

Progress for Wales, peace for Cowbridge!

14,000 drivers will use the
2½-mile new by-pass daily

By CHRISTOPHER YORATH

LIFE for the inhabitants of Cowbridge, one of the oldest and smallest boroughs in Britain, will undergo a remarkable transformation today. It will be a change from the humdrum noise of a continuous stream of traffic day and night to a delightful place of peace and quiet in the tranquil Vale of Glamorgan.

Business expansion

in South Wales

will benefit by

today's opening

of the by-pass

For today marks the opening of the magnificent new Cowbridge by-pass road, constructed in record time by McAlpine & Sons (South Wales) Ltd.

The by-pass opens to traffic eight weeks ahead of schedule.

And the people of Cowbridge, with the thousands of motorists who daily use the one road through the town, will be delighted with the news.

I have watched the skillful construction of this two-and-a-half-mile stretch of dual carriageway, since excavation first began, and I have no hesitation in saying that those engaged in the project have worked with enthusiasm—despite atrocious weather conditions and the ever-

constant presence of lorries and cars at both ends of the by-pass.

The A48 trunk road from east to west across industrial South Wales closely follows the old Roman road (Via Julia Maritima), and at Cowbridge it traverses about a mile of straggling village street across the Thaw Valley.

Vital artery

Access from east and west is down steep, winding inclines, and the route daily carries an average flow of about 14,000 vehicles, including a large percentage of heavy industrial traffic.

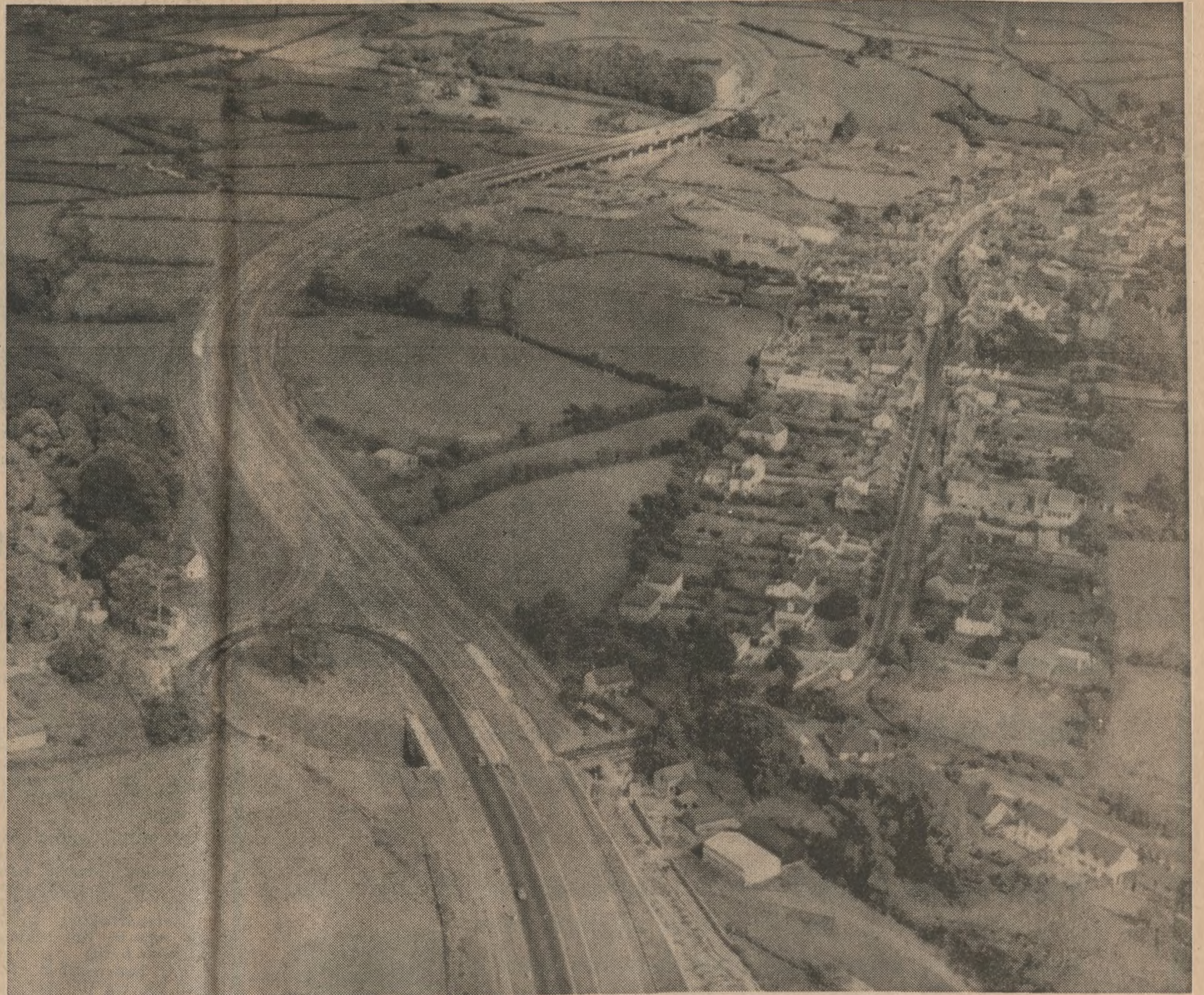
The by-pass line was located and protected by Order before the last war, but funds have only now been found to permit its construction.

