

Ordnance Survey Maps

The Origins of Ordnance Survey

While county maps of the British Isles were first published in the sixteenth century, they did not contain the detail needed for military operations. With England battling Scottish rebellion, King George II commissioned a detailed map of Scotland in 1746, just after the Battle of Culloden. The cartographer was William Roy who drew up his survey on a scale of one inch to 1000 yards.

By the end of the 18th century, The Board of Ordnance had carried out further surveys to produce maps of southern England. The first of these, a map of Kent to a scale of one inch to one mile (1:63360), was published in 1801.

The complete mapping of England and Wales to the same scale was completed in 1870 and the name Ordnance Survey was in common use.

In 1886 HM Treasury approved a revision of the Ordnance Survey maps to a scale of 1:25000 and by 1892 maps were also being produced at scales of 1:500, 1:2500 and 1:10560.

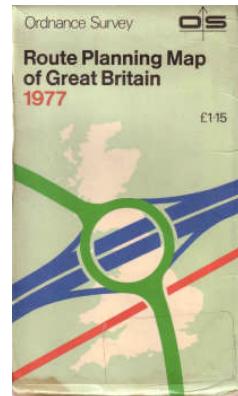
The original maps were surveyed using trigonometry and a theodolite. The first air survey was carried out in 1919. And today ground level surveys are supplemented by satellite surveys.

Twentieth Century Ordnance Survey Maps

The Ordnance Survey publishes a wide range of maps at different scales. Each scale has a particular purpose or customer base.

The Route Planning map covers the whole of Great Britain on a double-sided map. Drawn at a scale of 1:625000 (approximately one inch to ten miles), it is designed for long distance travel planning.

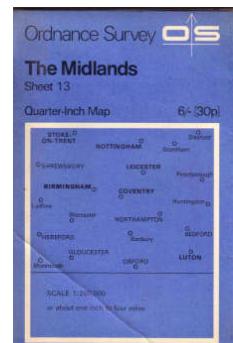
As can be seen on the 1977 version opposite, the maps are clearly dated and revised versions were published annually to keep up-to-date with major new road building.



Road maps on a scale of 1:250000 (approximately one inch to four miles) are also produced for road users. The 1:250000 scale officially replaced the one inch to four miles scale in 1957.

The Midlands example opposite, from 1968, was called the quarter-inch map and cost six shillings (30 p). It was one of seventeen sheets covering Great Britain.

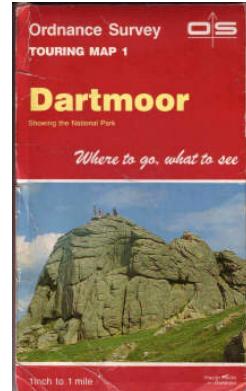
Today the Road maps are produced on eight sheets.



The original Touring or Tourist maps were produced at a scale of 1:63360 (approximately one inch to one mile) and covered an area of interest to holidaymakers. The first map, of Snowdon, was published in 1920.

The Dartmoor map opposite is from 1985 and was one of 15 such publications. It shows major and minor roads and footpaths and gives some tourist information.

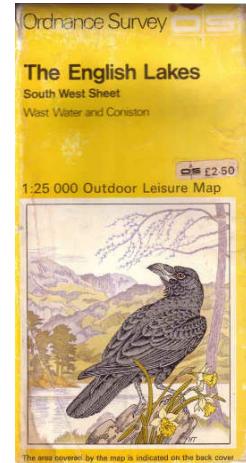
The modern Tour map is drawn to a scale of 1:100000. There are 22 sheets for various parts of Great Britain.



Although the Tourist maps show footpaths, the scale is not sufficient for use by walkers and cyclists. Consequently a new series of maps, called the Outdoor Leisure maps, were introduced at a scale of 1:25000 (approximately 2½ inches to one mile).

The example opposite is one of four covering The English Lakes from 1982. At this time there were 25 Outdoor Leisure maps covering the national parks and other major tourist areas. It shows footpaths and details of the countryside.

These Outdoor Leisure maps cover a larger area than the Pathfinder or Explorer maps that are produced at the same scale.

