“It’s all about me’? Reminiscences of writing”

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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.
‘It’s all about me? Reminiscences of writing

Richard Oliver

I have recently completed and sent for ‘pre-press’ my part in the Charles Close Society’s next publication, on Ordnance Survey ‘small scale’ maps. These are defined as the half-inch and smaller scales. The book has been produced in collaboration with Roger Hellyer, who, as usual, has been responsible for the cartobibliographical matters, whilst I have concentrated on the history: the former consumes much more time and energy than the latter. And, once again, Chris Higley is responsible for the ‘pre-press’ work, including the preparation of index diagrams. This marks what we suspect will be our final substantial joint contribution to the Society’s publications, and I ask myself the question: how did I get here?

‘The Ordnance Survey in Great Britain, 1835 to 1870’

I joined the Charles Close Society as soon its formation was announced, in June 1981, and attended my first meeting that December. I didn’t then anticipate writing so much about the subject as I have done. I had just completed a BA in history at the University of Sussex, as a mature student, and, having had an academically mediocre grammar school career, had been pleasantly surprised to find that my degree was good enough to qualify for postgraduate research. At Sussex my specialism, so far as the system allowed, had been towards nineteenth century British history, and I conceived a project for a study of the Ordnance Survey between 1840 and 1895, covering the period between the authorisation of the six-inch in Britain and the demise of national maintenance of the ‘town scales’. The logical place and supervisor for this would have been the University of Exeter and Dr J Brian Harley, but the vagaries of funding meant that I finished up back at Sussex, with Valerie Cromwell as my supervisor: she had previously been the tutor on my history special subject course, which produced a dissertation on the government’s handling of the cattle plague of 1865–7, with particular reference to Lincolnshire.1 Valerie was a government and administration specialist, and later went on to direct the History of Parliament Trust.2 Sussex – more particularly Brighton – was not Exeter, but I had connections there, the OS was certainly ‘government’, and Valerie had a loose-touch approach that suited the development of a thesis that was probably rather stronger on narrative and causation than it was on analysis or theory. Had I been registered at Exeter, there would have been the logistical inconvenience that practically all the sources were in London. Brighton was much handier, and for about fifteen or eighteen months I travelled three or four times a week up to ‘London’ – mainly to Kew Bridge, the nearest convenient station for what was then

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1 In fact the original scheme for the dissertation was to have covered later nineteenth century local government more broadly, but a discovery of the Market Rasen Cattle Plague Committee minute book in the Lincolnshire Archives Office (LAO) set me off in a different direction. The dissertation has never been published, though there is a copy somewhere in LAO: to my mind the balance of ‘national’ and ‘local’ would be very awkward for publication in either a national or a local journal, though the dissertation was entered in a competition organised by the journal History, and had it done a little better would have been published there.

2 Valerie Cromwell, 1935–2018: wife of Sir John Kingman, mathematician and sometime Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bristol: their son John was briefly acting head of the Treasury in 2016. Observe the financial motif.
known as the Public Record Office: this was ‘doable’ with a student railcard and rail fares lower in real terms than they are today.

The original scope of the thesis, 1840 to 1895, was modified after a few months to 1835 to 1870: this covered the preliminaries to the British six-inch, to the transfer of the survey from the oversight of the War Office to that of the Office of Works. This was partly due to Brian Harley, who was anxious to remain in touch with me, whatever money might decree. At this time his numerous projects included *The Old Series Ordnance Survey*, being published in what was projected to be ten volumes by Harry Margary of Lympne Castle, Kent. With the agreement of Valerie Cromwell, I extracted for Brian relevant material from the Ordnance minutes, PRO class WO 47, for 1834 into the early 1850s, when the minutes cease to be indexed and descend into a mass of trivia. I also extracted material relating to the ‘town scales’ for another project of Brian’s that was never completely realised. He had built up a considerable collection of photocopies and transcripts of Ordnance Survey material, from the PRO and elsewhere, and I was able to borrow a lot of this, saving me considerable time visiting Kew and elsewhere. Some of it was of immediate use for the thesis: more has proved valuable since, not least for the *Concise Guide*, which is described later.

Brian was also the external examiner of my thesis. Having got used to total anonymity and impersonality in external school and undergraduate exams, and found that thesis examining was a much more open affair, I thought he would be much too close to me. I suggested to Valerie that John Andrews, who had been valuable as a contact when I had visited the Ordnance Survey in Ireland, but whom I’d only actually met once, might be more satisfactory, but Valerie thought that, if Brian was available, he would do perfectly well. He was available. The internal examiner was John Lowerson, a nineteenth century social and leisure historian, with whom I had had dealings as an undergraduate. All in all, it seems a bit of an insider job. On the day of the viva the examiners were lunched by Valerie, and the subsequent proceedings tended to be jolly: my work was declared ‘a very good thesis’. I think that the Senior Common Room must have provided an unusually good lunch that day. The examiners’ main comment was on the numerous typos and spelling mistakes: three pairs of eyes came up with three different lots of these. The thesis created something of a sensation amongst the History Subject Group at Sussex, as it was completed within three years: quite a number of the non-faculty attendees at the weekly work-in-progress seminars were registered for ‘extension’, and completion in six to eight years was by no means unknown.²

³ The grant, from what was then the Social Science Research Council (renamed Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) in 1984), began on 1 October 1982; three copies were sent for ‘temporary’ binding on 11 September 1985, and were submitted for examination purposes on 1 October 1985.

⁴ Richard Oliver, *The Ordnance Survey in Great Britain, 1835-1870*, University of Sussex D.Phil. thesis, 1985, is available online at https://thos.bl.uk (accessed 26 September 2022), but it should be noted that, quite apart from being produced from photocopied amateur typescript, it contains a numbers of factual errors that were corrected in Richard Oliver, *The Ordnance Survey in the nineteenth century: maps, money and the growth of government*, London: Charles Close society, 2014.
Collaboration and co-authorship: the one-inch Old Series

Roger Hellyer and I have collaborated on seven projects: this seems to have grown out of consulting me whilst working on his *Ordnance Survey Indexes 1801-1998*, published by David Archer in 1999. The most intricate in development was the fifth collaboration, *The first Ordnance Survey map*, published in 2015, describing the one-inch Old Series of England and Wales; its earlier development will be described first. It followed on from *One-inch engraved maps of the Ordnance Survey from 1847*, published by CCS in 2009: the later volume includes sheets that started as ‘Old Series’ but became, with little apparent effort – but to the great confusion of later students – ‘New Series’.