Cowbridge, town, together with two steep hills, are being by-passed to the north by means of a diversion of about two-and-a-half miles and connected to the existing trunk road by separated junctions and with no intermediate connections.

The new route will be in rock cutting down Primrose Hill and Darren Hill, and across the Thaw Valley the new road will be on embankment varying from 10 to 20 feet in height for about 2,000 feet.

For the adjacent 1,500 feet of its length it will be carried on a viaduct, crossing the River Thaw, a branch railway, the grounds of the Cowbridge Girls' Grammar School, and the Cowbridge—Llantrisant road at a height varying between 20 and 45 feet above ground level.

The scheme has provided for the construction



Curving away from picturesque Cowbridge, the by-pass has 24ft. dual carriageways and is designed for a maximum speed of 70 m.p.h. It has a 1,500ft. viaduct which passes over the grounds of Cowbridge Girls' High School and the Cowbridge—Llantrisant road.

of dual 24ft. carriageways with acceleration and deceleration lanes where the slip roads join at the eastern and western extremities of the project. The slip roads are 24 feet wide, and the design speed is 70 miles an hour.

The total bulk excavation involved is estimated

at 350,000 cubic yards, and from a survey it was computed that there would be 120,000 cubic yards of solid rock. According to H.M. Geological Survey, the rocks which lie near the surface comprise carboniferous limestone and old red sandstone.

School life was sadly disrupted

THE girls of Cowbridge High School put their thoughts into verse on the topic of the new by-pass. This was the contribution of Hilary Davies in the school magazine:

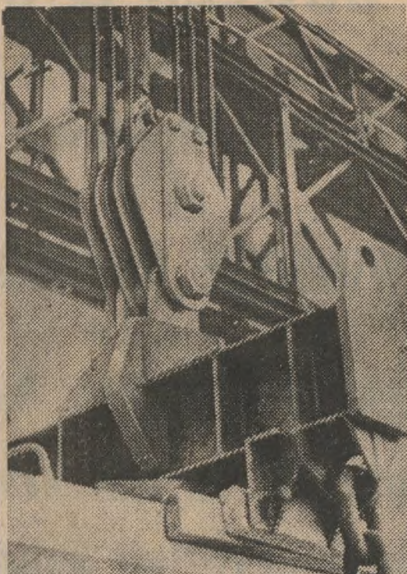
"THE BIRTH OF THE COWBRIDGE BY-PASS"

Thundering tractors rumbling down the hillside,
Scattering mud in the valley below,
Delving deep in the fields we once played in,
Creating the Cowbridge By-Pass.

Schoolgirls trudge cold from building to building,
Splashed, as they hurry, by teachers in cars.
Late and cold they arrive in their classrooms,
Cursing the Cowbridge By-Pass.

Suddenly 'midst the noise of the tractors,
Deafening explosion of dynamite roars,
Disturbing peace and shattering windows,
Creating the Cowbridge By-Pass.

But, in the not-too-distant days to come,
Townfolk, free from heavy lurching lorries,
In a peaceful and quiet street will live,
Blessing the Cowbridge By-Pass.



