



Sheetlines

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

“Copenhagen”

Chris Board, Gerry Jarvis and John Davies

Sheetlines, 83 (December 2008), pp.7-9

Stable URL: <http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Sh83-DK.pdf>

*This article is provided for personal, non-commercial use only.
Please contact the Society regarding any other use of this work.*

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.

Copenhagen

25–26 August 2008

Chris Board, Gerry Jarvis, John Davies

KMS

We assembled at the bus station in the Town Hall Square awaiting the 5a bus which would whisk us to Nørbro station. A short walk away in Rentemestervej was the modern office building housing KMS, Kort & Matrikelstyrelsen (National Survey and Cadastre) of the Danish Ministry of the Environment. We were met by Peter Korsgaard, Archivist and ushered into a conference room. Once installed there we were welcomed officially by Jesper Jarmbæk, the Director who explained he was an historian and that the technical programme would be handled by those who knew much more about maps.

Jørgen Grum explained that KMS's task was now to collect information for topographic mapping and to manage the national spatial data infrastructure. Until 1928 topographic mapping was done by the military, supported on the work of the Geodetic Survey, but then under the new title of the Geodetic Institute it mapped the country and produced maps at different scales. Financial and technological developments of the 1980s required changes such as the merger of cadastral and hydrographic mapping with topographic, and closer cooperation with the private sector where private companies publicly tender for the work of data acquisition for the 1:10,000 database. This database was created over five years, 1995–2000, for the whole of Denmark and is derived from air photography regularly revised and updated by land surveyors. The end result of updating existing mapping is the creation of one large-scale topographic database which had multiple uses in GI systems and could also produce topographic products at smaller scales.

Examples of how common object types (similar to OS TOIDs) were employed were demonstrated. This standardisation is crucial to strategic objectives laid out in the national response to the EU Directive INSPIRE (Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe). Next we were taken to another department where Michael Eriksen demonstrated how he edited with Geomedia software after personally checking an additional or an altered feature once it had been noticed on a new air photograph of the area.

Peter Korsgaard then spent time with samples of historical maps, illustrating his talk on the main types of topographic map starting with the Royal Society map of 1762–1821, manuscript versions at 1:20,000 reduced for printing at 1:120,000. This gave rise to a discussion about the reliability and value of such maps for historians. For example the absence of standards for classifying land use, whether on these maps or on yet older cadastral maps, give rise to unreliable interpretations. We were presented with a copy of Peter's book: *Kort som kilde – en håndbog om historiske kort og deres anvendelse* [The map as a source – a handbook on historical maps and their value]. This was published by the Danish Historical Society in 2006 and is beautifully illustrated in colour warning the historians of the pitfalls of superficial interpretations of old maps. This will be added to the Charles Close Society Archive in Cambridge.

Flemming Nissen continued with a closer look at topographic maps in the twentieth century. His talk focussed first on the eventual standardisation of place name spelling despite provincial variations in pronunciation. He showed that map content varied through time, affected by joining NATO and the changing uses of roads.

We were able to lunch together and continue conversation with Peter Korsgaard in the canteen, before leaving. The staff of KMS are to be congratulated for presenting a fascinating account of the history of their topographic mapping and its current activities. We are extremely grateful for the time they spent on us and formally thank them for receiving us so warmly.

CB



GJ

Archivist Peter Korsgaard (left) and Flemming Nissen (centre left) of KMS discussing one of the many gems of historical Danish mapping in their collection

Royal National Library

After lunch we caught the bus back to central Copenhagen and walked to the river front and the ultra modern Black Diamond building of the Royal National Library, where we met our host for the afternoon, Henrik Dupont.

He explained that until recently the map collection had been dispersed around Copenhagen, but now their historic mapping is housed in the one location. Our storage cabinet juices ran high, when we saw some of the large map chests with which they were provided.

Henrik started the afternoon session with a brief introduction to Danish history. Whilst I was aware of Denmark's responsibilities for Greenland, The Faeroes and Iceland, I had no idea that Norway and the southern part of Sweden were also once part of their empire, as also were forts in India and on the coast of West Africa.

He then continued with a display of a selection of their map collection, direct from the map chests. What was particularly impressive was that although none of the chest drawers appeared to be labelled, not once did he falter in his selection of maps. There seems little value in just producing a list of the maps that we were shown, and whilst a short personal selection does not reflect accurately his selection, that seems the easiest solution, so here are a few that particularly appealed to me.

Very early on we were shown a number of sixteenth century maps of the coastline of Denmark, for which the cartographer was provided with a yacht, but it still took him several years to complete the task. There was also an interesting seventeenth century map of Copenhagen, which showed the fortifications that once surrounded the city.

Of particular interest to all of us was a very large map of London by Morgan, dated around 1681. I don't think there was any implication by Henrik in his selection that London was once part of the Danish empire! Whilst several national libraries have one or more sections of this map in their collection, Copenhagen is the only library with the complete map.

We were also shown a couple of atlases that contained some of the personal map collection of King Frederick, which he bequeathed to the country. The complete set amounts to 55 atlases, so regrettably there was not sufficient time to browse them all!

The library also has a vast collection of aerial photographs from the 1930s onwards, including some German military photos from the 1940s, of which we saw a very small selection.

For my satisfaction I asked to see a map of the West African forts. I spent a month in 1999 undertaking voluntary work in Ghana, and one weekend visited the coastal forts, so was particularly interested in their mapping.

Finally, Henrik mentioned that they were undertaking a programme of digitisation of their map collection, of which a proportion was complete and available on their website. So if you would enjoy an afternoon browsing Danish maps, have a look at www.kb.dk. Regrettably, you will not have the personal touch which we enjoyed with Henrik, but I am sure you will have an interesting time.

GJ

The frivolous bits

These overseas trips have a serious purpose in helping to understand how other countries organize their national mapping, but also provide the opportunity to explore in the company of like-minded CCS members. As no visit to Copenhagen would be complete without an evening in the Tivoli Gardens that is exactly what we did. Call us impressionable old softies, but we thoroughly enjoyed the magic as dusk fell, the lights twinkled and a fantastical laser, fire and fountain show cast an enchanted spell. By morning we'd sobered up and took the train from Copenhagen over the new Øresund Bridge to Malmö. The railway emerges from a tunnel, mid-channel, on an artificial island before crossing the bridge which spans the eastern part of the Øresund between Denmark and Sweden. The new island is adjacent to Saltholm (Salt island) so with impeccable Scandinavian logic is named Peberholm (Pepper, of course). After exploring Malmö we caught a train north along the coast to Helsingborg for lunch, then ferry to Helsingör and train (which was in fact heading for Malmö and Helsingborg) south to Copenhagen.

JD