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“Not such a Scilly map”

*Gerry Zierler*

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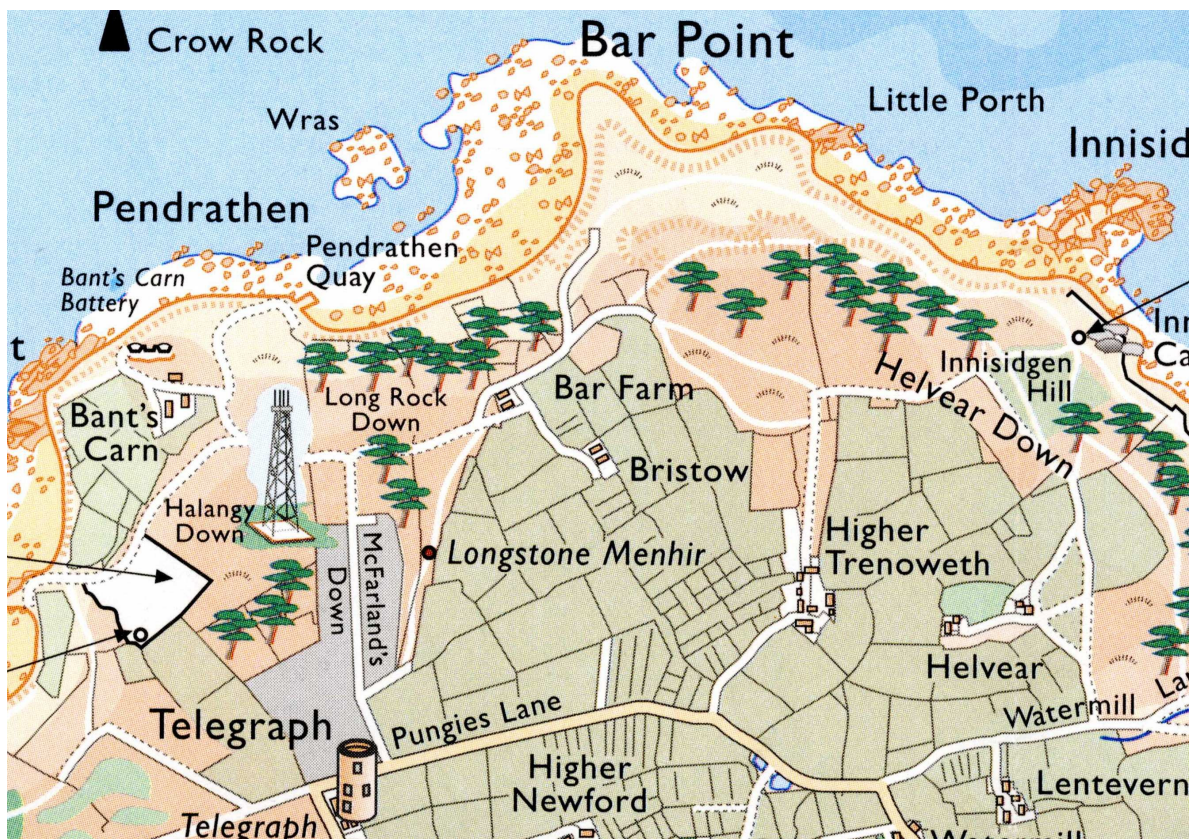
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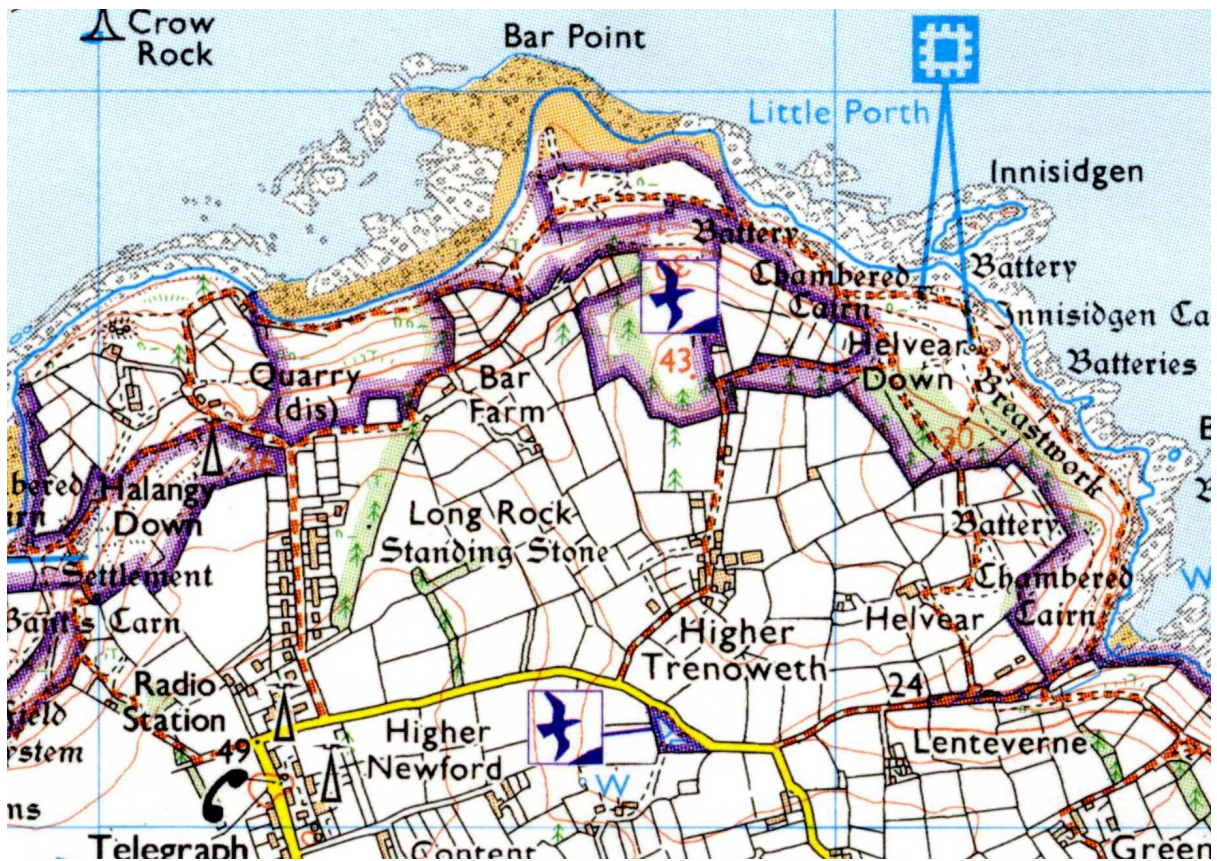
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The Charles Close Society was founded in 1980 to bring together all those with an interest in the maps and history of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and its counterparts in the island of Ireland. The Society takes its name from Colonel Sir Charles 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.



