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“How Bartholomew gained and lost a  
customer”

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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.

## ***How Bartholomew gained and lost a customer***

***Rob Wheeler***



David Archer's paean for Bartholomew's maps<sup>1</sup> made interesting reading, but I am not sure to what extent the people David deals with are representative of the normal customer for new maps. Perhaps I was unrepresentative too, but here is my story of how as a teenager I was briefly lured away from the Ordnance Survey product.

Hitherto I had taken on my cycle rides my father's Leicester sheet of the one-inch Second War Revision. I had always been impressed with the amount of detail it showed and how accurate it was, but I recognised that its depiction of the landscape was outdated. Besides, our house was inconveniently close to the southern edge. So I went to the Midland Educational, Leicester's general-purpose bookshop, to get something better.

Naturally, I started by looking at the Seventh Series OS one-inch, but found that to cover the area I wanted would require four sheets. In contrast, Bart's half-inch would only require two sheets and between them these would cover a much larger area than the four OS sheets. They were cheaper too and looked perfectly satisfactory. I remember looking to see if an OS half-inch existed that would meet my needs but, of course, there wasn't one. So I bought the two Bart's sheets.

I was soon aware – in fact, I may already have noted in the shop – that the maps' depiction of Leicester's new housing estates was scarcely better than the Second War Revision, but that was a deficiency I could live with. And it did at least show the new motorway. I had learned to distinguish railway over-bridges from under-bridges on the OS and was pleased that Bartholomew also seemed to make this distinction, although I found it was not altogether reliable.

What I found unacceptable was its road classification. In 1960s rural Leicestershire there were tarred, motorable roads and there were tracks across fields that might just be passable on foot if the nettles were not too high. Off-road cycle paths would, I thought, be a nice idea, but they simply did not exist. As a cyclist, I needed a map that distinguished roads from field paths, and this did not seem an unreasonable demand. Bart's showed 'Recommended through routes' (few problems there), 'Other good roads', a few of which were only field paths, 'Serviceable roads' (meaning unimportant because there were so few of these) and 'Other roads and tracks' (mostly tracks but some tarred roads). I now realise that Bart's 'good roads' in this area are generally those shown as Second Class on the OS Revised New Series, whilst the 'other roads' are Third Class. However, that does not explain the instances of 'good roads' that were field paths, which had been regarded as Third Class by the OS. Even had I known that the road classification on my map was closely derived from the OS New Series, that would not have removed my annoyance at finding I had to retrace my steps because a 'yellow road' had turned out to be impassable.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sheetlines* 89, 54.



Figure 1



Figure 2a

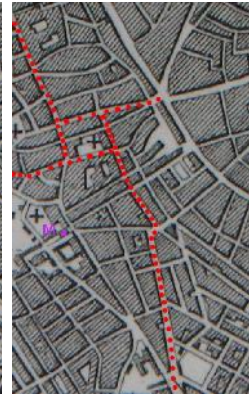


Figure 2b



Figure 3

The final deficiency of the Bart's map is something I took a while to spot. I knew my way across Leicester and would never have regarded the half-inch scale as particularly suited for the depiction of urban centres. However, the way it showed the main roads in the historic centre of Leicester with four roads converging on a sort of gyratory system around the cathedral was pure fiction, and rather tasteless fiction at that. *Figure 1* shows Bart's depiction. *Figures 2a, 2b* show the Revised New Series, which Bartholomew had presumably used as the basis of their reduction. *Figure 2a* adds the 'A' roads through the ancient city as they were for at least the period 1956-65; *figure 2b* shows the ones Bartholomew has chosen to show as 'recommended through routes' in red. *Figure 2a* is colour-coded to show the antiquity of the routes. The red ones are essentially Roman, and remained through routes to the 1960s. The yellow roads are a late-eighteenth century inner by-pass; the green route was only opened in 1902. It follows that apologists for Bartholomew cannot claim that the map is merely a little out of date in its depiction. The streets to the east of the cathedral that Bartholomew marked in red were always narrow, wholly unsuited for through traffic, and never used for that purpose.

*Figure 3* has been added to show that the OS half-inch also left a little to be desired in its depiction of through roads. The route it proposes from the south is certainly feasible but until 1902 it would have involved turning through the fourteenth century Magazine Gateway (marked with a purple 'M' on *figure 2b*); it was never to my knowledge regarded as a normal through route.

I suggested a few years back<sup>2</sup> that the choice of coloured roads on the OS Third Edition one-inch map was made in Southampton by not-very-inspired guesswork. As for the method that Bartholomew used, the existence of the splendid archive at NLS makes speculation inappropriate; I should like to think that a definitive answer will be produced by a future researcher there.

So this particular purchaser was looking for reliable content at a competitive price. Covers were an irrelevance; hypsometric tinting a mere bonus. Finding the content far from reliable, he never bought a (new) Bart's map again.

<sup>2</sup> *Sheetlines* 71, 22.