

Charles Roberts/  
Online Transport Archive (CCRI18713)

## OTA's new home

It's been a longer journey than we expected, but we are pleased to report that OTA completed the purchase of its own premises at the beginning of the month. This represents a major step forward for the Archive and fulfils a long-held wish to have a permanent base.

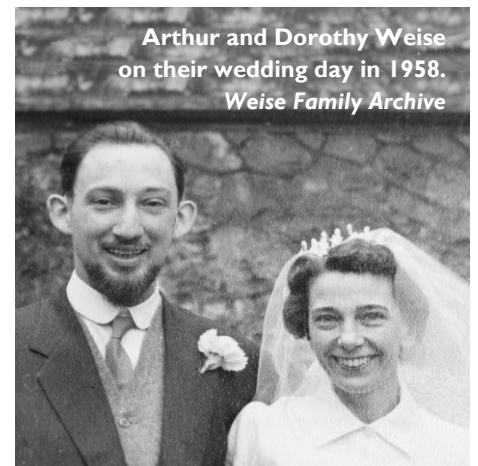
It wouldn't have been possible without the legacy from the late Arthur Weise, which we received in February 2023. The premises – on the edge of Shrewsbury – will be known as The Weise Building in memory of Arthur (1928-2021) and his wife Dorothy, who had predeceased him by ten years, as a mark of their generosity and to reflect their significant contributions to the transport enthusiast world over many decades. An obituary of Arthur appeared in Newsletter 17.

How did we get here? OTA was founded in 2000 and, in its earliest days, material was housed at the homes of trustees. An agreement with Ian Allan Publishing (IAP) led to space being rented at their site in Hersham in 2005. A change of focus at IAP meant that OTA was given notice to vacate in 2014. The decision was taken to relocate from Hersham to Shrewsbury and the move took place over the two-day period 1/2 June 2015, as recounted in Newsletter 6. The initial rented premises, later supplemented by rooms in a nearby charitable business centre, have provided OTA with suitable

accommodation over the last ten years, but the Archive is on the verge of outgrowing them. Trustees, past and present, felt that firmer roots were needed in the long term, although the existing rented accommodation will be retained during a transitional period.

Once the terms of the legacy were revealed, a working party of trustees set about exploring the options. Mindful that in the fast-moving property market it made no sense to make commitments until the funds were actually received, no firm plan could be made until the money arrived in February 2023, some 18 months after Arthur died. Working with Shropshire Council and commercial agents, many options were considered ranging from new-build industrial units to historic older buildings (see page 2). Nothing quite fitted the bill.

Then, out of the blue, we were alerted to a set of existing two-floor business units which the owner was seeking to sell. It was technically outside our specification but on reflection met our requirements. The floor area was greater than we'd targeted, but we felt that this gave us room for expansion looking many years ahead. Furthermore, sitting tenants in part of the premises will provide us with valuable supplementary income. The layout of the premises allow for appropriately partitioned usage, including the creation of a reference



Arthur and Dorothy Weise  
on their wedding day in 1958.  
Weise Family Archive

library. And the price was attractive, particularly when the previous owners agreed to leave a significant amount of furniture in situ.

As is often the case, property matters move slowly. Having had our offer accepted on 11 November 2024, the deal was completed on 4 March 2025 and the keys were handed over to three of the trustees who oversaw things on the day. Now the work begins – organising and fitting out the premises, transferring material across from the existing sites in the town, and being able to take receipt of collections which are being held at various locations round the country until space became available. The trustees are delighted and relieved that OTA now has a long-term secure base, cementing its place as one of the most significant transport archives in the country. We will keep you updated with progress.





One of the rooms in The Weise Building, proposed to be the store for our ciné collection.  
Charles Roberts/Online Transport Archive (CCR119846)

... and some of the places where we've NOT moved! From top: Oswestry station, the Sentinel Waggon Works offices in Shrewsbury, and new business parks in Bishop's Castle and Shrewsbury.



All: Charles Roberts/Online Transport Archive

## Profile: Michael R Taplin



Mike Taplin is one of the most respected names in light rail and OTA is honoured that he has entrusted us with his extensive slide collection.

