series* are unambiguous, even without a scale

¹ Publications mentioned in this piece are : Roger Hellyer, *Ordnance Survey small scale maps : indexes 1801-1998*, 1999; Richard Oliver, *Ordnance Survey maps : a concise guide for historians*, Second Edition, 2004; Chris Higley, *Old Series to Explorer : a field guide to the Ordnance map*, 2011.

being mentioned. Sometimes a little sub-title or explanation is advisable, as when I describe the '1:10,000', as the metric six-inch. That is, six inches to one mile. Mention the quarter-inch and most people envisage a sequence starting with the *Third Edition*, *Fourth Edition*, *Fifth Series* and then the *Routemasters* and *Travelmasters*. Despite the fact that the last three were a metric quarter-inch at 1:250,000, not 1:253,440. This is where I believe we must be accurate with descriptions and need to say 'metric quarter-inch' and not describe the *Routemasters* as 'quarter-inch' maps. Similarly for the ten-mile maps at 1:633,600 and metric 1:625,000. The concept of a metric quarter-inch or ten mile map is a neat description of the scale, where the mixture of terms is easily understood, just as in Welsh butchers, one can hear 'Dau lamb chops' being requested.

If you think about it, most of us have always been a little sloppy by not questioning common usage; the 1:500 are known as the ten-foot plans, but at 126.7 inches or 10.558 feet, are slightly nearer eleven than ten feet to the mile; 1:2500, which we call twenty-five inch maps are actually 25.344 inches, whilst the 1:25,000, two and a half inch are in fact 2.5344 inches to one mile. Do we favour the terms ten-foot plans, twenty five inch and two and a half inch maps rather than 1:500, 1:2500 and 1:25,000 because the metric system is so, dare I say it, European? Have we always aspired to being an imperial Imperial nation? Still, the terms one, half and six inch need no apologies.

But, as I say, it all depends on who is trying to communicate with whom. A few years ago, I started getting requests for Ordnance Survey maps of the first or second epoch. Absolutely meaningless to me. After making enquiries, it appeared that a well known commercial website used this term. I have just tried to see if it is still used, but the site is impossible to use. My memory is that they only talked about epochs, the period during which a particular edition was current, emphasising the word epoch, which the general public thought important and used when requesting maps from me. For edition, read epoch. Which is a bit like deciding to abandon the word newspaper, and use chipwrapper instead, 'I was looking at the chipwrappers yesterday, and noticed a report in the Times'.

When I talk to someone new to collecting Ordnance Survey maps, I am careful to refer to 'Populars' rather than 'Pops', and to the *Third Edition*, rather than 'Thirds'. But even this is assuming they know I am not talking about Irish or Scottish maps, when 'Scottish Thirds', 'Scottish Populars' and 'Scottish Populars with the National Grid' would be used. The later term, is sometimes inaccurately replaced by 'Scottish sixths'. God forbid. Amongst friends, I refer to 'one to fifties', 'seventh' and 'Scottish post-war', with no other explanation, and am understood, whilst to others, I mention 'one to fifty thousand' or '*Landrangers*'. Less common maps need a little more, 'Half-inch MOT', 'Half-inch Second Series', whilst the *Two-inch map of London* and the *Three-inch Map of Guernsey* are usually given in full. It is certainly the case that less common maps, even amongst the keen, elicit 'Have you got any of those' and then a brief description, with no attempt at a title.

I have an impression that anyone who has worked for the technical side of the Ordnance Survey thinks and talks in terms of scales, referring to '1:2500' maps when most CCS members would say 'twenty-five inch maps'. Whenever possible, I keep away from the dreaded representative fraction. A single zero makes a lot of difference and can cause problems. The area shown on a 1:2500 map is far less than on a 1:25,000 map. One needs 39 of the former and only 4 of the latter to cover Kerry Parish. My experience is that it is much safer to discuss the difference in detail shown on twenty five inch versus two and a half inch maps, and possibly save a lot of work. When

talking about post-1945 large scale Ordnance Survey maps, everyone tends to talk in terms of scales and not words. One seldom hears of a 1960s twenty five inch map, rather a 1:2500, which is a spot-on description. Scale is always used to arrange lists of map series. Roger's book starts with the one-inch, then half-inch, quarter-inch and eventually the 1:4,000,000; whilst Chapter two of Richard Oliver's *Concise guide* (to use two words of the sub-title) is also arranged largest down to the smallest, a convention again favoured by Chris Higley. Ever deviant, our catalogues started with the ten-mile and progressed to the one-inch.

Using a numerical description is certainly clear, providing everyone knows what is being discussed. There can be no confusion between a map at 1:126,720 and another at 1:31,680. The figures look so different. The only problem is that they do not bring to everyone's mind maps at the half-inch and two inch scale. Whenever these two scales are found together, we should insist on the representative fraction, as confusion is almost guaranteed. Flicking through a run of pre-WW1 maps in white covers, two miles to the inch and two inches to the mile are often assumed to be the same thing. Yes, we all know two miles to the inch are half-inch maps, but so many people pass over the other series as being the same. Open a two inch to the mile map and one is bound to find something very special, except perhaps for the London Passenger Transport Board maps, which are exceedingly dull by comparison with any other at this scale. Revision time : Re-arrange the following, putting the most detailed first, Half-inch, two inches to the mile, two inch, 1:126,720, two miles to the inch, 1:31,680.

The marker 'Fourth Edition, Populars', shows that old habits die hard. For all of us. In the early years of the society, we knew of a map called *Forth and Clyde in Roman Times*, but it was Roger who corrected us, noting that the map title was *Scotland in Roman Times*, but so many, myself included, still slip into *Forth and Clyde* mode. Slap on the wrist, which is also frowned upon, nay outlawed. Though life is now so complicated, things are still evolving. During the map market, someone told me they had some unwanted LRMs in their car. This threw me for a moment, not having heard nor seen the term before, but the meaning was clear, especially as I could see a boxful of the said pinkies on a table. A useful term, LRM, but not one to be emulated by the adoption of OIPE, HIMOGB or QIMOS, causing us to sound like the inmates of Feltham.

Where does all this get us? Basically, it is rare that we mention anything like a full title of a map series in conversation, relying on brief 'identifiers' depending on the present company. Two or three words are usually enough, with numerals being favoured for large scales by ex-OS employees. A few inaccurate descriptions are occasionally encountered, 'First Edition one-inch map' or the ultimate in ignorance, 'First Series one-inch map', when everyone else uses *Old Series*, as indeed did the Ordnance Survey; but members are more than willing to be corrected and fall into line. A couple of days after the AGM, I received an email from my 'fourths' friend, headed 'Populars', with a list of *Popular Edition* maps he still needed. Which made me even more determined to try and follow his example and refer to *Scotland in Roman Times*, but please do not try and catch me out when we next meet, as I have only just mastered referring to *Forth Clyde and Tay*, the largest text on the cover.

This week's quiz : on which Ordnance Survey publications can the words *Old Series* be found, referring to the one-inch map?