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“Plagiarism with large-scale maps”

Rob Wheeler

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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.

Plagiarism with large-scale maps

Rob Wheeler

Colby's circular of 1816 which tightened up the practices of the Ordnance Survey included a prohibition on the use of pre-existing maps: 'Nor are local surveys of any kind to be had recourse to except for the insertion of alterations and improvements whilst in progress.'¹ If the modern reader finds this strange, it is from surprise that so obvious a principle should need to be spelled out.

The prohibition would have been seen as strange by the surveyors who received it, but for the opposite reason: copying previous surveys (with such checking and revision as might be thought necessary) was absolutely normal and to prohibit it gave them unnecessary work. The purpose of this article is to set out some of the evidence for the ubiquity of this practice. As it happens, all my evidence concerns Lincolnshire maps being produced for civil engineering purposes. However, I see no reason why Lincolnshire should be exceptional; and arguments based solely on estate maps would be open to the objection that for an estate surveyor to base his work on a previous survey of that estate would be no different from an Ordnance surveyor basing his work on a previous Ordnance map.

My first example I have already quoted in *Sheetlines*:² in 1813, according to Charles Budgen, General Mudge arranged for him to borrow various drainage plans. He had these reduced to the two-inch scale and used them to compile OSD 279. So Colby was actually putting a stop to a practice his predecessor had actively facilitated.

My second and third examples concern the very fine twenty-inch plan of Lincoln which J S Padley published in 1842. Padley was also surveyor to the Lincoln Court of Sewers, which was responsible for ensuring that the rivers in the part of the county around Lincoln carried water away in an efficient manner (but had no responsibility for sewerage in the modern sense of the word). The Court of Sewers decided on 18 September 1844 to have maps produced showing lands liable to pay drainage rates; tenders were invited, and Messrs Dykes & Cooper, of Newark, won the contract. Their maps, at three and at six chains to the inch, include part of Lincoln already mapped by Padley, and are dated 1845 and 1846.³ Now the easiest way to demonstrate that a map has been copied is by the reproduction of an error. Unfortunately, the quality of Padley's map is such that I am not aware of any errors in the relevant part of it. However, one building in that area was rebuilt in 1844; it carries that date on its gable.⁴ Furthermore, it was rebuilt on a site slightly different from that of its predecessor. The Dykes & Cooper map shows detail in Lincoln almost identical to that shown by Padley. That in itself does not prove anything: two surveyors working to similar standards could presumably choose to depict the same topography in exactly the same way. But to show the predecessor of the 1844 building in a survey which cannot have been started before the very end of 1844 is an impossibility unless that survey drew on earlier material.

We now move from Courts of Sewers to sewers of the modern sort. In 1848, Lincoln City Council conceived the idea that it might be necessary to acquire a 'system of

¹ TNA OS 3/260 p 224. A fuller account is in Harry Margary, *The Old Series Ordnance Survey maps of England and Wales*, Volume 3, Lympe: Harry Margary, 1981, xxi.

² *Sheetlines* 76, 48.

³ This extract will be included in R C Wheeler, *Maps of the Witham Fens*, Lincoln Record Society, forthcoming.

⁴ It may be found behind the Post Office sorting office. It escapes mention in Pevsner and its function is unknown.

