

TRANSPORT IN STOCKPORT THROUGH THE AGES

The earliest known transport system in the region is the Roman road between *Mamucium* (Manchester) and *Aquae Arnemetiae* (Buxton), which forded the Mersey at Stockport. It is likely that there were well-established trackways used by pre-Roman communities long before Roman conquest of the area.

Methods of transportation did not change vastly between Roman times until the beginning of the 18th century with packhorses bringing produce to Stockport's market using a network of tracks and roads that had developed gradually over the centuries. The River Mersey served as a key artery for trade. Recently recorded rock-cut tunnels at Weir Mill have tentatively been interpreted as evidence for ferrying or water-borne transport in Stockport.

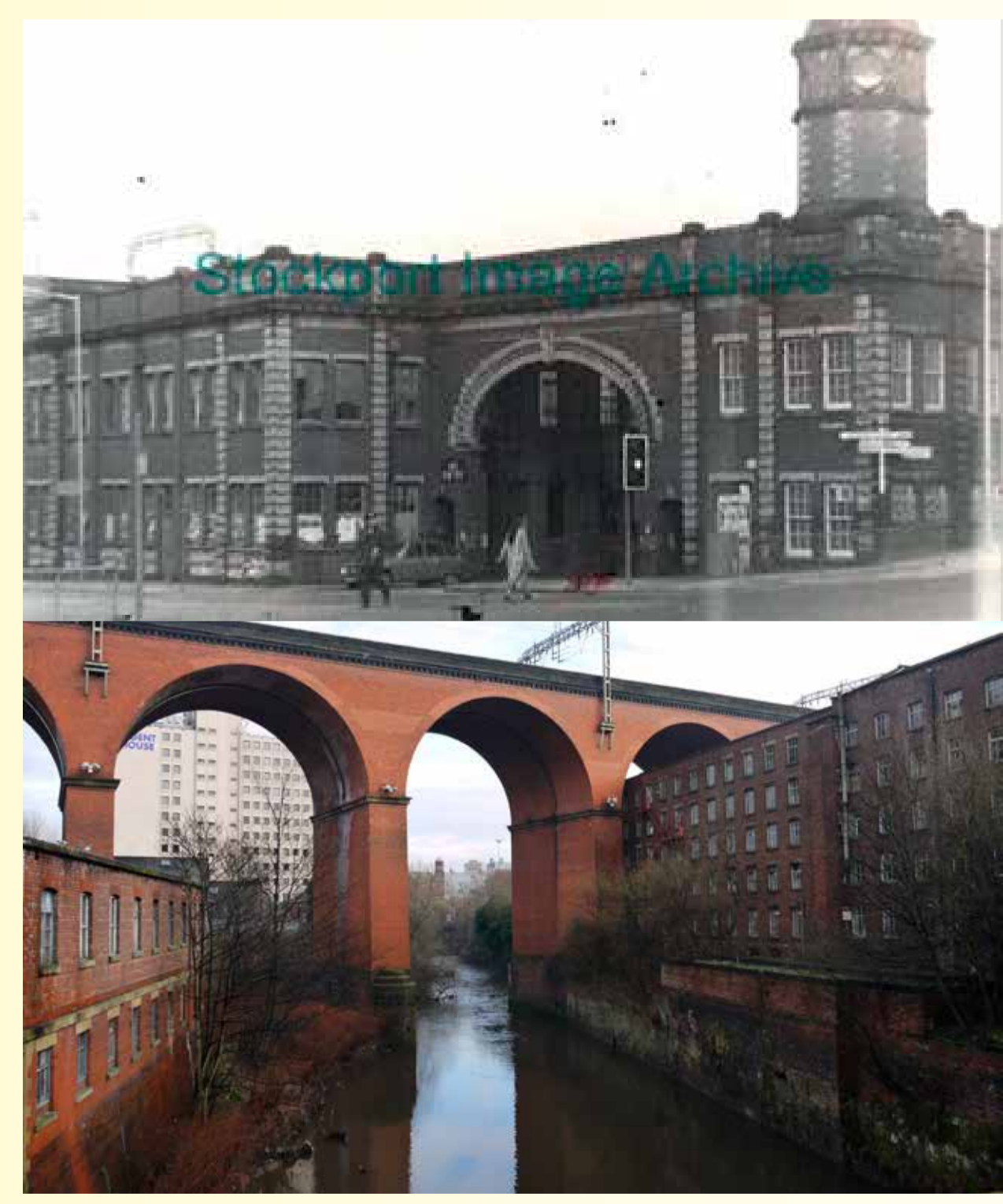
In the medieval period, the parish vestry was responsible for the upkeep of its roads. As trade and commerce increased in the 17th century, the ancient road system deteriorated faster than it could be repaired by parish labour. To remedy this, principal roads began to be 'turnpiked' by Acts of Parliament. Turnpikes required travellers to pay tolls, providing funding for road maintenance. Improved roads led to an increase in the use of inter-city stagecoaches carrying fare-paying passengers and associated lodging and stabling.