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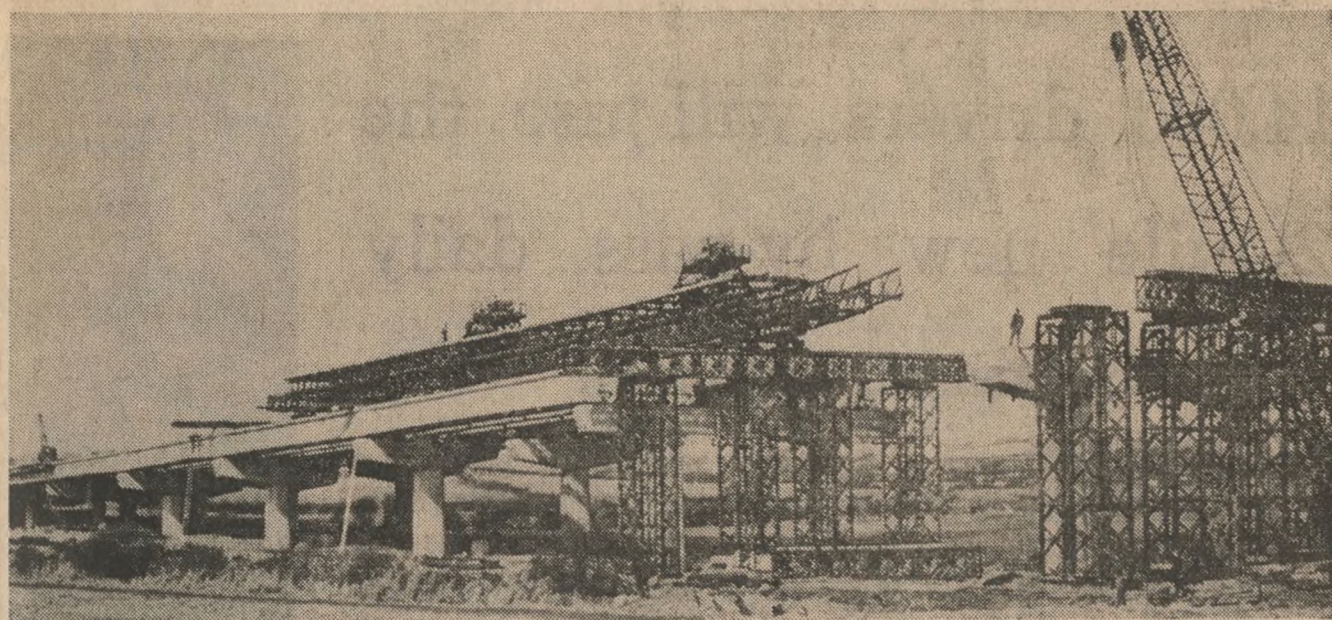
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A new landmark takes shape



Lifting 75-ton beams into position as the viaduct changed the face of the Vale was a delicate operation. A rail track and travelling gantry were skilfully employed. The by-pass is costing around £1,400,000.

Viaduct and three bridges

WORK on the Cowbridge by-pass was started in October 1963, when an "army" of workmen invaded the little borough (writes Chris Yorath). Feeling among the residents of Cowbridge was of immense relief that at long last the pre-war plans of Glamorgan County Council were to be implemented.

Cowbridge, walled for defence against the marauding English since the 13th century, extremely proud of its 700-year-old grammar school, and one of the leading market towns in the county, had watched with deep concern the increase in commercial and holiday traffic since the last war. Then the go-ahead was finally given, and the great project put under way in the autumn of 1963.

Some 'trespassing'

Now the cleverly-planned new by-pass is open for the convenience of millions of vehicles which will travel along the main route from East to West Wales in years to come.

In addition to the finely-

built viaduct three bridges had to be constructed—the West bridge, carrying the dual carriageway over an underpass slip road, the Eastern overslip bridge, which permits east-bound traffic from Cowbridge to join the correct carriageway without interfering with the main west-bound flow, and the Aberthin Lane bridge to accommodate a country lane which intersects the new road.

Flexible guardrails

There were embarrassments for the contractors, among them trespassing cows and sheep. There was also the complication that although the permanent boundary fence was to contain the livestock, it was necessary to remove lengths of existing hedges to obtain a line of sight to establish the by-pass centre line.

Caterpillar motor scrapers worked across the valley excavating the main cutting and forming the main embankment. Rock was found at a higher level than indicated and blasting was necessary.

Piling in the bridgework

was completed by July 1964. The viaduct, the main feature of the by-pass, consists of 14 spans of about 102 feet each, and a closing span at the east end of 60 and 40 feet on the north and south carriageways respectively. A four-foot gap down the centre separates the carriageway, and is protected by flexible guardrails and parapets.

Included in the work was the erection of 140 pre-stressed concrete beams each weighing about 74 tons and the record number of beams placed in position in one day was four. The viaduct was completed in 60 weeks from the termination of piling.

Special bridge

During the construction a large amount of GPO work had to be done including the re-routing of the main South Wales trunk line and television cable.

Other aspects of the work include the 400 feet by 20 feet high retaining wall in mass concrete faced with natural stone; the cutting of nearly two miles of drainage trench

in solid rock and clay-fissured rock, and 12 miles of kerb laying.

To place the viaduct beams in position the contractors used a special purpose Bailey Bridge structure designed by Thomas Storey Ltd., and Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons.

Smooth operation

The Bailey beam placing gantry was originally made 220 feet long and later extended to 260 feet. To this was added a 20 foot long launching nose and a 15-foot long tailpiece to cater for the placing of the beams on the outside of the viaduct curve. The all-up weight of the unit with its two winches is about 95 tons.

