

Bartholomew's half-inch maps

Publication of Bartholomew's half-inch maps in their familiar blue covers began in 1875 with 30 Scottish sheets; 37 for England and Wales followed in 1897. Production continued with periodic revision until superseded by the current 1:100,000 scale series in 1975. The maps proved popular with the public from the start and sold by the million, due in no small part to their accurate road classification and the use of layer colouring to depict contours. In terms of map sales to the public, the firm was in competition with the Ordnance Survey, from whose maps Bartholomew's were reduced. An unpublished Ordnance Survey report of 1914 acknowledged that "the road classification on the Ordnance small-scale maps was inferior to that of the Bartholomew half-inch map for the use of motorists"; and a map-seller observed that the Ordnance Survey map "is not anything like so popular with the motorist, cyclist and the ordinary tourist as the Bartholomew". This article is based on a study of 33 maps in 21 versions (1897 – 1959) covering central southern England; and background information provided by Bartholomew, and Cyclists' Touring Club members. It relates to sheets for England and Wales, but assumes that Scottish sheets followed the same conventions.

The adopted system of road classification charted contemporary highway development. The earliest maps (1897 – 1903) recorded two classes: 'Driving & Cycling Routes' (coloured brown) and 'Other Roads' (uncoloured). The evidential value of these editions is limited, owing to the possibility of uncoloured routes being either public or private. 'Brown routes' represented the main roads of the day, so few qualify for inclusion in the definitive map. Around 1904 the familiar rights of way disclaimer appeared. The key now recorded five classes of roads and ways, viz., 'First Class Road'; 'Secondary Road (Good)'; 'Indifferent Road (Passable)'; 'Footpaths & Bridlepaths'; and cautioned that: "The uncoloured roads are inferior and not to be recommended to cyclists". The first three classes were distinguished by the use of red infill, either solid, pecked or dotted. Although there are some gaps in the collection, there is a good spread of dates. It is striking how the maps kept pace with road development. By 1911 an additional 'Through Routes' class had been added. By 1919 the first three classes were bracketed together as 'Motoring Roads' and by 1922, main roads were assigned their Ministry of Transport numbers. Nineteen thirties' maps revealed further bias towards motorists. Classifications of 'Best Motoring Routes' (red infill); 'Good Secondary Roads' (orange); 'Serviceable Roads' (pecked orange); 'Other Roads' (uncoloured); and 'Footpaths & Bridlepaths' (single or double row of dots) superseded the previous ones. By 1936, cyclists were no longer mentioned in the margin. The key changed little thereafter.

According to Bartholomew, the Cyclists' Touring Club revision arrangement began c.1910. There is some evidence to suggest it may have been earlier, but date codes were absent before 1911. The CTC logo was printed in the bottom margin on maps revised by the club, and Bartholomew say the arrangement lasted until c.1928 – although the CTC logo is missing from two 1927 editions in the collection. However, the back cover of a 1944 sheet refers to CTC 'co-operation'. A former CTC Map Revision Officer states that Bartholomew was provided with road information on a voluntary basis until about 1989.

A typical post-1910 date code would be found in the top left-hand corner of the map, although it could appear elsewhere. The letter A or B signified the first or second half of the year, followed by the last two digits of the date; so that B22 denoted a map published in the second half of 1922. It is possible to date pre-1911 maps with reasonable accuracy by reference to amendments recorded in the base map; eg boundary changes or railway construction, for which exact dates are usually known.

Maps of this kind are admissible as evidence of the dedication of a way as a highway per S.32 of the Highways Act 1980; and the weight given to them will depend on the circumstances, including the purpose for which they were made. Of course, one map on its own without corroborating evidence is unlikely to be regarded as sufficient proof.

The purpose of Bartholomew's half-inch maps was clearly explained on the maps themselves. From the start they were earmarked 'for Tourists & Cyclists', and the roads were classified for 'Driving and Cycling purposes' (by 1919 'Driving' became 'Motoring'). Cyclists were confined to public carriage roads until 1968. The small scale permitted only the most important footpaths and bridleways to be shown. Clearly, the *raison d'être* of the maps was to guide travellers along public highways most suited to their mode of travel. It was *not* to encourage trespass.

It is essential to gauge the accuracy of information contained in the maps by testing it against other reliable evidence of the period. Even the finest maps (including the definitive variety) are not immune from errors and omissions, and Bartholomew's are no exception. Their main drawback is the number of minor highways omitted; but this is understandable bearing in mind the small scale. Obviously, these are not the first maps to consult if researching footpaths or bridleways, but they are a valuable source of historical evidence for carriageways. Bartholomew had its own information service and prided itself on producing the most up to date maps available; clearly the firm would not knowingly publish misleading information. If the odd error crept in, it was unlikely to survive the next revision. One or two years seemed to be the usual gap between updated printings. The classification of minor roads was con-

stantly revised as some were improved to cope with burgeoning motor traffic, and others were virtually abandoned and fell into disrepair. A most interesting period was between about 1910 and 1920. Before 1920, few roads other than main roads were tarred. The travelling public had lower expectations of surface conditions than today, but a road then considered adequate for horse-drawn vehicles would eventually have dropped out of the recommended classifications if not improved to keep up with the needs of motorists and cyclists.

Roads classified on maps of the above period could be compared with those shown on the 1910 Finance Act plans. These remained in force until the Act was repealed in 1920, so were almost exactly contemporary. Roads shown on maps of the next decade could be cross-checked with the 'take over' or 'hand over' maps prepared in 1930 when responsibility for maintenance of rural roads was transferred from district to county councils.

Obviously, all footpaths and bridleways shown ought to be recorded on the definitive map. Only relatively long and important paths were included, and there was no point in showing any that were not public. Some highways were clearly understated: various undoubted carriageways appeared as mere paths or uncoloured roads, in all probability because they were green lanes. A number of these are known to have been used by the public and tradesmen as vehicular routes, but Bartholomew did not recommend them. The reason may have been that ways of this kind were not necessarily suitable for wheeled traffic all the year round. In the case of recommended routes, it would seem probable that main roads apart, most were district roads which received at least some attention from the highway authority of the day. A few may have been *ratione tenurae* roads. If any have not been absorbed into the current classified and unclassified county road network, they should be recorded as by-ways or RUPPs unless legally modified.

The maps appeared in other guises, and were employed by rival publishers and cartographers. Early versions of Bartholomew's half-inch maps adorned guide books and atlases by G. W. Bacon and John Murray. In the 1920s, Hiffe & Sons, displaying their confidence in the accurate road classifications, published *The Autocar Half-Inch Map* for motorists; and Edward Stanford, agent for Ordnance Survey since 1852, published its cycling and motoring *Bartholomew's Map* in competition with the OS half-inch road map.

Bartholomew's half-inch maps represent a most interesting source of historical evidence, especially those sheets covering the 'golden age' of motoring and cycling c.1910 – 1930, when they so faithfully mirrored the continuous road development of the era.

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*Seymour, W. A: *A History of the Ordnance Survey* (1980; Dawson) pp. 226–7.

A fuller, illustrated version of this article is available; please send SAE to the author at 141 Bath Road, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1SS.