

The Tenterden Terrier



Number 67

Summer 1995



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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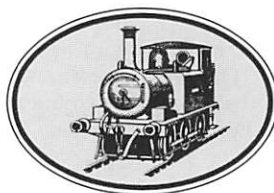
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FRONT COVER

Ivatt class 2 mogul No 46443, on loan from the Severn Valley Railway, splendidly re-creates the early 1950's branch line scene as it nears Cranbrook Road with the blood and custard set forming the 11.45 Northiam-Tenterden service on Sunday 14th May. (Gerald Siviour)

FRONTISPIECE

Neil Rose, having completed his speech, looks on as His Excellency Tom Vraalsen, the Norwegian Ambassador, prepares to re-commission No 376. (Brian Stephenson)

Editorial

Do we have the vision?

Our new commercial manager's vision of the future is as refreshing as it is realistic. A classic, rural railway, unique and quite charming, that passengers will want to visit time and time again. The ingredients are there – four and six wheel coaches and historic tank engines – we catch it all on film. But traffic is falling, so something is lacking. We are massively in debt and our presentation it seems is often inappropriate – orange clothing prevails where it is not needed, sites are untidy, not everybody likes seeing a diesel set running up and down the line.

We must try harder because a private railway is not the novelty it was when we opened 21 years ago. The number of tourist attractions in Kent has doubled in a decade; people are more discriminating and demanding. Each and every one of us must work to a common theme – the customer knows best.

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Lineside News

Compiled by Duncan Buchanan

From the Secretary

By the time this is published I shall be history! Enough is enough! The Secretary has retired, long live the Secretary! The ten years I have served have been eventful. During this period, Northiam and the Rother Valley Railway were perhaps particularly significant as evidences of a desire on the part of the membership for growth and expansion, but the price is high. In an age when business failure has been a norm, even in the affluent South East, we have learned that it is necessary to put our money where our mouth is, if dreams are to become realities.

Several years ago we started talking of the pursuit of excellence. (Our imagination had been fired by our success and recognition by National Awards in the field of Railway Preservation.) This worthy aim is still valid. Leisure pursuits and Tourist attractions that do not acknowledge it will not survive into the next century.

I wish my successor, whoever he or she may be, every happiness in an absorbing and

worthwhile post, which had in fact grown out of all proportion in the last ten years. I continue with the Association of Railway Preservation Societies' affairs, and may still be contacted for information, and advice.

Raymond Williams

Staff Changes

Our General Manager Gillian Howie left the railway at the end of April after arriving to fill a short term vacancy as Catering Manager in autumn 1993. Gillian has taken up an appointment to be Training Manager for Boots. The railway often trains people for strange things but this is not the usual way! Graham Hukins has been appointed to the post of Commercial Manager and as a result has had to resign as a director because charity law insists that employees are not directors.

Commercial

The return of service of locomotive No 376 'Norwegian' on the morning of 5th March 1995 heralded the start of our 21st Anniversary Year. A large crowd of invited guests was swelled by members of the public



*Ivatt mogul No 46443 departs from Wittersham Road for Northiam on Saturday 3rd June, 21st Anniversary weekend, in pouring rain.
(N S Rose)*

as the 76 year old veteran was officially recommissioned by the Norwegian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, His Excellency Tom Vraalsen. 'Norwegian' was centre of attention for much of the afternoon as well – as a very successful 'familiarisation visit' was arranged to give local Tourist Information Centre staff and hoteliers an opportunity to see the line's facilities.

Saturdays in March saw the recently-introduced Railway Experience Days being staged – with extra dates being added to the schedule when no other trains are operating. Places for the next courses (on November Saturdays) are selling very quickly with three of the four dates already sold out.

The theme of this year's family fun weekend at Easter was children's favourite Postman Pat who, with minder Mike Webb – in splendid Victorian postmaster's frock-coat – loaded sacks full of parcels and letters onto the trains throughout the weekend. The event proved very popular with numbers slightly up on Easter 1994, but highlighted our current shortage of serviceable coaching stock – fortunately the Operating Department were able to 'up the service' to ensure that no would be passengers were left behind.

The 50th anniversary of V.E. Day was marked on the 7th and 8th of May with a small-scale event which focused on the role of the railway during the War. Our four ex-military engines were in steam on Sunday but Nos. 23 and DS238 failed, leaving No. 24 (running as WD200) and 1556 to 'soldier on' in the company of 46443 and 16387 on Monday. Despite the multiplicity of V.E. Day events, passenger numbers were very similar to 1994 levels.

Our various on-train catering services continue to thrive with the Wealden Pullman now fully booked, save for Christmas and New Year's Eve specials. The Rother Valley Limited Sunday Luncheon train and afternoon tea service are also well patronised and the Steam 'n' Scones package for groups is once again proving popular.

Revenue has received a welcome boost from

a higher than expected level of filming work in the early part of the season. On Wednesday 17th May the BBC Drama unit were at Northiam to film sequences for 'No Bananas' set in wartime Britain whilst, at the same time, Tenterden Town played host to Sarah Green and a production team recording an episode of ITV's 'The Exchange'!

The 21st anniversary weekend was a commercial success with 1600 passengers travelling and 7 engines in steam (unfortunately No 21 did not make it). At Rolvenden the field was opened to host a fair and the slow start on Saturday, due mainly to the inclement weather, led to a brisker start on Sunday. The weather saw to the problem at about 12.30 on Sunday with the most tremendous downpour for about 20 minutes. After this things never did pick up again and the event closed early with many of the rides leaving before 5.00pm.

Passenger numbers for the year to the end of May are down 6% relative to last year at 14,320. This is partially accounted for by the 21st anniversary event in June and by the fact that no advertising was placed to cover the last May Bank Holiday, again due to the event.

Gift Shop

The effects of the recession came late in having any effect on shop takings. 1994/1995 year was the sign of this with a considerable drop in sales on books and videos with general souvenir items and Thomas keeping our heads above water.

The sales target to the end of May is £24,950 as against a target last year of £25,500 as agreed with the CSRE board. Sales to the end of this period were some £2,300 down as against the deficit last year of £2,600. This is a reflection in the number of trains that have run as we are overall £2,000 down on last year's takings.

The main difference, when analysing the sales, is the continuing drop in purchases of books and videos. The same period in 1994 saw a turnover of £7,500, dropping to £5,300 to date this year. The sales of general souvenirs have held up at £6,470 with Thomas at £5,529 compared respectively with £6,842 and £5,137 in 1994/1995.



Fireman Tom White, on P.Class 1556, gets ready to pick up the tablet before descending to Rolvenden, summer 1994

(M Willis)

These figures are just a rough estimate of the scene to date, and as we approach the main running season, it is hoped that sales will pick up. The drop in the books and videos means that more valuable items have to be sold in order to make our sales target. Although sales have held up on this side we need to see an increase in their sales to balance the target out.

New lines that will sell are hard to obtain. There has been some criticism of the Shop holding non-Railway items. This is a fair point, but it is these items that are keeping our heads above water, and the general railway items have reduced sales. More and more people are looking for holiday souvenirs as well as Railway ones, and it is this market I cannot ignore. The balance is about right, now. Thomas is another area where many well selling lines are hard to obtain. The last two years have found us going direct to many wholesalers in an attempt to save in this area, because our normal suppliers are slightly dearer, or are being forced out of the market on certain Thomas lines. We now stock the whole range of Thomas Die-cast and have got on

order a small quantity of the golden Thomas range to mark their Anniversary. These are due in August and will be priced at £9.99 due to the limited edition of this model.

The figures quoted above should not be taken out of context as it has proved a difficult year to date. Outside monetary pressures are obviously having their effect on the family pocket. The growing attraction of the book and video clubs has also had an adverse effect as demonstrated. Donald Wilson is continually looking for the more popular and educational books and videos, reasonably priced, in an attempt to boost sales, at the same time as maintaining our image as an excellent outlet for books and videos which allies itself to the Railway specialist.