The beams travelled from the nearby McAlpine casting yard on a rail bogie running beneath the viaduct. The Bailey gantry, positioned directly above, hoisted each beam by means of wire ropes controlled by two winches mounted on a special frame which travelled along the top chords of the Bailey panel. Each winch was fitted with a 10-ton

To next page

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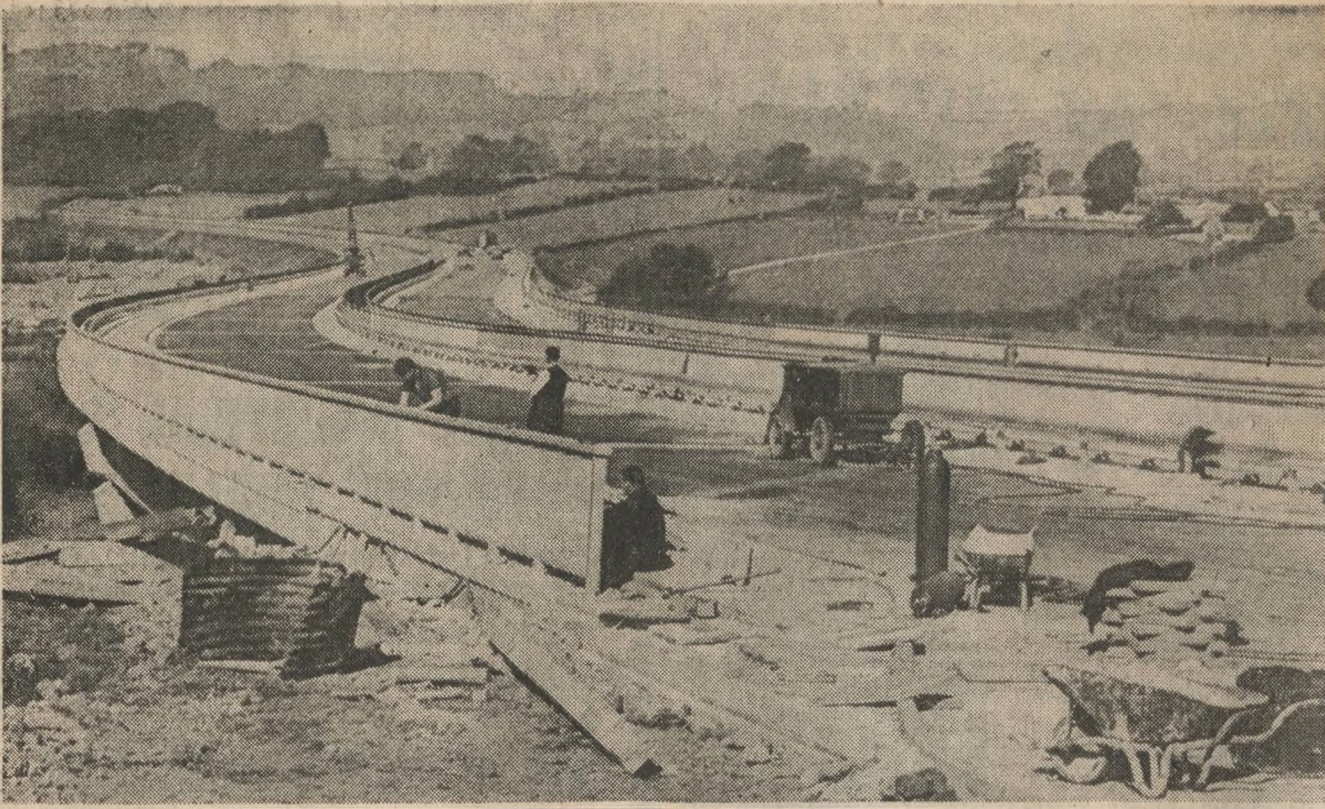
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The 14-span viaduct is made safer by the flexible guard-rails in the centre. Taken last month at the Aberthin Lane crossing.

Ode to the by-pass

Down the hillside they come,
Great yellow monsters,
Devouring the virgin earth,
Plucking it bare;
Belching choking smoke,
Polluting the air.
Trampling on smaller things
—Trivial things.

Clanking cumbersome machines,
Cantankerous implements,
Churning up the soil,
Oozing glorious mud,
Creating great gaping gorges,
Devastating the country,
Constructing a new highway,
A new by-pass,
By-passing human suffering,
The cares of life.

These coughing, spluttering machines,
Croaking along,
Shatter the studious silence of school,
Oh for some respite,
Nowhere can we escape,
No oasis of calm;
No sanctuary, no peace,
Turmoil.

But still they roll over the hill,
Lumbering, prehistoric monsters,
These guttural, grunting machines,
Carrying mud,
Making the road slushy and slippery,
Don't we care about the debris,
The destruction?
Why don't we cry out against these invaders?
Protest?
Why do we countenance this destruction?
This devastation?
Why do we allow this rape?
FOR PROGRESS.

