

Ex-NER Q6 0-8-0 63340 passes over Durham Viaduct with a southbound freight on 24 June 1961. This image narrowly missed the cut for the forthcoming North East Railways book, but others of the viaduct and from the Firminger Collection are included. Charles Firminger/Online Transport Archive (61-021-013)

## Sir Neil Cossons OBE FSA FMA

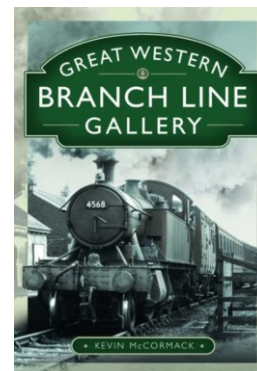
OTA is delighted that Neil Cossons has accepted an invitation to become Archive Patron. It is not his first involvement with the Archive as in 2011 he co-authored with OTA President, Martin Jenkins, the fundraising book *Liverpool: Seaport City* (Ian Allan). Sir Neil has a wealth of experience and knowledge from the heritage sector, having held senior roles at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum and the National Maritime Museum. He was Director of the Science Museum and was Chair of English Heritage 2000-2007. He received a knighthood in 1994.

On accepting the honorary position with OTA, Neil commented: "It is a great honour to be nominated as Patron of OTA, an increasingly important body capturing for posterity the images and iconography of the world of transport history. Colour transparencies began to become commonplace – and affordable – in the 1950s. Today they are an important part of an increasingly vulnerable past. OTA's dedication to securing that record - of all types of image - is vital and I'm hugely keen to see it thrive."



**Sir Neil Cossons speaking on the occasion of the launch of *Liverpool: Seaport City* at the Liver Building on 23 May 2011. Charles Roberts/Online Transport Archive (CCR048350)**

## Book news



A number of railway titles to bring to your attention in this issue. Recently published is Kevin McCormack's *Great Western Branch Line Gallery* (Pen

and Sword), which features a range of colour and B&W images, a high proportion of which come from the OTA. Available from the usual sources, with a guide price of £20.

For future publication by Crécy are two all-colour titles, raising funds for OTA. *Railways Remembered: North East England* gives extensive coverage of the BR and industrial scene from Berwick to Darlington, and from the North Pennines to the coast from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s. *Paddington and Points West* draws on pictures taken by Blake Paterson on BR Western Region in late steam and early diesel days. Both volumes should be available towards the end of 2023.

## Ciné film and video collections



Screengrabs from digitised Fred Ivey ciné footage. *Left: Belfast trolleybuses at the junction of Castle Street and Queen Street. Below: A train of BR(S) 4-COR 'Nelson' units head south from Clapham Junction en route for Portsmouth. Fred Ivey/Online Transport Archive*

**In Newsletter 15 (March 2021), we had news of developments concerning the digital film transfer work for key areas of our extensive ciné film collection. We are now in a position to provide a further update.**

Since 2019, we have spent nearly £20,000 having film professionally cleaned and restored, and converted to an industry standard, high resolution format that is useable worldwide, this being 12-15MB/s data rate with MP4 standard presentation.

Collections which have been transferred in full or in part include: Fred Ivey, John A Clarke, the late Geoff Todd (profiled on page 3) and Roger Manley. Geoff's family and the other three film-makers have provided generous financial contributions, much of which has been enhanced by HMRC's Gift Aid scheme. Slightly earlier film digitisations are from fragile 9.5mm stock from Jim Joyce (reported in Newsletter 3 in 2013). We have also received U-matic and Betacam tapes from Wilf Watters of Online Video, which contains first generation video transfers of films that have now been converted to digital format.

The transfer work has been undertaken by Paddy Kirby and John

Mclvor. OTA's trustees should also like to place on record their sincere thanks to Alan Pearce for his sterling work, at no cost to OTA, in ferrying boxes of films cannisters around the country for eventual long-term storage in Shrewsbury.

We are now in a position to 'go public'. Launched to coincide with the publication of this newsletter is OTA's own YouTube channel, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/@OnlineTransportArchive> Thanks to trustees

Caitlin Salt and Peter Whitehead for getting us to this stage, Caitlin in particular for establishing our YouTube presence.

