

Scott Wilson Scotland: A History

Volume 4

The Vision Revisited [1992]

JP McCafferty



Significant or notable projects, people and events are highlighted as follows for ease of reference:-

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Scott Wilson Scotland: A History [Fix header spacing Vol 4 & 2][Add photographs]

The Vision Revisited

JP McCafferty

1. The inaugural conference of the Scottish Group of DOCOMOMO Glasgow University 1992 [McCafferty; MacInnes; Wark]

In 1992, **Jim McCafferty** was asked to present a paper on the Glasgow Inner Ring Road to **Visions Revisited, the inaugural conference of the Scottish Group of DOCOMOMO**, an international working party for the DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the MOdern MOvement. The invitation came from **Ranald MacInnes** of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland [RCAHMS], with whom Jim had been in consultation concerning alterations to the Grade A listed SWK office at 5-6 Park Circus, Glasgow. Wary that such an invitation, to a largely architectural conference, might present an opportunity for throwing large 'custard pies' at the only engineer [presenting a paper about an urban motorway!]. Jim was eventually persuaded that all concerned would be 'interested' in what he had to say! In any event, his 'mantra' was that he 'never knowingly turned down an invitation' to publicise SWK!

DOCOMOMO was founded at the University of Eindhoven in 1988 and the inaugural conference of the Scottish Group was held at the History of Art Department, Glasgow University 10 October 1992.

The Convenor was TV Personality Kirsty Wark and the main papers and speakers were:

Inaugural Address: Herbert-Jan Henket, Prof of Architecture, Eindhoven University.

Modern Architecture and Heritage: David M Walker, Chief Insp'r Historic Bldgs, Historic Scotland.

Rebuilding Scotland: The Role of Government: Rt Hon Dr J Dickson Mabon, MP Greenock 1955-83, Formerly Minister of State Scottish Office and Dept of Energy

The National Housing Drive: Ronnie Cramond, Senior Administrator Dept of Health SDD.

The Crusade against Edinburgh's Slums: Pat Rogan, Chair Edinburgh Housing C'ttee, 1962-65.

The Glasgow Inner Ring Road, Past, Present and Future: **James P McCafferty**, Partner SWK.

Basil Spence & Hutchesontown 'C': Charles Robertson, Prof of Architecture, Strathclyde University.

Sam Bunton and the Cult of Mass Housing: Miles Glendinning, RCAHMS.

The Censorship of Neglect: Morris & Steedman's Private Houses: David Page, Page & Park.

Post-Coia Coia: The post-war work of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia: Mark Baines, Architect.

The Papers were subsequently published in 'Rebuilding Scotland, The Post-war Vision 1945-1975, Edited by Miles Glendinning, Published by Tuckwell Press in 1997, with additional contributions, mainly from architects from the era:-

Geoffrey Copcutt, Architect, Cumbernauld New Town 1950s/1960s; Prof Charles McKean, Architecture, Dundee University; Prof Andy MacMillan[*], Mackintosh School of Architecture, Glasgow University; Prof Isi Metzstein[*], Architecture, Edinburgh University; Prof Patrick Nuttgens, Architecture York University; John Richards, Architect, formerly Deputy Chairman, Scottish Homes; Robert Steedman, Partner, Morris & Steedman, Architects and Governor Edinburgh College of Art; Sir Anthony Wheeler, Consultant, Wheeler & Sproson, Architects and President of the Royal Scottish Academy 1983-90; Sir William Whitfield, Sen Partner, Whitfield Partners, Architect.

[*] Former Partners Gillespie Kidd & Coia, Architects.

Included below is the published text from 'Rebuilding Scotland' with minor corrections [to clarify points incorrectly transcribed from the video recorded conference or the original written text] and minor additions [to bring the story up to date at 2012]. The paper was illustrated using a large number of slides and was originally intended to be spoken rather than presented as the written word.

[Permission for publication was granted by Editor, Miles Glendinning, and Publisher, Birlinn (Tuckwell) Press, in their emails to JP McCafferty of 20 & 25 June 2012].

