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"50th 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.

50th Kerry musings

David Archer

When did you last close your eyes and feel your maps? By which I mean, give them a really good going over, as my Mother does presents on Christmas Eve, using her fingers to extract as much information as possible, without actually seeing the gifts? At the 1998 weekend meeting in Harrogate, Peter Stubbs provided the Saturday evening relaxation entitled 'Blind Map's Buff', with a pile of sealed envelopes, each containing an Ordnance Survey map folded into covers. After one of us was blindfolded, Peter would open an envelope, produce a map, show it to the sighted and hand it to the contestant who was expected to identify the item without seeing it. It worked exceedingly well, with everybody having a fun time, and most maps being identified. Difficult? No. Challenging? Yes. So many attributes are easily recognised by touch. Paper, cloth backed or dissected? Large or small covers, with one or two pieces of card? Dry fluffy card, waxy card or smooth laminated card? Paper covers, rounded corners and staples all help to narrow the field quite quickly.

If you close your eyes and imagine being handed an Ordnance Survey map in an OS cover, you will have a multitude of images flash across your mind. You will begin to hold all the different types of folded map that you own or have seen. Try it now before reading further. Close your eyes and summon up visions of maps in covers. Try it, read no further. Now repeat it and try to feel the covers. Is it a glossy benderfold or a dry, slightly brittle card cover in two parts? A small book-type cover with a hint of a waxy finish or just a wrap around cover of strong thickish paper? When given a map to identify, one, two, three or more points hit you instantly and at the same time you probably rule out more things than you pencil in. The first few seconds are the key to success. Well, for me they were. I am not saying that I can identify a map in seconds, rather that in Harrogate, the initial impression set me on the right path.

So, there you are with your eyes blindfolded, and a map is put into your hands. A multitude of thoughts bombard you at once, and although you might just be able to identify the actual map, it will be the series you are after. Initially you focus (when blindfolded?) on the cover, that which you are in contact with. Covers rule things in and rule things out, suggesting and ruling out dates. A one piece cover can be almost any date from the 1890s to the present, but only since the 1930s has a long, and fairly wide, one piece cover folded in the middle been in use. And if this is laminated, then the starting date is pushed forward to the 1960s. But if the map is cloth-backed in a laminated cover, the range of dates and maps is quite small, immediately bringing tourist maps, Seventh Series and quarter-inch maps to mind. A cloth-backed map in a laminated cover is a fairly easy start. A one piece cover hinged on the left has so many variants, and sizes. Very large ones, book size, will often have a text inside, whilst small textured covers with a paper label on the outside are remarkably distinctive, and were the first covers used by the Ordnance Survey in the 1890s. Too easy.

We should not forget that the OS produced maps on a production line system, buying equipment that could be used for the various map series available at any given date. Hence, in the 1920s, the style of covers and map folds for the one-inch and half-inch were similar, being produced, I assume, by the same machinery and systems. I believe that the covers will usually be the main indicator of the map inside, and will narrow possibilities instantly and dramatically, if only down to a few contenders.

A lot of the pre-war, two-piece covers have an unmistakeable waxy finish to them, another factor that helps pin down a particular group of maps as candidates. The covers on many Fifth and Fifth Relief Edition maps are like this and often have the added feature of the paper having a slightly waxy feel as well, the concertinaed map often feeling slightly spongy to the touch when folded. Three clues for the un-sighted. Many of the civil aviation map covers also have a waxed finish, and are frequently long and narrow, housing a map and inside legend panel both waxy to touch.

A few groups of maps can be identified pretty quickly. The six-inch town plans in the card envelope covers are like no other ever produced by the OS. Maps in pre-war benderfold covers usually have the lowest part of the sheet tucked up. The early Seventh Series also have a tuck, which the New Populars do not. Ten-mile Ansell-fold maps always feel cool to touch, and can be identified by size and cover texture, without resorting to the unique flap on the rear cover.

Pre-war archaeological maps and booklets appear in fairly lightweight but distinctive feeling paper covers, which are satisfyingly plump if prodded with a finger.

