

OTA

ONLINE
TRANSPORT
ARCHIVE

Welcome to this, the sixth OTA Newsletter. In our last one, we mentioned that OTA was going to be on the move. After a lot of negotiation and a lot of effort on the part of the trustees and other helpers, the move has now taken place, as described below. We also take the opportunity to profile another collection in the Archive and bring you briefly up to date with progress work on fund-raising publications.

The Great Move

The bulk of the OTA collection was housed within the premises of Ian Allan Publishing (IAP) in Hershams from late 2005 onwards. This was advantageous in many ways – it was convenient for one of the main publishing outlets of OTA material (although IAP never had a privileged position as regards reproduction rates), it was located close to the homes of many active OTA members, and IAP were able to provide the premises at a less than full market rate. There were, however, disadvantages – the premises needed major renovation and the site was only accessible during IAP's working hours. Furthermore, it was never seen as a permanent arrangement. However, it did enable OTA to become firmly established within secure accommodation.



Matters came to a head in mid-2014 when OTA was advised that the Hershams site had been sold and OTA was required to comply with the terms of the rental contract and vacate in spring 2015. The trustees viewed this as a positive development, allowing OTA to seek better premises from which it could develop. A number of alternatives were examined – striking a balance between location, cost and quality – before the decision was reached. The directors can now advise that OTA is safely installed in secure premises in Shrewsbury.



The move took place on 6/7 June, when two removal vans loaded the bulk of the archive – including cabinets, shelving and other supporting material – for its 160 mile journey to the Shropshire county town. Prior to that, working parties at Hershams had sorted and packed the material which was being moved. The contractors worked very efficiently and completed the loading and unloading in 2-3 hours each. Subsequent working parties at Shrewsbury have brought a greater degree of order to the collection than had been possible at Hershams and concerted efforts can now be made to sort, scan and catalogue those collections which have no associated listings.

Our new premises are readily accessible by public transport – about a 10 minute walk from Shrewsbury railway station – and researchers can work on site. All arrangements to visit the Archive should be made through the secretary – contact details at the bottom of p2 of this newsletter. With the new premises, OTA feels it is in a very strong position to develop further.

Bequests, legacies and volunteers

For the last 15 years, OTA has been involved in providing security for many important transport-related collections some of which would have been lost without the direct intervention of trustees and members. Now we are installed in our new premises, many of these collections are to be digitised, especially those showing signs of deterioration. Currently, the directors are particularly indebted to people like Nicholas Britton, Geoff Smith and Garry Ward who have been undertaking vital scanning work but more volunteers are urgently required. To ensure this work is done to the highest standards, OTA will need to purchase additional quality scanners. Our long-term objective is to have our own premises in order to accommodate our growing number of collections and guarantee our commitment to conservation and preservation. To this end bequests and legacies however large or small will always be most welcome. Similar organisations to ours have benefited from major legacies which have enabled them to acquire premises and equipment to protect the future of their irreplaceable archival material. Please do not hesitate to contact the Secretary or any of the directors for further information – for example bequests and legacies to recognised UK charities have clear tax advantages.

Newsletter

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Publications

Although the move has been the preoccupying task over the last few months, work is progressing on a number of publications to raise funds for OTA. These include an all-colour album of images of diesel locomotives and multiple units from the 'green' era, as well as a comprehensive, two-volume overview of all modes of transport on the Isle of Man. It is the aim of the Isle of Man volumes to feature every horsecar and MER vehicle which has operated since WW2. We have located quality images of almost everything we need, but if you can help us with any of the vehicles or vessels listed in the panel to the right, please contact the secretary.

Wants list for Isle of Man volumes:

Good quality colour images, taken pre-1980, of:

- Horsecars 11 and 26
- MER trailers 36, 37 and 49-53
- A Bedford OB coach with one of the Island's many operators
- IoMSPCo ships: *Manxman*, *Mona's Queen*, *Lady of Mann*

In another development, OTA is working with Unseen Steam. This is a brand new venture which aims to make available new archive railway footage for the first time and is releasing its material on DVD and a web streaming service, in part using material from OTA. Their website can be accessed at www.unseensteam.co.uk Updates on all these projects in the next newsletter.

Profile: John Meredith

A much-respected transport author and photographer, John was born in Dartford in 1928 although his formative years were spent in Croydon where he attended various schools prior to obtaining an Inter BSc qualification followed by an AMICE. After joining the Southern Railway Chief Civil Engineer's Office in November 1945, he was involved in a range of railway projects. These included preparations for the 1951 Festival of Britain, building new electrical substations and control stations, constructing depots and fuelling facilities for new DMUs, undertaking recoveries from abandoned branch lines, Parliamentary submissions and BR involvement with the Tyne and Wear Metro and the Docklands Light Railway. When he took early retirement in 1984 he was Eastern Region Works Engineer. Although married with a family, John has found time to give invaluable help and assistance to many transport organisations.



He has also authored *Traction Engine Archive Vol 3* and co-authored – with the late John Gent – *The Tramways of Croydon* and *The Tramways of Clapham and Streatham*. He gave his first transport talk, at school, in 1944 and organised his first tour, Maidstone trolleybuses, in 1948. Subsequently he arranged the Southern Counties Touring Society visits as well as co-funding brilliant film footage of these trips.



Most people reading this profile will know John through his photography. Although he took his first photograph in 1944 things only really took off when Bill Haynes (Haynes of Dulwich) sold him an Agfa Isolette

Camera (120 x 2¼ square negs) in 1948. Now his collection of some 18,000 meticulously filed and catalogued black and white negatives is lodged with OTA. John has created a truly remarkable record of all forms of transport during the past 70 years.

Don't put it off! – will writing and slide condition

Contacting OTA

Secretarial address:
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Email:
secretary@
onlinetransportarchive.org

OTA is still aware of collections being lost or becoming highly vulnerable because people put off making water-tight arrangements by writing a will (not expensive or time-consuming) or deciding to pass negatives, slides and films to recognised UK archives such as OTA whilst they can. We strongly urge everyone to make suitable arrangements for their collections. However, to make sure you have a collection which can be preserved, check the condition of your slides. With signs of deterioration now appearing on many slides, OTA recommends that you carefully assess your own collections in order to take necessary action to safeguard your precious images from further decline.