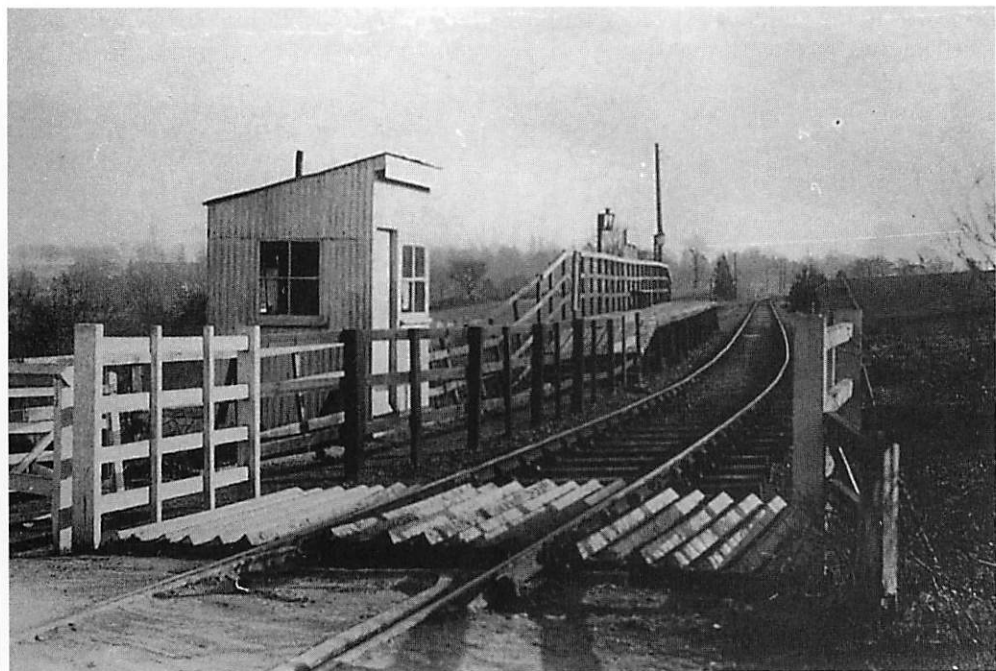
Buffet

A minor catastrophe occurred when both chest freezers gave up the ghost after many years of service but a new freezer was quickly authorised and installed just in time for the start of the season at the beginning of May.



The new crossing keeper's hut at Cranbrook Road and the tidied up area around.

(D Buchanan)



The original St Michaels Halt station building which was used as the basis for the new Cranbrook Road hut.

(Col. Stephens Historical Archive)

A simple hot lunch each day is planned on the mid-week buffet car service whenever possible. By experimenting with different products and methods the appeal to visitors can hopefully be maintained.

Pullman preparation and general cleaning has not been a problem so far this year, thanks to help from the Community Action group but how to attract more volunteer help within the railway system is still puzzling. Trading seems steady and optimism for the summer is improving.

Locomotives

Steam Locomotives

No. 3 (Bodiam): It is expected that the TRC and Isle of Wight railway will be placing an order for two boilers within the next three or four weeks. The TRC contribution is being funded entirely from private sources and not TRC funds.

No. 8 (Knowle): We are waiting for the completion of crane repairs to place the boiler into its frames again. The boiler is currently stored at Chatham in the dry.

No. 10 (Sutton): On static exhibition outside Carriage and Wagon at Tenterden.

No. 11 (1556): Available for traffic.

No. 12 (Marcia): The owner has spent a week working on this locomotive at the beginning of June.

No. 14 (Charwelton): Available for service, having undergone extensive attention to the valve gear.

No. 19 (Norwegian): Available for service.

No. 21 (Wainwright): Stopped for attention to Intermediate and Driving axle-boxes after running two hot axle-boxes at the late May bank holiday.

No. 22 (Maunsell): Progressing steadily. The steam test of the boiler is to take place during June.

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

No. 24: Available for service now that lining is complete. This locomotive has been renamed Rolvenden.

No. 25 (Northiam): Awaiting 10 year overhaul.

No. 27: Having spent several years in the yard at Tenterden being 'driven' by countless hordes of youngsters this



GWR Pannier tank departs with a freight train from Wittersham Road, 15th October 1994 (N S Rose)

locomotive has been sold and is expected to leave the K&ESR in late summer.

No. 1638: Available for service.

No. 46443: Currently on hire from the Severn Valley Railway for six weeks this locomotive will return to the SVR, after a boiler washout, in June.

Diesel Locomotives

No. 41 (Ruston 0-4-0): Currently out-posted at Wittersham Road in use as the Permanent Way Department's yard shunter. It occasionally pulls an engineer's train along the line. The new green livery still looks very tidy.

No. 43 (Titan 0-4-0): In regular use as the Rolvenden Yard shunter, Titan recently underwent a light maintenance inspection which revealed that a small number of items will require attention in the near future.

No. 46 (Drewry 2023): In regular service as the Tenterden yard pilot and has recently pulled the occasional empty stock and goods trains to Wittersham.

No. 49 (Class 14 9525): Serviceable and in traffic. Parts of the floor have recently been replaced as the old woodwork had rotted away and has undergone some maintenance.

Class 08 (Dover Castle): Currently out of service awaiting the delivery of new batteries, these should be delivered in the near future.

Hastings DEMU: This has performed regularly and reliably over the last few months whilst carrying out its passenger rosters.

2 car DMU Class 108: Restoration work progressing well on 50971 DMBS with the interior panelling having been replaced following removal so that the corrosion can be dealt with. The outside bodywork has been sanded down and undercoat applied. It is hoped to complete the painting of this unit some time this summer dependent on the ever changing British weather as work normally takes place outside.

Cranes

No. 311 (10 ton T&H): The extensive repairs to the engine and drive gear

continue on this crane.

No. 316 (10 ton Grafton): No change from last report.

No. 336 (36 ton breakdown): Awaiting a safe working local indicator but will be returned to restricted duties after a yearly exam.

Carriage and Wagon

SE&CR four wheeler No. 2947: The department has continued to make rapid progress with this project. Seat frames have been constructed in-house and the interior upholstered by a contractor. All doors have been re-built and re-fitted with new drop lights and straps installed. The interiors of the compartments are now substantially complete. During the spring, the body was mounted on a shortened PMV underframe (thanks to Adrian Landi for the necessary welding) and brake and steam heating equipment fitted. A battery box has been constructed and work is in hand to re-assemble the brake rigging, buffers and draw gear. C & W painters have begun undercoating the exterior.

L&NWR Inspection Saloon: Frames for the new seating have been constructed and await upholstering. Painting and lining out – in early LMS livery – is complete and the brake gear is going back into place.

Southern Railway CK No. 5618 (K&ESR No. 56): Priority for other projects has led to less progress on this vehicle recently, but the gutters and the battery boxes have now been fitted.

Mark 1's

SK No. 63: has received an 18 month inspection. Polish is being applied to the woodwork on many of these vehicles to improve their interior appearance.

Woolwich Coach (K&ESR No. 67): This vehicle (the first K&ESR coach of the preservation era) was brought down from the head shunt during May and the rubbish stored in it cleared out. Restoration, however, remains some way off.

Infrastructure and Admin

New user-friendly paperwork for reporting and recording vehicle faults has been introduced. New lighting is being installed in the shed and is much appreciated by the

staff. The department's tired old battery charger has been scrapped, its modern replacement being (literally) a leap out of the dark ages. This has finally solved most of the lighting problems with the Wealden Pullman set.

Annual Working Week

The 1995 Working Week will be 6-12 August. At the time of writing, it is intended to progress ex-SE&CR Birdcage No. 60 as far as possible without upsetting the work schedules for other vehicles. All welcome – make a holiday of it. Further details from Carriage & Wagon at Tenterden, tel. 01580 765511.

