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.

OS maps and motor sport
Tim Stevens[1]

Did you ever find an old map with all the spot-heights ringed? Or all the grid numbers or other details highlighted? Was the map rather crumpled or water-stained? Read on and find out why …

For motoring navigation rallies the UK convention is to require navigators to use a particular edition of OS map – normally the latest *Landranger*. Not always, though, as a recent event for vintage cars used a specially reprinted 1920s OS map, enlarged to 1:50,000 scale and overprinted with the modern grid. The object of the rally organiser is to provide instructions which make life difficult for the entrants, to get them thoroughly lost if possible; avoiding this can involve the competitors in a very close relationship with all sorts of mapping details. This can include almost anything you can find on your keyboard, and in addition can range from the relatively easy tulip diagram right through to the more complex herringbone.

What do you make, for example, of this?

TC1 15 15 78 79 16 80 17 81 18 81 79 TC2

TC1 stands for Time Control one, and what is required from there is to cross the numbered grid lines in listed order as you leave each square. Simple enough, although there will be nothing in the road-book to offer a clue about this – but what if the lines in both directions have similar numbers?

How about: 94 111 83 78 99 130 77 69 96 94 ?

This time the numbers clearly do not fit a grid lines sequence – eventually the beginner might realise that they are spot heights. And what jolly fun if these two 'systems' are mixed together? Or if the spaces are omitted?

Now try this: SLWSUSELUDRNN

This time, the letters tell you which side of each grid square you must cross, by cardinal point, or direction, so South, Left, West, South, Up, and so on. Easy, really, once you are in on the secret – but there is another variation, which adds further (usually lower case) letters. These represent points on the map where place-name or other lettering impinges on the road symbol. The addition of OS symbols such as > and + from the keyboard, or others drawn in by hand, can be a further twist of the organiser's knife. The result can be a clue which runs:

Srou67DB+117><u56ERR767778

Finally we come to drawn-in symbols in earnest, of which the more common examples are shown opposite. They both rely on an instruction in the small print such as 'No whites are used' or 'Sealed roads only' so that everyone knows exactly what counts as a junction. This saves the patience of the farmer's wife hanging out her washing as lots of drivers turn round in her dusty private drive.

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[1] A CCS member who has been involved in motor sport and the recording of rights-of-way for longer than he can remember.
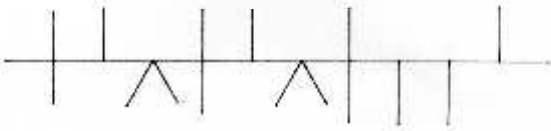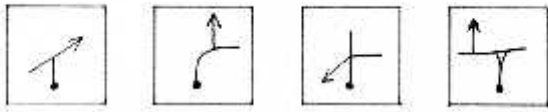
Tulips (*top row*) – first used in the Dutch Tulip Rally in the 1950s – are popular for beginner's classes or non-competitive touring events. Just imagine you are at the blob as you approach the next junction, and leave the junction following the arrow. For more serious events, the symbols are not always drawn the right way up, and sometimes in mirror image or without the starting point blob.

Herringbones (*lower row*) – named from the shape with scant regard for fish anatomy – are less helpful. What is drawn is what the map would show if the required route was straightened out completely, and the navigator's task is to ensure that the driver passes each junction – never mind the directions – leaving the correct number of turnings on each side. Not hugely difficult, once you learn the trick, except that sometimes the ends of the diagram are joined into a circle – so the first task is to work out where on the circle you start from, and whether the correct route is clockwise or widdershins.

There are two ways in which OS maps can be required (as distinct from useful) for motorsport events – one by the event regulations (see above) and the other by law. The legal requirement applies to motoring competitions on public roads. Everyone 'knows' that racing on the highway in Britain is illegal, but this does not prohibit lots of other motoring events using the road – treasure hunts, navigation rallies, driving tests, trials, each with its own complex rule-book. Where the law draws in the OS is in 'The Motor Vehicles (Competitions and Trials) Regulations 1969' – which require the event organiser of any motoring competition with a set route using the highway[2] to get approval from the MSA.[3] This involves sending them a tracing of the proposed route at 1:50,000 scale taken from the current *Landranger* mapping. The route is then checked against MSA records, where a full set of maps is kept, and against the declared routes of other events in the area around the same time. This avoids the risk of two motoring events using the same roads, and helps to 'spread the load' sensibly.[4] There are lots of other requirements, as you might expect, but this is one of the few aspects of the law which requires the use of OS maps specifically for ordinary non-government activities.

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[2] With a few minor exceptions.

[3] The UK governing body of motor sport, whose full title is 'The Royal Automobile Club Motor Sports Association'.

[4] What it does not do, of course, is to avoid conflict with cycling or equestrian events, or the village music-fest, as they are not caught by the regulations.