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“Kerry Musings”

David Archer

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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 musings

David Archer

Have you ever returned home with some new additions for your collection, and wondered who had previously owned them and what they had been used for? Not easy to answer, but sometimes the maps themselves do yield clues, unlike cars bought second-hand or which you pass on to the used car market. Apart from the previous keeper, one knows little about a used car, who owned it, where it had been or what it had been used for, unless someone had sat in it and eaten a fish and chip supper within three weeks of selling it.

I do not know why, but for some reason, most maps pass through this world without any history sticking to them. Of the thousands of maps I have handled, only a very small percentage have ever had any markings, stickers or annotations on them that indicate previous owners or usage. One sometimes wonders how ninety year old maps survive, only to appear for sale in mint condition, whilst other, much younger examples have obviously been used to the limit and are literally falling apart. Alas, most cannot tell us. But some can offer hints.

It is no use quoting the Ordnance Survey marketing people through the years, and saying that maps were bought by walkers, cyclists and motorists. These are only the groups they thought would buy maps and for whom they produced the advertising material. Although, these people did buy maps and probably for the purposes embedded in the group names, a lot of other people bought or owned maps for entirely different purposes to those suggested by the advertising, just as refrigerators are advertised with low temperatures to prevent food from deteriorating, but Eskimos buy them for their high temperatures that prevent food from otherwise freezing solid in their climes.

Signatures are the piece of information that comes most readily to hand and shows who owned a map, or at least who put their signature on it, usually on the front cover. One-inch Populars probably have more signatures than any other series, and my feeling is that this quite often dates from the age of rambling clubs, or ‘going for a tramp’ as was said in such unclear terms in those days. If one was with a group, it was inevitable that maps would be passed round whilst resting and eating a sandwich, and so ownership needed to be indicated. On the early white covered One-inch Third Editions, many signatures include military attachment details: H.N.R. Lampard, Vth Fusiliers or 16th (Service) Battalion, The Royal Scots, R.C. Lodge, without saying what the maps were used for. Manoeuvre maps with signatures, might appear to imply an obvious use, but what use? What was involved in using a manoeuvre map? “Go on”, one could say, “show me a manoeuvre”.

Similarly, ‘For Official Use Only’ and ‘Sonderausgabe! Nur für den Dienstgebrauch!’ appear as semi-threatening headings on some maps, without any mention of what the official use was or the dire consequences that would follow unofficial use. Sometimes a signature rings a bell, OGS Crawford, CW Phillips, Frank Pick and J Betjeman all added their mark to map covers, as did many

1 I believe that most names on maps are signatures, rather than autographs.
organisations that acquired large scale maps. Yes, the name of an organisation might suggest a possible use for a map, but then one might also ask what on earth did they want maps for? The Denbighshire War Agricultural Executive Committee stamp appears on 1:2500 County series maps, but why did they have them?

Teaching sets with possession stamps show that educational establishments, schools and universities, primarily geography departments, owned a lot of OS maps. Note the past tense. Indeed, in the early part of the last century, OS maps were printed specifically for them, often with the name of the school in a box in the top margin, *This map is supplied for use in Hanson Secondary School, Bradford...*. Revised New Series 69. We know who owned these maps, possibly who they were issued to, but we do not know how they were used in a lesson or lecture, or even the subject being taught.

Just as names in isolation do not tell us what a map was used for, so markings of all sorts, or annotations shall we call them, do not tell us who undertook the work or why. Sometimes the purpose of an annotation is clear, or we might have no idea what they are. I once bought a large number of Seventh Series maps in the red laminated covers which all had airfield runways coloured red, by hand and very well executed. No other annotations, no notes and no clue as to ownership. One can guess that this was to make the runways easier to spot, but was there more to it than that? We shall never know. Other maps have had pencil lines, never ink, going through three or more church towers and must have been owned by ley line hunters, who understandably never identified themselves. Nor did the person who marked every bus garage on the 1971 Greater London One-inch map and joined the dots together to produce a perfect London Transport roundel, closely aligned to the north and south circular roads. Far more convincing in my book.

Schools have probably produced the most examples of unidentified use, usually related to geography lessons. Maps with contours pencilled over and lines between the highest points on a map both show that some sort of instruction had been in progress, without naming anyone. A variety of books on map reading have been produced, for schools and the military, all containing map extracts, which does tell us what the maps were used for. An even more exact fit would be the map extracts used in geography examinations. Here, if lucky, we come across the whole production, a coloured map extract, a named and dated examination paper with the questions relating to the map, and sometimes notes by the nameless candidate. We know exactly what the map was used for, but not the user.

