

Use of maps for two purposes:

Researching (walks, local history in general)

Planning (/documenting/publicising) walks

1. Researching

i.e. finding and comparing historical maps, usually online. Comparing with modern/accurate maps.

Old maps

I'll go through the better London maps currently available online. These are generally, commercial published maps and governmental (OS) maps. They can exist in various forms. Some are simply large image files. Others give you a viewing window, so you can drag and zoom the map to the bit you want, often allowing download as well. AKA Slippy maps.

Others give you a way to compare the old map with a modern map – useful and sometimes necessary when the area has been completely rebuilt. These are typically in the form of overlays, where you choose the map(s) you want to compare, including a modern map, and can 'fade in' and out the different maps with an opacity slider. These maps have been aligned by identifying points (like surviving buildings, road junctions) that correspond in the old and new maps so that each layer covers exactly the same area. The technical term for this is **georeferencing**.

I'll list some London maps that I find the most useful, with additions from Dave. At this point I must say a couple of things:

First, these are maps of London, and 'London' is the London of their time. There was London, Westminster and Southwark, and as London expanded westwards it started to cover Holborn and then the West End. But don't expect to find any useful large-scale mapping of much beyond those places from three hundred years ago. Anything further out that exists will not be large-scale, or else will probably be privately commissioned estate maps in archives. A large scale map of "London" is always a map of London as it was at the time. The original audience for this talk was mainly Camden Guides, and most of Camden was outside London for a long time. As Westminster Guides, you will be aware that the oldest 'London' maps will usually cover the old City of Westminster, and that there *are* many early printed maps of Westminster and parts of it. I don't have the sort of knowledge of these that you may, but I've asked Dave Brown to run through these.

Second, there are many experts on historic London maps, and I'm not one of them. Dave Brown has done more with them and I'm sure knows more about their history, though he was modest about being called an expert. True, it's a big field and there *are* experts with huge knowledge about different often narrow fields. What I do know is the maps that are generally found to be useful, that are available in convenient form online. And some tricks to get the most out of them.

I had a slight dilemma in choosing the format. I want to cover the most useful and important maps individually. These tend to exist in two or three online places and versions, though the places come and go. Most of them exist in the main online *sources*, which each contain dozens of London maps. These each have different ways of displaying them and some have powerful ways of searching and, so you can find the maps covering a specific area and date range. There's now even an AI search that you can query in English! So when I cover the sources, it'll be primarily about the way they work, how to find and display the maps you want. I'll mention the maps they hold but won't go through them in the same detail.

Individual important maps

One of the oldest proper London maps is the misnamed 'Agas' map of 1561. Unfortunately no copies survive. But by an amazing chance, the copper plates it was printed from were reused to paint on the other side, and three of these have been found. A later though cruder map (the 'Woodcut map' or 'Civitas Londinum') is based on that one.

["Agas" map](#)

(see under Sources below for how to use Layers of London maps.)

This is supposed to be georeferenced but they've made no attempt to. It won't have been based on a proper survey and will be very inaccurate. Hybrid bird's eye. Later maps were sometimes surveyed but many weren't. [A lot of georeferencing online is very poor, even when maps are good enough for it.]

An academic site about the 'Agas' and other pre-1666 maps with many resources and links:

<https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/edition/7.0/MAPS1.htm>

I won't cover all these early maps. Many are small scale, single pages in books and atlases, and many are foreign with some strange spellings and nearly all are very inaccurate.

Faithorne and Newcourt 1658

i.e. just pre-fire

Only on the BL site as far as I know, viewable at large scale and downloadable at smaller scale.

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1881-0611-254-1-6?selectedImageId=1183268001

Like Agas, a fake oblique view.

(Ogilby &) Morgan 1682

Available as a plain image file but I'll show it as a georeferenced overlay on Layers of London, which I'll cover later
[Morgan's map of 1682](#)

This is based on Ogilby's own survey. This map unlike previous ones is a 'plan' showing an accurate outline of buildings.

Rocque 1746

Available on various sites with their own way of displaying them

[David Rumsey](#) (best)

[Library of Congress](#) Plain image

[Layers of London](#) overlay slider. See below for more on overlays.

Rocque (a Frenchman, story of his doing it as part of a bet). Early example of pretty good surveying, and gives an accurate idea of the way streets varied in width. Covers a wide area well beyond main centres in large scale.