Now and again, specific maps can be identified. The Eclipse map is of a certain size and the finish to the cover is distinctive. Just as the Middle Thames tourist map on waterproof paper usually has a hint of a concave front cover. The quarter-inch RAF maps have two sorts of buff covers, those with a smooth polished finish to the outside contain maps with purple layering, whereas if the covers are a dull fluffy, slightly brittle card, the maps inside have brown layering. That would look good if blindfolded: being able to feel colours on a map. When inspecting a large pile of laminated Seventh Series maps, one can feel a difference between the all red covers, and the red and white ones. Try it.

I think the point is made, that one can go a long way towards identifying maps without actually seeing them. Which begs the question of why there is no guide to collecting Ordnance Survey maps for blind people? Examples of a lack of sight not being a hindrance are everywhere, blind cricket commentators, blind aircraft pilots, blind artists, so why not blind map collectors? Or are there? Such people might not be able to see the map detail, but they most certainly are able to appreciate the tremendous variety of sensations offered by map collecting.

Amongst the most satisfying maps to hold are those with white waxy covers dating from early last century, most often one-inch Thirds or half-inch. The two piece covers are so distinctive when handled. Very like a super-thin Wall's ice cream between wafers, the covers just extending beyond the folded map, stiff and thin, crisp, sharp even. In complete contrast are the same series dissected in white

stuck on covers, soft and slightly podgy like new fives gloves, or a pigskin notecase full of tenners (I assume). Or we might attempt a mixture of soft and crisp; individually, 1:25,000 maps with blue integral covers are crisp edged in new condition, but soft and springy in a small pile of twenty or so.

The same two attributes occur in Old Series maps, where there is something very satisfying about following Richard Oliver's suggestion and running the back of a thumb nail over the stuck-on piano key strips on early issues. One can almost hear a crisp click when the join is found. Softness comes from the felt triangles pasted on the front outside surface of folded maps. Or the nice soft feel to blind stamps and plate edge impressions on engraved sheets. Surely more pleasure is obtained by touching than seeing some features.

Obviously this is all speculation, but my vision of a blind person's map collection would include a section focusing on paper differences, which are many. The texture of the paper itself, thickish soft and fluffy for early Old Series maps; stiff and waxy examples of Place's waterproof paper or modern and slightly glossy late Seventh Series papers. Various varieties of cloth were used for strengthening maps, some quite coarse, almost a scrim as found on New Populars and War Revisions, a variety of cloths on Populars and exceedingly fine high quality cloths on some early half-inch maps. Different paper sizes abound, which might sound pretty dull to us, but again, close your eyes and imagine a collection of different papers and sizes. An advantage would be that only one example would be sought, unable to see what is on a piece of paper, why have two the same size?

And then we have the pleasure of the unexpected. Labels in different sizes and shapes, very strange folds, Ansell, Bridge's and the one-inch Popular Edition of Northern Ireland in buff covers, unlike anything else. Surely either a real treat or frustration when first encountered? Even the sighted are surprised on first seeing the two extra long benderfold Populars, and long Scottish Populars in almost 11 inch covers. Map sets issued in boxes, card or leather will be a delight to the fingers, and I defy anyone to say that sliding a folded map into or out of a slip case is not a pleasure. Again, close your eyes and imagine them.

Unlike the sighted, I cannot imagine blind people collecting only OS maps. If 'That feels different' is the equivalent of 'I have not seen that before', then surely early pinkish WH Smith map covers with the blue labels will excite, leading to Gall and Inglis, Cruchley's and the rest.

For both the sighted and un-sighted, the thin crisp glossy paper used for maps in late nineteenth century Ordnance Survey annual reports and early quarter-inch county maps, has a very distinctive sound when handled, but the sound of maps is not a topic for discussion at present. And the only thing that comes to mind concerning identifying maps by smell, is the sickly sweet smell of the Olde Map Company range on fake parchment in red paper slipcases found in tourist shops ('An antiqued parchment replica'). These are also my leading candidate for identification by taste, although I have never actually tried them as the smell is so awful.