It is worth noting that no 'custard pies' were actually thrown and, as can be seen from the report of the conference by David Whitham in Planning History Vol 14 No 3 in 1992 [which follows], Jim's paper on the Glasgow Inner Ring Road [and Renfrew Motorway Stage 1] was well received.

In 1993/94, The Glasgow Inner Ring Road, North and West Flanks, was 'listed' by DOCOMOMO as one of sixty key Scottish 'Architecture' monuments from the post-war period 1945-1970.

2. The Glasgow Inner Ring Road: Past, Present and Future

James P McCafferty

As the only engineer contributing to this conference, among so many architects and others, I feel rather like the one-eyed javelin thrower, brought into the team not so much to win medals as to keep the crowd on its toes! I'm not a traffic engineer or a transportation planner. I cannot therefore claim any personal credit for the overall planning of the **Inner Ring Road**, but I was very much involved in its design and its construction.

When I left university and - a product of the white heat of technology - joined Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick, we were still in the Swinging Sixties. Mini-skirts, the Pill, New Towns, the Beatles, flat roofs, tower blocks — and urban motorways! It was a time of great change and excitement. Everyone wanted to be 'where it was at'. And, as far as urban motorways in Scotland were concerned, 'where it was at' was 6 Park Circus, Glasgow, the home of Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick. For the next ten years or so, I mixed with a group of energetic and innovative engineers from many parts of the world, and we also worked closely with Holford Associates, architects and planning consultants - and, of course, with our clients, the Corporation of the City of Glasgow. In the beginning, where no standards existed, we invented them. We felt that we were involved in the greatest project in Scotland. And when it was over, we scattered, like the remnants of the Seven Samurai, to far-off parts, to share our experiences with others.

I propose, first, to give you a potted history, to set this project in its historical context, followed by an evaluation - and a view of the future.

The first proposals for the systematic modernisation of the Glasgow road network date back to the end of World War II. In 1945, **Robert Bruce**, Master of Works and City Engineer, proposed two ring roads around the centre of Glasgow, and several radial motorways. In 1949, *Abercrombie's Clyde Valley Regional Plan* recommended an extension to the Bruce roads network, including several other ring roads and radial arteries, along with rehousing in New Towns, new industries for old, and a coordinated transportation plan. In 1954, the *Glasgow Development Plan* proposed two ring roads again, and nine dual carriageway arterial roads, along with road improvements to reduce traffic congestion in the city centre.

But all these plans, for the time being, remained on paper - and, by 1956, the average journey speed in the city of Glasgow was just 8.2mph. 'Stopped time' accounted for one-third of journey time. Traffic was focused on the city centre. Many of the roads were overloaded. Use of public transport was falling, and private vehicle ownership was increasing dramatically. Traffic volumes were expected to treble in fifty years. Road safety records were worsening. This is a quotation from the 1960 Review of the Development Plan: 'The future social and economic health of Glasgow will depend basically on a successful attack on the interlocked problems of housing, employment and communications. In this respect, the campaign of the 1960-80 period should be centred on the redevelopment of 29 **Comprehensive Development Areas (CDAs)**, and on the traffic proposals for the central area'. By contrast, the existing road system was characterised by the Review as 'a plethora of radial routes with multitudinous interchanges, and a complete absence of specially designed ring roads which would link the main radials and enable through and cross city traffic to steer clear of the city centre and inner residential areas'.

The 29 CDAs recommended in the 1960 Review - part of the Glasgow planners' strategy of linked redevelopment and overspill - involved 2,700 acres of the city, 2,500 industrial and commercial concerns, and a population of 300,000, and the traffic proposals included an Inner Ring Road. Although this concept had been discussed previously, now the CDA clearance programme provided a readymade framework into which the road could be slotted. By that time, in 1960, significant elements of public and political opinion in the city were ready for this bold step. The *Glasgow Herald*, on 22nd February, proclaimed, 'The timing and the logic of the proposals are both right. Redevelopment of the central areas provides the opportunity for road building on the boldest lines'. A strong element of civic pride was evident: Glasgow was, after all, the nation's largest city and its commercial-industrial hub. And there were also comparisons with the relative inactivity of England in this field. The *Herald* continued: 'The most extraordinary thing, perhaps, about the inner ring road proposals is that they have sprung from local initiative. While **Mr Marples**, Minister of Transport, is considering what powers he possesses or can acquire to make a departmental assault on London's traffic problem, Glasgow has produced a blueprint for the first urban motorway in Britain, probably in Europe, and is turning now to consider the prospects for an outer ring route'.

