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“The principal problem”

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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.

The principal problem

Very interesting article by K M Bromley re the stations on *Landranger* maps.³ It is many years since I lived in Surrey so I am not up to date with ‘Southern’ stations but I selected 24 ‘Major’ stations here in the North West and did a similar exercise. The first thing of interest is that five have been down rated between Seventh Series and *Landranger*, and one up rated. The latter is Blackpool North but this is clearly because Blackpool Central has been closed and it is now the main station on the Fylde.

I then looked at my 24 based on the following criteria:

1. do Intercity / long distance expresses stop there?
2. terminus and / or major junction station?
3. more than four platforms (including / excluding bays)?
4. overall roof and / or long platform verandas?
5. city or large town?

The one thing that can be said with 100% certainty is that no pattern is forthcoming. If anyone else comes up with a suggestion I will look again but I will be most interested if OS can establish an answer.

Martin Lee

Could it be that major outer termini are considered ‘principal’ stations? I do not have the resources to follow this up to any extent, but it is the difference between Weymouth and Torquay. Kingswear, however, where the Torbay line finishes, is not a ‘principal’.

Keith Pendray

Sheetlines 52 contains Jim Cooper’s article on one-inch revision in the mid 1960s with the most useful addition of the guidance given in the Green Book of those days. It is a reasonably safe assumption that a high percentage of the rules had altered little in the previous forty or

³ *Sheetlines 68*, 31.

so years and those for railways being no exception. It contains the key sentence ‘To assist the draughtsman, principal stations in towns will be so marked.’

The *Landranger* has seemingly inherited a ‘sin of the past’ in as much that some surveyors and/or draughtsmen took a somewhat wider view and as a consequence for example Popular sheet 138 (3300/31) shows not only the important stations Exeter St Davids, Central and Newton Abbot in rectangular form, but also Dawlish, Exmouth and Teignmouth in a similar state.

Even in Popular one-inch days a more or less built up area existed between Brighton and Arundel Junction where lines to Arundel and Littlehampton diverged. No less than fourteen stations and halts existed in this stretch and still did so (with just one disused) by the advent of the Seventh Series. Brighton Central, as befitted a major station (as in the case of all the London termini and junctions such as Clapham, Stratford and Willesden), was shown ‘plan size’ whilst Worthing and rather surprisingly Southwick were picked out as principal for rectangular depiction. This is a relatively straightforward situation – the London built up area was quite a different matter. Again on the Seventh Series, and away from the termini and junctions, the first principals to be encountered in a roughly clockwise direction are: Bedford, Hertford, Romford, Tilbury Docks, Gravesend (two stations), Crystal Palace (two), Maidstone (two), Royal Tunbridge Wells, Lewes, Brighton, Guildford, Aldershot, Basingstoke, Windsor (two), Staines, and Watford. There had been four notable casualties since New Popular (and presumably Popular) days: East Croydon, Eastbourne, Redhill and Slough.

Alan Young (*Sheetlines 54*) devotes a section to station importance on the Seventh Series and draws attention to disused principals: Crystal Palace High Level, Dalkeith, Gravesend West, Hull Cannon Street and Selkirk: four of these being at the ends of branch lines which is in effect the situation at Windsor. Also the surveyor could be confronted with the awkward situation of two or more major stations belonging to different companies in not particularly large towns (at least not in the 1920s). Examples are Wigan where the Great Central terminus was a dubious rectangle, and Great Yarmouth where the Midland/Great Northern Joint and two Great Eastern stations were of equal merit and none particularly large. Often a sizeable and important station was adjoined by a lesser one of a different company e.g. Leamington, Reading, Salisbury etc. and the latter enjoyed principal status as a result.

Why was it desirable to pick out the main station at all? Well, in the days when railway stations were of considerable importance to the map user on foot and so many stations and halts existed, all trains could be guaranteed to stop at the principal station and perhaps equally important there would be a refreshment room and other facilities.

Although the principal symbol appeared (with first black, later red infill) on the legend of the Popular map it was, as far as I know, not annotated until the days of the Fifth Edition and Scottish Popular. However the complete conventional signs of 1925 (1931 reprint) shown as plate 12 in Yolande Hodson’s *Popular Maps* displays the annotation.

And so to the *Landranger*. Intrigued by Mr Bromley’s disclosures I carried out an inspection at the local library (with bookshop checks on more recent sheets) finding other inconsistencies much as he describes. However, due to the loss of so many stations the number does not appear to be all that great. Most of the major stations are still in plan outline though sadly, Chester (formerly General), Leicester (formerly Midland), and Norwich (formerly Thorpe), etc. are all reduced to circle status. Where there is an adjoining or other station inside the built up area (apart from London) the principal is shown e.g. Bexhill,

Canterbury East, Colchester, Exeter St Davids, Folkestone, Grimsby, Guildford (due to the proximity of London Road Station), Hastings, Havant, Maidstone East (due to proximity of Barracks and West stations), Plymouth, Southend Central, Wakefield Westgate, Watford, Wigan North Western, Worcester Shrub Hill etc. Bexhill, Hastings and Havant are 'gains' since the earliest Seventh Series and Worthing remains whilst Southwick has quite rightly been demoted. Which leaves not a great deal to criticise: possibly Southport (formerly Chapel Street) and Blackburn together with Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, Weymouth and Windsor Royal. Moreover Blackburn and Littlehampton hardly merit plan outline.

A comparison was made with a 1986 British Railways map little altered in spite of privatisation, places (not stations) being shown as 'principal' or 'other' but the criteria not similar to Ordnance Survey's. Gatwick Airport is shown as 'principal' (and its depiction on *Landranger* rather exalts its importance) whilst the last six (less Weymouth) in the previous paragraph are described as 'other'.

As observed in *Sheetlines 68* Windsor Royal (formerly Central and before that just Great Western) is a very strange choice and one can only conclude that the 'royal' description has a bearing. As per Windsor Riverside it is purely a branch line terminal of similar rank but more convenient to the castle.

And finally the London 1:50,000 sheets 176 and 177 were inspected. Nothing has changed amongst the termini except Broad Street and Holborn Viaduct have gone altogether, and of the main junctions Clapham remains in plan outline whilst Stratford and Willesden have given way to double circles.

John Cole