



# *Sheetlines*

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“Rebranding OS – a view from  
Cartography Production”

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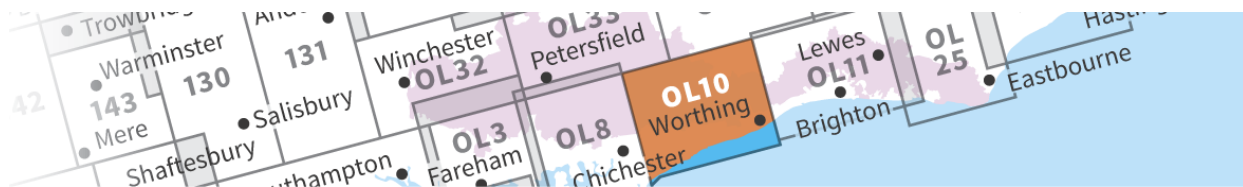
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The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.



## ***Rebranding OS – a view from Cartography Production***

***Mark Wolstenholme<sup>1</sup>***

You may have noticed that Ordnance Survey has had a rebrand and by the time you read this we will have finished the task with the release of our rebranded *Landranger* maps. So here's a look behind the scenes to highlight what we've changed on our paper maps.

It's summer 2014 and plans to rebrand Ordnance Survey are briefed to staff. The project is pitched as an important refresh required to build a stronger presence in the online and mobile app space. Everyone was given the opportunity to vote on draft ideas that hinted at the thinking behind the new direction; all talk was about a 'dynamic' or 'living' logo. For those of us in Cartography Production the reaction was less to do with an exciting new digital look more about 'could we print it?'. The rebranding was going to be handled by a dedicated OS team working with an external agency that specialised in this type of design. Our challenge would be getting the new look successfully and speedily applied to over 600 maps and covers all while delivering our normal revision programme.

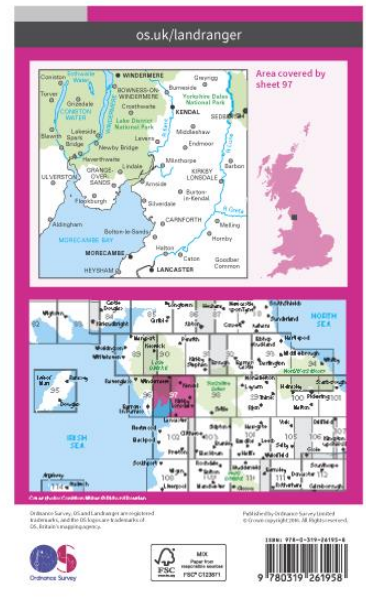
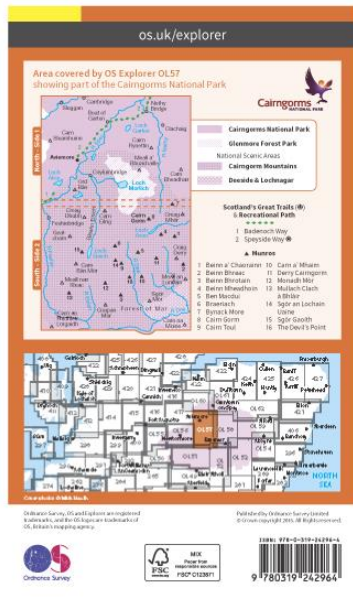
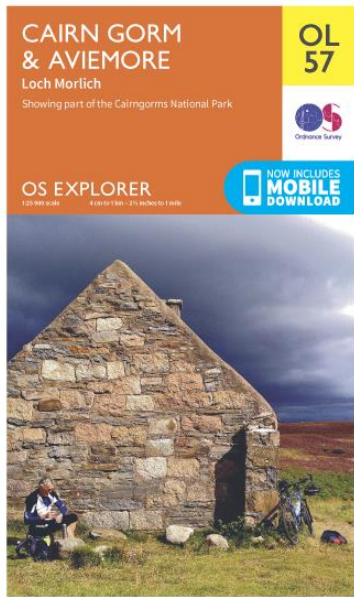
### ***Not just new covers***

