

Ordnance Survey 1:50 000 (Landranger) Map Cover Designs ***Lez Watson***

The mid 1960s saw the Central Office of Information take over the design of all Ordnance Survey publications. As official designers they produced the first of the uniform covers still in use today¹. The new design appeared on the One-inch map in 1969. This included a radically simple new Ordnance Survey title on a scarlet cover with black lettering, with a large location map surrounded by a slim white border. It was roundly denounced both in the Press and by users for its lack of imagination.

When the first sheets of the new 1:50 000 map series appeared in the spring of 1974, they sported a cover essentially the same as the One-inch map, except the cover colour became 'magenta' - usually called purple by the buying public. This is described by Roger Hellyer as '*Ordnance Survey House Style, 1968*'. The new Ordnance Survey colophon, a north-pointing crossed arrow between the letters O and S, representing both a bench mark and a magnetic needle, was developed by the Central Office of Information². The map was given the series name *Landranger* in 1980.

Over time the covers have developed to include colour photographic images in place of the front cover location map, along with a host of tourist and other information obscuring the clean lines of the original product. Today the well known 'purple' map can be seen in action at many locations around Britain by both professional and amateur users.

The *Landranger* paper map product had recently appeared to be nearing the end of its useful life, but paper map production was contracted out to Butler Tanner & Dennis Maps (now Dennis Maps) in 2010 following the OS realisation of the value of 'hard copy' mapping to the general public³. Retail-friendly digital products derived from 1:50 000 data are becoming common, especially custom tailored sheets⁴.

The OS underwent a comprehensive rebranding of all its products in 2015. A new 'fresh' colophon was created, and paper maps now come with a free digital download⁵.

A detailed list covering designs, numbered 1 to 7, is published by The Charles Close Society in *Sheetlines* 108 (2017), 9. A continuation list is given below. Details are given in the following order: front cover, rear cover, the spine, inside cover, and date the cover change appeared (where known).

7 *Fifth Photographic Cover (Revised Edition Format)*

7a



Front: white title on magenta; silver and grey design. New logo ("designed to reflect the organisation's work mapping Britain's towns, cities and countryside"⁶) top right corner, below sheet number. 'Now includes mobile download' logo.

Rear: location map at top, index map extract below. Other information at bottom including copyright year.

Spine: new white logo, white title on magenta, sheet number black on silver.

Inside: Series and other map information, including Explorer (sheet 379), Tour (Lake District & Cumbria) and custom made. Mobile download instructions, and scratch off panel.

Announced February 2015, appeared February 2016.

*NB In June 2015 the OS discontinued using alphanumeric editions codes on small scale maps, replacing them with 'month year' code representing 'date of publication'*⁷. The change was not reflected on the *Landranger* cover before 2016.

7b

Rear: A new note "Published by..." and OS logo: "Printed by Dennis Maps Ltd, Frome, UK". Appeared December 2016.

25 March 2017

¹ John Paddy Browne, *Map Cover Art*. Southampton: Ordnance Survey, 1991, 111-113.

² Op cit, page 136.

³ See also article in *Printweek* ([link](#)).

⁴ OS website ([link](#)).

⁵ Richard Oliver, 'Last year's wine in recycled bottles', *Sheetlines* 103 (2015), 2.

⁶ See <http://www.creativereview.co.uk/cr-blog/2015/february/os-rebrand> ([link](#)).

⁷ Sheets carried the previous or most recent *partial* revision date. A few sheets with 'month year' formats - 42, 55, 62, 65, 79, 103 and 127 - began to appear at this time but still with design 6u covers.