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“Merely clarifications”

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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.

## ***Merely clarifications***

***David E.M. Andrews***<sup>1</sup>

I have received a couple of queries following the publication of Michael Spencer's article 'Mere questions' in *Sheetlines* 110, pages 14 to 17.

### ***Query 1***

Reading the article, 'Mere questions' I feel that some clarification is called for on "Und" and "Def"; and since the author is quoting your article,<sup>2</sup> it would be best if it came from you. The problem is that the definition you quote of "Und" in your article in *Sheetlines* 103 has evidently been written by someone who does not give the same attention to the words he writes as would, say, a mathematician or a lawyer. As the OS used the term, it appears to me to mean that the boundary is not related to a feature *it runs on or alongside*, nor has there been such a feature *since the First edition of the large-scale survey*. Obviously, it is related in some way to more distant detail, otherwise its course could not have been surveyed; obviously too, the OS is not making any statement about the absence of mediaeval (or even Iron Age) features that the boundary might once have followed. Likewise, "Def" relates to defacing since the First edition.

### ***Answer***

The point about the mereing "Und" is that, at the date specified in the administrative order from which a new boundary comes into effect, (the "Appointed Day"), there was no physical feature in existence on the ground to which the boundary could be mered. If there had been a physical feature in existence at the "Appointed Day", but it had been removed or demolished by the time that the surveyor was on site to mere the boundary, then the mereing would have been "Def".

In practice the surveyor, finding that there was no physical feature in existence at the time of his visit, would have made enquiries with people, (usually the landowner(s)), who might know whether or not there had been a physical feature in existence on the "Appointed Day", and mere the boundary accordingly.

With regard to "mediaeval", "Iron Age" and other ancient boundaries I must confess that I do not know how the surveyors of the First edition OS large scale maps decided between "Und" and "Def" when there was no administrative order to refer to. I suspect that the lack of a physical feature adjacent to existing boundaries at the time of the surveyor's visit for the survey of the First edition large scale map resulted in a mereing of "Und" because the use of "Def" would imply the existence of a previously mapped physical boundary feature.

Incidentally, the quote referred to is not mine. It is the wording from "*Public Boundaries and Ordnance Survey, JRS Booth MBE, Ordnance Survey, 1980*". Booth is considered to be the authority on the subject of boundaries and OS mapping, but he was not a lawyer and when he wrote, "*never has been*", we probably have to understand that he actually meant, "*while the boundary has been in existence and has been mapped at large scale by the Ordnance Survey*".

<sup>1</sup> The author is a retired Ordnance Survey Chief Surveyor.

<sup>2</sup> 'Merely a question of boundaries', *Sheetlines* 103, 31-39.

## Query 2

Is there a difference of substance between “C Tk O C R” and “O C R” or is it just a change in standard terminology?

### Answer

As far as I am aware the two mereings “C Tk O C R” and “O C R” fell out of use in the late nineteenth century. The more modern mereings which replaced them are “Tk R”, (*Track of River*), where the old course of the river still can be seen on the ground but there is no water in the “Track”, and “C O C R”, (*Centre of Old Course of River*), where there is still a water filled portion of the old river, but the main alignment of the river is now in a different location.

A few more things arising from the article in *Sheetlines* 110, tackled in the order in which they are mentioned in the original.

1. “Cop” is defined in *Booth* as “Usually a raised bank; sometimes a hedge bank and sometimes the central ridge of a butt of ploughed land i.e. a raised section of land”.
2. A boundary line between boundary posts or stones is not necessarily a straight line, and Ordnance Survey practice is that it is mered “Und” disregarding the existence of any boundary posts, stones or other markers. Any other mereing, (such as “SLS”), would have to be changed to “Def” if one or more of the boundary posts/stones/markers were removed, giving the impression that the boundary had been previously mered to a feature depicted on an earlier edition of the map.

An “Und” boundary can arise in two ways;

1. the Order-making authority had intended the boundary to be mered to a physical feature, but that feature had been removed or demolished before the “Appointed Day”.
2. the Order-making authority intended the boundary to follow the alignment that they had drawn on a map, and which did not follow any physical feature on the ground.

A boundary mered “Und” will forever remain as “Und” until such time as the boundary becomes obsolete and it is deleted from the map.

3. *Booth*, following the Public Health Act 1872: 35 & 36 Vict C79 (10 August 1872), defines a “Union” as “a union of parishes incorporated or united for the relief or maintenance of the poor...and includes any parish subject to the jurisdiction of a separate Board of Guardians.” In apportioning boundary symbols to the boundaries depicted on the map Ordnance Survey would have needed an enormous number of discrete symbols to have covered all the possible combinations and permutations of boundaries in existence. In the example provided at Figure 3 of ‘Mere questions’ the boundary symbols depict the County and Parish boundaries dividing Roxburghshire, Cumberland and Northumberland. The fact that they are also “Union” boundaries is indicated by

the addition of the text “Union By.”. The “x”s along the boundaries indicate that they are also boundaries of Superintendent Registrars’ Districts.

4. The point made about how the owner of parcel 1969 comprising 0.649 acres manages to access his land assumes that the parcel remained in the same ownership after the railway had been constructed. It is probable that a transfer of the land to new ownership was negotiated between the railway company and the affected landowners so that the parcel and the land to the south east of it were henceforward in the same ownership. There is no reason why a landowner cannot own land on both sides of a national boundary!

And finally, two additional points for us to ponder.

Gates, stiles and doors are considered to be part of the wall/hedge/fence to which they are connected, and gates, stiles and doors have never been separately depicted on OS 1:2500 scale mapping. It was down to the surveyor’s judgement whether small gaps in physical boundary features resulted in the feature being described as “Broken” and depicted by a pecked line on the map. A boundary mered to a “Broken” feature would retain the same mereing as if it was an unbroken feature. Larger gaps in the physical boundary would result in a mereing of “Def” for the sections where there was no physical boundary.

In Figure 4 of the article ‘Mere questions’, why is the boundary not “Def” where it crosses the railway north east of the S.P.? It should only be correctly retained as “C Tk O C R” if the old course of the river was still discernible where it actually crossed under the railway; a somewhat unlikely situation! I would have been inclined to mere a short section of the boundary crossing the railway north east of the S.P. as “Def”, or alternatively as is the more modern practice, the mereing should have been broken by bracing symbols where the boundary crosses the railway, leaving a short section within the railway fencing with no mereing text.

*By way of clarification, the author of this article always uses the name “David E.M. Andrews” to distinguish himself from another Ordnance Survey Chief Surveyor, “David E. Andrews”. The existence of both individuals caused many instances of confusion, especially when both were working in North Wales!*

**Rob Wheeler writes:** Michael Spencer asks about the ownership of a small piece (0.649 acres) of Scotland cut off by the North British Railway. I do not claim any direct knowledge (and Scottish process may have been different) but in Lincolnshire the matter would have been dealt with when the Railway Company’s land agent was negotiating a price for the land taken by the railway. The erstwhile owner (or his representative) would add to their claim an element for the loss of value occasioned by being left with an uneconomic parcel of barely half an acre on the south side of the railway. The company would either accept this (usually over-stated) loss and pay extra compensation, or it would offer to include the parcel within the land it was purchasing, with the intention of selling it on to an adjoining proprietor. If negotiations broke down, the matter was determined by a jury at Quarter Sessions. Since such juries were composed of local landowners, they tended to take an exceedingly generous view of the value of land taken; hence railway companies tried very hard to reach a negotiated settlement.