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“The Special Emergency Edition”

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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 Special Emergency Edition (SEE): the good, the bad, and the intolerable

Rob Wheeler

Rationale

With the introduction of continuous revision in recent years, it has become possible to view a depiction of the entire country at something like a uniform date. Previously that was not possible: comparison of different areas was impeded by the fact that the revision dates were normally quite different. The one exception was 1938, when ARP Revision provides something like a picture of the entire country at once. However, there are a number of questions which need to be addressed about how complete the coverage was:

1. To what extent had there been significant changes on sheets for which no SEE was produced?
2. On those sheets for which there is an SEE, did ARP revision cover the whole sheet?
3. What categories of change since the previous edition were simply ignored?
4. What was left off for security reasons?

Drawing standards

In the course of looking at a couple of hundred sheets from different counties, I have seen nothing that requires a revision of what I wrote in *Sheetlines* 108¹ about the relationship between SEEs and the early Provisionals based on them. In particular, the additions of buildings and roads appear to have been copied faithfully. This is important because an earlier article on the manner in which buildings were generalised² had relied on that relationship. I have remarked in the past that drawing standards vary, not just between sheets but also within a single sheet. In part, this is because different standards might be applied at different stages of map production.

Evidence for this is provided by Herts 34SE, where the North Orbital has been drawn in (evidently from the recent 1:2500 survey) with bounding lines corresponding to outer fences. Where it crosses railway lines, the railway has been carefully deleted within those bounding lines. At this date, the road only had a single carriageway and, to judge by the 1:2500, the bridges were only wide enough for that single carriageway. The surveyor on the ground seems to have decided that the depiction on the map he was sent out with was unacceptable and drew in the constrictions at the railway bridges. That at least is the only explanation I can offer for what appear to be a pair of enclosures at each railway bridge (*figure 1*). Incidentally, the road did indeed have square roundabouts but the width of the carriageway round these roundabouts was a good deal more uniform than is shown. Coarse generalisation along with inaccurate drawing

¹ Rob Wheeler, 'The Special Emergency Edition in Lincolnshire', *Sheetlines* 108 (April 2017) 24-31. All the sheets I refer to are at Cambridge. In general, to see where a sheet can be found, check www.charlesclosesociety.org/SEE

² Rob Wheeler, 'ARP Revision, 1938', *Sheetlines* 100 (August 2014) 33-36.

seems to be characteristic of the preliminary work in the office. Figure 2, also from Hertfordshire, shows a different effect, whereby the Building Research Station is drawn with unusual attention to detail, including projections as small as 0.3mm. This is so different from normal field work (seen, for example, on the houses south of the Establishment's site) that it is likely to represent the copying of a plan supplied by the establishment, copying done, for once, without the pressure to do it quickly and coarsely.



Fig 1, above: Herts 34 SE, North Orbital showing roundabout and railway bridge.

Fig 2. Herts 39 NW, showing Building Research Station.



Where names had to be cleared to draw new buildings, what happened seems to have depended on how pressed for time the draughtsman was. On Herts 39NW, the intriguing *Booksellers' Provident Retreat* is neatly rearranged, losing only its apostrophe. In contrast Cheshire 41SW shows *Albert* by Winsford station, a partial survival of *Albert Infirmary*; part-deletion of names was normally avoided.

Occasionally buildings are found in the water, or at least the separation between water and land is lost. Figure 3 provides an example: in connection with the new dockside building on the left, the former edge of the dock has been removed but without troubling to replace it.



Fig 3. Essex n93 SE - Tilbury Dock.

One convention that seems to have caused genuine doubt concerned public buildings. In the Lincolnshire specimens I had examined, new public buildings

were drawn in solid black. However, the view that inaccurately surveyed additions ought to indicate their status by being unfilled seems to go right back to 1938. If a building like a school had new blocks added it was normally quite evident that they formed part of the school and they could be left unfilled: this is seen for example on Yorks 7NW or on new estates round Manchester. That this was gradually becoming policy appears from Cheshire 41SW where additions to a school drawn in solid black on the SEE are left unfilled on the post-war Provisional. Finally, one finds cases like the new school at Houghton Green on Cheshire 11 NW which is unfilled, unnamed and might be interpreted by anyone unfamiliar with the district as a rebuilding of the mine building previously on the site; perhaps this case indicates pressure of time rather than policy.

