



# *Sheetlines*

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

“1943 South Downs map”

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*Sheetlines*, 110 (December 2017), pp24-25

Stable URL: <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/sheetlines-articles/Issue110page24.pdf>

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Published by  
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY  
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps  
[www.CharlesCloseSociety.org](http://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.

## ***The 1943 South Downs map***

***Mike Nolan***

Prior to 1979 the Royal Army Educational Corps had been responsible for map reading training in the army. In about 1979 the Directorate of Military Survey took over this role. As a first step it undertook to design and run a new course at the School of Military Survey to train unit map reading instructors of all arms how to instruct the Common Military Syllabus (Recruits) in the subject of map reading. The first two-week course was run in mid-1980 at about the same time as the formal opening of the then recently rebuilt barracks by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II. The course, aptly named Map Reading Instructors' Course or MAPRIC, quickly became accepted by the army as a most useful course. With modifications, and doubtless with improvements, it has continued to the present day.

As with map reading over the preceding years, recruits were taught on series M726, the military version of the 1:50,000 scale map of Great Britain but shortly after the MAPRIC got under way, it was suggested that a filmstrip of conventional signs and marginalia appearing on series M745, the 1:50,000 scale series of Germany, should be produced and that a training area map of Salisbury Plain should be produced to the specification of Series M745, but the idea never came to fruition.

As is often the case, this proposal was simply a case of "reinventing the wheel". Recently found in the Defence Geographic Centre Map Library is a map of the South Downs conforming to the specification of Series GSGS 4250, the 1:50,000 scale map of France which was to be the operational tactical scale map used on D-Day and during subsequent operations on the continent. The familiar series GSGS 4347 of Normandy at 1:25,000 scale was also used by the infantry in Normandy, where its design showing field boundaries, orchards etc., was found invaluable in the close "bocage" country but it was originally conceived as an artillery map and it did not extend as far inland as the 1:50,000 scale series.

The South Downs map was produced as an aid to instruction in map reading and was produced on Series GSGS 4250 sheet sizes thus covering 30 x 20 kilometres of ground on a sheet 76 x 55 centimetres overall, a sheet size which could be printed in the field on the Demy-sized presses with which the printing trucks of the Field Survey Companies RE were equipped.

The symbols on the face and in the two Reference boxes were drawn to Series GSGS 4250 specification.

No grid data was given but the grid sheet-corner values and 10 kilometre ladder grid on the face conformed with that on GSGS 4250 and a GSGS 4250 type Convergence Data box was included.

The one example so far found has an imprint of 21,000/10/43/13 S/459, indicating that 21,000 copies were printed in October 1943. This map found in the Defence Geographic Centre is now held within the Charles Close Society archives in the University of Cambridge Map Library.

*Extracts opposite from the map have been reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library.*

