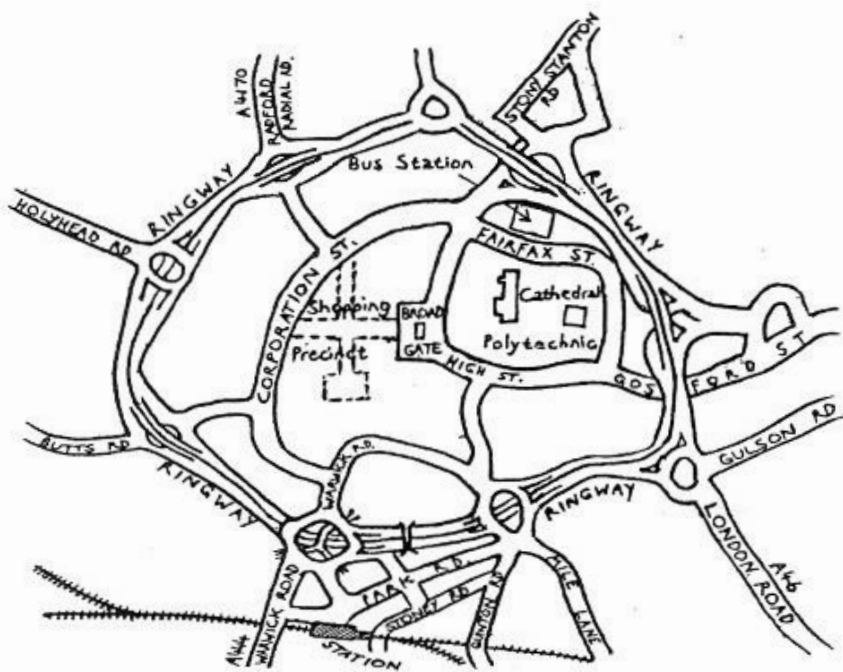


THE TREK TO THE TRAIN



By Robert Griffiths

Robert Griffiths was shocked by changes in his home city of Stoke-on-Trent which made it more difficult for people to get to the railway station. Then he started looking at other cities and towns, and discovered that Stoke was not unique.

Throughout Britain, bigger and busier roads were creating problems – for the railway traveller!

Produced by the Railway Development Society

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Maps by Christopher Jones

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Edited by Lloyd Butler, Ray King and Andrew Douglass

Are our Railways facing Psychological Warfare?

Stations are becoming isolated from the towns and cities they are supposed to serve — because of the construction of new roads. Various described as bypasses, relief roads, dual carriageways, expressways and urban motorways, they form a substantial physical barrier which the humble traveller has to brave on the way from station to town centre.

These roads can create mayhem in the communities through which they cut. Our purpose is to show what an obstacle they are to ordinary people, especially the disabled, the elderly and parents with buggies or young children in tow — in their trek to the train. High-speed traffic makes it more difficult to get to the station by bus, taxi or private car. The roads have been designed in such a way as to be an obstacle course for workers going to their city-centre jobs and for people going to the shops.

The original convenient links between stations and towns are being progressively fractured. Thus people are forced to become more and more reliant on roads. Often these roads are built without local people being aware of the effect they will have and the planning process does not even attempt to involve people who live in other areas but who visit by

train. These adverse effects should have been foreseen by Department of Transport planners, but for years this high-spending arm of government has appeared to operate as a servant of the road lobby.

Did they know? Did they care? Rail travellers sometimes have to negotiate six lanes of traffic to get to the town centre. Often there is no pedestrian crossing. If an underpass or bridge is provided, it is often much farther and can feel hostile.

The purpose of this booklet is to create an awareness among planners, councillors, British Rail, transport consultative committees and politicians of how providing facilities for one minority of the population (vehicle owners) often undermines facilities which are there for everyone to use.

It is hoped that the booklet will also be available in libraries and as a basis for discussion in school and college studies.

More thoughtful policies must be evolved to halt this insidious threat to railways, which is the sanest form of transport, especially at busy times and in congested areas.

Rail travel is far safer than going by road. The road lobby, which has been so successful in getting its way, has taken us on a rat race to environmental disaster.

Introduction

Many railway lines were axed by Beeching but the survivors are threatened by more subtle pressures.

