



Sheetlines

The journal of
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps

“Missing red plate - a gripping mystery”
K S Andrews

Sheetlines, 81 (April 2008), pp.56-57

Stable URL: <http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Issue81page56.pdf>

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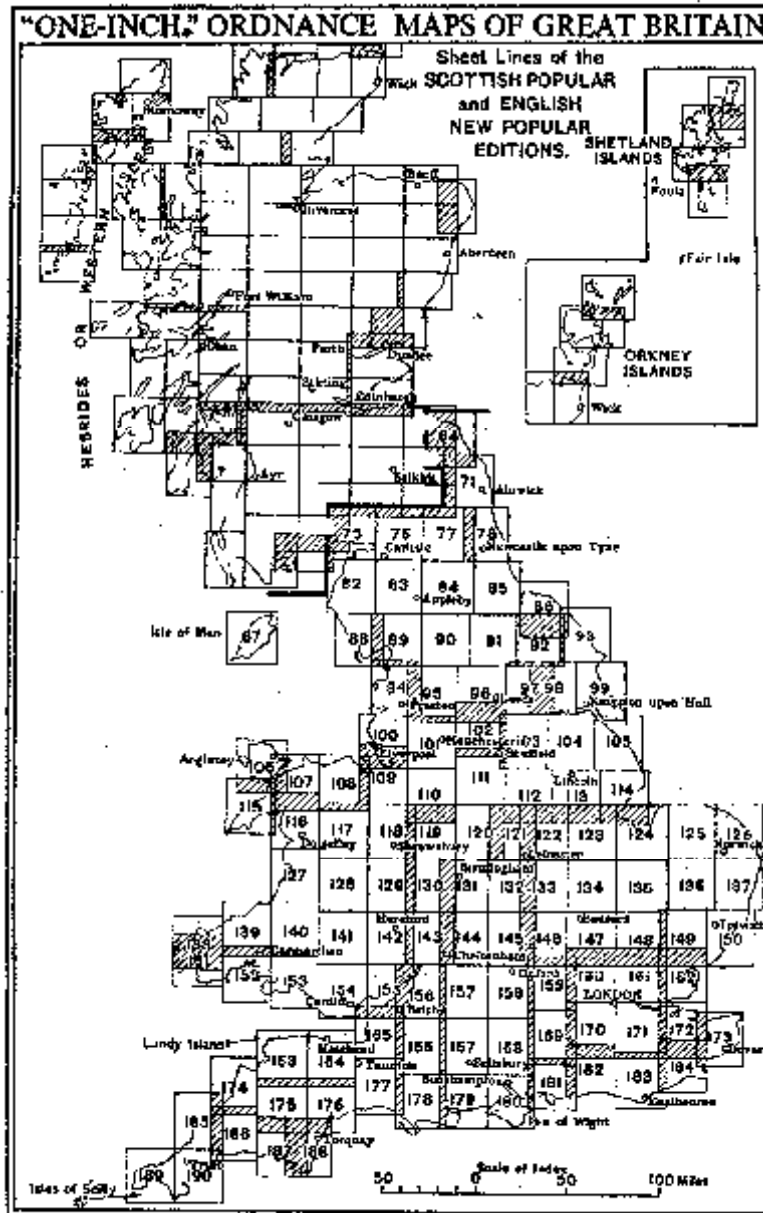
Published by
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps
www.CharlesCloseSociety.org

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.

Letters

Missing red plate - a gripping mystery



The open figures in RED represent the 100 km. squares of the National Grid
 Published by Authority of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

The illustration is from the rear of a post-war edition of Scottish Popular map 25, *Raasay and Applecross*, which I recently acquired. Was omission of the red plate a regular occurrence? If this was a postage stamp or a banknote it would be worth a lot of money.

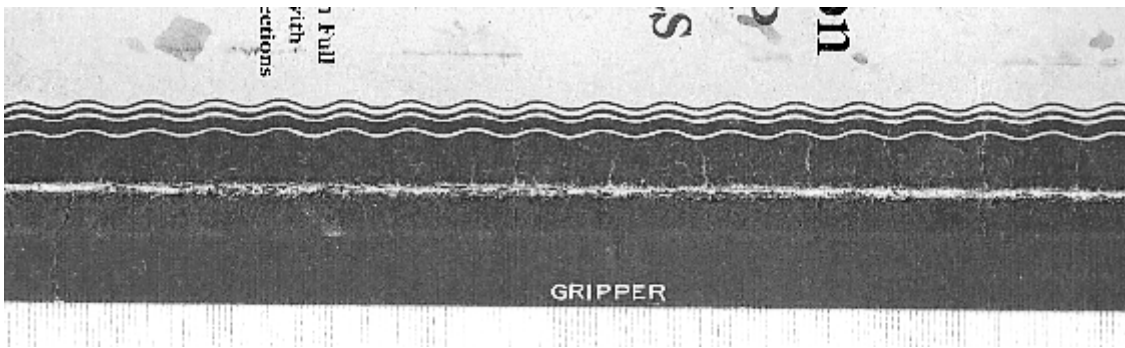
Tim Bleasdale

Keith Andrews comments:

The post-war Scottish Popular map cover reported by Tim Bleasdale is certainly unusual and it probably came about by accident, as speculated below. The sheet is edition 2225 (issued

January 1948) in dissected form, and the cover has ‘Popular Edition’ in the large size of lettering and ‘SHEET 25’ in capitals.¹ It is therefore similar in style to New Popular cover type KA3.² This dates it before 1949. The Scottish Populars were not being phased out until 1955-61 so there can be no likelihood that this index diagram was not intended to publicise them.

Scottish Populars have two-part covers like dissected New Populars; in fact the backs, having wholly generic information, may well come from a common source, though most of them are hinged on the opposite side. New Popular covers were printed with generic data in multiples on large sheets, the red before the black, as is shown in the illustration below of a scarce feature, the edge to be fed into the machine for the black plate print run being marked ‘GRIPPER’ by the red plate for the benefit of the operator.



The gripper mechanism takes the top sheet from a pile and feeds it into the press, it is passed through by rollers and then put on a pile of printed sheets. Very occasionally, the gripper may take two sheets instead of one and so a blank sheet will be hidden in the pile, to be subsequently transferred to the black plate printer to complete its printing. Thus a pile of red and black back covers will contain one that is just black. The rogue cover would be easily spotted if it were a paper or cloth New Popular cover, since the front would be obviously incomplete. An all-black back would be easy to ignore on a covered map – until it reached an observant CCS member wishing it were a postage stamp or banknote.

The post-war Scottish Popular covers are currently being researched and it is intended to report their classification in due course.

¹ Tim Bleasdale, personal communication.

² For New Popular cover classes see *Sheetlines* 76, 14-28.