OTA member Dave Spencer – who will be known to many of you as the man behind PMP Video – has been instrumental in getting content ready for uploading and can be seen on screen giving an introduction to the project.

As well as being of interest to our followers, these will act as a showcase for television and film companies who may wish to use longer clips and thus enhance OTA's income. We are exploring the possibility of releasing longer features via YouTube, possibly using a pay-as-you-view system in order that we can recoup some of our significant outlay.

**Please let us know what you think.**



## Profile: J G (Geoff) Todd (1934-2019)

The Todd family passed Geoff's considerable collection of ciné films to OTA after he died at the age of 85. They have also been proactive in helping to finance their digital transfer so that they can be made available to as wide an audience as possible, as Geoff wished.



Geoff was born in Maryport, Cumberland where he lived for the first few years of his life before the family moved to Glasgow. His interest in railways grew from those early days – family folklore is that his mother held him up to the window as a baby to watch the trains. These became central to his life, both as a hobby and as an occupation.

He studied Civil Engineering at Glasgow University and qualified as a Chartered Engineer. Employed initially as a Graduate Trainee by BR, his career subsequently took him to Nigerian Railways, back to the UK with the GLC and as a Project Manager on the Manchester Rapid Transport Study, and into the Civil Service at the Departments of the Environment and Transport. His final post before retirement in 1994 was with the Secretariat of the Bi-national Channel Tunnel Safety Authority, during which time he regularly attended meetings in France. That would have caused him no problem. His CV lists his language skills: “French (good); Spanish (rusty); German, Dutch, Italian, written Japanese (elementary)”. Following retirement, he and his wife moved to Harrogate.

He had completed a coast-to-coast trip to the USA, returning across Canada, in 1958, but his travels really started with his employment in Nigeria from 1959 onwards. His daughter Rebecca writes: “Over the next five years, he made full use of the generous ‘home’ leave that came with colonial jobs in Africa to do anything but go home, completing an overland Cape-to-Cairo trip by ship, train and bus in 1960, a trip around India, Nepal and Ceylon in 1962, taking in Ethiopia and Eritrea on his way home, a South American tour in 1964 (returning to that part of the world in 1967).



“Trips were painstakingly arranged from Nigeria by exchange of letters to managers of railway lines, booking agents etc. Later, between jobs back in the UK in 1969 and 1970, he fitted in tours of India, Taiwan, the Philippines and Indonesia, then Pakistan, India, Hong Kong, Japan and the Trans-Siberian railway back.”

When he was about 14, he took some black and white views of Glasgow buses and then a few precious reels of colour slides in 1956 featuring among others Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow trams. In 1957, he switched entirely to ciné – ‘much better to record things actually moving’ – and he never looked back, concentrating entirely on his magnificent film work. He took his trusty ciné camera with him on his many trips, determined to record the decline of steam and tramways in each of the countries he visited. He had a wonderful eye for a ciné sequence capturing the train in its environment and, by the 1970s, Geoff's films were so admired that his annual shows to the Continental Railway Club were packed to capacity. His final presentation was in about 2010 where, once again, the hall was filled with admirers wanting to see some favourite films again.

We should like to thank Geoff's family for their help with compiling this profile and look forward to continuing to work with them in the future.

*Left and above: Screenshots from Geoff's films of his travels to Spain and India. J G Todd/Online Transport Archive*



