

## ***New NLS online maps***

***Chris Fleet***<sup>1</sup>

### ***Ordnance Survey Ten-mile Planning maps series***

In 2010, as Ordnance Survey weeded their library before moving from Romsey Road, NLS was very grateful to receive a handsome volume, measuring 86 cm by 63 cm, proclaiming itself to be the *National atlas of Great Britain: Volume 1: Scotland*. Although lacking a date of publication, and with only a brief contents list and an introductory page of text, the volume includes a set of 29 thematic maps, all Sheet 1 of the 1:625,000 Planning maps series in excellent condition - a rare example in bound form of these well-known sheets. (As an aside, it would be interesting to hear if anyone else knows of one of these in this form, or a Volume 2, covering only part of England and Wales?). I have always been fond of the Planning maps, so the receipt of this volume - half a national atlas, and after all, covering the most important top part of Great Britain - was a prompt for a small project to scan and geo-reference the Planning maps series to allow their broader availability.

CCS members will know that the OS Planning maps series has been thoroughly researched by Roger Hellyer,<sup>2</sup> as part of a broader history and cartobibliography of OS ten-mile to the inch maps. The ten-mile to an inch scale (1:633,600) has a long history, used by Ordnance Survey from 1817, especially as index maps to larger scale map series. The Planning maps series enters the story over a century later, initiated during the late 1930s, particularly by Professor Eva Taylor through the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and their encouragement of a National atlas. Eva Taylor and Dudley Stamp both gave evidence to the Barlow Commission (the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Industrial Population, reporting in 1939) and made strong cases for the importance of thematic maps showing geographical distributions for planning purposes. By 1942 a Maps office was set up within the Ministry of Town and Country Planning (as it became from 1943), Dr Edward Christie Willatts was placed in charge of map compilation, and by 1944 the first instalment of ten Planning maps was published by Ordnance Survey.

Roger's history is also interesting for describing how very different the Planning maps series could have been, with advocates of different scales, a three-sheet rather than two-sheet map, and a number of different proposed thematic maps, several of which never saw the light of day. Industrial location, Land drainage, Recreation, Soils, and Unemployment, for example, were all planned and sometimes drawn, but not published. In spite of its critics, the series was successful in illustrating a number of important subjects to form a survey of national life and resources, particularly to support the war effort and post-war reconstruction. Our National atlas preface sums it up well: 'The whole series of

---

<sup>1</sup> The author is Senior Map Curator at the National Library of Scotland (NLS).

<sup>2</sup> Roger Hellyer, *The 'Ten-Mile' maps of the Ordnance Survey*, London: Charles Close Society, 1992.

maps is designed to present a detailed survey of many aspects of the economic, human and social facets of the county, including its physical structure and geology, mineral resources and uses, land use and quality, population, communications and other services.’

Today the maps themselves still have a value as a snapshot of Britain half a century ago, and a strikingly colourful display of physical and human geography. They also provide a nice window into some of the values and concerns of the time – regional disparities, industrial decline, agricultural production, mineral resources, population density and change, and a confidence in centralised state-funded planning. Numerous official bodies assisted with providing thematic information, including the Boundary Commissions, the Geological Survey, the Land Utilisation Survey of Great Britain, the Meteorological Office, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Ministry for War Transport, and the Department of Health for Scotland.

Written explanatory texts were also published to assist with the interpretation of the series. They explain the compilation of specific thematic maps, often with further details of how the thematic content was obtained and aggregated, and sometimes with additional statistical information. We have made available PDF copies of these booklets that were published and out-of-copyright:

- No. 1 - Land classification - 1950
- No. 2 - Average annual rainfall - 1950
- No. 3 - Population - 1950
- No. 4 - Limestone - 1957
- No. 5 - Vegetation - the grasslands of England and Wales - 1952
- No. 6 - Local accessibility - 1955
- No. 8 - Vegetation - Reconnaissance survey of Scotland - 1958

(A volume No 7 on Igneous and metamorphic rocks was described in 1958 as ‘in preparation’, but not published.)

