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“Kerry musings”
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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

Why can one be so easily distracted when it comes to maps? Somewhere, Richard Oliver has noted that when working in the British Library or an archive office, maps and plans taken out for another user are invariably more interesting than those he has in front of him. Richard is easily distracted by maps and represents the typical Charles Close Society member. Maps never fail to divert us from other things, even other maps.

Perhaps the most common distraction is when we open a map to check something, and having done so, or frequently not having done so, we are distracted by something we spot on the sheet in hand. It might be a word, the spelling of the word, the position of the word, or the type used. And having spotted it, we cannot resist looking for more examples on the same sheet and if not found, then the search continues on other sheets in the same series. And unless we are distracted by something else, we might continue our investigations on the previous or following editions, just out of curiosity. I defy anyone to even suggest that any of our members lack curiosity when it comes to maps. Look through any five numbers of Sheetlines and you are bound to find a piece written by a reader who saw something and then followed it up, meaning, they were distracted from whatever they were doing and started an investigation of some sort. I am sure that the Ordnance Survey have always tried to produce maps that have nothing that might jar the eye, nothing that stands out as being rather unusual. Whether a depiction of highland or lowland areas, a map should be of a uniform texture, something which most series do accomplish.

Those new to collecting Ordnance Survey maps are often naïve in thinking it a simple easy-going hobby where one only has to tick a new acquisition on a list. Poor souls. Such innocence does not last very long. Pretty quickly distractions appear. Covers of almost all series have had minor or more substantial modifications during their lifetimes. At the very least, prices differ, or the type used might change, or a small sticker with the new price might appear on a cover. The large sheet one-inch Third edition and 1:50,000 scale maps have had quite drastic transformations during their lives. The Thirds began with white waxy covers, then buff designs, whilst the 1:50,000 was born with plain pink covers, followed by a whole host of photographic styles, which continue. Anyone with the collecting gene will respond to such differences and be seduced from seeking a single copy of each sheet. Most of these simple souls, me included, spent at least the first few weeks of collecting by hunting maps within the first series to attract their attention, and were then distracted by seeing another series, and then another and another. Forgetting the numerous differences on their original series they then expanded searches to include these other series, and it is at this fairly early stage that people seem to go off in all directions with regard to what interests them.

Quite early on I was distracted by the non-map productions of the Ordnance Survey: paperwork of all sorts, especially ephemera, catalogues, and index sheets.
The small semi-glossy post-war OS catalogues were often put into the map box in bookshops and a small collection soon built up. The first real find along these lines was the 1924 catalogue with the wonderful Ellis Martin crest filling the whole of the front cover. This was magic, without even opening it, and when I did, I discovered a list of Ordnance Survey publications that were a ‘must have’ list: *Measurement of the Loch Foyle base line, Notes on the parallel roads of Lochaber ..., Plans and photographs of Stonehenge*. I am positive that I am not alone in having wanted these not for their content, but because they were an OS production, with the magic ‘Ordnance Survey’ on the title pages. Besides such monographs, the 1924 catalogue also introduced me to the bewildering world of large scale maps, with lists of 1:2500 and 1:1250 maps available for each county. Such strange looking entries and sheet numbers:

**Staffordshire.** *Surveyed in 1875-86. Revised 1897-1902. Second Revision 1912-23.*

1:2,500 SCALE.

Plans too open for publication 1.-7.

Partially filled plans priced at 4s. 22.-2, (13 & 9). 27.-4. 28.- (7 & 5) ... What did it all mean? Thankfully there were two pages of explanation with the numbering system shown as a *Diagram of 6” Full Sheet showing 6” Quarter Sheet and 25” Sheet Lines* followed by another for 1:1250 sheet lines, and the intriguing note listing obsolete scales: 1:1056, 1:528 and 1:500. What were these like when they were at home? Where could one see them or might one ever find any? Such distractions were bliss.

And so it has gone on, for about forty-five years, distractions, discoveries, diversions, or tangents, *anything* bearing those two immortal words ‘Ordnance Survey’ attracts me and requires attention, maps and non-map productions. A favourite group of distractions, produced during the actual production process has claimed many hours of my time. Such things are not of a cartographic nature and seemingly have nothing to do with what appears within the neat line. If you have a piece of hand-painted china, even fairly cheap stuff, turn it over and you will probably see some sort of marking, a dab of colour, a squiggle or initials indicating who worked on that piece, information considered necessary in the production process, placed where it would pass unnoticed by most people. Semi-secret things have always been fun to delve into and OS maps provide for more delving.