In 1967 Brian Harley was approached by David & Charles of Newton Abbot, who had quickly built a reputation for publishing transport and industrial archaeology books. Presumably this was on the recommendation of having produced the *Historian’s guide*, of which more later. ‘David’ was David St John Thomas (1929-2014), who was particularly railway minded, and had the idea of reissuing the early Ordnance Survey one-inch maps – known variously as the Old Series or ‘first edition’ – and for which Brian would act as editor. Mr Thomas wanted the versions that ‘showed railways’, and the result was a mixture of map states, ticking the railway box except for those few sheets free of these ‘rash assaults’ (Wordsworth). They varied from fairly early in the far north of England to the very last known printings, made in 1909 for ‘record map stock purposes’ in some places further south. The original intention was to use ‘record maps’ as far as possible: these were mainly superseded stock, and availability depended on what remained unsold. The gaps in OS stock were filled from a number of other sources, including a set originally acquired in 1867 or 1868 by the Royal Military Academy, a slightly earlier set at the Royal Geographical Society, and one or two private collectors. There were sometimes hiatuses in railway information at sheet edges; the inclusion of railways might have been more defensible had the latest states been used, showing the network as it was around 1890, shortly before the mapping was superseded. Mr St John Thomas insisted on calling the confection *Reprint of the first edition of the one-inch Ordnance Survey of England and Wales*. For many of the sheets this was distinctly questionable: for those such as 56 (Old Series 40), 72 (Old Series 1), and 95 (Old Series 33), where the David & Charles issues were produced from versions that had been wholly revised and re-engraved, and were at the very least ‘second editions’, the ‘first edition’ claim was plain wrong. Brian Harley fought ‘tooth and nail’ against ‘first edition’, to no avail, but insisted on using ‘Old Series’ throughout his editorial matter: thus there is an intentional discrepancy between the map covers and what is inside. The maps included

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5 Much of what follows is based on recollections of conversations with Brian Harley in the 1980s.
6 The Ordnance Survey side of the correspondence is in The National Archives (TNA), OS 1/1436: an index at 13A indicates that in September 1967 sheets 1 NW, NE; 2, 4, 5, 12, 14, 15, 17-21, 23-34, 38, 39, 41-3, 45; 46 NE, SW, SE; 48-50; 51 NE, SW, SE; 52, 53; 54SE; 56, 57; 59 SW, SE; 60, 61; 63 SE; 66, 68-71; 72 SE; 73 SW, SE; 74 NW, SW, SE; 75 SW, SE, 76, 77; 78 NW, NE, SW; 79 NW, SW, SE; 80 NW, NE; 81 NE, SW; 82 NE, SW, SE; 83-5; 89 NE, SW; 90 NE, SE; 94 NW, NE, SE; 98 SW of the standard version, and 1 NW, NE, SE; 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 23-7, 30-35, 38, 40, 41; 42 NW, NE; 43, 44; 46 SW, SE; 47-52; 53 NE, SW, SE; 54-9; 60 NW, SW, SE; 61; 62 NW, NE, SE; 63-76, 78; 79 NW, NE, SW; 80-86, 88 SW, SE of the ‘Index to Tithe Survey’, were available. Further exploration of ‘record maps’ is for another time.
historical and cartobibliographical notes, the latter frankly owned not to be exhaustive; they were, it seems, largely ‘dictated to a secretary in the British Museum’. Given that Brian was based in Liverpool when the project began, a summary, mass-production job was inevitable.

There was certainly some excitement when the maps emerged, in batches in 1969–71, but there was also disappointment. Reproduction quality was variable – later railways had been deep-engraved onto worn detail – and there were occasional irritants, such as on sheet 23 (Old Series 86), made up from a sectioned RGS copy, with some losses at joins. It was a lot better than nothing, but it fell distinctly short of what it could have been. The OS having contributed some of the originals, they received a royalty, which was actually twice that paid to Brian Harley. As the royalties were still significant in the 1980s, at least there was a continuing financial recompense for the intellectual compromise. It seems that sales were slow at first: the sheets were about twice the price of the contemporary one-inch Seventh Series, and prices were not increased in line with inflation. They seem to have sold better once the original Bender-fold issues were replaced by flat sheets less conveniently folded and placed in envelopes, around 1980.

At the same time as David & Charles were developing their ‘first edition’ scheme, Harry Margary was producing facsimiles of county maps, and an issue of the Ordnance Survey one-inch Old Series in early state was a logical companion to this, particularly as a few early Old Series sheets were being included in his county collections. How far The Old Series Ordnance Survey (‘OSOS’) was Harry Margary’s idea, and how far Brian Harley’s, is unclear; the Margary county facsimiles were accompanied by historical notes by various writers, including William Ravenhill, who was head of the Geography Department when Brian took up a post at Exeter in 1970, and a personal connection is possible, though I’ve never heard of Bill Ravenhill claiming any credit for OSOS. At any rate, OSOS began officially in 1972. It would differ from the David & Charles enterprise in one very obvious way, in that it would be published in volume rather than sheet form, with each original full sheet spread across four openings. Again, it is unclear how the ‘volume’ concept emerged: perhaps it was thought handier for library and domestic use, and having had to handle some of the earlier ‘original-size’ Margary sheet facsimiles both professionally and domestically, I certainly understand this. The original concept was that each volume would contain, as a preliminary to the map reproductions, a historical ‘introductory essay’, cartobibliographies of the pre-railway states of the sheets included in the volume, and redrawn conventional signs and examples of detail, as a substitute for no comprehensive legend ever having been produced for the Old Series. These last were drawn by Rodney Fry, the chief draftsman and cartographer in the Exeter geography department. For the cartobibliographies and other assistance Brian recruited Yolande Hodson (then O’Donoghue), who was on the staff of the British Library, and had far better access to originals of the maps than was possible from Exeter. She had an interest in military cartography and relief depiction that fitted neatly with the dominant element of the Old Series: the hachures. Hachures, indeed, would

7 The maps were originally offered at 15s (£0.75) per sheet, which was raised to £0.95 by 1977, and £1.95 by 1981; in 1969 the one-inch Seventh Series was 6s.6d (£0.33) per sheet, soon raised to 8s, and by 1978 the 1:50,000 successor was £1.40.

8 Having seen the University of Exeter’s holdings, that is being very kind about it.
appear in ‘Margary’ far more prominently than they did in ‘D & C’. The intention was to publish two volumes a year, and complete in five years: 1977-8, I suppose.

