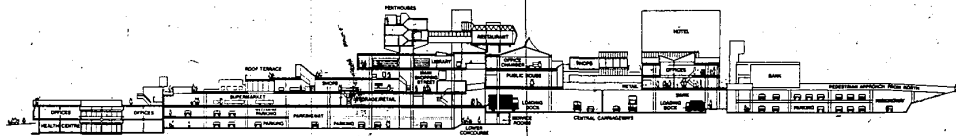


A CROSS-SECTION of Cumbernauld's "town centre" building's first phase, dedicated in 1967. Parking and deliveries are on the lower tier, stores and offices on the second, more offices on the third. Local government offices and the library are here, too. The "central carriage-way" is what we would call a divided lane highway.



Cars Don't Kill People In This 'New Town'

By TIM RICHARD
CUMBERNAULD, Scotland They call this "the safest town in Britain."
This suburb of Glasgow has an accident rate of only 20 per cent of what you'd expect for a town its size.
Cumbernauld's size today is about 35,000, a little less than Garden City's or Farmington Township's. Its traffic planners anticipated that as it grew by 3,500 or more a year, its casualty rate would increase from 30 per cent of the national average to perhaps 40 per cent.
Instead the accident rate dropped.

In recent years, only one person per year has been killed in traffic on Cumbernauld's roads although the national rate was 2.4. One would expect 149 killed and injured, but Cumbernauld's casualty figure was only 29.

HOW DID Cumbernauld do it?
Not by banning the automobile. In fact, Cumbernauld has a relatively high percentage of auto ownership.
Not by remaining a "bedroom suburb" of Glasgow, without commerce or industry. In fact, Cumbernauld's stores, offices and factories provide 10,000 jobs.
Not with conventional traffic control. There are no traffic lights or "wardens" directing traffic.
Cumbernauld earned the

accolade of "the safest town in Britain" by its design. It designed its houses and streets to separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic. As a technical brochure summed it up:
"The facilities are provided for the people and not the people arranged to make use of the facilities."

In brief, the footpaths don't run alongside roads. Houses are arranged so that auto traffic goes on one side, people traffic on the other. If a footpath must cross a major road, there's an underpass.

CUMBERNAULD is what city planning people call a "new town," a comprehensively planned community build almost from scratch in a short period of time. It has a range of housing types - penhouses, single-family houses, flats.

It's one of about 30 new towns designated in Great Britain since the end of World War II and one of five around Glasgow that were aimed at reducing that crowded, industrial city's population. It straddles a hill about a half-hour's drive from Glasgow and an hour's from Edinburgh.

With its relatively high degree of house ownership and reliance on the passenger auto, with a relatively higher job skill level in its labor force, with its technical

college and scads of children, Cumbernauld seems the most like Observerland suburbs of any British town, new or old. An American doesn't feel like a tourist here.

It was designated by the national government in 1956, and building began in the early '60s. Population is increasing by about 3,500 a year and will ultimately reach 70,000, or about the same as the City of Southfield today.

DESIGN AND construction were carried out by the government-appointed Cumbernauld Development Corp., which is still in the business of building housing and attracting new industry (including a Burroughs Corp. plant). If you prefer, the development corporation will sell you a lot and you can get your own builder and put up a house.

Bill Jamieson, in the corporation's information office, estimates Cumbernauld has some 100 industries in its industrial park and about 30 stores in its town center.

"The Cumbernauld Town Council governs the town. It's dominated by the Scottish Nationalist Party," Jamieson said. "There's a Dunbarton County Council, dominated by the Labour Party. It handles services like police, some roads, education, sewage and drainage."

There the similarity bet-

ween Cumbernauld and Observerland ends.

YOU GET OFF the expressway and approach Cumbernauld by a divided lane road, and you find the town is dominated by a giant building called the "town centre." It straddles the crest of a low hill, and the road goes right under the middle of it.

You pull off the ramp and immediately are in the first tier parking lot (free). There's no traffic jam surrounding the place as there is around our suburban shopping centers.

The first tier of the town centre is devoted to parking and deliveries. There's no long walk from your car. You literally walk or take an escalator upstairs, and you're in the second floor shopping area.

