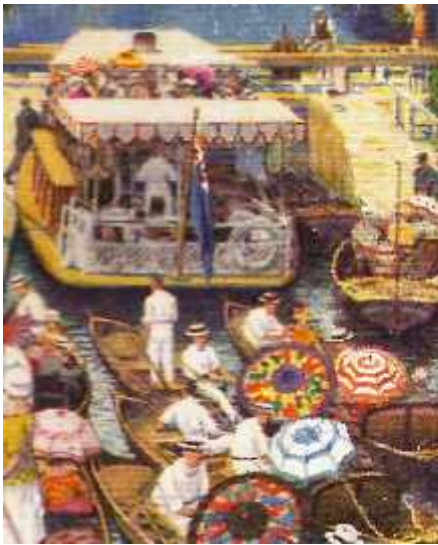
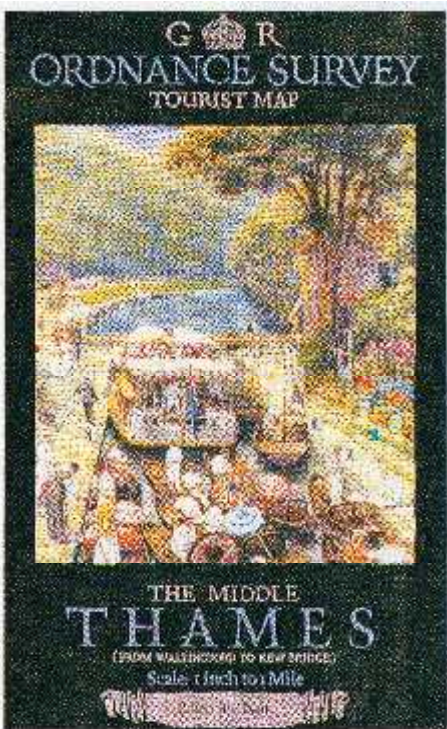


Why the blue ensign?

Peter Stubbs



In *Old Series to Explorer*,¹ Chris Higley wonders why Ellis Martin painted a blue ensign on the steamer in the lock on the cover of the 1923 Middle Thames tourist map (*above left*). I think he used this photograph (*above right*) of congestion at Boulter's Lock, Maidenhead taken in about 1890 as the basis for this painting. I do not know who the photographer was; possibly Francis Frith?

Left are enlargements of the steamer and flag from the map cover and the same area in the photograph. The composition of boats and lock workers is identical but he has added more parasols/umbrellas. I understand that Ellis Martin frequently worked from photographs and, of course, if he was working from a black and white photo he wouldn't be able to tell that the steamer was flying a red ensign. I suspect he chose the colours for artistic purposes because he thought they looked good, rather than strive for accuracy.



¹ Chris Higley, *Old Series to Explorer: a field guide to the Ordnance map*, Charles Close Society, 2011