Confining the ‘bibliographical notes’ to pre-railway states did not survive beyond Volume II; Volume III included ‘railway states’, and more of them than had been recorded in the D & C notes. I do not know why the scope was extended, but it is easy to imagine that there were complaints that, with everything else generally so superior to the D & C issues, stinting on the cartobibliographies was spoiling the ship for a ha’porth of tar – and, anyway, once one got north of Birmingham an increasing number of sheets postdated the first railways. Actually, it was a lot more than that: more states meant more library visits, and more work. This led to John and Barbara Manterfield taking over the work for Volumes IV and V, and making a start on Volume VII: John had been a doctoral student of Brian’s at Exeter. They extended the library searches further to include university libraries, local record offices and local history libraries, which on the one hand produced new material, and on the other increased preparation and travel time; the advent of the Charles Close Society in 1980 meant that more private collectors offered access to their holdings. More libraries resulted in more complete, or at any rate, extensive, sets, and whilst providing additional material for the later volumes implicitly raised questions about the completeness of the earlier ones. All that leaves out the complications of post-1847 states produced from electrotype duplicates, which did not display any neat pattern of progressive addition or omission. In 1986 I took over for what was now Volume VIII, and in due course handled the remaining volumes as well. The cartobibliographies were compiled from scratch, without reference to the David & Charles work, and occasionally the D & C notes mention a state that was not in ‘Margary’: I departed from empirical purism by noting these, hoping to minimise correspondence with readers in the future. Though the D & C notes gave a rough outline of what to expect, as far as I know no-one had constructed a cartobibliography quite like this before, and word-processing to minimise the work of typing and retyping only became available in the mid 1980s. Fortunately for me, home computing became available just in time to rationalise my first notes for Volume VIII, and devise a new method that minimised retyping; that procedure is now a curiosity of technological transition, and was soon rendered obsolete by the advent of laptop computers, enabling ‘continuous revision’.

I also had the advantage, in 1986-9, of not being tied down to fixed office hours. I claim no other advantages.

It was intended that the ten volumes would effectively provide a serialised history of the Old Series and its context, from the conception of the Hounslow Heath baseline in 1783-4 up to the obsolescence of the Old Series as the replacement New Series progressed after 1872. The essay for volume I duly covered the early base lines, and the making of maps of Kent and Essex: chronology was on its side. As the series progressed, however, so the chronological approach was departed from in favour of a regional approach, and this in turn contributed to a departure from the original ten-volume scheme. This was presumably devised with a view to printing the map sections single-sided, to avoid any show-through problems, though in practice the paper used was good enough for this not to be necessary. The volume numbering was odd: the highest number was 9, Wales being divided between

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‘6a’ and ‘6b’: why? (The volumes were numbered in Roman on the outer dustwrappers and in the letterpress, but in Arabic on the indexes.) The introductory essays depended largely on the amount of material available in the Ordnance records at the PRO, and this was somewhat unevenly distributed regionally and chronologically: it was a good deal easier to write about Wales with a source-induced bias towards the south, and very difficult to write about the eastern half of northern England, as there is very little source material other than the actual maps – and that is something of a matter of windmills and level crossing cottages. Proceedings moved forward agreeably with visits to and lunches at Lympne Castle.

Figure 1. Harry Margary, Brian Harley and Richard Oliver at Lympne Castle, 4 July 1989.

OSOS was finally completed in the summer of 1992, with the publication of Volume VI, Wales. When I joined the project in 1986 I successfully argued for a reduction from ten volumes to eight, on the basis that, with the back-to-back printing being adopted for Volumes IV and V – probably initially just to economise on paper – it would be possible to fit Wales and northern England into a single volume each. This was duly done. Volume VI ought to be the most ‘complete’ of the series, both in terms of chronological scope, covering much of the development of the Old Series, and of cartobibliographic breadth. In one sense it is imperfect, and that is that Brian Harley died suddenly in December 1991, before he could work on my draft for the ‘introductory essay’. Brian’s increasing
commitments meant that he was happy for me to provide preliminary drafts of the essays for the last three volumes: he then reworked them so that there should be overall stylistic consistency.

**Collaboration: Roger, Richard, tables, and the Engraved Maps**

Apart from the Old Series, Roger Hellyer and I have collaborated on seven projects: three of these have been straightforward, in that they have broken new ground, one was a revision and extension of work by Guy Messenger, one was a development of the Margary project, and is described separately below, one (*One-inch engraved maps*) used some Margary material as a starting-point but was really a fulfilment of something I had begun and then laid aside, and one (*Ordinance Survey small scale maps*) has taken over work from three other CCS members.

The Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 First Series, which was published in 2003, is one of those projects which developed somewhat mysteriously. Back in 1986 there appeared what was treated as the Charles Close Society’s first publication: a listing, with a brief historical introduction, of the one-inch Seventh Series. It grew out of correspondence between Guy Messenger and myself, and it was a co-authored offering. It was typed on an elderly office typewriter with terrific ‘hammer’ which would have been ideal in pre-photocopier days, when secretary-typists would routinely produce half a dozen carbon ‘flimsies’ in order to supply needed copies for information. Stock was produced by photocopying in small batches, each with its own print-code. I then published a ‘What next?’ article in *Sheetlines*, suggesting, amongst other projects, a listing of the 1:25,000 First Series, which was expected to be completely superseded by 1990. I gave an estimate of time, based on a sample of the British Library’s legal deposit set, and with a view to it being a collaborative venture. In 1993 I published an article describing the development of the 1:25,000 family, but otherwise matters rested for about ten years, until Roger Hellyer took up the idea. I contributed an ‘introductory essay’, of some 30,000 words: closer to ‘Margary’ than later ‘Hellyer-&-Oliver’ proportions.

The stimulus for our next project was Tim Nicholson’s study of the one-inch Revised New Series in colour, which appeared, after prolonged preparation, in 2002. Tim did not want to go beyond this, which was in many ways an advance on Guy Messenger’s work on the one-inch Third Edition maps in colour: his study of the Large Sheet Series appeared in 1988, and was the first CCS monograph. Guy’s work was out of print, and did not include Ireland. So we set about rectifying this, including the Irish Third Editions, and such documentary background for the mapping as we could find. There was the satisfaction of finding several states of the maps that had eluded Guy.

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10 Richard Oliver, ‘What next? Some personal reflections on CCS publications’, *Sheetlines* 17 (1986), 2-5. Most of the projects and schemes described there have now been realised, with the notable exception of the 1:50,000 series, and a comprehensive OS bibliography.


