

OTA

ONLINE
TRANSPORT
ARCHIVE

Newsletter

Issue 18
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Welcome to this, our first newsletter of 2022. After two years of starting the newsletter by writing about Covid-19 restrictions, it really does look now as if we're able to get back pretty much to normal, albeit a cautious version of normal. One indication of this is that OTA trustees have started giving face-to-face presentations to interested groups again, although there have been Zoom-based events in the interim.

The first one after the restart used a significant amount of material from the Allan Clayton collection. This spurred us into preparing a long-overdue profile of the person behind one of

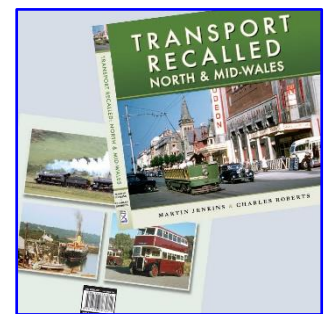
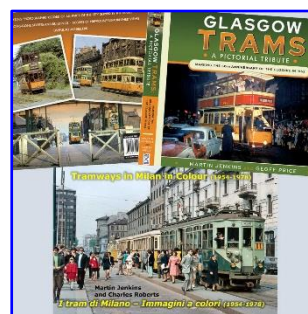
the first significant collections to reach the Archive after it was formed. We also give an update on our Facebook presence as well as details of what to look for in the bookshops – real and online – over the next few months.

Publications

Already advertised for advance orders with some outlets, OTA fundraising book *Transport Recalled: North and Mid-Wales* (Pen and Sword) has a provisional publication date in May. This will be followed over the coming months by other fundraisers *Tramways in Milan in Colour (1954-1978)* (LRTA) and *Glasgow Trams: a Pictorial Tribute* (Pen and Sword). Work is well-advanced on another Italian tram volume, the first in a series of three illustrated volumes on Spanish tramways, and a book on the Railways of North-East England.

Facebook analysis

OTA's Facebook presence continues to grow. We are continuing with archival postings on Mondays and Fridays with something a bit different on a Wednesday, usually a news announcement or a mystery picture. We have been asked if we really know the answer to the latter postings – the answer is a definite NO! We rely on our followers and, almost without fail, someone comes up with an answer in pretty quick time. In recent months we've only been failed twice – a four-window open-top tram body (6 October 2021) and a double-deck bus in use as living accommodation (26 January 2022). Scroll back through our feed to see the full size images if you want to have a go now. No prizes unfortunately!



A newly available analytic tool function allows us to know more about our audience. We now have 4264 people who 'Like' our page. Perhaps to be expected, the biggest proportion of these are in the 65+ age group (24%), but not far behind are 55-64 (22%) and 45-54 (21%), with the remainder being under 45, showing that our appeal is across the generations. Given our base in the UK, it's not surprising that 3318 are from here, but we also have significant followings in the USA (131), Australia (84), Ireland (68) and India (56), showing our global outreach. Within the UK, we have the



most followers in London, followed by Liverpool, Sheffield, Birmingham, Southport, Bradford, Leeds, Glasgow and Halifax. We pride ourselves on presenting a range of different locations and transport modes, so our apologies if it takes a bit of time to get round to your favourite!

Presentations

It's been a while, but an OTA trustee gave a presentation to a society in mid-January after an interregnum going back to late 2019. The society was the Tramway and Light Railway Society

(TLRS), more specifically its Merseyside Branch. The talk was entitled '20 years of Online Transport Archive', although OTA Chairman Charles Roberts was quickly to correct this to 22 years when the talk began, as the presentation had been prepared for delivery in 2020, before you-know-what happened. Charles led the audience through the story of OTA from its formation to the present day and then illustrated the wide range of Archive material, mainly through the lens of Allan Clayton, whose profile appears overleaf. Attendance numbers were down very slightly, but the talk was rerun via Zoom a couple of weeks later for those who couldn't make it.

