

The Tenterden Terrier



Number 56

Winter 1991



Journal of the Tenterden Railway Company Limited
Proprietor of the Kent & East Sussex Railway

The Tenterden Railway Company Limited

(Limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Registered charity 262481

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Bodiam Castle

A National Trust Property



The Castle is open every day from April till October, but weekdays only November to March, between 10.00 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. or sundown if earlier. Closed over Christmas. Built in 1385 as a defence against the French, ruined in the Civil War, it still has a magical effect on every visitor. Inside one tower an audio-visual display describes life in a castle 600 years ago, and in another, on video, a warrior is being dressed in a magnificent suit of armour. There is a café in the car park. Telephone Staplecross (058083) 436.

Great Dixter

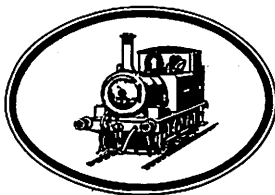


OPENING TIMES House and Gardens open **Tuesdays to Sundays inclusive** and Bank Holiday Mondays from 29 March to 13 October and 19/20 & 26/27 October. Open 2.00 pm. Last Admission 5.00 pm. (Garden open from 11.00 on 25, 26, 27 May, Sundays in July and August and 26 August)

The 500 year old manor hall is open together with the gardens, well known for a wide variety of plants. Some of the unusual plants have won awards at the Royal Horticultural Society shows in London. *1½ miles from the K.&E.S.R. station at Northiam*; follow the signposts in the village for a very pleasant visit. Telephone : Northiam (0797) 253160.



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Editorial

Measuring the Downturn

1991 was never expected to be a good year, given the severity of the recession. With traffic some 17% down we could have been experiencing problems by now, but for the fact that we had budgeted for a downturn and set our expenditure targets accordingly. Not surprisingly, the activities that we do really well – the vintage train, the Rother Valley Limited, and the Pullman, have come up to best expectations – the normal service trains have seen lighter loadings. On a positive note, our assets are in good shape and we have a considerable flexibility in our operations so that we can set our overheads in line with income. Whilst operating surpluses of late have been good, the level of borrowings associated with the push to Northiam remain uncomfortably high. Cash generation must be a high priority in 1992 to improve the balance sheet.

FRONTISPIECE G.E.R. 6 wheel coach, newly outshopped alongside the carriage shed on 14th July 1991. (Mike Esau)

The vintage train approaches Pope's Cottage with an afternoon working on 28th July 1991. The Chairman is seated on the front veranda of the L&NWR saloon; GER coach to the rear. (Mike Esau)

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FRONT COVER "Charwelton" in an unusual pose, outside the carriage shed, during the "Good Old Days" event on 22nd September 1991. (Donald H. Wilson)

From the Chairman

1991 continues to be a year of change. In anticipation of the recession, your Board budgeted accordingly, so that although passenger numbers up to 1st October are down by 17½%, income is in line with expectations. In light of the boost to revenues last year from the opening to Northiam, I feel comfortable with our achievements. However, in the competitive world in which we operate, there is no room to stand still. Key planning tasks for the next 5 to 10 years include sympathetic development and improvement of the Tenterden site, including better catering facilities; covered carriage storage sidings for our collection of unique vehicles; a strategy for locomotives including capital investment in this area; volunteer recruitment, and job specifications for senior management and Directors. Finally, we plan to have a fully costed feasibility study for the Northiam to Bodiam section to be ready for consideration by the Board in March 1992. This will dovetail in with the plans of our new company, Rother Valley Railway (East Sussex) Ltd, to link the line up with Network South East at Robertsbridge. I am sure you will agree that this is a very considerable task for your Directors - we take the challenge very seriously.

From the Board Room

As Company Secretary I am conscious that these notes will be read after the Annual General Meeting to be held in October. The procedures for calling the meeting, and servicing the procedures for election to the Board, were set up years ago, but, with minor fine tuning, such as adjusting the size of the Board, and including the "50%" rule, they have stood the test of time. They were well drafted by those who had the care of our affairs in those days.

I should add a word about the "50%" rule, for the benefit of those who were not around when it was made. A candidate for election OR re-election as a Director has to have votes recorded for him/her on HALF the total voting papers returned: that is both the ones completed at the AGM, and the proxy votes. Even an existing Director seeking re-election by rota, and leading in an uncontested poll, but securing less than 50% support would not be declared as an elected Director, nor could he/she be co-opted

during the period before the next AGM. If this were done, it would be contrary to the declared will of the membership. Writing before AGM 1991, I am keeping my fingers crossed that this rule will not need to be invoked this time.

A great weight of responsibility is conferred upon the Board of Directors by their election. They must not be found wanting in shouldering what is undoubtedly a heavy responsibility for the not inconsiderable capital resources, and for safeguarding a turnover which is now in excess of half a million pounds. Responsibility is theirs also for the safety and welfare of Company member/employees, and Company member/working volunteers. Above all they must accept responsibility for the protection and forward looking governance of the future of the Railway. If you look back over the events of the past year in the light of what is written in this paragraph, you may have to view some events in a new light. What may have appeared to be a stern decision, or, in some people's opinion, a wrong choice, will in fact be seen as no more than what was necessary in the perceived circumstances. In fact the performance of the Board has been well up to previous standards as can be seen by the published results.

Last year's Board will probably have spent some 65 hours in 13 meetings, by the time of the AGM, and this is in addition to their normal work as volunteers, and their site visits, and interviews on and off the railway, and considerable correspondence, and use of the telephone, as well as sectional committee work. They are our leading volunteers in this volunteer led organisation. The marvel is that all this takes place against the background of considerable career responsibilities elsewhere: which, in two cases, take the people concerned to the other end of England for much of the week.

Reviewing what has gone before, I look forward with confidence to the continuing good performance of the Board of Directors in 1991-1992, as they face the challenges of the Northiam to Bodiam project, alongside all their ongoing routine business.

Steam Locomotives

The position of the locomotive fleet is as follows:

No. 3 (Bodiam). Awaiting Board decision on



Class 73 Electro Diesel, "Kent & East Sussex Railway" heads rebuilt West Country Class Pacific No 34027 "Taw Valley" out of Ashford with the empty stock of the train for the Folkestone Harbour branch workings on 12th September 1991. (Mike Esau)

finances for a new boiler.

No. 8 (Knowle). New support brackets for the boiler at the firebox end are being manufactured to replace those missing and will then be fitted.

No. 10 (Sutton). Out of service at present; re-tubing has just been completed.

No. 11 (1556). Out of service pending completion of repairs to the valve gear.

No. 12 (Marcia). New boiler cladding sheets are to be fitted, supplied by the owner, Dick Beckett.

No. 14 (Charwelton). Working satisfactorily after attention to the driving axle boxes and subsequent trials.

No. 19 (Norwegian). Work has been concentrated in the area of the steam pipes in the smoke box. A set of superheater elements has been ordered.

No. 21 (Wainwright). The boiler was duly returned to Rolvenden and work on re-assembly to the frames was due to commence in October.

No. 22 (Maunsell). The boiler was sent to the contractor at Chatham Dockyard for attention, concurrently with the return of No. 21's boiler. A new front tube plate will be fitted and new tubes. Work on machining badly worn surfaces on the main frames is in hand.

No. 23 (Holman F Stephens). Available for service.

No. 24 (William H Austen). Available for

service.

No. 25 (Northiam). Out of service pending a 10 year boiler examination and frame overhaul.

No. 26 (Linda). Successfully passed a boiler hydraulic test on 19th September.

No. 27 (Rolvenden). Out stationed at Tenterden for the use of junior engine men. "7597". Still at Rolvenden at the beginning of October, awaiting return to Loughborough.

Diesel Locomotives

No. 40 (Ford). Out of service, pending repairs.

No. 41 (Rushton). Available for service.

No. 42. Out of service, pending the re-fitting of the intermediate wheels and new axle box crown brasses.

No. 43 (Titan). In service as the Rolvenden shunter.

No. 46 (BR Class 03). Undergoing trials following the fitting of a new exhaust platform.

No. 47. Out of service, pending overhaul.

No. 48 (BR Class 14). Out of service, pending overhaul.

No. 49 (BR Class 14). Available for service.

Cranes

No. 113 (DS451). Still away for repairs at contractors works, following accident damage.

No. 145 (DS17700). Available for service, but requires the jib to be painted before the winter.

No. 151 (815). Due for a thorough boiler inspection in March 1992.

Smith 5 ton crane (un-numbered). This was delivered to the Railway in July and is a former steam crane converted to diesel power. The existing jib has been removed and the jib from No. 109 will be fitted. No. 109, also a Smith crane of a similar type, was purchased from McAlpine's in 1971, but its working days are now over.

Carriage and Wagon

GER 6 wheeler No. 197 entered service on 28th July and along with the other vintage stock was chartered by the Colonel Stephens Railway Society who were visiting the Railway. 197 was later returned to the shed for the fitting of suitable vintage pictures of the Great Eastern area to the 1st class compartments, and end handrails and steps. Further modifications to the running gear were undertaken in September. This completes the vintage set for the moment and it will now be in use until the Santa Specials start, when it will be withdrawn for more work. The restoration of these vehicles is the subject of a separate report elsewhere in the *Terrier*.

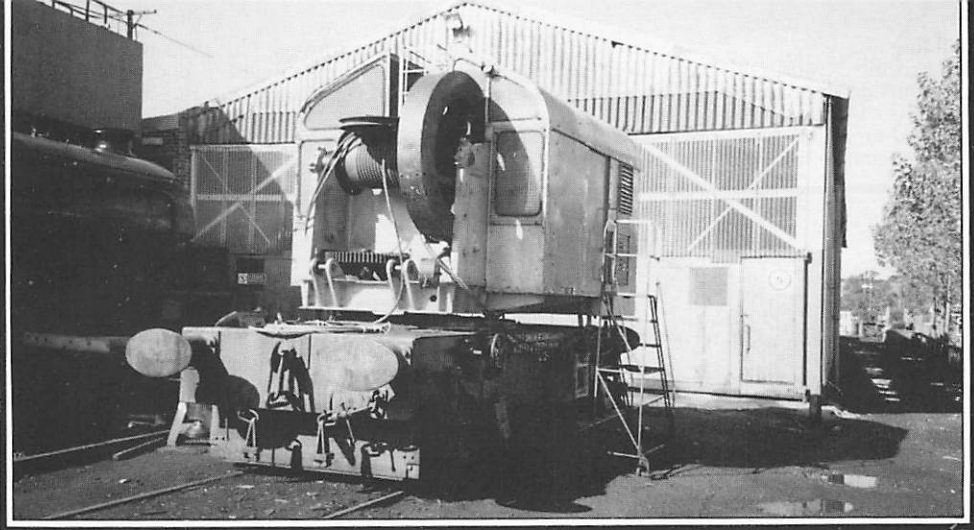
Mark 1 TK 63 (third corridor) entered the workshop in July for a repaint and to have the corridor and compartment floors recovered in new lino. This necessitated the removal of all internal doors, seating and fittings which always seem to be held by dozens of screws, of which the last ones never want to come out, and are just as difficult to replace. Professionally lettered and lined, No. 63 entered service on 21st September in K&ESR maroon livery, just in time for the "Good Old Days" weekend.

During that weekend no fewer than 17 model Pullman cars were in the workshop including 3 sisters of Cambria, and a complete Brighton Belle set. Late on the Sunday night, after most people had gone home, a foreigner, Charwelton, steamed through the shed trying its whistle for size in the confines of the workshop. The last of the brown and cream Mark 1s, BTO (brake third open) No. 73 emerged from the evening gloom into the carriage shed. No. 73 requires a large amount of bodyside repairs to corroded window surrounds, 2 new door skins, 3 new windows and a new lino floor, which means the seats have to come out by removing dozens of screws the last of which . . . No. 73 will be painted in K&ESR maroon livery making the four car rake, and it should be returned to service in time for the Santa Specials.



No 24 "William H. Austen" heads the first train of the day waiting to leave Tenterden Town station on 28th July 1991.

(Mike Esau)



The recently arrived Smith 5 ton diesel crane, minus jib, at Rolvenden on 5th October 1991. (Philip Shaw)

Stores van NE 161278 also entered the shed on 22nd September for repairs to the bodyside and one headstock which was damaged during shunting at Wittersham.

On 5th October "Medfit" B460575 (158) the second steel sided 13 ton open wagon, which has been in service since it arrived in March 1988, entered the shed for the fitting of a new floor, repairs to the vacuum brake and a much needed coat of paint. The old floor was shovelled out and replaced with new timbers, the body was cleaned down, primed, and finished in "engineer's blue" livery and lettered K.E.S.R.