But others were not so keen. In the *Glasgow Herald* three days earlier, Councillor Harry J. Crone had complained that the Planning Committee were 'bulldozing the individual members of the Corporation'. A.S. Warren complained of being 'pulled by the nose'. The person doing the 'bulldozing' and 'nose pulling' was **Bailie Bill Taylor**, Convener of Planning and future leader of the Labour Group in Glasgow Corporation. He explained, in reply, that 'purely negative restrictions on traffic do not meet the basic functions and needs of the city, and severe restrictions could eventually lessen the importance of the central area as a whole . . . Unless our road system matches the potential challenge, then the centre of Glasgow is going to die of slow strangulation'. As **S. Hamilton**, former Town Clerk, subsequently noted, a decisive role was indeed played by the City's Labour administration, which supported this initiative of the Planning and Housing Committees, and forcefully exploited available Government subsidy.

In 1960, therefore, Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick were commissioned to develop an **Inner Ring Road** proposal. At this stage, the road proposals included the embryonic idea for a ring road round the centre. The **Clyde Tunnel** was already proposed, and there were motorways heading towards Glasgow, but nobody was quite sure what they were going to do when they got there! In 1961, Lord Provost **Jean Roberts** led a visit to the USA to study redevelopment of urban areas. They visited Washington DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, New Haven, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Chicago. They returned convinced that comprehensive redevelopment, mass transportation, and urban motorways would halt Glasgow's decline.

Again in 1961, Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick were asked to undertake a more comprehensive study, and we brought in New York consultants **Tippetts-Abbott-McCarthy-Stratton [TAMS]** to advise on

American experience. The initial proposals for the **Inner Ring Road** were published in 1962. In 1963 the **Highway Plan** itself was completed, although it was not published until 1965. At that time, car ownership was predicted to be three times higher by 1990, and the proposals included three ring roads, plus radial motorways and expressways. The ultimate network of roads comprised an **Inner Ring Road** at the centre, with various **arterial roads and outer ring roads**. It indicated the present **M74** coming off the **Inner Ring Road East Flank** at Glasgow Green just north of the Clyde; the **Kingston Bridge** crossing; and the Renfrew and Monkland Motorways. Going straight out to the north-west was to be the **Maryhill Motorway**, towards Bearsden, Milngavie and the north of the city.

As already mentioned, the Inner Ring was to make extensive use of the **Comprehensive Development Areas**, already designated by Glasgow Corporation planners, which covered a vast area of the city. These CDAs, of course, were there not just to cope with roads, but to cope with rehousing and regeneration of the city. They came first, in other words: the road opportunistically made use of their clearance. Although, I daresay the tenements in the path of the road fell into disrepair even more quickly once its alignment was decided!

Target 1 of the Highway Plan - the motorway across the city, including the **West and North Flanks of the Inner Ring Road** - was planned to be completed by 1975, along with **pedestrianisation of principal shopping streets** and an effective parking policy. By 1965, work on the **North Flank at Townhead** had commenced, with the Scottish Office providing finance of 50-75% for the contracts which followed. In the event, Target 1 was actually completed by 1981, in ten contracts at a cost of about £150m (or £590m in today's [1991] prices).

The principles of planning of the **Inner Ring Road** were similar to those produced in the Buchanan Report, which it pre-dated. Primary roads would be built for main traffic flows; most traffic would be directed away from city streets; large travel and environmental benefits would result. Traffic diverted to well-designed new roads would cause less environmental harm than the same traffic on narrow city streets. The city centre environment would be improved by diverting through traffic, and city centre traffic would be further minimised by control of parking spaces. Short-term parking was to be encouraged, car commuting discouraged.

