Sheetlines

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

“October weekend in Conwy”
John Davies

Sheetlines, 83 (December 2008), pp.10-11
Stable URL: http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Sh83-Conwy.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.
Bryn Corach is a fanciful turreted house, reputedly a replica of Conwy Castle, which it
overlooks, and has sweeping views over Great Orme, Snowdonia’s mountains and the Irish
Sea. This hospitable HF hotel was our venue for the weekend. The manager, a genial New
Zealander named Keith, welcomed us in what we took to be Welsh but turned out to be
Maori. He did promise us some Welsh weather, though, and that proved to be true.

As is usual for our annual social weekend we had arranged a mix of formal and informal
sessions from Friday evening until Sunday noon, giving plenty of opportunities for getting to
know fellow members and learning something new with a cartographic flavour.

Our Friday speaker was Dafydd Gwynn, cultural historian, archaeologist, broadcaster
and director of the Welsh Highland Railway. He described the relative remoteness of north-
west Wales, particularly before the railway era, and the vital contribution of local map-
makers, however unsophisticated, to the economic development of the area. Later Alan
Collinson, of local cartographers Geo-Innovations, spoke of the creative ways in which
mapmakers can portray information without the need for symbols and legends.
On Saturday we visited Great Orme Head. This was a pleasant surprise to those of us with childhood memories of the mountain as a rather tacky tourist trap. It’s now a well-managed, attractive and very interesting destination where conservation co-exists, more-or-less comfortably, with tourism.

Our first stop, after ascending by the venerable cable-hauled Edwardian tramway, was a tour of the Bronze Age copper mine where our guide, Edric Roberts, told of the accidental discovery of the extent of the workings when he was commissioned by the local council to survey the site of a proposed car park twenty years ago. A vast system of hand-excavated tunnels and shafts extends under the mountain, dating from about 2000 BC, which was worked for green malachite, from which the copper was smelted, until Victorian times. Mr Roberts and his colleagues, having managed to prevent the car park construction, took a lease over the land and have subsequently gradually explored and opened up passages and developed an attraction of major significance.

Later, Rhona Davies, acting warden, led a walk over part of the Country Park, pointing out some of the features and talking about the challenges of mitigating the pressures of tourism. As well as its status as a Country Park, the headland includes an LNR (Local Nature Reserve) and an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). The western part, beyond the summit is a particularly sensitive area of limestone pavement and wild moorland; tourist development being largely restricted to the area east of the summit towards Llandudno.

We collected two different and very attractive locally-produced large-scale maps of Great Orme, both derived from original GPS surveys and local observation. These are by Geo-Innovations and Mapping Company Ltd respectively. In addition, the Country Park leaflet includes a useful and informative map.

Several members had brought items from their own collections to display and discuss, which we did on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. This sharing of knowledge and passions is always a rewarding experience and we thank Chris Higley, Mike Cottrell, Roger Hellyer and Gerry Zierler for their contributions.

**Links :**

- Great Orme Tramway: [www.greatormetramway.co.uk](http://www.greatormetramway.co.uk)
- Great Orme Copper Mine: [www.greatormemines.info](http://www.greatormemines.info)
- Great Orme Country Park: [www.conwy.gov.uk/countryside](http://www.conwy.gov.uk/countryside) and follow links
- Geo-Innovations: [www.geoinnovations.co.uk](http://www.geoinnovations.co.uk)
- Mapping Company Ltd: [www.themappingcompany.co.uk](http://www.themappingcompany.co.uk)