Errata

Correction to last *Terrier*: GER 197 is on a "Stove R" underframe not a "Store R".

G.W.R. Railcar Project

No. 20's renovation has been progressing over the summer period, with working parties enjoying an attendance of six volunteers on most occasions. The task of replacing the top section of the left-hand waist-level beam in the forward saloon was completed earlier in the summer, and work has now commenced on the repair of the framework of the Robertsbridge end driving cab. The work being carried out here is the replacement of frame sections damaged by rusted bolts, although other frame members require attention as a result of damage incurred by shunting in B.R. days. The only area that has suffered rot damage is a small area in the centre of the forward nose-beam.

Other recent tasks carried out include the replacement of more of the vertical-to-crossmember brackets, and the refitting of the seat-mounting brackets in the forward saloon. Both the domed cab roof sections were taken away in July for repair, and these should have been returned by the time this has been published.

Permanent Way

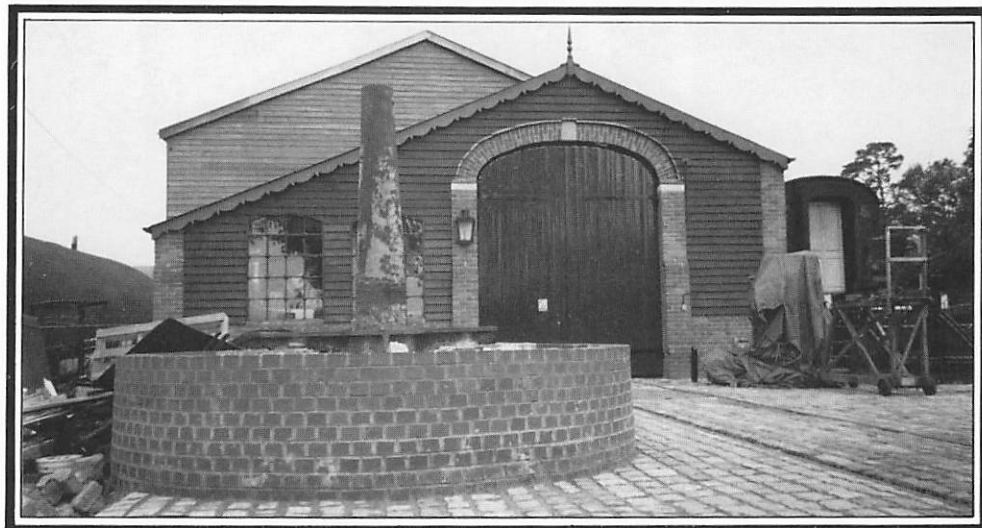
This year's round of spot re-sleepering has finished, after changing several hundred sleepers between Tenterden and Newmill Bridge. During the working week in August, the loop at Northiam was extended and the correct run round point at the Bodiam end installed. The effect of this is also to ease the radius of the approach curve from Bodiam. The level crossings at both Cranbrook Road and Rolvenden have been re-surfaced this summer by contractors. This winter's programme will include re-laying two thirds of a mile of track between Oxney Curve and Gazedown Wood with materials recovered from Southfleet. At present work is concentrated on repairing the concrete sleeper panels. An important event will be the re-connection of the Northiam headshunt with the Bodiam section, enabling Wickham trollies to traverse the line throughout the weedkilling.

Clive Lowe and Keith Jones are to be thanked for their tireless work tamping the line every other Saturday night. In addition, the ballast regulator has been to Aylesbury, assisting the contractor with work in conjunction with the introduction of Networker turbo trains for British Rail.

Building

Prior to the "Good Old Days" weekend, the yard outside the carriage shed was cleared of amounts of debris. This has enabled the yard area, which is now 90% laid with granite setts, to be viewed in its entirety. Our

the trains running. The 1992 timetable is currently in the advanced planning stages and will basically remain the same as this year with no additional midweek operating days. The main changes will be to timings and the pattern of service of peak weekends.



The newly completed plinth for the Hawkhurst yard crane, in place with the main column, outside the carriage and wagon shed on 9th October 1991.

(John Miller)

thanks go to Andy Fielder for carrying out the backbreaking task of laying the setts over the past 3 years, assisted by all other members of the building department at various times.

In conjunction with the sett laying the C&W department have commenced construction of the Hawkhurst yard crane superstructure. The round brickwork base was constructed by Dave Green and Malcolm Brunger. The centre casting has been positioned and the base filled with hardcore; it will be capped with concrete and coping bricks prior to the erection of the remainder of the crane.

As part of the continuing maintenance programme a pair of rotten sashes have been replaced in the station building at Tenterden.

It is planned to renew the complete roof sheeting of Tenterden station during October, with a similar style to that of the existing roof being utilised.

Operating

The "Peak Season" midweek running has once again stretched the department this year, generally though, the daily running has gone well and thanks are due to everyone who gave up spare time and holidays to keep

With the prospect of further extension in the medium term the Operating department along with others has started various planning and strategic exercises to prepare for the future. One which has recently been started is the review of signalling requirements along the line, the result of which will allow the S&T department to plan workload and resources over the next few years.

The departmental restructuring exercise referred to in the last issue is now complete and the details will shortly be sent to the Board for ratification. The aim of the new structure is to provide for a constant improvement in Operating standards, close control of resources and increased accountability and responsibility for the department managers and inspectors. Details of the new organisation and how it works will hopefully form the subject of an article in a future issue.

Signals and Telecommunications

The Department's major project at the moment is the installation of the Engineer's sidings ground frame at Wittersham Road. This is being led by Nick Wellington, as a priority task in order to effect proper interlocking signal protection on the siding

points and dispense with the present inconvenient method of operation involving crowbars and point clips! It is hoped to have this new ground frame in service during the early part of next year.

In addition, upgrading work has been taking place at Wittersham Road signal box, including re-pointing of the lower floor brickwork, painting of the lower part of the lever frame, and installation of an electricity supply. Much of this work is being done by Carol and Jamie Douglas, assisted at times by James Palk and Chris Small.

The signalling installation at Rolvenden has now become very reliable after initial teething problems. Peter Lawrence has carried out minor modifications to the Block instruments to guard against "Operator error". Occasionally in the past this caused the Tablet instruments to become locked, requiring the adoption of Pilotman working in midweek, and causing train delays and staffing problems. Technical failures this year have been minimal, thus contributing towards the quality of service that the Kent & East Sussex Railway aims for.

In conclusion, the Department will shortly be involved in further discussions with the Operating Department regarding the requirements for the signalling of the railway at Northiam and beyond. This is particularly important now that plans have emerged finally to return the line to Robertsbridge.

Commercial

Passenger figures up to the end of September show a drop of 18% compared to the same period last year and while this is a disappointment it is largely in line with the budgeted level. In round figures it was anticipated that the recession would reduce visits by 10% and the 'novelty' effect of the opening to Northiam in May would lose us a further 10%. There has been a gradual improvement in trading in recent months for at the end of May figures were down by 25%.

Traffic from Northiam rose in the period June to September from 15% of the total in 1990 to 18% in 1991. To follow this trend advance planning for 1992 will see an earlier first train (present 12.00) and a later last 'round trip' opportunity (present 3.00). The feasibility of establishing a retail and catering unit at Northiam, probably in a converted ex-departmental Maunsell coach already on the railway, is being examined to encourage visitors to wait on site if they have just missed a train. Experience shows that we are losing some business from visitors who are unwilling to wait for up to an hour without

any facilities to hold them on the station. A resolution of the foul water drainage problem will ascertain the final cost and therefore financial viability of such a unit.

A 'Shoppers Ticket' for Northiam residents, allowing half price travel on selected trains, was introduced on an experimental basis during August and was used by an average of six people a day. Travel had to be on the 12.00 train from Northiam, with a return permitted on most afternoon services from Tenterden. It was felt to be a worthwhile exercise and will be repeated and extended in 1992. The offer applies only from Northiam to Tenterden and not vice versa since residents of Tenterden are not perceived as likely to catch a train to Northiam, only to be faced with a two mile trudge to the village store when they enjoy vastly superior facilities in their home town!

'Santa Special' advance bookings are looking very promising having passed the 4,000 mark at the end of September - a total of 14,000 seats are available. Demand at peak times always exceeds capacity, with spare seats available on the off-peak days. A 'two-tier' pricing structure has been introduced for the first time, with a supplement payable for travel on the peak trains in the run up to Christmas with a hope of encouraging some passengers to switch their visit to one of the quieter days and so increase train loadings overall.

The 'Victorian Train' is proving very popular and the Autumn timetable has been increased from a one-train Mark One coaching stock service to an hourly service with two trains, one of which is the Victorian Train. A supplement of 50p each way is levied and some passengers are willing to wait over an hour to travel on the Victorian Train at a higher price in preference to an earlier train of Mark One stock.

Filming work undertaken this year included a return of the B.B.C. drama team "Moon & Son" in July, starring Millicent Martin. The series is due for transmission in February 1992.

On 20th July 1991, a riverboat service between Newenden and Bodiam was inaugurated by a private operator, using M.V. Elsie May. Timed to coincide with train arrivals at Northiam, from which Newenden Wharf is only a short walk, boats depart at 12.00 noon, returning at 3.45 pm, allowing for 2½ hours ashore to view Bodiam Castle. This is believed to be the first time since the 1930s that a pleasure boat has plied on this section of the River Rother, although there is a perpetual right of unfettered navigation.

The return fare is £5 per adult, with reductions for families. The service was maintained throughout the summer and is planned to resume again next spring.

We have had a number of interesting visitors to the Railway this year:-

Soviet Ministry of Railways

On Tuesday, 13th August, a special trip was arranged with "Sutton" and the L&NWR engineer's saloon for a high ranking delegation from the Soviet Ministry of Railways, who visited the line as part of a fact finding trip to Britain. The party, accompanied by Chairman David Stratton and Northiam Stationmaster John Bourne, included the head of the Soviet Locomotive Directorate, Mr A. M. Kryvnoi, and Mr V. P. Tereschenko, the Director of the Soviet Railway Research Institute. The purpose of the trip was to find out more about the concept of the Tourist steam train, for possible development in the U.S.S.R. The party expressed their enjoyment of the trip to our staff, although the concept of a volunteer-run enterprise was not one with which they were familiar.

Colonel Stephens Society

The Colonel Stephens Society - Yes, there is



Mark 1 coach No 73 at present receiving new lino and a repaint to the guard's compartment. This vehicle will re-appear in maroon livery. 9th October 1991.

(John Miller)

such an organisation and it is totally independent of the K&ESR - made its first official visit to the railway on 14th July. About 60 members attended and they had the privilege of being the first users of the three-coach vintage train; the Great Eastern six-wheeler having its seating fitted only the previous evening.

Following a return trip to Northiam, the party had conducted tours of the Carriage & Wagon shed at Tenterden, and were then conveyed by hired road-coach to Rolvenden for tours of the locomotive workshops and depot. Then on to Bodiam where the party received a first-hand account of the restoration project - and finally to Robertsbridge where, fingers crossed, K&ESR trains may once again make connection with main-line trains.

All members of the Society who attended seem to have enjoyed the visit and appreciative letters were received later by those K&ESR members principally involved in its organisation.

French Visit

On 24th July, the Mayor of Bailleul in north-east France, M. Jean Delobel, visited Tenterden accompanied by a group of 50 pensioners from his home town. Bailleul is twinned with Hawick in the Scottish Borders, but M. Delobel, who is deputy head of his local school, would like to establish links with Tenterden's Homewood School, which is within easy travelling distance.

During their day-trip, the party visited Tenterden Town station and were greeted on the platform by Councillor John Link, Mayor of Tenterden, who presented M. Delobel with a sample of locally produced wine.

The party took a return trip to Northiam with John Sorrell, who works as a volunteer sales assistant in the Colonel Stephens Railway Shop, and his wife Angela, acting as interpreters.

Catering

With daily running now behind us we have the chance to look back over the summer season and forward to Christmas and the New Year.

For the "Good Old Days" event in September an attractive marquee was erected in front of the Buffet extending the seating and service area for the weekend. The increased capacity enabled us to cope comfortably with the extra visitors and increase turnover by three times the normal for this time of year.



The Vintage train in the platform at Northiam station, 24th August 1991. (John Miller)

The Rother Valley Limited train has continued to prove its worth. The use of this set for evening charters worked very well; it has also been used for the purpose of serving coffee on the "Darling Buds of May" tours and the popularity of Sunday lunch is still growing, so much so that on 29th September, 96 people were served in less than 2 hours.

The Wealden Pullman continues to receive a steady flow of compliments from diners. Plans for the Christmas and New Year's Eve trains are finalised and bookings are coming in fast; for reservations please telephone 05806 5155.