Rocque also mapped the surrounding countryside, **10 miles around, and Middlesex** – at smaller scale but the best at that time for non-built-up areas – which of course included much of the post-1965 City of Westminster.

[Rocque 10 miles around London](#)

Horwood & Faden

Horwood surveyed his wonderfully detailed map in the 1790s, but sadly got little recognition or success. Later editions were created by Faden between 1806 and 1819. Horwood's map is available on several sites but I use this one because it has the 1819 Faden as well and you can switch between them and modern maps and satellite images.

[Horwood and Faden](#)

Click on the full screen icon, the top right 'layers' icon switches between the maps.

Individual houses are shown and the frontages are accurate, so you can pinpoint the location of any individual house.

House numbers are shown, presumably on those houses which had them – some on Horwood, many more on Faden.

Parish boundaries are shown exactly, even where they go through the middle of a building. I suspect some of the backs of houses, which Horwood may not have been able to see, are conjectural.

Next are three good maps of the early 19th century. These tend to become more like street maps we know, with widths starting to become a bit more standardised.

Mogg 1806

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ed/1806_Mogg_Pocket_or_Case_Map_of_London%2C_England_-_Geographicus_-_London-mogg-1806.jpg

Note the proposed 'British Circus' at top left.

Greenwood 1828

The best version online has disappeared, but there are two or three online sources to this and very similar editions

[Greenwood 1828](#)

<https://curiosity.lib.harvard.edu/scanned-maps/catalog/44-990102029440203941>

After that there were many competing maps, e.g. by Cruchley, covering many dates. You can probably get one for any year you want (though data may not be up to date, or may include things never built). These are listed in Sources below.

Whitbread 1853

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g5754l.fi000101/>

This is one example of many. This is an early example with sans type, probably some standardisation of street widths which we get with later street maps.

Stanford

When they came out the largest-scale Stanford maps were described as "the most perfect maps of London", just predating the 25 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey ones. Maybe some standardisation of street widths and building shapes compared to the OS. Both by now are completely accurate (others often are still not). Three have their own domain but all these are provided by the commercial site Mapco.

1864

<https://london1864.com/>

1872

<http://london1872.com/>

1878

<https://london1878.com/>

1897 (street map, smaller scale, different style)

<https://mapco.net/stanford/stanford.htm>

1877 Parish Map, overprinted with 1877 parish and poor law union boundaries

<https://mapco.net/parish/parish.htm>

Booth Poverty maps

Colour overlays on a base map, showing the affluence or deprivation of roads and terraces. The original series can be seen here

<https://booth.lse.ac.uk/map/14/-0.1174/51.5064/100/0>

(and also the notebooks - not map sources but a wonderful source of stories).

A later edition is on Layers of London (see below).

[early base is OS 6 inch of 1869, later Stanford]

Bartholomew maps

By the end of the nineteenth century there were street maps in book form by Bacon, Philip and others. John Bartholomew's series ran from around 1900 to 1969 in a characteristic attractive mapping style, and much better print quality than others. I used one as the banner for a web page <https://www.notjustcamden.uk/resources.html> and as an image illustrating 1917 events. <https://www.notjustcamden.uk/orchestrelle/> Many not online but some years are.

and of course, **Ordnance Survey** maps, which I'll cover under the main source for them.

SOURCES

Now I want to cover the main *sources* of London maps. The reason to look at most of the London maps via their online sources is that each of the major sources has a slightly different way of displaying maps, and it's worth knowing how to use them. More important, all of them list their London content in a useful order, and a couple have very powerful ways to search for what you want.

oldmapsonline.org

I'll start with the most useful source, and explain why – which I didn't appreciate before Dave mentioned it.

Oldmapsonline has a search tool which covers most London maps. They index *all* the maps in online sources that are available under terms that allow it – museums, libraries, university holdings, generally all except for commercial sites.

these include the maps held by

British Library (incl Crace Collection)

National Library of Scotland (for OS in particular)

the David Rumsey collection

several universities in Europe and the US

- are all searchable on oldmapsonline.

[The BL maps are often only in small scale, not very usable, no doubt since they were hacked two years ago. Some are large scale, hopefully they're gradually replacing the small ones.]

To see how to use the site, see [this document](#).

National Library of Scotland

is the place for OS maps but has MANY others. All should be indexed on oldmapsonline but their main list page, arranged by date, is useful.

