

The Hershey Electric Railway at Havana (Casablanca), Cuba, 2001. Alan Pearce/Online Transport Archive (ARP_14327)



2025 has turned out to be a momentous year for OTA, something that we were only getting the first inkling of when we released Newsletter 26 in November 2024. At that time, we had just heard about some potential permanent premises and were considering our options. Within four months, the premises were ours and the work on fitting them out and moving collections in could begin. That work progresses and we look forward to bringing you updates in 2026. In the meantime, OTA's trustees would like to wish all of our followers and supporters best wishes for Christmas and the New Year and hope that 2026 is a good year for all of us.

Publications

A number of OTA fundraising books, through several publishers, are due over the next few months. Actual publication dates, and even the order in which they will appear, haven't been confirmed yet, but it is anticipated that the first to appear will be *The Baby Grands: Liverpool's Last Trams* (Martin Jenkins, Unique Books) covering the city's 100 streamlined four-wheelers which ran until system closure in 1957.

London Underground Gallery 1954-2000 (Kevin McCormack, Pen and Sword), draws heavily on previously unseen OTA collections and shows many facets of this fascinating system, including many behind-the-scenes views. And two books in the *Railways Remembered* series are currently in preparation by Crécy. *Southern England 1962-1972* (Martin Jenkins and Kevin McCormack) is based

around the collection of former BR manager Blake Paterson, a follow-up to last year's Western Region volume.

And last but not least is *Railways Remembered: Lake District and North Lancashire* (Martin Jenkins and Charles Roberts), which takes readers on a tour through this fascinatingly varied region of Britain.

Weise Building visits

While we continue to bring some order to the Weise Building, we have been able to host visits by several people including OTA Patron Sir Neil Cossons who was greatly impressed with what he saw. Sharing knowledge from his career in the heritage and museums sector, he provided valuable advice for the future.

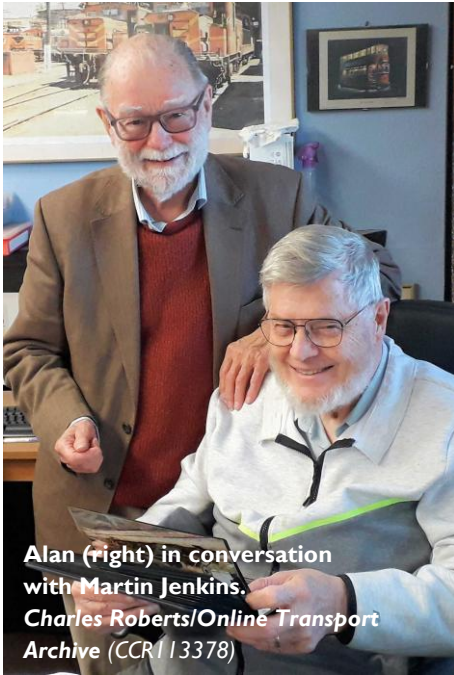
On 23 October, OTA took delivery of bound volumes of *Modern Tramway* from Jenni and Mark Seltzer. Jenni is one of the daughters of Nigel

Eames, who died in November 2024 and whose obituary we featured in Newsletter 27. We are generally not a repository for printed material but there are selected exceptions. For example, a reference library which people can use in support of the picture archive, Nigel's set of magazines certainly fits the bill. We are grateful to the family for passing them over in Nigel's memory.



Mark and Jenni Seltzer pass over Nigel Eames' bound run of *Modern Tramway*. Charles Roberts/Online Transport Archive (CCR113378)

Profile: Alan Pearce



Alan (right) in conversation with Martin Jenkins.
Charles Roberts/Online Transport Archive (CCR113378)

Alan has been an ardent and active supporter and benefactor of OTA almost since its formation. The Archive is honoured to now be the custodian of his range of still images, ciné and video, some of which date back as far as the early 1960s. He recently reminisced with OTA President Martin Jenkins about over 70 years as a transport enthusiast and professional.

Alan Rodney Pearce was born in 1944 and can remember having an interest in transport as early as the late 1940s. A key moment was when he was taken for a ride on the Wimbledon tram route in 1951 and a fascination with all things electric grew from there. "Anything electric, and also railways generally, but not buses!"