We then proceeded to the military versions of the one-inch map produced between the early 1920s and mid 1970s. This was a logical development of Roger’s work on the small-scale indexes project: whilst the extent of most of the military versions was clear, things were fuzzy for the inter-war period. Whilst the Third Edition work was substantially checking, tidying and augmenting, the military maps had to be produced from scratch. Maps from the early 1940s onwards were unproblematic: there was the Ministry of Defence’s collection, which, most conveniently, had recently been deposited in the British Library, and large numbers were in private hands. Earlier mapping was more difficult: there was a policy of only replacing maps issued to troops once they were worn out, and whilst this ensured ‘sweating the assets’ for the taxpayers, it means that, proportionate to what must have been printed, far fewer pre-1940 one-inch military maps survive than for later on. Lack of copies in unofficial hands would not matter so much were the MoD collection as comprehensive as it is for post-war mapping, but it isn’t: I rather suspect that storage space was at a premium, and ‘weeding’ was rather hit and miss. As it is, the inter-war military printing history of many sheets is incomplete, and for some is pretty non-existent: one gap was filled just before going to press (Figure 2), a few more have been filled from the second-hand market since the book was published in 2004, and some sheets thus ‘apprehended’ have been sent to Cambridge University Library. Locating these military printings is important if the history of the parent civil series is to be fully understood, at any rate before the advent of the Seventh Series. Gaps in Military maps are a continuing challenge to posterity.

The presentation formula used for the 1:25,000, Third Edition and Military volumes, and in the recently-published Intermediate scales book completing ‘the 1:25,000 story’, was one used in the Seventh Series booklet, and was being used elsewhere in what there was of OS cartobibliographies at the time: a tabular arrangement, based on one horizontal line per edition, with dates and other identifying data in columns. (Figure 3) This is well suited to lithographically-printed maps, where dates and other marginalia are usually sufficient to establish the identity and developmental place of an individual copy, and changes to specification and content can be compressed into letter-codes, but it is completely unworkable for maps printed directly from copper (Figure 4).

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The nature of lithographic printing was such that it favoured printing in relative bulk, to provide several years' stock if possible. With engraving on copper the position was completely different: the plate had to be inked and wiped for each individual impression,
and output was perhaps ten to twenty copies an hour. Once the requisite number of copies was printed off the plate went back into store until more copies were needed. This tended to favour small ‘runs’ and frequent ‘printings’. It was also possible to incorporate changes on the plate at frequent intervals, and so a particular ‘state’ of the plate may have yielded comparatively few copies. Up to the early 1860s, no date was offered subsequent to the original publication date: then an electrotype date was added, where relevant (mainly on one-inch series of Britain), but it was still possible to make amendments to the electrotype. Railway ‘insertion’ dates were added from 1881 onwards (again, mainly on British one-inch), but these sometimes bear a loose relationship with actual changes to the plates. A columnar arrangement is impractical: there is nothing for it but a condensed narrative description.

In 1982, stimulated by an editorial comment in Sheetlines no.1, I produced an article providing an outline guide to the one-inch New Series and the corresponding maps of Scotland. This, together with the work I was starting on my doctoral thesis, suggested a cartobibliography of these maps complementary to those in the Margary OSOS volumes. Given the division of these maps into ‘editions’, and the slackening rate of railway development from the 1880s, this was anticipated to be a much simpler task than for the Old Series, but a practical complication was the publication of the mapping in alternative outline and ‘hills’ forms, and although I generated a lot of notes based on British Library holdings, first in 1982-3 and then again around 1989-90, not a great deal of progress was made, though I did manage to work out most of the design and content development of these maps up to the relative standardisation of these in conjunction with the comprehensive revision in the 1890s.

Thus things stood in 2003-4, with the Third Edition and Military Maps projects approaching completion. We then decided on reviving my work: in practice most of the subsequent ‘slog’ around the map libraries, and editing together of materials was Roger’s. (The work I did on the last three Margary volumes enables me to judge the relative amount of work consumed by history and cartobibliographies.) The scope of the work was extended to Ireland, which hitherto had not had its fair share of smaller-scale cartobibliographic attention. The scope of the cartobibliographic work was extended way beyond anything that had been envisaged for ‘Margary’, and took on a worldwide scope: for the One-inch Engraved Maps and Old Series projects Roger examined the collections in the major libraries in six European capitals, Toronto, Vancouver, five Ivy League universities, the New York Public Library and, especially rewarding, the Library of Congress.

By this time, as I explain later, I was turning again to putting my thesis into publishable form, and the preparation of the necessary ‘introductory essay’ made it desirable to fuse work on the two as far as possible. Progress was slowed by family and work considerations, but would have been a lot slower but for a change of policy by what was now The National Archives (former PRO): readers could now bring in their own digital cameras, and take photos for their own research purposes to an almost unlimited extent. From earlier forays I knew that there was a considerable amount of relevant material in the Treasury papers, and it was now possible simply to photo away, and work on the reading and ‘note-taking’ at home. What proved rather more hard work was disentangling the sequence of events.

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between about 1851 and 1856 and determining the relationship, if any, between the design of the Irish and Scottish one-inches.

One-inch engraved maps was completed and printed in time for the Edinburgh three-day cartographic event in September 2009. At 720 pages it is the longest of the CCS monographs: even so, it has something of a ‘cramped’ look. We thought of publishing it in two volumes, but that would have entailed two lots of binding and a disproportionate increase in cost, both in printing and to hoped-for readers. An important feature was a long chapter on map content, illustrated with enlargements of details, which owed something to the map content chapter in my Concise guide.¹⁶

Unfinished business: the First Ordnance Survey map

Whilst all those concerned with OSOS were glad to see the project completed after twenty years, there was a sense of unfinished business. Back in 1988 or 1989 Guy Messenger had decided to extend the cartobibliographies for volumes I and II to include the later states, and this work was published by the Charles Close Society in two booklets in 1991, as part of the celebrations for the official bicentenary of the OS. These booklets were better than nothing, but were not wholly satisfactory, as they left out of account certain collections that Guy found not so easy to access, notably some at the British Library. Had CCS not needed some bicentenary publications, they might not have appeared as they stood. The cartobibliography for sheet 7 (Middlesex) in OSOS Volume IV was also knowingly incomplete, with later states being confined to noting new electrotypes rather than details of railway changes.

