“Thumbnail sketches on one-inch map covers from 1945 (part 1)”

K S Andrews

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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.
Thumbnail sketches on one-inch map covers from 1945

Part 1. The first phase of sketch maps on New Popular covers

K S Andrews

The sketch map, or location map as it is sometimes termed, has been a common feature of the front of an OS folded map, especially one of a series planned to cover the country. The front, whether it be a real cover or that convenient cartographer’s oxymoron ‘integral cover’, carries printed identification to help the user to pick the right map for the task in hand. Usually, the whole area covered by the map is indicated by a small, crude diagram giving a bare minimum of information.

At a scale of 1:1,200,000 and measuring a mere 38 by 33 mm, the location maps on the covers of New Popular and Seventh Series one-inch maps undersell the quality of the map inside to a marked degree, being designed to orientate the user, showing some of the places on the sheet and very little else. This series of articles aims to report their design and development on one-inch ‘blood and custard’ covers from the mid 1940s until the Seventh Series was fully withdrawn on completion of the Landranger Series in the 1980s. This first instalment sets the scene and describes the sketch maps in general and the characteristics of the first wave of sketch maps used on the covers as the New Popular Edition was rolled out. Study of the replacement sketches on later New Popular covers and the transition to the Seventh Series is as yet incomplete but the results will be reported in due course.

The 114 sheets of the New Popular Edition were first published in two cover styles, named in a previous article KA1 and KA3. Sheets 157, 158, 161, 167, 169, 171, 172, 179, 182, 183 and 184 (the eleven ‘Ellis Martins’) were published in 1945 with a hand-lettered cover design KA1 which was soon replaced by a letterpress cover KA2 which resembled the first cover KA3 used for the remaining 103 sheets. This simple scenario conceals the fact that the sketch maps are of four different types which cut across the groups of cover styles. As an aide-mémoire, a diagram of the early cover groups is shown below.

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1 A map sheet with identification information printed on part of the back and visible when folded is said to have an ‘integral cover’ but cover there is none.

2 Sheetlines 76, 14-28.
Sketch Type 1

Sketch type 1 is found only on sheet 161. As shown in Figure 1, it has a 3-box frame, as do the other ten Ellis Martin cover sketches, but the Caslon typeface used for the lesser placenames in the sketch is quite small. Sheet 161 is also singled out in that, in addition to the generic lettering, the sheet number line ‘Sheet 161’ and the sheet title ‘LONDON, N.E.’ are hand-lettered on the cloth cover, the paper and dissected EM covers having those features in letterpress. The type 1 sketch is carried through from KA1 to KA2 covers of sheet 161. The 3-box sketch for sheet 161 is also unique in the use of ten lollipops and some dots for Epping Forest, named in italic sentence case, the only natural land feature to be illustrated by symbols on a New Popular sketch. It is re-drawn with only nine lollipops and some dots on its replacement type 4 sketch (see below and Part 2 of this article).

Sketch Type 2

Sketch type 2, which also has a 3-box frame, has a larger Caslon typeface for the lesser placenames as shown in Figure 2. Type 2 is found on the other ten Ellis Martin covers in group KA1 and on their successors in group KA2. At this point it is pertinent to note that the
3-box frame is not a template, but was drawn individually as can be seen by comparing 167, *Salisbury* with 183, *Eastbourne*. The outer thin frame lines are more closely spaced on the former. These sketches were also replaced later in type 4 format.

**Sketch Type 3**

Type 3 sketches have a 2-box frame, maybe because it was thought that the bold 3-box design resembling a funeral notice was a distraction from the details in the sketch. These sketches again use the larger Caslon typeface, having the distinctive ‘g’ with a flattened lower loop and a short-tailed ‘y’. This sketch type, shown in Figure 3, was used on all covers on sheets first published after the ‘EM eleven’ up to the end of 1946, and some published subsequently, there being a chronological overlap with type 4. The last type 3 sketch was made for sheet 130, *Kidderminster*, published 6.47. Type 3 sketches are found on covers in group KA3 (but see Part 2 where they will be reported as lingering in south Wales on later cover groups after being replaced in type 4 design everywhere else). Again, the frame is not a template, as shown, for example, on the cover of sheet 166, *Frome*, where it is interrupted by the locating circle for Bath.

