



# *Sheetlines*

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“The Man with the Map - Reflections on the  
Artwork of Ellis Martin and Bradley Hutchings”

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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 Man with the Map - Reflections on the Artwork of  
Ellis Martin and Bradley Hutchings  
John Millard***

During the two years, 2015 and 2019, events occurred which are significant in the history of the Ordnance Survey and deserve further consideration. In 2015, the Ordnance Survey undertook a rebranding of their products and digitalisation of their maps with mobile app provision for users. Bradley Hutchings, the Hampshire based artist, was commissioned at the time to produce a Limited Edition of prints to mark this occasion. And 2019 was the Centenary of Ellis Martin's employment by the Ordnance Survey, following his demobilisation in 1918 at the end of WW1 from the Royal Engineers Field Survey Battalion. It may be argued that the two artists are inextricably linked with regard to the iconic image of 'the Man with the Map' as will be suggested in the following discussion.

The contribution which Ellis Martin made as a professional map artist with the Ordnance Survey has been fully researched, yet a century has elapsed since he was first employed at Southampton and one hundred years tend to be a time of celebration. It was intended to stage an exhibition of his work in 2019, at Southampton City Art Gallery, to include not only that completed for the Ordnance Survey but also for private commissions and commercial organisations such as WH Smith and the RAC, prior to 1919. Following a conversation with the Gallery, it would seem that this did not take place because of the onset of Covid and we were denied the opportunity to view the work of this exceptional artist.

It might be pertinent at this point to reflect on Ellis Martin's war service because it does give the opportunity to briefly consider how his cartographic training and artistic talent was used; and link in with some recently discovered letters which he sent to his family during the conflict. Martin's Army Records are readily available and confirm that he was attached to the 5th Tank Brigade as part of the Royal Engineers Field Survey Battalion. The Battle of Amiens in 1918 was one of the last engagements of World War One and it is interesting to consider what might have been the cartographic and field sketching input which he made. He was posted to France in March 1918; the battle took place in the following August and the Field Survey Battalion were actively involved. Inevitably, it would be impossible to locate a specific signature of Martin's work on a map because of GSGS regulations which forbade this but an example of what was produced to aid the Allied forces is shown as *figure 1*. It is located in the archives of McMaster University in Ontario.<sup>1</sup> A point of interest is that Martin's Army Record shows that he enlisted in 1916 and was posted

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<sup>1</sup> McMaster University. Morlancourt,, Etineham,Chipilly: trench map, before Battle of Amiens 1918 information up to 28-7-18. Field Survey Battalion RE 3-8-18 GSGS. Box N PC18 No 549

to the Ordnance Survey in January 1917 before joining the Field Survey Battalion and so had established links with the OS before 1919; this suggests that 1919 may not have been the centenary of his first employment in Southampton after all!

