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“Visit to Quickmap, Luton”

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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.

Visit to Quickmap, Luton

Nick Jeffery

It was many years ago that I first remember seeing Charles Joseph Minard's wonderful 'carte figurative' depicting Napoleon's disastrous 1812 Russian campaign. This related geographic location, the devastating reduction of his forces as the campaign progressed and prevailing temperature.¹ I couldn't help but be reminded of this (in the use of visual techniques for depicting the flows of people) during the visit to 'Quickmap', the hosts of the CCS visit to the intriguingly (and accurately!) named 'Hat Factory' in Luton on 16 January 2008.

Nine members were welcomed by a triumvirate of ecologically-minded versatile individuals – Steve Cousins, Andrew Sutton and David Sherriff – who created this business some ten years ago and see themselves not so much as cartographers but as designers. If you can envisage the presentation of data related to geographical features as being a continuum between, say, the London Underground map created by Harry Beck in 1931, where the predominant emphasis is on the different lines and linkage between stations and their geographic location is highly distorted, and 'classic' OS mapping, true to geographical detail but with no specific information emphasis, then Quickmap's products fall in between these two extremes.

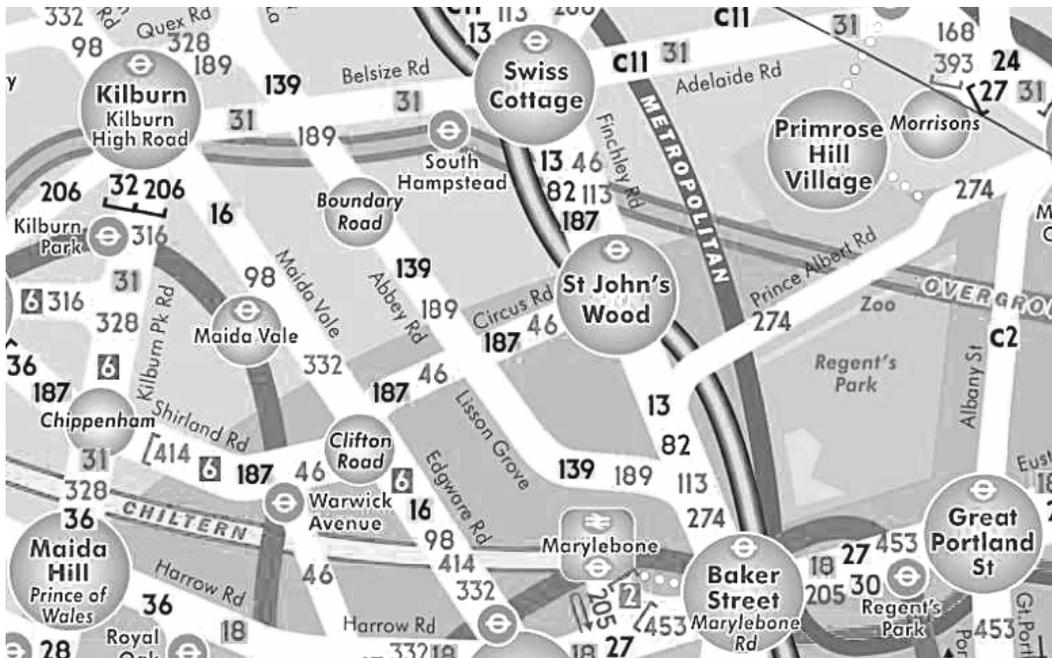
Their main work has been to prepare travel maps using concepts based on nodes of 'activity centres' and 'interchange points' which are the focus of the maps. Activity centres are identified from a combination of such characteristics as the presence of banks, shops and taxi ranks. This then enables the designer to establish a hierarchy of information provision including routes, frequency, connections and fare structures and present this information in a variety of ways, the normal presentation format being a 'node and spoke' arrangement. The object is to present the key information in an easily assimilable manner that meets the users' needs, rather than those of the provider, and hence builds confidence in the potential user that a viable, accessible network is available. Although there is a national database available for transport nodes (NaPTAN, National Public Transport Access Nodes) Quickmap's approach is to directly survey the area under consideration to establish the relative importance of the node. An interesting measure of the 'scale' of a city is that by their methodology London has 416 nodes; Glasgow has 126, a reflection on their relative vitality and variety.

Major work has been done in the London area including pocket *London by bus* (launched by Ken Livingstone in 1999), *London tube and walk* and *London all-on-one* maps, the latter showing buses, tubes, trains and streets. Showcasing their work is the A1-sized *All London travel planner*, the first integrated travel map showing all buses, tubes and trains within the M25 area.

¹ For those not familiar with this it can be found at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Minard.png>.

Another interesting aspect of their work is ‘Map movies’, started in 2001 as internet-based rapid-download route or event animations. It’s far easier to watch these than describe them so visit www.quickmap.com and click on one of the map movies shown. My favourite was the Notting Hill Carnival one, which employs a combination of techniques to show a vast amount of information in a vivid and easily digested way.²

All in all a fascinating insight to the plethora of choices that must be confronted when presenting complex information to a non-specialist audience – what to include / what not to include / what is important / what is unimportant / how to present it / how to market it. I must admit that next time I go to London, having come away with a Quickmap *London all-on-one* map, I’ll certainly be a bit more adventurous in my travel choices!



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This monochrome extract does less than justice to the clarity of the ‘London all-on-one’ map, a sample of which may be downloaded in full colour from www.quickmap.com/downloads/freeA4download1.pdf

² Members attending this year’s AGM will find a Kingston map movie available on the same website. – CJH