**Sketch Type 4**

On type 4 sketches the typeface for lesser placenames is changed from Caslon to Times, giving a greater clarity and more modern appearance to the sketch (see Figure 4). The first

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*Figure 5: the New Popular edition showing the geographical boundary between sketch types 3 and 4.*
type 4 appears on sheet 85, *Durham*, published 1.47. Thus the sketch design attained the form to be retained until the launch of the red H132.1 covers for the Seventh Series in 1969. No clear division of publication dates is evident but a clear line can be drawn across the country between type 3 and type 4 sketches. This geographical division is illustrated in Figure 5.

**Sketch map features**

Sketch maps always show any coastlines with (usually three) echoing wave lines to distinguish them. These lines are artwork possibly depicting waves of the sea; they have no factual basis in high or low tide levels, or submarine contours. Main rivers, canals, and lakes (some with wave lines, e.g. Derwent Water on sheet 82, *Keswick*), are also depicted. Large conurbations such as London and Birmingham are blocked round with diagonal hatching infill, and location circles are used for all other named settlements, up to about 15 per sketch. Placenames are added in three styles; LONDON and BIRMINGHAM are in upright capitals and other conurbations are in italic capitals, as are larger settlements only shown as circles. LONDON has its name within the hatched area, all others are outside. Lesser named places are in upright sentence case. ‘BRISTOL CHANNEL’ and some other large sea features are in italic capitals and may not be shown horizontal. A few bays, promontories and rivers, including ‘Mouth of the Severn’ are named in italic sentence case and some canals bear the word ‘Canal’. Railways and airports are not shown.

**Printing procedure**

Spacing differences on different printing batches of the covers of sheets with first wave sketches show that the sheet number line was not on the sketch block but set up with moveable type. It is known that by 1948 the generic data on the covers was printed by lithography but the sheet-specific information was still added by letterpress.³ New Popular coverage was complete by the end of 1947, so the first wave of sketches were all printed by letterpress. A contemporary textbook, *Practical Printing and Binding* edited by Harry Whetton, has a well-illustrated contribution by A E Dent describing how line blocks (‘zinco’s’) were made and used.⁴ To summarise, the line drawing, which may be quite large, is first photographed. The negative is pressed on a metal plate coated with albumen and ammonium bichromate. By exposure to light, a photochemical reaction forms insoluble lines which are treated to form the acid-resist of the plate. After nitric acid etching, the printing surface stands up in bold relief, with the non-printing areas being etched down, the larger areas then being cut down further with a routing machine. The zinco, mounted on a wood block to be ‘type-high’, is placed with moveable type in a forme to print the sheet-specific data on the part-printed cover.

**Misleading maps**

The following idiosyncrasies have been noted on the first wave of sketch maps but the list may be incomplete. Where the difference is in spelling, the version on the sheet is indicated in parenthesis.

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³ *Sheetlines* 76, 17.
⁴ London: Odhams Press Ltd, undated (c. 1945), 262-270. The reader is also instructed on grippers, wet and dry flong (and how to beat it) and much else.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sheet identifiers</th>
<th>sketch type</th>
<th>discrepancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75 Dumfries</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Locherbie (Lockerbie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107 Snowdon</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Penmaen Mawr (hyphenated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115 Pwllheli</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Llandyfni (Llanllyfni)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117 Bala &amp; Welshpool</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Llanfair Caereinion (hyphenated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128 Montgomery &amp;</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Abbey Cwmhir (hyphenated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llandrindod Wells</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139 Cardigan</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Rosebush (located across on sheet 138)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152 Carmarthen &amp;</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Llanmadog (Llanmadoc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166 Frome</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Sketch shifted eastwards(^5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2 of this article will explore the replacement sketch maps on later New Popular covers. 

The assistance of Peter Gibson, who reported in detail on his map collection, is gratefully acknowledged.

\(^5\) See Sheetlines 48, 4-5 for an article on sheet 166 sketch maps by Brian Dobbie.