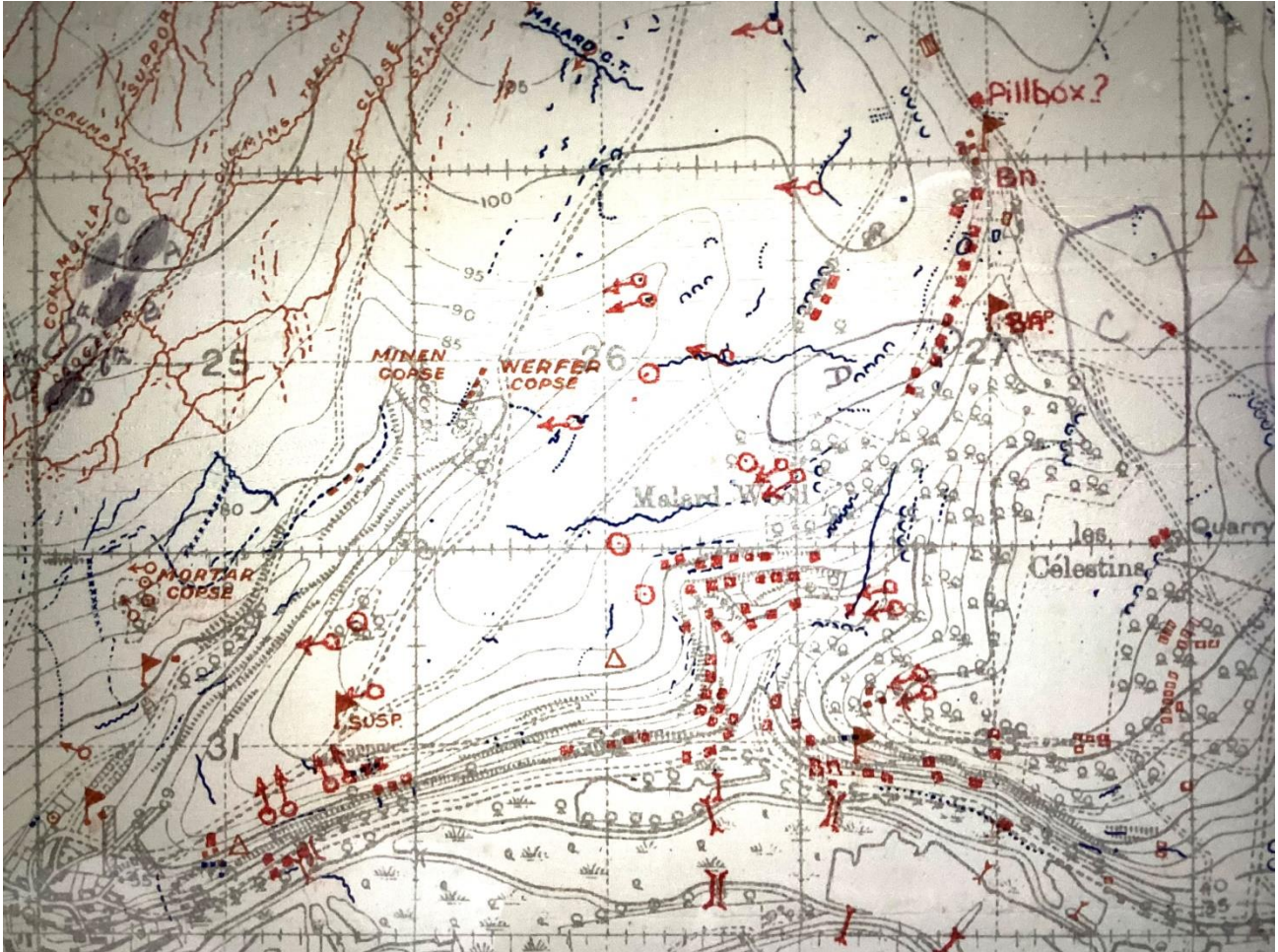


Figure 1. Morlancourt, Etineham Chipilly Trench map. Battle of Amiens 1918 (British trenches Red Enemy trenches Blue). McMaster University, Ontario

Martin's work in the Field Survey Squadron would not have focused entirely on the production of maps of current trench positions etc, but encompassed sketches of relatively advantageous locations for the movement of troops and artillery. There are limited examples of his sketch work beyond that which Paddy Browne included in Map Cover Art<sup>2</sup> which shows the HQ of the 5th Tank Brigade at Arras in France (figure 2). However, a post to the Ordnance Survey Facebook group for 17 June 2019, opens up new possibilities to add to this.<sup>3</sup> The post mentioned that it had been quite exciting to receive an email saying that during a house clearance, a painting of Martin's had been found, which showed a scene located on the Embankment in London. Of greater interest was that behind

<sup>2</sup>JP Browne. Map Cover Art. Pub. Ordnance Survey 1992 Page 21

<sup>3</sup> Ordnance Survey Facebook. Keegan Wilson 17 June 2019. 100 years of getting people outside-celebrating Ellis Martin

the mounting, there were about twenty letters, which he had sent to family members whilst he was stationed in France. The letters were in good condition and are now in the possession of the Ordnance Survey. One letter includes a sketch of the building where maps were produced together with a description of the harsh surrounds in which they worked. One comment refers to the cartographers working and sleeping in the same draughty stone floored room. An extract of the letter is shown as *figure 3*. The OS Archivist has indicated that one letter mentions Martin needing to make contact with the Ordnance Survey to see if it would be possible to resume employment with them - confirming that 2019 was not necessarily the centenary of his first employment with the Ordnance Survey.