Central to any rebranding is of course the logo and it tends to be the main change that people notice. Less obvious is the impact of fonts and the colour palette. The choice of fonts proposed presented problems and some debate. Our *Landranger* and *Explorer* maps are raster (pixel) based and it wouldn't be possible to change them. The proposed title fonts didn't have all the characters to support the Welsh language, and the teams building our new digital apps were seeking their own 'clean' look by using classic Gill Sans. The decision to use the old *Explorer* favourite Gill Sans gave me lots of fit problems on covers – the titles were going to be in caps. Hopefully, you'll agree that the result works, despite all the compromises and constraints we had to accommodate. But there was much more to it than just the look and feel of some covers or our website. Cartography Production were bringing in new technologies and working with our marketing team to explore new ideas at the same time.

At one point it was suggested we abandon cover photos altogether to simplify the production effort. Nobody liked that idea and it was marketing that conceived the idea for members of the public to submit their own photos. This led to the extremely popular OS Photofit competition with many thousands of outstanding entries, happily not all sunsets. The competition squeezed another printing deadline for rebranding.

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<sup>1</sup> The author is Cartography Consultant at Ordnance Survey.



The design for the new covers came through by early 2015, and making them fit for production and robust enough for future revisions took us into early summer.

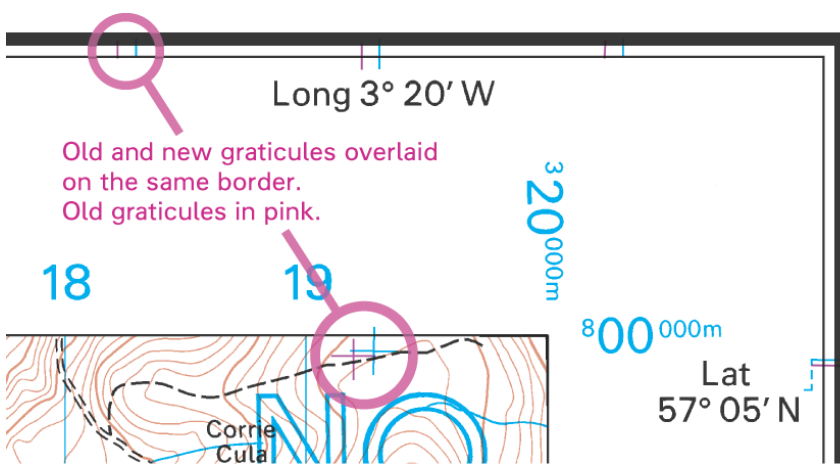
One major change required to keep the clean look involved moving the National Park and other logos from the front cover. This meant they had to be accommodated on the back, giving me even less space to improve the cartography of the map diagrams. In the end I was particularly pleased with the *Landranger* covers which now feature a much clearer coverage diagram, and the return of Sid (Sheet indicator dot) last seen on the green *Pathfinders*. Not only is the black 'sid' square accurately scaled to the miniature GB shape, but the coverage diagram is exactly 80 mm square, or 1:500,000 scale. Rebuilding the coverage diagram for *Landranger* allowed me to finally add rivers as I had done with the last generation of *Explorer* covers. I always felt that these were much more useful than location dots for giving geographical context to an area. Other improvements included making the adjoining sheet diagram on both series the same to help show the relative coverage of sheets between the two. Scripting and GIS tools helped enormously with building and completing each cover, even down to drawing the barcodes directly into the artwork from a database.

Whilst rebranding aimed to expand the reach of our digital maps, we also wanted to give users a mobile version of their paper map. This became a major project across a number of groups at Ordnance Survey; for Cartography Production it meant building a unique process that could take out print production artwork and clip out the map along with insets and extrusions.

