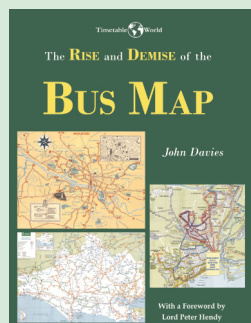


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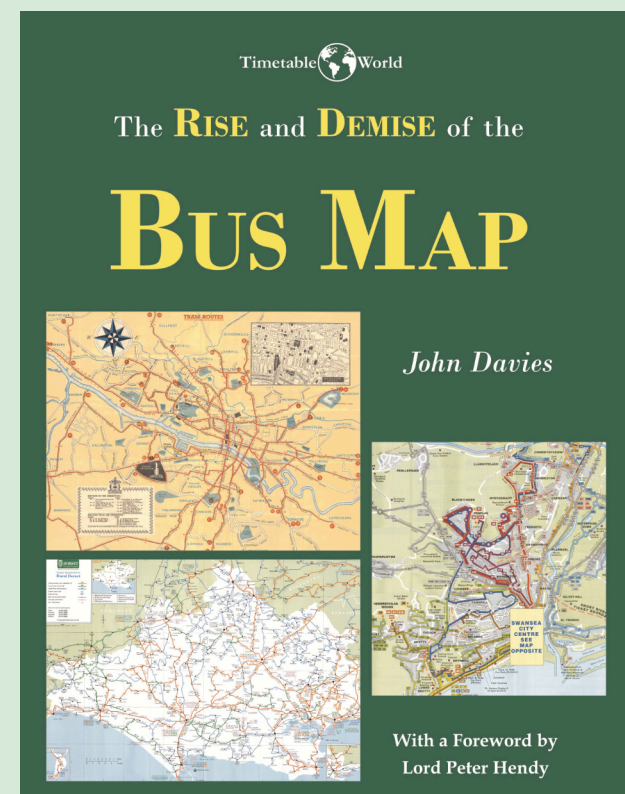
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*"John Davies has treated this subject with scholarly rigour, precision – and also, clearly, love. His book will be treasured by many – including me – and is well worth buying, and reading, not just once, but several times. Each map tells a story, 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."*

Peter, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill CBE



Using 220 historical bus, tram and trolleybus maps, John Davies tells the story of Britain's bus services over the last 120 years or so. Operators took pride in producing high-quality fold-out paper bus maps to promote their services and encourage residents and visitors to use them. Throughout an era of relentless social, political and technological change, bus services and maps evolved and adapted, up to the present day where digital is supplanting the paper map – adding capability, losing some things in the process.

In collaboration with the Timetable World digital archive, the maps can be further explored online at full resolution. Additional maps and timetables are available.

John Davies is a lifelong enthusiastic user of buses and maps, known for his book *The Red Atlas: How the Soviet Union Secretly Mapped the World*.

<https://timetableworld.com>



# The RISE and DEMISE of the BUS MAP

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John Davies

**Section 1**  
**Introduction**  
**Maps, Passengers and Buses**

The book is a love letter to the lost art of the fold-out bus map and its endangered cousin the tabular timetable, victims of the ever-present online geographical real-time information systems.

Along the way, we'll see how two hundred years of developments in technology along with relentless changes in social, political and economic circumstances have affected bus travel in Britain (and the most popular form of public transport over 4 billion passengers a year take a bus, 2.8 billion a train or tube).

We'll also hear about some of the people who made the maps and how they did it, as well as examining the many different types of maps they produced.

Just as a picture is worth a thousand words, so a map shows us, at a glance, what would be impossible to describe otherwise. For anything that exists over an area of the earth's surface, a map is the perfect medium for showing what happens, where.

Every map tells a story, every map has its own purpose. A bus map is a showcase, promoting journey possibilities to potential passengers and giving them confidence to embark on a journey. It may ignore geography, like Beck's tube map, or it may embrace the local landscape; it may depict the complexity of frequency and route variations, or ignore them, all depending on the cartographer's choice. The cartographer decides how much information to convey and how best to do so, in an easily-understood and attractive format.

What the map reveals is that an individual bus service is a component in a network, with connections at interchange points. By portraying the complete network, the map suggests many travel opportunities.

In the following pages we'll see many examples of different styles of bus map, some more successful than others. But all have served the purpose, over the years, of portraying on paper the real, but intangible, world of bus services. Unlike railways, buses require little or no physical infrastructure on the ground for a surveyor to plot on an Ordnance Survey map.

In the earliest days of passenger transport, stage-coach and horse-bus

**SECTION 1 · INTRODUCTION** **7**

The Stagewerk Midlands 15-59  
151 Coventry - Staffordshire  
Area serving passing Laid  
Coventry (Stagewerk Midlands)  
Published on 2nd October 2023  
(Stagewerk Midlands)

**London trams, LCC and LPTB, 1927, 1933**

The 1927 LCC map (above) shows the expansion of services after World War I and includes information about connecting services and surrounding streets and adjacent areas.

Following the formation of LPTB in 1933, their tramway map of that year can be seen to closely resemble the LCC's forerunner.