Bolton town centre presents a curious case of a structure (or rather a block) that was partly a public building. It had previously been a brass foundry but one end became an ambulance station. The SEE fills the whole block in black and it appears to be embraced by the label *Municipal Buildings*; as far as can be established the foundry continued to function.

Geographical completeness of coverage

Turning to the first of the questions I posed, there are actually two issues: (a) the criteria for carrying out ARP revision of a sheet and (b) whether the OS had access to the information needed to apply them. With regard to (b), one might suppose that local authority rating departments would have good knowledge of residential developments, while water supply organisations (often the same local authority) would know where they had laid water mains. Changes to industrial buildings and isolated houses without any form of mains services might be harder to keep track of. For the things that ARP revision was primarily interested in, intelligence ought to have been generally good.

Turning to (a), there are SEEs which record very few changes. For example, Durham 33SE shows one new house (or a small block) in the village of Howden-le-Wear and two in Witton-le-Wear. There are four small industrial establishments to which no changes were made, and it is difficult to see why the sheet was selected for ARP revision. In contrast, within the area of Lincs 78SE, there were half a dozen new council houses in Harmston village, one farm extension, a large house on the main road, and some building in the grounds of Harmston Hall in consequence of it having become a mental institution. The 1950 Provisional for the sheet also shows some 30 or 40 houses in Waddington village; in contrast to Harmston, I do not have firm dates for these but believe at least half to have been built before 1938. Yet Lincs 78SE was not thought to require ARP revision.

Why then was Durham 33SE selected for revision when Lincs 78SE was not? The topographical intelligence needed to prioritise one over the other must have been readily available; but it seems not to have been used. Consequently, the fact that some SEEs show almost no change does not tell us anything about the sheets that were not revised.

As for the second question, whether ARP revision covered entire sheets, there are numerous instances of small changes tucked away on farms outside the area

that might be selected as likely to have seen development. This tends to suggest that revision did actually extend to the edge of a sheet. This is backed up by instances on county boundaries where an area is covered by the sheets of two separate counties on different meridians and with different dates of (full) revision. In such instances, the sheet belonging to the older county in its pre-1938 state will show the 'foreign' county at its last-but-one revision. With a couple of exceptions, discussed later, all the buildings added at the last revision turn out to have been added (in a generalised manner). This can be seen to have been done right up to the sheet edges. In this case there would have been a good argument for stopping the redrawing at the county boundary; but this was evidently thought unacceptable. That suggests there was a demand from the ARP organisation that all the SEEs should be revised right up to the edge of the sheet.

Categories of change ignored

These overlapping sheets provide useful evidence of the types of change that might be ignored in ARP revision. Figure 4a shows an area of Lancashire adjoining the Manchester Ship Canal as it was in 1904-5; it is left unchanged on the Cheshire SEE. Figure 4b shows it as it was in 1926 with what looks like peat extraction under way; it is left like this on the Lancashire SEE. Whatever the landscape was like in 1938 it can have borne no resemblance to figure 4a, to such an extent that the map was well-nigh useless; evidently this was of no concern.

Failing to draw in the tramway system on figure 4a might be considered an insignificant omission, but it reflects a general principle that new railways were not to be drawn in on the SEE. Figure 5 shows one of the more extreme consequences. At the time of the previous revision in 1913, the North Eastern Railway was changing the alignment of its line at Monkseaton: the new alignment had already been fenced and the station buildings on the up side were built, but the permanent way had not been laid. The new lines, along with the new station, were opened in 1915. The ARP reviser in 1938 duly noted that the name *Monkseaton station* was in the wrong place; he must have marked it for deletion and added a *Sta* by the new one. He also drew in the new station building adjacent to the down platform. The line from Backworth can be seen coming in at the west side of the extract. This now curved round to the new station instead of continuing straight on as it had prior to 1915. The surveyor marked the continuation of the track for deletion, and this was done, which is why the railway is shown stopping opposite Ashbrooke Road. (He was doing more than he needed to: there are plenty of cases where superseded railways are left unchanged on the SEE.) But there seems to have been no procedure for drawing in the new track. Understanding the map is easy enough if one knows the history, but to anyone using it without local knowledge it would be a complete puzzle.