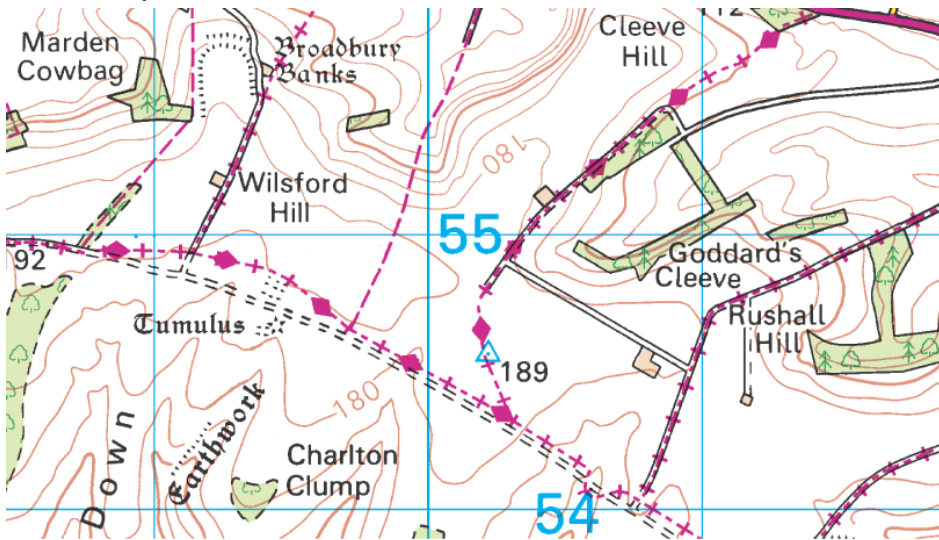
Delivering this data just had to work because we were already printing new covers and sticking unique scratch-off codes inside.

**New graticules**

Our revision programme itself was going through major changes even without rebranding. One



change was the renumbering of some *Explorer* sheets to bring the South Downs and Cairngorms into the ‘yellow’ *Outdoor Leisure* (OL) set. We weren’t all in agreement with this move as it resulted in a non-continuous set of *Explorer* numbers. Another big change was the position of longitude and latitude marks depicted around the borders of our paper mapping. With the increasing use of mobile GPS devices the difference between our projected OSGB 1936 lat/long and the WGS84 lat/long used by GPS devices was being questioned. With rebranding about to replace all our printed stock over an 18 month period, the chance to address this was taken. I won’t comment on the merit of recasting over 44,000 graticule marks and labels on two raster products to the ETRS89 datum, suffice to say that it was a big task. One recently retired cartographer commented that ‘he was glad to be going now as it didn’t seem right to move the 2° West longitude off of the centreline of the National Grid’. Editions that have had the new graticule marks note the new datum in the legend. On *Explorer* sheets we have also rounded corners of the scalebar box as a ‘tell’. To build the new graticules a special transformation was created by Mark Greaves (OS Geodetics). This was then reworked into a production utility that could draw the marks into a geo-referenced sheet in Adobe Illustrator. This very precise process did reveal a few original errors in the hand-plotted marks from the original sheet borders so maybe it was worth it!



Mixed styles on current Landranger. Note the styles of the word ‘Hill’.

Below; examples of the old fonts (left) alongside the new (right).

