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“Visit to Lovell Johns”

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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.

## *Visit to Lovell Johns*

*4 June, 2008*

*John Henry*

Lovell Johns operates a large international cartography business from a quiet location on the edge of the village of Long Hanborough, Oxfordshire. The very clear location map on their website assured that all fourteen visitors from the Society found their way there, despite the anonymity of the actual site due to hedge-screened directions and low-key signage on the building.

We were met by manager Louisa Keyworth, herself a cartographer, who explained the three main business areas of LJ: GIS/Web products, conventional atlas and map production, and online map sales through *www.mapsinternational.co.uk*. We divided into four groups to hear Louisa's overview and introduction to LJ and to visit the three business areas and meet Dave Murray and the two Liz's who explained their work and showed their current projects.

LJ has been in business for 43 years starting in the era of pen and ink, film scribing and colour separations and advancing to completely computerised map-making. Along the way their client list has expanded to include, among others, the Environment Agency, Thomas Cook, National Geographic, the Automobile Association, Philips, Open University, Saudi Arabian Ministry responsible for Mines, Royal Automobile Club, Times Atlas, and numerous local government authorities. Their considerable contribution is often not attributed but they are the 'back room' for many well-known publishers. Their products include early map reproductions, road atlases, a major world atlas, brochures, wall maps and also maps within other texts and reports.

After Louisa's overview, our group met Dave who demonstrated how he takes raw OS data for an ITN (Integrated Transport Network), keeps it updated as to road class, road name/number, one-way directions, road works from various data basis, and occasionally intervenes as an old fashioned editor to tidy up and improve the appearance. He then applies style information, supplied by and/or developed with his clients, as a 'rule base' to produce maps that are fundamentally the same, but which appear dramatically different in different publishers' street plans and highway atlases.

We then met Liz Adams who manages Maps International, LJ's relatively new map retail business. In addition to the wide range of 'standard' off the shelf maps, travel guidebooks and atlases, she showed us how to design our own wall map online, centred, scaled, cropped, captioned, labelled as required, with whatever logo we supplied and delivered in a variety of finishes. Try it on their website. At the end of seven stages MapVu puts a price tag on what you have designed and you can put it in your virtual shopping basket or go back to the 'drawing board'.

Liz Donnelly works in Editorial, which is more familiar to the older cartographer with map chests, drawing boards, and shelves of reference atlases and topographic maps. Editorial produces atlases and maps in series with a high degree of cartographic design, client liaison and individual editing. Editions of some atlases are edited in several languages. This writer found the Lithuanian version of Inuit in the high Arctic fascinating.

The visit to Lovell Johns was a very interesting. We came away with an impression of a small group of enthusiastic individuals doing creative work that they enjoyed and producing a wide variety of map products to many satisfied clients. The people we met had been with Lovell Johns for many years, a clear sign of a happy and cohesive company. The CCS would like to thank Louisa and her colleagues for presenting an insight into the workings of the often unacknowledged creative force behind much of the commercial, administrative, navigational and educational mapping that we encounter routinely.