Overall, it appears that ARP Revision was expected to cover just roads and buildings. Anything else could be ignored and, if time was pressing, *was* ignored.



*Fig 4, above: Different depiction on two SEEs (a, left) Cheshire 9NW (b). Lancs 103SW
Fig 5. Northumberland n86SE.*



Security Deletions

Most RAF stations were in rural areas not included in the ARP Revision programme. However, Flintshire 10NW includes RAF Sealand. The original survey date was 1908-9. RAF Sealand was built in the 1920s, ie before the main Expansion Programme. It can be seen on the one-inch 7th Series sheet 109 (B//) of 1969 and I can vouch for the buildings being there in the 1970s. The SEE carefully widens Welsh Road (the A550) along the frontage of the RAF station but makes no attempt to update anything the other side of the fence. This might be more accurately described as an omission rather than a deletion.

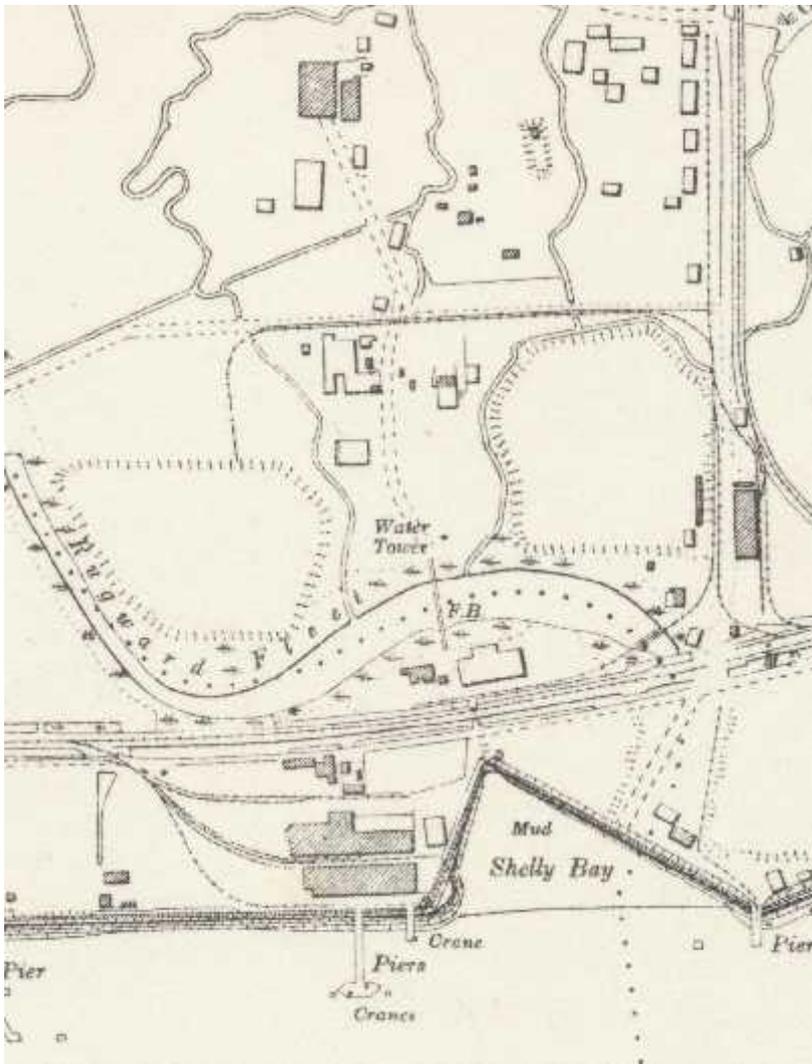


Fig 6. Essex 89SE - Shellhaven

Figure 6 shows an actual deletion, at Shellhaven on the north bank of the Thames estuary. The two empty areas surrounded by embankments were actually full of oil storage tanks and are shown on the previous edition (revised 1919). The embankments are bunds to contain any escape of oil. Some of the tanks can be seen on post-war mapping, and it seems highly implausible that the surveyor just happened to find the site undergoing refurbishment with all the tanks temporarily removed. Interestingly, there seems to have been no objection to showing other buildings. From the outlines one can see that it is an industrial installation of some sort but one can deduce little more. It was the close-packed circular tanks that were characteristic of a refinery and which declared themselves so

obviously to be a potential target for bombing raids.

Another deletion took place on Suffolk 40NW where a Martello tower ('Q') in the middle of Walberswick is shown on the 1928 edition and still exists today (converted to a house) but was deleted from the SEE. Someone seems to have been over-pedantic in applying the rules.

Turning briefly from deletions on the SEE to deletions *after* the SEE, in *Sheetlines* 108, I mentioned the omission of the name *Grimsby Municipal Airport* when the early Provisional edition was prepared from the SEE. This seems to have been part of a more general aviation-related process. *Aerodrome* at Woodford on Cheshire 28NE is deleted post-war, likewise *Aircraft works* at Lostock on Lancs 86SE. Both sites played a major part in aircraft production and the inclusion of both names and buildings on the SEE seems to indicate that, with the exception of oil storage facilities, there was no suppression of industrial or civil-aviation facilities.

Failures

The foregoing sections attempt to answer the questions posed at the start. It would appear that, so far as roads and buildings are concerned, ARP revision does generally provide a good snapshot of England & Wales in 1938. But as might be expected with so massive a programme conducted in great haste, there were instances where sheets went out in an unfinished state, either because it was