During the 1960s increasing concern over funding the costs of new Planning maps and how out-of-date certain sheets were, as well as the large numbers of unsold copies of particular sheets contributed to the demise of the series. That said, the ten-mile base map, Administrative areas, Physical and Route planning maps were available from the Department of the Environment until the 1980s, and the series lives on in its way through the general, administrative, period maps (e.g. Roman Britain, Ancient Britain) *Routeplanner*.

Our website presents an initial set of twenty thematic maps (with two sheets covering Great Britain for each theme) including Administrative areas, Coal and iron, Farming, Geology, Land classification and land utilisation, Limestone, Local accessibility, Population density and population change, Railways, Rainfall, and Roads. We hope to include additional maps, especially those not published until the 1960s, when they fall out of copyright.

Planning maps – geo-referenced map search interface at:  
[http://geo.nls.uk/search/ten\\_mile](http://geo.nls.uk/search/ten_mile)

Planning maps – individual sheets and Explanatory texts at:  
<http://maps.nls.uk/os/ten-mile/index.html>

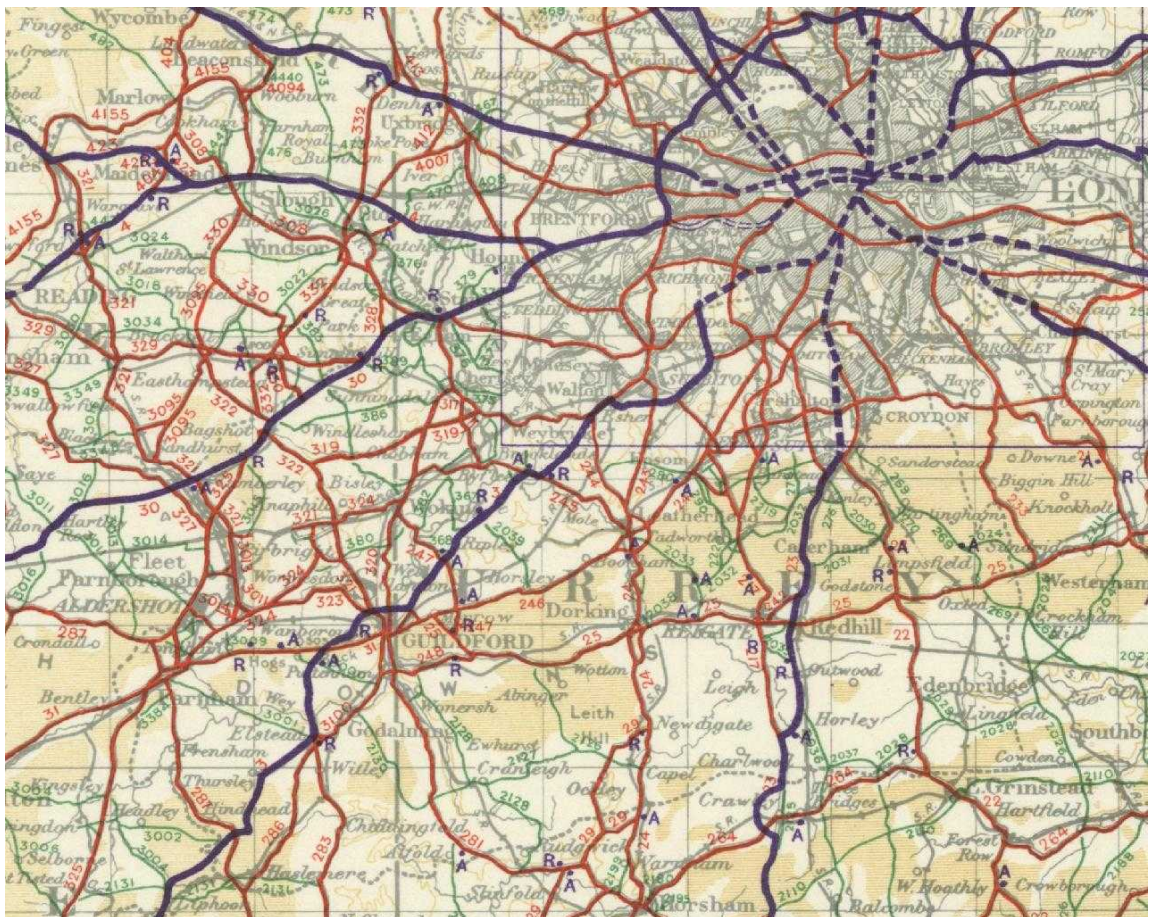
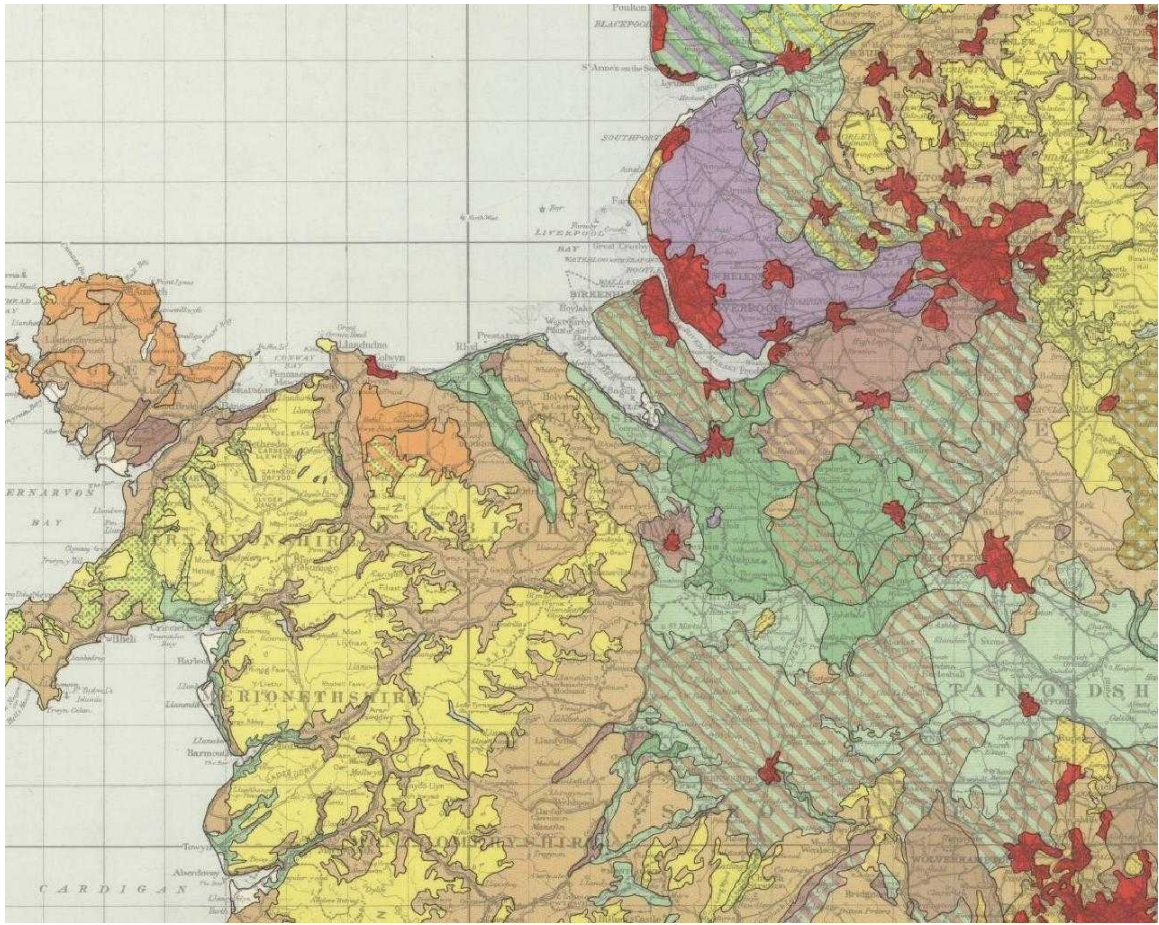


