



Sheetlines

The journal of
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps

“DOS/OSD series numbers”

Richard Oliver

Sheetlines, 84 (April 2009), pp.42-43

Stable URL: <http://www.charlesclosesociety.org/files/Issue84page42.pdf>

*This article is provided for personal, non-commercial use only.
Please contact the Society regarding any other use of this work.*

Published by
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps
www.CharlesCloseSociety.org

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.

DOS / OSD series numbers

Richard T Porter

At the conclusion of his article on ‘Edition codes’ on OS maps, Richard Oliver¹ gives an example of the Overseas Surveys Directorate’s practice. Perhaps I may expand a little on this.²

The series numbering system used by the Directorate of Overseas Surveys, as developed by June 1971, usually used three digits. The first indicated the scale range, the second and third (00 – 99) indicated the country, thus:

1 – 100	Preliminary mapping, no longer used
101 – 199	1:5000 and larger, up to 1968.

With increasing demand for 1:1250 and 1:2500 scales, these were indicated from November 1968 by prefixed zeros and then, with the mapping of Male (1979) and Stanley (1988) at 1:500, a five digit number was introduced, so that the full sequence ran:

00001 – 00099	1:500
0001 – 0099	1:1250 (also 1:1000 and 1:1250)
001 – 099	1:2500 (and 1:2400 if it arose)
101 – 199	1:5000 (and 1:4800)
201 – 299	1:5001 – 1:10,000
301 – 399	1:10,001 – 1:25,000
401 – 499	1:25,001 – 1:63,360
501 – 599	1:63,361 – 1:126,720
601 – 699	1:126,721 – 1:253,440
701 – 799	1:253,441 – 1:500,000
801 – 899	1:500,001 – 1:1,000,000
900	International Map of the World series
901 – 1000	Small format maps. The former ‘Colonial Office List’ and ‘Report’ maps did not use the regular country numbers.

Four-digit numbers, not involving country numbers, were used for various specialist maps, and were allocated in order as the maps were undertaken, regardless of scale or country:

1001 – 1999	Geological maps	
2000 – 2999	Miscellaneous maps	
3000 – 3999	Land resources maps	
4000 – 4999	Print laydowns	
5000 – 5999	Mosaics	} But when part of a national map series, these bore the appropriate scale and country numbers, suffixed M or P.
6000 – 6999	Photo-maps	
7000 – 7999	Reproduction-only tasks	
8000 – 8999	Rectified prints; orthophotos; enlargements (except those for internal use).	

The country numbers were allocated in the order in which the countries were first mapped, hence Jamaica, the first country taken up in 1946, was 01, but the system of invariant country numbers was not evolved for several years: British Somaliland 1:125,000

¹ Richard Oliver, ‘“Edition codes” and identifications on Ordnance Survey maps’, *Sheetlines* 83, 33.

² The main authorities for what follows are internal DOS circulars *D.O.S. Numbers* of 21 November 1968 and 10 June 1971; a file note *Overseas mapping and the consequences of OS International*, May 1991; OS International, *List of overseas mapping on sale from Ordnance Survey* (various years 1991-95); personal knowledge.

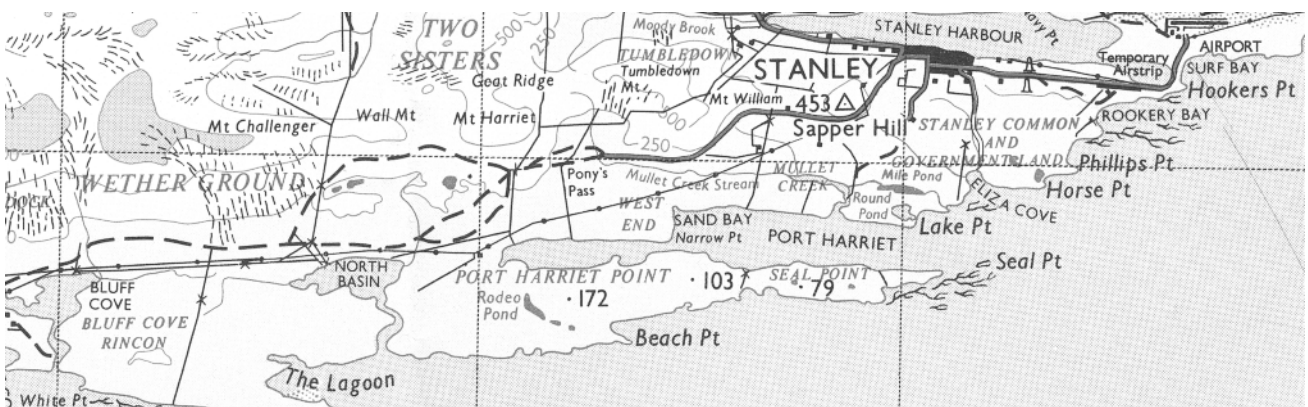
mapping (1952-57), for example, was DCS 39 but the 1:50,000 mapping (1952) was DCS 27; only the 1:25,000 series (1959-60) used the full DOS 339.

Oliver's example of the Falkland Islands highlights two other features of the DOS system. When a series was redesigned on totally different sheet lines (but at the same scale) the series number had to be altered (and the edition numbering to start again at 1). This was achieved by adding '/1', as happened also with the Belize and Lesotho 1:250,000 sheets. An earlier, ad hoc, method of differentiating series in such cases was used for Belize 1:50,000, where the $\frac{1}{4}^\circ$ sheets, DOS 4499, replaced the much earlier landscape 449. I am not sure how brief the circulation was of OSD 653/1, but it had a print run in January 1996 of 5000 copies, funded by the Falklands government, who presumably took the great bulk of the stock.

The second point of interest about series OSD 653/1, Edition 1-OS, is its anachronism. DOS became the Overseas Surveys Directorate of OS in April 1984 (not 1985), but in April 1991 OSD changed its name to OS International. Now it had been decided at the time of the merger that an existing DOS series would retain its DOS prefix on new sheets produced post-merger, but that any new series commenced post-merger would be prefixed OSD. If this policy were to have been carried forward, any new series after 1 April 1991 would have become, say, OS Int 060 (St Helena: Jamestown); however it was felt that this lacked simplicity and was liable to mis-transcription, while 'OS', on the other hand, though not used as part of a series number by OS Great Britain, would give no hint that it related to an overseas country.

I therefore decided that, given the accepted continuity of use of existing DOS and OSD series, the few formally anachronistic series such as OSD 653/1 or OSD 060 would not stand out. The only hazard seemed to be that researchers in years to come might deduce that publication of such an OSD series 'must have been commenced in the days of OSD, between 1984 and 1991'. File OSD 58/108/1, if preserved, will refute that theory. Otherwise *Sheetlines* may be the sole authority for what actually happened, and why! There is an analogy here with the continued use of 'GSGS' on some military mapping.

Finally, not all DOS / OSD mapping carried a series number referring to DOS or OSD at all, especially when it was part of a 'joint project' with the country. In Bermuda (Bda ...), Jamaica (Series 1), Liberia (LIB ...), Nepal (NEP ...), Zambia (ZS ...), for example, some or all of the mapping employed the country's own series numbering system, alone or – Lesotho (L ...) – in conjunction with the DOS system.



The then little known Bluff Cove, Two Sisters and Tumbledown appear on this extract from 1:250,000 DOS 653 Falkland Islands East sheet, edition 2-D.O.S. 1977. – CJH © Crown copyright NC/00/1340