Sheetlines

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"OS County Series "

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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.

OS County Series – NLS records listing project

Over the last year, the National Library of Scotland has recorded sheet level records for the first time of all of our six-inch and 25 inch County Series maps of England and Wales. The work was part-funded by EDINA, to whom we are sincerely grateful for providing the impetus and rationale for the project.

The rationale for the project was actually the deficiencies of date information within the Landmark historic mapping that forms the basis of Historic Digimap. The original scanned images of sheets were cropped at their neatlines and seamed together into geo-referenced tiles, then grouped into epochs of time, usually about 20-30 years apart, from the 1840s to the 1980s. It is therefore not possible to date a specific map to a specific year

In 2009, EDINA were able to fund the recording of sheet-level information for all Scottish OS six-inch and 25 inch County Series sheets. This facilitated the subsequent scanning of all these maps, as well as their online availability,[1] and formed a useful pilot project for marching south of the Border to list maps of England and Wales in 2012-13. We recorded 152,332 maps in eight months, using two full-time and three part-time staff.

The sheet lines defined in CCS *Sheetfinder* and associated shapefiles[2] were of great value, and we are very grateful to CCS. These cover the theoretical possibilities of the County Series, rather than actual sheets published, and so we needed to link them to real sheet information. The shapefiles allowed a unique polygon ID to be created for every possible sheet at both scales. This was used to create sheet records in a master spreadsheet, including the sheet polygon ID, County, and sheet number in Roman and numerical forms. As sheets were listed, records from the master spreadsheet could be copied and pasted into individual county spreadsheets, recording the specific date information for each sheet. This both saved time and reduced chances of mis-transcription. But most important, it also allowed the completed county spreadsheets to be merged back with the shapefile via the polygon ID, creating a geographic index to the records.[3]

We had to aim for a high throughput recording just basic date information; the priority was to record survey/revision and publication dates for every sheet, not record all the possible marginalia. We aimed to record all published sheets, and although we skipped duplicates, our definition of these was very specific. Any differences in printed information was treated as a new edition, and where all printed information was the same, but stamping dates of accession in NLS or reprint dates were different, we recorded these as additional sheets with different 'probable' dates of publication.

What can we say about completeness? The Advocates Library that acted as the

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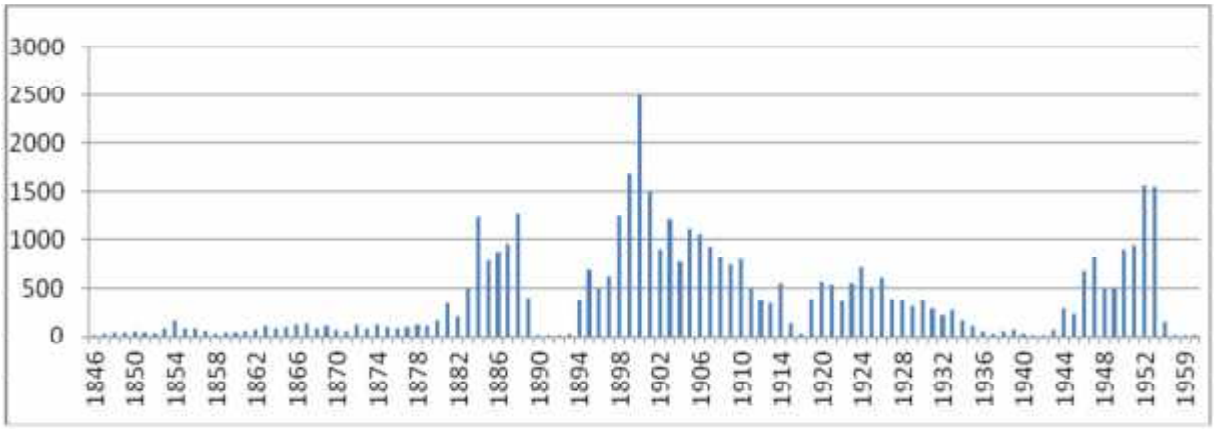
1 All NLS OS maps are available at *http://maps.nls.uk/os* and via a graphic index at *http://maps.nls.uk/geo/find*