As the main Pullman season draws to a close Ken, Peter Broyd and Margaret Howard would like to express sincere thanks to Stuart Phillips as roster clerk (on-train volunteer table service resources executive).

Those wishing to make Stuart's job easier in 1992 might be interested to know that we have been offered the services of a specialised consultancy company to train new volunteers and provide refresher courses for our existing staff.

Shop

Our Tenterden Shop is still maintaining budget figures and this seems to be due to the fact that although fewer people are actually travelling they are spending more in the shop. Figures are still comparable to last

year; turnover in the month of August was £5.26 lower than in the corresponding month of 1990.

June and July again saw the annual invasion of school children, being made to listen to their conducted tour, while heads strained to peer into the shop to catch a glimpse of some small memento ahead of the next person. Once the train ride was over the shop staff braced themselves for the onslaught. Fitting a party of 100 school children into the shop all at once is no mean feat. Most of these children have a maximum of £1 to spend and it takes some of them considerable time and consultations with their teachers or helpers to choose how to spend it. An enormous amount of patience is needed by staff at this time but we all enjoy seeing those children go out of the shop, bag in hand, smile on face, usually having spent every penny of the amount they originally brought in.

All previous shop till records were broken by a large sum on Sunday 22nd September, the second day of the "Good Old Days" event. As the weather was kind to us (after the downpour during the Saturday night) we "borrowed" one of the porters barrows and had an outside stall in front of the lamp room. This integrated the shop into the event as well as boosting sales. Bill Pertwee made a guest appearance to sign copies of his book "The Station Now Standing". All copies were sold by the middle of the afternoon.



M.V. "Elsie May" on her inaugural trip to Bodiam, leaves Newenden quay at noon on 20th July 1991.
(Philip Shaw)

The current success is of course not only due to the customer, but also to the dedication of volunteers who man the tills, to whom we offer a very big thankyou.

Donald Wilson, our book and video buyer, reports that the number of new railway books and videos continues to increase at an alarming rate, making the job of selection for stock holding even more difficult.

The most successful title was the OPC reprint of "Southern Signals" of which we sold 18 copies. On re-ordering we have been told it is "temporarily out of print" so even the publishers must have been surprised by the demand! A feature of our bookshop is the "bargain corner" where publishers' remainders are sold at half price (or less) and this forms a significant part of our book turnover.

The video producers are constantly adding to their titles, but due to the varying quality and duplication of subject matter, we are stocking only a selection from the main professionals - Railscene, Video 125 and Transport Video Publishing. Whilst specialist tapes continue to have their following, we have sold an increasing number of budget tapes (£9.99) to the general public. We also stock a wide range of feature films with

railway themes e.g. "Titfield Thunderbolt", "The Train" and "The General" as well as a wide selection of the BBC tapes. For younger children, all the "Thomas" tapes continue to be popular.

We can always order specially any book currently in print but it is sad to note that the service level offered by previously reliable publishers e.g. Ian Allan has deteriorated this season. Why is the UK book trade so inefficient?

If you have not yet made your choice for Christmas, come along any weekend and see for yourself. If you live too far away, we shall be delighted to send any item by mail order, but postage cost must be added. As Colonel Stephens said "Support the Local Line" ...

Membership

At time of writing, 331 new members have joined during 1991, not surprisingly well down on the exceptional year of 1990. Sadly, 290 members were deleted as their subscriptions were not paid/fully paid. However, the net overall total has now broken the 3,000 barrier.

Following a public meeting of the Rother Valley Railway (East Sussex) Ltd in Robertsbridge recently, nearly 50 persons

expressed an interest in joining the Tenterden Railway Company as members, many as working volunteers. Application forms have been despatched and the membership secretary awaits results! Meanwhile, 32 new members were enrolled at the "Good Old Days" event at Tenterden in September.

Finance

The Tenterden Railway Company achieved a surplus of income over expenditure amounting to £57,178 in 1990. This compares with a deficit of £26,164 in 1989. The main feature was a substantial increase in income from fares and charter trains, which rose from £135,320 to £232,596, aided by the reopening to Northiam in June 1990. Operating expenses rose more modestly - from £402,892 to £449,735, but interest payable was up from £19,031 to £40,164, reflecting mainly higher bank interest on overdrafts and loans.

The balance sheet at 31st December 1990 showed total net borrowings of £386,100, against reserves of £352,697. Of the borrowings, £168,315 is represented by the two bearer bond issues, which carry an interest rate of 7%/8%. The remainder is mainly bank borrowings.

Rolvenden

In the first week of August the dilapidated and potentially hazardous plant workshop

was finally demolished. Following demolition the area was filled and levelled with the aid of Kevin Hickmott's digger. Two 20 ft containers were obtained and lifted into position by a road crane on 8th August. A small 10 ft container was also acquired and positioned for storage of building materials. Thanks are due to Brian Heyes and the Post Office for providing transport.

The former men's room building is being converted into a new stores, although work on this project is somewhat slow due to other commitments. When midweek running finishes, the water tank will be drained and a pump fitted to the line in order to speed up the filling of locos.

In late August the brick structure alongside the water column was demolished and a completely new building is being constructed by Dave Green to house cleaning materials, lamps and loco tool lockers. Thanks are due to Merlin Dexter and Redland Bricks for supplying materials.

At an auction at Vic Berry's scrapyard in Leicester in August a large consignment of cage pallet bins was purchased. These allow materials and equipment to be stored neatly and allow easy access by forklift truck. A large amount of pallet racking was also purchased for the new stores.

As midweek running is nearly over thoughts



The visit of the representatives of the Soviet Ministry of Railways on 13th August 1991. KESR Chairman David Stratton (third from right) and Station Master John Bourne (extreme left).

(Jim Berryman)

can be turned to next year's work programme. Funding permitting, 1992 will see the interior of the shed rewired and the public viewing gallery constructed.

Bodiam Project

It is now two years since monthly working parties started at Bodiam and while there is still much to do on the station building, the site generally is now 'under control'.

The corrugated-iron roof of the building has been repaired and the whole has received two coats of bituminous paint; the new canopy supports have been undercoated; the dwarf-wall on the forecourt side of the building has been repaired and painted, and all the old domestic equipment from inside the building has been collected by Rother District Council.

More of the original tarmacadam forecourt surface has been exposed and when enough old sleepers have been accumulated, a start will be made on restoring the cattle-dock.

Now that the hot weather is behind us, some of the more arduous tasks will once more be tackled, in particular the digging of holes to complete the fencing around the yard

entrance.

During August, the Hastings Community Service scheme commenced regular working parties, initially on clearing undergrowth from the track and lineside from Bodiam crossing gates towards Northiam.

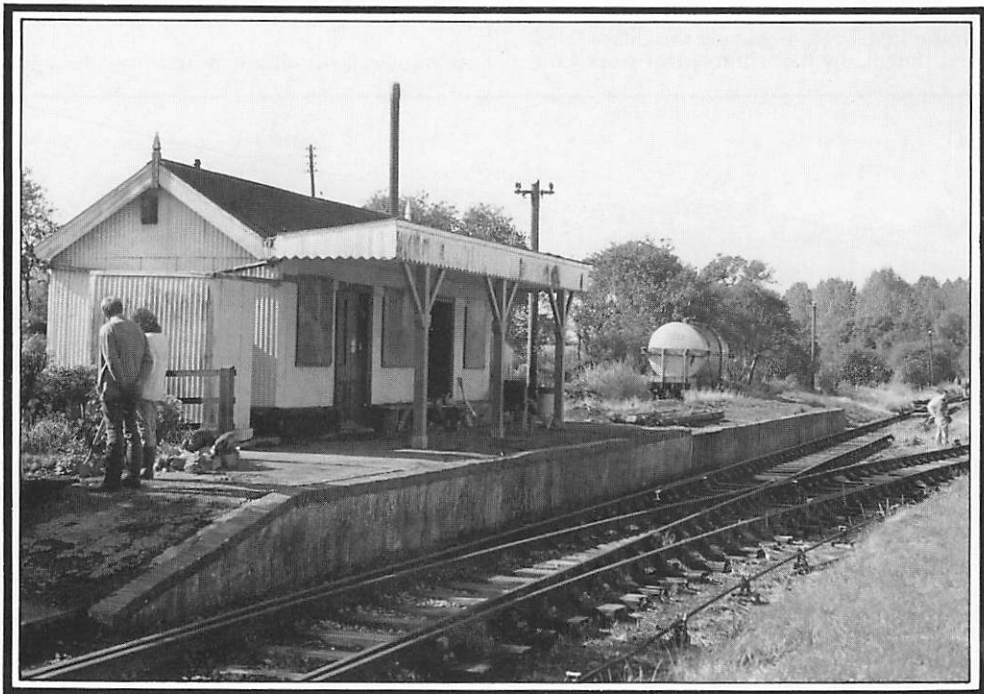
Details of working party dates appear in the 'Rooter' newsletter.

Robertsbridge Project

Although the Rother Valley slumbers peacefully as winter approaches and little activity appears to be taking place on the ground, progress hums incessantly behind the scenes.

Land negotiations are proceeding positively and we hope to announce soon the purchase of a further section of trackbed. Wherever possible, options to buy will be our preferred course of action as this method removes our need to find the purchase capital immediately.

Provisional level crossing designs have been drawn up and these will be discussed and examined in detail between the Rother Valley board and outside public bodies. We are



Bodiam, September 1991. The canopy supports newly restored, the station awaits repairs to the doors and then repainting.

(John Miller)



The end of the line. Northiam awaits connecting up with the Bodiam section, a task that is likely to be completed in 1992.

(Brian Stephenson)

pleased to report that our consultant has agreed to include design work for Bodiam level crossing at no extra charge, in his plans for all the crossings and the Light Railway Order.

Gardner Crawley, our civil engineer has been working hard on new bridge designs, particularly on the first section of trackbed between Robertsbridge and Northbridge Street. Once completed, detailed costings will be drawn up on these six structures.

An accurate land survey is about to be undertaken which will plot the whole of the proposed route, including deviations and this will additionally delineate accurate gradient profiles.

We plan to commission a new station west of the existing one at Bodiam. This will be of low-key construction to blend into the countryside and serve both Bodiam Castle and the newly opened traction engine museum at Quarry Farm to the south. The installation of a 5 coach passing loop will mean that the existing Bodiam station can remain as an unspoilt historic site from the pre-war Stephens era.

A successful public meeting held in the Robertsbridge Community Centre in mid-September brought forward much support. Apart from signing up new members of the Kent & East Sussex Railway, a sizeable group

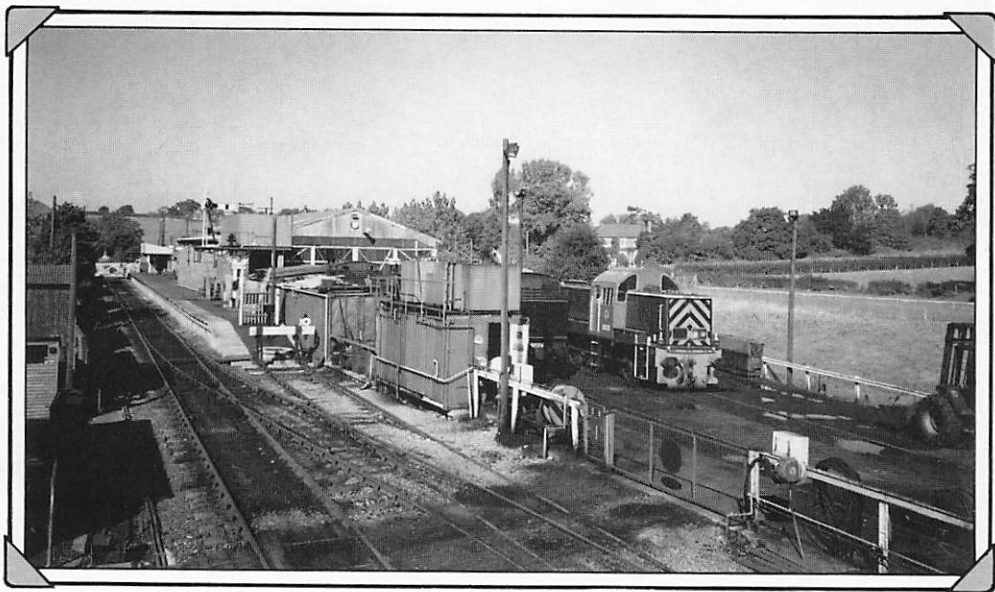
of local residents has offered to work on the Robertsbridge site. Working parties began to take place every Sunday from 29th September onwards. Initially the work has primarily been land clearance, gardening and the finishing off of the information centre. We are grateful to Brian Fox of British Rail for his help in facilitating access on to our newly acquired trackbed to enable us to clear trees, and look forward to the first of the track laying.

