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“Visit to Snowflake Software”

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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.

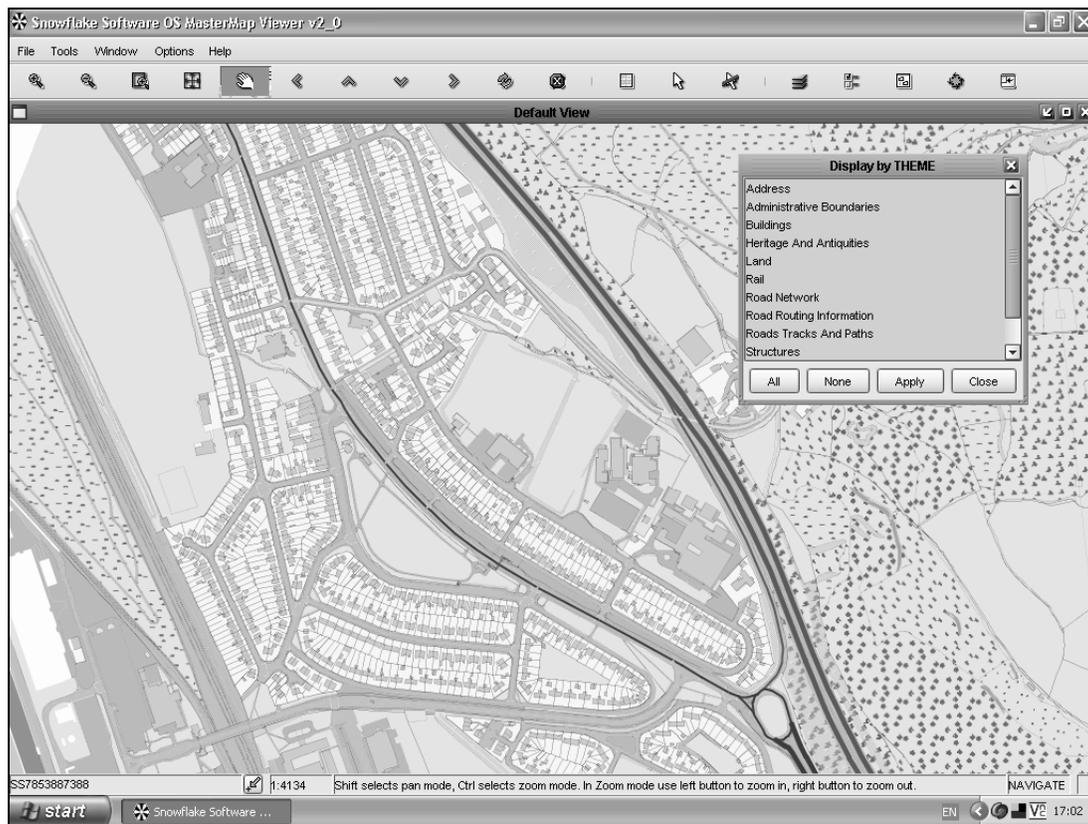
The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.

Visit to Snowflake Software

John Davies

This visit, on 18 May, was a real eye-opener to those who think of maps as colourful pieces of paper found in second-hand bookshops! Here was a vivid demonstration of the power of digital maps and the tools available to view and exploit them.

Eddie Curtis, co-founder and Chief Technical Officer, explained that when somebody buys OS *MasterMap*, what they actually get is a computer-readable file of 450 million objects, organised into 'layers'. What Snowflake offer to their customers – typically central or local government authorities and agencies, utility companies and so on – is the means to turn this vast data repository into meaningful information to support their business objectives.



Snowflake MasterMap viewer

Snowflake have three main products: Go Viewer, Go Loader and Go Publisher. Go Viewer, freely downloadable from the website at www.snowflakesoftware.co.uk, portrays *MasterMap* data visually as on-screen mapping, allowing layers to be selected and zooming to any scale.

Go Loader and Go Publisher enable the user to maintain an Oracle database comprising selected data from OS *MasterMap* together with any other compatible data. This lets an organisation integrate its own information (such as pipe or cable runs, in the case of a utility company) into a comprehensive map and to produce this in a variety of formats for planning, operational and display purposes.

The software adheres to international standards, XML and GML, thus not only OS mapping but any conforming spatial data can be accommodated and Snowflake are actively engaged in a number of Europe-wide initiatives. We were given a glimpse of an exciting new product, 'City GML' which combines CAD and GIS technologies to produce three-dimensional perspective images of cityscapes. This has huge potential for such applications as telecommunications, city planning, disaster recovery, noise mapping, simulators and vehicle navigation.

Founded in 2001, now with a staff of eight, Snowflake is a shining example of a small, innovative company moving swiftly forward to exploit new technologies to create new opportunities.