## OTA trustees

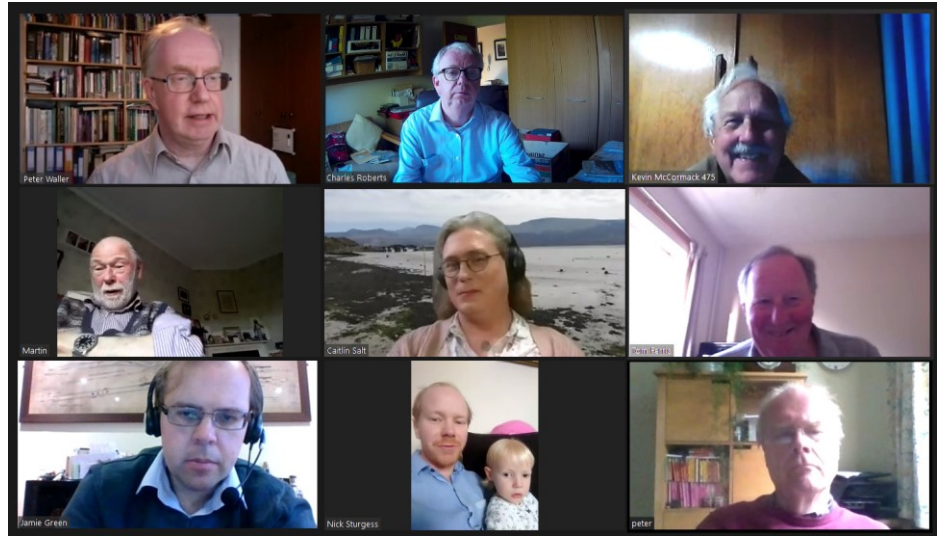
A concern often expressed within the transport heritage sector is that of an ageing profile of active members. Someone we recently spoke to said that in his organisation they were attracting new members, it was just that almost all of these were in the 65+ age bracket! Hence: "What will happen to OTA and my collection when the current crop of trustees are no longer involved?"

OTA has addressed this issue from its earliest days, when the founding trustees were in the age range 40-61. That is broadly the position today, with new trustees from the younger age bands joining the fold. We thought this would be a good opportunity to provide a brief profile of current trustees and their roles. More detailed pen pictures are available on our website.

**Tom Ferris (69)** holds a Masters degree in Railway History and is the author of a number of books on that subject. His career has been spent in the publishing industry working at every level from sales representative to the boardroom. Based in Shropshire, he has also been a working member of the Severn Valley Railway for over 35 years.

**Jamie Green (34)** is also resident in Shropshire, where he combines his job as a signaller for Network Rail with volunteering at the SVR. He is also active as a conductor and driver at Crich. He looks after the OTA website and is a member of the team that brings you Facebook postings each week.

**Martin Jenkins (84)** is OTA president and has been a trustee from the start. Professionally involved in the theatrical and broadcasting worlds, he has been actively involved in transport heritage since leading a successful bid to preserve a Liverpool tram (869) in his student days. Through his involvement in Online Video, hundreds of thousands of pounds were raised to support transport preservation. His vast network of contacts ensures that people's links to OTA are maintained, and he always has several book-writing projects on the go using Archive source material.



**Kevin McCormack (76)** is another prolific author with over forty books to his name, his *Great Western Branch Line Gallery* (Pen and Sword, 2023) being the latest offering. He is actively involved in transport preservation, being a regular volunteer at Didcot and the London Bus Museum at Brooklands.

**Charles Roberts (63)** is another trustee who has been involved with OTA from its inception. Merseyside-based, he has served as OTA secretary and treasurer, and is its current chairman. He has co-authored 11 books with another one on the way. He contributes towards OTA's image scanning process and Facebook offerings, is its newsletter editor, and is actively involved in picking up collections.

**Caitlin Salt (45)** is originally from Lincolnshire and is involved as a volunteer with the Severn Valley Railway. A software development consultant by profession, she leads OTA through the minefield of information technology and is currently working on a major digital storage project for OTA.

**Nick Sturgess (36)** was born in the Derwent Valley and pursued a career in the museum sector, working at various times at the RAF Museum, the Fairground Heritage Centre and the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings. Through these and others, he has a thorough awareness of external funding organisations, which will be of crucial

**Above: Since Covid, regular use has been made of Zoom to allow more frequent trustees' meetings to take place, given the wide geographical spread of locations. Here, one trustee takes the request 'Do we know of any younger potential trustees?' to its extreme.**

help to OTA as it develops further. He has been an active Crich member since 2003.

**Peter Waller (63)** has been involved with OTA since 2005 and is currently its secretary, dealing with all of the Archive's administrative matters, including its compliance with company and charity law. He worked for many years for Ian Allan Publishing and is currently a freelance writer, with a prestigious output of work. He is also involved with the National Transport Trust and several charitable bodies in the Shrewsbury area. He is actively involved in filing and cataloguing collections and overseeing our two premises in Shrewsbury.

**Peter Whitehead (68)** from Reading is a chartered civil engineer based in Reading, with transport interests in buses and trolleybuses. For OTA, he leads the working party overseeing film transfer work and is developing ideas to bring it to a wider audience.