And so, this week's competition, choose three maps, say what they would taste like and why (with or without a side dish of indexes). Obviously maps in slipcases will not be considered, as nobody in their right mind would eat a slipcase. Or would they?

To celebrate David Archer's fiftieth musings, we reprint below his first musings, published in Sheetlines *57 in April 2000. Reading this sixteen years later, it is fascinating to see just how perceptive and forward-looking it is.*

David says his purpose is to inform, to nudge, to wonder and to get members thinking around the subject of OS maps. He achieved it in 2000 and happily continues to do so.

For us, the new millennium arrived in mid-December in the form of a new computer. Lots of colour, fun and frustration, with instruction manuals leaving no infinitive unsplit. Eventually, we decided to stick a toe in the water and surf, although initially we were more like jumping seagulls.

The Ordnance Survey site was an obvious early port of call, not because it was of interest, but because I knew they had a site and I wanted a successful search. For anyone who has not seen an Internet demonstration, the Ordnance Survey site can best be described as an on-line, very glossy and colourful folder containing lots of leaflets on anything OS; history, products and services, just as one might expect. However, there are also games, downloadable images and information not available elsewhere. All for free. All items have the OS logo, which, if on paper, would be prized collectors' items in fifty years time. Some images will only be available for a few weeks.

Might we call this the new ephemera and does it need our consideration?

What do I mean by the new ephemera?

The new ephemera appear first on the Ordnance Survey website and can be copied (downloaded) by an individual onto their own computer or a floppy disc.

Whilst writing this, in February 2000, the Ordnance Survey is offering "Free wallpaper to download in February", "Free downloadable mapping for the whole of Great Britain at a variety of scales", "Free GB maps: download small scale maps of Great Britain in a variety of formats", "Free! Osview: a new version of the newly enhanced software that allows you to view digital map data products", a map puzzle game and more. In fact, everything on the site can be copied onto an individual's computer. In the last issue of *Sheetlines*, Jon Risby mentioned changes to the OS website. The original text and any illustrations have now gone. The free wallpaper (background screen illustrations) mentioned above will be changed after February (I assume). Was there one for January? All very ephemeral.

How does the new ephemera differ from the old?
The new ephemera (by my definition above) can only be seen on a computer screen. It can be copied and stored on floppy discs. An appropriate computer system is needed to view it. The old ephemera was on paper and could be viewed anywhere in good light.

What are the implications of the difference?
Most examples of the old ephemera have survived because they have been tucked away and forgotten – frequently as bookmarks or slipped inside books. Paper ephemera is often in the form of leaflets, usually advertising Ordnance Survey products or services.

To survive, the new ephemera must be collected, stored and have suitable machines available to view it. Very little will turn up by chance. I just cannot envisage the computer equivalent of second-hand bookshops, with shelves of old computers amongst which someone exclaims "Hey, this one's got some old OS web-pages saved to disc". The technology is changing so fast that what we save on a floppy disc today might not be readable in the future unless we keep the computer as well.

So, what are the chances of CCS members in 2050 being able to study the development of the Ordnance Survey website between 1998 and 2005 by viewing the actual material? Very slim I would say. I am sure that the OS does not have a policy to create an archive of website material. Individual members of our society might start to collect web-pages and free stuff, but will soon get bored, run out of space or rediscover maps.

Which leaves the Charles Close Society to pick up the pieces, if it is thought to be worthwhile.

Fans of London's transport maps may be interested to learn that TfL has produced a geographic version of the familiar *London Connections* map of the tube and rail network. Dated May 2014, it shows major roads and open spaces and includes the proposed route of Crossrail (now known as Elizabeth line). The recently incorporated Overground routes are labelled 'future'.

The map seems not be available in print format, but can be download at *http://content.tfl.gov.uk/london-connections-map.pdf*

The standard diagrammatic version, now called *London's Rail & Tube Services*, continues to be available in print and online at *https://tfl.gov.uk/maps/track* The latest version is dated May 2016.

Meanwhile, the new version of the Tube map (June 2106) includes for the first time 'Tramlink', the Croydon area tram network.
http://content.tfl.gov.uk/standard-tube-map.pdf