GILLIAN PERCY,
Cowbridge Girls' Grammar School.

Vast scale

From previous page
capacity diesel - driven
torque converter supplied
by Henry Sykes Ltd.

With a concrete beam
secured within its frame-
work the beam placing
gantry was moved laterally
across the "T" heads of
the viaduct by means of
three Trehwella hand
crabs to its exact emplace-
ment position and then
lowered on to the "T"
heads.

For the first and last
spans where back launch-
ing and front launching
was necessary the concrete
beams travelled through
the gantry on carriages
powered by a separate 10-
ton diesel torque converter.

Time factor

The use of this beam
placing gantry, allied with
the close proximity of the
casting yard, has done
much to ensure the com-
pletion of the contract
within the scheduled time.

Other interesting figures
attributed to the efficient
work of Messrs. McAlpine
are that 350,000 cubic
yards of earth were
removed; 1,500 tons of

steel reinforcements sup-
plied, and 50,000 cubic
yards of concrete poured.

I must point out that
the people of Cowbridge
have patiently borne the
inevitable inconvenience
which the project has en-
tailed over the past two
years.

Real teamwork

But, like the men
engaged on the work, they
have realised it was some-
thing that just had to be
done and everyone has
been co-operative and
helpful.

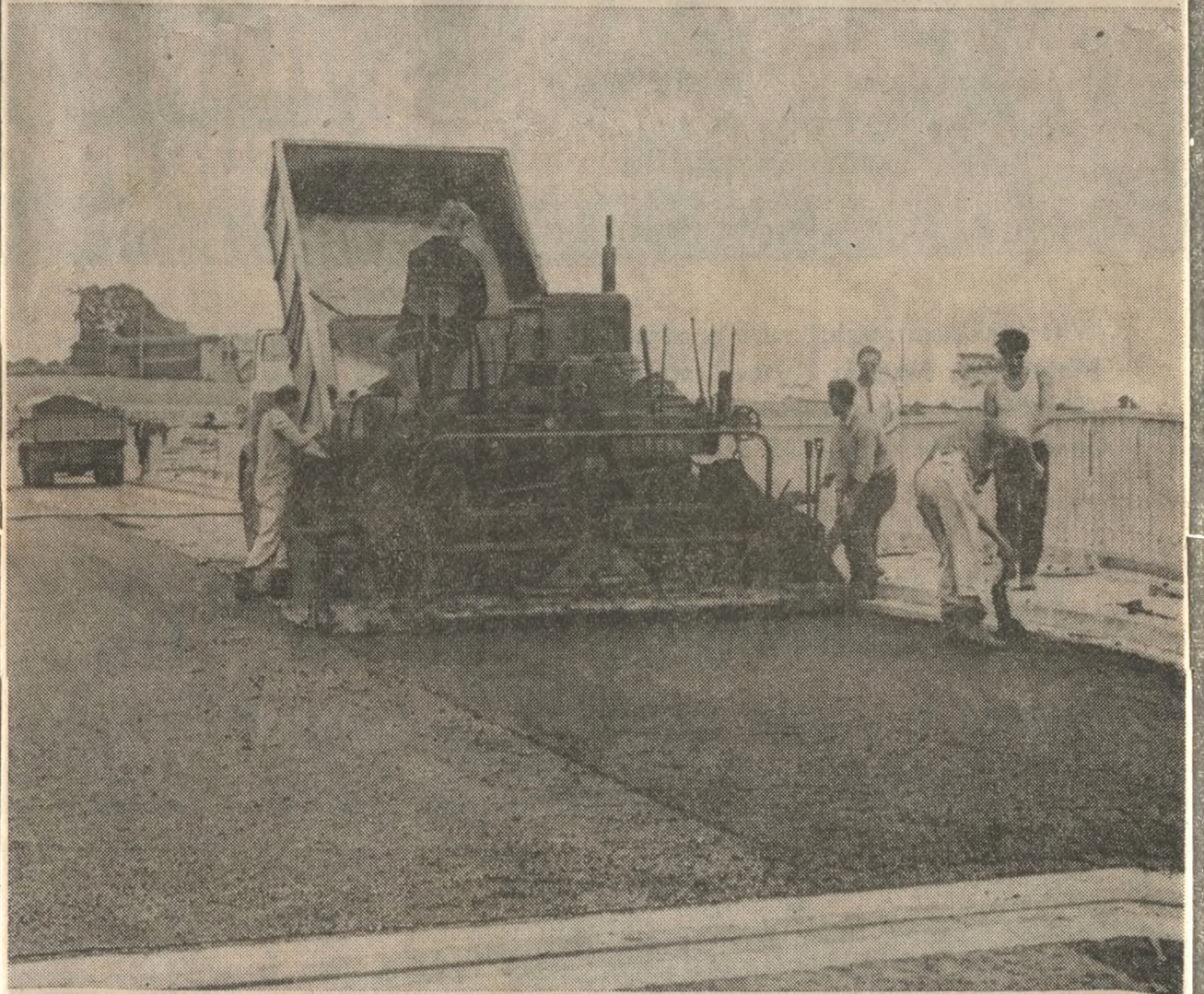
Now, peace and quiet
have at long last, settled
on the ancient Borough of
Cowbridge, with the busy
traffic of the 20th century
gliding by on its outskirts.