Another piece of unfinished business was that, by the late 1980s, Brian Harley was thinking of gathering together the essays and reworking them in a single volume, provisionally titled The first national survey, which would include Rodney Fry’s conventional sign drawings. Nothing would be done until OSOS was complete, and by then Brian was dead, and the priority for his literary executor, Paul Laxton, was getting published the collection of essays delivered to John Hopkins Press by Brian three weeks before he died, which emerged in 2001 as The new nature of maps. Given the way Volumes VI, VII and VIII had developed, it is likely that I would have had a substantial hand in The first national survey, though it was a title that was immediately objected to as leaving out the claims of Christopher Saxton, to look no further. Well, it was a working title, and it had to remain that: by 1992 I was engaged at the University of Exeter on tithe maps, and the most that I had time for was articles for Sheetlines. Anyone seeking the history of the Ordnance Survey’s first published series had to read eight disconnected essays, supplemented by a few journal articles elsewhere, and a series of cartobibliographies of varying degrees of completeness.

This remained the position for about fifteen years or so until, as the One-inch Engraved Maps project drew close to publication, Roger Hellyer, now retired, turned his attention to the Old Series. By this time laptop computers were well established, and Roger had gained considerable experience with a wide range of Ordnance Survey mapping, not least the nineteenth century ten-mile map and the post-Old Series engraved one-inch maps. Actually, the early northern England component of these was simply the redesignated Old Series

sheets in OSOS Volume VIII that became the first New Series sheets, and Roger was able to improve on my work without having to start from scratch. The object now was to produce as complete a cartobibliography as practicable, and to incorporate all the ‘complete sets’ that had emerged during work for the later OSOS volumes. Laptop computing had become available a little too late for these final volumes, but by the mid 2000s there was another tool: online library catalogues, and this yielded yet more sets of the Old Series. Those in Europe were accessible; scans were negotiated of some further afield, notably in Australia.

All this amounted to a revival of the First national map project, and I was now in a position to take on the ‘introductory essay’, as I continued to call it, though in One-inch engraved maps this had run to over 100,000 words, and in what we decided to call The first Ordnance Survey map – a nod to Brian Harley’s concept – that ‘essay’ was not much less. (But what should my contributions be called? ‘Historical accounts’?) Rather than attempt to fit together the seven essays taking the story up to the early 1840s, my section was completely written from scratch, to preserve chronological order as far as possible. Some regionalism is present in places, simply because of the location of important developments, for example archaeology in Wiltshire in the 1810s, increased attention to geometrical fidelity in Lincolnshire around 1820, and the development of place name recording in Wales over a longer period. Partly as a souvenir of preparation for OSOS volume VI, and partly in anticipation of the First national map, I had in my hands a lot of Brian Harley’s notes and photocopies, and the writing was a relatively straightforward job. The story was completed by reference to the David & Charles and Margary enterprises, with a photograph of Harry Margary, Brian Harley and myself on the terrace at Lympne Castle in 1989 (figure 1 above). It would have been nice to have a group photo of all those involved in OSOS – but they were never all together in the same place at the same time.

The first Ordnance Survey map was ready in time for the Charles Close Society’s annual general meeting in Lincoln in May 2015: given the strong Lincolnshire element in the story this was an appropriate venue. It brought to a close a project that could be said to have stretched over nearly half a century.17

The Concise Guide: collaboration in disguise?

Having enlisted me as a collaborator, Brian Harley discussed various projects: one was a replacement for The historian’s guide to Ordnance Survey maps, which collected and augmented articles published in The local historian in 1962-3, mostly by Brian but including one on the Survey’s ‘period maps’ by CW Phillips, who was then Archaeology Officer. It is difficult to overstate the effect of this 52-page booklet when it appeared: it was a window into a new world.18

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18 [JB Harley & CW Phillips], The historian’s guide to Ordnance Survey maps, London: National Council of Social Service, 1964. Of course, once the window was open one had to find how to travel into the landscape! There were at least four printings, readily identifiable by price changes: five shillings (title page), six shillings, 50p, 85p (all on back cover); I am indebted to David Archer and George Jasieniecki for help with this.
Note that this was my reaction in 1965; it was certainly not that of Brian Harley by the early 1980s, when he would have disowned the thing if he could. By that time he was equally well-known for *Ordnance Survey maps: a descriptive manual*, published by the Survey in 1975. Unfortunately there seems to be no file in The National Archives devoted to this, but it is apparent from a reference in the ‘David & Charles’ file that Brian was originally enlisted in July 1970 to prepare a successor to the *Description* pamphlets covering large-scale, medium-scale and small-scale maps and plans, last issued in 1954–7. How the project then developed is uncertain, but the result was far more elaborate than were the old *Descriptions*, and included extensive material on map content and conventions, such as had not been published before. This came from OS internal manuals, which were supplied to Brian, but which he was not allowed to cite in notes: this concern with confidentiality was rendered completely unnecessary by the early 1980s, when copies of these manuals were sent to the British Library and other collections – including earlier versions which Brian pretty certainly did not see. In 1979 he produced a pamphlet on the OS’s recording of land-use on the 1:2500, which made good use of the ‘Southampton Circulars’, and set a new standard in thoroughness. The *Historian’s guide* was good on the basics of series development and on approximate dating of county coverage, but it said little on map content, and not all that was accurate. In this respect it fell obviously short of the standard of the *Descriptive manual*, never mind the land-use study. Further, by the early 1980s Brian was developing the ideas that would be gathered together in *The new nature of maps*, and *The historian’s guide* seemed beyond inadequate both in content and in conceptual underpinning. As far as he was concerned there could be no question of reissuing it, even in a modestly expanded and updated version: there would have to be a completely fresh start. I was certainly not the first to be enlisted as a collaborator on a *New historian’s guide*: I know of at least two others who were approached. For the present our priority was ‘Margary’, and the nearest we seem to have got to specifics was a suggestion by Brian that the book should be angled towards ‘nuances’ rather than the broad picture. I don’t know how that might have worked. A further complication was that in 1986 Brian moved from Exeter to a chair at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

In 1988, stimulated by some comments in a lecture by Barbara Bond at the Edinburgh three-day cartographic event in November, I started to investigate the pattern of OS large-scale cover, more particularly in the National Grid era. Out of this grew a series of lists, one of survey dates for towns covered by the 1:1056, 1:528 and 1:500 surveys of 1842–1908, which largely derived from long-published information, and another of initial survey dates for the 1:1250 cover of urban areas, practically all of which could be obtained by careful handling of data in the Survey’s published annual reports. I also had some other data, 

19 Drewitt to Harley and reply, 28 and 31 July 1970, 159A and 160A in TNA OS 1/1436. It is possible that more could be learned from Brian Harley’s papers, but these are not at present accessible to researchers.