2 *www.charlesclosesociety.org/CCS-sheetfinder* and *www.charlesclosesociety.org/kmlfile*

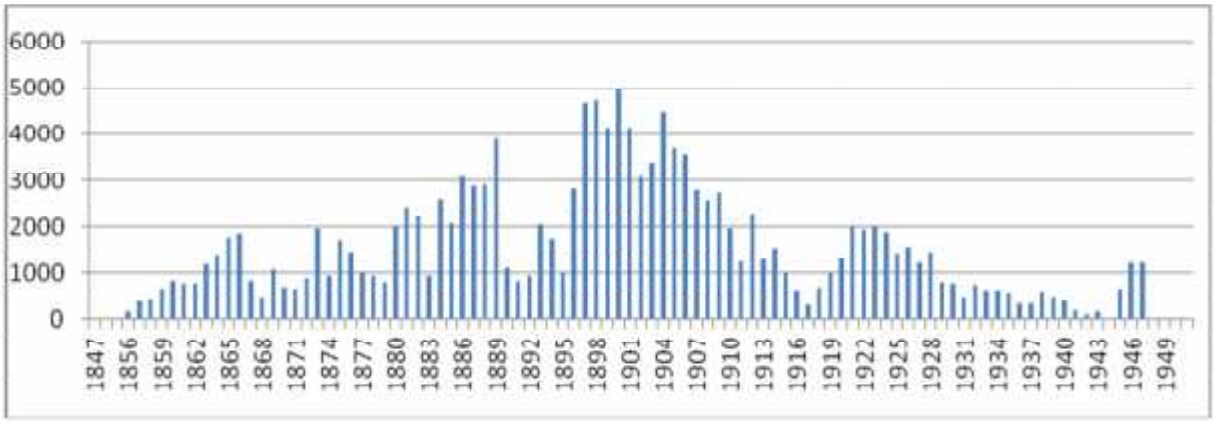
3 We used Michael Minn's *Attributes Join from CSV file* QGIS plugin for this (*http://michaelminn.com/linux/mmqgis*), which helpfully matched our spreadsheets on the sheet polygon ID to create large shapefiles of 150,000 records, also saving any mismatched records in a specified CSV file.

forerunner to the National Library of Scotland before 1925, only obtained legal deposit status from 1911, and we knew that our earlier sheet coverage was likely to be patchy, in spite of the significant donations of OS mapping to NLS in the 20th century. We aimed to record sheets that were published, whether or not they were held by NLS, by using OS County Series graphic indexes and publication records, as well as the records of later editions (recording survey dates of the first edition), and we clearly recorded whether the sheet records were in NLS as real paper items, or not in NLS. As CCS members will know only too well, there are numerous idiosyncrasies to OS mapping with non-standard sheets, and no library can therefore claim completeness on any grounds. NLS also only received very occasional Inland Revenue sheets published ca. 1911, and none of the Special Emergency Edition / Air Raid Precaution sheets of 1939. At least for the initial comprehensive revisions of counties in the 19th century, the ability to check editions spatially within ArcGIS/QGIS was very helpful, allowing us to spot graphically any missing sheets, especially at county boundaries.

We have made all the information available in our OS sheet records viewer at *http://maps.nls.uk/geo/records*. It is possible to summarise statistics for numbers of published sheets for Scotland, England and Wales at these scales over time (*below*). These should be treated with caution, given the caveats mentioned above, but show interesting troughs and peaks. For example, according to our figures, OS published 7467 sheets at these two scales in 1900 but the peaks in the 1880s and 1940s-1950s are significant too. ***Chris Fleet***



Six-inch maps per year 1846 to 1959. Total of 43,895, peak is about 2500 in 1900.



25 inch maps per year 1847 to 1953. Total of 145,529, peak is about 5000 in 1900.