Born in 1948, Mike has had an interest in transport for his entire life – “there is a photo of me studying a London bus map aged about 2” – and began taking an active interest at the age of about 11 when he transpotted at Wembley Central during the last years of steam on the LNWV main line. His interest developed into buses and a family holiday to Europe in 1962 stirred an interest in tramways. He joined the LRTA soon afterwards, the start of

lifelong involvement. He also has a passing interest in ferries and aircraft – a real polymath.

He began taking black and white pictures in 1963 using the 120 format, and progressed to 35mm colour in 1966. On an LRTA visit to Brussels, the legendary Jack Wyse took him to a shop which sold bulk Agfachrome, a brand which he stuck with for most of his slide career, with occasional use of Kodak and DDR-based Ulbrichtchrome. His cameras also came from East Germany – Praktika and Werramat.

Mike was educated at Lewes Grammar School and joined the Southdown management training scheme, going on to work for several bus operators on the south coast until privatisation. He then worked in the local authority sector for Hampshire and Gloucestershire Councils before moving to the Isle of Wight, finally retiring after 56 years of employment in 2022.

Alongside this, he has been overseas news editor of Tramways and Urban Transit (formerly Modern Tramway) since 1969, and served with great distinction as LRTA chairman 1987-2002. His annual analysis of new and projected tramways worldwide in T&UT is one of the highlights of the magazine. His wife has also played a major role in the cause of modern tramways.

He had visited and photographed all European tramways by 1980 and subsequently paid a number of visits to North America, Australia and New Zealand. His photographic coverage is up there with the most wide-ranging of anyone.

Double-deck driving trailer in Alexandria, Egypt.  
Mike Taplin/Online Transport Archive (MTap-610-008)



## Profile: Geoffrey Tribe (1943-2024)



Geoffrey passed his collection of slides to OTA some years ago, supported by a comprehensive digital catalogue and a full set of scans. We were preparing this newsletter profile when we got the sad news from his family that he died on 21 October

2024 at the age of 81. We are fortunate to have his own words to lead us through his interest in transport and his photographic career.

He was born in Burton upon Trent in 1943 and was interested in transport for as long as he could remember. "The network of railway lines serving the town's many breweries with both industrial and BR locomotives was just an everyday part of the scene as were the municipal and various 'bus companies. Interest in things further afield and particularly in trams was triggered by a small number of articles in the Meccano Magazine.

"On a scout trip to Scotland in 1955 I had seen trams in Princes Street in Edinburgh and on the way to Ulster in 1956 I saw the Liverpool Overhead Railway from the deck of the Belfast steamer. An advertisement in Railway World for the third edition of Great British Tramways Networks led to it being my Christmas present in 1957 and I have never stopped buying books on the subject. Sheffield was the first place I actually rode trams with several visits in 1958 and 1959."

Professionally, he was a career railman, starting with BR in the London area straight from school in 1960 and remaining with them until his retirement in 2001. He joined the LRTL in 1959 and attended regular meetings in London, which broadened his outlook considerably and introduced him to many other enthusiasts.

"My photography started in a small way with a Kodak Brownie in 1960. I used this on my first overseas visit with the LTRL to France and Belgium in April 1962. The highlights of the trip were probably my first introduction to the incomparable Vicinal followed closely by PCC cars in Brussels and Antwerp that were a revelation in smooth riding and acceleration.

"For my second overseas trip to Germany and Switzerland in 1963 I had a new Zeiss Ikon Contessa LK camera and for the next 43 years usually took colour slides until moving to digital in 2006. My first SLR was a Pentax and later on I had one each from Canon and Nikon."

He travelled overseas extensively – Western Europe, then Eastern Europe, including Hungary, Ukraine, Romania and the former Yugoslavia. He was involved with the running of the London Area of the LRTA for many years and also served as secretary to the TLRS for over 20 years. When living in Leighton Buzzard, he volunteered on his local narrow gauge heritage line, including working as a guard and on the maintenance and construction of carriages. He moved to live in Loughborough in 2020.

Latterly, he was a regular contributor by way of comments on OTA's Facebook postings, and invariably was able to provide additional insight to his own pictures when we posted them.

We send our condolences to Geoffrey's family and friends and would like to thank Geoffrey's daughters Zoë and Amy for their help with this profile.

---

## Obituary: Nigel Eames (1942-2024)

Nigel was born in Bebington, Wirral on 19 October 1942. His father was an army major with postings abroad, which meant that Nigel's education had phases in Mönchengladbach and Tripoli. It was revealed during his funeral oration that he worked for a time as a Liverpool bus conductor and also appeared on stage at the legendary Cavern Club as a drummer.