Figure 2. HQ of 5th Tank Brigade, Arras. (Browne)

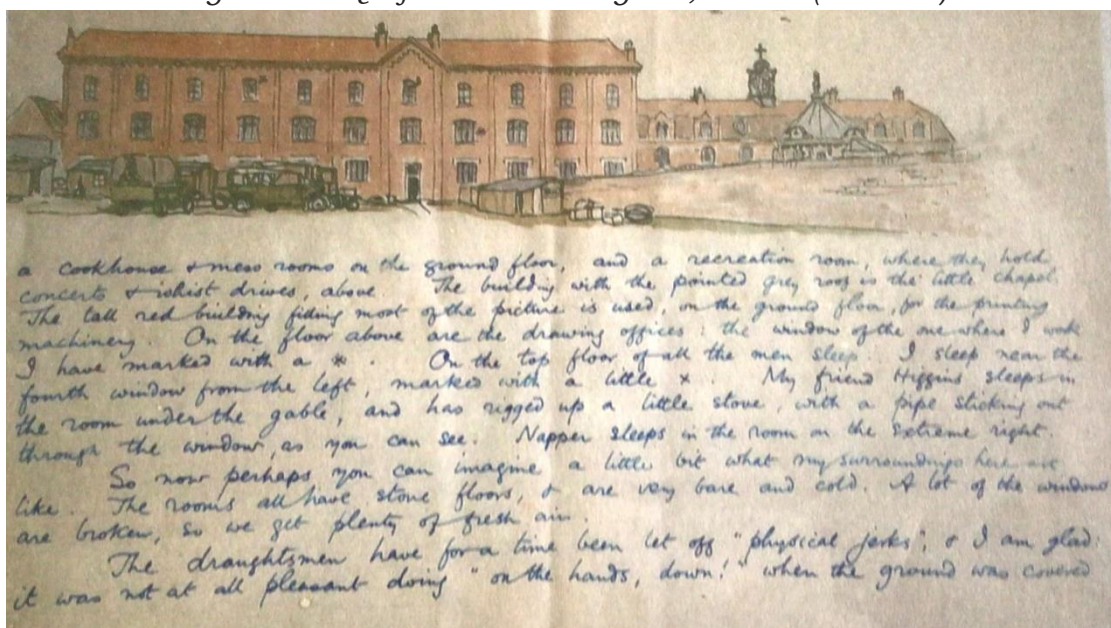


Figure 3. One of Ellis Martin's letters which was discovered behind a painting. (Ordnance Survey)

It is an established fact that Ellis Martin was employed by the Ordnance Survey to boost map sales, and the iconic image of potential users referring to a map both on promotional material and covers was an inspirational marketing ploy. The rationale behind this emphasis has been well documented; the post First World War years saw increasing leisure time and especially mobility and the newfound delights of the open countryside were beginning to attract town dwellers hitherto confined by an often depressing urban environment. Open spaces could be reached by foot, bicycle, car or train and a map was an essential accessory. What a temptation it was to pick one up either from a railway station bookstall, high street shop, or garage, with an illustration which stirred the imagination! There are so many possibilities to illustrate Martin's work focusing on the 'man with the map' but two might suffice (*figure 4*). One shows a very early promotional leaflet and the second illustrates the pipe smoking hiker consulting his map, which appeared on Tourist, Popular and District maps throughout the 1930s. The Charles Close Society Archives contain a large number of these covers (*figure 5*).

