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.

Kerry musings
David Archer

Most people will agree that our members are very generous in sharing information, not at all secretive. Yet anyone who has tried it will report that a note in *Sheetlines* seeking help in listing a map series produces indifferent results. But put a *list* of maps in the same publication, suggesting there might yet be others to add, and the responses flow in. Why will our members check a list yet are reluctant to write and say what they have?

With a list, most of the work has been done already. If members respond, they only have to note additions, but with a general request for information, they would have to list all they have. This, they are not willing to do, as it is a big task and they assume they only have common items which the requester knows of. So why bother? Ah, give me a good list to check any day, they say. And they do. Why? What does someone get from checking a list? Well, it's a good excuse to have a serious play with their maps, to renew acquaintances and indulge in a bit of nostalgia, remembering exactly where and when each item was found and the thrill of finding them. If a list is structured, identifying sub-categories or variations from the norm, it might answer various questions that have accumulated over the years. Indeed, it might help to explain what is held. Most people get pleasure from chipping in to help achieve a greater end, just as we all donate to charity. People check lists because they want to be able to add a little to the end result; maybe offer a little 'thank you' for previous work, from which they have benefited.

Checking a list is not purely altruistic. They hope to get something from it. At the front of everybody's mind is the desire to know what proportion of the list they hold. Pleasing if high, a bit depressing if low, especially if the map series is one they are interested in and they thought they were well on the way to completing a set. But this is soon outweighed by the excitement of finding an unlisted item. People just love to find something not listed, and this possibility is the driving force in this situation. Finding not only something the experts have missed, but more importantly, something they have found, even if prompted, in *their* collection. Surely I have a rare map? Oh, the joy. And now I can write to the expert and tell him or her of my wonderful map. Not that it looks wonderful, nor that I knew it to be so until three minutes ago. But a rare map is a rare map, and I own it. Thus enthused, they use the list to get up their own list of items wanted. They now know what to ask for and what to look for. The collecting end is in sight, or at least they see the finishing line.

What does a cartobibliographer receive from having a list checked? Reassurance, joy, disappointment. As the replies arrive, one part of the compiler relaxes: they are reassured, the list is understood and the subject appeals enough to be checked. Regardless of how many new items are reported, a feeling of well-being will now exist. If few, then contentment at having found those listed unaided. If a lot, then the delight of being able to fill gaps and not having issued an incomplete 'final' list. No matter how many or few items are

reported, a compiler welcomes all contributions to the final production. Possible disappointment and unease are felt should no replies be forthcoming. A total lack of replies will cause bewilderment and great distress. Surely someone must have spotted something, even trivial little mistakes if nothing else. What about those items thought to exist but not found? Someone must know of at least one of them. Is there a major mistake in the structure of the list, or the codes or the introduction, making it incomprehensible? Are friends not telling me they cannot understand it? What is going on? No replies. The one certainty of submitting a list to the scrutiny of our members, is that it will be checked thoroughly. New categories are unlikely to be found, but new maps might be, with new states more likely. It helps if the compiler knows how many people have checked the list: the more who check it without notifying anything, the more complete it must be, and from feedback, the compiler can better assess whether there are any problems with the terminology.

Of course, when a list appears, it will not be the first time that anyone has seen it. As with any research, a controlled experiment is needed and a few selected individuals will usually have seen a previous version. But even with this group, the question arises as to when should a draft be circulated? Goldilocks would probably say 'Not too soon and not too late, somewhere in between should be just right'. Some consultants really earn their money. If offered too late, meaning too near publication of the final list, it will dent the freshness of the final piece. A lot of hard and tedious slog always goes into the last twenty per cent of such research, with little return. The same information might have been obtained more easily if the list had been offered earlier. If thorough research has been undertaken, little will be notified after publishing a draft list in the final stages. If little is found, members might be discouraged and be reluctant to check future provisional lists. However, if notifications abound in what is considered the final stages, warning bells will ring and doubt might be cast on the whole work.

I think it fair to say that anyone checking a list will expect it to be pretty complete, hence it cannot be offered in the very early stages of research. The work must be far more than skeletal; anorexic will not do, a good chubby offering is needed for a final fattening. If a brief list were to bring in a vast amount of information it would certainly save work, but anyone who undertakes such a project is far from work-shy, and anyway, they want it to be overwhelmingly their offering. If map details and locations are received early on, it might well flush out hard to find items, thus saving a lot of work. It might even attract a like-minded person to help, good news if the two can get on together. But if offered very early, resulting in too much to notify, replies might not be forthcoming due to the work involved. Replying to a list must be easy, not hard work, and therefore a near complete list is required, as in 'I think this is everything, does anyone disagree?' But problems arise when the list is nearing six hundred pages and size does matter. Here, even the most pessimistic cartobibliographer should feel safe that the list will not be bettered if

released for general scrutiny.

If one has done the job thoroughly and checked every conceivable location, why not go straight to the final publication and avoid the disadvantages of submitting a provisional list? What disadvantages? Well, if destined to be issued as a monograph, sales might suffer. If a much collected series, unlisted items might be considered rare and not be notified, whilst the owner corners the market in these maps, or prices might rise for unlisted items. Neither being true in my experience. Indeed, prices might fall, as supposedly rare maps are seen to be more common than previously thought. No, the main drawback to issuing a preliminary list are the pressures that might be put on the compiler. If no response results, is the list not of interest? Does it mean the cartobibliographer has indeed found everything, in which case, can the research be stopped, or is anyone withholding information which might yet be found elsewhere? If several people report the same missing item why did the compiler not find it? Doubts will appear everywhere. The researcher might get discouraged by the amount of work still to be undertaken, or by adverse criticism of work done so far. If encouragement abounds, people will expect a finished list to appear soon, whilst the worst case scenario would be to find someone else has a more complete list.

If there are disadvantages to issuing a draft list, there will also be advantages. The main one being that the list might be improved, made more complete. Something missed will be found and incorporated in the final product for the benefit of all. The language in an accompanying essay will be more confident. Things might be firmed up. 'Might exist' could be replaced by 'Almost certainly does not exist'. If there is any prospect of the whole project not being completed, it gets something into the public domain, adds to the body of knowledge, offering information that might be needed in other areas. It tests the mechanics of the list, its structure, terminology and so on. A good body of work might 'open doors' if access is needed to restricted areas in order to complete the research, as the compiler will be seen to be a bona-fide researcher on that subject. If the list is to result in a monograph, initial publicity will be given, aiding decisions on the print run and price. Issuing a draft might encourage others to share their 'work in progress' on other subjects, not that I have ever been brave enough to submit a list of any sort, and live in awe of all who do.

Once the final list has been published, the odd, very minor addition might be noted, tinkering really, and usually found by the compiler. Such people just cannot stop looking, until they become immersed in something else.