20 The ‘Red Book 1952’ – instructions for detail survey – is a case in point.

21 JB Harley, *The Ordnance Survey and Land-Use mapping, 1855–1918*, (Historical Geography Research Series, no.2), Norwich: Geo Books, 1979. The ‘Southampton Circulars’, of which there is a photocopy in the Charles Close Society archive at Cambridge, consist of circulars sent (mainly) from OS HQ to field divisions, giving instructions on how to survey and record detail: they survive for 1880 to 1921.

22 *Historian’s guide*, 25, where the references to turnpike trusts and field names are at best misleading.
notably lists of abbreviations, many no longer used. In March 1991, one day during lunch at the PRO, I conceived the idea of drawing all this data together into a modest booklet, which by the winter of 1991-2 was being referred to in CCS committee minutes as ‘Large scale guide’. It was intentionally a makeshift, to cover basic factual information, so as not to interfere seriously with the New historian’s guide, however that might turn out. There was a perception in some quarters that ‘historic OS maps’ still had a smaller-scale rather than larger-scale bias, and something might be done towards correcting this.

Brian Harley’s sudden death in December 1991 meant that any tentative plans for a New historian’s guide were rendered completely irrelevant, and I was free to trench on at least some of its territory. Ordnance Survey maps: a concise guide for historians was still intended to be of comparatively modest dimensions: 160 pages, A5 softback, to sell for £8.95, with summary histories of map series, tabulated dates and scales for mapping of towns and counties, a list of abbreviations and a bibliography. What only emerged quite late on was what in the first edition was Chapter 3, ‘Notes on the depiction of detail’, which was based mainly on Brian Harley’s copies of the ‘Southampton Circulars’ and formerly confidential internal manuals which he had retained following publication of the Descriptive manual. This may have provided some of the ‘nuances’: it certainly proved well worthwhile, as it seems to be this section of the book, duly expanded in the two later editions (2005 and 2013), that has been most useful to readers.23 I was a little annoyed when one reviewer referred to the book as a revised version of the Historian’s guide: apart from anything else, scales smaller than six-inch were relegated to distinctly secondary treatment.

In supplying raw material, Brian Harley was a sort of ‘ghostly collaborator’. A rather more material one was David Archer, who was CCS secretary at this time, and undertook a great deal of comment and checking on the earlier drafts of the Concise guide. It is due to him that the book that emerged in late May 1993 was of 192 pages and B5 size, selling for £11.95; another case where the author’s original concept proved misguided, as it gave the book greater ‘substance’, there were plenty of takers at the higher price, and the Society’s funds benefitted agreeably. (It also proved a useful ‘visiting card’ at some county record offices for the latest ‘Exeter’ project, on enclosure and other ‘parish’ maps.) Incidentally, producing drafts at that time was not straightforward: at Exeter the standard word-processing software was Nota Bene, which was capable of generating Times Roman and other ‘proportional’ fonts, but displayed them in a non-proportional font on-screen, and printing relied on a ‘postscript’ cartridge that had to be plugged into the printer in the drawing office, which could only be accessed easily ‘out of hours’. Even then, difficulties were not over: it took about three minutes to print an A4-size sheet, which does not compare very well with the output from copper. A complete reprint of 160 to 192 pages, even two-up, was therefore a formidable operation, and this had to be gone through several times before David and I were satisfied.

The title Concise guide may have been appropriate for the original 160-page concept: the Third Edition is 320 pages, and a fourth edition is in contemplation, which will probably

run to 352 pages. The claim to ‘concision’ is, I think, still justified, partly because of keeping an eye on the bibliography, to eliminate more marginal and superseded material, and partly because what is now Chapter 5 is a great deal more compact than even one of the Blue books or Red books that provide much of its basis.

Figure 5. A peer-reviewed article: early-career academics beware…

The Ordnance Survey in the nineteenth century – or is it the twenty-first?

We left the story of my doctoral thesis with it completed and examined in the winter of 1985-6. There arose the question of publishing it. I was advised that it would be better first to get a few articles in print in academic journals, before approaching a publisher: quite a lot of doctoral theses don’t seem to get beyond the ‘two or three articles’ stage, if that. The thesis was not so structured that it would be possible to extract and rework one or two chapters as articles: I have only ever published two ‘peer-reviewed’ articles, one of those a joint effort arising out of my employment at Exeter, and neither includes any of my doctoral work.²⁴ (Figure 5) I was told by an academic at Sussex, in the bar after one of the weekly history-work-in-progress seminars, that academic publishers wouldn’t look at a monograph of over 60,000 words. (I don’t think he was on his first drink of the evening.) Now my thesis was officially about 78,500 words; the limit at Sussex was 80,000, though I

²⁴ Richard Oliver and Roger JP Kain, ‘Maps and the assessment of parish rates in nineteenth-century England and Wales’, Imago Mundi 50 (1998), 156-73; Richard Oliver, ‘Mapping for cycle touring in Britain: past, present and a possible future’, Cartographic Journal 38 (2001), 48-60. (A cousin who hadn’t seen me for some years who said to me at a family ‘do’, ‘You’re some sort of academic, aren’t you?’ probably had it about right.)
remember one post-graduate (who completed in somewhat over three years) saying that he certainly couldn’t fit his work into much less than 120,000 words.\(^{25}\) (I don’t know if he got away with it.)

My thesis said a good deal about administration and politics, but practically nothing about the maps, though there were quite a number of monochrome illustrations, and a few hand-coloured ones, that are enduring monuments to the state of photocopying in the mid 1980s. Further, I had got round the word-limit by putting the various arguments for and against the various scales and methods of relief depiction in the Battle of the Scales of the 1850s into an ‘appendix’, which saved at least 5,000 words. This was thought to be a bit cheeky, but I got away with it. A chapter on the effects on maps would have added substantially to the 85,000-odd words of the main text, counting in that questionable appendix.

Anyway, what it came down to was that there seemed no immediate prospect of publishing the thesis, which in the book form that was implicit would have been of around the length of John Andrew’s *A paper landscape.*\(^{26}\) (And I think that, whatever assistance was given along the way, the thesis has more ‘Andrews’ than ‘Harley’ influence.) That said, my thesis did achieve a rather wider circulation than sometimes happens: I advertised photocopies in *Sheetlines* and in *Cartographitti*, the newsletter of the Map Curators Group of the British Cartographic Societies, for an unspecified price that varied from customer to customer (OS at Southampton got off lightest): at least twenty ‘authorised’ copies must have been made.