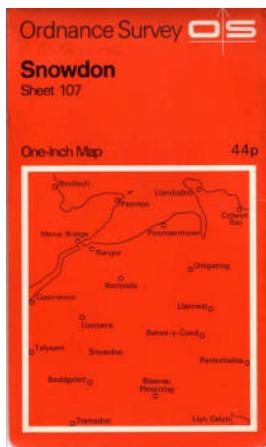


The whole of Great Britain was redrawn on a National Grid system introduced between 1936 and 1953. This allows positions on maps to be located in either six- or eight-figure grid references rather than using longitude and latitude.

The scale in use at the time was one inch to one mile. The first metric maps, drawn to a scale of 1:50000 (1¼ inches to one mile) were introduced in 1969. These later became known as the Landranger series of maps.

There are 204 Landranger maps covering the whole of Great Britain.

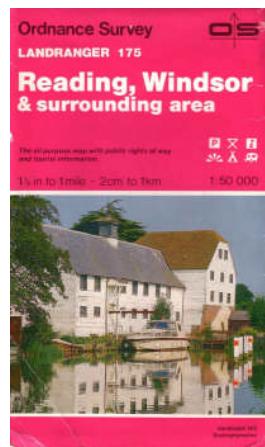
Landranger maps are a general-purpose map, showing all roads and footpaths, including rights of way. The reduced detail of the terrain makes them more suitable for road users than hikers however.



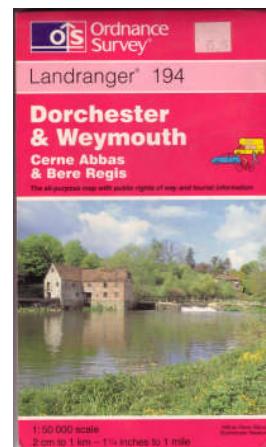
One-inch map of
Snowdon 1969



1:50000 First series of
Brecon Beacons 1974



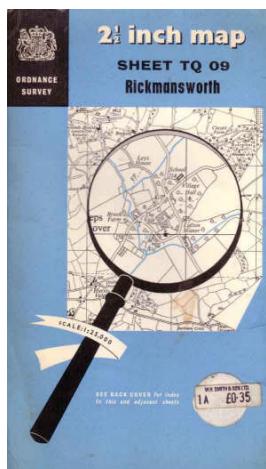
Landranger Reading,
Windsor 1990



Landranger Dorchester
& Weymouth 1999

For walkers and cyclists the Pathfinder or Explorer maps show more detail of the terrain.

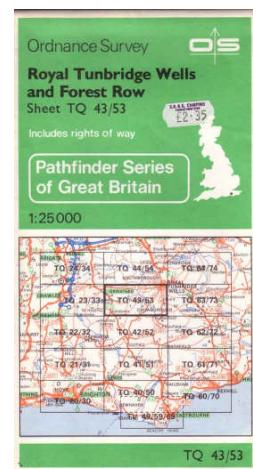
The original maps covered an area of ten kilometres square. New sheets were later issued covering 20 kilometres by ten kilometres and now 403 sheets cover the whole of Great Britain.



2½ inch map of
Rickmansworth 1960



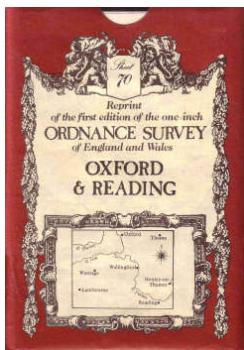
1:25000 first series of
Reading (East) 1964



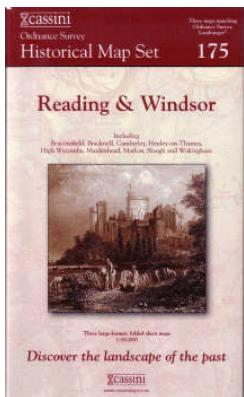
Pathfinder Series of
Tunbridge Wells 1981

Historic Maps

Ordnance Survey maps remain Crown copyright for a period of 50 years. After that, they are in the public domain. Several companies have reprinted old maps for use by historians, making minor alterations to the original in order to obtain a new copyright. Two examples are shown below.



The first is a straight copy of an 1891 one-inch Ordnance Survey map, but with additional notes about the map printed underneath. Although colour was introduced to these maps in 1887, the reprint is in black and white. It was published by David and Charles of Newton Abbot.



The second example is a reprint of maps from three eras, 1816-1830, 1897-1909 and 1919-1920. National Grid lines have been added and the areas covered match the present Landranger maps. The maps were published by Cassini Publishing Ltd. in 2008.