We are pleased to report the appointment of Robin Dyce as a director of Rother Valley Railway (East Sussex) Ltd. His principal role will be of liaison between this company and The Tenterden Railway Company Ltd. Specifically, Robin has the unenviable task of ensuring that the two sections meet up at the same place and at the same time.

Museum and Archive

Some of the archive and museum relics with a personal association with H. F. Stephens were taken to North Wales recently, where they were shown to those attending a three-day residential course on "Colonel Stephens and his Railways". As usual, there was surprise that so much from the past has survived.

A start has been made on making new captions for exhibits and the photographic display and this work will continue through the winter.



Rolvenden from the signal box steps. A warm autumnal day on 5th October 1991.

(Philip Shaw)

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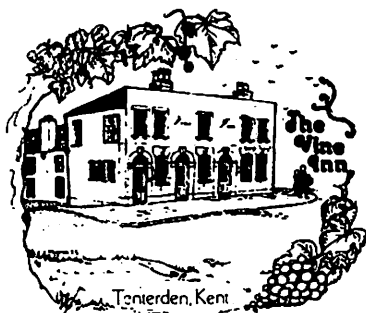
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Restoring the Great Eastern Coach

David Dine outlines the work that has been necessary to bring into service the latest addition to the vintage train, and featured in the frontispiece of this issue.

The idea of running a vintage train of four wheeled coaches and thereby creating a "first" in the railway preservation movement stemmed from the success of the District Railway carriage. This vehicle was acquired many years ago, and when placed into service in our normal set of carriages was always popular with passengers, notwithstanding the cost of the supplementary ticket. The L&NWR was the next vehicle to receive attention and most recently a third vehicle, the Great Eastern coach, which had languished in a partially completed condition, following initial sterling work carried out by Bob Gilbert and his team of volunteers. The vintage train is now up and running, proving to be both a delight to photographers and a huge success with our passengers. This article details some of the problems associated with restoring "Composite 197 M".

The beginning of the end of the reconstruction of Great Eastern Rly carriage No 197m began in January 1990 when the B.B.C. required a compartment of a carriage to represent an Irish Railways coach for the filming of "Parnell". The fee for the filming paid for two people to work on one compartment, turning it out in varnished natural wood. After the filming, the temptation to complete the job was too great and the drab brown carriage entered the shed emerging 18 months later with its new paint work shining in the summer sun.

One of the first jobs was to replace two broken axleboxes, the coach being lifted one end to remove the centre wheels. The carriage had to be lifted quite high to remove the centre wheels so we cheated and removed the guard irons as well.

Much ground work had already been carried out before the vehicle arrived and various fittings and mouldings had been made by Bob Gilbert before he retired to Shropshire. A search was started for the rest. Several months earlier, a group from another railway had visited the line and saw No 197. They have a similar coach body in Lincolnshire and a phone call had two large G.E.R. grab handles returned by post, free of charge and later on a pattern for the hat rack brackets was borrowed.

Providing door locks posed a problem. The

originals (of which only one remains) were not sprung and have to be turned fully by hand on the outside to lock them. Brass door handles had already been cast by Bob Gilbert to the original pattern and a search of the stores turned up a bunch of Southern pattern guards door locks. These give a partial lock when slammed and the handle then has to be turned to complete the lock. But the Southern made left and right hand locks. We required 9 lefthand locks, we had 7. By pure chance a S.R. van body had been broken up by B.R. several years before at one of their depots. The doors had survived in the weeds, complete with locks, lefthand locks.

Steam heating was fitted early on in the programme, bringing the carriage in line with others in the class. One heater is provided per compartment including the guard's. Sections of the brake work had to be removed to allow access for the fitting of the pipework, but even so one could have done with some caving experience to negotiate the many obstacles.

Because of damp penetration into the body side, the decision was taken to remove the whole of one side, and replace the panels and mouldings with marine ply and to patch repair the panels on the other side. The body was stripped down to the teak framework which is still in very good condition. New panels were cut and fixed with new mouldings covering up the joints. The air vents were refitted to the body and doors, the latter working, the bodyside ones are dummies. Extra grab handles were made by the local blacksmith, to match the two originals, and bolted to the sides using the existing holes.

The body originally had a centre luggage compartment which was now to become a guard's compartment fitted with a handbrake. The underframe, being from a braked vehicle, was still fitted with the trunnion for the brake column, but was it in the correct place? A hole was made in the floor and the column linkage dropped straight onto the fitting, alleviating any need for additional rodding underneath, there's enough of that already! A guard's chair was made to fit in one corner and other fittings include tool cupboard and ladder. G.E.R. lettered brass gauges are provided for steam

heating and vacuum brake.

The seats were always going to be a problem, originally those for the 1st class compartments had large curved wings and individual cushions all covered in moquette. The nearest available seating units which would fit were from B.R. Mark I compartment stock, but these are 10" short one end. The units were stripped down to the bare framework, a tedious job, requiring the removal of many hundreds of small staples. The metal frames were cut into three sections, and 5" inserts were welded in, to make the correct length. The seat bases were treated the same, the springs being padded out to the joints. The wings were cut from 20mm ply to a pattern made from the original drawings. All of the upholstery was carried out by contractors except the 1st class door panels which are covered with moquette padded and buttoned.

Various other carriage fittings from several different companies have been used, all dating from the correct period. Most noticeable are the brass and enamel light fittings. The carriage was originally oil lit and then gas. Unfortunately we were unable to fit glass globes due to the low ceiling height.

With the bodywork complete the internal decorations and fancy ceiling mouldings were applied. This included two mouldings around each of the three ceiling panels in the 1st class compartments and 24 pairs of "hit and miss" vents cut out of teak veneered ply.

Externally the carriage is painted in the Great Eastern Rly 1919 livery of "Carriage Crimson", lined out in gold colour around the mouldings, class numbers on the doors and Guard on the centre door instead of Luggage. Transfers of the G.E.R. crest are no longer available and although experiments with colour copying was tried they were not successful, so the only way was to paint the four crests. Time did not allow the painting to be done straight onto the body side, so they were painted onto cartridge paper and sealed on both sides with gold size. Fixed with gold size and coated with three coats of varnish, hopefully they should last a year or

so. Although nowhere near the standard of a true transfer, from a distance they give a reasonable representation of the G.E.R. crest albeit missing the top scroll work.

From drawings of the original coach there were six pictures in each compartment. These were long and narrow in design with the hat rack running above. To give more headroom above the seats and to cover up marks in the partitions, the fascia panels had to be made deeper and we decided to make the pictures larger to accommodate standard size material. In each compartment there is a mirror, each etched with G.E.R., plain in the 3rd class, ornate in the 1st.

The pictures are enlargements of photos of Great Eastern territory and include Great Yarmouth, Cromer, King's Cambridge, Dedham, Havering and London. Reproduction G.E.R. maps and advertisements have also been used along with our own recruitment poster.

The roof is furnished with dummy lamp tops for each compartment, the design based on the original drawings, and three of the compartments are fitted with two air vents each. Being unable to find six "laycock" air vents we have fitted old style "shell" pattern vents. Steps and handrails are provided each end along with a selection of lamp brackets. Originally there were six lamp brackets on each end. Two full length step boards have been provided each side which are not only functional but also help hide the more modern equipment like battery boxes and dynamo.

The following contributed to the restoration project:- Bob Gilbert, Steve Beastall, Maurice Dallen, Peter and Maggie Palk, Paul Ramsden, Peter Carey, Gordon Young, Bob Clifford, Martin Cammel, Clive Grewcock, Mark Backhouse, David Strivens, Frank Kent, Philip Whiteman, Ray Church, Chris Cheney, and apologies to anyone I've missed who has worked on this carriage over the years.

And a thankyou to Alf Ludlam who supplied the handles and John Watling who supplied the drawings and much of the technical data.

**Great Eastern
Railway**

197M



Built May 1887 at Stratford Works for main line running. Withdrawn September 1928. Sold as a house at Wisbech. Re-entered service 28th July 1991.

1st Class - 12 seats

3rd Class - 20 seats (originally 2nd Class)

Diagram Number - 14600-219

32'-0" over body. Original tare weight 12c-16cwt-0qtrs.

The suffix "M" stood for Mixed class carriage, now known as composite.

This was altered in 1923 to 197E to denote it was a ex-G.E.R. vehicle.

the White Hart

NEWENDEN, KENT



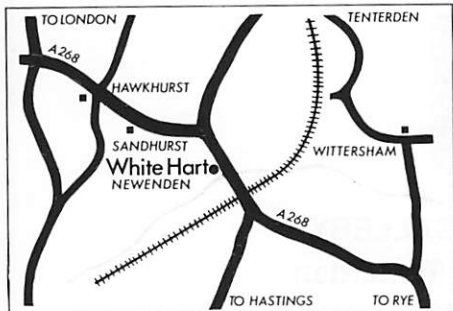
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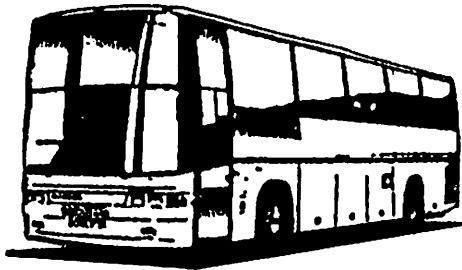
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Over the weekend of 21st/22nd September, the Railway sponsored a colourful event at Tenterden, with the emphasis on creating a period setting with only the best in vintage cars, vehicles, traction engines and side

shows. Two brass bands and a string quartet were engaged to ensure an appropriate atmosphere throughout the weekend, and there were attractions to appeal to all ages – Punch 'n' Judy, old fashioned "Hornby Dublo" model railways, model boats, a coconut shy and a travelling shop display.

Vehicles included Pop Larkin's famous Rolls Royce from ITV's acclaimed "The Darling Buds of May". Actor Bill Pertwee attended, and signed copies of his recent book, "The Train Now Standing", which is an anthology of the author's "discoveries" amongst attractive stations, and indeed our own Tenterden Town features. The vintage train was in service throughout the two days.

Some 4,000 people came over the weekend, which was generally fine and sunny and although the gate takings did not quite match the costs – estimated at £5,500 – this was more than made good by higher than average takings from catering, in the shop and from the trains themselves. More importantly, everybody enjoyed themselves and the event was a great morale booster. Tenterden Station and the buffet were repainted, everything was made neater and tidier than for a long time.

If, as is likely, the event is repeated next year, we may be able to improve profitability by reducing the establishment costs without detracting from its quality. In addition, maybe the entrance fee was too low – at £2 for adults it represented a real bargain.



The scene is set . . .

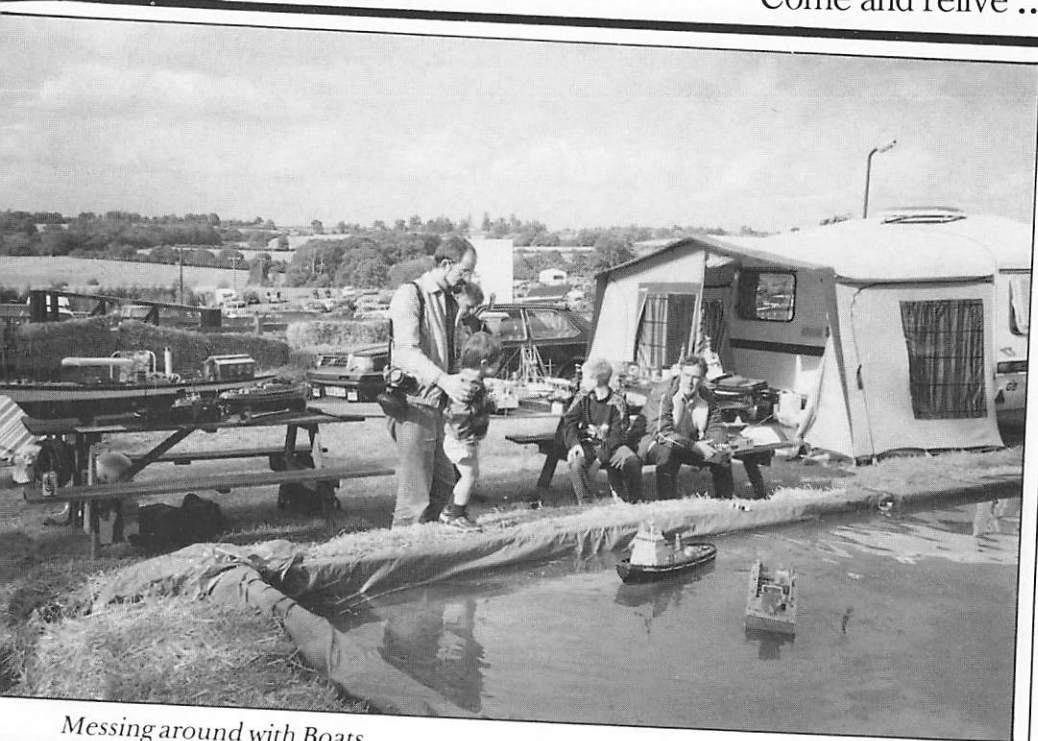
(Philip Shaw)



(Philip Shaw)

"Pop" Larkin's "Roller".