Following a degree in Electrical Engineering at Kingston Polytechnic, he worked for Westinghouse Signalling at Chippenham, GEC General Signals at Boreham Wood, and London Transport (Docklands) (later SERCO) before retiring in 2007. He met his wife Susan in 1975. "She hails from Pittsburg, USA, so this gives me the excuse to visit many US tramways and museums!"

He joined the Light Railway Transport League (later the LRTA) in about 1960, rising to be London Area Officer, whilst also being the LRTA

representative on the Tramway Heritage Committee. It was through Alan's efforts that an arrangement was reached with OTA whereby the Archive holds and administers the London Area's slide collection under a joint copyright arrangement, ensuring that the work of photographers such as Jack Wyse, Frank Hunt, Mike Lee and others are cared for.

He is a member of the LCC Tramways Trust, the Merseyside Tramway Preservation Society, the Tramway and Light Railway Society, and the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum. He has also enjoyed an active lifetime association with the Seaton Tramway. With his Seaton connections, he took possession of a former LCC tram trailer which now resides in his back garden. He also purchased and paid for the transportation of car 730 from Lisbon to Seaton. He passed 730 to the MTPS in Birkenhead who regauged it, and the tram is now at Beamish.

His first black and white photographs were of London trolleybuses in July 1960. He progressed to colour negatives and slides, ciné film and later to all forms



Above: LT trolleybus 1521 pulls out of Clarence Street, Kington-upon-Thames on route 601 heading for Tolworth.
Alan Pearce/Online Transport Archive (ARP_00170)

of digital photography. He is very widely travelled, visiting Belgium with his school in 1960 and going on to develop a lifelong fascination with the Vicinal. He has also visited most of Europe as well as Argentina, Australia, China, Ecuador, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Mongolia, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe. He is a world expert on Cuba having made 12 visits to record amongst other things the Hershey electric interurban.

Alan is also a skilled modeller and computer expert. He has digitised prints, slides and films for OTA and been a great source of help and advice for many years.



Vicinal S Class car 10164 at Pont-a-Celles on route 78.
Alan Pearce/Online Transport Archive (ARP_00551)

Profile: John Ryan

Armed with a lifetime of vivid memories as an enthusiast and railway industry professional, there can be few such eloquent raconteurs able to bring the past to life as well as John. When we were speaking to him to get his details for this profile, his simple introduction "I'll tell you a story!" led onto 4-5 hours of conversation, which we can only summarise here.

John Michael Ryan spent his early life in South Manchester. For Christmas 1939, aged 2, his parents bought him a toy elephant on wheels which, for some unexplained reason, John provided steam train noises for! Soon after that, he remembers always insisting that the family travelled into Manchester by train from Chassen Road rather than by bus and he has clear recall of LNER green locos hauling varnished teak coaches.

At home, he went on to build a model railway and he also started collecting loco numbers, but remembers reading an article by Eric Tonks which widened his interest to railway history. From that seminal moment, he built up wide-ranging knowledge of railways in their social and industrial context and a significant proportion of his photographic collection is as much industrial archaeology as it is transport.

He began photography with black and white in 1947 using a box camera before moving on to a Kodak folding model. Attending slide shows in his latter student days convinced him of the merits of colour and took his first slides on 1 April 1961. As was the recommendation at the time he mounted these in glass, and kept detailed records, logically starting a numbering at sequence at 1. 2933 slides later (14 September 1963) he decided to move to plastic mounts and got through something like 2000 films before his last reel in 2024. He utilised many cameras in this time including Werra and Miranda before settling on Olympus. He also took ciné film and his collection is some of the first to be put through OTA's FilmFabriek equipment (see page 4).

His interests widened from railways to include buses and trams and he started venturing overseas, with his first trip being to France and Switzerland in June 1962. He travelled the world, photographing and filming, some of the highlights beyond Europe being South Africa, Rhodesia, Mozambique, Indonesia, Thailand, Patagonia and India. His father, Geoffrey Ryan, was a keen amateur photographer and John has passed his slides – a mix of 35mm and medium format, predominantly of shipping – to OTA along with his own.