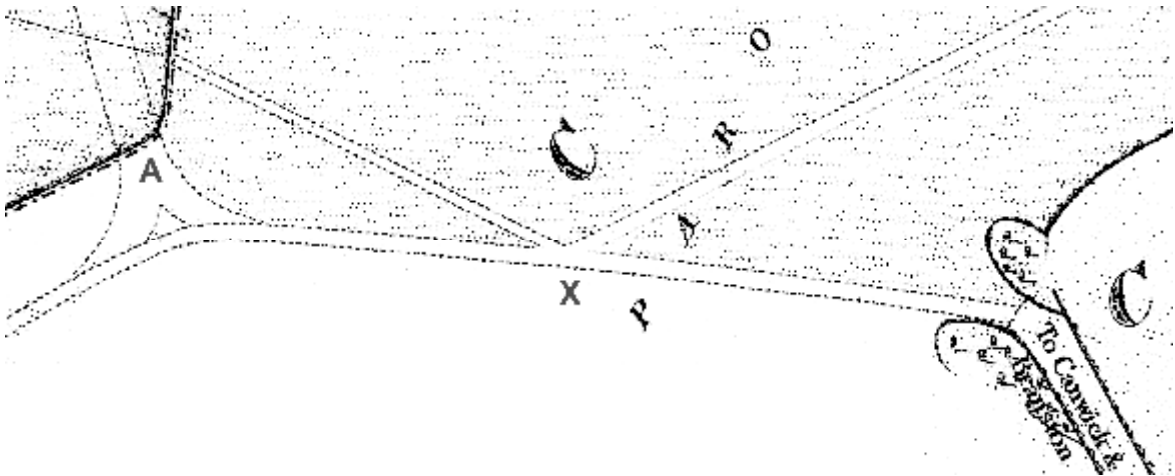


Figure 1: Padley's Engraved Plan, 1842 edition

The road from Canwick heads west to enter Lincoln by the medieval Bargate. At X, a minor road joins it from the NE and a footpath heads NW providing a more direct route to Lincoln. The wide new road at A was the planned line of the new direct road from Canwick into Lincoln.

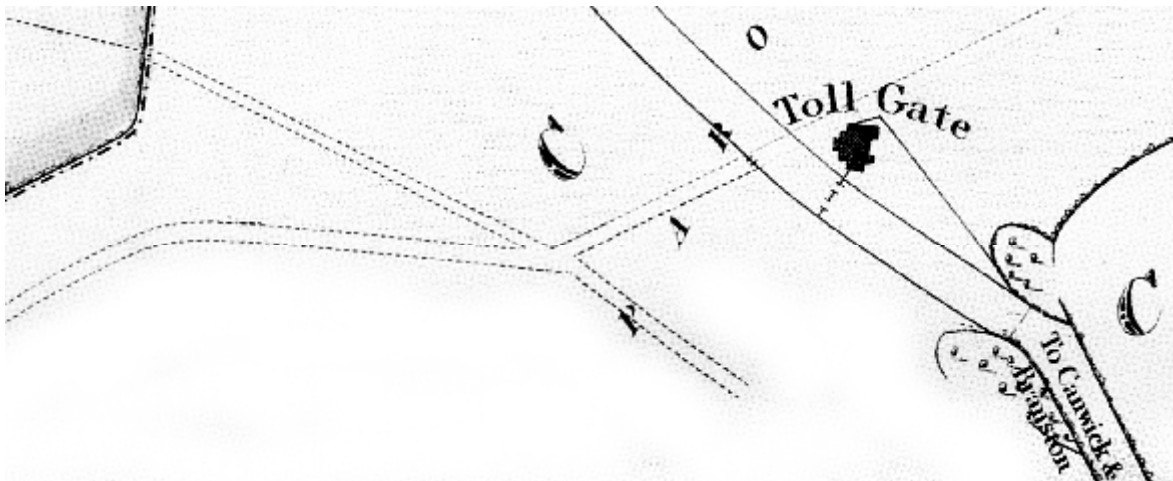


Figure 2: Padley's Engraved Plan, 1851 edition

The new road has been built but by a more direct line. The old road east of X has been deleted (though imperfectly – the broken line of its southern boundary can be seen immediately west of the old gate into the common). A new footpath heads SE from X; the varying widths of tracks here and their awkward alignment on the map arises from the reluctance to delete more material from the 1842 plate than is absolutely necessary. The new toll gate is shown – a double gateway to cope with the anticipated traffic – together with the adjoining toll house, the whole grouping being labelled 'Toll Gate'.

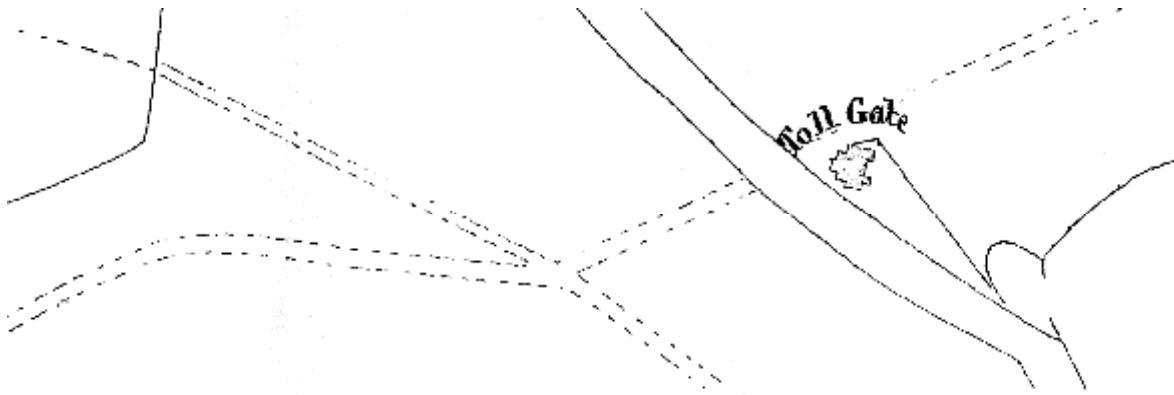


Figure 3: Giles's Sewerage Plan, 1849

The arrangement of the tracks at X exactly mirrors the 1851 Padley. (So also does the lettering 'Toll Gate' even though the gate itself is not shown!).