simply forgotten that not everything had been done, or perhaps because the production schedule demanded that the drawing be sent on willy-nilly.

The overlaps along county boundaries provide a useful test here. In describing the procedure it will be useful to take as an example the Cheshire / Staffs border west of Tunstall. Staffordshire had been revised about 1897 and then again in 1922. Cheshire had been revised in 1908. Thus, the existing Cheshire sheets still showed Staffs as in 1897. Naturally, the surveyors (at least within Staffs) were working from Staffordshire sheets. Once those sheets had been drawn, the relevant Cheshire sheets were updated, copying the depiction of additions since 1922 and also drawing in generalised form the updating made at the 1922 revision of buildings that had had changed or been added since 1897. It seems an unnecessarily laborious process: some form of cut-and-paste would surely have been easier. Nevertheless, that is how it generally appears to have been done, and on most of the overlap sheets examined the process was followed thoroughly.

One isolated exception is Cheshire 57SE. The north-east corner and the whole of the central and southern parts of this sheet are in Staffordshire. The north-east corner is updated from Staffs 6SE (SEE). The rest of the Staffordshire part, so far as one can tell, has not been updated at all.

Runcorn comes within the Cheshire / Lancs overlap and examination of the Weston Point area south of that town (*figure 7*) suggests that two independent surveys have taken place. Both surveyors have added housing development to the south and east of the extracts; they handle it identically so it is of little interest. In the centre of the extract, the Cheshire surveyor has added Pigow Farm Road and nothing else. The Lancashire surveyor does not show Pigow Farm Road at all. Instead, he has cleaned off the existing fields and substituted what appears to be a recreation ground with a pavilion. He also adds factory buildings in the loop formed by the Runcorn Dock Branch. How could two surveyors present such different pictures of the area?

The answer appears to be that we have the work of two different draughtsmen working from the 1937 revision of the 1:2500. The man working on the Lancashire sheet evidently took the view that, because Pigow Farm Road did not lead anywhere and had no houses on it, he did not need to show it. He generalised the buildings on the recreation ground – although his labelling is at variance with the 1:2500, which describes the southern building as *Club*, the one to its NW as *Pavilion* and the one to its NE set at an angle as *Shooting Range*. Neither draughtsman saw fit to add the new railway line with sidings, immediately west of Pigow Farm Road. At first sight this might be dismissed as two different but permissible approaches to generalisation; but the factory could not legitimately be omitted, and the three buildings on the recreation ground are all larger than a pair of houses, so they too needed to be shown.