Figure 1 (left, upper). Great Britain, Sheet 2. Land Classification, 1944. This colourful map shows the 'Intensively Cultivated Arable' lands of Lancashire in purple, the crop and grasslands of Cheshire and Flintshire in greens and browns, and the 'Mountain, Moorland or Rough Pasture' of Snowdonia in yellow. The smaller orange patches in North Wales denote 'barley-turnip-sheep land where ploughable'.

Figure 2 (left, lower). Great Britain, Sheet 2. Roads, 1946. Perhaps a pre-motorway Route-planner? Road information was supplied by the Ministry of War Transport, with blue indicating trunk roads, and class I (A) roads in red, and class II (B) roads in green. The dots with R and A by them indicate telephone boxes owned by the Royal Automobile Club and Automobile Association, respectively. This part of Surrey is now bisected from northwest to southeast by the M25.

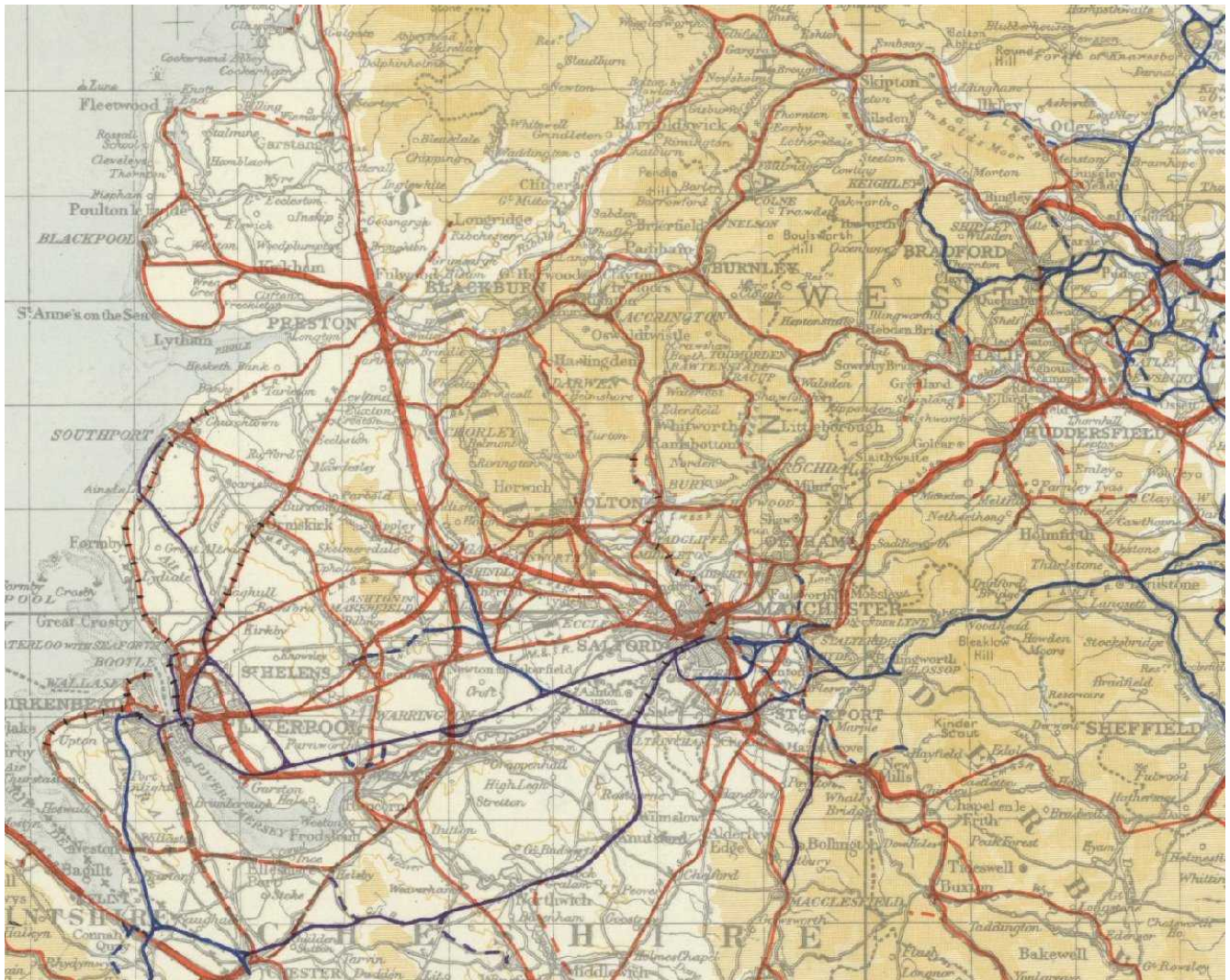
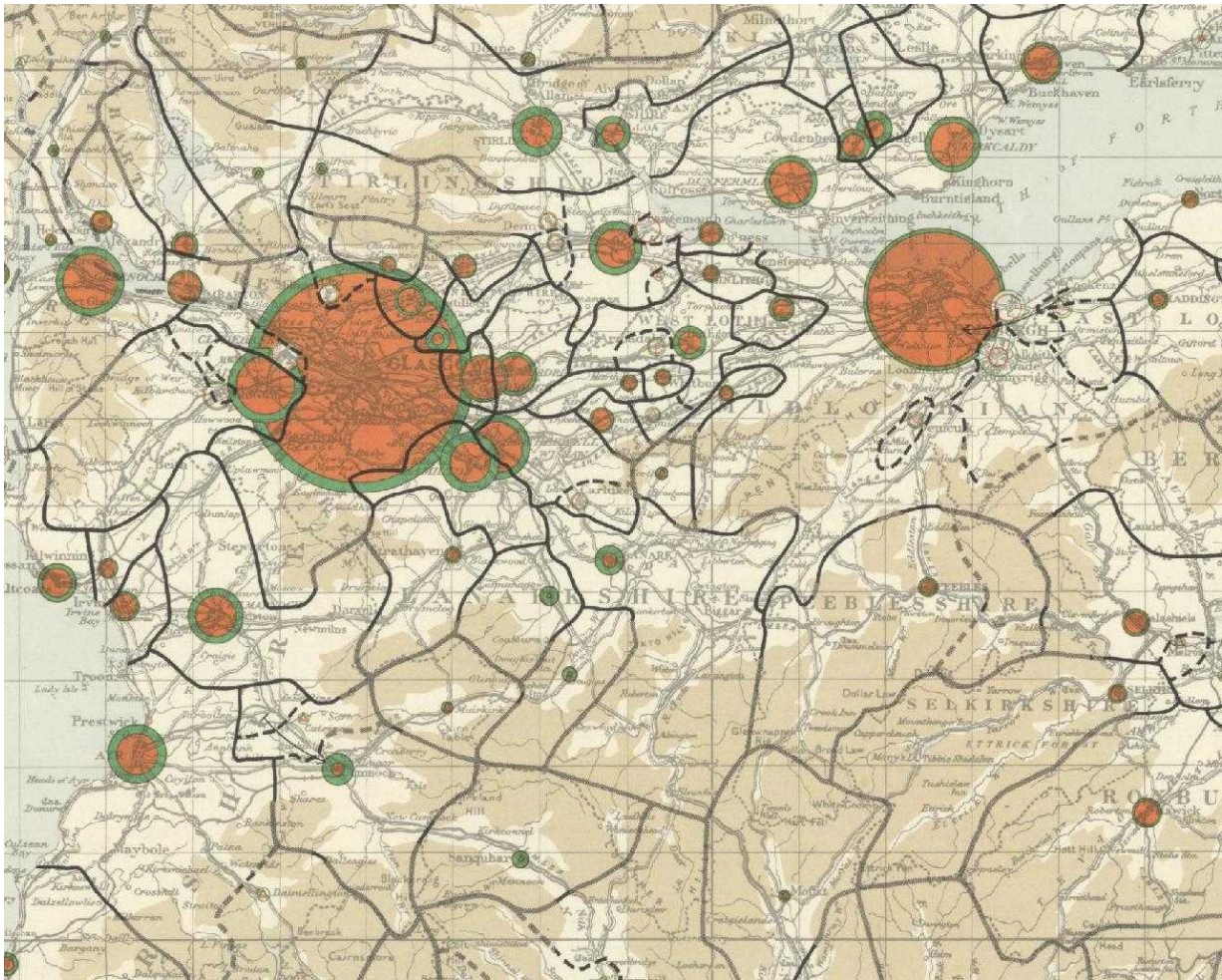