CANALS

Canals offered a more efficient means to convey goods to and from Stockport's factories. The extension of the Bridgewater Canal to River Mersey in 1776 provided the first viable means of transporting raw cotton, arriving from the Americas at the Port of Liverpool to Manchester and onto Stockport via horse-drawn transportation. The Stockport branch of the Manchester and Ashton Canal opened in 1797, the Peak Forest Canal was completed by 1799 and the Macclesfield Canal in 1829, each bringing the town ever closer to the sources of timber, coal and limestone, the latter received via the Peak Forest Canal. The canals also stimulated industrial development with coal wharfs supplying local foundries and textile mills. Finished products were transported to other parts of the British Isles, and, via ports, to destinations around the world.

RAILWAYS

The continuing compulsion to achieve more efficient transportation systems led to the development of railways, which quickly superseded the canal network. Stockport was linked by rail to Manchester and London with the completion of the Stockport Viaduct in 1842. Rapid expansion of the railway network in the mid-19th century provided further east-west routes, enabling local, regional and national connectivity. This is reflected architecturally by a wider use of building materials: Welsh roof slate; sandstone from Yorkshire; and Scandinavian pine. In the 1880s, the Stockport Viaduct was widened on its western side and this magnificent structure continues to be a distinctive landmark of Stockport's skyline to this day.