<https://maps.nls.uk/towns/london.html>

I'll cover the OS maps and how to use the site for them later on.

Mapco

<https://mapco.net/london.htm>

A wonderful source especially of 18th & 19th century maps (including the Stanfords above), Bartholomews 1908 and much more. Listed in date order. A commercial site but maps are viewable in high quality, though watermarked. Not georeferenced, a key map links to individual section images. As a commercial site it's not indexed on oldmapsonline, so there will be a few here that don't exist anywhere else.

(Not to be confused with the similar site **Motco** which closed about ten years ago.)

Layers of London

<https://www.layersoflondon.org/map>

London Uni/Inst of Historical Research project.

A lot of user-contributed historical text data, for our purpose we'll look at the maps themselves. They're a bit fiddly.

Brief instructions:

Click on the Overlays icon in the left hand nav column. This brings up the map sources panel. Click on one, and 'Use this overlay' (top right of panel) to add it. Now click the back arrow at centre right of the panel to hide it. The map view shown is filled with markers which relate to user-contributed stories. Click 'Hide pins' on the top row to hide them.

Bottom centre of map 'Show overlay tools' gives an opacity slider. Some maps have been given extra layers such as parish and road boundaries but these can be switched off and the original map shown. You can use many different maps and slide or switch them on and off. We plan to create a document on using this.

This is good for Rocque, the postwar RAF Aerial images, the Bomb Damage maps, the Booth Poverty maps, the Inland Revenue survey of 1910-15 and the Goad insurance surveys and others. You can go back and add other maps and switch between them or slide their opacity.

The Goad maps are worth mentioning individually. Ugly things created for insurance purposes and mainly covering commercial streets, they give the use of each building (draper) and often the name, along with the building and roof

material. They ran from about 1887 until 1961 and they supplied updates as paste-on cutouts. So there is a huge number of variants and dates, only a few of which are online. They would need a special X-ray technique to see the layers, like they use on ancient rolled-up papyrus.

The Grub Street Project

A very professional/academic source for 18th century London life, with a map page

<https://www.grubstreetproject.net/london/maps/>

listing just about all available maps pre-1720 and a few later. Available elsewhere, as from public sources.

Copyright/licencing status given for each. Amazing search results for place names.

The Underground Map

<https://www.theundergroundmap.com/index.html>

This is a project to create street and station histories for London, with overlay maps (opacity slider) covering many decades. Many are too small scale for many uses. This is an odd site, you can request downloads of maps via their paid Substack subscription, but most or all are freely available elsewhere. Not the first place to look but the decade by decade selector gives a quick way to identify and date major changes.

National Library of Scotland

other than the listed ones mentioned above, they are the main source for OS maps, many georeferenced, which you can view with an overlay slider or in a side-by-side view.

In either case, you can choose a modern map and an old one

Side-by-side (probably best to start)

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side/#zoom=15.7&lat=51.51791&lon=-0.14524&layers=168&right=osm>

The RHS panel gives you a wide choice of modern maps or satellite imagery and is possibly the best way to see other satellite sources apart from Google. I'll show these later.

The 'old' (LHS) panel defaults to a one inch map which is too small-scale for most of our purposes, but there are many others with much more detail. Easiest to zoom the maps in (using top left +/- or the scroll wheel). Then on the text box at the bottom of the old panel, check 'Only show maps with more detail than the current zoom level' to remove the small scale ones from the dropdown. The main sources are Ordnance Survey maps from the 1840s onwards, though these earliest are patchy in coverage. The 1944-1973 OS series are useful, and gives the street numbers of the time. For London, these are clearly early in the date range, maybe 1950, as many bombsites are still marked 'Ruin'. The 25 inch 1892-1914 is another good one, useful for showing the many street name changes graphically.

On the top banner, the 'Georeferenced Maps' link switches to an overlay slider view.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=16.9&lat=51.51432&lon=-0.11907&layers=117746212&b=9&o=59>

Both views' alignment, "georeferencing" is the posh term, can be a little inaccurate, most obvious at big enlargement. It's a good idea to identify some building that is unchanged in both, and see where the corners don't quite coincide and mentally adjust for it.

On the Camden guides course I got 5 Pancras Square as a stop.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=17.3&lat=51.53376&lon=-0.12714&layers=251&b=osm&o=0>

I put the group here and talked about the new building, how moving staff out from many leased buildings saved them money, the fins and energy efficiency, the awful artworks, but soon started to talk about the industrial past, how this was very polluted land, and you'd never want to be standing where we were. Particularly there [slide opacity slider to right].