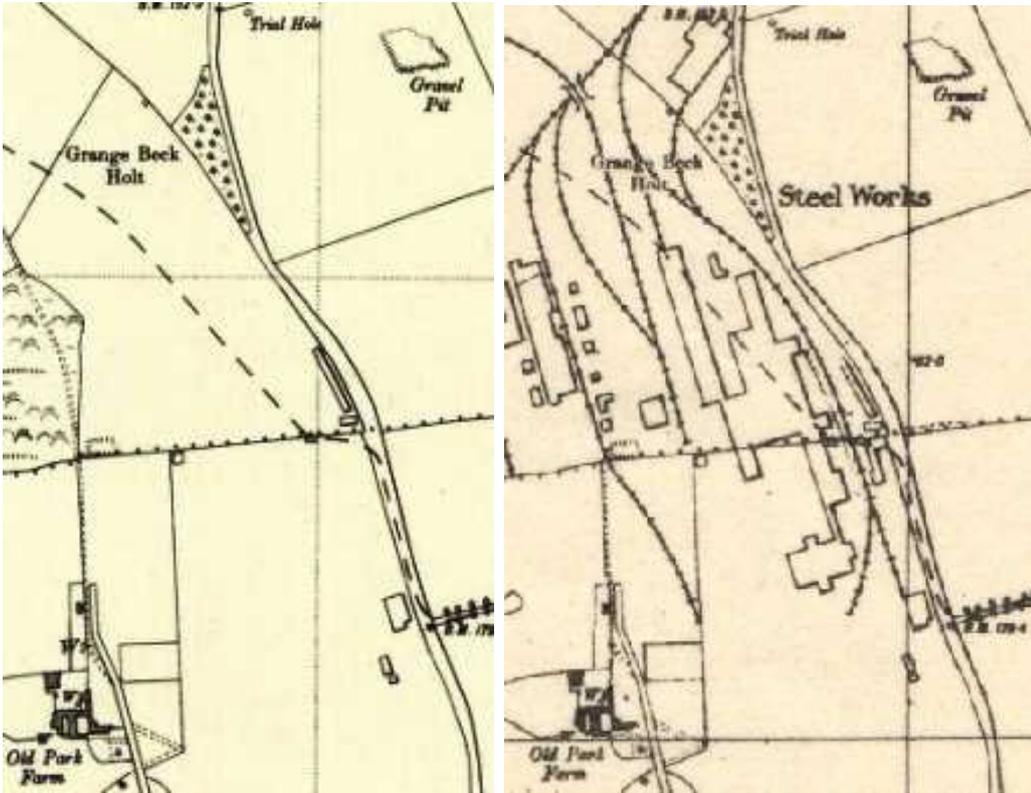


Fig 7. Weston Point: (a, left) Lancs 118NE, (b) Cheshire 24NE.

Before moving on to the final type of failure, it is necessary to say something about survey techniques. ARP revision used crude graphic methods to relate new buildings to detail that was on the existing map. This works well for ribbon development; it can cope with the odd new street here and there; but it cannot be used where there has been wholesale replacement of the previous landscape. Major new housing development was the principal cause for such wholesale replacement. Local councils will have had plans, whether these were council or private developments, and it is presumed that these plans were used in compiling the draft map which the ARP reviser took out into the field. Major industrial plants were another cause of wholesale landscape replacement: one much assume that plans were requested from the proprietors, but such requests may not have been acceded to so promptly. We have already noted the difference in style of the depiction of the Building Research Establishment, a difference which suggests it was drawn from a plan provided, but not at the same time as other detail was being incorporated so much more coarsely. It would be understandable if some of these plans arrived too late to be incorporated. That at least is the explanation I would put forward for the absence of the ICI works at Billingham (Durham 51NW), which Yolande Hodson drew attention to.³ Another example is Lysaght's Steel Works at Scunthorpe, shown in figure 8. The figure is taken from the early Provisional; no copy of the SEE has been located. New houses can be seen along the west side of the road but the steelworks behind them has been omitted. This can hardly be a security omission: Lysaghts (otherwise known as Normanby Park) steel works was started in 1910, had been shown on the one-inch ever since the Popular Edition came out, and was not fundamentally different from the other Scunthorpe steel works which *are* shown on the six-inch. It looks as though the surveyor was told to ignore everything the