Prior to this, OTA was delighted to be able to help LCGB president Charles Firminger illustrate a talk he was giving at the Club's Overseas Tour Reunion. Thanks to Charles personally, and to the LCGB, for their donations in respect of this. More recently an online talk to the RCTS's South Essex Branch on 'The Electric Railways of Merseyside' drew a maximum permitted audience of 100, including one attendee from as far away as Chicago. More in the pipeline.

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Profile: A S (Allan) Clayton (1913-1999)

Allan Seymour Clayton was born, raised and educated in Wallasey. He was a skilled architect spending time with Stockport and Liverpool Corporations as well as Littlewood's and finally a major firm in Liverpool. He also had his own private practice and was an outspoken critic of city planners and the destruction of city centres, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. At the age of 77, he was awarded an MSc in Urban Renewal by Liverpool Polytechnic, having submitted an extraordinary, highly personal dissertation: 'Transport and the Environment on Merseyside 1889-1989'. He claimed to be "completely UN-BIASED in his approach" and based his conclusions on "nearly three quarters of a century of keen and perhaps 'unusual' INTEREST and STUDY of the subject". (His capitals and punctuation!)



His transport interests were far ranging. From an early age he collected tin-plate toys and postcards of ships. He was passionate about the Mersey, its ships and ferries, pre-grouping locomotives and trams, especially those from Wallasey and Liverpool. Blessed with a good memory, he was able to help with various restoration projects as well contribute to books and DVDs. He was also a hoarder having stockpiled all manner of memorabilia including embossed bases from Birkenhead and Wallasey traction poles. In the 1980s, Allan gained national prominence when he gave an astonishing vocal rendition of the variety of noises made by a Wallasey tram on route to Seacombe Ferry in a BBC Radio 4 programme entitled *Trams and Tramcar Enthusiasts*. By the end of the recording, he was clearly moved to tears by the memories he had brought back to life. Not only did his 'tramway symphony' feature in



Pick of the Week but it also topped the list in *Pick of the Year*, and the clip is occasionally repeated on air now.

Later in life, he undertook visits to places such as Sweden, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Portugal as well as more ambitious jaunts to Hungary and Romania in 1977, and Japan and Hong Kong. Some of his European trips were undertaken one of his succession of cars and camper vans, but it's safe to say he wasn't always the best of drivers.

Allan took a few photographs before the war but he really came into his own when he purchased two 35mm Leica cameras in 1949. With these he took many invaluable black and white images. Prints from these negatives have been widely circulated from the late 1960s onwards in support of preservation projects. Allan began taking slides in 1960 and his whole collection is well in excess of 10,000 images. He had an eye for the unusual and would often photograph details on railway wagons and tramway works cars. One of his main delights was to record activity in the Mersey docks. He took many hours of ciné film and some of his footage features in various Online Video releases. 'Merseyside Memories No 4: The Ferries across the Mersey' is dedicated to him.



His death in 1999, at the age of 85, was significant in the formation of Online Transport Archive. In his will, Allan had left elements of his collection to different people. To avoid the near-impossible task of dividing everything up, the beneficiaries agreed to retain the collection as a single unit and place it with the fledgling OTA. However, sorting and cataloguing had not been his strongest forte and as a result, it has been a challenge to accurately date some of his images. It transpired he sometimes left it 4-5 years before sending exposed films off for processing and in fact a package of undeveloped slide films from

his trip to Japan was found amongst his effects. Being exposed 10 years earlier, they were found to be beyond salvation, but thankfully on that trip he was accompanied by others who covered much the same subject matter.

Images from Allan's collection have appeared in many books over the last 20 years, but it is only fairly recently that OTA could embark on a concerted programme of scanning his negatives and slides. Over the next few weeks on Facebook we will be showcasing some of the best of Allan's range of output. OTA President Martin Jenkins sums him up as "out-going, eccentric, charming, erratic and fun-loving."

