

OTA

ONLINE
TRANSPORT
ARCHIVE

Newsletter

Issue 16
July 2021

Welcome to Newsletter 16, now we're into a regular cycle of a planned three issues per year. Covid is still lurking in the background but there are signs that lives are getting back to some sort of normality, although it remains to be seen exactly what form that normality will take. Through it all, OTA continues to undertake conservation work, receive new collections, work on various book projects, and respond to incoming queries.

We must start this edition by thanking several people for making recent financial donations, most of which we have been able to add to through the HMRC Gift Aid scheme. These donations are

earmarked for a new scanner (to replace one which has worn out after tens of thousands of scans!), archival storage boxes for prints and slides, and for work associated with our ongoing film-to-digital transfer project. We are very grateful for these donations – and future ones – for helping us achieve our primary aims.

We must also thank several people for recently passing their collections over. These include slides and negatives from Barry 'Curly' Cross as well as complete slide collections from Mike Taplin and David Gibbs, both of whom are highly knowledgeable, well-travelled enthusiasts. David has been particularly helpful in providing material for forthcoming overseas publications, which we'll cover in the next issue. Mike's name you will probably know as World-Wide Editor of *Tramways & Urban Transit*, a former Vice-President of the LRTA, a respected author and a foremost expert on modern light rail.

Overleaf, we profile another collection we hold, one which was saved through little more than good fortune. This contrasts with the examples set by Curly, Mike and David, where their collections can be well-conserved and brought to a wide audience without leaving things to chance. Everyone needs to think seriously about their lifetime's work – it could end up in a skip if you're not careful (read article on p2).

Scanning standards

Two recent conversations have led us to return to this topic, which still causes confusion. One was with a magazine editor, bemoaning the fact that he was having to reject submissions from people because the quality of scans they had produced themselves was too low. Another was a reported exchange between a publisher and a respected author, who'd submitted some pictures (not from OTA) for a book. Publisher: "Some of the images you've submitted are unacceptable – they seem to be less than the 300 dots per inch [dpi] our designer wants." Author: "How can I tell?" Publisher: "I don't know."

OTA is not changing its recommended specification, but rather it is presenting it in such a way that will hopefully be clearer. Imagine the page of a typical landscape-format illustrated book, say 12 inches across (305mm) by 8½ inches tall (216mm). For an image to appear full page-width at the publisher's specification, it will need a minimum of 12x300 dots (pixels) = 3600. The equivalent vertical measurement will be 8½x300 = 2550.

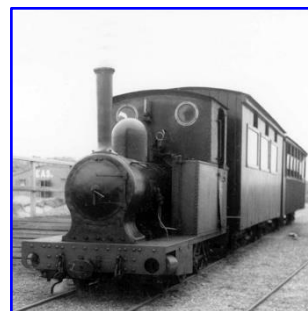


In case some image cropping is required, it is best to scan to a slightly higher resolution to generate more pixels, so that when areas are removed from around the edges, there are still enough pixels left to meet the printing spec. **Hence, you should be looking at producing scans of 5000x3000 pixels, as a minimum.** How can you check your scans? In Windows thumbnail view, hover the cursor over the image and it usually displays these dimensions. Alternatively, in Windows 'Details' view, enable the column 'Dimensions' and it will show the information for all the files in a directory.

There are so many different scanners on the market, and every one seems to have a slightly different set of settings to achieve the required output. OTA has standardised on the Epson V800/850 series which does slides, prints and negatives if you're looking to invest for yourself.

Don't just see the setting 300dpi and automatically assume that's right! If you're scanning a slide you want a much higher setting to get your 5000 pixels across. You will probably need a bit of trial and error at first to get it right. If you want any specific advice, please contact us and we'll help. Don't scan tens of thousands of slides (as some people have!) and find you've made a mistake. And **don't throw away the originals** – someone might want to go back and rescan them in future.