He began work for the Foreign Office in London 1965 as a press attaché, but his career subsequently took him to overseas postings in places such as Paris, Geneva and Warsaw. As much as his position allowed, he was able to provide anonymous reports on tramway developments in these places, which appeared in Modern Tramway. His overseas postings finished in 1978 and he and his family were based in Tunbridge Wells from then on. He spoke many languages: fluent French, German, Spanish and Portuguese, and decent Italian, Russian and others.

A number of OTA trustees and members attended his funeral on 12 November 2024. Archive President Martin Jenkins, who had known Nigel for 65 years since they met at Liverpool LRTL meetings, spoke at the service, concluding with an evocative reading of the poem 'The Tram Man'.

Nigel is survived by his wife Jean and daughters Nikki and Jenny, grandchildren and a great-grandson to whom we send condolences, as well as thanks for their help with this obituary. Nigel had a complete bound set of Modern Tramway going back to 1945 and the family are keen for it to pass to OTA. It will represent a fitting centrepiece to the proposed reference library at our new premises.



Brand new London Country Atlantean AN40 with RT2328, Garston garage, 10 June 1972. Geoffrey Tribe/Online Transport Archive (GT\_1972061010205)



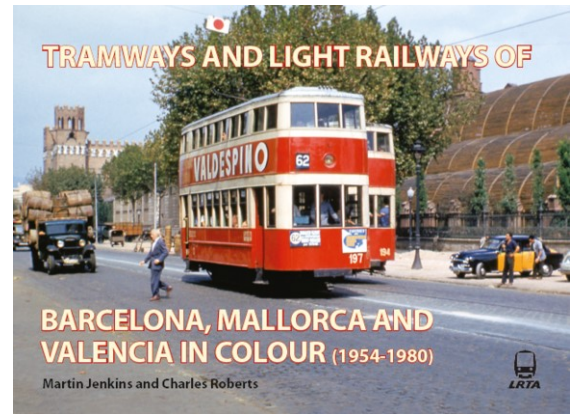
## News in brief

**In memoriam.** Within a short space of time, OTA received news of the deaths of three contributors. Newsletter 25 contained a profile of **Martin James**. Sadly he died on 30 November 2024 at the age of 93. **Roger de Boer** was a well-known enthusiast and self-confessed eccentric. His interest in milk floats, and his role in the preservation of some rare models, was unique. He died in December at the age of 84 and some of his ciné films are now with OTA. We were extremely grateful to **Joy Parkinson**, widow of Jack, for the help she gave us with ensuring his collection of slides and ciné film was preserved. Sadly, we lost touch with Joy in her later years but and only belatedly discovered that she'd died on 28 August 2024 in a Southport nursing home at the grand old age of 97. We send condolences to relatives and friends of Martin, Roger and Joy.

**Books.** Much work is going on behind the scenes with a number of OTA fundraising books due for publication during 2025. First on the shelves is *Tramways and Light Railways of*

*Barcelona, Mallorca and Valencia*, which is now available from the LRTA and other outlets. Featuring a significant number of pictures taken by Ray DeGroote of Chicago, this colour volume provides comprehensive coverage of systems in the area in the period 1960-1980. Albums on London Underground, railways in the Lake District/North Lancashire and Southern England (the latter featuring the colour work of legendary photographer Blake Paterson), and South Lincs Trolleybuses are due out later in the year. We actively encourage everyone to buy these books as they provide funding for OTA and lead to further commissions, which means we can bring our many memorable images to a wider audience.

**VAT.** Reflective of the growing size and stature of OTA is that we are now registered for Value Added Tax. Please be aware of this if you are using OTA material. If you are invoicing us for goods or services, ensure that you



quote your VAT number. The additional work associated with this means that we are looking for help in this area. If you have a background in finance and would be prepared to support us for a few hours a month, please contact the secretary.

**Trustee news.** OTA would like to thank Nick Sturgess for the work he did for the Archive following his appointment as a trustee in November 2019. He is now the honorary secretary of the Tramway Museum Society and we would like to wish him every success in his new role.



Modern light rail in an historic city, Istanbul, Turkey.  
*Mike Taplin/Online Transport Archive (MTap-608R-023)*