Come and relive ...TH



Messing around with Boats.

(Philip Shaw)



Bill Pertwee (right) takes a ride with Mark Toynbee.

(John Liddell)

GOOD OLD DAYS



The String Quartet plays in the Marquee.

(Philip Shaw)



Come and relive ... **THE GOOD OLD DAYS**



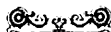
There are plenty of vehicles, and plenty to see.

(Philip Shaw)

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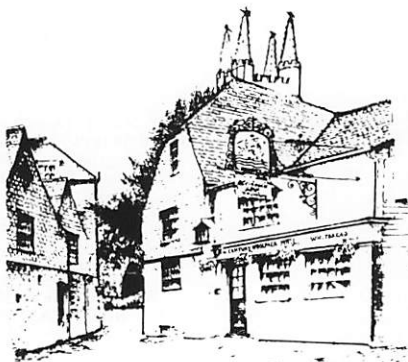


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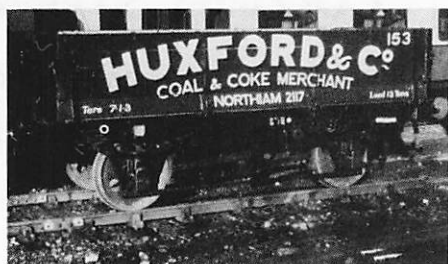
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The Railways of Martin Mill

Part 1 – The Pearson Railway

Dover, although an important town, was not a natural harbour and up to the beginning of the 19th century had but primitive port facilities. In common with other English Channel Ports, it suffered from the Eastward Drift which led to blockages by shingle. By the time the South Eastern Railway arrived from London via Redhill, Tunbridge(sic) and Ashford in 1844, improvements were already afoot. In 1847, the first real effort to effect a permanent solution was commenced. Commissioned by the Admiralty, a massive 2,100 foot breakwater to the west was intended ultimately to enclose the whole of Dover Bay although this aim was, for various reasons, never achieved as originally conceived. The Admiralty Pier (as it became known) was an immediate success providing shelter from weather and shingle and was subsequently extended. The South Eastern and the London Chatham and Dover Railway Companies provided rail facilities and a station on the pier. The station was cramped, at the mercy of wind and waves in inclement weather, in fact aptly described as "miserable". Ironically, this was eventually replaced in 1918 by Dover Marine Station "as big as Charing Cross and the finest marine terminus in the world".

In order to accommodate the original station, the pier design was amended and by reducing the thickness of the western (windward) parapet, a narrow platform was installed. Miserable, indeed, even by S.E.R./L.C.D.R. standards! It appears that the weakening of the parapet by the aforementioned installation led to the collapse of the outer section of the parapet during a violent storm in the 1880s. However, such was the success of the Admiralty Pier that thoughts were turned to the updating of the commercial harbour. The next development was the construction of the Prince of Wales Pier. This was inside and parallel to the Admiralty Pier, 1,000 feet long of iron "viaduct" construction (apparently to avoid a build-up of storm waves trapped between the two piers), plus a masonry extension of a further 1,500 feet. The area between the two piers soon became a commercial harbour and cross channel terminal. Further harbour improvements included a proposal for a 3,320 foot Eastern Arm. This was to be built of mammoth concrete blocks of 25 to 42 tons each, faced with granite, constructed on site at the Eastern Blockyard (there was also a smaller Western Blockyard for other harbour

contracts). Smaller, 3 ton, blocks were to be manufactured in another blockyard at Sandwich and brought in, together with cement, sand and gravel, by sea. The contract for construction of the Eastern Arm was awarded to S. Pearson and Son Ltd and to keep pace with demand, Pearson proposed a railway 3 miles 61 chains long to commence at Martin Mill on the Dover-Deal joint line to bring sand and gravel to the Eastern Blockyard, although cement and the granite facings would continue to arrive by sea for the duration of the contract.

The shingle was produced from Stonar ballast pits at Sandwich, the water-filled sites of which are visible today on the seaward side of the Sandwich-Ramsgate Road although no longer worked. A rail connection from the Sandwich-Minster line was provided opposite Richborough Castle. Material was also brought in by rail from pits at Rye Harbour and Dungeness although probably not for the Eastern Arm contract.

Several routes for the Pearson line were surveyed. Eventually a decision was reached and an agreement with the principal landowner, The Earl of Guilford, was signed. Various terms and conditions were attached to the lease which was to be for 10-14 years at an annual rent of £25.00. The War Office had a prior interest in some of the land and their rights were to be preserved. The line would be single track standard gauge with a maximum gradient of 1 in 30 and a minimum of 5 chains radius on the curves. The rail was to be flat bottomed with a weight of 56lbs per yard. Ballasting appeared to have been formed of "beach". Inexplicably (in hindsight) Pearson was obliged to apply for approval to operate passenger traffic, such approval to be forthcoming within 3 years of the date of the lease, and yet passengers were not to be carried unless such receipts averaged at least 2/- per passenger train mile! Unsurprisingly, passenger traffic did not materialise despite a seemingly pointless proposal to construct a station at Langdon Hole, a huge natural amphitheatre open on one side to the sea (quite uninhabited then, as it is today) to the East of Dover. Almost certainly workmen's trains were operated at some time but no firm evidence of this has come to light. Construction of the Pearson railway proceeded rapidly, being opened throughout during May 1899.



Balanced transporter, Dover Harbour, February 1901.

(Dover Museum)

The tiny village of Martin was provided with a station, some $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the east on the Dover-Deal railway. This line was opened in 1881 and was operated jointly (though not always amicably) by the South Eastern and the London Chatham and Dover companies. The station was named Martin Mill for St. Margaret's Bay after an adjacent windmill, and lay 5 miles north of Dover. The Pearson railway commenced immediately south of the station, access to it being gained via a direct connection from the main line. From exchange sidings and a small locomotive shed the line ran for the first $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles more or less parallel to the main line but at an increasingly higher level, crossing over two road bridges en route. Here a point between Guston Village and Guston Windmill was reached where a footbridge and sidings were provided. A branch was built in 1906 to carry building materials to the Duke of York's Royal Military School, then under construction on a green field site. The branch appears to have been of a temporary nature and was probably lifted as soon as the school was completed. From Guston, the line swung towards the south east, the formation changing from embankment to cutting and rising steeply, probably at the maximum gradient of 1 in 30. The Dover-Deal road, the present-day A258, was underpassed by means of a brick-arched bridge and after passing beneath a second footbridge near Bere Farms, the line curved towards the east through shallow cutting and on low embankment. Just before Langdon Hole in the vicinity of the Dover Castle - St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe Road (crossed on the level) the railway swung sharply westward, continuing along the cliff top to fall rapidly to the East Cliff Terminus

just short of the present Jubilee Way. Here sidings and an unloading shed were provided but there was a problem to be overcome as the terminus was some 150 feet above the shoreline. This was solved, initially, by dropping the shingle through a chute. However, in 1900, a 2-track self-balancing transporter superseded the chute. Shingle was stored in a 1,000 cubic yard hopper on the cliff and gravity fed into narrow gauge skips which descended, via the transporter, to the blockyard.

The Eastern Harbour Arm contract was completed in 1911 and for a short period the Pearson line continued in use carrying chalk fill from the cliff face for the Admiralty Pier widening (see next paragraph). A zig-zag connection was installed from the excavation to meet the Pearson line at a headshunt below the transporter from whence the chalk was taken to the site via Martin Mill and Dover, a 10 mile journey to bridge 1 mile. Obviously less inconvenience to Doverians was caused in this way. In the years to follow, proposals were made to adapt the line to carry export coal from the Kent pits to the harbour (indeed the Tilmanstone Colliery Aerial Ropeway was built for the latter purpose during the 1930s) but this was not to be.

Incidental to and (contrary to popular local opinion) quite separate from the Pearson Martin Mill line was a proposal put forward in 1901 for a 5 mile, 3' 6" gauge electric tramway to be operated by the Dover, St. Margaret's and Martin Mill Light Railways Company - a grandiose title for a scheme which eventually came to nothing. A Light Railway order application was made and



Site of balanced transporter (foreground) and later zig-zag connection to excavation from cliff face for proposed electric tramway (centre). Chalk face (right of centre) is route of Pearson line from Martin Mill, thence to left across hill. June 1991. (Norman Johnson)



Martin Mill looking north in the late 1950s. Station is top right of centre; Pearson line trackbed curves away bottom right between the hedges. (A. R. Nichols Collection)

construction was commenced, somewhat indirectly, under the LRO by excavating diagonally up the cliff face above the Eastern Dock, the spoil being used as fill for the Admiralty Pier widening in 1912/13. This very wide excavation is clearly seen and walkable today.

After the completion of the Admiralty Pier widening contract, Pearson appears to have quietly withdrawn from the scene and no further work on the Light Railway scheme was undertaken although applications for extensions to the LRO were made on a number of occasions. The light railway company was finally wound up as recently as 1952.

One can only speculate as to the rolling stock used on the Pearson line as no photographs of the line in action appear to exist. The motive power was most likely an 0-6-0 saddle tank built by a well-known builder of the era such as Hunslet, Peckett or Manning Wardle. Pearson was known to have operated a sizeable locomotive fleet and the loads and gradients would have been within the capabilities of that type of engine. Passenger stock, if any, would have been confined to a 4- or 6-wheeler for a workmen's train. There were no freight transfer facilities for the Pearson line at Martin Mill, therefore wagons were drawn from Pearson's private main-line wagon pool and run through to the cliff top terminus (a 1907 O.S. map shows connections to and from both running lines at Martin Mill).

Signalling would have been conspicuous by its absence, one engine in steam working being normal.

The route of the railway can be traced for most of its length although much overgrown in parts. Agricultural needs have resulted in some boundary hedges being removed but, mostly, the other remains. Bridge abutments can be seen in East Langdon and Guston and the bridge beneath the A258 is identifiable although the cutting is filled in. There is a fragment of embankment high up in a field at Langdon Hole. The end of the route along the cliff top can be walked; many sleepers remain, together with visible evidence of the zig-zag and associated terminal sidings. The completion of the Eastern Arm of the Harbour in 1911 marked the end of that particular Pearson contract. For the most part, the Pearson Railway remained, disused and derelict, until 1937 when most of the track was lifted by the army which had moved into the area and taken over.

Thus, an historical and interesting industrial railway was laid to rest . . . or was it?

