

BOOK review

THE RISE AND DEMISE OF THE BUS MAP

By **John Davies**

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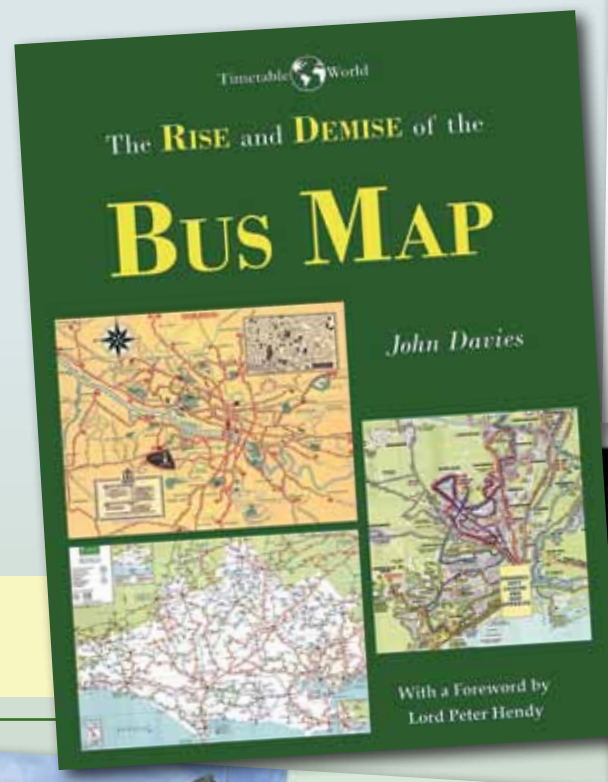
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There are few of us enthusiasts that don't like a good bus map and this fascinating and informative book from John Davies has something to satisfy everyone's interests in the subject. The author has been interested in maps and buses from an early age and so, whenever he was travelling for his job as a computer programmer, would collect whatever he could. His extensive knowledge is put to good use in this book.

Using 220 historical bus, tram and trolleybus maps, we are told the story of Britain's bus services over the last 120 years or so and how, despite relentless social, political and technological change, bus services and maps have evolved and adapted.

With logical progression, the book starts with a LGOC map from 1914 and goes on to cover the early years up to 1948 describing how bus services and networks throughout the country developed together with their corresponding bus maps. It recalls an era when all self-respecting major bus companies and municipalities would have a map and many operators took pride in producing high-quality fold-out paper bus maps to promote their services and encourage residents and visitors to use them.

The following sections cover the peak bus era to 1967, when there was an intense demand for travel, and then describes the period of rationalisation from 1968 to 1986 when demand dropped significantly, NBC and the PTEs were formed and the writing was on



the wall for the future with the deregulation of coach services. Finally, we have the periods of deregulation and privatisation up to the present day where digital is supplanting the paper map – adding capability but losing some things in the process.

The introduction to each section puts into context how the maps of the period were developed and produced and highlights their varying quality, or otherwise. Adding to the interest are an occasional page or two giving snippets of information about associated subjects such as the development of destination displays and fare collection amongst other interesting topics.

The author has access to the substantial library of maps available at Timetable World and so has been able to include an extremely wide and varied selection including Local Authorities and Tourist Boards. As a result, we have examples of most operators, all regions of the country and London's tram, bus and trolleybus development up to and after London Country's departure in 1970. Such was the volume of maps produced from the start of deregulation up until the turn of the century, this section has been split into regions for ease of reading. The final short chapters cover open data maps, the bus open data service and finally how online maps are developed and produced.

Printed on high quality glossy paper, the maps and illustrations have reproduced very well but, by their nature, some are a little too small for the reader to get the full benefit. This should not, however, be a problem as the maps are annotated with a reference number. By accessing timetable world's website (www.timetableworld.com) and inputting that number the online version of the map can be explored at full resolution. I have tried it and am very impressed!

As Lord Peter Henty writes in his forward to the book:

“ John Davies has treated this subject with scholarly rigour, precision – and also, clearly, love. His book will be treasured by many – including me – and is well worth buying, and reading, not just once, but several times. Each map tells a story, and there are many of them in here! I hope you enjoy what is a wonderful, colourful, and informative, insight into the world of bus maps. ”

I couldn't have put it better myself!

Review by Tom Lynn