Figure 3. Great Britain, Sheet 2. Railways, 1946. This shows the extensive railway network in northwest England, two years before nationalisation. The lines in red are those of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway, whilst those in blue are those of the London and North Eastern Railway. Dashed lines are for single tracks, continuous lines for doubles, and thicker lines with three or more tracks. Note too, the newly electrified lines with cross bars near Manchester and Liverpool.





**Ordnance Survey "ten mile" Planning Maps of the United Kingdom, 1944-60**

**WILBOURN ASSOCIATES**  
Chartered Environmental Surveyors

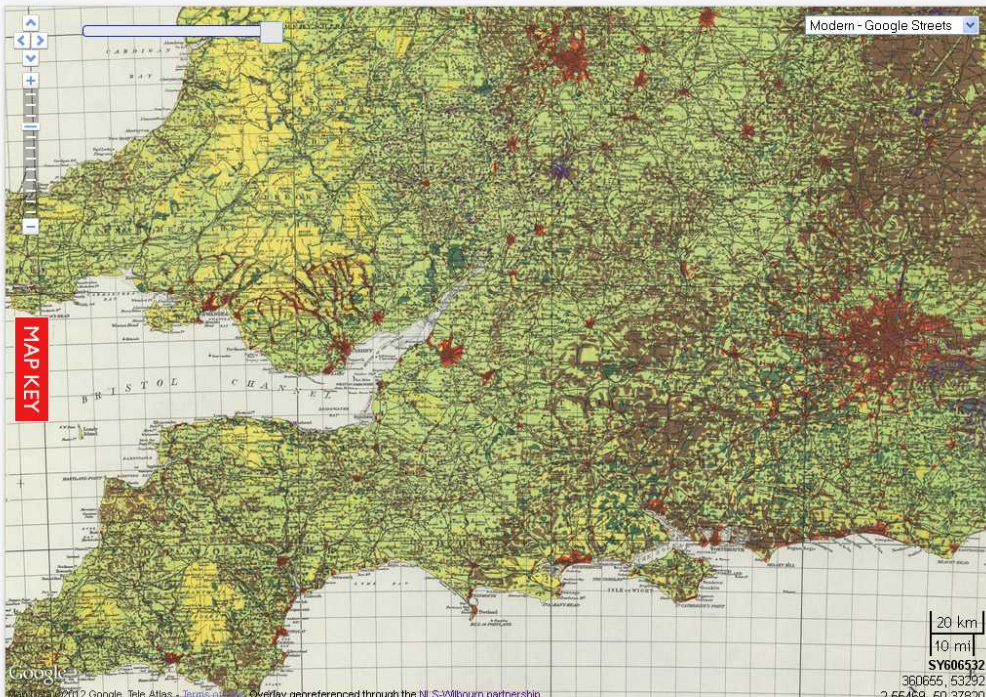


**Gazetteer / National Grid Reference:**  or **Scottish county:**

**layers** (upper right) can also be viewed by sliding the **Transparency Slider** (upper left on map) [Help](#) [Further Information](#)