*Scilly maps : Even reduced by about 20%, the McAuley map above is still clearer than the enlarged OS map below, increased by about 10%*



## ***Not such a Scilly map?***

***Gerry Zierler***

Although not unknown, it's not often that an Ordnance Survey aficionado such as a Charles Close Society member will want to criticise a product of the OS, the love of his life.

But sometimes, very rarely, that awful expression 'fit for purpose' springs to mind. Such an occasion was last month in the scintillating Isles of Scilly, when even the latest edition of OS *Explorer* 101 [edition B1/2008] was worryingly difficult to read, even out of the wind and with glasses on!

A quick trawl through all the stationery and souvenir shops of Hugh Town produced about a dozen maps of the Isles of Scilly, ranging from giveaway leaflets to some overpriced items aimed purely at the sedentary tourist. But one map in particular, priced at £5 and in an attractive cover complete with key map and attractive beach photograph, was the McAulay Map of the Isles of Scilly.

Compared with the familiar OS map, the scale seemed rather more sensible for exploring and walking around each of these beautiful small islands. At just 4 inches to the mile (1:15,840) there is certainly room for more features and their labels. But that aside, the clarity is outstanding, and it's intriguing to ask oneself why.

The first thing to poke you in the eye is its almost complete absence of any map legend. Instead of the 216 square inches on the *Explorer* (roughly one quarter of the sheet area), there is just 2 square inches of symbology on the McAulay Map. Mary Spence, when president of the British Cartographic Society said that a good map needs no legend, and this maybe be living proof. Farmland is green, heathland is orange (darker for higher grounds), woods are attractive little trees and distinguish between deciduous and coniferous very clearly. The myriad of little lanes on the five inhabited islands are shown cased, pale orange if surfaced, otherwise white. Footpaths, despite being uncased, stand out clearly in white out of the orange heathland – much clearer than the minuscule dotted black lines on white of the *Explorer* (no green public rights of way here!).

Some very attractive mini-illustrations – ferry boats, helicopters, wrecks – adorn free space, unobtrusively and appropriately positioned. The many sands and inter-island shipping routes are clearly shown on a layered blue sea – surprisingly useful when island-hopping (at very low tide, Scilly routes can seem even more silly without a map).

The OS *Explorer* 101 has two large insets, one of Hugh Town (not a huge town), at 1:2,500, and the other of Tresco Abbey & New Grimsby at 1:10,000. I'm not sure how useful these are, frankly. Although of course a lot of individual buildings are named or numbered at 1:2,500, the detail is excessive for a tourist but may be insufficient for the serious Scillonian. The famous Abbey Gardens cover just two of the 85 square inches of the Tresco inset and

are frankly unreadable, the rest being mostly sea and sand. Two further small insets show Penzance at 1:25,000 and routes in Cornwall.

These compare with the McAulay map's single inset, at reduced scale, of the uninhabited and spread-out Western Rocks; a sensible use of the otherwise empty SE corner. So despite being at a much larger scale, McAulay's map is a more manageable 840 square inches, compared with the *Explorer's* massive 1365 square inches of which over half is insets, making for a very unwieldy map when opened fully. Not a minor issue when in the spring breezes of the western approaches!

So in the writer's view, the McAulay map, for the visitor to Scilly at any rate, is a map more 'fit for purpose' than the standardised specification of the OS *Explorer* map. It wins on size, scale, price, clarity – and pocketable walkability! Congratulations to the publisher of McAulay Maps, Neil Reid of Cormorant Design in Penzance – ironically not a Scillonian – who, incidentally, publish the splendid 'Isles of Scilly Guidebook' containing extracts from the same mapping.

*With thanks to Neil Reid for permission to reproduce an extract from the McAulay map.*

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