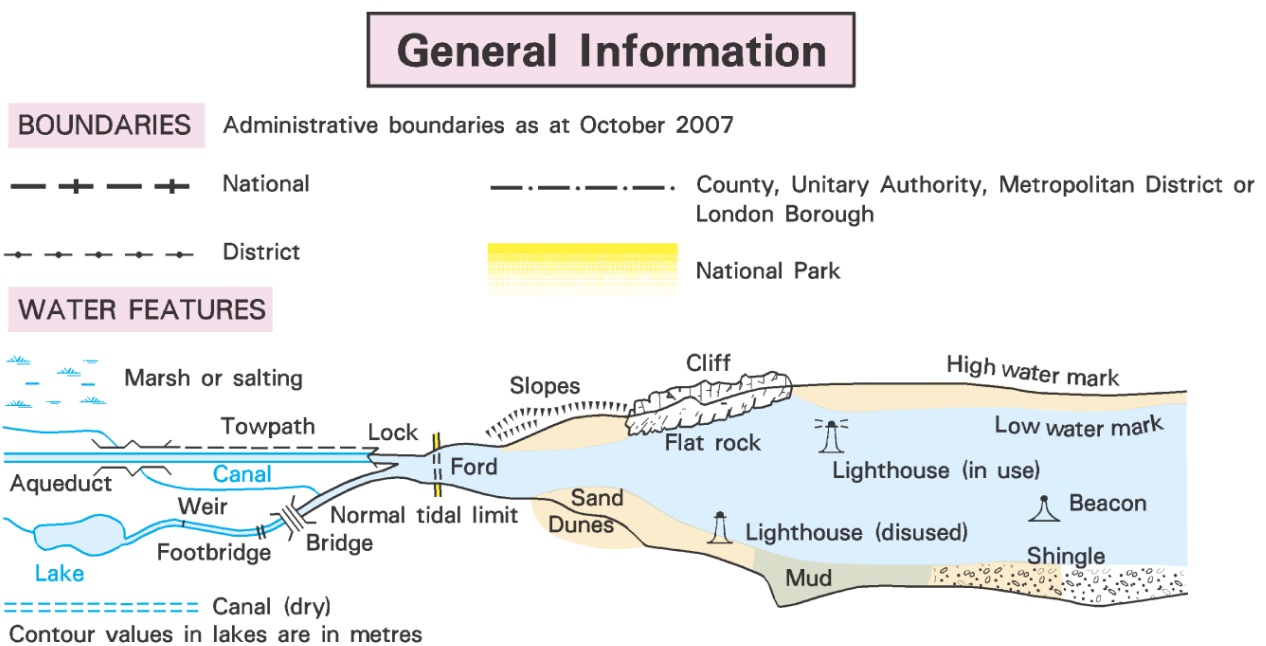
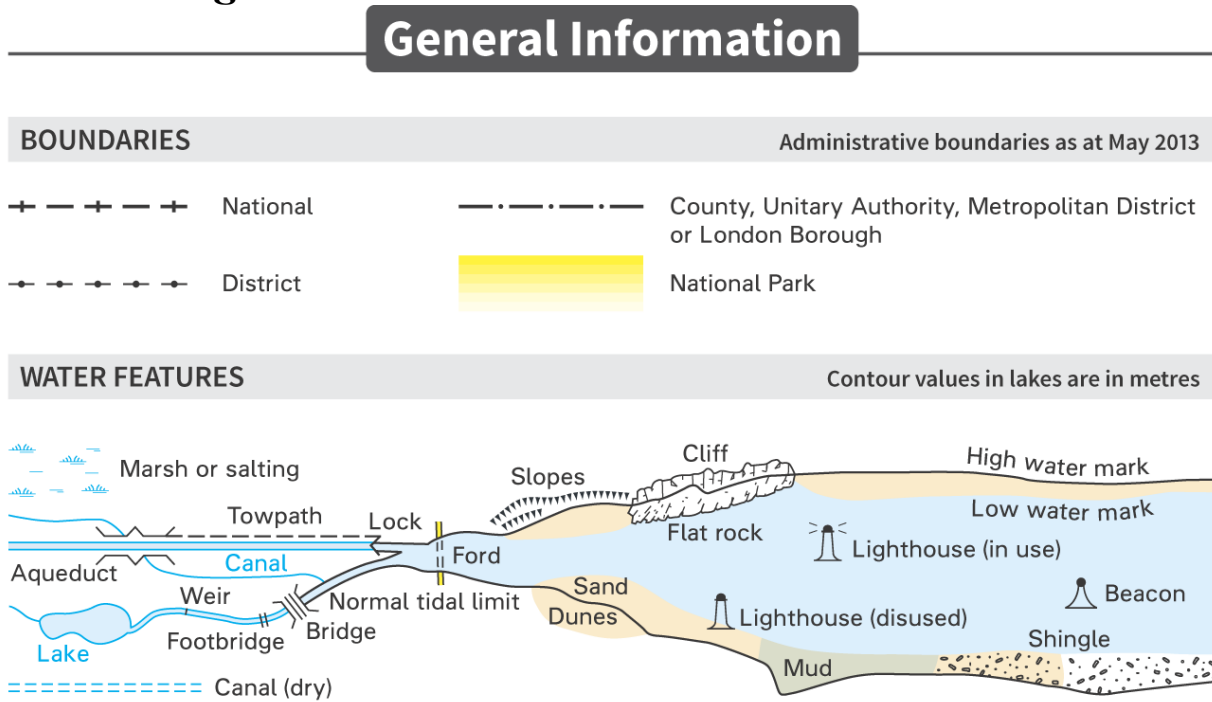
Broadbury Banks	Broadbury Banks
Wilsford Hill	Wilsford Hill
Earthwork	Earthwork

