



**Caledonian Drummond 0-6-0 57375 at Whithorn, 2 September 1961. Henry Pryer/ Online Transport Archive (T040\_1064)**

## Premises update

It's now nearly five months since OTA got the keys to the Weise Building, our permanent base in Shrewsbury. Although there has not yet been a full migration of collections from our existing premises in the town, we've not been idle and the building is beginning to take on a busy look.

The first development is that we've ended up with more space than we originally anticipated as one of the sitting tenants decided to retire and hence vacated his part of the premises. A bonus to us was that his business was that of a painter and decorator so, at no cost to ourselves, he refurbished the area he was leaving! One slight problem is that there is no inter-connecting door from this area to the part of the building we're currently using, so in time we'll need to engage a contractor to knock that through for us.

A number of collections which were 'in transit' have gone straight to the Weise Building to be sorted. These include those of Roger Wheaton and

Dr Ian Manning from Australia, and Martin Weyell and Henry Pryer from the London area. Recently, these have been added to by the slide collection of John Ryan from Wirral. We have worked with John over the last couple of months to uplift his important, and well documented, collection and hope to bring you a profile in our November issue.

New shelving units have been erected in preparation for the 'big move' but as yet the principal items that have been transferred are some plate glass negatives. These have been handled with extreme care because of their fragility and space has been allocated in a small, locked room to keep them out of the way of day-to-day activity.

At the end of June, we were delighted to

host a visit by colleagues from The Bus Archive, with whom we have a very good working relationship. Their initial comment: "What a lot of empty space!" Don't worry folks, it'll fill up quickly.

**OTA secretary Peter Waller with guests from The Bus Archive on 26 June 2025: Elizabeth Shuck, Neil Barker and Philip Kirk. Charles Roberts/Online Transport Archive (CCR122155)**





## Profile: Henry Pryer (1938-2024)



Pryer Family Archive

Having read about OTA and its work, and heard presentations by Charles Firminger at the Locomotive Club of Great Britain (LCGB), Henry left OTA his slide collection in his will. We were alerted in the autumn of 2024 that Henry had died and, over the next few months, trustee Charles Roberts was able to work with Henry's brother Thomas to locate all the relevant material, box it up ready for transporting, and oversee its collection by a contractor on 20 March 2025. Thomas was also happy to be interviewed by Charles to provide information for this profile.

Henry Edmund Pryer was born in Enfield on 23 September 1938, five years before his brother. Their father was a solicitor in the City of London and the family lived in Oxfordshire before moving to Watford in 1943, a town which was to become their lifetime home. Henry was educated at



NCB 0-4-0ST (RSHN 7049/1942) at Whitehaven Docks, 13 July 1968. Henry Pryer/Online Transport Archive (NCB07\_39)

Highgate School, which he attended as a boarder, and subsequently studied at night school to gain his professional qualifications in civil engineering. He went on to make his career with British Railways, being based at St Pancras and latterly back in his home town at Melton House. In the early 1980s, he was working at the Watford Area Civil Engineers office Project Section, undertaking work connected to the electrification of the Bedford-St Pancras line.

His passion was steam and many of his early slides (dating from about 1963) document trips he took to seek out their diminishing outposts on BR. Thomas remembers: "He took some

interest in diesel and electric, but his wider transport interests were buses – mainly London Transport and ex-LT buses round Britain – trams and a bit of shipping." As a family, they were well-travelled, although they never flew anywhere. Cruises were undertaken on an annual basis and the brothers would break off from 'civilian' activity to have a look at the transport scene. "We'd been to Spain for Henry's 21st birthday in 1959 and went all over Europe in the years after that – Scandinavia, Turkey, Iceland, North Africa, the Black Sea ... too many to mention. After the fall of the Iron Curtain we took the opportunity to go to the DDR, and the USSR before it began to break up."

Henry was an active member of many societies, including the LCGB, the Stephenson Locomotive Society, the Industrial Railway Society, the Transport Ticket Society and the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway. He and Thomas shared an interest in stamps and coins, and books – thousands of them!

Henry died at Watford General Hospital on 11 July 2024 at the age of 85. We are thankful to Thomas for his help with this profile and to allow us access to some personal photographs from the family archive.

**Unloading timber at San Sebastián, Basque Region, Spain, 13 June 1964.**  
Henry Pryer/Online Transport Archive (T201\_1004)





## Profile: Roy Hobbs (1932-2017)



Respected transport photographer Roy Hobbs was born in Reigate, Surrey. His earliest memories were of being evacuated to GWR territory in Somerset before returning to his home town which was the headquarters of London Transport's Country Area. Their vehicles were the subjects of some of his earliest black and white photographs. In his early working life, he spent some time in the RAF before

going to work for the Marine Sales division of Castrol in London.

