When David Archer kindly sent me a draft of his latest *Sheetlines* contribution,\(^2\) with a suggestion perhaps to write something to accompany it, I immediately felt I had to leap to the defensive; protecting the beloved Barts half-inch series from such cruel and dismissive remarks. How could such a broad-minded and kindly fellow possibly be so rude and unfair? But on a second read, I realised that much of his criticism is in fact directed at the covers and the difficulty in distinguishing the various series. True enough, as a map collector or dealer these are serious matters, but even he has to admit that once one focuses on the map content itself as a user, things look rather different. The map-buying public in their day thought so too – thank goodness Bartholomew didn’t just rely on collectors!

Whilst *Sheetlines* may not be quite the right place to initiate a new wave of research interest into what is, after all, not an Ordnance Survey series, there are in fact many good reasons for taking a closer look at the Bartholomew half-inch. The maps themselves are stunningly attractive, representing a perfection in technique and aesthetics that cannot fail to move the heart. In purpose and content, they are also so evocative of leisure and pleasure – enhancing the landscape and inviting all to head off out and explore it. Not least for CCS members, Bartholomew’s multi-faceted and often tense relations with OS in fact worked both ways. On the one hand there were continuing complaints by OS over Bartholomew’s cheery attitude to copyright and their successful commercial exploitation of OS’ hard-earned topographic information, but on the other, OS learned much from Bartholomew on matters of colour, aesthetics, the orthography of names, printing and marketing. Finally, not only were the maps commercially successful – a trademark series for the first half of the twentieth century – but they also reflected broader ideals beyond the map itself. John George Bartholomew held sincere convictions that the world would become a better place through better cartography.

Tim Nicholson’s research\(^3\) on the genesis and early years of the half-inch is an excellent starting point, placing the maps in their broader context, including the Bartholomew’s emulation of German cartography and layer colouring, the experiments with half-inch district sheets before gaining the confidence to bring out a fully-fledged series, and their gradual move from printer to publisher. The half-inch maps were not an instant success, and in overcoming the commercial and practical difficulties of the 1880s, repackaging of the half-inch maps in the *Survey Atlases*, and moving south of the Border to the more lucrative but competitive market in England and Wales, the first national coverage was achieved by 1903.

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1. The author is Senior Map Curator at the National Library of Scotland.
2. See page 54.
Figures 1a-f. Changing palettes of layer colours for part of the Cairngorms, south of Aviemore, Sheet 16, Braemar and Blair Atholl, from its first printing in 1890 through to 1905. Note the pink shades for highest ground in 1902.

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The Bartholomew Printing Record (a copy of almost everything the firm printed from 1877 to 2002) has been the focus of recent conservation and cataloguing work, and records the precise date of printing, as well as print runs of all their maps. Now preserved as flat sheets, we hope too that in time it will allow their digitisation and website presentation. But even at this early stage, it allows the subtle but continuous experimentation and evolution in the half-inch layer colouring techniques and content over a couple of decades to be readily apparent (see figures 1a-f).

Ken Winch’s useful Brief guide to dating Bartholomew maps summarises the main half-inch series titles, their various print codes and Bartholomew’s addresses over time to provide an essential framework for the collector. But we are also lucky that Bartholomew kept the most meticulous and detailed records of their production processes, and with the recent completion of the Archive’s main Business Inventory, it is possible to go into much greater detail. The Order and Cost Books (1886-1944) and Publication Ledgers (1910-1968) seemingly record in neat black handwriting every miniscule stage of production, every quantifiable detail, all cross-referenced, throughout the life of the series. We know the exact dates of engraving for each individual map, how long each took, and how much each stage cost. Likewise the transfers to stone, lithographic drawing, and work on the colour tints, are all separately itemised and costed. We know who supplied the paper, when, its quality, size, dates of use, and the precise quantities returned to the mills. Depending upon the time period, for each half-inch sheet we often know how many prints were taken for each pull, how long it took, when it was done and by whom. Even the ounces of ink for each printing pull – buff, blue, brown, red, green, and yellow – are individually recorded and carefully tabulated. The production records also have supporting sales and dispatch figures, and there are also tabulated runs of half-inch sales at selected times. As if that were insufficient, many of the original half-inch copper plates also survive – copper plate engraving providing the best sharp black line work and text, and the essential basis for registering the elaborate lithographic colouring on multiple tint stones.

There is extensive supporting information into the practicalities of half-inch production. Bartholomew famously relied on a wide network of informants for updating information, including the Cyclists’ Touring Club, and there is correspondence sent in from far and wide on corrections. There is also an extensive set of marked up half-inch proof maps, ordered by series and sheet number. Upon these are marked corrections on the current outline edition for particular printing colours – including both deletions and insertions – that would need to be brought together for a new edition (figures 2a, 2b). Here can

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4 The Bartholomew Printing Record search interface is still in an embryonic state, but currently allows basic records of each item printed by the firm from 1877 to 1909 to be searched: http://digital.nls.uk/bartholomew/search/
Figure 2a. Proof black correction copy in the later 1960s for part of Manchester and its northern environs, Great Britain Sheet 28, Merseyside.

Figure 2b. The final published sheet (1972)
[Collins Bartholomew Ltd, reproduced with permission of HarperCollins Publishers]
be found an expanding hand-written network of roads, motorways, airports and suburbs, as well as new golf courses, reservoirs, forests, and (often disappearing) railways, with margins filled with place-name corrections. There are even touches of drawing office humour – a note on the Cheshire sheet warns colleagues to ‘See new strippers for Manchester and Liverpool areas!’ – a reference to the strips of corrections on transparent overlays for linear features.

Another plus point for collectors is of course that the series is no more. Metrication and republication at 1:100,000 in the 1970s was not enough to save it as sales steadily dropped, and the firm itself then went through an era of profound transition. Following its acquisition by Reader’s Digest in 1980, and then News International in 1985, the Bartholomew family sold their stake by 1987. Digital technologies, brought in gradually from the 1980s, rapidly expanded, printing was outsourced in 1993, and in 1995, all production moved from Duncan Street (their home from 1911) to Bishopbriggs. But all is far from lost, given the influence of the series on a whole myriad of other publications, and the continuing appreciation of it. Collins Geo retain a real interest and respect for their Bartholomew heritage, and still employ some of the qualities, in terms of layer colouring, accuracy, and aesthetics, behind the half-inch series. Fortunately too, Bartholomew’s former employees have often retained a great loyalty and affection for the firm after retirement, and today there is an active ex-staff club. In the last few months, the Scottish Working Peoples’ History Trust has undertaken a selective oral history programme with us, interviewing staff about the particularities of life in the firm, to help support and understand the Archive, and build up knowledge of the production processes and craft of cartography. But that’s another story...

The Bartholomew half-inch is very much in need of its personal Hellyer, Herbert, Hodson or Oliver and hopefully this brief piece has whetted the appetite, not just to collect the maps, but to take advantage of its uniquely significant archive. The Bartholomew Archive website at digital.nls.uk/bartholomew provides summary information, and under the Resources page are links to detailed PDFs of the Business record and Summary list of maps and plans. Karla Baker, the Bartholomew Archive Curator, also writes a regular lively and fully illustrated Bartholomew blog, which amongst other things, highlights the diversity of the firm’s output – not just far beyond the half-inch maps, but far beyond maps as well.

Zoomable versions of the whole of the Cairngorm sheets (figures 1a-f) can be viewed at www.nls.uk/blogs/bartholomew/index.cfm/2010/10/22/The-Evolution-of-a-Map