



# *Sheetlines*

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for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps

“Kerry musing”

*David Archer*

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THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY  
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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.

## ***Kerry musing***

***David Archer***

Kerry musings' occasional questions number 57: Where can you see the original Arthur Palmer artwork for the cover of the *Bristol District* map? Question number 58: And the original artwork for the unused *New Forest* cover, shown as *Map cover art 35*? Answers: in the Charles Close Society Archives,<sup>1</sup> along with Tim Langner's donation illustrated on page 39 of the last issue of *Sheetlines*.<sup>2</sup> A veritable treasure trove of Ordnance Survey material, still in its infancy but growing rapidly in volume, scope and depth. Such single subject archives are of tremendous importance to the circle of users they serve, in this case, anyone interested in the affairs of the Ordnance Survey, especially our members. I can remember frequent references in late-1960's interviews in *Melody Maker* to individuals and groups visiting Cecil Sharp House in London to plunder the archives for long forgotten folk songs and tunes. The archives: "The most important concentration of material on traditional song, dance and music in the country". Our archives are fast becoming, indeed, possibly have become, the most important concentration of material on the Ordnance Survey anywhere in the world. But they will always benefit from more material and more use. Hence this nudge.

The word 'archives' sounds very Dickensian; dusty old ledgers, cobwebs and musty boxes stored within dark and gloomy rooms. Not so. The new Cambridge map room is as bright and modern as can be. True, some documents are old and well used, but all are stored in nice fresh archival standard boxes within a regulated environment. All of which means you will not get filthy looking at anything and the surroundings are more than pleasant.

Our archives contain all sorts of material, and reflect the interests of those who made donations. For example: *Abridged list Ordnance Survey small-scale maps*. OS Leaflet no.6/35/2 / *The Ordnance Survey 3-inch map of London*. OS Leaflet no.16/33/2 / *Ordnance Survey map of XVII century England*. OS Leaflet no.14/31 // *Double interpolation tables for the conversion of Cassini co-ordinates (old county originals) to National Grid co-ordinates / Current British military operational grids (as at 1st April 1973) / A modified rectangular polyconic projection / Computations book one. Hydrographic Department work, mostly concerning British coastal waters* // Popular and Fifth Edition maps with cover titles re-labelled / New Series, Revised New Series and Third Editions in agent's covers / OS half-inch Training Maps printed by commercial printers / Collection of OS archaeological maps, various states, in covers. Plenty of Irish material, map-sellers' catalogues and very large contributions from the Ordnance Survey, OSNI and the MOD. Thus, we have published and unpublished material, internal OS working documents, map proofs, catalogues of second-hand maps, of new OS

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<sup>1</sup> Held within Cambridge University Library, Map Department. See Anne Taylor, 'CCS Archives catalogue on Janus', *Sheetlines* 94, (2012), 4-9.

<sup>2</sup> The only copy I can find on the internet, should you need to consult it.

maps, scarce maps, OS ephemera, leaflets and photographs; in fact anything to do with the Ordnance Survey.<sup>3</sup> Supporting the archive, or vice versa, is the map collection of Cambridge University Library, which has the advantage of having received maps from the Ordnance Survey as a legal deposit library. A premier collection of OS maps and an archive relating to the affairs of the OS, all under one roof. The foremost collection of material on the Ordnance Survey, and growing. But you really should look for yourself by going to the society website [www.charlesclosesociety.org](http://www.charlesclosesociety.org), click on *CCS Archives* in the left hand box, and then on the *Janus* link at the top of the page.<sup>4</sup> Scroll down and start clicking on the blue links, but not after ten at night or it will be morning before you realise it, if you have not already rushed to Cambridge.<sup>5</sup>

One might ask “Why do we need an archive?”, to which I would reply that our archives hold the stories behind the maps we are interested in. Stories needing a lot of research material. The archives hold the job files for the *Seventh Series*, which list all work undertaken on each sheet. But examples are also held of *Seventh Series* maps known as ‘travellers’, standard maps annotated with small corrections and details of inspections needed before the next corrected issue of a sheet.<sup>6</sup> And before the first *Seventh Series* were on sale, much work had gone into the planning of this new series and in producing the final specification to which the maps were drawn. Much of this work is in the archives for those who are interested. Again, “Why do we need an archive?” Put it another way: in the absence of the CCS archives where would you start looking for such material? And never find it. As opposed to libraries, which might be said to hold material for current usage, archives hold material that might only be of interest in the future, once it has become history, but which needs preserving now because all too often, it is the only extant copy.

Already quite large, the CCS archives are still quite young and need building up. Why? Because a lot of what might be called basic documents are not present. This might seem strange, but it merely reflects the way in which our archives have been assembled, which has been mostly from donations, which reflect their owners’ interest in matters OS, which in turn, have often been non-mainstream. Hence, the archives have a great depth of information in some areas, yet are lacking in the more mundane, but essential material found duplicated in many members’ collections. And here, I would add that so much of what is of interest is slight in volume, ephemera, leaflets, booklets and such, and should be in the archives, despite being held in other public collections. It is so much easier for a researcher to call up something there and then, when it needs to be seen, rather than having to make a note and consult it elsewhere. Much of the archive’s content was bequeathed by CCS members. This is an outstanding strength, as

<sup>3</sup> Additionally, some excellent answers on *ordnancemaps* really should be preserved.