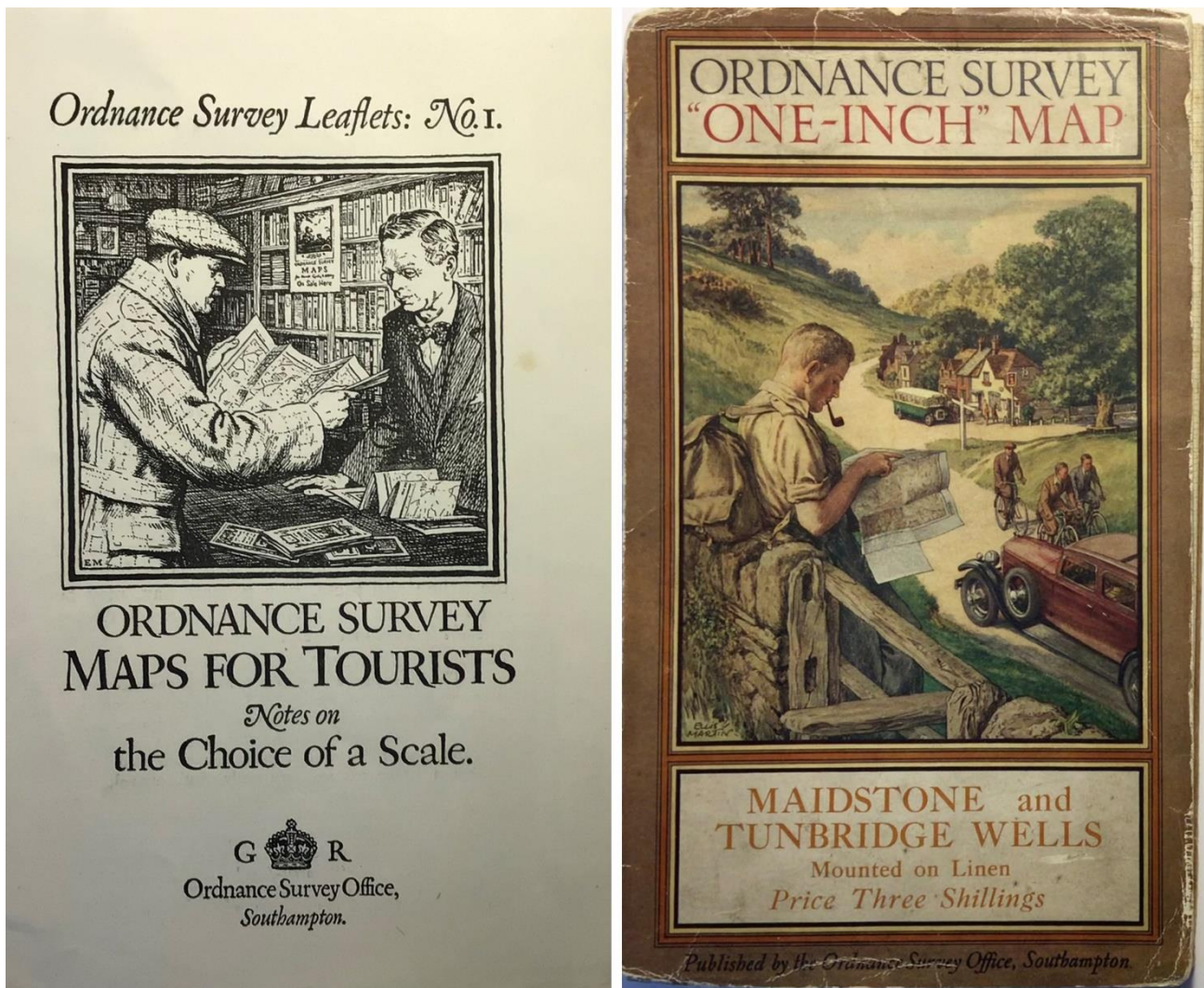


Figure 4. Ordnance Survey Leaflet No 1 1931 (Author)  
Hiker at stile Third/Popular Ed. District Maps 1932 (Author)



Figure 5. Montage of Ellis Martin's covers on the theme 'Man with the Map'

In the period following the ending of the Second World War, map cover art was to be in the hands of graphic designers rather than pictorial artists. Opinion was divided as to how pleasing this was to the eye; some users felt that it was a welcome modern approach, whilst others bemoaned the passing of an artistic touch which stirred the imagination. Ellis Martin's last contribution to cover design appeared in 1945 with his hand lettering on a few sheets of the One-inch Great Britain New Popular Edition of 1940 (figure 6) ...almost an apology to an influential map cover artist.