A system of 'inner relief roads' have appeared in many towns and cities supposedly to relieve traffic congestion. In fact these roads often exacerbate the very problem they are meant to solve by providing more road space for more vehicles.

On occasions, these 'expressways' pass between the centre of town and the railway station. Sometimes they are even built on redundant railway land such as sidings or freight depots no longer in use. The map below illustrates the problem.

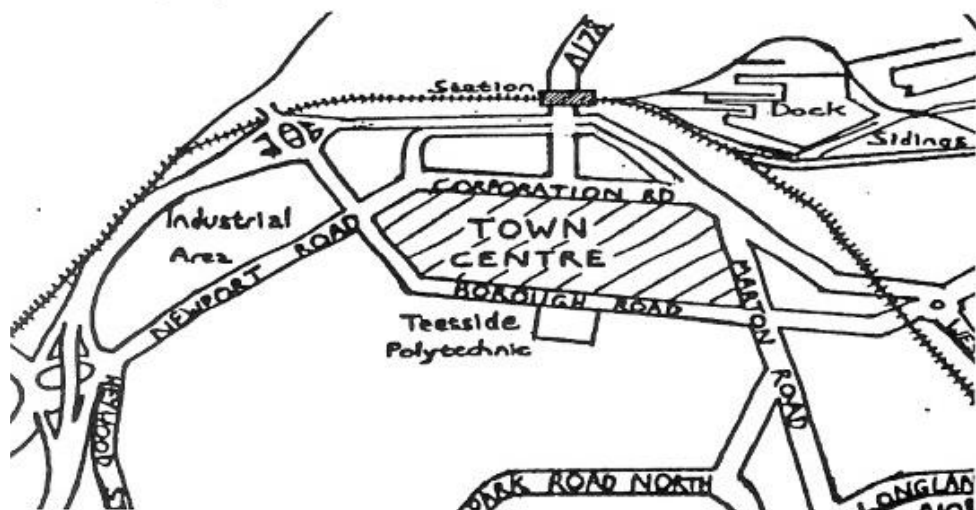
Notice how the railway station is excluded from the centre (with its bus station and car parks) by a dual carriageway road.

When bridges or subways are provided, they are often at best inconvenient or at worst no-go zones for prams, wheelchairs and shopping trolleys.

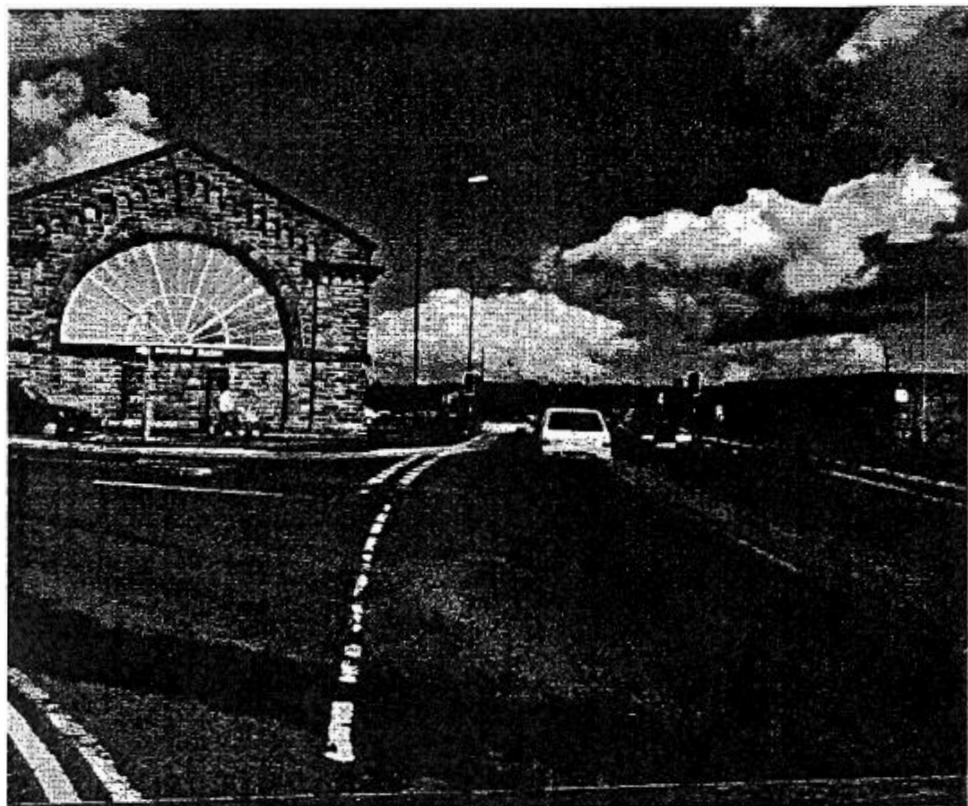
Here we present a small selection of towns and cities where rail is being squeezed out by road. Sadly there are many other examples.

