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“Not so secret tower”
Paul Kennet
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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.
**Not so secret tower**

*Paul Kennett*

Much has been written about security deletions on OS maps but an allegation that something is deleted which is in fact, clearly shown is, I think, unprecedented.

According to Wikipedia,¹ ‘upon its completion, the location of BT Tower [now Telecom Tower, previously Post Office Tower] was designated an official secret and it did not appear on Ordnance Survey maps, despite being a 177-metre (581 ft) tall structure in the middle of central London that was open to the public for about 15 years.’

Wikipedia refers to another website² which states ‘Despite the BT Tower being one of most recognisable and conspicuous buildings in London, it was classed as an ‘official secret’ until fairly recently, and taking or possessing photos of the tower was technically an offence under the Official Secrets Act. In line with its ‘secret’ status, this 620ft London landmark was also omitted from all Ordnance Survey maps until the mid 1990s.’

Furthermore, Kate Hoey MP stated in Parliament in February 1993: ‘Hon. Members have given examples of seemingly trivial information that remains officially secret. An example that has not been mentioned [...] is the absence of the British Telecom tower from Ordnance Survey maps. I hope that I am covered by parliamentary privilege when I reveal that the British Telecom tower does exist and that its address is 60 Cleveland Street, London.’³

I offer these two images to show that Kate Hoey apparently failed to consult an OS map before speaking – and to remind us to treat Wikipedia with a certain amount of caution!

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² [http://www.urban75.org/london/telecom.html](http://www.urban75.org/london/telecom.html)