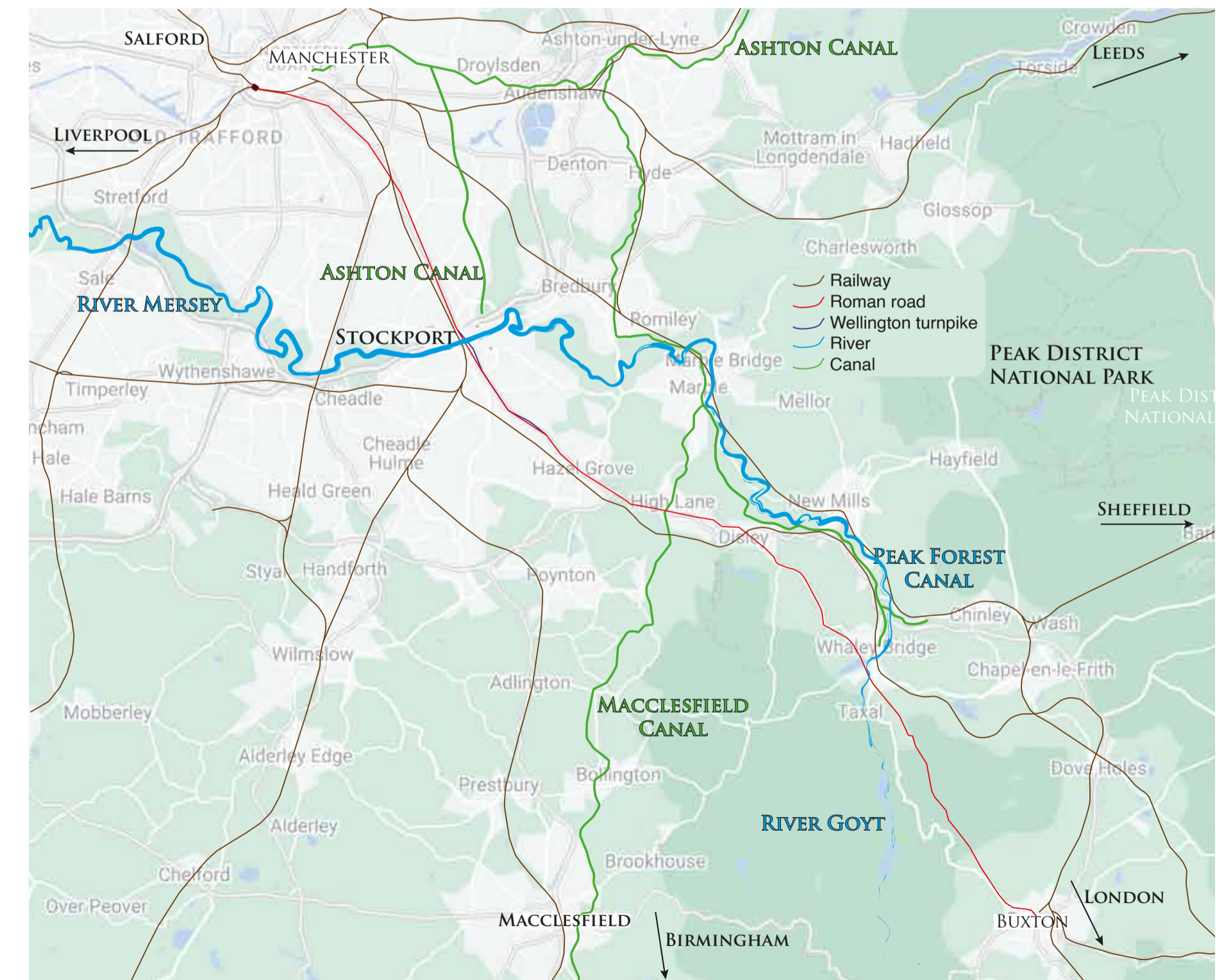
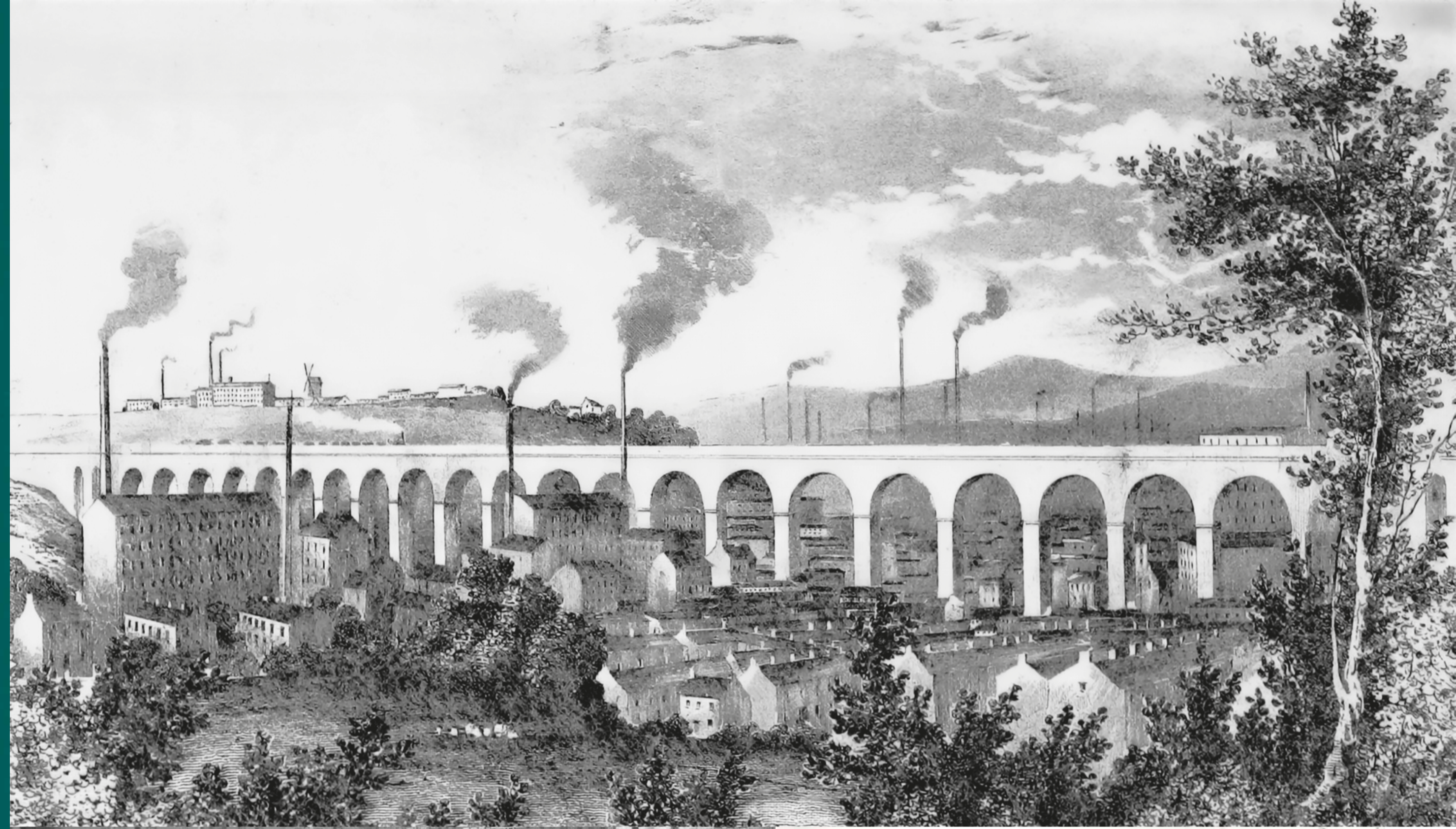


TRAMS

In the Victorian era horse-drawn bus services provided local transportation for Stockport's residents with connections to Manchester, Cheadle, Didsbury and Hazel Grove. In 1880, the Manchester Carriage and Tramways company opened a horse-drawn tram service between Stockport and Manchester. This network grew through the years and was eventually replaced by electric trams in 1902. The first motorbuses operated in the borough by 1908.

ROADS

The network of tramways and local railways began to be retired in the early 20th century with the advent of motorised transport. Provision for road transport massively increased in the later 20th century including the construction of the M60 motorway, which passes through the centre of Stockport.



Top right: 'Bradshaw's Hand-Book to the Manufacturing Districts of Great Britain' c. 1854; Middle left: Stockport Corporation 83 leaves Mersey Square, 1940s; Middle right: Stockport and Hazel Grove Carriage Company Horse Car, late 19th century; Above top: The bus and tram depot at the corner of Heaton Lane and Wellington Street North taken in the 1970s (© Stockport Image Archive 2023) Above bottom: Stockport viaduct over the River Mersey and Weir mill (courtesy of Smabs Sputzer); Bottom right: Various modes of transportation on modern mapping (© Google)