John, at the family home in Irby, Wirral in the early 1960s, in a portrait shot by his father, Geoffrey Ryan/John Ryan Collection/Online Transport Archive (GHRyan_07_077)

Returning to John's early life, his schooling was in Didsbury and Cheadle Hulme and success in exams won him a place at the University of Liverpool to study Civil Engineering in the autumn of 1956. Graduating in 1960, he was taken on by BR at Liverpool Central on a short-term basis before starting his railway career in earnest in March 1961 with a post in London. His career took him to Walsall, working on the implementation of electrification, then on to Crewe and back to Liverpool, at one stage ending up in the very same office where it had all begun in 1960. His work in Merseyside coincided with construction of the Loop and Link Lines, and his photograph collection includes many unique, behind the scenes views of construction taking place. He took early retirement from the railway in early 1993 as privatisation beckoned. His home has been in Wirral since the early 1960s.

He was a member of many societies, which are too many to list individually, but he was an early member of the Branch Line Society and the Wirral Railway Circle, and a founder of an RCTS Branch in



Left: 40646 and 30925 Cheltenham on an RCTS railtour, Darlington, 13 May 1962. John Ryan/Online Transport Archive (JMR1147)

Walsall. He was also a founder member of the Liverpool University Public Transport Society and participated in the purchase of Liverpool tram 869 from Glasgow, including spending some nights sleeping aboard it for security when it was stored at Parkside, Leeds. In more recent years, he has brought his professional knowledge to bodies such as the Wirral Transport Users Association (of which he was Chair) and the North Cheshire Rail Users Group. He traded commercial postcards and was well known at fairs all over the country.

He was a sought after speaker and many of his slides were marshalled into talks. OTA has scanned them in this format before making a start on returning the slides to their rightful places in his numerical sequence. Our initial work has concentrated on his glass-mounted slides (1961-63), which require very careful handling to avoid damage when being remounted.

Sadly, his activities were brought to a sudden end by a fall at home on Christmas Eve 2024. He now resides in residential care in Bidston, Wirral.



The Euston Arch, gateway to the station until it was controversially demolished in 1962. Photographed by John during his time working in London, 29 September 1961. John Ryan/Online Transport Archive (JMR0656)

Trustee profile: Dave Spencer

Dave has been actively involved in OTA for a number of years now, and was formally appointed as a trustee in March. Anyone who attends bus rallies and running days around the country will know Dave, by sight if not by name, with his video camera, recording events which will appear through PMP Video. Dave has been instrumental in establishing our YouTube channel and getting OTA set up to undertake most of its own film transfer work in the future.

To start with, we'll let Dave say a bit about himself. "I grew up near the Crumbles in Eastbourne where Claude Lane's Modern Electric Tramway ran together with Hall and Co industrial locos running on sectional track. My primary school was unable to accommodate children locally so we were bussed out on the Corporation's Regal or Lion, both of which amazingly survive. That got me interested in road transport and my passion widened to aviation and militaria interests through time in the Royal Observer Corps, including flying on an RAF Argosy. I ended up in Manchester in the 1960s and, married and settled in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, took a serious interest in photography to the extent that I took evening classes.

"My work in mechanical engineering gave me opportunities for travel and I was soon printing the Irish Omnibus Circle newsletter while working in the Republic of Ireland. I started selling bus photos at PSV Circle meetings at the Boyle Street Museum in Manchester and then developed PMP Video which has now produced over 5000 films. My interests extended to trucks and, through a friendship with one-time OTA trustee John Bishop, to trams and trolleybuses. I have a penchant for travelling to unusual places and recent trips have taken me to China, Transnistria, Bangladesh and Paraguay. I am happy to share my



Dave in action at the bus running day in Kirkby, 1 June 2025. Charles Roberts/Online Transport Archive (CCR121396)

knowledge of moving media images to help OTA."

In early October, OTA took delivery of a modern film scanner from The Netherlands. For the technically-minded, it's a FilmFabriek Pictor Pro 2.7k with 2 track audio. It has a 'wet head' which removes up to 95% of scratches and lines (while generating an alcoholic aura around it!). The purchase has been funded by a generous donation from Alan Pearce, whose profile you read earlier. At a stroke, it has given OTA the ability to undertake assessments of film collections it holds but which it has never really had the opportunity to explore before. These have already included John Ryan (again profiled earlier), Tim Murray (with sound) and Paul Cresswell.

The software associated with the scanner allows for the capture of still images, more than adequate for use on social media and in presentations and even for use in printed media, provided that the image is not too large. A few examples will appear on Facebook over the next few weeks. And don't forget to access our YouTube channel where a sample of our collection appears:

[www.youtube.com/
@OnlineTransportArchive](http://www.youtube.com/@OnlineTransportArchive)