I pay tribute to those
mainly responsible for
completing the project in
record time.

They include, Mr. K. J.
Henderson (site agent);
Mr. T. Farrell (works
manager); Mr. C. Syrett
(plant manager); and on
the County Council side,
Mr. E. John Powell (county
surveyor), and Mr. W. A.
Tooley (resident engineer).

...talking about
SURFACES...
WOODWARDS
have the answer

look at the
COWBRIDGE BY-PASS

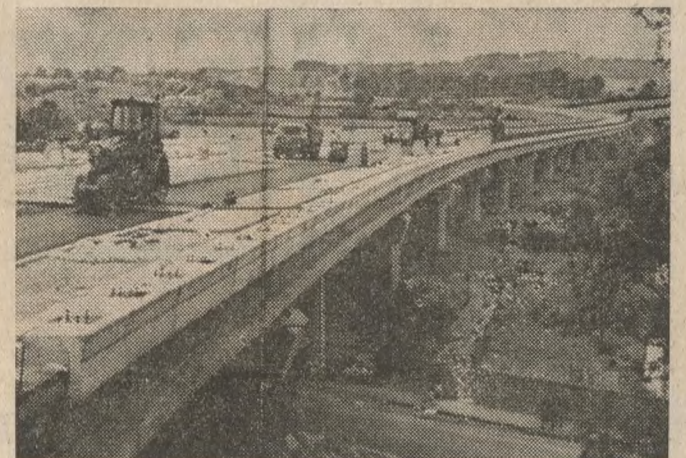


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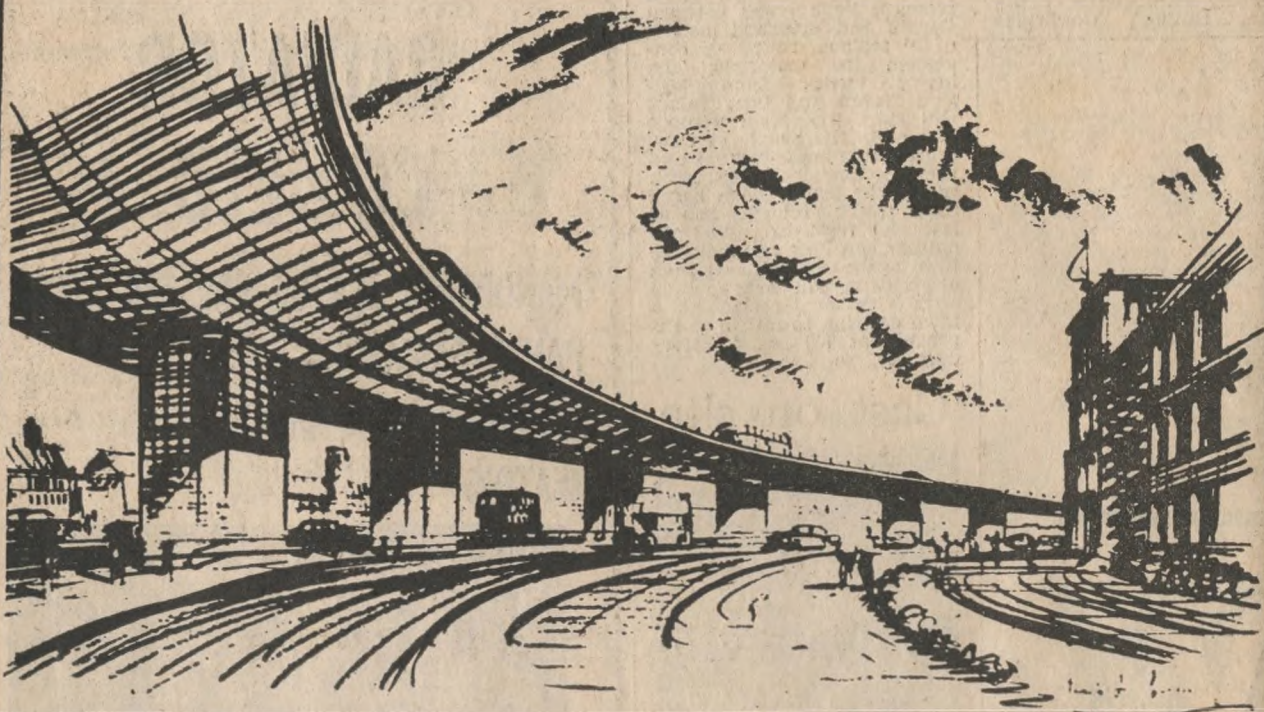
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Accident saga is over in traffic-hit town