Then you begin to notice another radical difference between Cumbernauld's town centre and our suburban shopping centers. You don't have to drive someplace else to get to city hall, another place to get to the county building, a third to get to the public library, a fourth to get to the doctor's office or the hotel or the pub.

It's all there in one building - every kind of service you could want or expect in a town that size. You bless the planners because it's so convenient for you, the private



PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC comes out of one side of the houses, vehicular traffic is confined to the other side. Cars and people aren't mixed. (Cumbernauld Development Corp.)

citizen. And it also cuts traffic.

THERE'S YET another advantage. In the old towns of Britain - as well as in such American towns as Plymouth, Mich. - there is an irritating odor of auto, truck and bus fumes. Not in the town centre of Cumbernauld.

In an Observerland shopping center, you will practically never find a person who reached it by walking. Yet many of Cumbernauld's shoppers walked there - without crossing a major road, of course.

Children play around the open air edge of the town centre, perfectly safe while their mums shop. Dogs are tied there, too.

As the town grows, small neighborhood stores will be added for convenience goods so that a resident can, in ef-

fect, walk to the corner drug store instead of going downtown.

THE RADICALISM with which Cumbernauld's housing was planned boggles the mind. Your single-family house in Observerland has a front door and a rear. The rear goes to the garage or back yard. The front entrance is the major, attractive one. All movement, whether you leave your garage in an auto trip or your child goes next door to play with a neighbor, is in front of our houses (assuming there is fencing of backyards).

Our streets are basically on the grid pattern, which any ecological tract will tell you is the most wasteful of land there is. There is a lot of dead space between houses, which we think is necessary for light, air and privacy.

CUMBERNAULD is best described in the words of the development corporation's technical brochure:

"Entrance doors on either side of the house both lead into a common hall so that each entrance is of equal importance..."

"A 'meshed' system of roads and footpaths... Motor vehicles enter the site from the periphery of the area by the use of cul-de-sacs... Pedestrians move toward the center of the scheme by a series of spur footpaths linked to a main footpath... Garages are grouped in blocks alongside the roads at the end of the terraces."

"This provides fairly adequate separation of vehicles and pedestrians..."

"A form of layout where a

housing area of, say, 200 to 250 houses is surrounded by perimeter garaging results in a longer walk between garage and house, but it keeps the residential area clear of permanently parked cars..."

"In all housing areas, toddlers' play spaces are being provided in close proximity to groups of houses... with fixed equipment..."

In other words: People and cars don't get mixed. The question of privacy is solved by clever cluster design. No one is looking into anyone else's bedroom window.

CUMBERNAULD in 1967 won an international prize of \$25,000 from American architects, who described it as "undoubtedly the most comprehensive project of community architecture to date. Rarely has a group of architects and their allied professionals and consultants produced a more carefully developed scheme on this scale."

The jurors, judging from a photo in a brochure, were males. What does a woman think of it, though?

"It's functional, but it's not a place to wander around in," said my lady companion. And there weren't any antique stores.

But there are some more important objections to life in Cumbernauld, we agreed as we sat in the "Kestrel," a neon-and-metal pub, and sipped on half-pints of Tartan ale.

The town centre building, however brilliantly laid out, is quite frankly drab and even ugly. It looks like something the Russian army would build - solid grey.

The interiors of the stores look exactly like American stores, but the corridors are something else. In American shopping centers, the corridors have skylights and colored tiles and plants. The corridors in Cumbernauld's town centre look like subways.

In an island nation where castles and cathedrals built 900 years ago still stand, Cumbernauld's concrete is pitting, and the work appears to have been shoddy.

BRITONS ARE fanatically neat, compared to Americans, about littering, but Cumbernauld was an exception. Candy wrappers and cigaret butts were everywhere.

One wondered aloud if this littering were an indication the people didn't like it there, but a fellow patron didn't think so. "These people come from Glasgow, and that's the dirtiest city in the world," he said. It was a variation on the theme that ends "...but you can't take the stink out of the people," although Cumbernauld's residents certainly weren't derelicts.

All these faults, however, don't detract from the fact that Cumbernauld, Scotland is the safest city in Britain because it was designed for people. It will gain charm as trees and flowers and shrubs are planted. But they could have made it a little prettier.

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