underground sewerage', notwithstanding its considerable reluctance to pay for such an innovation. In December 1848, it commissioned a report from a civil engineer, George Giles of London. Giles's report of 1849 was based on a map showing the system he was proposing (although the full map was not published as part of the report). That map survives in two versions, at two chains and four chains⁵ to the inch. Unlike all the later sewerage maps for Lincoln, this is drawn on a fully detailed topographical base map. It shows developments later than 1842 and at first sight appeared to be a detailed survey of Lincoln, independent of Padley's 1842 map and its 1851 revision.

However, suspicions were aroused by the very great similarity between Giles's depiction of blocks of central Lincoln and the 1842 map. The principal differences here could be explained by hasty copying: in particular, a number of the internal divisions between buildings had been omitted. The key piece of evidence was St Margaret's churchyard, where the paths on the Giles map were exactly the same as those on Padley's 1842 map; moreover, the junction of two paths on the Padley map had been obscured by lettering, and the corresponding junction on Giles's map was omitted, even though there was no lettering to provide an excuse.

More remarkably, where changes had taken place since 1842, Giles's depiction of those changes bears a remarkable resemblance to their depiction on Padley's 1851 revision. Again, paths turn out to be the clinching evidence, this time the varying widths of paths on South Common. The reason for the variation on Padley arose from the need to minimise deletions on the copper plate: one path had previously been a road and had been retained at this width despite its downgrading; the other was newly added in 1851 so was shown at the normal width for a path. The only plausible explanation for this was that Padley had already undertaken the drawing for a revision but had not proceeded to the stage of updating the copper plate. This updating of the plate only took place in 1851, after further revision on the ground. Meanwhile, Padley must have supplied a copy of his MS revision to Giles. Further

⁵ Local studies collection, Lincoln Central Library.

evidence for this hypothesis is provided by dating Giles's base map on the basis of datable alterations to buildings; his map turns out to depict Lincoln as it was in 1847, the year before his report was commissioned.

My fourth example concerns a map produced by Padley himself. In 1857, responding to concern about the state of the Trent embankment at Spalford (alias Spaldford), the Lincoln and Nottingham Courts of Sewers agreed to undertake repairs and commissioned a map from Padley showing which lands had been flooded when a breach had occurred at this point in 1799. The map was based on evidence from (elderly) witnesses, combined with instrumental contouring of the flood level. Since a base map would be required extending beyond the areas mapped by Dykes & Cooper in 1845-6, the Lincoln Court resolved⁶ that application should be made to all occupiers of more than 100 acres for maps and plans of their lands. We know that at least one such occupier, Richard Wells of North Scarle, provided a plan, because he subsequently claimed a discount of 6d per acre on his rates in recognition of its use.

Having shown that this practice was widespread (at least within Lincolnshire) and was encouraged by authorities ranging from General Mudge to the Lincoln Court of Sewers, it is useful to examine how this affected professional practice. The Ordnance Survey today regards its topographic database as its greatest asset. J S Padley had a topographic database too.⁷ It consisted of some hundred tracings, some of plans he had produced for a client, some of other surveyors' plans dating back as far as the 1760s. The tracings are rarely smart: names are usually in cursive script and buildings would almost certainly need revision 'by eye' before anything was submitted to a new client but they are good enough to save the need to re-survey from scratch. Topographical data could be traded, too. In 1871, Padley provided tracings of the village of Harmston and the park of Harmston Hall to a firm of Lincoln solicitors. He charged 21s for the making of each tracing, but also 30s for the use of each map.⁸

All this would change when the OS County Series maps became available – at the end of the 1880s for Lincolnshire. Topographical data of the highest standard became ubiquitous and relatively cheap. And the surveyor in private practice who could make a map from scratch – and knew how useful it was not to have to do so – became a figure of the past.

⁶ Lincolnshire Archives (hereafter LAO), UWIDB 5/3/4, minutes of 14 June 1857.

⁷ It survives in large part, as LAO, Padley 2.

⁸ LAO LCL 5001, p151.