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“Mapping the Olympic park”

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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.

Mapping the Olympic park

In December 2010 we mentioned¹ an unusual OS map depicting the Olympic park in east London at a scale of 1:4000. Produced jointly with the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE), its purpose was to promote civil engineering as a career choice for young people and to celebrate the work of the Olympic Delivery Authority in preparing the site for the 2012 Games.



Now a new one-off version entitled *The future Queen Elizabeth Olympic park* has been issued, again jointly with ICE and again printed on both sides with integral covers. The plan of the park itself occupies about half of one side, alongside a timeline from 2005 to 2030 (when 9.3 million visitors are expected) and an overview map locating Stratford. On the reverse, developments (achieved and proposed) are described under topic headings such as Transformation, Transport, Venues, Energy, Water and Waste.

Ordnance Survey are evidently pleased with the map, as they displayed it at the International Conference on Cartography in Dresden in August this year, using it (rather than their standard products) as the case study to demonstrate their 'Cartographic design principles'.

The map is indeed attractive and easy to read with the choice of muted colours depicting the different land use, for example.

However, closer inspection leads one to suspect that style has taken precedence over substance. There are several errors and omissions in the case of railways (ironically, as one of the purposes of the production is to promote the development of the urban transport infrastructure). Also, whilst the title on the front cover is as shown above, on the map itself it appears as the highly-misleading *Queen Elizabeth Olympic park 2030*.



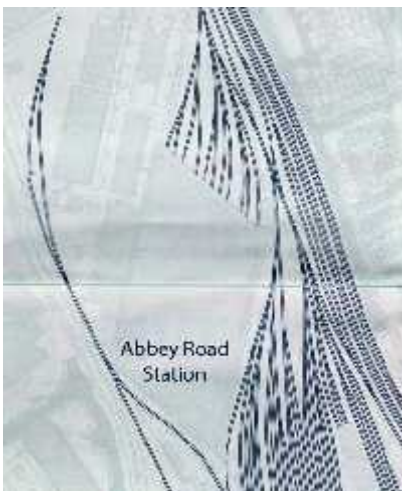
Far left: The main stadium
Left: the legend with colours for venues and buildings (top row); glass roofed and green roofed (second row); sports playing surface and playground (third row)

¹ Engineering the Olympic park, *Sheetlines* 89, 4.

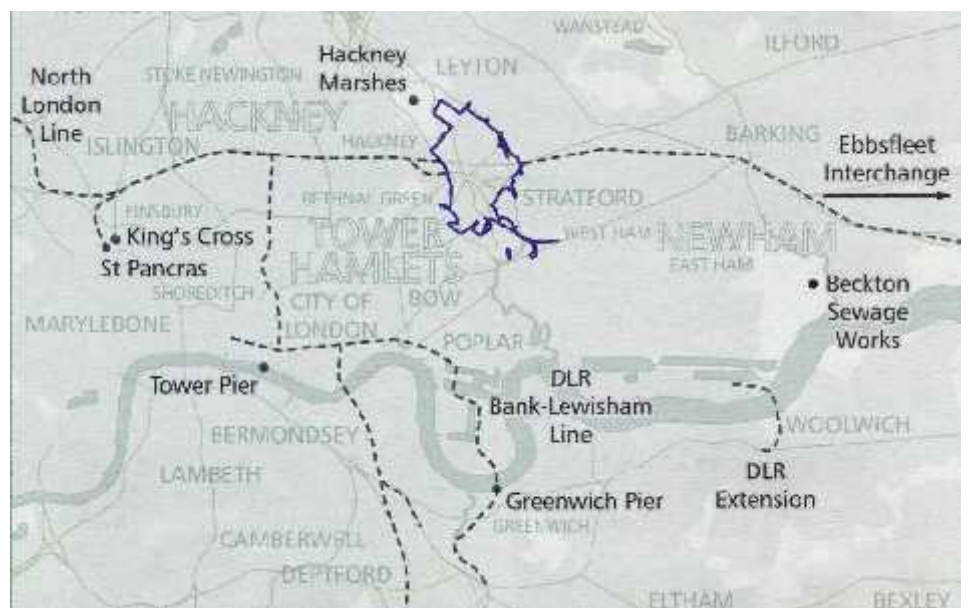
Applying our cartographic design principles

- * User requirements – the map had to show the importance of civil engineering in developing and creating the Olympic park
- * Display format – This was a paper map and the colour palette was developed to ensure maximum clarity
- * Visual hierarchy – The main focus was the Olympic park. To allow park data to stand out we chose a colour palette that was bold but aesthetically pleasing
- * Simplicity – We depicted only the key information required. The park features shown were boundary, rail lines, venues, utilities, pedestrian concourse and roads, general surface, green space, water and facilities / buildings
- * Legibility – All the map features were coloured to make them instantly recognisable. Text was positioned to make it as legible as possible and halos applied to make it clear amongst surrounding detail
- * Consistency – We kept both maps [2010 and 2013 versions] similar in terms of design but tweaked the colour palette enough so each map would stand out on their own
- * Accessibility – We tried to make the map as intuitive and easy-to-use as possible
- * Composition – Being a folded map it was designed with fold lines in mind. - for example the overview map and legend occupy one panel each. Borders were used to separate the different elements but the overall impression is one of balance and harmony, helped by the fact that the main map bleeds into the other panels.

A slightly abridged version of the OS presentation at ICC Dresden, with thanks to Christopher Wesson, OS Cartographic design consultant.



Above and top right: Some of the errors on the map. Jubilee line Stratford depot is wrongly labelled Abbey Road station; Bow Road station (District line) is labelled Bow Church, a non-existent station is labelled Bow Road and the DLR Bow Church station (on the easternmost line shown) is omitted. Other errors include the omission of Stratford High Street station (DLR) and the anachronistic labelling of the London Overground as the North London line.



The Overview map (above) is rather odd in that two short spurs of the DLR are depicted, but not the sections serving Stratford. High Speed 1, two detached sections of London Overground and an unidentifiable line north of Tower Pier all appear, but no National Rail or London Underground lines.