

OTA

ONLINE
TRANSPORT
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Newsletter

Issue 17
November 2021

This newsletter brings sad news that two of OTA's most committed supporters died within a few weeks of each other this summer – Arthur Weise and Geoff Smith. We were in the process of preparing a profile of Geoff for the last newsletter when we heard the unexpected news, so the decision was taken to carry it over to this issue. Arthur, who was aged 93, had been unwell for some time, but his loss to OTA and the wider transport community cannot be underestimated.

Both had made the decision to pass over their collections of slides and films to OTA some years ago, so that they could be scanned

and brought to a wider audience. Legacies to OTA and other organisations will ensure that their contributions during their lifetimes will not be forgotten. To link in with these profiles, OTA's Facebook feed will be showcasing examples of their photographic work between now and the end of the year.

This issue of the newsletter has updates on several items covered in the last edition plus news relating to our slide scanning programme. Hope you enjoy the read.

Arthur J Weise (1928-2021)



Arthur and his late wife Dorothy were stalwarts of many organisations to which they gave unwavering support for decades. Arthur was born in Sevenoaks but his family moved to Surrey when he was young. He left school at the age of 16 in 1942 and went to work for Vickers Armstrong (latterly British Aerospace) where he remained until he retired in 1988.

He married Dorothy in 1958 and the following year they moved into a brand new bungalow on the

Hermitage Woods Estate in Woking, a place which was to remain their home for the rest of their lives. They shared a passion for travel and were regulars on LRTL/LRTA study tours around Europe. He also held various major roles within the League including Membership Secretary and later London Area Officer. Arthur would handle the formal business role whilst Dorothy always provided a friendly welcome to people as they arrived, particularly any new attendees. Together they attended LRTA conventions, something which Arthur continued to do after Dorothy's death in 2011, his last one being at Nottingham in 2019

when he was 91.

As well as friends and neighbours, representatives of many organisations close to his heart attended his funeral at Woking Crematorium in late September. These included people from OTA, LRTA, TLRS, TMS, LCC Tramways Trust, RCTS and several cinema and theatre organ societies and clubs. People spoke of his dogged determination in his later days, his dry wit, generosity, appreciative spirit, quiet dignity and deep devotion to Dorothy. OTA President Martin Jenkins fittingly concluded the service with an evocative reading of 'The Tram Journey' by Milena Ercolani.



Scanning update

Our slide scanning programme proceeded apace during Covid lockdown and in August we took delivery of the latest batch – a mere 142,000 images! It will take us a bit of time to incorporate these into existing stored data but a start has been made. They are too many photographers to list individually but included is the work of Bob Bridger – complete with the acquired collections of Charles Firminger, Martin Wilkins, and the Harrison family (Bernard, Roger and Alfred) – Bernard Boreham, and the extensive bus collection of John L May. There are also Martin Jenkins' own slides, including his joint collection with Chris Bennett as well as material he acquired from Ron Copson and American enthusiasts W R Stillman, Dennis Hage, Edward Springer, Jack Fahy, Ray Bicknese and others. A start has been made on the interesting and varied collection of Allan Clayton, of whom there will be an extended profile in the next newsletter. OTA is indebted to Nick Britton for undertaking the bulk of the scanning.



Geoff Smith (1943-2021)

Many people with links to OTA have spent a high proportion of their lives on one means of transport or another, but Geoff Smith very nearly began his life aboard a train. As he wrote to OTA at the start of the year: "Not any train, mind you, but one of the Mersey Railway Westinghouse sets stranded under the River Mersey because of an unexploded land mine on



Birkenhead Park station. This was 1943, and I finally appeared in Birkenhead General Hospital." Splitting his childhood between Merseyside and North Wales, he developed an interest in the various transport systems in both areas.



His early photography was with a box camera and some of his earliest images are of the derelict Welsh Highland Railway. This burgeoning interest in narrow gauge railways led to him becoming an early member of the Festiniog Railway Society (No 152). In 1958, he received a Voigtlander Vito B 35mm camera along with a Weston Master 3 light meter as presents. Armed with colour film, he would cycle to Bethesda from his home and photograph the fascinating quarry steam loco operations, although the price of film meant that he was unable to record as much as he would have liked.

