Ordnance Survey Maps

The Ordnance Survey (OS) was founded in 1791 to provide accurate mapping as a counter to the threat of a French invasion.

The Oxfordshire area was first surveyed in the early 19th century and, with regular revision since then, Ordnance Survey maps have become a remarkable record of the changing landscape.

How do I know which map sheets and editions you hold?

We have noted under each scale or category of Ordnance Survey map listed below how to identify individual sheets.

Finding aids:

- **Spreadsheet** - holdings list held in spreadsheet form, only available through Searchroom staff
- **Heritage Search** - online catalogue (suggested search terms are given)
- **Manual catalogue** - paper holdings list of maps (catalogue only available in Searchroom).
- **National Library of Scotland** offers a comprehensive online graphical index to published 1:1,250, 1:2,500 and 1:10,000 / 1:10,560 scale OS maps, 1841-1991.

And how do I go about viewing them?

We have noted under each scale or category of Ordnance Survey map listed below what formats are available for viewing and where they are stored.

Format:

- **Paper** - sheet map on paper; please ask to book a seat at the Map Table
- **Microform** - these include 35mm microfilm, aperture card or microfiche; microform readers are available in the Searchroom.
- **Digital** - digitised map content is available through all the public computers in the Oxfordshire History Centre Searchroom; two computers have dedicated large screens for map use. County Series OS maps are available through a clickable map index, in a sheet-by-sheet arrangement; they are also available as searchable seamless mapping through the ArcGIS digital mapping program. National Grid OS maps are only available as searchable seamless mapping through the ArcGIS digital mapping program.
- **Online** - National Library of Scotland increasingly provides free online access to OS mapping of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, including: pre-war large, medium and small scale; but post-war small scale only.
1:63360 (1" to 1 mile)

Draft field drawings, known as the Ordnance Surveyor’s Drawings, were prepared of the very first survey between 1808 and 1818 at a scale of 2" to 1 mile (1:31680)

Format - microfiche [ref. Microforms Room: MR2]
Finding aids - Bibliographical fiche and index map [ref. Microforms Room: MR2]
Coverage - Southern England

Format - paper [ref. A: MC3.6.1B]
Finding aids - index map [ref. A: MC3.6.1B]
Coverage - Oxfordshire

Online - British Library provides free online access to the full colour Ordnance Surveyor’s Drawings for the whole of England and Wales.

This early field survey was used as the basis for the Old Series or 1st edition 1" to 1 mile maps first published in 1830.

A New Series was published from 1847 and revised editions appeared regularly until metrification brought the Seventh Series to an end in the 1974-6. Old Series and New Series maps have been republished since 2005 as colour facsimiles under the imprint of Timeline or Cassini, re-projected to fit the modern 1:50,000 scale.

Format - paper (original sheets) [ref. A: MC14]
Finding aids - spreadsheet

Format - paper (facsimiles of Old and New Series) [ref. Searchroom: OZ 942]
Finding aids - Heritage Search [search for: “Cassini” or “Timeline”]

Online - National Library of Scotland, including:
  • New Series, 1893-1905
  • New Popular Series, 1945-7
  • Seventh Series, 1955-1961
**1:50000**


Format - paper (original sheets, flat up to 2004) [ref. A: MC14]
Format - paper (original sheets, folded from 2005) [ref. Searchroom: OZ 942]
Finding aids - spreadsheet

**1:25000 (2½" to 1 mile)**


Format - paper (original sheets, flat up to 2000) [ref. A: MC14]
Format - paper (original sheets, folded from 2002) [ref. Searchroom: OZ 942]
Finding aids - spreadsheet
Online - 1:25,000 Provisional edition (1937-61)

**1:10560 (6" to 1 mile)**

County Series:
- 1st edition (1866-83)
- 2nd edition (1897-1900)
- 2nd revision (1909-21)
- 3rd revision (1919-42 Berks; 1932-9 Oxon)

Format - paper (original sheets):
- Berkshire [ref. D: MC6]
- Oxfordshire [ref. A: MC16]
Finding aids - spreadsheet; printed holdings list and map index in Catalogue area
Online - 1866-1943 Berks; 1872-1939 Oxon

National Grid Provisional edition (c.1948-65) and Regular edition (c.1953-70).

Format - digital
Finding aids - searchable through ArcGIS digital mapping program
Format - paper (original sheets) [ref. A: MC17]
Finding aids - spreadsheet; map index in A: MC17
Users are expected to consult the digital version of this mapping, unless they have a justifiable need to examine the original.

