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"Visit to Landmark Information Group"

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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.

Visit to Landmark Information Group's Exeter Offices

Ken Hollamby

In our work as consulting archaeologists we often receive Landmark *Envirocheck* map packs from clients. Our company in Newark, Nottinghamshire, was recently bought by CgMs Consulting and we now have access to Landmark products, so I was particularly interested when the visit to Landmark Information Group at Exeter was announced.

My wife and I stayed at the Raffles Hotel in Exeter, restored to its Victorian magnificence. When I asked the proprietor about the very fine nineteenth century map of Exeter on the entrance hall wall, he said that one Rodney Leary, on an earlier visit, had commented that there were no maps on display, and would I tell him that the situation had been corrected.

On 22 March, eleven members of the Society gathered at Landmark's Exeter offices located on an industrial estate close to the M5 Exeter junction. We were greeted by Craig Wheeler, the Project Manager responsible for research and product development, and his colleagues Martyn Lufkin and Matt Wills. Landmark provides digital datasets to professional clients who need environmental, planning and mapping information. Their services are only available through consultants, architects, solicitors and similar professional users as Landmark do not provide any analysis of the data. They have main offices at Exeter and Henley-on-Thames and a smaller one at Bromley. Henley concentrates on sales and marketing; Exeter on product development, computing and the delivery of services to their clients.

Landmark is part of the Daily Mail Group and developed to provide commercial environmental and planning reports. Over the years their services have extended to include site reports for residential developments, reports on underground utilities, flood maps, geology reports, aerial photographs and historic map packs. They work closely with Ordnance Survey, the British Geological Survey, the Environment Agency, The Coal Authority and similar organisations that originate map based information. They have digitised around one million OS maps including many that have not previously been available. They capture every planning application, around 15,000 each week. All of the data on the digitised OS maps is geo-referenced. This work was done in New Delhi where five Landmark staff trained 150 Indian staff to carry out the analysis.

After the introductory talk we had a tour of the building, in particular visiting the computer and production departments where the data is stored, customer requests processed and printed and digital reports produced. Around 95% of Landmark business is site centered reports. They have 250 staff over the three locations.

The company is totally dependent on computer-based data. Your editor, until a few years ago a computing service manager, was very impressed by the well-

organized network monitoring tools on display, and the explanation by Pete Selhurst of the company's strategies to ensure constant availability of this data and to protect it from accidental loss.

The walk round was followed by further presentations. The first talk by Craig Wheeler covered the technical aspects of data collection, verification, quality control and product development. Landmark goes to great lengths to ensure the integrity of the data provided to clients. This is particularly critical when dealing with the potential for land and buildings to be contaminated. The historical OS maps are overlaid with the National Grid to enable comparisons to be made with modern maps. Of particular interest to CCS members is the inclusion of Russian mapping in the service. Other development areas include tithe maps, enclosure maps and non-OS historic mapping. As an archaeologist I could see the potential for these new services but, as was explained, Landmark is a commercial organisation and can only justify developing services that clients will pay for.

The next presentation was by Martyn Lufkin who described the Goad Fire Insurance maps. These were produced by the Charles E Goad company from 1885 to 1970, at a scale of one inch to forty feet. The maps cover areas in towns and cities with the highest fire risk and contain details of construction and use not available elsewhere. Goad rented these maps to the insurance companies and revised them every two or three years. The revisions were by pasted-on amendment slips and the maps were replaced when they became too thick to handle comfortably. Goad used fold-over edge flaps when the mapped area was expanded. All this means that they are difficult to handle and use. Landmark has scanned 7,000 maps which is 85 - 90% of those issued. All of the maps are geo-referenced but at the time of the visit were not available on-line. They will be an invaluable resource when Landmark adds them to their services.

The final presentation by Martin Wills covered Landmark's historic map service and how the analysis of historic maps can be used to identify hazards relating to historic industries. There may be mercury contamination on sites previously occupied by hatters, oil pollution on old service station sites or unexploded bombs on sites highlighted on bomb damage maps. The analysis of old mining sites is about to be released. Landmark staff are currently working on the listed building dataset which they expect to be incorporated into their system in about eighteen months time.

The staff at Landmark gave the CCS team an excellent insight into what is possible using the current state of digital technology. Before the Internet and cheap processing researchers had to visit libraries, record offices and archives to retrieve a fraction of the data available today from the comfort of an office. The sophisticated systems and techniques employed by Landmark Information Group turn this data into valuable information. More details can be found on their website, *www.landmarkinfo.co.uk*.

Craig Wheeler said that they are always keen to investigate new sources of mapping data and Landmark Information Group now has a copy of *Historic Town*

Plans of Lincoln 1610 - 1920 jointly edited by our secretary, Rob Wheeler. Rob's next book *Maps of the Witham Fens 13th - 19th Centuries* will be published in June 2008 and details of the special offer will be in the next edition of *Sheetlines*