Small scale maps often have walks and drives marked, but we cannot tell whether these are proposed walks or finished walks. I am afraid that when planning a walk, I treat a map as I do a cooking recipe, I like to get the general idea, know what I am aiming for and modify everything as I go along to suit my

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2 The latest I have seen is for the *Education Department, Preston* on Manchester District 1924, 9750/28.
preferences. Maps are intended to help you get around the countryside, not to record your walk. When shown, so few walks are annotated ‘muddy’ or ‘steep’; problems are usually remembered for the next visit, not written down. Yes, it has always amazed me how infrequently maps bear any annotations, let alone annotations indicating what an owner has used the map for. Where we are rewarded, notes are often of birds seen, meals eaten and train times, implying the map has been used during a visit, but was also seen as a diary or memo pad. Not something the OS advertised as a use. Occasionally one comes across a map where a user has added a road improvement or new roundabout, such as the Old Series full sheet I once had with the M5 added in blue biro down Taunton way.

The condition of maps is a good indication that they have been used, with small scales, especially the One-inch and 1:25,000 frequently being rather tatty. Large scale maps when well used frequently have annotations showing why they are in such a condition. Maps that have been owned by estate agents who are also land agents frequently show annotations by way of measurements and sketches of boundaries. Estate agents appear to have had the habit of merging, and large scale maps from this source often bear several different possession stamps, as do many maps from government departments, where maps were transferred. In addition to annotated maps, there are many where the civil sheets have blank areas, but military versions display full details, such as the fortifications shown on some Hampshire Six-inch and 1:2500. Again, we cannot say for certain what this extra detail was used for.

And then we come to those maps which were used for a known purpose, and we know by whom they were used; sometimes annotated and sometimes not. It seems that when we do have full details of ownership and what a map was used for, more times than not, the usual suspects, walkers, motorists and educational establishments are not represented. Within the last twenty years, there has been a surge in people using Ordnance Survey maps for works of art, and I do not mean all those cushions, curtains, notepaper and deckchairs in the shops today. The first that I can remember was Geoffrey Fisher, an artist wanting mint copies of Seventh Series maps to make into small pieces set in cases. A map background with globes, cubes and so on all covered in the same mapwork. He had an exhibition in 2000, *Boxed map constructions*, and since then, I have had numerous requests for maps from artists, usually with condition of little importance, but seeking a variety of scales offering different colours and visual textures. On a similar theme, people often want maps as a substitute for wallpaper. One customer again wanted mint Seventh Series maps to cover one wall of a three storey London stair-well, with Land’s End in the basement and Shetland on the attic level, whilst others sought a more manageable task by papering the ty bach with OS maps.

Ordnance Survey maps, almost since the beginning, have been a requirement for many legal procedures. Richard Dean has given us a very clear insight into the use of OS maps by railway companies for legal purposes, whilst I have beside

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me several maps which accompanied licensing applications before 1940. Such maps are single or composite 1:2500 sheets, marked with concentric circles at $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile from the applicant’s premises and have filled coloured circles showing other outlets: red for Ale houses/Public houses, green for Beer houses and yellow for Off licenses, with all outlets named. Such use of maps was never included in any OS advertising, nor did they envisage what the Great Western Railway would do with large scale maps.4

Bill Bignell has shown how OS maps can be used for historical research into windmills,5 whilst a customer in Lancashire has been using early Six-inch maps to identify rifle ranges around the country. I have used maps to identify fords, stepping stones and holy wells within Wales, whilst others have sought early twentieth century post offices in Devon, golf courses and very early airfields. Whilst I am always surprised at the variety of information found on OS maps, it has never been the aim of the Ordnance Survey to produce maps that can be used for research into the features they show. They produce maps to show the landscape as it is, and if in the future maps are used as historical landscapes, so be it. Alan Sillitoe, a keen Ordnance Survey enthusiast and collector once mentioned in a radio interview that he liked to use the names on OS maps for characters in his works. Local place names used as personal names help create a more convincing character. Thus, we can have a name and a use, but no remaining evidence on the maps themselves, showing how infrequently people do mark maps. I have a box of errors on OS maps and map covers, and nobody has altered an error before it came into my hands. Maybe they were not spotted, but the same goes for books, where spelling mistakes and missed or extra words are never corrected by observant readers, if spotted. There are obviously many examples of maps being used for specific purposes by known owners that I have never come across, and that such things keep appearing is one of the delights of OS maps.

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**Puzzle solutions and solvers**

The beaches and/or resorts which readers were asked to identify in *Sheetlines* 121 were (in alphabetical order): Bigbury; Blackpool; Booby’s Bay; Bridlington; Cayton Bay; Cheswick; Coll; Largo; Luce Bay; Shoreham; Skegness; Towyn.

I am unsure if it was exceptionally difficult or exceptionally confusing (there were queries and doubts expressed about the alphabetical order; some of those doubts being justified, some not; however, I intend once again to plead the fifth amendment). In any event, only eight readers submitted answers, although not necessarily the correct answers. I feel it would be invidious to select One of them as a winner, given the element of confusion. Congratulations therefore to all of them – namely Dave Vaughan, Tony Walduck, Roger Holden, Michael Spencer, Malcolm Stacey, Peter Addiscott, David Purchase and David Fairbairn.

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