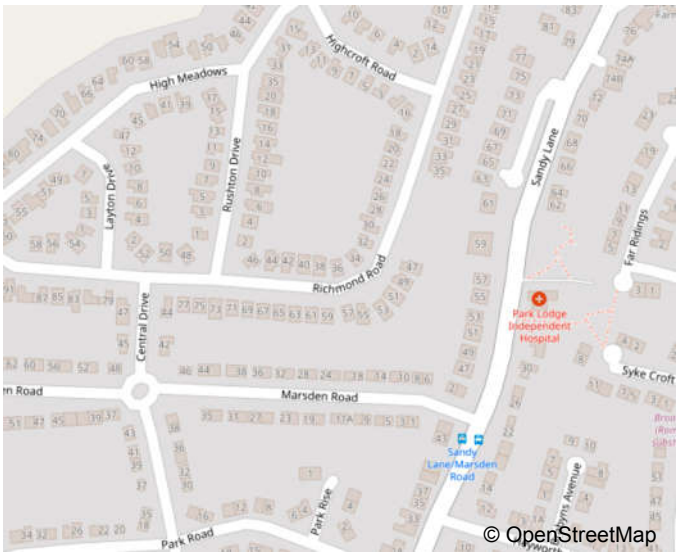
# This Week's Wisdom:

## OpenStreetMap vs Ordnance Survey

**One spends millions on professional surveyors to provide an accurate map of GB. The other relies on volunteers to create a collaborative map, in a similar way to Wikipedia. OpenStreetMap and Ordnance Survey both strive to create great mapping but with very different approaches.**

**Consistency**

OpenStreetMap is a fantastic tool for use in your GIS, however it comes with some limitations; it uses the general public instead of professional surveyors to map the UK. As we know from Boaty McBoatface, Jo Bloggs can't be relied upon to provide honest and accurate information in their submissions. That leaves us with an opensource product that can be accurately mapped in one part of the UK and 'glossed over' in other areas.


Above left is Denton, Manchester and above right is Romiley just 3 miles south. Both maps have the exact same settings and zoom level. Romiley has been mapped with great detail, down to the individual house numbers. Denton doesn't even show houses, let alone house numbers. The map quality in OSM varies vastly over just a few miles!

On the otherhand, Ordnance Survey have strict quality control standards which means that every town mapped across the UK conforms to the same specification and level of accuracy. This provides a consistent and reliable map regardless of location.

**Futureproof and vandalism**

OpenStreetMap is constantly being updated by it's network of volunteers. The database is live which means updates appear instantly. In todays fast paced consumer world, Ordnance Survey seem a bit slow with their updates being released between six weeks (MasterMap) and six months (OpenMap Local). What Ordnance Survey can promise though is that every update is free of errors. The same can't be said for OSM; some errors are simple mistakes, some are deliberate acts of vandalism. In 2016, people started adding fake lakes and fields to OSM when they realised that the map data was being used to power PokemonGO. Walk past your newly created fake lake and that elusive water pokemon would appear!

**Price**

OpenStreetMap is of course free to use. However Ordnance Survey have built up an impressive collection of free mapping data as part of their Open Government Licence (OGL). We will address the full list of the Free and Paid OS products in a later edition of This Week's Wisdom!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