This major new exhibition looks at the history of the 20th century through its maps for the first time, shedding new light on familiar events, from global conflicts to the depths of the ocean floor – and even the mapping of outer space.

It explores how 20th century maps shaped the ways we see the world we live in. Furthermore, it celebrates the rare beauty and astonishing variety of 20th century maps from the first sketch of the London Underground from 1931, to declassified Ministry of Defence maps, Ordnance Survey maps from the 1920s, a Russian moon globe and the first map of Winnie the Pooh’s Hundred Acre Wood.

From questions of war and peace, to understanding the movements of people, nature, and even the financial markets, Maps and the 20th Century: Drawing the Line explores how maps became increasingly present in 20th century lives.

The exhibition looks at the spectacular advances in the technology of mapping across the century, from the land surveys of 1900 to the development of satellite imagery by 2000. For the first time, we could see from the Atlantic Ocean floor to the far side of the Moon. Telling the history of the 20th century in maps allows us to reconsider the recent past from different perspectives.

Exhibition highlights include:

- 3D relief models of the Western Front from 1917, on display for the first time.
- A dress made out of Second World War escape maps printed on silk.
- Secret Cold War maps by the Ministry of Defence;
- An early sketch for the map of the London underground railway system.
- 1931 aerial photograph of Liverpool with targets marked in red, from a booklet of British industrial targets for Luftwaffe operations from 1940.
- E H Shepard’s map of the Hundred Acre Wood, first published on the endpapers of A.A. Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh* in 1926.
- A navigational stick chart, produced in the Marshall Islands c.1900.
- A Russian moon globe produced in 1961.
- A map of the Atlantic Ocean Floor by Heinrich Berann, from June 1968.
- John Betjeman’s personal set of Ordnance Survey maps.
Of this exhibition Tom Harper, lead curator of Maps and the 20th Century: Drawing the Line at the British Library, commented: ‘Maps intrigue and astonish us, and Maps and the 20th Century: Drawing the Line will give a captivating and sometimes unexpected take on our recent past. Maps always reflect the motivations of their creators, and we will be looking at how maps were used not only as sources of information, but as tools of power and influence.

‘The British Library has one of the world’s leading map collections, so we are the perfect place to explore why our enthusiasm for maps is so enduring, using powerful and surprising examples from across the world.’

This exhibition is accompanied by a season of events exploring how maps continue to shape and influence the world we live in, exploring themes of fictional maps, political propaganda and transport.

Further information on the exhibition, opening times, accompanying events and the British Library, readers are invited to see: www.bl.uk/events

Picture captions

1
L'Entente Cordiale, 1915.
Copyright British Library©. Photo by Jon Ellis.

2
Russian moon globe from 1961 with NASA earthrise image of the earth in the background.
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3
Ordnance Survey tourist map cover proof from the 1920s.
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