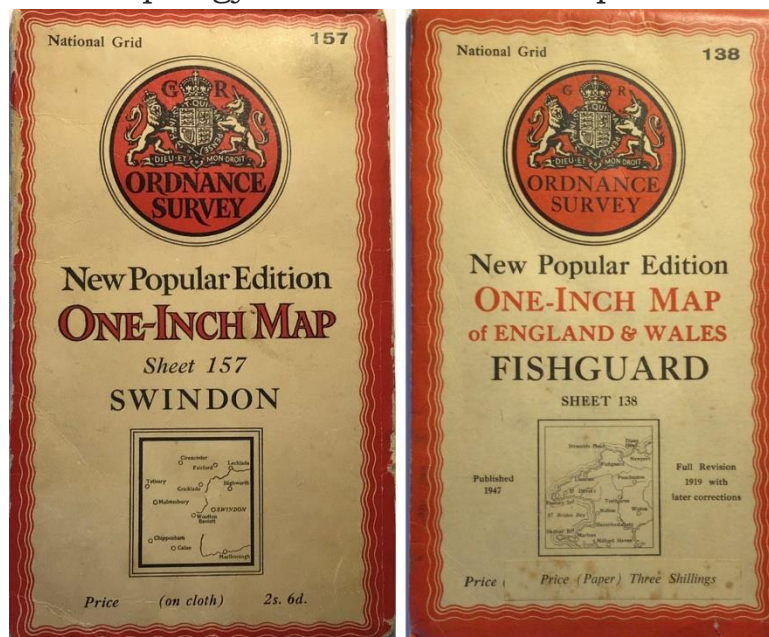
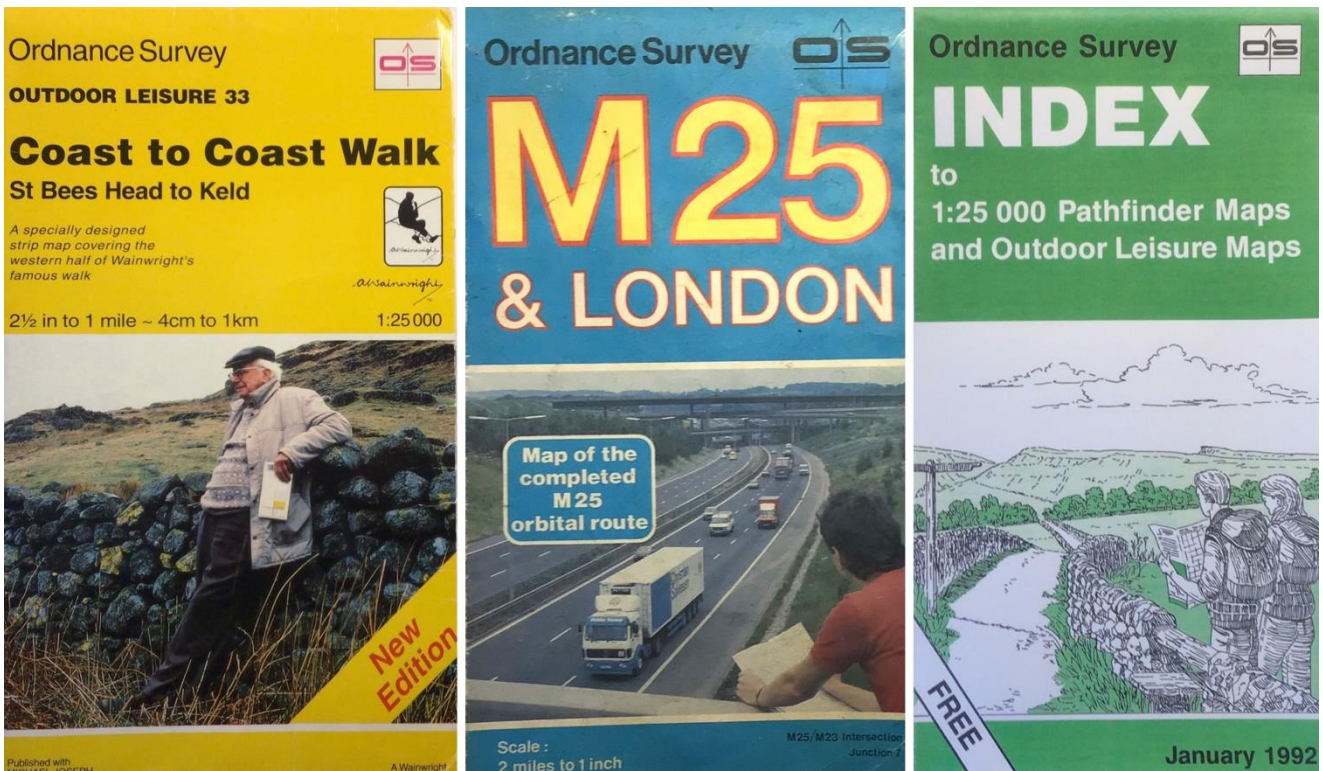