<sup>4</sup> <http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F3296%2FCCSA> for masochistic typists. Why cannot the website designer use <http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/CCS-archives/>?

<sup>5</sup> My apologies to those without access to a computer.

<sup>6</sup> A six-inch County Series traveller in the archives is illustrated on page 4 of *Sheetlines* 98 (2013).

what has been added is exceedingly focused, reflecting their varied interests and collection strengths. When alive, these members were active within the society, contributing in person at meetings, in their writings and through personal contacts. Such members knew the significance of what they had assembled, and by donating parts of their collections to our archives, often including unique copies, they ensured that everyone reading this will have access to that material, and more importantly, it will be available for others in the future.

For the average CCS member wishing to contribute to the archives perhaps the most difficult step is identifying material worthy of preservation in a public collection. So often, I have I been invited to look through a collection and whilst doing so have been told “It is all pretty standard, nothing unusual”. And nearly every time, I have pulled out a little gem, unknown to most people. My advice is: if in doubt, offer it. If you want to help, spend thirty minutes looking at what the archives already hold and consider whether you have anything that would enhance the holdings. Roger Hellyer has led the cataloguing, with most items catalogued individually, and not hidden within ‘a box of leaflets’, as is so often found elsewhere. This means the search facility is pretty impressive; the first item mentioned above will return a hit if searched for by either ‘Abridged list’ or ‘no.6/35/2’.

All right, assume someone reading this knows they have a few things which the archives might want. What next? The most obvious thing would be to offer them now, but failing this, make sure that they will be offered eventually. You could for example, mark each item and write a note to accompany your will, or even put it in your will that these are destined for the CCS archives, explaining what they are and where they can be found. Show a family member the items and explain where you want them to go, when the time comes. I am sure that a lot of members have come across what looks like a very nice map collection on a market stall or book shop, and on enquiry, it has been confirmed that they came from someone who had to ‘clear a relative’s house’. And always, one wonders what has already been sold, or even worse, destroyed as it was just ‘papers and notes’ thought to have had no value or interest. I know several older members who have started selling parts of their collections, and might not have considered whether anything might be of interest to the archives. If a scarce item is to be sold, I believe *it is essential* a copy be made and donated. Something is better than nothing. Surely many members over a certain age can afford to be generous to a society that has given them so much pleasure, even if they donate paperwork that has little monetary value? Indeed, such things are often hard to find in public collections.

In the above, ‘donate’ should probably read ‘offer to the archives’, as there will be situations in which refusal will be necessary, though this might not mean that an item is unwanted. I have offered things to our archives which were not really within its remit, but the Map Department of Cambridge University Library was pleased to take some of them. “Ah-ha”, say some observant readers, “I thought that you were against the ever present and increasing southern bias in all things?” Yes, I most certainly am. But in the absence of an institution *actively*

building a major OS map collection in the north of England, it is better that such things are placed somewhere, and alongside our archives seems preferable.

Some members might wish to encourage the building of our archives, but have nothing to offer. Well, maybe they could consider a legacy specifically for the archives. If our annual accounts included an Archives Fund, it would both ease the pressure on Cambridge University Library to provide archive boxes and other materials, and would also enable the purchase of items which would otherwise not be acquired.

Cautionary note: Not so long ago, the owner of an exceedingly fine Ordnance Survey collection died. A most meticulous man, yet no will was found. A distant relative in Scandinavia inherited, and instructed a solicitor to see to everything. The solicitor engaged a local auctioneer to provide a valuation for probate and to dispose of the contents of the person's council flat. The most obvious nineteenth century material was valued and removed, and some more modern items were also removed for auction. The rooms full of maps and books that remained, would have been a honey pot at an AGM map market for many years, and contained many items *essential* for our archives. Eventually, having done little, the auction house lost interest and called in the council refuse department to clear the flat of this still very large OS and book collection. Act now, to make your wishes known.

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### ***Don't put Shetland in a box***

New rules barring public bodies from putting Shetland in a box on official documents have come into force.<sup>7</sup>

Islands MSP Tavish Scott had sought to change the law to ban the “geographical mistake” which “irks” locals, by amending the Islands (Scotland) Bill.

The bill's “mapping requirement” has now come into force, although it does give bodies a get-out clause if they provide reasons why a box must be used.

MSP Peter Chapman calling it “impractical” and warning it would reduce the amount of detail in maps due to changing scales.

This was backed by the Ordnance Survey, which said inset boxes avoid “publishing maps which are mostly sea”.

A spokesman for OS said: “The Shetland Islands are approximately 245km (152 miles) from the Scottish mainland, from the most northerly part of the Shetland Islands to John O' Groats, and 690km (428 miles) from the most southerly point of the Scottish and English border.

“It would be virtually impossible to print a paper map, with any usable detail, of this vast geography.”

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<sup>7</sup> As reported on BBC News website on 4 October 2018.