³ Yolande Hodson, *Popular Maps*, Charles Close Society, 1999, figure 27 on page 161. The map illustrated is the early Provisional, but the SEE is essentially the same.

other side of the fence, expecting that the company (GKN) would provide a plan.



*Fig 8, far left:
Lincs 10SE
without steel
works*

*Fig 9. GSGS
3906 53/42
NW. Lysaght's
steel works.*

What came next

The SEEs were printed between Sept/Oct 1938 and Sept/Oct 1939.⁴ The maps were photographically reduced to 1:25,000 for the provisional edition of GSGS 3906. Redrawn, the information was used for the one-inch Second War Revision. That is the standard account, and, but it seems not to be the whole story. GSGS 3906 is not simply a reduction of the SEEs. Some of this relates to the method used for the production of that series and will be addressed in the forthcoming monograph on the series; but there are also enhancements, drawn to SEE six-inch standards, which seem intended to rectify the gravest shortcomings of the SEEs. Four instances are outlined below.

1. Lysaght's steel works is inserted, along with the railways serving it (*figure 9*). The plan differs from that on the one-inch Popular, and this probably reflects improvements made in the 1930s when coke ovens were integrated with the blast furnaces. The railways serving the plant are added but without their earthworks.

2. At Monkseaton, a double-track railway symbol is drawn in along the new alignments.

3. The same is done at Keadby Bridge on Lincs 18NW. What had happened here was that in 1912-16 a Scherzer rolling lift bridge was built as a combined project of the Great Central Railway and Lindsey County Council, carrying road and rail traffic side-by-side at high-level, in lieu of a rail-only low-level bridge. The ARP reviser had drawn in the new bridge (at least its north or 'road' side) along with a building that seems to be the new Althorpe railway station, but the

⁴ Info from Richard Oliver based on TNA IR 65/29.

new alignment of the railway was not shown, nor was there any indication that the new building was a railway station. Before GSGS3906 was made, the new alignment of the railway was drawn in and the old bridge deleted. No attempt was made to move the name of Althorpe station (*figure 10*).