Permanent Way

The winter works programme, on the Newmill Straight, was completed with just about enough time for all the tamping and ballasting to take place. The completion of this job means that final solutions to some previously avoided problems had to be found. It was discovered that there was indeed too much rail on the curve round to Gazedown Wood and the appropriate joint had to have 2" of rail cut out and welded. Two other joints with rails of dissimilar profile were also welded to prevent long term problems.



Driver Peter Salmon at the controls of Ivatt No 46443, 30th April 1995. (T White)

Early March saw the re-occurrence of an old problem at Willows Curve. The track formation was washed out leaving five sleepers completely in mid-air. Ballast, originally destined for routine maintenance at Cranbrook Road, was used to fill the void. As part of a complete survey of the line by our newly appointed Civil Engineer, Peter Tobutt, a new approach to providing a medium term, affordable, solution is to be tried. Ballast and new sleepers, at a closer spacing than before, should allow the speed limit to be raised slightly and the track to maintain a good alignment and top without constant work to maintain it.

At Wittersham the rotten, grounded wagon body next to the mess room was burnt and cut up leaving the tangle of concrete sleepers, beside the mess room, to be sorted and laid as a flat area into which a container has been placed. This provides secure storage for tools and other P. Way items.

An unexpected problem arose in May when it was discovered that the weigh beams on Hexden Bridge were rotten and not really capable of supporting the necessary weight. These were replaced by the mid-week gang who are normally to be found out patrolling the line.

At Tenterden a new P. Way gang, under Martin Hockley, has formed to look after this site and the track below the station. They have cleared the backlog of spot re-sleepering and re-timbering from Tenterden yard down to the top of the Wet Cutting. In addition they have carried out fishplate greasing from the Tenterden end. Whilst on the journey they carried out some necessary remedial hand packing of the line immediately below Cranbrook Road. The main gang started out at the unheard of hour of 7.00am to renew this crossing one May Saturday. The check rails and chairs were needle gunned and swapped from side to side. The road was then tarmacadamed again all well within the time scale set for the job, which led to complaints when more work was scheduled to keep them all occupied!

Signal & Telecomms Engineering

Activity has concentrated heavily on the sorting and clearance of the old wooden

workshop building at Tenterden behind the buffet. This was erected (second-hand) in 1978 for the Carriage and Wagon Dept. and was 'passed down' to the S&T around eight years ago after the new C&W shed opened. Time and a damp environment under trees have led to the building deteriorating to an unusable condition, and demolition was carried out by the Community Programme staff during the last week of May. In order to carry this out, it was necessary to move the S&T staff coach further along the Back Siding, a vehicle which has not moved for around 5 years, and has to be moved with extreme care, due to certain parts having been removed to repair the active Maunsell coaches.

The site is being cleared thoroughly in preparation for the new workshop to take its place. Assistance with fitting out of the new building will be welcomed, probably from August onwards; carpentry skills are particularly in short supply. If you would like to assist with this project, please contact Nick Wellington on 01622 844306.

During March, many of the point drive cranks & compensators were refurbished at Rolvenden, some of this work being contracted out and certain work being done in-house, the first time we have attempted such. This became necessary as this equipment was second-hand when installed, and has had fairly high usage in the five years since the box was commissioned. In future we shall refurbish fittings where necessary, before installation, to avoid this type of rework.

At Northiam, the telephone exchange trailer has been moved into its final position, and the remaining cable ducting installed. There remains some levelling off of the settled ground, and construction of the exchange cable chamber, before cabling can commence "from the outside".

At Tenterden upgrading of the underground telecomms cables continues, with a new 20 pair cable being brought into use from by the station entrance through to behind the buffet. This has enabled several old, damaged cables to be recovered.

Rolvenden

The major work carried out at Rolvenden

this winter was the re-building of the pit on No. 1 Road. This involved the replacement of much of the brickwork with steel girders. The problem of water ingress was also addressed with special water-proof concrete. Side pits were also installed to aid drainage and to give better access to the lower outside parts of vehicles. This work was somewhat protracted due to the restricted space available which meant that one side had to be demolished, dug out and complete before the other side could be started. Meantime work continues on some minor works around the site during the summer months.

Some work has been taking place towards planning developments for the field alongside the shed. Anyone interested in assisting with the planning and design work please contact Simon Long at Rolvenden.

Northiam

The installation of the BR S&T school at Northiam, where BR will be training techniques in modern track circuit installation and testing techniques, required a new electrical supply to be installed. An electrical cabinet (ex N.E.E.B.) was installed

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Hastings DEMU arriving at Northiam, Summer 1994. Is this part of the diesel pipe dream (sic)?

alongside the water column to act as a mains intake and a water treatment plant will be installed in its spare compartment.

Community Action Project

The scheme is sponsored by Hadlow College and is intended to help the long term unemployed return to work. The link with the K&ESR was set up in June 1994 since when a succession of participants, who stay for a maximum of six months, have provided help in many areas. Our railway has proved to be a popular project as the wide variety of work available has enabled most people to find something to suit their capabilities. Every week they spend two and a half days at the Railway and a half day at Hadlow exploring employment prospects. The full time supervisor is Peter Davies and the authorised establishment is fifteen though in practice the team has seldom exceeded ten.

Just some of the tasks achieved include the design and installation by Bob MacKenzie of an air supply system for power tools in the C&W workshop. Welding, bricklaying and concreting for the new washout pit at Rolvenden by Dave Parker and Roger Bratton. Painting and installation of the smart new whistle signs by Trevor Ashenden, who is now repainting Tenterden Station. Lorraine Wright and Kate Mackechnie have helped out with the Pullman and buffet as well as painting and

general repair work.

Almost everyone has been involved with repairing and painting the gates and fences at Tenterden, Rolvenden Level Crossing and the new look Cranbrook Road. Mark Wallis has dug many of the fire precaution barrels into the ground, improving their security as well as lineside tidiness. On 23rd and 24th May Dave Terry, Mark Wallis, Stuart Grant and Peter Manktelow demolished and cleared the site of the old S&T workshop at Tenterden, a difficult and backbreaking task. Many more small but significant jobs have contributed to an overall improvement in presentation at these locations.

Attention will soon be turned to similar improvement at Wittersham Road and Northiam where it is intended to complete as many as possible of the jobs outstanding since the station was reopened. Casual volunteers are welcome to join in on every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday when continuity of work and a good crack can be assured.

Forestry and Conservation

Over the past few months, at the request of Carriage and Wagon and Permanent Way, the undergrowth and lichen that have grown around the old stock stored at Tenterden Head Shunt has been cut back and burnt. At the other end of the line, at

Northiam Head Shunt, more of the old track has been cleared so that even more old stock, which had been at Wittersham could be stored.

Work has also continued on removing or cutting back the trees that have grown under the telephone wires between Oxney Straight and Newmill Bridge.

It is gratefully acknowledged that John Talbot from Selectokil donated the time and chemicals for this year's weed killing along the line, which was carried out on 12th May. The evidence of this important work cannot always be appreciated when one is enjoying the journey as it is the track under the train and several feet either side which is sprayed, which cannot be seen from the carriage window.

The grass banks at Tenterden and alongside the bungalow at Cranbrook Road Crossing have been strimmed back not only to improve these areas, but also in an effort to reduce the risk of lineside fires.

Operating

The season has begun with the usual busy weekends at Easter, VE Day and the 21st Anniversary. In short the operating department has coped superbly with all the problems presented to it. Filming and photographic charters have kept everyone busy whenever passengers have not been around.