What can we do?

When plans for new roads are published, make sure that the needs of rail travellers are considered. If necessary, make a formal objection and be ready to give your views at a public inquiry. The Department of Transport boasts about the environmental benefits of its road building. Demolish their arguments before the road is built. It will be more difficult to demolish their handiwork.



Middlesbrough, where the dual carriageway cuts the station off from the town centre



Buxton: The beautiful fanlight window of the station is in sharp contrast to the tatty and sordid road conditions outside. Part of the station was even demolished to make way for the A53 'relief road'

Buxton

Trains to Ashbourne and Matlock used to leave the spa town of Buxton, Derbyshire, where now an inner relief road allows traffic from the A53 to blast through from the South on its way to the A6.

There may have been few other options for the road's route but it now expels the station from the town centre.

Leaving the main entrance of the station, the passenger has to negotiate the busy A53 road.

No bridges or subways, which would make the road less of an obstacle, are provided.

Buxton has an hourly rail service to Manchester which is 20 miles away.

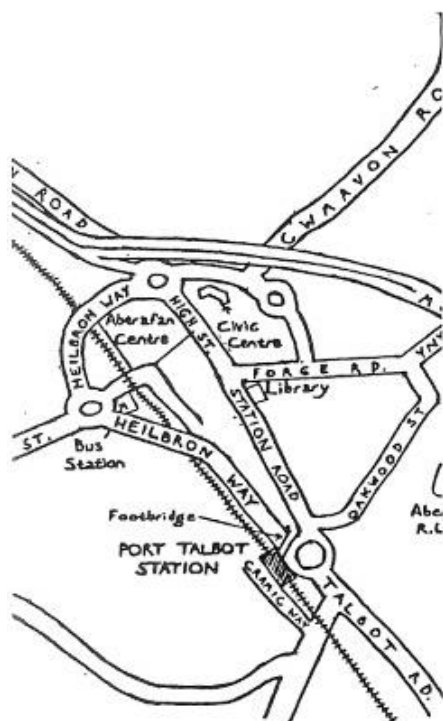
The Peak Railway Society also plans to reinstate trains on the old Midland Railway line between Buxton and Matlock.

The number of passengers using Buxton should, therefore, grow substantially in future.

Port Talbot

There was once a serious bottleneck on the A48 main road which ran through the town. The M4 motorway, originally the A48, was expected to solve this problem.

However, the road lobby insisted on having its cake and eating it. Another road, the inner relief road, was built in such a way that it separates the station from the main street. Next to the station is a massive roundabout. A bridge has been provided for people to cross the inner relief road.



The map shows how the 'inner relief road' cuts off the station from the town centre and bus station

By contrast the bus station is sited on the town side of the road. It would have been common sense to build the bus and rail stations as close as possible.

As things are, a passenger who arrives at Port Talbot by rail has to cross two bridges to reach the town centre. The first one is on the station itself which has an island platform. The second is over the A48 relief road which is called Heilbron Way. To get to the bus station, passengers have to negotiate a series of minor streets, and walk threequarters of a mile. For a disabled person this is a nightmare journey.

An alternative route to the bus station from the railway is to go into Cramic Way, along a dirt track and then through a subway under Heilbron Way. This cuts the journey to half a mile but the dirt track features a series of puddles after rain.

Pedestrians are not allowed on Heilbron Way which would be the quickest route to the buses.

Had Heilbron Way not been built, there would have been plenty of space to build a bus station close enough to the railway station to provide a covered way.

By looking at the map, one can see how much land has been devoted to roads rather than rail. Paradoxically, a three-lane rather than two-lane M4 might have been a more sensible 'solution'. Port Talbot can probably claim to be the worst example in Britain of how a road can separate the railway station from the centre.