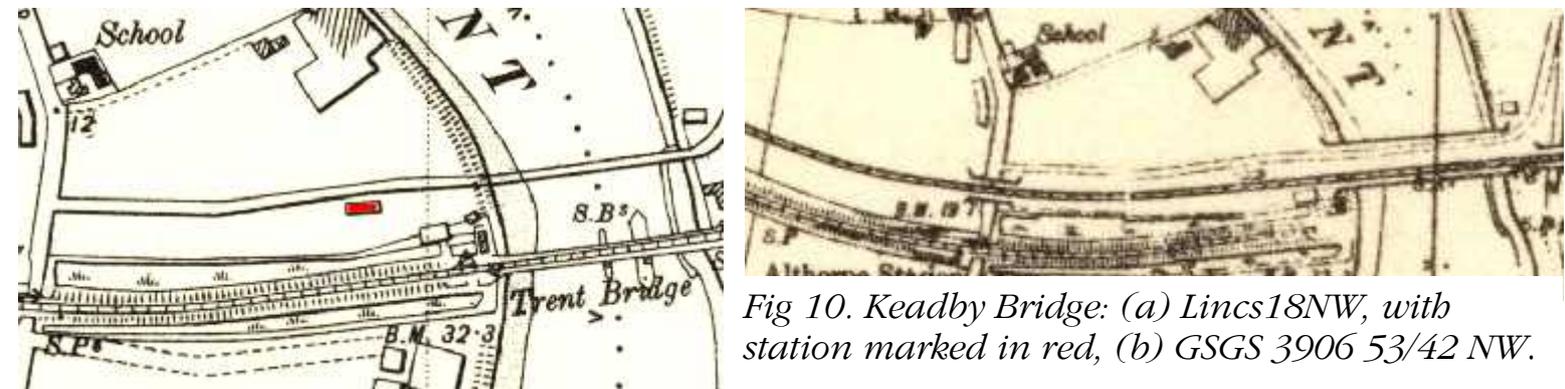


Fig 10. Keadby Bridge: (a) Lincs18NW, with station marked in red, (b) GSGS 3906 53/42 NW.

4. Whereas the previous three SEEs might well be regarded as unacceptable, the fourth case is odd and concerns the Hindley Green collieries on Lancs 94SW. Between 1927 (revision date of previous edition) and 1937, the collieries had closed and their pit-head buildings had been demolished. The SEE deleted the buildings and names, but left the railway lines in place. That was usual. GSGS 3906 deletes the railway tracks from Scowcroft's Junction to the southern collieries and the line over the main railway as far as the workshops just south of the northern colliery group. This must be based on 1:2500 revision made in 1937 but only published in 1939. It is not clear why this length of industrial railway should have been deleted when so many more were left in.

It seems likely that many more instances of updating could be found by diligent search. They are most easily explained as updates to the master drawings of the SEE in readiness for a second edition. They will have been lost when the Southampton offices were bombed in 1941, which is why the post-war early Provisionals are based solely on the printed SEEs.

If this interpretation is correct, it poses the question whether any second edition SEEs were actually issued. It seems unlikely that any bear a title of that sort or they would have been remarked on. However, a 'silent' re-issue ought not to be ruled out. Comparison of specimens is not easy, so it seems possible that a few sheets exist in two different forms and that this has never been spotted.

Comparison between SEEs and one-inch Second War Revision (2WR) has proved more troublesome than I expected. The sort of problem that arises is shown in figure 11. The SEE shows Willington Square to consist of a road junction by a colliery with three streets of houses converging on it. 2WR shows additionally, an incomplete square with a church in the middle, all in the style of drawing used for additions. So where has this extra information come from? GSGS3906 turned out to be the same as the SEE. More puzzling still, there turned out to be a 1:2500 survey of 1942. That too was broadly similar to the SEE: the SEE's *Institute* turned out to be *Aged Miner's Homes* [sic], but that is hardly

significant. The solution to the puzzle was found by looking into the place's history. Willington Square consisted of four ranges of cottages built in the first half of the nineteenth century and forming a sort of square. In 1928 progress dictated that a new arterial road be driven across the southern corner of the square. The SEE actually cleaned off the entire former settlement, apart from its name. On the one-inch, the square with its church, the new arterial road, and two of the radiating roads were already on the map prior to the war⁵; only the houses along the road to Willington were added as part of the War Revision process. The old square ought to have been cleaned off at this point but wasn't. As for the church, I gather a Willington Square UM chapel was in existence in 1940. Of the three buildings, the SEE shows 'floating' north of the junction, the northern and the south-eastern are present on the 1:2500 and the northern looks as though it might be a chapel, although it is unlabelled on the map. Comparison with the modern landscape is unhelpful: Willington Square is merely a multi-level roundabout surrounded by out-of-town commercial development.

Thus, the message that emerges from this cautionary tale is that pre-war additions to the Popular can be indistinguishable in style from those resulting from the 2WR process; and that there was less interest in recording deletions than when the SEEs were drawn. If there is genuinely new material that appears on 2WR but not on GSGS 3906 it will take significant work to find it.



*Fig 11. Willington Square:
(a) from SEE (Durham 3NE/
Northumberland 95NE;
(b) from Second War Revision
sheet 7.*

Figures 8 and 10a are reproduced by kind permission of National Library of Scotland. Figure 10a is actually Provisional, but depiction on SEE is the same.

⁵ They appear on the 2035 printing of Sheet 7.