In 1989 I was appointed to a proper salaried post at the University of Exeter, working for Professor Roger Kain on various map projects which paid the bills, but did not seem to bring publication of my thesis any closer. Although the early intention had been that the Charles Close Society would, a modest Sheetlines apart, be a facilitator of dissemination rather than a publisher in its own right, by the 1990s things had developed differently, and in October 2001 CCS Committee minutes mention ‘the 1835-70 monograph’. Work progressed slowly: in 2004-5 I typed a large section of the text, which could be reused practically as it stood, whilst I worked on the One-inch engraved maps project, which itself involved investigating tangential matters, notably the OS’s use of the Delamere meridian, and the two-inch mapping of Scotland, and investigating a good deal of post-1870 material at TNA that I had examined cursorily in the 1980s. Research at TNA for those based outside London was now greatly facilitated by the possibilities of digital photography, and this gave me the idea of extending ‘the thesis’ at both ends, to cover the whole of the earlier development of the Ordnance Survey, up to – when? The mid 1890s seemed too early, as hares set to run by the Dörington proceedings in 1892-4 had yet to reach their destination, and 1900 seemed arbitrary: what about 1914? The

\(^{25}\) The thesis was typed on a WH Smith portable typewriter: there was no question of automatically-generated word-counts. The method I used to determine the length was to count a specimen page of text, and measure it vertically with a ruler: this yielded a formula of X words per foot. All that was then necessary was to measure up the pages and keep a running total. Maximum length for theses vary between universities: I have heard of limits varying between 75,000 and 100,000 words.

‘long nineteenth century’ of 1783 to 1914 is a recognised historical period, its start coincides with the suggestion of the Greenwich-Paris connection, and 1914 is the date of the completion of the 1:2500 remapping of Ireland. So I adopted 1914 as my terminal date, and it gave the excuse to include one of Sir Charles Close’s experimental one-inch coloured maps as a plate. In 2009 I took early retirement, and completed the first draft of The Ordnance Survey in the nineteenth-century: maps, money and the growth of government in January 2011. It was then sent to several ‘readers’, of varying backgrounds, for comment, and the opening chapter, in particular, had a good deal of reworking. I wanted if possible to have the book printed and ready for distribution as a sixtieth birthday present to myself, and I achieved this with about four days to spare.

‘OSC19’, as I abbreviate it, is in places derivative, in earlier sections from the writings of Brian Harley and others, and a lot of the Irish material is taken from John Andrew’s Paper landscape. Mindful of Brian Harley’s views on plagiarists, I hope all this is properly acknowledged: John received a complimentary copy. He also reviewed it for Imago Mundi: “To read this book is an enjoyable experience as well as a gruelling one.” (The main text is about 225,000 words: so much for 60,000 words…) This highlights a problem with reviewing CCS work: the pool of suitable reviewers is a small one. As usual, Chris Higley undertook the pre-press work; some of the illustrations repeat those in the thesis, but the availability of colour-printing enabled a much more satisfactory result, and to my mind OSC19 approaches about as perfect a realisation of a concept as an author has a right to expect, even though a couple of irritating glitches remain. Once OSC19 was printed I discarded the camera-ready copy for the thesis, and all the preliminary drafts: it’s the final text that matters.

Ordnance Survey intermediate scale maps
Roger Hellyer had a long-standing interest in the military component of the 1:25,000 family – the true 2.5-inch (1:25,344), GSGS 3036, the 1:20,000, GSGS 2748, the 1:25,000, GSGS 3906 – and on 31 March 2015, with The first Ordnance Survey map at the printers, we met at Cambridge University Library to inspect a collection of GSGS 3036 – actually, a group of the original sheets, printed in late summer 1914 before the GSGS number was issued. Roger wanted another project, and over tea we decided on a volume to cover all the 1:25,000 family except for the First Series. For once I would bestir myself cartobibliographically, and take on the Second Series family. We used the term ‘intermediate scales’ as these maps have characteristics both of smaller scales, in relative breadth of cover on a given sheet, and of larger ones, in relative resolution of detail – particularly as quite a lot of them turn out to be based on direct photo-reduction of six-inch linework. The term ‘medium scale’ was used by the OS for a couple of decades after 1945 to cover both the 1:25,000 and the six-inch, and would clearly be misleading here – or else we would have produced a very bulky volume indeed. As it is, in order to accommodate postage bands, the main text is printed on 90 gsm rather than 115 gsm paper; it seems to work well.

We expected the job to take about two years; in the event it took over seven, with the first copies collected from the printer on 2 August 2022. The delay was partly down to me:

27 Concluding words of review in Imago Mundi 67(2) (2015), 251-2.
at the same time as I undertook to handle the ‘historical essay’ and the Second Series, I became involved with some ‘church records’, and found Things That Had Not Been Done But Ought To Have Been Done: sorting those out consumed considerable time in 2015-16. (Some rail strikes, impeding access to TNA, didn’t help, either.) Publication was also delayed latterly by the onset of the pandemic. Writing was straightforward, although the narrative deviated in places to explore some context, notably the development of National Grid mapping after 1939, and of public rights of way recording. The original ‘intermediate scale’, GSGS 3036, was evidently produced for counter-invasion purposes, and portraits in the letterpress include some of personalities not usually associated with Ordnance Survey history, though I drew the line at including Kaiser Wilhelm II.

As with the earlier 1:25,000 First Series book, a tabular arrangement is adopted, and with word processing it is easy to insert new lines for new states. This was particularly useful for the bulk of GSGS 3906, produced in ‘provisional’ form from 1940 onwards, as the printing history proved rather more complicated than we had expected: whereas earlier series had been printed centrally, mainly by OS, a lot of GSGS 3906 was printed by Engineer survey units and others, sometimes in quite limited quantities. Roger’s examination of the sets in the legal deposit libraries yielded five new states not in the BL Ministry of Defence deposit, whereas 125 new states were found in the Library of Congress. (Washington has also produced some interesting things at smaller scales.) The earlier mapping proved rather easier, as the record largely depends on the MoD and other collections in the British Library, but even then there are gaps of the sort that we had encountered with the one-inch military editions and that have had to be filled from other collections, and the earlier versions of the artillery training map, GSGS 2748, are often still to seek. Experience with the one-inch military maps has shown that further copies will emerge, but the numbers will be modest. We hope that the book will hold its value for a long time.28

**Ordinance Survey smaller scale maps**

When we embarked on the intermediate scales, we did not anticipate that we would also be taking on yet another project, which we have dubbed ‘small scale’: mainly the half-inch and quarter-inch, but including aspects of the ten-mile and 1:1,000,000 maps.29

It is possible to trace the origins of the ‘small scales’ book far back into the 1940s, when Peter Clark, CCS’s founder-chairman, was taking an interest in the half-inch map, and started collecting them. At the meeting to found the Society, in November 1980, Peter gave a paper on the half-inch, and there is no doubt that he was intending to produce a monograph in the fullness of time. Whilst he was the most knowledgeable of men about maps, he was not a natural author, and as the years and decades passed, so there was no sign of the monograph. Relief-depiction is an important element of the OS half-inch story, and in due course Yo Hodson joined Peter to write it up, and the prospect of a publication seemed further advanced when Roger Hellyer undertook to prepare a cartobibliography. The cartobibliography was issued in ‘provisional’ form in 2010, in the hope of eliciting

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further states. The accompanying historical essay made no progress, not least because of what in many ways was another ‘relief map project’, Yo’s work on the Royal Collection at Windsor, with its wealth of eighteenth century manuscript mapping, by William Roy and others, and now available online. Just as the Windsor work was drawing to a close, Yo was enlisted for a military map-history job for which she was well qualified, and it was arranged that I would take over the half-inch historical account.