The techniques which were used in the 1961 traffic survey were as follows: destination surveys established travel patterns in 1961, and traffic patterns were then predicted for 1990, allowing for traffic growth, and changes of population and employment, New Towns and so on. Future road proposals were then tested for the predicted traffic flows. The results of this 1961 survey, fed into a model of the city streets, demonstrated large flows on either side of Central Station and crossing the River Clyde: that was why there were already those two bridges there. And there were big flows on Paisley Road West, Great Western Road, and on Parliamentary Road, leading out to Springburn and Kirkintilloch. The 1990 traffic fed on to the same system indicated that there would be massive congestion, were nothing to be done to the road system. Particularly busy would be Paisley Road West and the roads along the south side of the line of the present **Kingston Bridge**. All in all, predicted traffic flows were found to be four times higher in 1990 than in 1961. The same 1990 traffic levels, fed on to the **Highway Plan's** proposed new network, showed a large volume of traffic flowing out across the **Kingston Bridge** and going up round the **West Flank of the Inner Ring Road** and out along the North. There was also a massive flow - indeed a bigger flow - predicted for the **East and South Flanks** and the connections to the **M74** at the south-east.

The traffic survey models, we believed, provided a rational basis for the design of new roads. Primary routes were located so as to cause least environmental harm which, it was recognised, could arise from noise, visual intrusion and severance. I mentioned the CDAs a moment ago; outside those areas, the motorways were located along disused canals, adjacent to railways, or adjacent to industrial areas - in other words, trying to snake along lines of existing severance. Construction of the **North and West Flanks** was staged: the worst areas of congestion, mostly in the early CDAs, were

relieved first. It was intended that a sensible, coherent system was to exist at all times. Inevitably, however, the dramatic period from 1965 onwards, when the line of the road became a huge expanse laid bare awaiting construction, was a time of great trauma for the city. Most people travelled by public transport in those days, but there was still a lot of chaos, traffic-jams of buses, and general inconvenience to people who were simply trying to go about their daily business while an urban motorway system was being constructed across their city.

Considerable efforts were made to ensure that the system would be safe, user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing. For example, the design set out, from the beginning, to provide open-span pedestrian underpasses rather than closed boxes, because it was felt these were much more open and user-friendly, allowing free movement of traffic and people at ground level. A lot of attention was given to the detailing of footways and landscaping. Also carefully considered, were the interchange designs, with bridges and roads sweeping overhead and over one and other, to carry the predicted traffic. There were many daring and interesting structures in their own right - sweeping curves following the vertical and horizontal geometry of the roads, some with single columns supporting torsionally stiff prestressed concrete boxes.

Townhead Interchange was the first to be constructed. Its prestressed concrete box girder bridges were quite avant-garde in their day. The red sandstone retaining walls, on the other hand, harked back to the past: they were faced with red Dumfriesshire from the same source as many of the tenements and public buildings in Glasgow

Models of major structures such as Townhead Interchange were made, to assist in public exhibitions - which were not the same thing, of course, as today's idea of public 'participation'. The Inner Ring Road design work was split between two firms of consulting engineers, Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick & Partners (who dealt, basically, with the **North Flank**) and W.A. Fairhurst and Partners (the **West Flank**). Another environmental concern was that, in addition to preserving important industry, buildings and areas of historical or architectural interest - including their settings - were to be preserved. At Charing Cross, for example, the motorway was depressed in cutting, to reduce noise and visual intrusion, to minimise severance of the community and to avoid overshadowing the Mitchell Library; and there was an effort, through the famous **'Bridge to Nowhere'** - which was intended to carry shops across the motorway- to preserve the line of Sauchiehall Street and the 'canyon effect' and grid pattern of the city centre streets. It could, of course, have been cheaper and simpler to adopt a ground level and viaduct alignment, but that would have been inappropriate and unacceptable in such a sensitive location.