Figure 6. One inch Great Britain New Popular Ed. 1940 (Pub 1945) Ellis Martin's hand lettering (left) compared to the later lithographic covers. (Author)

Despite, the changes which took place, it would be possible to suggest that the Ordnance Survey never quite gave up on the marketing concept of ‘the man with the map’ as a selling point. Two illustrations might support this view. The first (*figure 7*), is the Outdoor Leisure Map 34, 1:25000, produced in 1995, which covers a section of Wainwright’s famous walk from St Bee’s Head to Robin Hood’s Bay. Again it shows the pipe-smoking walker, who is leaning against a wall holding a map. The second map for the eastern section of the walk shows Wainwright consulting the map. In the illustration shown, it might be tempting to suggest that there is a disdained look on Wainwright’s face and he might be saying ‘What am I doing here, I don’t need a map but as a Northern borough treasury officer, if you are paying me, so well and good’. It is based on an original photograph, which is the current practice on many Ordnance Survey maps, especially the Landranger and Explorer series. The second illustration (*figure 8*) is the two miles to one inch map of the M25 & London, 1986. Again, there is an anonymous map reader, leaning on an overpass barrier. There is one further illustration which might just suggest the Ordnance Survey did not fully abandon the artistic pull of walkers consulting a map, (*figure 9*): Steve Abbott produced a sketch for the January 1992 Index to the 1:2500 Pathfinder Maps and the Outdoor Leisure Maps.



*Figure 7 (left). Outdoor Leisure Map 34 1:25000 1995. (Author). Figure 8 (centre). 2miles to 1 inch map M25 & London 1986. (Author). Figure 9 (right). January 1992 Index cover. 1:25000 Pathfinder & Outdoor Leisure Maps (Steve Abbott/ Author)*

Bradley Hutchings is an art illustrator based in Hampshire and was commissioned by the Ordnance Survey in 2015 to produce an illustration to mark the rebranding and digitalisation of their products; to enhance sales through use of modern technology. The current Ordnance Survey House symbol appeared and mobile download facility was added to certain maps. He tells me he was asked to produce 250 signed copies, which would be distributed to selected clients. Further, half of the signed copies would have a printed map and the other half would show a map on a mobile phone. He gave permission for his work to be included as *figure 10a*, although it does differ in minor respects to that produced for his commission. Further, he said that although he was not directed to use any of Martin's artwork, he was personally drawn to Martin's classic covers for the one inch maps of 1918 and 1933 (*figure 10b*).



*Figure 10a. 2015 Ordnance Survey Commission by Bradley Hutchings. (Author)*



Figure 10b (Author)

2015 print has a ghostly feel of Ellis Martin but that must remain a personal view. When asked what had attracted him to the two iconic covers, he said that his thoughts had drifted towards what might be going through the minds of the two cyclists sitting on the side of the valley. Were they locating specific places or absorbing the aesthetics of the view; the sounds, the smells or just the beauty of what was before them. It may be, of course, that they were contemplating what was in their rucksacks for lunch!

As with any artistic work, beauty will be seen in the eye of the individual but it would be tempting to suggest that as a variation to the often repetitive colour photographs adorning the front covers of Ordnance Survey maps, the occasional piece of original artwork might appeal and enhance sales at a time when printed maps are struggling to exist in competition with mobile apps and direct download. Ellis Martin was an artist, like Bradley Hutchings, and the skills used to portray landscape need to be viewed as something more than just a marketing commission. However, the iconic image of the 'man with the map' clearly has an enduring legacy and the Ordnance Survey has not quite given up on this most effective marketing ploy.

Much debate has taken place as to the location Martin used for his sketches but Bradley's background hills were taken from a photograph of a location in Scotland. As in the Martin sketches, the viaduct remains a prominent feature. I am further led to believe that a small number of Bradley's prints were used by the Ordnance Survey as a competition prize on Facebook but I cannot find any reference to this. The