By CHRIS SHERIDAN

COWBRIDGE nestles in a hollow scooped out of the surrounding hills in the Vale of Glamorgan. Its Old World exterior of peace and charm, however, came close to being destroyed by the ceaseless flow of traffic, including a vast number of heavy lorries. Just sitting in a pub, the sound of traffic reverberates ceaselessly through the room, through you.

But the newly-opened by-pass should solve this distressing problem. As Alderman Mrs. Gwen Tilley, 71, and ex-Mayor of Cowbridge, told me, "Cowbridge can now cater for tourists making overnight

Journeys. The Bear Hotel used to be a coaching house, the stage between Cardiff and Pyle. Cowbridge could become a "stage" town again, being a pleasant and quiet retreat."

There are, however, more pressing problems beyond mere noise that have been affecting Cowbridge. There have recently been a distressing number of accidents, involving heavy lorries crashing into houses as a result of brake failures. Last September alone there were three accidents in a week, while, in October, a lorry

ploughed into the house of Mrs. Tilley.

"Heavy lorries, particularly in the rain, are a tremendous worry," Mrs. Tilley told me. "That night, after the lorry came in the front, a car crashed on the opposite side of the road. I thought I was having a nightmare, but it was the real thing."

"But this will be rectified. Cowbridge will be a pleasant place again, pleasing to people. The Civic Trust will plan the town to make it as attractive as possible, convenient for the bus people, who should benefit extensively, and all concerned."

Roaring giants

According to the Buchanan Report on Traffic in Towns, the highways were not originally built for vehicles at all. So long as most roads in Britain are little more than third-rate roads, then the future of towns and villages like Cowbridge will continue to be in danger. Cowbridge is not "lucky" to have a by-pass built around it, while towns like Cardiff go without the "luxury" of unnecessary accidents, like those last September and October have made it a necessity.

And, as Mrs. Tilley put it, "The character of the old town will be brought out. The older people especially will be glad that the roar of heavy vehicles passing through will go—their fears will be eliminated."

But their fears are certainly no exaggeration. A stretch of road skirting the "Mason's Arms" possesses no pavement at all. "On Market Day," continued Mrs. Tilley, "the cars queue right along the length of the main street and make it worse for the pedestrians." Professor Buchanan has been at pains to emphasise that pedestrian space is a mark of a civilised urban society.

Better parking

Mrs. Tilley has travelled extensively in Europe, but she says, "I have never come across any place like this, not even in France or Switzerland."

The other important convenience that the by-pass will provide concerns the ease with which shoppers will be able to park. Until the by-pass was opened there was no parking at all, on either side of the main street between the traffic lights on the Cardiff side and the "Duke" Hotel.

The landlord of the "Duke," Mr. Robert Jennings, told me, "The by-pass will definitely be an improvement."

His 600-year-old coaching inn has a long tradition in refreshing travel-weary travellers. "But," said Mr. Jennings, "at the moment you can't break the line of traffic or park anywhere. The by-pass won't be detrimental to us; those who want to come into Cowbridge will come. This happened in Stamford, and they've built two new pubs since the by-pass opened."

No one I spoke to in Cowbridge expressed anything except relief at the opening of the by-pass. One of the customers in the "Duke" was especially enthusiastic. He passes through Cowbridge



Pouring concrete into the final set of T-heads during the building of the viaduct.

regularly, and told me that the new road would "eliminate hold-ups which were terrific sometimes." The road was unlikely to affect the refreshment trade of many-taverned Cowbridge because, he said, "On many occasions there is congestion and the temptation to go through while the going is good is too strong."

"What difference is it going to make? Two minutes? And after that I'm back on the road again. I think it will have a great effect from the business point of view."

Again, the road is unlikely to be detrimental to other traders—the amount of trade from the average passer-through is not too great anyway. If anything, the traders will generally benefit, because there will be more room for parking. "Saturdays and Sundays are particularly nasty," one man told me "because there is a large volume of traffic for the Gower Coast, Porthcawl, Southend, Llantwit Major and Ogmore."

Trade benefits

The parking problems, to the benefit of the traders, will be rectified. Mrs. Tilley told me: "They will be able to ignore the present signs and park where and when they like. The town, in short, will be very much improved. Like Bridgend, there will be plenty of room for parking and shopping."

Furthermore, the townspeople will at last be able to sleep at night. Several people told me they had been "driven round the bend" by the ceaseless roar—day and night—of the diesel engines passing through.

