

Newsletter

Issue 21, March 2023

OTA
ONLINE
TRANSPORT
ARCHIVE



Newly delivered Scottish Omnibuses
Bristol FLFs, Edinburgh. C Carter (1279)

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. We received much favourable feedback to the redesign we introduced for the previous one, so we'll continue with it and look for ways to make further improvements.

As well as the usual news updates, this edition has two major features – a profile of well-known photographer C Carter, and an article about a collection of rare Francis Frith plate negatives which have been entrusted to the Archive.

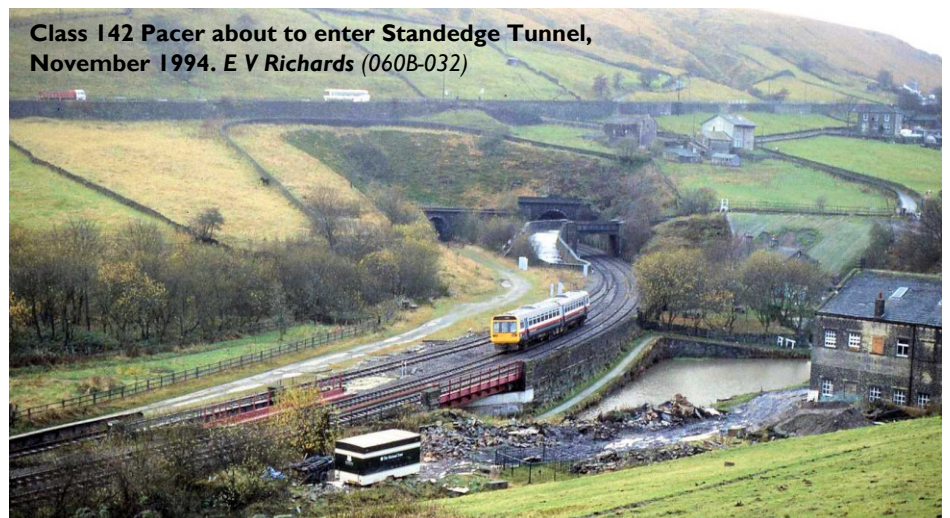
New collections

Quite a lot of new material has recently been received. About 25,000 slides taken by the late E V (Edgar) Richards have been donated by Ormskirk-based Phil Prosser. Edgar died in 2017 at the age of 95 and his collection – which covers railways, buses, shipping and aviation, plus transport architecture and ephemera – has been on an interesting journey since then, which we hope to recount in a

future newsletter. Recently received from the USA is the collection of Carl V Ehrke, which nicely complements material from other American photographers already in the Archive.

A collection of colour slides and colour negatives has been donated by C C (Chris) Thornburn who has been very helpful in providing material for recent OTA-commissioned book titles. We are delighted that he has entrusted

his collection to the Archive. Mike Mercer has passed over some more slides and, via Tom Turner, we have a selection of black and white negatives and prints from Tudor Davies – predominantly buses with a slant towards North Wales and Merseyside. We hope to upload some examples of these photographers' work to our Facebook feed in the next few weeks, as well as working on photographer profiles.



Class 142 Pacer about to enter Standedge Tunnel,
November 1994. E V Richards (060B-032)

Profile: C Carter (1920-2009)



One of our most historically significant collections is that of the late Clarence Carter. As he detested his first name, he ensured that his photographs were always credited just 'C Carter' and to many people he was known simply as 'Carter'. Brought up in Leyton and then Buckhurst Hill, he remembered travelling on B Type buses as a child because the saloon windows were low enough for him to be able to see out, unlike those on the newer NS Type. He took his first photograph – a South Met tram at Crystal Palace – in 1933.

During World War II, he served as a flying officer on Halifax bombers with No 614 Pathfinder Squadron in North Africa and Italy. He was proud of his wartime service and kept diaries, now lodged with

the Imperial War Museum. Before the War, he had briefly worked for publishers Methuen, but was unable to return there after being demobbed as a paper shortage meant that there were no jobs available. Instead he worked in the wages department of the General Cleaning Company, part of the Pritchard Group and a subsidiary of London Stone.

In summer 1939, Carter was given his first colour film – a Dufaycolor 120 film with 8 exposures – and took several remarkable images. However, he was called up before he could obtain any more film. After the war, he resumed his colour photography building up a unique record of the UK's trams, buses and trolleybuses. In many instances, his are the only known colour views, for

example those of Blackburn trams and Notts & Derby trolleybuses. He was mainly interested in the colour schemes and not the actual vehicles themselves. He had a dark room at his house and used to enlarge and print his monochrome negatives for sale. Quality copies of his Dufays were made by a specialist firm in Wandsworth, and many of these have appeared in publications over the decades.

Below: O'Connell Street, Dublin street scene showing Nelson's Pillar (destroyed 1966) and Sir John Gray statue. C Carter (1245)



Pontypridd UDC Bristol K5G with Beadle bodywork. (Dufaycolor original slide.) C Carter (1075)

When he died, all his London colour images together with systems within a 30 mile radius of the capital were donated to the London Transport Museum. The remainder of his Dufay colour collection, together with his Kodachrome II slides were initially leased to OTA by his son, John, on a 10 year agreement. When that came up for renewal, John kindly donated the material to the Archive together with his father's collection of prints including many commercial postcards.