(to be concluded)

Norman Johnson

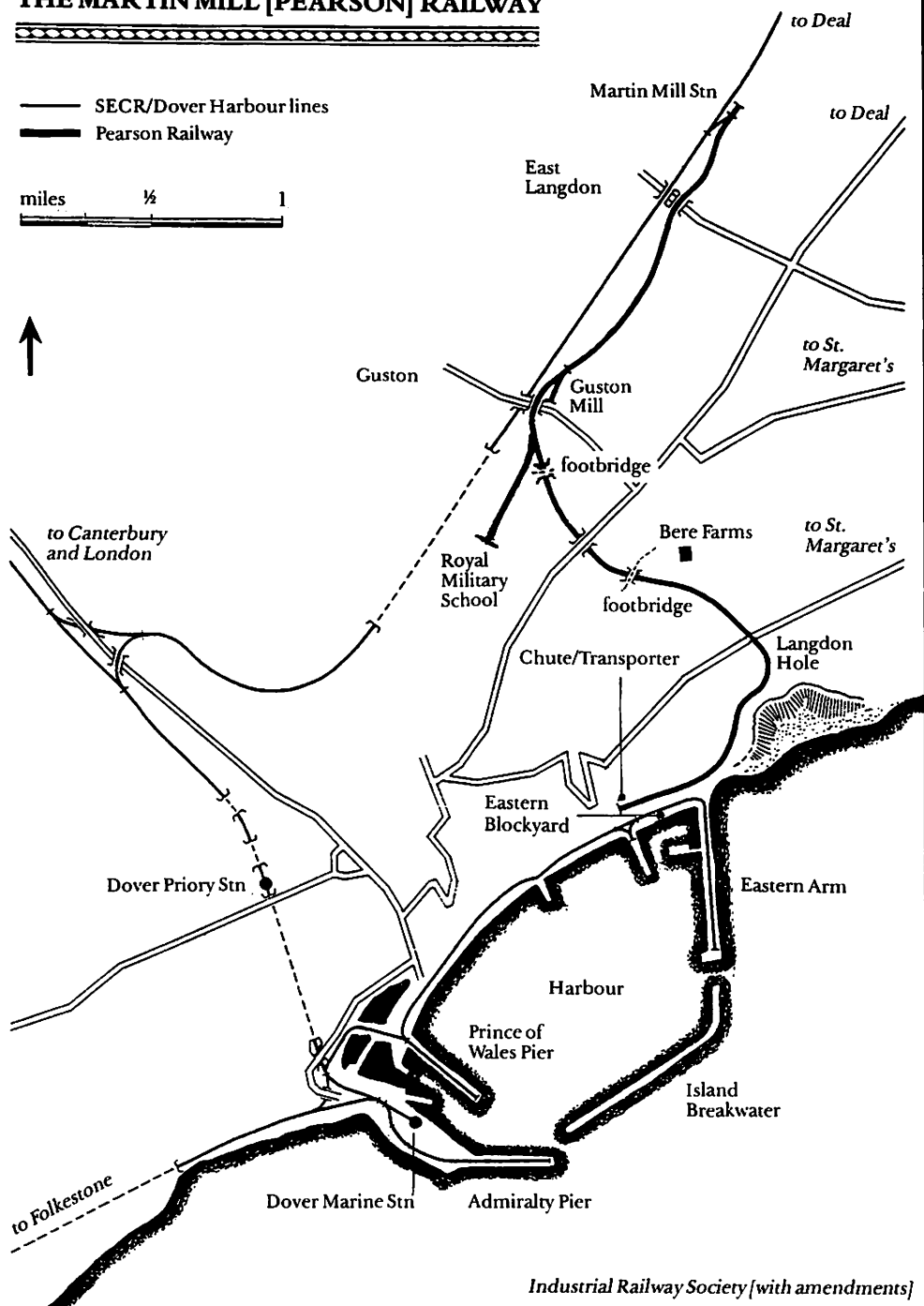
Footnote

Despite extensive researches by historians, no photographs of the Martin Mill Pearson railway in action appear to have been found. If a reader knows of the whereabouts of such a photograph, the author would be very grateful for details.

THE MARTIN MILL [PEARSON] RAILWAY

— SECR/Dover Harbour lines
— Pearson Railway

miles ½ 1



Industrial Railway Society [with amendments]



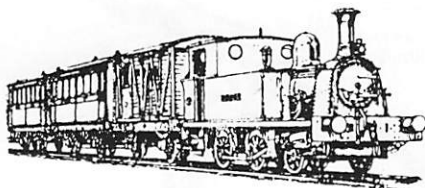
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An Unpredictable Day

by Neil Rose

Readers with long memories, or with access to back numbers of this journal, will recall a rambling article of mine entitled "Pipe Dreams or Prophecy?" which appeared in the Winter 1981 issue of *The Tenterden Terrier*. In it I looked forward to a typical operating day on the Railway ten years ahead.

In what seems no time at all a decade has passed and the day in question come and gone. On re-reading my article I am struck by my optimism. Did I really believe the Railway would be opened through to Bodiam by 1987? If only progress was that fast. Sadly three-day weekends proved to be just a figment of my imagination.

What happened to my fishermen's halt beside the Oxney Straight and as for Dixter Halt, I'm not even sure that it still exists in the jungle between Northiam and Bodiam. At Northiam we still await completion of the second platform and the building of a signal box. Also at Northiam we appear to have got away with traditional level crossing gates rather than the lifting barriers as I suggested: Cranbrook Road has yet to be converted into an open crossing. I seem to have overlooked the signalling and realignment work at Rolvenden completely.

Nor did I forecast the fortunes of the locomotive fleet with much precision. I still believe that an ex-LMS 2MT Ivatt Mogul would be an extremely suitable locomotive for the Railway; if its arrival did not occur in 1985 as I suggested, how about making that particular prophecy come true in the early 1990s? Little else was accurate either! No.3 (Bodiam) still awaits its boiler work and neither the Norwegian Mogul nor No.27 (Rolvenden) have been steamed in the past

ten years. I did not anticipate that No.25 (Northiam) would be languishing in Orpin's siding, itself not thought of in 1981, awaiting heavy overhaul. At least I was right in noting that No.23 was serviceable.

I was also correct to record that a train would be made up of Mk 1 coaches but my prediction that passengers would clamour to ride in a non-corridor ex-SECR Birdcage coach was rather wide of the mark; we still await one returned to service after restoration. No mention was made of the ex-GWR Railcar which is probably a good thing, but I did suggest that a railbus in the form of LEV 1 would be scurrying back and forth, apparently carrying shoppers to Tenterden since buses had long since disappeared from the vicinity.

I will take modest credit for remarking on the well-ballasted, concrete sleepered track near Northiam and for comments on the well maintained state of Bodiam station - admittedly I thought it would be part of the operational railway. I was only three years adrift over the opening date of the ex-Maidstone bus station as the buffet building at Tenterden. As for plans to extend the Railway all the way to Robertsbridge, not a mention!

So what happened on Friday, 5 July 1991?

At least trains were running! No.23 (Holman F Stephens) and a four-coach train set (Mk 1s of course) made four round trips to Northiam, leaving Tenterden at 1100, 1225, 1435 and 1600. The trains were not over busy and the operating day was uneventful. For the record a return ticket cost an adult £4.90. Passenger numbers were barely 10% of the 2,000 or so I predicted but at least a Pullman train ran during the evening. As for weather? - it was damp and dull, not a cloudless sky promising to be hot later; weather forecasting ten years ahead is always going to be problematical!



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Bodiam Robertsbridge East Sussex

A Short History of the Mess Coach

Nick Pallant takes a tongue in cheek look at volunteer life on the Kent & East Sussex Railway in the 1960s.

Throughout 1962 and 1963 the tempo of activity on the Kent & East Sussex Railway increased to the point where the then Preservation Society's volunteers began to find it necessary to stay in Tenterden overnight. Most of us were quite impecunious and paying out for hotel or boarding house accommodation was out of the question. Some of the early volunteers had previously been with the Bluebell Railway, which in those days was not too keen on its workers remaining on the premises 'after hours'. Using tricks and skills he had learned at Sheffield Park and, I believe during his National Service, Dennis Pope was known to ensconce himself for the night in a platelayers' hut between Rolvenden and Wittersham Road. Dennis is, sadly, no longer with us but that hut is, and in a curious way it has become his memorial, for a younger generation now know it as Pope's cottage.

Others, however, preferred to use the only reasonable accommodation then available and people began camping out in the booking office at Tenterden Town station. There was at least a stove for heating and a small gas cooker – but it also meant sharing the office with the administrative side of the Society. This co-existence could at times become rather fraught and Committee members could be heard muttering that conditions in the booking office were becoming 'intolerable'. The sight of the Secretary, Robin Doust, attempting to type letters amidst piles of food and blankets had become commonplace, whilst on Saturday nights half a dozen bodies snored on the floor and the air always seemed to be filled with the aroma of baked beans and stale socks.

The alarming habit had developed of cooking food in unpunctured tins. A future director of the Tenterden Railway Company – whom we shall not name – applied this treatment four times to one tin of baked beans and sausages which were never actually eaten once they were cooked. On the fifth occasion the long suffering tin gave way and exploded (Health and Safety at Work?) demolishing the gas stove and splattering red hot beans all over the booking office ceiling.

The answer to these problems was found at Ashford Works by Dave Sinclair (still a

member of the Company) who worked there in the Carriage and Wagon department. For some years a grounded coach body, which dated from South Eastern and Chatham days, had been in use as a store and cleaners' rest room. When this was finally pensioned off it was acquired for the princely sum of 10 shillings (50 pence) and taken to Tenterden for the use of the volunteers. A mound at the end of the platform was levelled off and a base of old sleepers prepared. At Ashford, Dave Sinclair sawed the coach into two halves and transport was arranged by Mike Farley, another member (and school friend of Derek Dunlavey) who made available lorries belonging to his family's business.

The coach was duly delivered on Saturday 25 January 1963, the writer's diary indicating that the first half arrived about 11 am. By the end of the day the coach had been reassembled, was ready for use and was indeed slept in that night. The join in the middle leaked somewhat but the coach did have a stove and was tolerably comfortable. The stove eventually developed various faults and was replaced about 18 months later, a suitable substitute having been 'found' at Horsmonden station on the abandoned Hawkhurst branch and brought to Tenterden in the boot of the writer's car.

Some people still complained about squalor, but at least it was at the end of the platform together with its familiar odour – a blend of grease, stale sweat and cold tea – as well as a clutter of sleeping bags, blankets and unwashed dishes. Order now returned to the booking office except that volunteers at first needed to continue to use the gas stove. Kevin Blakiston laid on electricity soon afterwards and some time later running water arrived as well. This was at least an improvement on trying to wash under the single tap by the station building.

Around the time the coach arrived the Dave Clark Five were working their way up the charts with a number called Glad All Over, which, in an era of unforgettable music, was memorable only for its thumping rhythm. Every time this song was played by whichever pirate station the coach radio was tuned to, a loud thumping of volunteer feet would begin and the aged structure would creak and shake. Fortunately for the continued survival of the coach, and after a sequel, appropriately titled Bits and Pieces,



The Mess Coach today – is it now part of our heritage or does it deserve a fiery fate?

(John Miller)

the Dave Clark Five sank out of sight.

The partition in the coach was quickly moved back to provide further sleeping accommodation and the remainder left as storage for the permanent way department. Eventually the PW department was pushed out altogether as the number of volunteers increased. The partition was eventually demolished, its last use being in a much mutilated condition several years later when it served as the entrance to something called the 'Rother Valley Buffet' which was where the food and drink was kept. In the end this went as well, and even more sleeping accommodation was crammed in by the railway's bunk builder, Terry Heaslip, who in his working life was one of our several BR employees. The bunks made use of old carriage cushions and were quite comfortable to either sleep on or sit on although their design appeared to owe something to one of the volunteers' favourite films – *The Great Escape*.

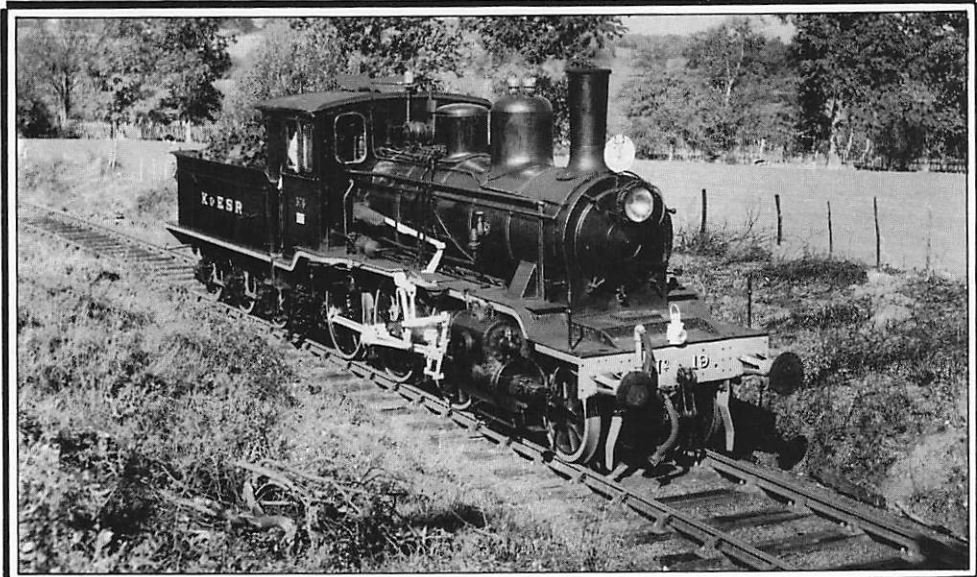
With companions around one, the coach could be quite cosy if a little basic. Spending a night in it could, however, be an eerie experience as Dick Beckett (the owner of No.12, Marcia) once found out when he awoke to hear a great crashing around at the far end. No movement was visible in the gloom and Dick made a great rush for the light switch, only to find that the disturbance was not being caused by the ghost of a discontented passenger but a moth in a

paper bag. Amongst my own favourite memories of the coach is standing at the door – on the platform side in those days – one warm September night in 1966. A huge harvest moon was rising over the backdrop of darkened trees, Grass-hoppers chirped in the undergrowth and there was a distant purr of combine harvesters working into the night in nearby fields. It was all quite idyllic.