Cowbridge will now be a pleasant little break between Cardiff and Bridgend instead of a tedious centre of congestion for motorists. The heavy lorries from Milford Haven and Port Talbot will skirt the town without danger to the people of Cowbridge from brake-failures and fumes. The patience with which the people have borne their traffic problems has at last been rewarded, and tranquillity can descend upon the town again. A three year saga of accidents will serve to stifle any criticism directed at a town desiring to return to the peace that 700 years' history deserves.

Cast on site



A precarious perch. His vantage point is one of the 75-ton beams cast on site. A Loveridge Ltd. picture by permission of McAlpine's.

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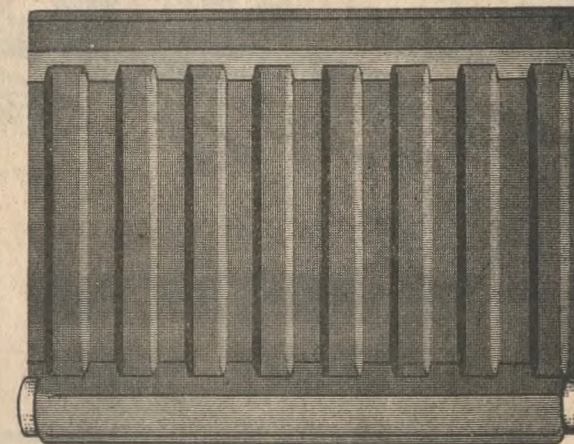
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History Is Made In Cowbridge

£1,500,000 By-Pass Opened

JUST before eleven o'clock on Monday morning a small motorcade drove from Stalling Down to the top of Darren Hill, Cowbridge, and made history—for the road they used was the new Cowbridge by-pass.

It was the first time for a thousand or more years that travellers from Cardiff to West Wales did not have to travel through the Borough on their journey.

The Romans marching along the Via Julia Maritima passed through what later became Cowbridge, but they took the direct route—now referred to by local inhabitants as the Old Roman Road, which goes in a straight line from the Flamingo Cafe, over the top of the common, and down the steep slope to join the present road half-way along Primrose Hill.

For 17 centuries travellers followed the straight path cut by the Romans, and it was not until the eighteenth century, when the steep descent from the downs into Cowbridge became too much for the Royal Mail stage coaches, that chain gangs of convicts from the House of Correction at Cowbridge were marched out to cut the new road around the downs.

FOR STAGE COACH

That road, designed especially for the stage coach, served the ever-increasing traffic until this week, when the magnificent £1,500,000 dual carriageway was opened to the public on Monday morning.

A small group of people watched as the Mayor and Mayoress of Cowbridge, Coun. and Mrs. Glyn McNeil, were welcomed at the Cardiff end of the new road by the officials responsible for its construction and senior police officers. Coun. McNeil drove his car along one arm of the dual carriageway and on its arrival at Darren Hill, turned around and returned along the other half of the carriageway to Primrose Hill.

The journey was the signal for workmen to remove the bollards and notices which prohibited the entry of vehicles on to the by-pass and soon the traffic was speeding along the two tracks of the by-pass, saving up to quarter-of-an-hour on the old journey through the town.

WORRIED

On this road it is expected that motorists will be able to travel at extremely high speeds in safety. In fact, unless a close watch is kept on the speedometer, motorists will find themselves travelling far faster than they are accustomed to, especially along the long descent, when travelling from Cardiff to the West.

At one stretch I thought I was travelling at about 60 m.p.h. and was shocked when I looked at my speedometer to see that it was touching 80 m.p.h.

Many people are worried about the effect high winds from the north or south may have on cars travelling at speed. The long run down over the Slade is in a deep cutting, but suddenly the road emerges on to the open viaduct by Cowbridge Girls' High School. The

sudden emergence from the shelter of the cutting to the open bridge might have a dangerous effect on the unwary motorist travelling at speed.

TRANQUILITY

The by-pass has already given inhabitants of Cowbridge a peace and tranquility which they have not known since the invention of the internal combustion engine.

No longer do endless streams of lorries clatter their way along the narrow road through the town, while cars and vans sped along its main street. At a reception given by the Mayor, after he had performed the opening ceremony, people felt there was something strange about the town. Suddenly it was realised that the

town was quiet, so quiet, in fact, that I later saw two men standing in the middle of High Street talking, a thing which a few hours before would quickly have been fatal.

I doubt if Cowbridge will ever return to the era to which the late Alderman Robert Thomas frequently referred, for when he was a boy cricket was played in the main road. Perhaps those days are gone for ever, but it is perhaps a hopeful omen when two men can stop for a couple of minutes in the middle of the road and not cause a traffic jam back as far as Bonvilston.

—TONY HUGHES