The rebranding exercise coincided with the building of a new GIS-based production system for our raster products so that we could retire the editing system from the 1990s. Time that was going to be spent bedding *Landranger* into the new process now had to be spent prepping every sheet for rebranding. Half of the sheets in the series were going to be rebranded with updates and priority revision and the other half were ‘reprints with new cover’. To support the switch, we had to sort the problem of fonts, which in the legacy system were baked in as shapes, but in the new editor they needed to be standard fonts. It was decided to go to the effort of drawing our own fonts, partly to avoid the expense, but also to take the chance to have our own optimised fonts. Not only Gill Sans and Univers, but a copperplate font for ‘Roman’ names and an old English ‘OS Historic’ font for

antiquities were drawn. For each of the fonts careful consideration was given to improving legibility, making subtle changes to characters to improve readability.

The OS Univers lowercase 'l' for example reintroduces a curved tail to help distinguish it from a capital 'l' in names such as Ilchester. You'll notice a mixture of both on current *Landrangers* as names added in the raster editing system didn't match those created in the conventional days.

### New vector legends



### *New (top) and previous versions of the legends*

Being able to automatically draw artwork and text directly into Illustrator using scripts has delivered considerable efficiencies in time and effort, besides being less prone to error. It is early days, but the marriage of GIS-based map editing

and sheet layout in desktop publishing software has brought real benefits to our paper maps.

At first glance the new look *Landranger* maps are much the same as the old ones. Besides the new logo and a title block designed to match the cover, the only other element brought in for rebranding were the ‘charcoal’ intaglio section titles. Rebuilding the legend as vector artwork allowed a number of layout improvements to be made. The width was reduced by 2 mm to ease the left edge away from the panel fold, making the legend more comfortable to read, and the main horizontal fold no longer cuts through the Land Features section. The right edge is now less ragged and the pink title backgrounds are now light grey and extend across the full width to help clarify each subject block.

We decided to remove French and German translations to free up space for new symbols and give a clearer layout. These translations had become somewhat of an anachronism in this mobile app age. Their removal allowed legends on the Welsh maps to exactly match the layout of the English side and provided additional space for more abbreviations to be listed. The National Grid example has been revamped rather than being crammed in with a small text size.

Other changes have been made to keep pace with the outside world; a new Natural Resources Wales symbol to replace Welsh Forestry Commission symbols and on revised sheets the blue roadside assistance telephone is being deprecated and a pink emergency telephone (now just ‘phone’) added. The wind turbine symbol is finally being modernised with a more representative three bladed design, helping to distinguish this from a wind pump. Those *Landrangers* that were not updated during rebranding will have these changes applied on future releases.



One of my dislikes were *Landranger* sheets where the internal grid figures – applied every 10 km across the tile data – would often end up running up close to the neatline. All these extra grid figures were just clutter that obfuscated the map underneath. Now sheets produced through the new editor have just two runs of northings and eastings across the map, always centred in the same place (imagine lines for a ‘noughts and crosses’ game). This halves the number of grid figures, but still gives a set of figures on every pair of panels so that the map can be used folded and read like a book.

That’s almost the whole, hopefully interesting, insight into production at Ordnance Survey. As with everything, it is ongoing with new symbols planned for *Explorer* along with *Explorer* joining *Landranger* in the new editor. For me I must get back to revamping *Explorer* legends for this summer’s new editions.