

OTA

ONLINE
TRANSPORT
ARCHIVE

Newsletter

Issue 12
December 2019

Welcome to this, our 12th newsletter, with its usual range of news about happenings at OTA. In this issue, we profile a further two significant photographers/film makers whose collections are deposited in the Archive, bring you up to date with publications featuring OTA material, along with news of our appearance on Facebook. As this newsletter should reach you in the run up to Christmas, may we take this opportunity to wish you Season's Greetings and give you our best wishes for 2020.

Profile: J G (Jack) Parkinson (1923-1990)



Jack was born in Bolton but moved to Southport at an early age. Trained as a draughtsman, in his professional career he was involved in designing hydraulic machinery for the mining industry, working for companies such as English Electric and Gullick Dobson.

He was a keen film maker and photographer of all modes of transport, with an excellent eye for a scene, his images going beyond being purely record shots as he sought to capture the spirit and atmosphere of a rapidly changing environment. He was particularly active during the end of steam traction on the railways, particularly in the

Northwest of England. He also recorded the changing face of his adopted home town of Southport and was often on hand to record the wrecker's ball when another much-loved landmark – transport or otherwise – was in the process of demolition.

His first transport love was canals. From the 1950s onwards, he owned a boat named 'Sark', converted from a former Army pontoon which he and his wife used extensively to travel on the inland waterways of Britain. This was a time before mass canal tourism and Jack's camera faithfully recorded traditional narrow boats carrying cargo, some even remaining horse-drawn until the 1960s. In later years, Jack and Joy shared trips with another couple in a boat called 'Grey Dove', which appears in many of Jack's pictures. 'Grey Dove' travelled to many obscure parts of the UK canal system, and may have been the last boat to navigate some of them before they closed.

Jack was taking pictures at such a rate in the 1960s, that we doubt whether he ever really had the chance to savour them in the detail they deserved but the scanning process is now enabling the images to be enjoyed fully.



Some slides were sadly on Gevacolor film which, as many readers will know, has faded badly and become cast with a red hue. However, the wonders of photo editing software are managing to recover virtually all of the lost colour and eliminate other forms of deterioration. Around 9,000 slides have been scanned and captioned by OTA member Chris Clegg and several images have appeared recently in 'NarrowBoat' magazine.

Jack married Joy in 1951. She still lives in Southport in retirement and the Archive is extremely grateful to her for making the collection available, thereby allowing many of Jack's evocative pictures to appear in OTA fund-raising books.



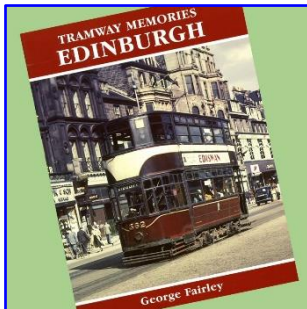
Facebook

OTA now has a presence on this social media platform (www.facebook.com/OnlineTransportArchive) and has been posting there on a regular basis since late July. The plan is that Facebook will be used to bring you news of our current activities, for example by posting images from collections which are currently being scanned, sample images under consideration for future book projects, and notification of forthcoming events, such as talks featuring images from the Archive. It will be used in conjunction with our website (www.onlinetransportarchive.org), which will contain the more 'static' information, such as documentation and back issues of the newsletter. The website is currently undergoing a graphical and technical revamp and is planned to be up and running in its new form very shortly. If you are a Facebook user, please access our page and 'Like', 'Follow' and 'Share' to bring the page to as wide an audience as possible. **Stop press:** a recent posting has reached an audience of over 35,000 in less than 48 hours!



Profile: George Gibb Fairley (1937-2017)

George Fairley was born and educated in Edinburgh. After National Service with the RAF, which he spent almost entirely in the Edinburgh area, he joined the civil service eventually working for HMRC. A new posting took him to London and to a new home in Orpington. Throughout his boyhood he lived close to Gorgie tram depot and, over the years, he developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of Edinburgh trams. He took his first black and white photographs in the early 1950s plus a few precious colour images in 1955/56. He assembled an extraordinary wealth of information and so extensive was his photographic archive that he was able to



write his own profusely-illustrated book (*Tramway Memories, Edinburgh*) as well as contribute pictures for other publications devoted to Edinburgh trams. He also ensured that the collections of other Edinburgh-based photographers were saved for posterity.

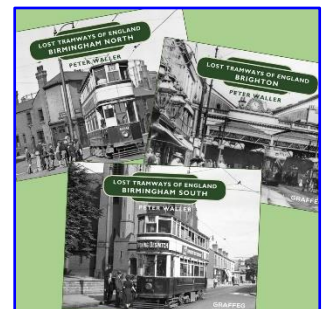
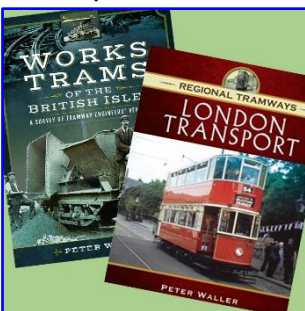
In more recent times, he gave several eagerly-anticipated talks about the system which he always placed in context of the city he so deeply admired and he was, of course, elated when the second generation tramway finally opened and he could once again board a tram for a ride along Princes Street. He kept saying he had to pinch himself! He greatly enjoyed keeping a fatherly eye on the Edinburgh 'Standard' tram preserved at Crich as well as on the on-going restoration of Edinburgh 226. He was a man of great integrity, faith, commitment, warmth and generosity of spirit. A true family man, he was someone always willing to help, listen and share his expertise.



Publications

As forecast in our last newsletter, *London's Transport Recalled* by Martin Jenkins and Charles Roberts, was published in August, and has been well-reviewed. Writing in the November 2019 edition of *Buses*, Alan Millar asks his predominantly road-orientated readers magazine readers to "savour also the sights of steam trains and past generations of electrics and diesels, pleasure steamers and ocean-going ships in the River Thames, propeller-driven airliners, horse-drawn wagons and bygone shops, housing, cinemas, theatres, factories and power stations".

It is important to note that this book is a fund-raising project for OTA, for which neither the authors nor the photographers have received any fee. Unlike publishing contracts from, say, 5-10 years ago, OTA's income is directly related to the number of copies the book sells, so please spread the word. It is vital that OTA receives income to cover the costs of storage accommodation, and that's before we think about expenditure on conservation and restoration work, scanning and IT equipment, as well as the usual running expenses.



A large number of black and white images, many of which come from the extensive B J Cross collection, appear in recent books by Peter Waller. *Works Trams of the British Isles* features pictures of often rarely-seen tramcars which emerged at night to carry out repair and maintenance work. *London Transport* is the latest in Peter's *Regional Tramway* series, whilst Brighton and two Birmingham volumes continue the Graffeg series of *Lost Tramways* publications.

An appeal

OTA is embarking on a major digitisation project of some significant collections of 8mm ciné film – more in the next newsletter. Consumable materials are now in very short supply. If you have any **400ft 8mm film reels and cases**, or any **film splicing tape**, please contact the Secretary urgently.



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