Generally tif [Tagged Image File] is the preferred file format to use, but jpeg [Joint Photographic Experts Group] files are usually acceptable to publishers, and also take up significantly less storage space. However, jpeg files deteriorate in quality every time they're opened and resaved, so always retain a first-generation master you can return to. Final piece of advice – **keep colour adjustment at the scanning stage to a minimum.** The people who do image enhancement work for us say that it can be very difficult to undo so-called 'improvements' which well-meaning amateurs have made.





Profile: Marcus Eavis (1930-2006)

P M Eavis, known as Marcus, started transport photography in the late 1940s in monochrome. He was an early convert to colour photography and took his first colour slides in 1957, although he continued using monochrome film in the initial crossover period. Marcus had an eye for capturing a scene, making his transport pictures particularly interesting and often artistic. He covered a full range of transport subjects: horse-drawn wagons, trams, trolleybuses, motor buses, shipping, aviation and railways, mainly within the British Isles.

Marcus came to the attention of OTA through his friend, Jim Joyce, whose transport collection is also with OTA. By this time he was retired (he is believed to have been a librarian in the education sector) and living in Cheam, Surrey, having moved there from Worcester Park with his mother. He lived in social housing and died suddenly. Extremely fortuitously, his collection has survived. With him having no known relatives, staff from the London Borough



of Sutton were on the verge of clearing his flat when OTA trustee Kevin McCormack was alerted. OTA was able to mount a rescue mission, which wasn't helped when Sutton's legal department discovered at the eleventh hour that he had a half-sister that he never knew about!

Matters were resolved amicably and his wonderful photographic collection, mainly contained in the Kodak yellow boxes in which the slides had originally arrived from processing, came to OTA.

Without this prompt action, his material would almost certainly have ended up in a skip rather than being preserved. Many OTA fundraising books have subsequently appeared with the credit *Marcus Eavis/Online Transport Archive*. In addition to transport interests, Marcus was involved with the Cinema Theatre Association, whose interest lies in the actual buildings, and was its Secretary/Bulletin Editor for many years. He took many pictures of cinemas and theatres and OTA passed these on to the Association.



During August, we will be showcasing the range of Marcus's work on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/OnlineTransportArchive/). Follow us now if you're not one of the 4000 or so people who've done so already.

Do you want this to happen to your collection?

We make no excuse for plagiarising the headline of an article which appeared in *The Railway Magazine* as long ago as May 2005, when people were first beginning to think about safeguarding their collections – not only slides but prints, negatives, films, video, digital formats, plus the all-important supporting documentation. Above, we have described how an exceptional collection survives today because of little more than good luck. We have others to which the same applies, but a long list of ones which have 'disappeared' for various reasons.



OTA could almost write the definitive book on collections which have 'got away'. Many of these relate to family members not carrying out the verbal instructions of a deceased relative. Even if written down there can be problems. In well-reported case, a highly-respected enthusiast had willed his collection to a noted museum, only for a relative to have the house cleared so the property could be quickly sold to pay for nursing care. We know of several where a collection has passed to an individual rather than a legally-constituted body and then 'gone missing'. Even in the best-case scenario, this only defers the issue until the death of the initial recipient.

Since its inception, OTA has been banging this particular drum – make watertight arrangements in your will to ensure your wishes are carried out, or else pass over your collection now to guarantee your wishes are definitely fulfilled. Some of the earliest material passed to OTA consisted of ciné films that had been

loaned for video transfer 20+ years ago, but which the owners didn't want back as they no longer had working projectors. We're finding that many people are now saying the same about their slide collections. How often do you look at yours? Any what about your early negatives?

The contrast to the Marcus Eavis tale, and the collections which have been lost, are people like Curly Cross, Mike Taplin and David Gibbs, who have elected to pass over material now for peace of mind. If you want any advice about will-writing (with all its implications) or to discuss the longer-term security of your archival legacy, please contact OTA using the details on the right.

Contacting OTA

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