Meanwhile, and again long antedating the formation of the Charles Close Society, Chris Board had developed an interest in the quarter-inch map. He published several articles and reviews in Sheetlines, and was expecting to produce a monograph, but as time went on he felt less able to tackle it. Once again Roger moved things along by undertaking the cartobibliography, and in the autumn of 2015, just after taking on the intermediate scales project, I agreed to write the historical account of the quarter-inch. The ability to photo in bulk at TNA facilitated this, but further progress was delayed by work on the intermediate scales and various non-cartographic distractions. Meanwhile, Roger got to work on refining the half-inch cartobibliography, and developing that of the quarter-inch. The ordinary civil issues were relatively straightforward, a few ambiguous inter-war ‘reprints’ apart, but the military and aeronautical versions proved much more intricate. As with the military one-inch, complete and straightforward official collections from the 1940s contrast with fragmentary survival earlier.

Roger had published a monograph on the OS ten-mile family in 1992, and much of it has stood the test of three decades, but further details of the original ‘index’ map came to light that were worked into The first Ordnance Survey map, and on the twelve-sheet ‘1904’ map. The ten-mile was also used as a base for aviation mapping, until replaced after 1937 by the 1:500,000, and there was logic in including ten-mile material under the ‘small scales’ umbrella. Mention of the 1:500,000 and 1:1,000,000 was rather modest, as they really form parts of wider international series and concepts; the same applies for the 1:250,000 ‘JOG’ – Joint Operations Graphic – that superseded ‘the military quarter-inch’.

By early 2020 I was in a position to set about writing the history of the ‘small scales’. At this point the Covid pandemic struck, and travel became impossible. Fortunately I had completed the necessary photography of TNA material, and was able to work at home without distraction: for once, Covid actually helped things along. I varied my usual writing procedure, which is to work chapter by chapter: make notes, and then notes on notes to summarise things and develop ideas, and then to produce a rough draft, largely written out of my head. This draft is then typed up, with source notes and corrections to my memory supplied as necessary: the draft is printed out, and further corrections made, and then I go on to the next chapter. For Ordnance Survey small scale maps I varied the procedure: instead of typing up as I went along, I started the next longhand draft immediately. This was partly so as not to lose momentum, and partly because of problems with procuring supplies of printing-toner. The only other published book I’ve written in this way was the first draft of my thesis, which depended on manual typing: in fact the final copy was prepared from the first typed draft, which I regard as indecently hasty these days. An alternative to hard copy printing, which works well for proofing but not always if one decides on making extensive alterations or for cross-checking, is to change the font and size temporarily: I usually type main text in Garamond, 12-point, single-space, but a completely different view is given by
Dr Todd Gray commissioned for the Devon & Cornwall Record Society Facebook page a number of short contributions from local authors on how they were managing to work during the pandemic: I supplied one on the writing of the small scales book, accompanied by a photo.

I completed the handwritten draft of my section of *Ordnance Survey small scale maps* in October 2020, and the first typed draft in mid-January 2021; a copy was sent to Peter Clark in time for his 95th birthday. Other drafts were sent out for comment, and I only started the preparation of a ‘final’ text early in 2022.

Illustration is an important part of cartographic history publication, and the advent of scanning has greatly eased this, particularly when one is using originals in one’s own collection. One big drawback to using many otherwise excellent national collections is cost: both in commissioning photography, and in paying reproduction fees. For this reason, all CCS publications have relied as far as possible on private collections. Sometimes this is
impracticable, as with unique surviving copies of high importance: there are several examples of these in both the Intermediate scales and Small scales books. Scale and arrangement are important: a map is produced to be printed at a specific scale, and whilst it is sometimes useful to enlarge detail to make a point, reduction gives a false impression: in fact, it often makes it very hard to judge the quality of the cartography. Nonetheless, book designers cheerfully enlarge or shrink, with authors apparently powerless to protest, no doubt thinking that panning and zooming are normal in on-screen viewing. Ah, but it is paper maps that are being discussed here: viewing is different. It is also important to ensure that map extracts covering the same area of different dates or styles can be read alongside each other, and this can occasionally result in breaking strict chronological sequence.

How does one select an area to illustrate one’s points? If the extract is from a stylistically unique map – for example, the Greater London half-inch of 1935 – then choice may be conditioned by a sufficient degree of variety, or legibility. There can be scope here for personal references. Extracts from Greater London have a family slant: one manages both my own family and some in-laws, and another is perhaps something of a joke in that it shows the site of RAF Henlow, to which my father was attached during his time in the RAFVR in the 1940s – though for reasons of security the airfield is omitted from the extract used. An apparent fondness for showing aviation mapping with a significant proportion of sea can be explained by showing a variety of signs, and the complexity of warnings of live-firing areas. One illustration is a reconstruction, as we only have monochrome photocopies of the half-inch gridded mapping of Aldershot of 1922. The grid was overprinted on the standard map of 1915, and was redrawn on a colour photocopy. The result is not especially elegant, but then a purple kilometre grid at half-inch is not the most legible of things, and one wonders if it was set up to fail.

**Marking one’s own homework?**

I observed above that the pool of available reviewers of the books published by the Charles Close Society is small, and some inside comments on the writing process may compensate to an extent for an objective outside view. I will conclude with a quotation from PG Wodehouse:

‘His letter on its way, he was wondering, like all authors who have sent their stuff off, if it could not have been polished a bit and given those last little touches which make all the difference. However, again like all authors, he knew that what he had written, even without a final brush-up, was simply terrific…’

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30 Personal references in mapmaking were something that interested Brian Harley in his work for The new nature of maps, and he was interested when I ‘decoded’ a couple of literary parallels in my thesis.