A useful and annoying feature of these 'draggable' views is that each time you change the zoom or move the coverage, the URL changes. This is the same with modern Google and most or all 'slippy' maps, and it adds a huge number of URLs to your browsing history. But the upside is that when you've zoomed and centred to just what you want, you can save the URL shown and publish it, and anyone clicking on that link can see the same view (that's what I did here). Or you can bookmark it with a suitable title for your own reference.

The leftmost link on the top banner, 'Map Finder' is important. This gives a graphical view of the coverage of different scales of OS map. So you can say, I want to see the boundaries of all the 25 inch maps in this window. This is important, as it is the way to see many other OS map series that don't feature in the side-by-side and Georeferenced dropdowns. For example:

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/#zoom=14.2&lat=51.53716&lon=-0.10951&layers=101&b=1&z=0&point=0,0>

This shows the 25 inch map coverage. The depth of the overlay colour shows how many different map versions they have. Clicking on one covering Oxford Street and Regent Street gives a right-hand panel showing that there are OS maps available for 1875, 1916 and 1934, none of which are in the side-by-side and Georeferenced. Click on any to see the OS map from any of these dates. The small green 'Back' icon at top left returns you to the coverage view. Click on the OS Six-inch series, 1820s - 1960s and on one of the map extents and you'll typically get four to six maps. These don't have the detail for individual ordinary buildings but can cover a wider date range.

Last and best for later periods, the OS 1:1250 - 1:10560, 1944-1973 dropdown entry gives you a large range of dates. For the small square including the Fitzrovia Chapel there are 12 maps, from 1951 to 1991. The later ones are listed but not displayable as they're in copyright, but ones from 1974 are just out of copyright and can be seen.

<https://maps.nls.uk/view/144878023>

Flickr group London Maps <https://www.flickr.com/groups/londonmaps/>

874 London maps and related images, in no order but searchable by keyword. Many people have added sections of maps (including me), and it gives a taster of some of the other old mapping styles. But the main reason to mention it is the many maps added by Mikey Ashworth. He has a huge collection of maps and ephemera, mainly transport ones, and all his London maps are here. So if you ever want to see where the trams or trolleybuses ran in the 1930's, Mikey is a great source.

David Rumsey/Old Maps Online

He is a US collector with a huge collection which he generously makes available to all. Many of the NLS OS maps are from him.

<https://davidrumsey.oldmapsonline.org/maps/190451833386/view>

Not sure how many are only available here but the big thing they offer is, you can sign up, and upload your own maps. Not for them to use, but you upload your map, 'georeference' it, and can then see it against other maps with an opacity slider. This example is their version of Rocque's 1746 map but is badly wrong around Fleet Street / Ludgate Hill. Rocque is reasonably accurate, but the georeferencing has gone very wrong.

Oldmapsonline has taken over the hosting of the David Rumsey site, they can be used using their tools. Rumsey has its own viewing and comparison tools called 'Luna', different from the oldmapsonline ones (I think you can use either), and Luna seemed to offer some advantages. One is that it has just started to offer an AI interface, so you can form a search in English. Go to <https://www.davidrumsey.com/> for a page about AI. Type London in the top right search bar. On this page click the bottom right blue icon, and type "Show London maps of the 1810s [1830s] with house numbering". [1810s fails, 1830s shows Tallis panorama.]

Two specific uses

Street names. These have changed many times, in particular in 1935-9 when the many variant names (Great, Upper, Little etc) were rationalised. You can get very lost in old directories and the census without a map of the same period.

House numbering. House numbers gradually came into general use (as first listed in Johnson's 1817 street directory) and Faden's version of Horwood's maps is your best source for that time. Then up one side and down the other, and as these are very much the exception now it shows how many streets were renamed and renumbered in the 30s. 1951 OS for post-renaming numbers - which also may be different from now.

https://www.maps.thehunthouse.com/London_Miscellany.htm has various sources of street names and changes.

and https://www.maps.thehunthouse.com/Streets/Guide_to_Dating_London_Maps.htm is a map dating guide listing dated changes.

At this point I was running late and had to drastically curtail the next part, on digital maps. I'll create a separate document on some of these, with some of the links that I had to cut, and will announce it on the map mailing list.