In May an MK1 TSO previously owned by John Liddell was delivered to its new owner at Robertsbridge Station. The opportunity was taken to also deliver the G.M. saloon owned by the Rolling Stock Group. This was a complicated procedure involving two low loaders and a hired crane as normal off loading facilities were not available at Robertsbridge. The entire job took over 12 hours to complete and thanks are due to all those who took part.

On 26th March the Rolvenden fireman and cleaners Mutual Improvement Classes visited our colleagues on the Bluebell Railway to see how the other half live and see big engines at work. As usual the K&ESR seemed to try and take over in the best possible taste!

Tenterden Railway Press

It is a year since the official re-opening of the new print room at Tenterden, after the transfer from Northiam. The success is evident by the number of visitors who stop by to watch. The railway is now again able to charge for platform tickets, in part due to the print room.

Turnover to the end of May was £1,500 compared to a budget of £500. This is virtually all in-house for TRC or CSRE and the rates charged are about 50% of commercial rates. When it is realised that the press often runs only 1 day at weekends and Thursday evenings the turnover is a real achievement.

Whilst the success is welcome there is more to aim for. Some items are still printed by outside contract (the timetable and Pullman brochures for example) and so another press would be welcome. If any reader knows of a good condition second hand Heidelberg 10/15 platen then let us know at Tenterden Station. Some of these presses are still being put out to scrap despite the prices being asked for in commercial magazines.

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February 95

Drawn - Rolvenden Mess Room

1st	C A Lark	(81)	£55.00
2nd	Alan Dean	(341)	£30.00
3rd	Colin Edwards	(42)	£20.00
4th	Roy Ellis	(302)	£10.00
5th	Ros Debling	(103)	£5.00

April 95

Drawn - Northiam Station

1st	R Halliwell	(31)	£55.00
2nd	L G Hersey	(363)	£30.00
3rd	Mrs A J Rose	(288)	£20.00
4th	Dave Felton	(311)	£10.00
5th	E L Stockdale	(136)	£5.00

March 95

Drawn - Tenterden Station

1st	A J Clarke	(63)	£60.00
2nd	Frank Lambert	(385)	£35.00
3rd	Carol Heyes	(60)	£30.00
4th	Brian Remnant	(245)	£25.00
5th	M B Knott	(365)	£20.00
6th	Adrian Chapman	(237)	£15.00
7th	Laurie Cooksey	(93)	£10.00
8th	Dave Williams	(318)	£5.00

May 95

Drawn - Wealden Pullman

1st	A M H Baker	(190)	£55.00
2nd	Christine Moorman	(394)	£30.00
3rd	Alan Dean	(341)	£20.00
4th	Neil Rose	(159)	£10.00
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Back to the Future

Newly appointed Commercial Manager, Graham Hukins, sets out his vision of the way forward.

The news that I had "got the job" was still sinking in when I was asked to write a few words on the 'Commercial Way Forward' for the railway.

This article is the result, but is not so much a Commercial Way Forward as my views on how the *whole* railway can pull together to ensure continued success and future progress. There is no point in any one department working in isolation. Ideas may spring from a particular area but will only succeed with input from many, as, above all, we must ensure that every aspect of our product is right.

To this end, I believe the business must be commercially-led if we are going to earn the money that enables the railway to continue to function. We must remember that the market place in which we now operate is very different to that in 1974. The number

of tourist attractions in Kent practically doubled during the 1980's and a ride on a steam train today is not the novelty it was two decades ago, open access having enabled steam to return to many parts of the main line network. In short, the competition is far more intense, our visitors are more discerning and have greater expectations. We must try harder – we must sell more than a steam train ride, we must sell an 'experience' and to do that we need to adopt a particular style and create an atmosphere.

There are a number of styles we could choose and several types of atmosphere we could strive to obtain, however, it would seem appropriate to look first at our past and see whether that yields a viable option.

Fortunately, our position as Britain's first light railway has given us a rich history on



Graham Hukins, our new Commercial Manager, May 1995.

(R Berry)

which to build. The small country stations miles from anywhere, sharp curves and steep gradients that are all characteristic of the line, stem from its light railway roots and make the K&ESR unique amongst preserved railways.

In the past, there has been much debate about preserving a light railway or having a commercially successful one. I would venture that it is not a case of either/or – but quite definitely both. A well presented line that recaptures the atmosphere of a light railway will be commercially successful. Note, I am talking about the style of our operation, not about a rivet-by-rivet reconstruction of K&ESR as it was when the Colonel was on his death-bed in 1931!

For those of you that are not convinced that something as nebulous as style or atmosphere can be conveyed to the visiting public, let me mention a recent visit I made to the Great Central Railway. Express engines, double-track, extensive sidings, with long goods trains and stored coaches, large stations with several platforms, not to mention their literature, all convey the message 'mainline'. I see the K&ESR at the opposite end of the standard gauge spectrum – a classic rural railway, something unique and quite charming that passengers will want to visit time and time again.

I am sure we can achieve that goal – after all, the ingredients are already here in the form of the infrastructure I have already mentioned plus a fascinating collection of locomotives and rolling stock.

Colonel Stephens' talent for running 'jumble sale' railways with second-hand locomotives and coaches, meant that in the 1930's trains were often formed of 4 and 6 wheeled coaches, including an old carriage from the Royal train, hauled by a 'P' Class, 'Terrier' or ex-industrial saddle tank. Today, our trains include a rake of 4 and 6 wheelers, one of which is an old Inspection Saloon worked by ex-industrial saddle tank or the very same 'P' Class and it is not inconceivable that a 'Terrier' or two could be added to the list in the next few years. As you can see, in some areas, we are very close to our historical roots. What we must improve is the way we communicate these

facts to our visitors, so they go away not only entertained but educated and with a desire to come back and discover more.

Of course, today we need a proportion of larger trains with bogie stock to enable us to exploit specialist markets such as on-train catering and to provide facilities for the disabled. Similar trains used to run on the line, notably for hop pickers or, in the 1950's for rail enthusiasts. With a little effort, appropriate headboards etc, it would be possible for the 'mass market' area of our operation to resemble these types of train.

Undoubtedly, there are some special events and activities such as the Santa Specials and 'Friends of Thomas' weekends that are purely commercial undertakings and which bear very little resemblance to any era in the line's history. However, these occur for a limited period each year and generate a substantial amount of revenue, which can then be used to support the mainstream activities.

The key, with day to day trains and special events, is to make sure that we provide a high quality product, as this generates repeat business and good word of mouth – the cheapest form of advertising but one that money can't buy! We must therefore improve our presentation, in particular station site and lineside tidiness and ensure *all* our staff are smartly turned out – one "scruffy Herbert" can ruin the atmosphere created by half a dozen sets of polished buttons! And when it comes to destroying a carefully nurtured period scene, nothing surpasses the catastrophic effect of the seemingly all-pervading high visibility orange clothing – I know there are certain areas where there are very good safety reasons for donning such attire but station platforms, signal box balconies, brake-vans and locomotive footplates are not amongst them!

As I settle into my new role, I do not pretend to have all the answers; I have got some ideas but to bring them to fruition I am going to need a great deal of help. Every member can play a part and if we pull together our line will be the best light railway in the country.

Welcome Back to the Loco from Hell

Norwegian Mogul 376 has taken eighteen years to restore to service. In a two-part article Neil Rose continues his report.