Throughout the lifetime of the tramway network in 1932, tram maps and bus maps were separate publications. Trolleybuses were included on the tram maps, their first appearance on the bus map being in the 1952 edition.

**SECTION 2 · THE EARLY YEARS** **35**

**Local Colour**

**Wirral, Merseytravel, 1998, 1999**

In 1998/9 Merseytravel published a series of local bus route pamphlets for its four divisions, each having a long title and large-scale map, plan of bus stop locations, Merseyrail network diagram and bus route details listing operation and frequency.

No cartographer is credited, the style of the North pointer suggests FWT, but that may not be the case.

**SECTION 5 · DEREGULATION & PRIVATISATION** **243**

**Local Colour**

**Isle of Wight, Southern Vectis, 1997**

The Isle of Wight bus operator was founded as Dodson & Campbell in 1921, becoming Vectis Bus Company in 1932 and acquired in 1929 by the Southern Railway, to become Southern Vectis. On nationalisation in 1948 ownership passed to RTG and in 1969 to the National Bus Company, with a management buy-out on privatisation in 1986.

The island has always been a popular holiday resort and this 1967 map, published jointly by Southern Vectis and the Isle of Wight Council is designed to showcase the local tourist attractions and walking routes as well as the bus routes.

The key identifies the main bus routes individually by colour, with dashed lines for seasonal services.

On the reverse side, twelve walking trails are described and these are shown in red on the map. Other walks and trails are shown in green and dozens of pubs, chapels, museums and similar visitor destinations are depicted, along with central area enlargement for the main towns.

There is a list of the island's bus services, including those of a handful of private operators. No timetable or frequency information is provided, but this is found in the companion guidebook 'Getting Around the Isle of Wight', available at the company's Tourist Centre (of which there are several) and at shops and tourist information centres.

The map was produced and printed by Penzance.

**SECTION 5 · DEREGULATION & PRIVATISATION** **191**

**Local Colour**

**Local Colour**

And so on, right across the country. These symbolic liveries were long-lived and municipal buses were generally smartly turned out, a source of civic pride. In Edinburgh, the maroon and cream sported by the tram and buses since at least the 1930s still survives as the livery of Lothian Regional Transport.

Similarly, council-owned Ipswich Buses has retained its predominantly green livery. Reading, however, have chosen a different approach. Here, each route is branded a different colour and the buses are painted accordingly.

The PTE inherited the local municipal fleets and needed a unifying colour scheme, being careful not to favour any community over the others. South Yorkshire, for example, acquired the cream and light blue Sheffield buses, the dark blue of Boxborough, the red and purple of Cheshire and omeled to avoid the red and green of the

National Bus Company. So, they chose coffee and cream, which didn't offend anyone, but wasn't very interesting either.

What of the groups? Stagewerk and Arriva each adopted a single nationwide colour scheme, which simplifies the transfer of buses between operations, whilst Go-Ahead retains the historic patterns and liveries of operating companies. First class services, however, and ignoring local identity.

At Seaside Ferry Terminal, Walsley, in 1978, a year after the creation of Merseyside PTE, a 1929 Leyland P32 bus still in Birkenhead Corporation blue livery stands alongside a former Walsley Corporation 1951, operated in Wirral Division colours. (Alan Murray-Rust)

**LOCAL COLOUR** **55**

**Section 6**  
**THE DIGITAL AGE**  
**It's all online**

The coming of the railways in the 19th century profoundly changed the face of Britain over a period of about fifty years. It's no exaggeration to say that the digital age brought even greater changes over an even shorter period.

Although dock-key computers (PKs) had arrived in the 1980s, revolutionising office work, the real impact of new technology on the travelling public came with the advent of three linked developments: the internet, smartphones and GPS. The internet, in turn, encouraged a new spirit of openness. Free data and open-source programs could lowered the barriers to new entrants being created.

Google Maps was launched in 2005 and by the early 2010s most of the population had instant access to geographical information at their fingertips. You would never get lost again.

Whilst the PCs had hugely simplified the cartographer's work, the more tedious scribbles, enabling the production of vast numbers of maps such as seen in Section 3, by 2025 was estimated to have led to a 5% increase, but broader issues such as service frequency, coverage, and reliability remained.

In 2020 the Bus Open Data Service (BOS) was established in England under the Bus Services Act. This government initiative provided for open data on timetables and fares, bus stop locations and other bus locations to be published and shared using standard formats, updated every ten to thirty seconds.

These and other developments prevented a proliferation of smartphone apps enabling personal journey planning at the touch of a button wherever and whenever required. On the journey, too, any smartphone could give travellers confidence that the intended bus would actually turn up.

The effect of these innovations on passenger numbers (and whether they mitigate the loss of paper maps and timetables) is impossible to gauge. The National Audit Office (NAO) 2025, reveals that bus journeys in Great Britain in 2023 totalled around 1.8 billion, a fall of 9% against 2019/20. Following a long-term trend, accelerated by the 2020 Covid pandemic, the introduction of a 62 maximum fare in 2022 (reduced to a 5% increase, but broader issues such as service frequency, coverage, and reliability remained).

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**Local Colour**