

Notes on GSGS Mapping in World War II

In preparation for the invasion of Sicily, which took place in July 1943, the Geographical Section, General Staff, War Office, London produced an illustrated guide to the to the mapping situation in the Central Mediterranean theatre of operations entitled “Notes on the G.S.G.S. Maps of Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, 1 May 1943”.

As the war progressed the G.S.G.S. produced further guides for subsequent theatres of operations:

- “Notes on the G.S.G.S. Maps of France, December 1943”,
- “Notes on the G.S.G.S. Maps of Germany, Denmark and Central Europe, March 1944” and
- “Notes on Maps of The Balkans, July 1944”.

These guides followed a standard format. Part 1 consisted of a description of all the operational GSGS series of the theatre at 1:1,000,000 scale and larger including map samples and map series indexes. Part 2 generally contained notes on the mapping of the various countries, notes on road classifications, availability of air photo cover, notes on grids and grid junctions, notes on map distribution and the state of reproduction material distribution. Appendices include Glossaries of the topographical terms used in various countries and Gazetteers of geographical names appearing on medium scale series.

Also often included are inserted large-format map series indexes and conventional signs cards.

No such guides were available for the Western Desert, North African or Burma Theatres of operations.

These wartime guides are an invaluable description of, and finding aid for, the general mapping situation and map series in use in various theatres in World War 2. Armed with the information they contain, the historian or researcher can, if required, seek appropriate series and sheets in the various archives and map libraries in which these maps may now be found such as The National Archives,

The British Library, The Imperial War Museum, The Royal Geographical Society and University Libraries.

To this end, the Defence Surveyors' Association has included scanned versions of all four guides on the web site to assist researchers who may not otherwise have access to these publications.

1) Notes on the G.S.G.S. Maps of Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, 1 May 1943

GSGS Maps of Italy - Glossary

[BO1 - Italy - Glossary.pdf \(2.8 MB\)](#)

Italy - Selection of Maps held in the GSGS Library

[BO1 - Italy - Index.pdf \(5.9 MB\)](#)

Italy - Index Maps

[BO1 - Italy Map Selection.pdf \(6.7 MB\)](#)

Notes on GSGS Maps of Italy

[BO1 - Notes on GSGS Maps - Italy.pdf \(42.1 MB\)](#)

2 Notes on the G.S.G.S. Maps of France, December 1943

Glossary of Dutch Topographical Terms

[BO2 - Glossary Dutch Topo Terms.pdf \(668 KB\)](#)

Glossary of French Topographical Terms

[BO2 - Glossary French Topo Terms.pdf \(516 KB\)](#)

Gazetteer of Holland

[Gazetteer of Holland.pdf \(1.6 MB\)](#) (Not currently available)

Provisional Gazetteer of Belgium and Luxembourg

[BO2 - Gazetteer Belgium.pdf \(1.5 MB\)](#)

Notes on GSGS Maps of France, Belgium and Holland

[Notes on GSGS Maps - FR BE and HOL_1.pdf \(38.5 MB\)](#)

[Notes on GSGS Maps - FR BE and HOL_2.pdf \(41.2 MB\)](#)

3) Notes on the G.S.G.S. Maps of Germany, Denmark and Central Europe, March 1944

Appendix 1 - Glossary of Conventional Signs for Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland

[BO3 - Appx 1.pdf \(19.2 MB\)](#)

Appendix 2 - Short Glossary of German

[BO3 - Appx 2.pdf \(708 KB\)](#)

Appendix 3 - Short Glossary of Danish

[BO3 - Appx 3.pdf \(628 KB\)](#)

Appendix 4 - Short Glossary of Czech and Slovak

[BO3 - Appx 4.pdf \(636 KB\)](#)

Appendix 5 - Short Glossary of Polish

[BO3 - Appx 5.pdf \(428 KB\)](#)

Appendices 6-8 - Map Index

[BO3 - Appx 6.pdf \(15.5 MB\)](#)

Appendix 10 - Gazetteer of East Germany

[BO3 - Appx 10.pdf \(4.3 MB\)](#)

Appendix 11 - Gazetteer of Denmark

[BO3 - Appx 11.pdf \(2 MB\)](#)

Appendix 12 - Gazetteer of Austria

[BO3 - Appx 12.pdf \(1.9 MB\)](#)

Notes on GSGS Maps of Germany, Denmark and Central Europe

[BO3 - Notes on GSGS Maps Germany.pdf \(60.8 MB\)](#)

4) Notes on Maps of The Balkans, July 1944

Appendix - Notes on Maps of the Balkans

[BO4 - Appx Balkans.pdf \(15.5 MB\)](#)

Notes on Maps of the Balkans

[BO4 - Maps Balkans.pdf \(57.6 MB\)](#) (Not currently available)