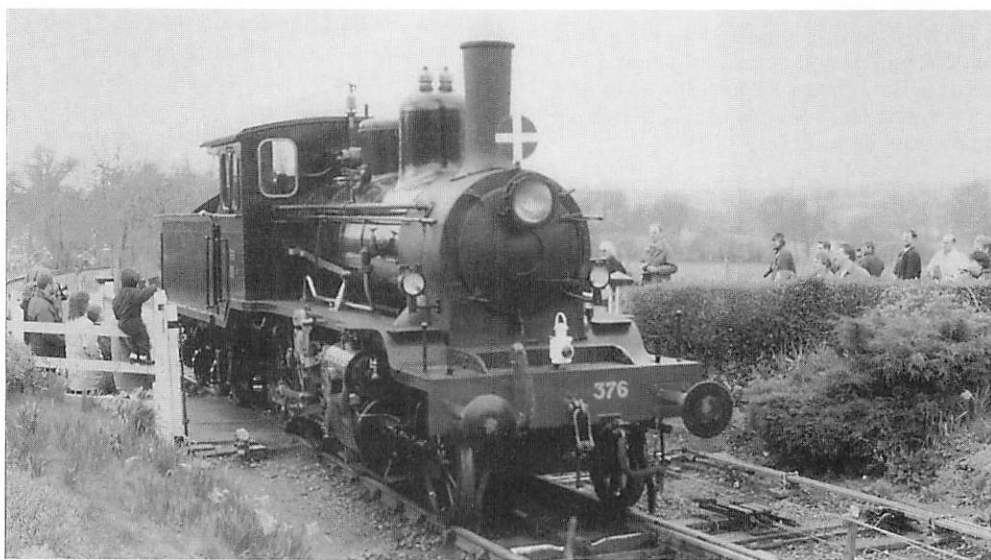
Part 2: 1989 -1995 Restoration & Running Again

The unexpected extra boiler work at Chatham was in danger of over-running the Trust's finances and there was concern that there would be insufficient funds to pay for further restoration work. The Tenterden Railway Company agreed to grant the Trust a loan to finish the boiler work. In the event Trust members ensured there was just sufficient money available to meet the bills as they came in and so the TRC loan was never required.

After the boiler's return to Rolvenden late in 1989 hopes were raised that reassembly and completion could be achieved in a short timescale. Every year brought hope of re-entry into service. That this was not so was in part due to the Railway's pressing need for a reliable fleet of large locomotives which committed scarce voluntary resources. It was also due to the multitude of tasks that remained to be done; indeed work on 376 never ceased. Whilst there was

some feeling that restoration would never be completed, one Trust member wrote "Deadlines should be regarded as expressions of hope rather than sacred cows. I look forward to seeing the engine running when it is ready to run – but not before".

One of the first tasks on return was to fit Adrian Landi's new ashpan which had to be made to clear the rear driving axle (no pattern existed since the old ashpan had long been discarded). A BR pattern rocking grate was also incorporated with an operating mechanism in and below the cab which did away with the hazardous levers on the offside running plate. The boiler had to be lifted once again (in May 1992) to finish the ashpan modifications and to remove the lower cab sides and rear ends of the running plates; all being badly wasted. Indeed, the whole of the old cab was virtually unrestorable and a completely new

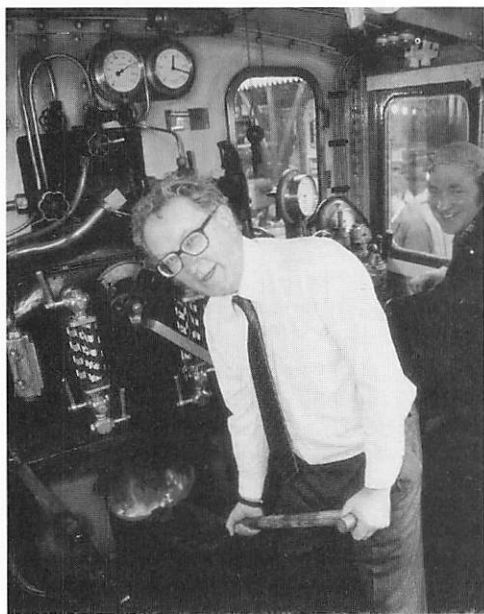


No 376 arrives at Tenterden for the re-commissioning ceremony, 5th March 1995.

(N S Rose)

one was later fabricated under the direction of John Clark. One good job was the removal of old grey paint from the coupling rods and elsewhere on the motion so that they would appear as burnished steel.

Trust members agreed at their 1991 meeting that the locomotive's livery would be black, with a simple red lining. The same year saw Adrian working on the smokebox into which much new plate had to be welded before inserting and testing the pipework and fittings. A new blast pipe was needed and so, typically, Adrian decided to make one himself. Starting with a pipe 9 inches in diameter and 1 inch wall thickness, he not only made the long taper



His Excellency Tom Vraalsen, the Norwegian Ambassador, helps Adrian Landi on the footplate of Locomotive No 376, 5th March 1995.

(R Berry)

into the nozzle but also a slight S-bend as the exhaust ports are not in line with the chimney. Fourteen superheater elements were ordered and fortunately there was sufficient time to return them to the makers as they twice failed to meet specifications. No resources were available to work on the tender which languished on Orpin's siding.

In 1992 the grate, ashpan and rocking

mechanism were completed and new copper work formed into shape. With the steam pipes fitted, hydraulic testing of the boiler did not now seem too far off.

But progress was still slow in 1993. At least the smokebox was completed, just awaiting the chimney. GWR pattern sliding firehole doors replaced the previous single hinged door and flap which were beyond repair and here John Houslander was chiefly responsible for making the door slides and operating mechanism by reference to those on the Pannier tank. The new cab was fabricated from scratch, sections being riveted rather than bolted together. Also the tender was at last put into the shed so that work could recommence. One small but vital matter to emerge was that after buffers had been fitted between engine and tender the drawbar was now too short, so a new one had to be ordered.

Spirits were raised at end-1993 when 376 became a top priority project at Rolvenden; the Railway was losing serviceable small locomotives as overhauls became due. Work started at a much faster rate and there was now real hope that a new target date for completion of late Summer 1994 could be realised. Remaining jobs included the fitting of two smaller air brake reservoirs to replace a large one between the frames for ease of access and maintenance. A crack in the left hand cylinder casting caused initial concern but was successfully repaired by Richard Crumpling.

The steam test was delayed until the boiler was ready for cladding so it was not until 19 March 1994 that 376 was steamed for the first time in 17 years. Two leaking flue tubes at the firebox tubeplate end and a weeping palm stay rivet were the only boiler problems found. We could not return to the original contractor as he was by now out of business, so Chatham Steam Restoration Company was contracted to re-anneal and expand all the flues in the hope this would cure the problem. A few steam pipe joints needed attention, as did an ejector and an injector, but otherwise everything else worked fine. The time had come to start making it look a proper locomotive again. Over the ensuing months lagging and cladding undertaken by Dave Brailsford

and his gang enveloped the boiler once the inspector was satisfied; the cab was completed, with reassembly of the motion being left until last.

Adrian still had much work to do on the tender: not least the compensating linkage for the brake gear had to be sorted out by attaching suspension points to the bottom of the water tank which involved lifting the tank from the frames yet again. Essentials such as water valves had to be assembled and lockers, steps and pipework completed. It was finally finished (except for painting) in September, balancing having been a time-consuming problem.

376 was propelled dead to Tenterden on 15 September 1994 for gauging tests and later went to Wittersham Road for the same purpose. Clearance between cylinders and platform at Northiam is minimal but 376 just fits: raising the rails a couple of inches should remedy the problem. Through September and early October the final jobs were completed so that 376 could be ready for the "Century on Rails" weekend on 15/16 October. Painting led by Peter Salmon and Tony Pearson took place right up to the last minute with Peter Salmon applying the lining.

Hopes of a triumphal return over the weekend were dashed a few days beforehand when the first run under its own steam did not go quite as planned. 376 could only barely move, expending vast quantities of coal and steam struggling around Rolvenden Yard. The consensus was that the piston and valve rings had somehow seized during their years of non-use and steam was escaping past them. The pistons would need to be removed for examination, but not until after the weekend. 376 was only to be seen in light steam about the yard. Later examination found absolutely nothing wrong with the rings but revealed an altogether more prosaic reason for the failure. 376 was once fitted with a coasting gear and sometime during restoration the plug valves had been removed and not replaced. Quite simply, steam was going straight up the chimney. Once the ports were sealed off the problem disappeared. Rumour has it that one old plug was found doing service as a doorstep

in a former trustee's home!