He used cameras of many different makes during his lifetime, including a folding 35mm Baldwinette and an Ensign Autorange 16-20 II, before settling on another Ensign model. For colour slides, he used an Agfa Silette Compur and later a Praktica VF with a Pentax SMC Takumar f1.8 lens, which he stuck with for his entire slide career.



The Transport Library

Between 1971 and 1977, he worked for British Caledonian at Gatwick which enabled him to make affordable overseas visits to places such as Latin America. Closer to home, he concentrated on the rail scene around Reigate, coupled with trips around Britain and Ireland, where he accessed remote locations by bicycle and later by motorcycle. Latterly, he switched from slides to colour prints. After a period based in Exeter, he retired to Hereford, although he maintained close links with his former home area.

OTA trustee Kevin McCormack remembers Roy as someone who was very helpful and approachable, very much a steam and LT bus enthusiast, but slightly disdainful of the preservation world, regarding it as artificial and unrealistic. However, heritage centres do feature in his collection, most notably the Bluebell Railway. OTA Secretary Peter Waller, who worked with Roy when he was transferring his bus material to the Archive, recalls his strong interest in music, particularly jazz, and his work in recording concerts. He remained a keen cyclist throughout his life.

Roy died in early 2017 at the age of 84. His black and white negatives are held by The Transport Treasury.



*Top left: SR Class H 0-4-4T 31518 arriving at Brasted on 28 October 1961, the last day of operation of the Westerham Valley Branch Line.*

*Left: GWR 4-6-0 6000 King George V departs Paddington with a Newbury races special on 23 November 1962. Roy Hobbs/Online Transport Archive (both)*



## Film update

There have been a number of developments with OTA's film collection, most notably the burgeoning success of our YouTube channel, which now exceeds over 1000 subscribers. This is the level where (using YouTube's word and spelling) it can be 'monetized', ie OTA can start to receive a flow of income to support its projects.

Thanks to Wilf Watters and Martin Jenkins, many of their unique range of transport-related tapes produced by Online Video (OV) are now available for viewing under the OTA umbrella. Having been cleaned and remastered, they are proving popular viewing. Although we have always stressed that OV and OTA are, and always were, totally separate entities, one of the reasons OTA came into existence was to provide a home for ciné films whose owners no longer wished to house them. Did we ever think OTA would grow so big from that single acorn?!



In a new development, OTA has taken the first step towards undertaking its own film-to-digital transfers, without the need to use a third-party, by acquiring a FilmFabriek Pictor Pro 27k which should be installed within the next few weeks. This will enable us to assess the quality and content of hundreds of unseen films in the collection. However, OTA will continue to use outside contractors when high quality transfers are required.

## News in brief



**In memoriam:** OTA recently received the news of the death of **Bill Ryan** – 'Reverend Willian D'Arcy Ryan' as per the order of service for his Requiem Mass in respect of his role as deacon at St Mary and St Michael's RC Church, Garstang. Bill died on 13 June 2025 at the age of 82. OTA was represented at his funeral mass and it was a good opportunity to meet the wider family and assure them that we will continue to bring Bill's work to a wide audience as we have done for the past 10-15 years. A profile of Bill appeared in the November 2024 newsletter. We also received news of the death of **Marjorie (Madge) Wilson**, widow of prolific bus photographer R L (Reg) Wilson, on 11 April 2025 at the age of 95. Reg died in January 2001 and OTA has administered his collection since then. We have always been thankful for her appreciation of the work we've done and this will continue into the future, including chatting to the family about a long-overdue newsletter profile of Reg. We would like to send condolences to the families of Bill and Madge.

**Books:** Quite a number of fundraising books have recently reached the latter stages of preparation. Already delivered to their respective publishers are: *Railways Remembered: Southern Region*

*Wanderings 1962-1972: the Blake Paterson Collection* (Kevin McCormack and Martin Jenkins, Crécy); *London Underground Gallery in Colour 1954-2000* (Kevin McCormack, Pen and Sword); and *The 'Baby Grands': Liverpool's Last Trams* (Martin Jenkins, Unique). Nearly there is *Railways Remembered: the Lake District and South Lancashire* (Martin Jenkins and Charles Roberts, Crécy). Slightly further down the line are colour albums devoted to the trolleybuses of St Helens and South Lancashire, Phil Tatt's early railway colour, and books devoted to tramways in Spain and Italy.

**Image scanning:** After an impasse, this has now restarted. The collection of over 6000 slides taken by Martin James (profiled July 2024) has been completed. Approaching 3000 of the recently-received John Ryan collection have also been scanned. These are slides which had been assembled into talks that John used to deliver to societies across Britain. The order, with John's supporting notes, has been preserved in digital form but the original slides can now be returned to their chronological order amongst John's collection. The scanning of black and white negatives continues, with many being shared on The Transport Treasury website to raise income for OTA.