We would like to thank Carter's son John for his help with compiling this profile, and to Kevin McCormack who has used many Carter images in books from the 1980s onwards.



Pre-NBC era Victoria Coach Station with Leyland Leopards from Southdown and Midland Red (BMMO). C Carter (Q-01-A0275)

Francis Frith plate glass negatives

A collection of over 200 plate glass negatives, some over 150 years old, has been passed to OTA after a remarkable survival story. OTA President Martin Jenkins tells the tale.

Since the late 1960s, together with the late Jerome McWatt, I had been helping Bruce Maund and John Horne to locate photographs to illustrate their magnificent five-volume history of Liverpool Transport. We decided to approach some of the leading commercial postcard producers such as Valentine

and Judge. With most we drew a blank, the original negatives having already been disposed of or else the firm no longer existed and there was no way of tracing the whereabouts of their negatives, but Francis Frith was different. After an introductory conversation we were invited to their premises in Reigate in Surrey.

On arrival, we were informed that the firm was going into liquidation and its assets were to be disposed of. We were then shown shelves stacked high with thousands of plate glass negatives as well

as folders crammed with innumerable sepia prints. One of the employees took us aside and told us the negatives might all be smashed to make ground glass. After a hasty consultation, Jerome and I asked if it might be possible buy some of the negatives. Somewhat surprisingly, we were told that would be possible and that the cost would be in the region of £1 per negative but that we needed to move quickly.

We returned I think a couple of days later in Jerome's car – it was early 1971, around the time of decimalisation. I had immediately contacted David Packer whom I knew shared a similar desire to conserve old negatives. Looking back I wish we had involved others so that more could have been rescued but time was not on our side. When the three of us went back, we were given a few hours during which we had free rein to go through the thousands of negatives looking for those depicting street scenes featuring trams. We worked solidly, focused purely on making our selection. We knew we had only touched the surface but we did extract some 250 whole plate negatives as well as about 70 sepia prints.

We were also given a copy of the Frith numbering scheme so we could date each negative. From memory, we paid a total of something like £200 and everything just about fitted into Jerome's car. Also we agreed that we would not reveal the cost to our respective spouses!



Douglas, Isle of Man, cable and horse cars, 1907. Francis Frith postcard (from glass negative) (59157)



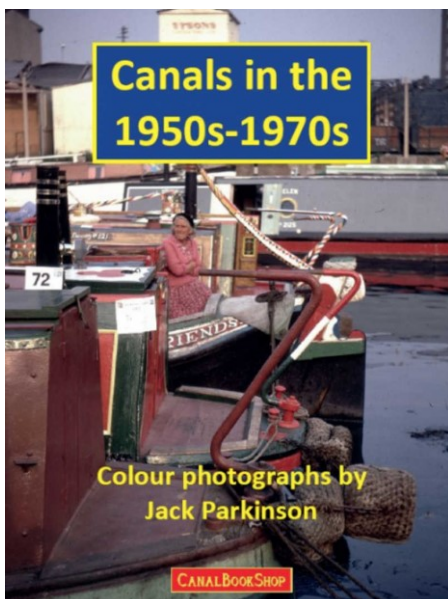
For safe keeping, the negatives were copied and half were retained by myself and Jerome and half by David. When Jerome died in 1978, his widow agreed that David and I should remain as custodians. In early February 2023, we decided that the sepia prints and the superb whole plate negatives, some dating back to the late 1870s, should be assigned to OTA. Fortunately, the bulk of the Frith archive was later purchased for conservation.

Left: **Great Yarmouth, showing Southtown Bridge (today known as the Haven Bridge) and Town Hall. Francis Frith postcard (from glass negative) (59157)**

Books

Release of titles has reached a slight impasse because of policy discussions at certain publishers, but work on a book on Railways in North East England is well-progressed and it should appear in the autumn. OTA has also reached agreement with the LRTA for the next books in the series of colour albums devoted to overseas tramways. The next to appear will cover Barcelona, Mallorca, Valencia and Mataró.

Recently appeared, and entirely based around the J G (Jack) Parkinson inland waterway slide collection is *Canals in the 1950s-1970s*, published by the Canal Book shop at Audlem Mill in Cheshire. The easiest way to obtain a copy (at



£19.95) is through their website (www.canalbookshop.co.uk). We profiled Jack in Newsletter 12 (December 2019) and the book pays tribute to him and his wife Joy for recording the state of Britain's canals while they travelled round in their own cruiser.

Capital Transport's *Town and City Buses*, due for publication in May and co-authored by OTA trustee Kevin McCormack, features a significant number of pictures from the Archive.

Arthur Weise legacy

Stop press news is that, in spite of some last minute delays at HMRC, we have now received the bulk of the legacy from Arthur Weise, who died in August 2021. We hope to be able to give an update on our plans in the next newsletter, due for publication in July.

Below: **Dale Street, Liverpool, 1886. Francis Frith postcard (from glass negative) (20002)**