So what were the results of all this planning and effort? An evaluation carried out by Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick in 1980 produced the following results. For the motorist, there were of course direct and obvious benefits. Traffic speed had increased from an average of 18 mph in 1961 to 50 mph, largely because of the **M8**; time savings were about 20%; fuel savings, approximately 9%; and a reduction of street congestion produced similar savings of time and fuel. But other people benefited, too. There was a large reduction in the number of accidents and fatalities on the roads in the city: fatalities were cut from 16.5 per million vehicle-miles to 0.8 in 1977. There were also environmental benefits - a reduction in noise, fumes, visual intrusion and vibration in the city; a reduction in the number of heavy vehicles travelling through the city, a reduction of traffic in the main shopping areas and pedestrianisation of Buchanan Street and parts of Sauchiehall Street, Argyll Street and Gordon Street in the heart of the city. There were also improved operating conditions for buses.

And what of the appearance of the completed motorway itself? Looking at it today, it is, in my opinion, a green and pleasant, yet dramatic motorway. Lots of trees, excellent landscaping, user-friendly footbridges with spiral ramps, aesthetically pleasing bridges and structures and the planting has come on well giving the impression of a linear park through most of the city. It has become part of the fabric

of Glasgow. And what a dramatic gateway - anyone travelling into Glasgow by motorway knows that they have arrived [as St Paul said of Tarsus] at no mean city!

But along with, or in the wake of, all this, there inevitably also came a 'downfall'. **The Greater Glasgow Transportation Study (GGTS)** set up in the mid-1960s to produce a coordinated transportation plan for all modes of traffic, confirmed in 1968 that the **Highway Plan** was the highway network the City intended to adopt. Several years later, however - in 1973 - the Land Compensation Act gave rights to compensation if property values were to fall due to road construction. That year, the GLC in London immediately abandoned its motorway plans. By 1974, the **Greater Glasgow Transportation Study** was reporting a 30% drop in predicted 1990 traffic. In the deteriorating economic conditions and changing political climate, the motorway proposals appeared over-ambitious and expensive. Now there was more emphasis on jobs and dealing with urban deprivation. Increasingly, transportation policy encouraged the use of public transport.

The optimism of the 1960s was gone, and attitudes towards urban motorways changed. 'Motorway' became a pejorative word, and the roads themselves were now actually blamed for the clearance of the CDAs! Environmentalists and conservationists led the protests. Confidence among politicians and officials waned. **In 1975 Strathclyde Regional Council inherited Glasgow's roads**, and by 1981, Stage 1 had been completed. But there were to be no more, big urban road schemes [at least for the time being]!

What, then, of the future? Traffic volumes continue to rise inexorably. There are currently [in 1991] 155,000 vehicles per day crossing the **Kingston Bridge**, against 120,000 predicted for 1990. Because the **Ring Road** has not been completed, **Charing Cross Section** cannot cope with the traffic: under the original plan, half the through traffic on that section would have gone the other way, via the South and East Flanks. So, at rush-hour Charing Cross is slow-moving, often blocked. Something needs to be done.

Yet, paradoxically, car ownership in Glasgow is very low, by modern Western European standards. There's a long way to go before we get anywhere near the sort of car ownership levels of Düsseldorf or München! But car-use will inevitably rise fast unless it is restricted by some political action. We only need to look at what's happened since the most recent predictions; car ownership has been increasing far faster than expected. What is to be done?

Strathclyde Regional Council have proposals [in 1991] to tackle this situation, which they have summed up in a document called 'Travelling in Strathclyde'. This plan proposes a light rail transit system through the city; this will be on roads, with wires overhead: useful, but perhaps not as aesthetically pleasing as some other modes of transport. But what about new roads? The Strathclyde plan shows spreading red lines snaking right round what once might have been called the **East and South Flanks of the Inner Ring Road from the M74 to the south end of the Kingston Bridge**, all looking suspiciously like some sort of completion of a **Ring Road** - but not quite the sort of Ring Road that was planned, originally!