Perhaps amazingly, the mess coach has survived for over 25 years, known to two generations of volunteers, whilst Tenterden Town station has developed round it. But the time is approaching when the coach will have to be moved and there is a suggestion that it might find its way back on to revenue earning, passenger carrying wheels. This would certainly be a better fate than that which befell the fictional mess coach in an unpublished (unpublishable?) novel by the writer. In the story the central character returns to the preservation scheme of his youth, to find it grown into a very commercially minded enterprise. This imaginary steam railway had, amongst other things, mutilated the fondly remembered coach as part of a light and recorded sound display called (and I wrote this several years ago) – the 'Edwardian Experience!' Of course, the K&ESR would never do such a thing, but, oh dear, what's the name of the event that was held on the Kent and East Sussex on 21 and 22 September 1991 ... Life imitating art perhaps?

Will Number 19 be back in 1992?

Neil Rose outlines the progress being made with restoring the K&ESR's only tender locomotive to working condition.



Number 19 climbs Tenterden Bank, during the Sutton Centenary Cavalcade celebration on 26th September 1976.
(Brian Stephenson)

Former Norwegian State Railway 21c class 2-6-0 No.376, numbered 19 in the KESR locomotive fleet, has not featured in *The Tenterden Terrier* recently and an update on restoration progress is due. Hopes that the locomotive would be back in service by 1990, thirteen years after it last ran on the Railway, have proved over optimistic. Restoration work is going ahead, albeit slowly.

Resources at Rolvenden are limited and the Directors have rightly given priority to overhauls of the Railway's largest locomotives which are needed for day-to-day operating. Whilst No.19 looks large, and weighing in at 60 tons, with tender, is certainly the heaviest locomotive on the Railway, it is little more powerful than No.14 (Charwelton). Indeed those readers who remember it running in the 1970s will recall that its light axle loadings and large wheels made it susceptible to slipping in the wet on Tenterden Bank. However being the line's only tender locomotive it was popular with visitors as it looked a "real engine". This appeal is recognised by the powers-that-be; No.19 has a future part to play in the

Railway's operating fleet although it will not be able to haul the heaviest service trains unaided. No.19 is due to receive additional labour resources allocated to its completion and the intention remains to see it in service in 1992.

As for completed work, the frames, motion, and running gear are ready, as is the boiler which was returned from contractors in early 1990. Recent work has concentrated on making a new smokebox and ashpan; minor platemwork is still needed on the tender. Much of the work has been undertaken by Adrian Landi between other commitments. Many jobs do not look much but are essential prior to reassembly; for example Adrian has spent much effort to complete the steam pipes and exhausts. The last major task before final assembly is the fitting of 14 superheater elements. Incidentally, although the boiler was tested and inspected some while ago, time for insurance purposes does not start to run until it is first filled with water.

Reassembly work includes fabrication of new cladding and cabwork which will be open

rather than fully enclosed as before. No.19 will be repainted in lined black livery.

On the financial front the good news is that most of the expensive repair costs, for example on the boiler, have been met. So far work on returning No.19 to running order has cost just over £25,000. Some £6,000 will be required to finish the job, the largest remaining item of expenditure being the superheater elements at just under £3,500.

Ownership of the locomotive is vested in the Norwegian Locomotive Trust. This charitable trust was set up in 1984 with the objects of first purchasing No.19 and then raising money to restore and maintain the locomotive in working order. To date membership is made up of 87 individuals and groups who between them have purchased 185 shares of £100 each. Donations have brought in £7,600 and miscellaneous income, for example the running of special Pullman trains staffed by Trust members, has raised a further £3,200. Money sitting in the bank has earned £3,900.

In addition to the restoration costs No.19 cost the Trust a modest £2,530 to purchase. All other administrative costs and overheads, primarily arising when the Trust was set up, run at a little under £1,000. These figures all add up to the present position of some

£5,000 in the kitty to fund the final restoration costs. In other words, there is not quite enough money available!

The Trustees, who are David Stratton, Bob Blackley and Tony Pearson, will be delighted to welcome anyone who is willing to spare a little money towards No.19. If you are willing to invest £100 (which may be paid in instalments) you will become a Trust member: donations of any amount are always gratefully received. The residual funding gap must be met to ensure the remaining work is not delayed for want of funds. It would be prudent also to build up a modest reserve for the future security of No.19. Please consider joining the Trust now.

Existing Trust members have waited patiently for a long time for No.19 to be returned to service. The day when a tender locomotive is seen once again steaming the Rother Valley is not far off. A further £2,000-£3,000 in the bank would do much to secure No.19 running again in 1992. The Hon. Treasurer, Neil Rose, will be pleased to provide details to potential members or donors; he can be contacted on (0892 88) 2608 [or (0892) 782608 - BT are altering numbers shortly!] or via the office at Tenterden Town station.



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Letters to the Editor

Last train through Salehurst

Sir — May I refer to the penultimate paragraph of John Humphrey's article: "Last Train Through Salehurst," in the Summer issue of *The Tenterden Terrier*.

He suggests that TRC "raised no objection" to the by-pass. I have on file correspondence with the South East Regional Office of the Department of Transport which makes it plain that the Department of Transport were well aware of our views. I quote from the Chairman's letter dated 28th October, 1987.

"We in NO way wish to delay or obstruct the start of the construction, which we know is of prime importance to the people of Robertsbridge, but I am fully supported by my Board of Directors, and our members, who require the following to be included in the said order:

The Tenterden Railway Company, whilst fully appreciating the construction of the by-pass is paramount, require without prejudice the right to reach Robertsbridge Station British Rail as a continuation of its extension plans, from Bodiam."

I now quote from the Department's letter in reply, dated 20th November, 1987:

"The Department would be willing to consider any future venture which involved the provision of a bridge to carry the railway over the by-pass."

In fact the thinking now is that, when the route is re-instated, a level crossing will be installed, and this is the view of those responsible for carrying the project forward. Thus it will be appreciated that TRC was in no way selfishly insensitive to the needs of

Robertsbridge, and, by taking that line, we may well have influenced current discussions and negotiations over our proposed extension, which, of course, will further benefit Robertsbridge in a different way from the construction of the by-pass, bringing people into the town, rather than diverting them away from it.

The Tenterden Railway
Company

Raymond Williams
Company Secretary

The Fireman's Lament

There's more (said the Fireman), to firin'
an engine,
Than shovellin' coal on a fire.
If you put too much on, you won't get
much steam,
An' she'll smoke like a funeral pyre.

An' our neighbours at Tenterden, kind as
a rule,
Will think it a poor kind o' joke,
An' they're likely to make the most
spiteful remarks,
If yer engine starts belchin' out smoke.

What they put in our bunkers at
Rolvenden shed,
Which they get, so I'm told, from the
States,
Wouldn't burn down in Hell in a bucket o'
meths,
Never mind me Austerity's grate.

So remember, when sloggin' up Tenterden
bank,
If yer journey's a tedious crawl,
That I'm up to me eyeballs in coaldust an'
sweat;
Jus' be grateful we get there at all!

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My Dear Dah - and Mam



Stephens - circa 1910.

(Colonel Stephens Railway Archive)

In the Summer 1990 issue of *The Tenterden Terrier*, Kay Smailes recorded extracts from some of the letters written by Holly Stephens to his parents in the early years of his working life. In this the second and final selection, she continues the story.

* * * *

This second venture into commenting on a selection of letters and postcards concerning the young Holman Fred Stephens (Holly) and his parents, Frederic George and Rebecca Clara (Dah and Mam), exchanged during some 35 years of the late Victorian period and the first decade of this century confirms earlier impressions that H.F.S. was a man of indomitable spirit and extraordinary vision, whose experiences and interests during his early years seemed to be closely linked with the ideals and achievements of his later life. Although many of his plans for railways proved to be too ambitious, too costly and too impracticable to succeed for long, we have in this historic correspondence many colourful and often amusing glimpses not only of how H.F.S. saw himself but also of how others saw him in his formative pre-military years.

Holly's artistic heritage and loving devotion to his parents, his interests in money and in getting full value for it from early youth onwards, his instinct for detailed calculations, and his dedication to the fulfilment of his aims, are all evident. So also is his desire to do the right thing, to meet the right people and to behave correctly. All these aspects of his character are revealed in a medley of extracts together with reports from others in this miscellany, which are left to speak for him as they were written.

Undoubtedly Holly's most joyous letters and cards came from Brittany. At no time later could one imagine him saying "I am as happy as the day is long", words he wrote to Mam from Vitré (1883, at the age of 15), and we soon learn the symbol of true happiness at that period was for him an oil-colour paint-box. Many parents will be familiar with pleas from their children away from home to send more money, but the imperious manner of some of Holly's demands seemed to expect miracles too . . . "Please let the Post Office order reach me before Monday next." During his stay in Karlsruhe to learn German, he carefully calculated that instead of paying for private lessons, it would have been cheaper to attend the Polytechnic in term-time, corresponding exactly to University College School. There he could have attended German classes of one hour every day for 6 months for 30/-, and additional classes in any other subject for the same moderate sum. He wrote "The next time I come to Germany I will go to N. Prussia. It is much cheaper because one goes by sea in 24 hours to Hamburg, and I could live there for just one half of what it costs in a family in S. Germany."

In spite of professional discouragement being given at that time to young fellows wishing to become Civil Engineers (the prospects were not very bright), Holly, with strong support from his father, took the vital steps to acquire qualifications and experience. A letter dated July 26, 1890, from F. G. Stephens to J. Bell Esq. of Neasden forms the link between Holly's school days and his first ambitious steps into the future. F.G.S. wrote "Thank you very warmly for your great kindness in allowing my son to enter the Company's workshops at Neasden and work there for a considerable time. I hope that those under whom you gave him opportunities of learning his profession found him energetic, practical and teachable. I am sure he has been very anxious to learn. I should therefore in view of his future regard it as an additional favour if a certificate of his having worked at Neasden could be granted to him. I am, dear Sir, Yours very faithfully, F. G. Stephens".

Dated October 9, 1891, the first letter from Holly to Dah headed "Cranbrook & Paddock Wood Railway, Engineer's Office", although written from Horsmonden, illustrates two commonly recurring themes – "Thank you for the money duly received", and "Will you please ask my Mother if she has arranged some clean collars for me." Father, we learn later, made him a monthly allowance of £8 and paid his subscriptions until the launch of the Rother Valley Railway in 1900. Mother received and returned his washing ("underthings"), usually via the cloakroom at Charing Cross station, a convenient clearing-house, much used by members of the Stephens family for all manner of goods lent, borrowed, given or exchanged, as well as serving as a laundry collection point. A brass fender and picture frames for Holly's bare walls were dispatched and collected in this way.

His first years with Cranbrook & Paddock Wood Railway were not easy for H.F.S., but his life offered him the challenges he seemed to need and kept him increasingly busy with travel, planning advice, Board of Trade inspection demands and contacts with a variety of lines and enterprises.

His letters over the next 15 years from 1891 are a strange mixture of the important and the trivial, the formal and the familiar, revealing his character and philosophy of life, expressing gratitude for presents received and for introduction to well-known people. In June 1892 – "It is absolutely essential to have a policy and to stick to it. If it fails try some other way. I'm sure this is the only way to get on." In 1895 he wrote "Can you get me an introduction to the Hon. F. D. Smith (son of the late W. H. Smith) or the Marquess of Bristol? I want to interview them." A few years later, in July 1901 – "Many thanks for your letter and enclosed card of introduction to Mr. Kipling. Please thank Sir P. Burne-Jones for me." Earlier, in November 1896, he wrote "I have a letter of introduction from Lord Medway to Lord Harris 're' a proposed line in Isle of Sheppey. You know so much better than I do how to manage these sort of things. How shall I address Lord Harris? I write 'My dear Lord Medway' because I know him, but I don't know Lord Harris. Shall I say 'Sir' or 'My Lord'?"

From a letter of November 1898 we learn – "Mr. McLaren said if I was judiciously pushed I might yet do well. He said he would help in any way, but I was to bear in mind that most things went through influence nowadays, and if we were not willing to use what we had it would be wasted."

In November 1903 he wrote "Many thanks for the delightful (tie) pin you sent me. It is rather gorgeous for a simple person like myself but I will try and live up to it. Personal adornment is rather out of my line." From a letter dated March 1897 we read "I want very much to come to the Boat Race. Will you let me have a post-card 're' time. May I bring my man (W. H. Austen) with me? He has never seen the race and would appreciate it I think..." At Christmas 1898 Stephens wrote to his parents thanking them for "... the beautiful pipe, a handsome present which will be very useful to me. My man nearly swallowed the sixpence Mam put in his pudding and when he has got over the shock he is going to write to Mam and thank her."