**1. Choose an overlay:**

- ☐ Ten Mile - Administrative Areas, 1956
- ☐ Ten Mile - Coal and Iron, 1945
- ☐ Ten Mile - Farming, 1944
- ☐ Ten Mile - General, 1955
- ☐ Ten Mile - Geological, 1955
- ☐ Ten Mile - Iron and Steel, 1945
- ☐ Ten Mile - Land Classification, 1945
- ☒ Ten Mile - Land Utilisation, 1944
- ☐ Ten Mile - Limestone, 1955
- ☐ Ten Mile - Local Accessibility, 1942
- ☐ Ten Mile - Physical, 1957
- ☐ Ten Mile - Population Change, 1921
- ☐ Ten Mile - Population Change, 1931
- ☐ Ten Mile - Population Change, 1939
- ☐ Ten Mile - Population Density, 1931
- ☐ Ten Mile - Population Density, 1951
- ☐ Ten Mile - Railways, 1946
- ☐ Ten Mile - Rainfall, 1881-1915
- ☐ Ten Mile - Roads, 1946



Modern - Google Streets

MAP KEY

20 km  
10 mi  
SY06532  
360655, 53292  
-2.55469, 50.37820

*Figure 4 (left, upper). Great Britain, Sheet 1. Local accessibility, 1955. The flying saucers have landed in the Central Belt! This fascinating map attempts to portray the accessibility of towns and their hinterlands by bus. The accompanying Explanatory text goes on to explain that ‘as in general buses are the most widely used forms of public transport (used far more than the car or bicycle), an analysis of bus services provides a basis for illustrating the range of metropolitan centres in orange and their hinterlands in green’. The darker beige zones on the map are rather harshly described as ‘Principal virtually uninhabited areas’.*

*Figure 5 (left, lower). The NLS Planning maps website search interface. Through geo-referencing, the Planning maps can be overlaid and compared directly to one another, as well as to modern mapping and satellite imagery for any place. It is also possible to search by a gazetteer of modern place names, postcodes, and National Grid references to view all the Planning maps for any particular place.*

### **Ordnance Survey County Series maps for Scotland (1892-1960)**

We have also been busy on other fronts, and over the winter added a further 25,000 detailed Ordnance Survey maps of Scotland to our *Maps of Scotland* website (<http://maps.nls.uk>). This includes two main map series – the six-inch (1:10,560) and 25-inch (1:2,500) to the mile maps for Scotland – both dating between 1892 and 1960. The first edition OS maps at both of these scales (1840s - 1880s) are already on our website, and this new website addition therefore completes the availability of the OS County Series maps for Scotland, just over 41,000 map sheets in total.

The six-inch to the mile series (7,486 map sheets) covers all of Scotland, and all sheets were revised between 1892 and 1907. Thereafter, urban or rapidly changing areas were updated up to the 1950s. The 25-inch series (17,466 map sheets) just covers the more inhabited regions of Scotland, less than half the total land area. Again, all sheets were revised between 1892 and 1907, with selective updates to more populous areas thereafter.

The website allows easy access to the maps by a zoomable Google and OS *OpenData* map interface, a gazetteer of place names, and counties and parishes. There are guides to abbreviations on the maps, and further information on the history of the series, map content, projections and meridians.

Six-inch: <http://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch-2nd-and-later>

25-inch: <http://maps.nls.uk/os/25inch-2nd-and-later/index.html>

Both series can be searched at: <http://geo.nls.uk/search>

### **OS One-inch to the mile series maps of Scotland and Great Britain**

In February, we also made available two sets of smaller-scale series maps:

OS Scotland, One-inch Popular Edition (with National Grid), 1945-48 at <http://maps.nls.uk/os/one-inch-popular-nat-grid/index.html>

OS Great Britain, One-inch Seventh Series, 1952-61 at <http://maps.nls.uk/os/one-inch-seventh-series/index.html>