[**Looking back from 2012**, with the benefit of hindsight concerning Edinburgh's disastrous, and currently on-going, fiasco resulting from its decision to construct a tram system, it is, perhaps, a relief that Glasgow decided against such a scheme! Although, surely Glasgow would have made a better job of it!

Furthermore, those red lines snaking in from the east of Glasgow eventually resulted in the construction of the **'South Flank M74 Extension, from the M74-M73 Maryville Junction to Fullarton Road (1994) and on to the south end of the Kingston Bridge in 2011**, thus providing an eastwardly elongated **'Ring Road'** with the **M8 Monkland Motorway** on the North Flank and the **M73** for the East Flank! Not quite what SWK had planned but with similar operational benefits, particularly

at Charing Cross, on the West Flank, which had become overloaded without the beneficial relief of the originally planned East Flank].

3. The DOCOMOMO Inaugural Conference was written-up by David Whitham in his Report published in Planning History Vol 14 No3 1992, which, interestingly, gives more space to the GIRR Paper than to any of the others! The Planning History Group, founded in 1974, is an international body with members, drawn from many disciplines, with a working interest in history, planning and the environment.

[Permission for publication was granted by David Whitham and Helen Meller, editor of Planning Perspectives, in their emails to JP McCafferty, 4 & 2 July, 2012].

The Report on **Jim McCafferty's** Paper is included below

Roads and Planning in 1960s Glasgow

James McCafferty, a partner in Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick who had worked on the Glasgow urban motorway schemes from the 1960s provided a pivotal view of Glasgow's post-war planning history.

He traced the evolution of the Glasgow road plan. City engineer **Robert Bruce's plan** of 1945, which confidently demonstrated that a million people could be housed within the city boundaries, had proposed two ring roads, the inner ring tightly enclosing the city centre. **Abercrombie's Clyde Valley Plan** of 1949, though recommending reduction of Glasgow's population by at least 250,000, endorsed Bruce's road plan, enhancing it by proposing that main radial roads should be motorways rather than improved existing roads as Bruce had envisaged. The inner ring box was thus accepted by both second city and dispersal camps. There was no dispute either about the need to clear the city's slums, the worst of which surrounded the city centre in the path of the ring road. The 1960 development plan review linked the problems:

'The future social and economic health of Glasgow will depend basically on a successful attack on the interlocked problems of housing, employment and communications. In this respect, the campaign in the 1960-80 period should be centred on the 29 comprehensive development areas and on the traffic proposals for the central area'.

The **CDA**, originally intended for reconstruction of war-damaged areas was the chosen instrument for renewal in the 1960 review: Glasgow's 29 CDAs covered 2700 acres and contained 300,000 people.

In this context Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick was to make an initial study of the inner ring road, and Lord Provost **Jean Roberts** led her delegation to the USA. SWK were appointed to make a more comprehensive study, with American consultants, and eventually to design the inner ring. In 1963 the city highway plan was completed and work commenced on the north flank in 1965.

The study, with Holford Associates, published by the city in 1965, in many ways anticipated the Buchanan report on traffic in towns, but by 1974, with construction of the west flank well advanced, urban motorways were out of fashion. The GLC had abandoned its inner ring plan and even in Glasgow confidence waned. In 1975 roads became a regional responsibility, and after completion of the north and west flanks in 1981 there would be no more urban motorways.

Mr **McCafferty** clearly regretted that the plan was not completed, demonstrating present congestion and forecasting worse, but was justifiably proud of what had been achieved. His illustrations ranged from the heroic, the **Renfrew Motorway** threading through south-west Glasgow to the **Kingston Bridge**, to the intimate, the carefully graded and landscaped pedestrian crossings that never resort to the terrifying and squalid tunnels of other cities.



The 'Visions Revisited' discussion panel: Glasgow University

Visible from L to R: Charles Robertson, James P McCafferty, David Page and Kirsty Wark.



