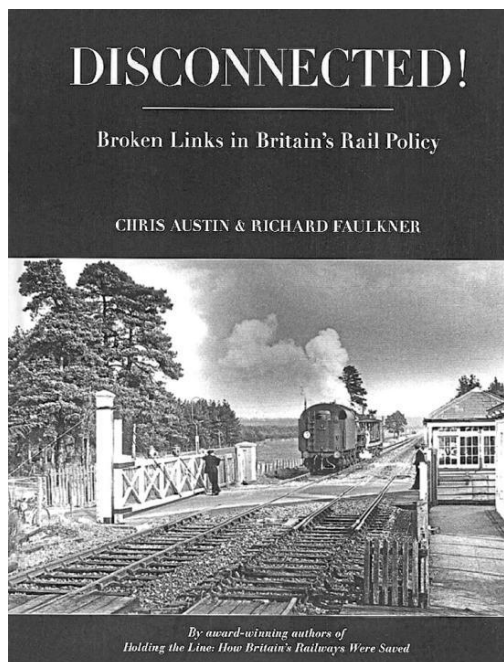


# REVIEWS: DISCONNECTED! BROKEN LINKS IN BRITAIN'S RAIL POLICY

By Chris Austin & Richard Faulkner

THIS is not one of those 'coffee-table' books that well-meaning relatives give you for Christmas because you 'like trains'.



Nor is it a product of amateurs churning out volumes that then languish in charity shops for £1.99 apiece.

'Disconnected' is a serious, thoroughly researched sequel to the authors' *Holding the Line*, published by OPC in 2012. Thus we learn how a civil servant and a respected railway journalist risked their careers by leaking details of the Serpell Report to the press, creating such a media outcry that the report's proposals were thrown to the winds.

With assistance from Hansard and the National Archive Centre, the authors provide proof of the negative attitude to railways prevalent during the 1960s and '70s among civil servants and even at BRB HQ.

A particular eye-opener is the comparison between the costly and counter-productive widening of the A34 Oxford-Southampton trunk road and the fate of the Didcot-Newbury-Southampton railway that could have been fettled up to carry container trains, releasing capacity via Reading.

The work includes case studies on lines that could have been saved, of some that eluded closure, and others that have been reopened and are now thriving. One of the appendices supporting the 14 chapters lists the 130 stations and sections of line opened or reopened since 1983 under the Speller Amendment Act.

Two minor criticisms: one author "vividly" remembers using a King's Cross - Mallaig sleeper service in 1956, but I understand that it was only during the summer of 1901 that such a facility was provided to the west coast terminus. Subsequently seating coaches for Mallaig were attached in Glasgow enabling sleeper passengers to change vehicles without leaving the train.

And why no reference to the opening of the Borders line south of Newcraighall?

The text is supported by crisp black & white and some colour photographs, and by no fewer than 319 references.

Justifiably enthusiastic about the expansion of UK rail traffic over the last 25 years, the authors give cogent reasons for their support of HS2.

In short, anyone serious about the role of our railways should have this book

KF