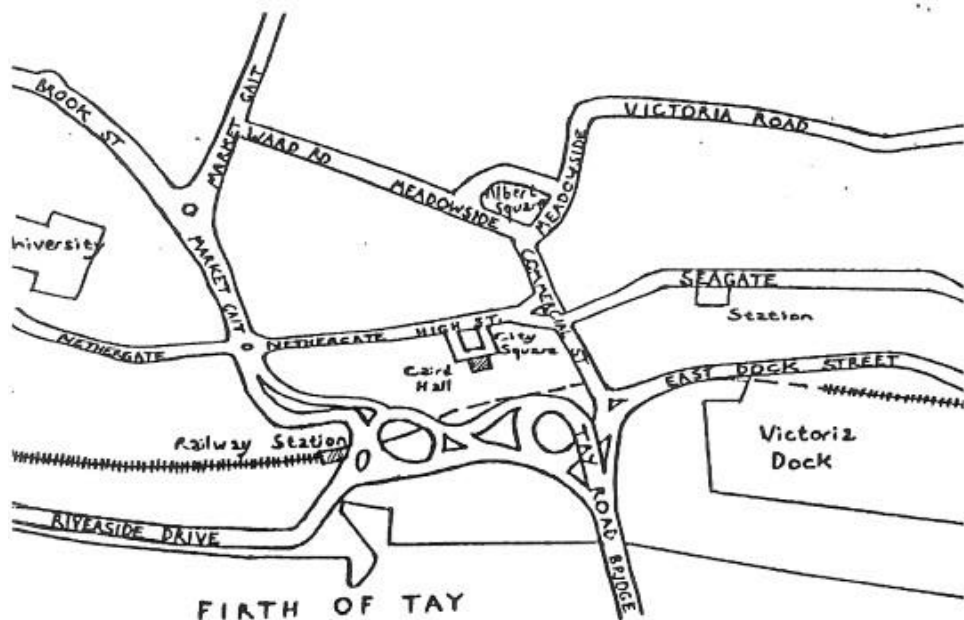
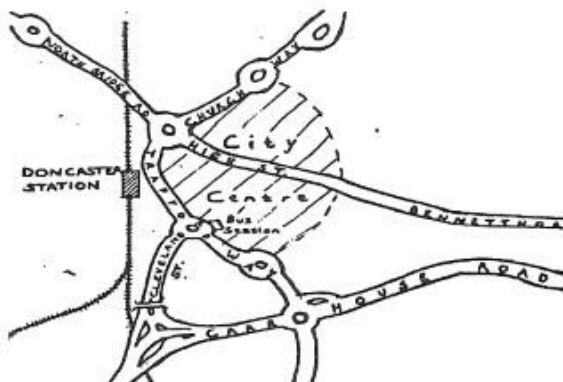
The way for rail passengers at Port Talbot from the station to the town. The bridge takes people over the A48 'relief road'. The alternative is via a dirt track and a subway



the view from the footbridge. Heilbron Way is a formidable barrier between railway and town

Doncaster

The inner ring road effectively separates the railway station from the city centre. Although a few subways are provided, the centre appears to disown its station, one of the principal stops on the East Coast main line and a town with an impressive railway heritage.



Dundee

The traveller has to negotiate a large roundabout when leaving the railway station en route for the centre of this university city at the north end of the Tay railway bridge. Traffic coming over the Tay road bridge sweeps north to

Aberdeen, separating the station from the centre.

East-West road traffic should be, but is not, kept out of the centre because there is a bypass skirting through the northern suburbs of the city.

Telford

The A442 main road cuts off Telford Central railway station from the town centre. There is a network of bridges, without canopies, for pedestrians to get to the station.

The map shows that Oakengates railway station, just a mile north of Telford, has not experienced the same fate, being still within very easy reach of Oakengates town centre.



Stoke-on-Trent

The A500, known locally as the D road, separates the railway station from the old city centre, the capital of the Potteries. Before 1977 Liverpool Road led straight from the centre of Stoke to Station Road. Nowadays passengers have to walk through ten right angles (more than two complete revolutions) to get to Station Road from the city centre. The problem is caused by the roundabout. These roads generate so much traffic that it is often quicker to walk to work in the city rather than drive.