Print codes were the first of such distractions to be of interest. I was already familiar with these from having briefly collected London Transport underground diagrams when much younger. From these, one could make out quantities printed and dates in a rough and ready way. But the important thing was that they were different; exactly the same underground diagrams, differing only in the print codes, sometimes by only two digits. Such things were sought because they were different, and the transition to seeking them on the lower margins of OS maps was painless: 6.12, 2700/34, 2538, 3046/Cr, 25,000/7/46 Wa. Even if a

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1 *Catalogue of maps and other publications of the Ordnance Survey*, Southampton, 1924.
person has never noticed such things, 6.12 or 25,000/7/46 Wa cannot fail to suggest something. When I found different codes on what seemed to be the same map, I assumed this to be a good way of identifying the various states of a sheet, four codes, four states. And then Guy Messenger informed us that for the large sheets of the one-inch Third edition, one could have the same print code with different prices or copyright statements in the lower margin. Endless hours were spent looking into such things, and I eventually joined those who already knew that lots of maps were reprinted with minor changes within the neat line, whilst leaving the margins unaltered. Only last week I was flicking through a pile of 1:2500 county series sheets and ‘Liable to flooding’ caught my eye on one sheet but was absent on the following copy of the same sheet, with identical margins. Another unacknowledged reprint was a 1961 map where the price details in the lower margin had been moved about 3mm to the right if compared with a second copy. Otherwise identical in all respects, and without the job files we will never know which was the earlier printing. Not that it matters. Well, does it? Surely this really would be labelled a distraction rather than cartographic research? But having noticed it, I now frequently compare two seemingly identical sheets for such minor changes. That they went on, and were so trivial fascinates me. My current theory is that this was a form of someone putting their own mark on a map unnoticed.

Maps usually have to be trimmed during production, the paper trimmed to the correct size and to remove things not intended for public viewing. Many older maps can be found with thin lines at the sheet edge, possibly showing trimming lines, or sometimes there are very small 2mm ticks at the edges which I take to be folding guides. Not uncommon are strips of colour blocks which need to be seen by the printers, but which are usually removed at a later stage. Of far more interest is a copy of the Irish coloured one-inch sheets 41 and 53 combined, 1906, on which These Maps to be reserved for Special Mounting is preserved in the lower right corner. A similar note, These maps are for Special Mounting appears on a copy of the coloured one-inch Third edition sheet 18, Barrow in Furness, 1907, which is dissected in Edward Stanford covers. So many questions come to mind. Why ‘These maps’ and not ‘This map’? Were all such maps intended for sale to OS agents? Why was the Third not fully trimmed? One can find a long thin cross in many margins, usually black, but sometimes of various overlapping colours, indicating, I assume registration marks; however, the right margin of the Irish sheet has the usual long vertical line, but with two cross bars, and a single line cross in the left margin, both in black. Why two? Why different crosses left and right? What was their exact purpose? I cannot recall seeing two horizontal lines before. Hours must have been spent looking for other examples. On a similar theme, I once took a 1916 map to a meeting to be identified, and Peter Clark noted that it had very small crosses cut at the four corners of the neat line, which

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2 Huntingdonshire 1:2500 5.3, revised 1924 lacking print codes, exists with two states having significantly different detail within the neat line, whilst a second state of one of these, has 20/34, 20/40, 50/41 added.
were probably used as registration marks on a proving press. All features not meant to be observed by users. Similarly, sections of maps, often 1:2500 sheets, were laminated between two pieces of card to form many early white hinged covers. Again, it was Guy Messenger who told us such things were visible by holding these covers close to, almost touching, a bright table lamp, whereas Tim Nicholson noted that production codes were hidden away on the inside edges of red and cream Seventh Series covers, where they could easily be referred to by OS staff, yet remain hidden from the map buying public. What else have others spotted, I wonder?

Nobody reading this should be under the impression that I spend all of my time indoors studying map margins for the smallest of small differences. No, other outdoor distractions are frequent. A good few years ago I bought a copy of Abstracts of the principal lines of spirit levelling in England and Wales. This “contains the principal lines of levels taken in England and Wales … the levels … marked upon permanent objects on the ground…”. So, all bench marks on the principal lines of levelling, e.g. Liverpool to Spurn Head or London to Dover are listed together with their location, “Mark on corner of garden wall at Ivy-Place; 5·01 ft. above surface”. This sounded fun. How many were still there? In an early musing I discussed bench marks in Newtown, but what made this list different was that it included bolts, standard bench marks with a lead plug in the centre of the cross bar. Bolts, sounding superior and less common must merit being a distraction from boring old maps and a pleasant excuse to get out and about.

Obviously, if I was in the area, I looked for everything listed, but in the intervening 161 years a lot had changed, and locations such as “Bolt in South-west angle of Joseph Risdon’s out-house at junction of roads…” were less than helpful. The first bolt found was in the wall of the church in Llangurig, which we pass on our way to Aberystwyth. Having stopped and wandered around the church, there it was, just as listed, sitting waiting to be re-discovered after all these years. All CCS members should take visitors to see their nearest bench mark or flush bracket. I am sure they will be more than thrilled, the bench marks I mean.

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3 Irish maps of the period in Survey of Ireland covers are often found, with the maps having been pasted over sections of cloth backed trench maps with the trench map text showing on the backing.
4 Sir Henry James, Abstracts of the principal lines of spirit levelling in England and Wales, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1861. Available on-line at http://www.deformedweb.co.uk/trigs/1gl.cgi where page 556 Llanidloes to Llangurig can be seen at http://www.deformedweb.co.uk/trigs/data/1GL/1GLA_556.png
6 See Owen, T. and Pilbeam, E., Ordnance Survey : map makers to Britain since 1791, Southampton, 1992, 43.
7 Fortunately, distances between bench marks are given, in links.