That problem solved, 376 went out on commissioning trials. The locomotive lived up to its old reputation as a free steamer and capable of hauling four coaches up to Tenterden. Another problem, however, manifested itself. The flues continued to leak and some small tubes also seeped when the locomotive had been working hard. Attempts at re-expanding the pipes were not satisfactory. So the decision was taken to adopt the continental practice of welding in the tubes which seems to have done the trick. Perhaps staff at Rolvenden had forgotten the locomotive arrived from Norway with welded tubes; Adrian should not have forgotten as he removed the originals!

376 has been prepared for service without rush over the winter. Residual tasks have seen the sanding gear piped up (it runs off compressed air with a sand hopper in a dome) and electrical components fitted. Not all original lights are reinstated but the headlamp, markers and cab lights all operate.

For the record the final restoration cost worked out at £38,000.

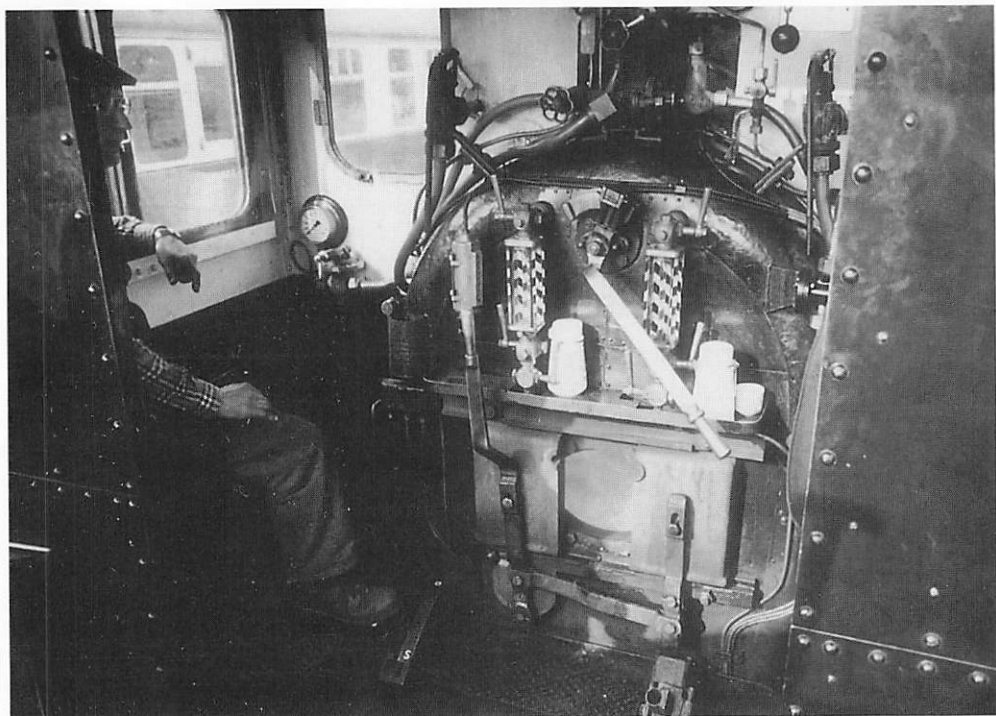
On 5 March this year 376 was commissioned by the Norwegian Ambassador, Tom Vraalsen, patron of the Trust. It has been a little embarrassing advising successive Ambassadors of forthcoming commissioning ceremonies and then never formally inviting them but at last we had made it. After a short ceremony Trust members and guests travelled to Northiam and back on a special train hauled by 376. The Ambassador and his daughter travelled on the footplate for the return trip. It was 18 years to the day since the locomotive opened the newly rebuilt Newmill Bridge heading a special train for Wittersham Road, then no more than a building site. Volunteers and the general public travelled behind 376 during the afternoon.

Since 5 March 376 has been in regular use and has lived up to everyone's expectations. Although restricted to three coach trains it has sailed up Tenterden Bank with ease. It is extremely light on coal, very free

steaming and the superheaters mean it is also sparing on water. Fireman can enjoy their seat for much of each trip. Above all it is a very handsome machine and it looks in keeping on the line.

It was good to see Adrian driving on recommissioning day when incidentally, he was given life membership of the Trust in recognition of his work and guidance. He may not like to admit that he last drove 376 in service 18 years ago. At least now there is a clock fitted in the cab to improve timekeeping as he is notorious for driving without a watch.

divided it was left until the last minute to decide whether the locomotive carried its NSB number only or displayed the name "Norwegian" as well. The Ambassador made it very clear that he would like to see 376 named and thought "Norwegian" entirely suitable. As to whether it should be prefixed "The Norwegian", he pointed out that his countrymen were notoriously bad at their grammar so its omission would not matter in the least. It has always been referred to as the Norwegian on the K&ESR and will undoubtedly still be so whether named or not. By the time this

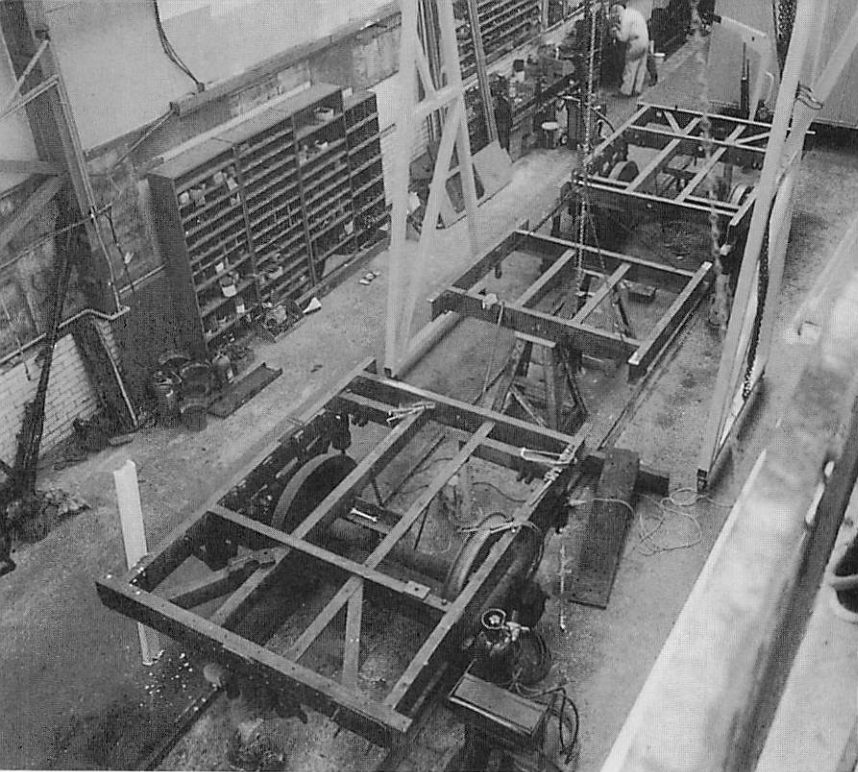


The spacious footplate of a tender engine is evident as Tom Featherstone relaxes on the fireman's seat of No 376. 30th April 1995.
(N S Rose)

376 did not carry a nameplate for the recommissioning. Two years ago there was a protracted debate amongst members over a suitable name. Several were proposed but no consensus reached until the name "Norwegian" was suggested. Nameplates were cast, then painted and polished by John Liddell. Subsequently there was concern in some quarters about the name's suitability. As Trust members have been

article is in print nameplates will be fitted at running plate level.

Finally, several people have been mentioned in this article. Inevitably many others have been omitted. To all, named and unnamed, the Trustees of the Norwegian Locomotive Trust express their grateful appreciation. The project has been well done.
Concluded.