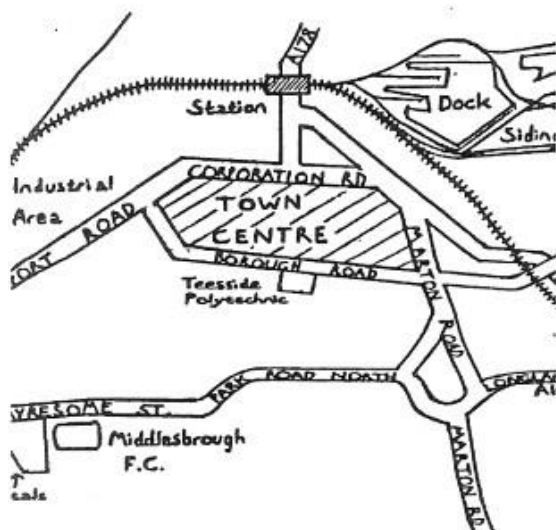
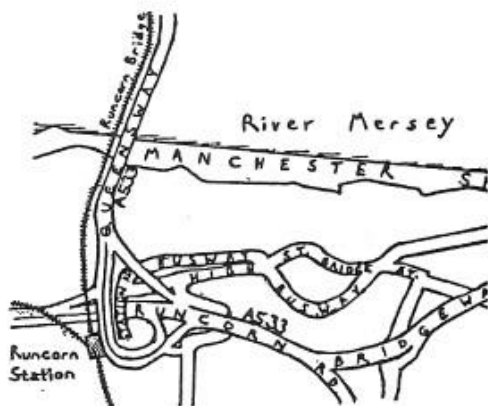
Stoke ... before



... and after

Runcorn

A maze of dual carriageways has the 'new town' of Runcorn in a stranglehold. Runcorn railway station and the town centre are on opposite sides of a 'spaghetti' road junction which feeds traffic on and off the Runcorn road bridge over the Mersey. One good aspect of the road system is the bus-only routes running between the railway station and parts of the town centre.



Middlesbrough before the A66 was built — compare with the map on page 4

Middlesbrough

This port town on the Tees developed following the birth of railways. Coal for export was delivered by rail from the nearby Northumberland and Durham coalfield. It is ironic, therefore, that roads now reign supreme — with the A66 neatly separating the town centre from the railway. From the town plans, it can be seen that a new industrial estate has been built. Unfortunately, it is isolated from the railway by the road, making it reliant on road transport. It would be difficult now to provide sidings for the estate.

Leicester

A ring road has been constructed here which cuts across London Road, between the railway station and the city centre. Once the

railway blended in with the rest of London Road. Today the ring road pushes the station away from the centre, as effectively as a city wall.

Making Tracks on the Real Issues

Proper investment in railways will enable us to maintain the kind of mobility we have become used to in the modern world, without the drastic damage caused by road traffic. But Government policies have forced BR to cut services and scrap trains so that it is now unable to cope with demand for rail travel.

Meanwhile, billions of OUR money is squandered on new roads . . . a transport policy leading nowhere. The argument for the railways is strong but the road lobby, with its enormous resources, has managed to distort transport policy and democracy. People like trains. They do not like lorries and traffic jams. Yet most freight and passenger traffic now goes by road. What a scandal!

We in the Railway Development Society are trying to put things right by building a strong, national, politically independent grouping to fight for rail. More than 2,900 people have already joined the society and much has been achieved.

Threatened lines have been saved, closed lines and stations reopened and some services improved. We have a national strategy and local campaigning groups. But we need your help to counter the road lobby and the dangers of privatisation so that everyone has the choice to travel by train and companies are encouraged to put freight back on safe lines.

👉 5,217 people died on the roads in 1990, compared to 84 on the railways.

👉 A new rail line costs less than one third of the cost of a new road. The subsequent fuel saving is enormous. France is planning to build 13 new high-speed lines. Britain is hesitating about one.

👉 Almost all the airborne carbon monoxide in city streets comes from motor vehicles.

👉 In the 1980s the railways of Germany, France and Italy each invested at least three times more than BR.

👉 The number of company cars has quadrupled in 10 years. The amount of Government subsidy to company cars is five times greater than the entire Government grant to BR.

👉 Public expenditure on transport 1983-9: Road £22,965m, rail £573m.

For a free sample issue of the RDS magazine Railwatch or, if you would like to join RDS, send £10 for annual membership to Elisabeth Jordan, 13 Arnhill Road, Gretton, Corby, Northants NN17 3DN