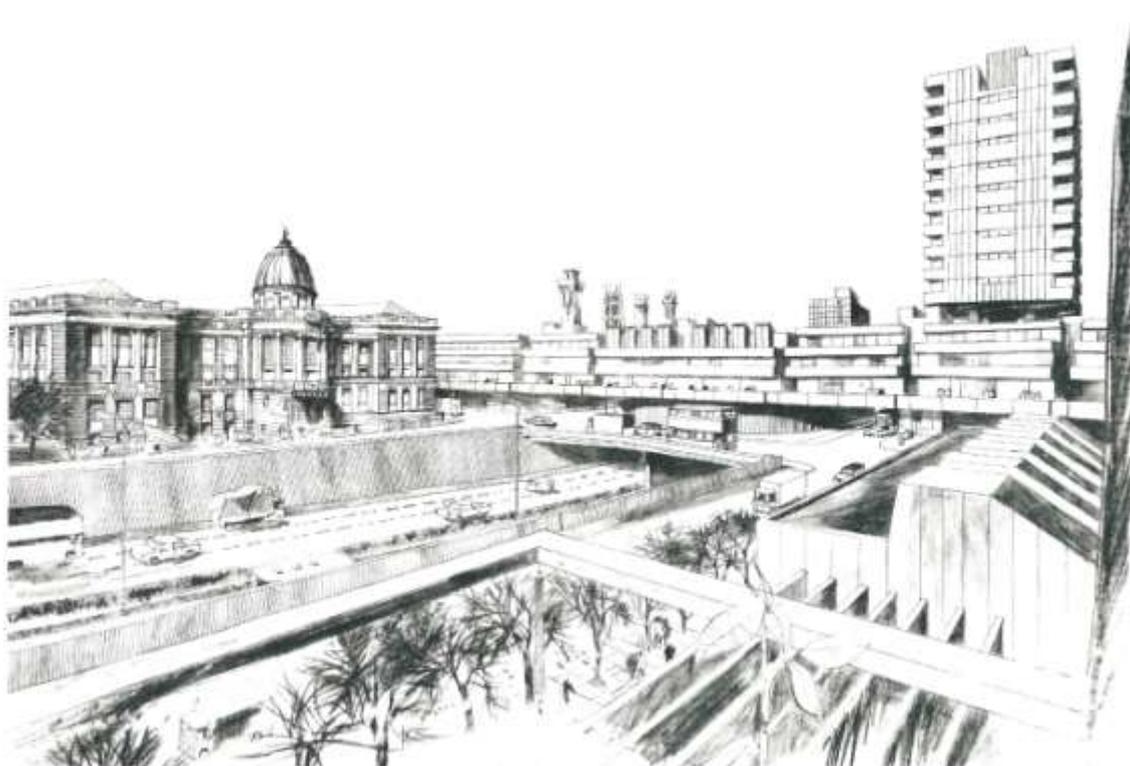
The proposed Glasgow Inner Ring Road [1962] from 'A Highway Plan for Glasgow' published 1965 showing the relationship to the Comprehensive Development Areas [CDAs].



The Glasgow Inner Ring Road under construction in 1968. Kingston Bridge is bottom centre, Charing Cross and St George's Cross are top centre with the North Flank [Woodside 2] departing to the right.



The Vision: Townhead Interchange with Glasgow Cathedral and the Barony Church to right; Royal Infirmary top centre; Cathedral Street crossing East Flank; Collins Building [curved] centre left in what is now the Strathclyde University Campus.



The Vision for Charing Cross; Mitchell Library to left, Park Circus Towers top centre. From 'A Highway Plan for Glasgow'; image by Alexander Duncan Bell.



The Vision Revisited: M8 Glasgow Inner Ring Road: St George's Cross Interchange in 1972.



The Vision Revisited: M8 Renfrew Motorway Stage 1 in 1976 threading between works and communities along the line of the Glasgow-Paisley railway. Ibrox bottom left, Bellahouston Park bottom right, Kingston Bridge top left. Paisley Road West runs diagonally top left to bottom right.