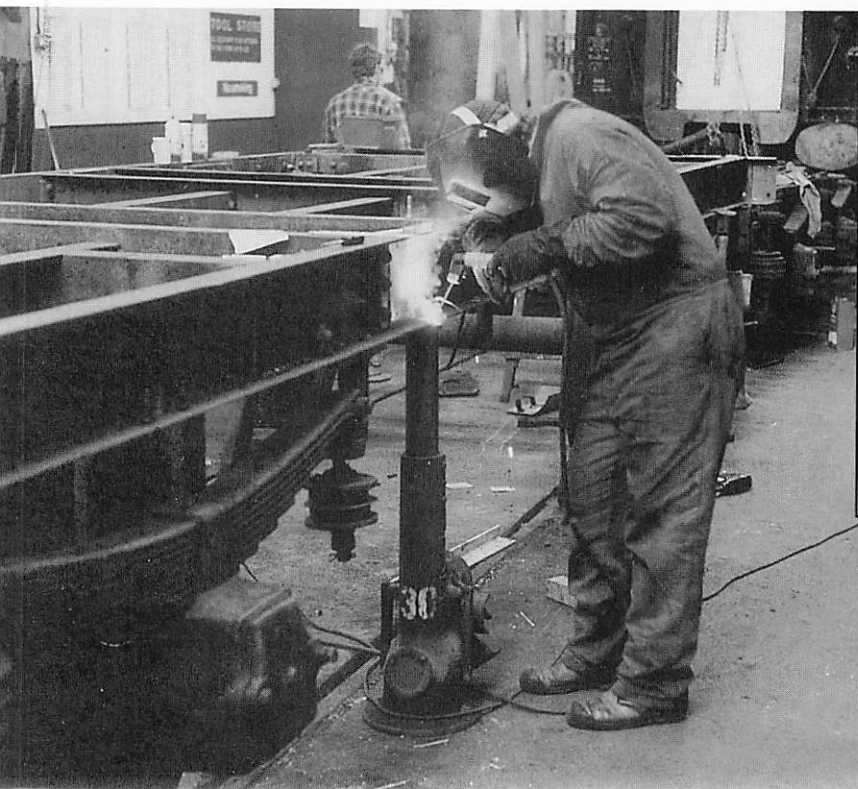


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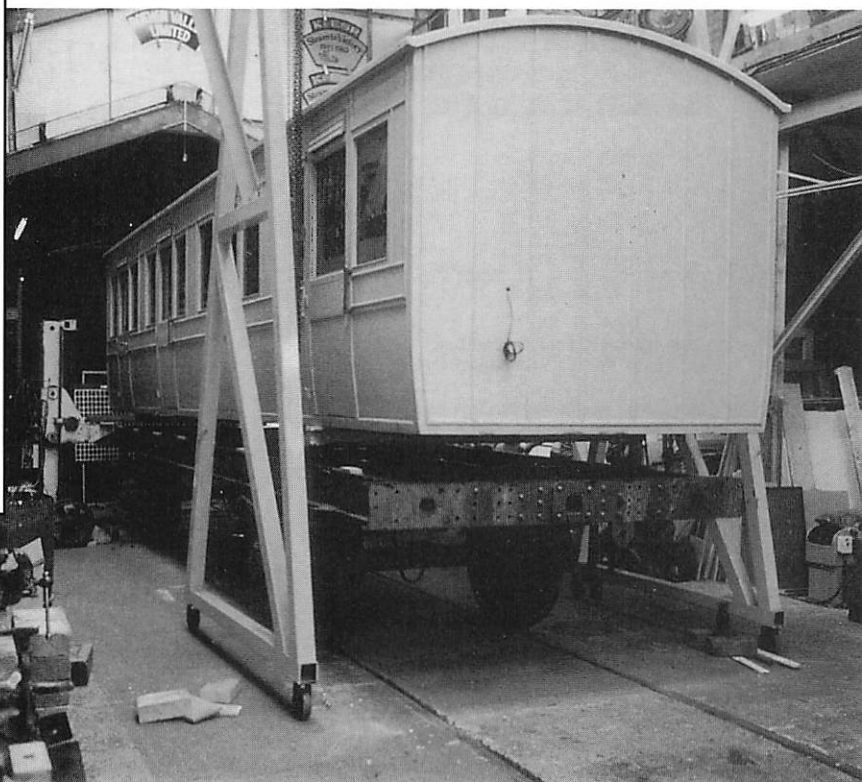
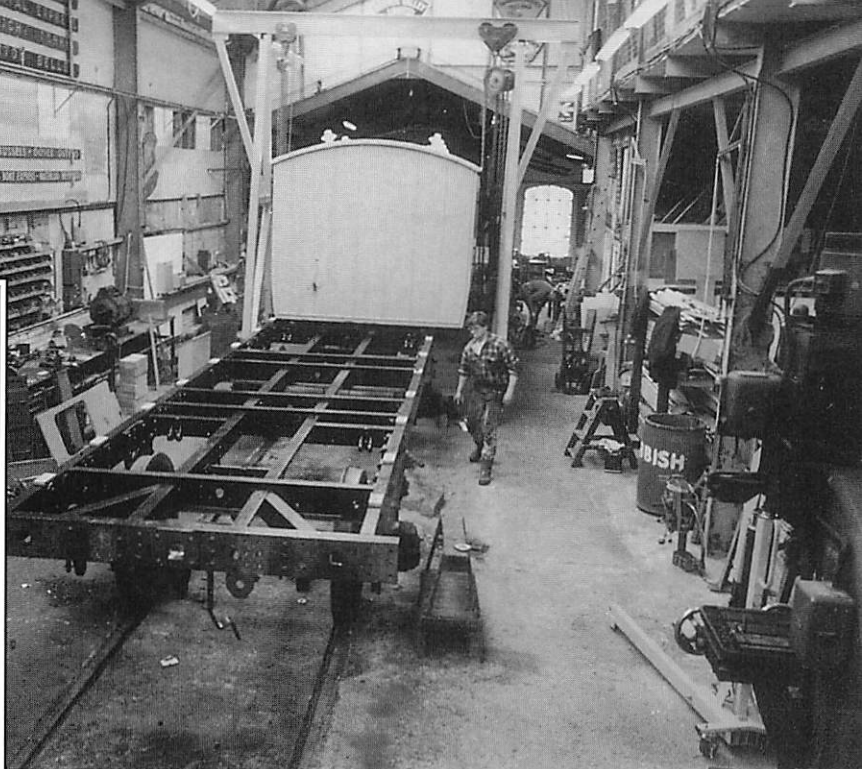
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Book Reviews

Colonel Stephens' Railways, by Stephen Garrett and John Scott-Morgan. Published by Irwell Press, price £7.95. Soft covers, 44 pages of text, liberally illustrated with photographs.

Colonel Stephens' involvement with internal combustion vehicles is well known to historians, but this is the first published work bringing together all known information on this aspect of his various lines. Stephens was highly innovative in this field and if his proposals for a Hornsby-Ackroyd compression ignited tractor on the Rye and Camber Tramway in 1895 had succeeded, he could have been accredited with the design of the first passenger carrying diesel locomotive in the world. In any event, the Wolseley-Siddeley car on the Selsey line in 1923 emerged as the prototype of his famous railbuses, to be followed by the Ford and Shefflex sets in the mid and late 1920's.