By the end of 1895 H.F.S. was living at Ashby House, Tonbridge, soon to acquire an office at Salford Terrace, from where he could travel more easily. From the twenty letters dated 1896 in this collection it would seem the busiest years were now upon him. There was mention of his involvement with the Cranbrook & District Water Company, and with the Rye & Camber Tramway. He



"My man" Austen.

(Colonel Stephens Railway Archive)



Mr and Mrs F. G. Stephens in the garden of their house at Hammersmith Terrace,
London W., circa 1900.

(Colonel Stephens Railway Archive)

was hoping to obtain flood prevention work in Tonbridge which would be "a bit of experience in another direction", and in a letter from Swansea Vale his advice was sought on making a Light Railway to some coal villages up the Clyddach valley if the scheme were practicable and possible to carry out at reasonable cost. There were letters from Ambleside and Westmorland C.C. asking advice on projects for tram roads and Light Railways.

Stephens was also busy with the Chichester to Selsey line, and with possibly extending the North Cornwall line to Truro; he was involved in travelling from Essex to Penzance, with attending public meetings all over the Gower Peninsular, and with the Swansea and Mumbles to Worms Head line. He returned home dead tired but was hard at it again the next day. There is mention of an order to extend the Rye line 1½ miles, and of a similar line from Sandwich to the coast.

Perhaps the most vivid impression of H.F.S. at work, as others saw him, comes not from a letter but an article in the *East Kent Advertiser* of 12 October 1895, which was headed "A Steam Tram for Sandwich!", and continued - "Who would have thought it? To picture a snorting, whistling vehicle wizzing into the sleepy old place is certainly peculiar, but it is by no means improbable that the scheme for a steam tram to run between Sandwich, the Golf Links and the shore will be carried out by local enterprise. A meeting which was held at the Bell Hotel was well attended. All the principal big-wigs were there. More than this, the proceedings were quite enthusiastic. Mr. Stephens, the engineer, was a host in himself. He depicted the future career of the Sandwich Steam Tram Company in glowing colours, and his sanguine, buoyant remarks infected his

hearers with his own enthusiasm. and carried them in imagination over any difficulties or hindrances which suggested themselves to the cautious mind."

In February 1896 H.F.S. wrote "I am glad to say that the schemes I have in hand are going on as well as I can hope." and in October of that year, "So far as I am concerned I am very busy and as you know I can't afford to keep a proper assistant. You can guess that to keep my own practice going finds me full employment. It is rather an uphill game but I think that in the course of a short time the benefit of the work I have in hand will become apparent." After the turn of the century, in July 1901 we hear

KENT & EAST SUSSEX RY.	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <p>REFER TO THIS NUMBER</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 5px;"></div> <p>IF YOUR REPLY</p> </div> <div> <p>Station.</p> <p>Dept.</p> <p>190</p> </div> <div> <p>TICK</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 5px;"></div> <p>OR</p> </div> </div>	<p>10/5/05</p> <p>With best love to</p> <p>Both:</p> <p>very busy opening</p> <p>new line</p> <p>H</p>

Tenterden, 10th May 1905. With best love to both; very busy opening new line. H.

that - "I am very busy indeed with the negotiations 're' my Headcorn line which is giving me a great deal of trouble and anxiety", and in July of 1903 that - "We have had some very bad weather here during the last week. Tonbridge station was flooded and my man Austen was washed out of the lower part of his house . . . We are making the borings for the piers of the Calstock viaduct and hope to start work soon." A year later, in October 1904, he confides to his parents - "As for my money matters, I hope I have made enough to keep me from the workhouse and also those dear to me if the need comes."

Not until April 1904 was there any misunderstanding apparent between father and son. Holly had not been told of his mother's accident (a fall) and her period of ill-health since the previous December; he queried the choice of medical advisers, and the slowness of her recovery. "It is perfectly clear that some means must be discovered to put her on her legs again and be the dear one she has always been to all of us." A long and detailed reply from Dah (his last letter in this collection) asks Holly - "Can it be that you have got it into your head that I am withholding help from your Mother on any account whatsoever, least of all because of its cost? I share your anxiety because of the tardiness of Mam's improvement during more than 10 months. This affects me not less than yourself. She has had the aid of 4

doctors, the occasional attention of 2 others, 4 nurses (2 together for many weeks), 2 masseuses and the constant service of Ethel who is very helpful and fully satisfied the doctors."

We have letters to Dah until 15 April 1905, but no more from him; he died in March 1907. Mam eventually recovered and lived until November 1915, and the last six letters on black-edged notepaper are headed with her own and Holly's addresses:

Robertsbridge
S.O.
Sussex

9 The Terrace
Hammersmith
W.

An announcement in *The Times* of 30 May 1911:

"STEPHENS, Major H. F. on promotion and on appointment to command Kent Fortress R.E. by the Inspector General of the Forces" was followed on May 31 by the final letter that we have from Mam -

"My dear Holly,

I heartily congratulate you on your promotion. You have given much time and energy to the country. It used to be said that when one's sons had been presented it was usual to have a few yards of extra silk to go to the Drawing Room. There was a time I thought so too but not now.

Much love from Mam"

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On Course with the Colonel

Plas Tan y Bwlch, the former home of the Oakley family, quarry owners, and now the Snowdonia National Park Centre, was the setting for a residential four day study course on the 27th-30th September 1991 entitled "Colonel Stephens - the Man and His Railways". Appropriately, the centre is located adjacent to, but some eighty feet below, the Festiniog Railway, which for a period in the 1920s and 1930s was administered by the Stephens office in Tonbridge.

It was this connection which led to the course being organised in part by members of our Colonel Stephens Museum Group, and by members of the Festiniog Heritage Trust, notably Eileen Clayton and Michael Seymour.

Several members from Tenterden had attended courses in the past at Plas Tan y Bwlch and were impressed by the centre's arrangements and suitability for such activities due to its connection with, and proximity to, its own halt on the Festiniog Railway just south of Tan-y-Bwlch station. The attendance of John Miller, Philip Shaw and Doug Lindsay two years ago on a course "Festiniog Railway - The Spooner Era" led to a suggestion that we might run a course on the Stephens Era, this in turn became a reality, but was widened in its scope to become a course covering all 'Stephens Railways' and his personal life as well.

Suitable speakers were then sought to present various lectures on different aspects of Colonel Stephens history, and once commitments were achieved, preparations could commence. The dates were chosen and then advertised, and indeed, all fifty or so places were taken by a whole variety of students including Les Darbyshire of the Colonel Stephens Society, Vic Mitchell, founder and proprietor of the Middleton Press and a wide range of light railway enthusiasts from all over the country.

The course started with dinner on the Friday evening, followed by an outline history of the Colonel and his railways presented in verbal and slide form by Philip Shaw.

Saturday's activities started with a presentation by Peter Swift on the Festiniog and Welsh Highland Railways in the 1920s and 1930s, covering alterations and additions made to both railways under the Stephens administration. There then followed a group visit to the current Welsh Highland Railway

where a special train was laid on for the short return trip hauled by the recently restored loco "Russell". After a very interesting tour of the workshop at Gelert Farm, a brief visit was made to the remains of the two Portmadoc 'new' stations which had existed either side of the GWR Cambrian main line during the Stephens period. Then the entire party was taken by road coach up to the northern end of the former line and journeyed back stopping at several points to inspect remains of stations and earthworks long since bereft of track, this culminated in a group walk along the most famous section, that through the Aberglaslyn Pass and through the three tunnels before re-joining the coach for return to Plas.

John Miller then presented "Stephens Career to 1900", plus viewing of some of our archive collection, whilst after dinner, Stephen Garrett covered the history of the Kent & East Sussex Railway and this was followed by a selection of vintage films of several of the Colonel's railways.

On Sunday morning Michael Davies opened the day with "Salford Terrace - the Hub of the Empire", a presentation about life during the Stephens and Austen periods, with many anecdotes and incidents recorded due to Michael's chance encounter with Arthur Iggulden, the Colonel's secretary, many years ago. John Miller provided the next lecture on the Colonel's Career 1900-1914, illustrated with slides, following which the whole party was taken to Boston Lodge works on the Festiniog Railway. Current activities there include building two brand new Fairlie locomotives of both the double and single types and the complete rebuilding of "Blanche", one of the former Penrhyn Quarry locos, re-building various carriages including the unique hearse vehicle, and constructing a new carriage storage shed. This visit, so well organised by the FR team, culminated in the party joining the special train headed by the Simplex tractor "Mary Ann" over the 'cob' to Portmadoc Harbour. With an eye to economy, "Mary Ann" was purchased by Colonel Stephens for £350 and delivered in July 1923 from the Kent Construction & Engineering Company, of Ashford, Kent. This very special train included FR Van No.10, a Stephens period conversion of a former 1870's luggage van which, although it saw some service in early preservation years, hasn't run for over 30 years, and is the result of an extensive three year rebuild by volunteers at Boston Lodge,



Welsh Highland Railway locomotive
"Russell" heads the Colonel Stephens
 course special train at Pen-Y-Mount on
 Saturday, 28th September 1991.
 (Philip Shaw)

"Mary Ann" and train at Harbour Station
 on Sunday, 29th September 1991.
 (Doug Lindsay)



and is now classed as a 'heritage' vehicle.
 Also in the train was the much rebuilt Welsh

Highland carriage No.23, an FR four wheel
 'bug-box' No.5, FR four wheel Guards brake

van No.2, and observation car No.11. After a brief stop at Harbour Station, the whole train was headed up to Blaenau Ffestiniog by double Fairlie "Merddin Emrys". In true railway tradition, Van No.10 had only been finished the day before and this was to be its first run up the line in service since restoration and what better train for its inauguration! Time was allowed en-route to inspect the beautifully restored station at Penrhyn and for a couple of run pasts for photographers at Tank Curve before arrival at Blaenau Ffestiniog station now equipped with canopies and permanent buildings.

The return journey to Plas Halt was another, almost unique, occasion, as the train ran non-stop – it is most unusual for any FR train to run non-stop through Tan-y-Bwlch where trains are passing – but this special did!

Following the return to Plas, Michael Davies gave another superb presentation - on the Colonel's family background, the Pre-Raphaelites and his Military career. Michael Seymour, the FR archivist, then presented a selection from the FR archives pertaining to the Stephens years. After dinner Stephen Garrett presented the history of the East Kent Railway and the Kent Coalfield which covered some 40 projected lines in the area! More vintage films followed, including one

made by Robin Doust of the KESR in the very first years of preservation.

On the final day, Monday, Philip Shaw gave a presentation on Stephens' career 1914-1931 including the lines projected but never built, and was followed by Michael Davies' Shropshire & Montgomeryshire memories, another very interesting talk on some of his personal experiences on the S&M. Finally, Doug Lindsay presented a selection of slides depicting "What survives today and Preservation" and provided a handout listing various sites of Stephens significance and what is to be seen by the enthusiast today.

A question and answer forum was followed by luncheon and final dispersal. All in all a very successful course for the student of Colonel Stephens' and other light railways, which could not have been organised without the superb co-operation of the Welsh Highland and Ffestiniog Railways who laid on special trains and privileged viewing of their illustrations, Eileen Clayton and the National Park Centre for organising the accommodation, coaching and lecture facilities, to the speakers who gave their time freely and to the participants in the course who made it all happen, to all of these, we extend our thanks. It is just possible that a further course will take place in 1993...

Doug Lindsay

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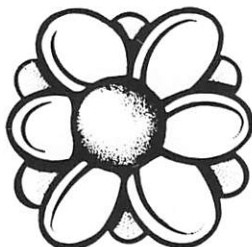


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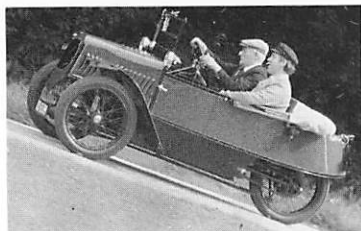
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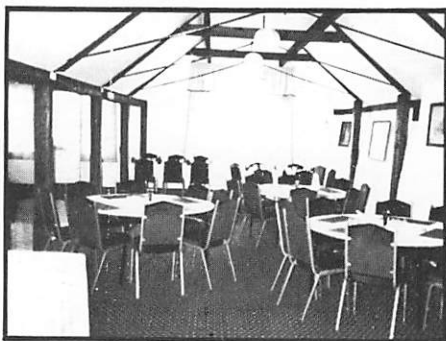
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