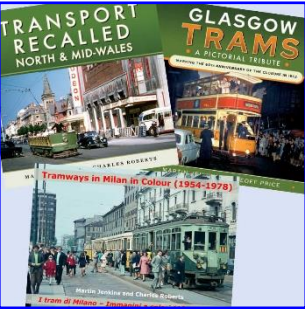
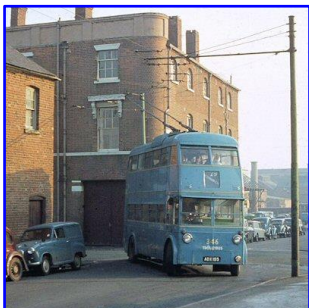


Whilst a student, he joined the active Liverpool University Public Transport Society (LUPTS), and during his vacations worked as a conductor (and later occasionally as a driver) for Crosville at Llandudno Junction. Geoff moved to South Wales after he graduated and started a long career as an engineer in operational logistics in the steel industry. With his interest widening to include inland waterways and industrial archaeology, Geoff was on hand to record the sad decline of industry and transport in the Valleys and surrounding areas in the 1960s and 1970s. Retiring from British Steel around the millennium, Geoff qualified as a driver at the Seaton Tramway in 2003 and continued as a volunteer Control Inspector until the tramway suspended operations during Covid lockdown.

For many years, he was an active contributor to OTA, undertaking important scanning and cataloguing of slides and negatives. Some six to seven years ago, he scanned all his own slides* and passed the digital versions and the originals to OTA. These are supported by detailed computer records which give full information on locations and dates, especially useful when the image might be of a long abandoned trackbed or water course! A number of Geoff's images have appeared in various OTA publications and more will feature in the forthcoming OTA book devoted to transport in North Wales. He was extremely helpful in providing supporting information and anecdotes, and reading and checking the authors' captions, and this book carries a dedication in his memory.

* see below for information on scanning standards.

Geoff was a valued active member of the OTA team, whose dedication will be greatly missed. His passion for OTA's aims and objectives was evident through his request for donations at his funeral in his memory to come to the Archive. We send condolences to his family – his sons Stuart, Lawrence and Ed, to his half-siblings and all their respective families. Sadly Geoff's wife Christine died in 1990 at the age of just 46.



In brief

Scanning standards: We received several communications after our item on scanning standards in the last edition. Having put our heads above the parapet, the feedback was entirely favourable. One lengthy treatise on the subject ended with the sentence: "As far as I can see, the only thing that really matters is the number of pixels", which is a slight over-simplification but gets across the gist of what we were trying to say. At the risk of repeating ourselves: you should be looking at producing scans of 5000x3000 pixels as a minimum ... don't throw away the originals ... keep colour adjustment at the scanning stage to a minimum ... tif or unmodified jpeg.

Publications: Due out in relatively quick succession in 2022 are OTA fundraising books

Transport Recalled: North and Mid-Wales (Pen and Sword), *Tramways in Milan in Colour (1954-1978)* (LRTA) and *Glasgow Trams: a Pictorial Tribute* (Pen and Sword). Work is advanced on other continental tram books and is about to start on a volume on Railways in North East England. *Bus Stations in Britain: the fifties to the eighties* by Kevin McCormack (Capital Transport) is already out, as are several titles by Peter Waller: *Britain's Preserved Trams* (Pen and Sword), *The Blackpool 'Standards'* (Unique Books) and several titles in the Graffeg 'Lost tramways' series. These each feature many images from the Archive. Follow us on Facebook for information on new books.

This is our final newsletter for 2021, so everyone at OTA would like to thank you for your support and interest during the year, hope that you have a good 2022, and finally wish you a very Happy Christmas.

Contacting OTA
Secretarial address:
25 Monkmoor Road
SHREWSBURY. SY2 5AG
Email:
secretary@
onlinetransportarchive.org