Term is over and I have managed to dispatch the last newsletter of the year just in time to say that Christmas orders can still be sent to the UK and mainland Europe. A list of last posting dates is here. My Christmas clearout is available until January, so you can still buy Underground Maps Unravelled, plus one other title (Underground Maps After Beck, Mr Beck’s Underground Map, Paris Metro Style in Map and Station Design), including delivery, for £35 UK, £45 continental Europe, or £55 USA/Rest of the World. Email me to order.

Date for your diary

• The second Schematic Mapping Workshop will be held on 11th/12th April 2019, at TU Wien, Austria. Details are on the workshop website and the program will be announced once it is finalised. The web page for contributions is accepting submissions for one more week, and online registration is now open.

Book news

Apologies, I have been forgetting to mention a rather lovely Japanese book on transit maps. Its title literally translates as Fun Route Maps, and it would be a perfect gift for a Japanese speaking map fanatic. In fact, there are so many nice images in this book that I would recommend it for non-Japanese speakers too. If you want to track down a copy, the ISBN number is 978-4-7661-3187-1.

No details yet, but I am in the process of completing a co-authored book on maps, which will be a slight departure for me. Hopefully, details can be made available soon in the new year, publication is expected in time for Christmas 2019. As soon as this one has wrapped up, I will be restarting work on another map book project, this time on a topic very close to my heart.

Map of the Month: A fitting end to the decade of diagrams

This has been an exciting year for me, with two schematic map discoveries from the 1930s that I had no previous awareness of (see Newsletter 60). These were very creative times – in contrast, schematic map innovation in the two decades after the Second World War was relatively infrequent.

It seems fitting to highlight the work of a designer who was one of the early pioneers. George Dow’s diagrammatic maps of LNER commuter networks were first issued in 1929, preceding Henry Beck’s more famous London Underground design by four years. George Dow ended this ‘decade of diagrams’ with a particularly ambitious creation. He combined, into one single diagram, the three separate London suburban networks of the London & North Eastern Railway.

This is a map that I have long wanted to reconstruct, but its major innovation has held me back until now. This design uses 13 pictograms to designate facilities and leisure activities available throughout the network: they are quite intricate, and I have never been able to pluck up courage.
to attempt to recreate them. Fortunately, I recently received an email from Doug Rose asking for a scan of
this very map, and in the ensuing conversation, he very generously agreed to recreate these pictograms.

What did I learn about this map from recreating it? It is obvious, looking closely, that it was not
designed with the pictograms in mind: there are many congested areas where they barely fit. Also,
this organised, elegant design was unfortunately not implemented very conscientiously. This map is intended to be a straightforward octolinear diagram, but there are barely
any lines on it that are true to horizontal, vertical, or 45° degree diagonals. Small deviations can have big
knock-on effects, and in the process of correcting the angles, this design was subtly rebuilt, making it a
representative anachronism rather than a faithful reconstruction. On the other hand, for various reasons,
I’ve argued that absolute authenticity is impossible for a reconstruction, and futile to attempt.

The original map was typeset using LNER standard Gill Sans lettering, and this is available off-the-shelf
from various sources as a digital font. In past years, I would have hesitated at this, because all of the
available (and seemingly identical) versions were, simply, awful. In contrast, the latest Gill Sans Nova is
much improved, with well-judged spacing and kerning, effortlessly substituting for the original lettering.

After a busy term, I’m looking forward to a quiet Christmas. My University of Essex module: Transit Maps:
Past, Present, & Future will be having its third outing next term, and a few of the lectures need rewriting.
I’ll also be preparing for the Schematic Mapping workshop, including writing a paper on the pitfalls of
measuring usability. I’m intending to distribute my next newsletter mid-January, and Map of the Month
is in hand. To find out what is on the horizon, subscribe to my newsletter at www.tubemapcentral.com.
Wishing my readers a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

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