“Poetic licence”
Richard T Porter

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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.
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‘Nimble spirits may, of course, entertain themselves as pleasantly with Mercator’s Projection as with an Ordnance Survey imprint of six inches to the mile, in which one’s neighbouring haystack and brook make as fair a show as Baghdad and the Amazon’, wrote Walter de la Mare.¹

In a revised and expanded version (not used for the 1953 reprint) he enlarged his scale and modified his topography: ‘… an Ordnance Survey imprint of twenty inches to the mile, in which one’s neighbour’s haystacks and duckpond make as fair a show …’.²

While OS has occasionally shown some non-permanent detail, such as fences around an archaeological excavation,³ where they replaced established features but were never intended to ‘remain in position for at least 10 years’,⁴ the only circumstance that occurs to me where a haystack might inadvertently appear on a printed map is on a photomap, where incomplete field checking might cause it to appear as a hut or shed. And a scale of 20 inches to 1 mile or 1 inch to 4 chains (1:3168) is more for estate maps, or even town plans,⁵ than for ‘Ordnance Survey imprints’, I fancy?

² ‘Maps actual and imaginary’ in Walter de la Mare, Pleasures and speculations, London: Faber and Faber, 1940, 335-347.
⁵ e.g. Lincoln by J S Padley; cf. Sheetlines 69, 3.