1:10000 National Grid

This series provided the Metric replacement for the old 6" maps (1972-96).

Format - digital
Finding aids - searchable through ArcGIS digital mapping program
Format - paper (original sheets) [ref. A: MC17]
Finding aids - spreadsheet; map index in A: MC17

Users are expected to consult the digital version of this mapping, unless they have a justifiable need to examine the original.

Superseded by Landplan digital raster mapping (1999-)

Format - digital
Finding aids - searchable through ArcGIS digital mapping program

1:2500 (25" to 1 mile) County Series

• 2nd edition (1897-1900);
• 2nd revision or 3rd edition (1909-20).
• 3rd (incomplete) revision or 4th edition (1919-39).

Format - digital
Finding aids - searchable through ArcGIS digital mapping program or clickable Oxfordshire index map
Format - paper (original sheets) [ref. D: MC6-MC9]
Finding aids - spreadsheet
Online - Berks 1866-1943; Oxon 1872-1939

Users are expected to consult the digital version of this mapping, unless they have a justifiable need to examine the original.

1:2500 (25" to 1 mile) National Grid survey

• Chart paper editions 1955-92. Begun nationally in 1948, the first survey of Oxon was completed 1962-80, and Berks 1964-82. The Banbury survey was begun in 1965 and Oxford in 1955. We hold all later chart paper editions, as published, up to 1992 when the paper series was discontinued and superseded by digital mapping.
Format - digital
Finding aids - searchable through ArcGIS digital mapping program
Format - paper (original sheets) [ref. D: MC10-MC13, MC15]
Finding aids - spreadsheet

Users are expected to consult the digital version of this mapping, unless they have a justifiable need to examine the original.

• Interim and bespoke editions, 1977-99. Published chart paper editions were updated by SIM (Survey Information on Microfilm) printouts, showing latest surveyed changes (1977-93). We also hold selected Superplan printouts (1994-9) which were the digitally-sourced on-demand replacement for SIMs.

Format - paper (original sheets) [ref. D: MC10-MC13, MC15] Finding aids - spreadsheet

There are no digital versions of these map sheets, so users need to order the paper originals for consultation in the Searchroom.


Format - digital
Finding aids - searchable through ArcGIS digital mapping program.

1:1250 (50" to 1 mile) National Grid survey

• Chart paper editions 1955-89. National Grid mapping at this scale was introduced for towns with a population of over 20,000 in the 1940s; Oxfordshire coverage of published editions includes Abingdon (1980-6), Banbury (1965c.1984) and Oxford (1955-89).

Format - digital
Finding aids - searchable through ArcGIS digital mapping program
Format - paper (original sheets) [ref. D: MC18-MC19]
Finding aids - spreadsheet

Users are expected to consult the digital version of this mapping, unless they have a justifiable need to examine the original.

• Interim and bespoke editions 1970-97. Published chart paper editions were updated by SIM (Survey Information on Microfilm) paper printouts, showing latest surveyed changes (1970-95). We also hold selected Superplan printouts (1995-1997) which were the digitally-sourced on-demand replacement for SIMs.

Format - paper (original sheets) [ref. D: MC18-MC19] Finding aids - spreadsheet
There are no digital versions of these map sheets, so users will need to order the paper originals for consultation in the Searchroom.

  
  Format - digital
  Finding aids - searchable through ArcGIS digital mapping program

1:500 (10.56 feet to 1 mile)

As part of the OS County Series mapping, only towns with a population of over 4,000 were surveyed at this generous scale; in Oxfordshire, that meant Abingdon, Banbury, Henley and Oxford only (1873-82). These are immensely useful to historians as the detail of buildings and street furniture is quite stunning. The town plan scale was never revised beyond this first edition of 1873-82.

Format - digital
Finding aids - searchable through ArcGIS digital mapping program

Format - paper (original sheets) [ref. A: MC14]
Finding aids - spreadsheet

Users are expected to consult the digital version of this mapping, unless they have a justifiable need to examine the original.

Where else can I go?

Websites
- National Library of Scotland offers a growing selection of geo-referenced historic Ordnance Survey maps
- Bodleian Library (Oxford University) online catalogue. Searches can be limited to cartographer, format, scale, date, etc.
- British Library map collections
- British Library online catalogue

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