

Electronic OS Maps - How Brilliant is This!

OS maps are now available online - in some cases, free of charge. The app is available for Android, iPhone and Symbian operating systems. Just search the Market for 'OS Atlas'. Once loaded, you will see your location displayed on the OS map of your area and from there you can scroll. All map scales are available from 1:125,000 to 1:10,000 (where applicable) which is achieved just by zooming. To use this network connectivity is necessary as there would be insufficient memory on a phone for the complete library - and anyway this would be unlikely to be free! However it is possible to scroll away from your current location and your movement is tracked.

Although not free but more useful, is basically the same app for the iPad, called ViewRanger Premium. More useful because of screen size and the ability to go to any map tile you have downloaded. Plus, of course scrolling is much quicker than on a phone. See <http://www.viewranger.com/phonesupport.php>. For £15 you get the app, a 1:125,000 OS map of the UK and about 900 credits which you can use to buy (download) OS maps of your choice. Additional credits may be purchased. Of course, network coverage is not necessary as the desired map tile can be selected from your library of downloads. If you do have a network signal just touch a soft button and your current location will appear centred on the OS map. There are various settings that can be changed such as Grid Reference (to 6, 8 or 10 places) or Lat/Log in its various manifestations.

Unfortunately, neither of these applications are available for Windows OS. However, the maps can be found at <http://www.bing.com/map/>. Just type in the place name you wish to view and this will come up centred in the viewing pane. To get the OS version of the area up click the down arrow at the top of the viewing pane (just after *London Street Map*).

There are lots of maps available online of course but nothing to touch OS ones when it comes to leaving the road.



Photo taken in Cahaba Heights, Birmingham, Alabama

Alabama Tornadoes

Anthony Ernest GW3LQE who also holds the call N4ERN, was in Birmingham, Alabama, during the night of Wednesday 27th April, when the now infamous tornadoes struck the region, with the deaths of over 450 people across 7 States.

Tony told RAYNET "The destruction was absolutely horrendous, and not only power, fed by overhead lines, went down immediately in many areas around the city, but also mobile phones were silenced as cellphone towers collapsed, and communications became difficult or impossible for many people."

However the local Birmingham Radio Society responded magnificently, and were in action within minutes of the tornadoes passing through the region. The local repeater W4CUE/R was switched from a *K* response, to a *W* response (Weather Watch), and later to a *N* response (Net Control) only. Hams passed messages from the Emergency Control Centres to Red Cross centres (often churches or even a supermarket), and from my monitoring of the situation, were responsible for the handling of traffic directing food supplies to hundreds of residents, power workers and others working in Disaster Relief. When I left Birmingham a week ago, 5 days after the "storms", hams were still on duty 12 hours a day passing valuable traffic on behalf of the Emergency Management services, and I salute all those club members who gave countless hours towards helping their fellow citizens in a time of huge distress and need.

It just shows the value of a service similar to RAYNET, when natural disasters strike huge swathes of a country's population.