The Authors have been painstaking in their researches and their captioning of the photographs draws attention to a minutiae of detail which is often overlooked by the less experienced eye. The book also chronicles the K&ESR steam railcar, although some aspects of this vehicle's history still remain shrouded in obscurity. The humour associated with Stephens and his lines is not forgotten in this excellent little book – a world away from "Health & Safety" and the general mollycoddling of people today. There is a delightful anecdote which records the complaint of the Vicar of Criggion, the Reverend R. Brock, who arrived at Kinnerley Station, Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway, on 12th November 1912 to board the train, only to find that "I was put with another man and two women into the back part of an engine with only a screen between us and the fire — no roof and the sparks and smuts falling over us...". As a result, Stephens felt obliged to provide a tramcar trailer for the conveyance of the Reverend Gentleman and other passengers. A

worthwhile experience in itself, no doubt, but what would readers of this book give to ride to Criggion in the bunker of "Gazelle" today! **P.D.S.**

Porthmadog to Blaenau, by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith. Published by Middleton Press, price £9.95. Hard laminated covers, 96 pages of captioned photographs and introductory text.

This most recent offering from the Middleton Press in their Country Railway Routes series, chronicles the revival of the Festiniog Railway over the last 40 years in a much more detailed way than was possible in the publishers' earlier "Branch lines around Porthmadog" album. Many, possibly most, of the photographs have not been published before and there are scenes of dereliction before reopening in 1955 up until the present day. The problem of the deviation and construction of the new tunnel are dealt with in graphic detail. Some nostalgic scenes may never be seen again, such trains over Britannia Bridge. One wonders how many people know this section of track was used by the Simplex locomotive in the 1950's as a means of visiting the filling station! **P.D.S.**

Also received

Bogie Carriages of the South Eastern & Chatham Railway, by David Gould. Published by the Oakwood Press, 208 pages plus 48 pages of plates. Price £10.95

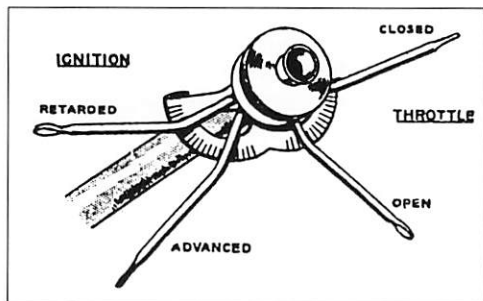
Mr Gould's latest book chronicles developments from the SER's first essays with bogies in 1878 to the corridor "Continental" stock of 1921, somehow managing to keep a continuous thread of narrative running through the necessarily detailed accounts of construction and traffic working. The later history of the carriages under Southern Railway and British Railways ownership is not ignored. **T.G.B.**

Tin Lizzies on Rails

Former K&ESR employee, Monty Baker, describes what it was like to drive the famous Back to Back Railmotors.

The Ford Railcars had a completely different method of driving than the Shefflex cars, the latter having a conventional gearbox, with clutch, and a foot accelerator.

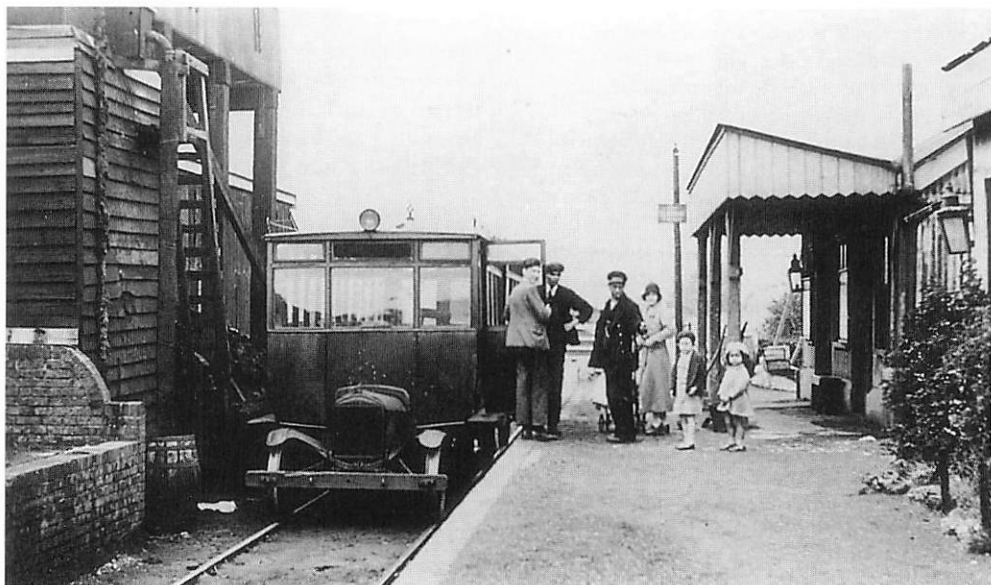
On the Fords the steering column was retained, minus the steering wheel, and shaft, leaving the hand operated advance and retard lever on the left, with the hand throttle lever on the right.



In the summer starting the Ford was not too bad, but in winter it was horrific. There was no such thing as anti-freeze, so radiators were emptied at night, and refilled with some warm water from a Loco in steam in the Shed in the morning, plus a handful of horse dung to seal the many leaks in the radiators.

The engine was 4 cyl. Bore 3³/₄" Stroke 4" Equal to 102mm or 2892cc. There was no oil pump, but the sump was the flywheel casing. As the flywheel revolved it splashed oil around the bearings, some being deposited into a small funnel on a forward sloping pipe that conveyed oil to the timing gears at the front of the engine.

Ford recommended an oil consumption of 1 gallon of engine oil to 500 miles, so the levels had to be constantly checked, especially at the start of the day. There was no dipstick, so the driver crawled underneath to check the two taps on the



Ford Railcar No 2 at Rolvenden c1934, L-R Monty Baker, Nelson Wood, Harry Simmonds, wife and family.
(Col. Stephens Historical Archive)

flywheel casing, a Max level, and Min level. As the oil filler was at the front of the engine it entailed more crawling to check when oil started dripping from the Max tap, then close it. Imagine that consumption, and checking on a car today.

Next job in the preparation programme was to top up the sand buckets, one each side of the drivers seat. A 1" bore iron pipe went through the floor by each sand bucket, down to the rail near the rear driving wheels. Each pipe was topped with a funnel, and each bucket contained a tin, or a chipped enamel mug with which the driver tried to pour an equal amount of sand down each pipe, whilst controlling the hand throttle with the inside knee of his right leg.

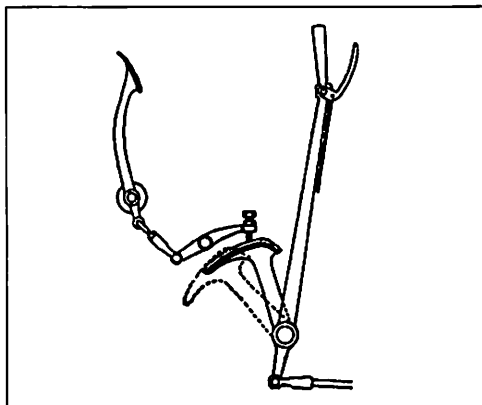
It was a difficult job to get from Rolvenden, up the bank to Tenterden on a frosty morning or if the rail was at all damp. Remembering that only one pair of the eight wheels were powered; on many occasions slipping was so bad that the journey to Tenterden was abandoned, and after a phone call to George Dobell to notify him, and check he had no passengers waiting, the first journey of the day to Robertsbridge would start from Rolvenden.

The manner in which the gearbox and clutch of the Ford Model T (for its day) was exceedingly ingenious and simple. The three foot pedals, all the same size, and from left to right were; Clutch, Reverse, Footbrake.

To introduce low gear the clutch pedal was pushed forward as far as it would go. It then tightened the contracting band on the low gear drum by means of cams, and brought this gear into operation for the purpose of climbing a steep hill, or moving away from a standstill.

To introduce the high gear the clutch pedal was allowed to come back towards the driver under the influence of the clutch spring. In this position the low gear brake band was released, and at the same time the clutch discs were brought closely into contact with one another and consequently furnished the drive.

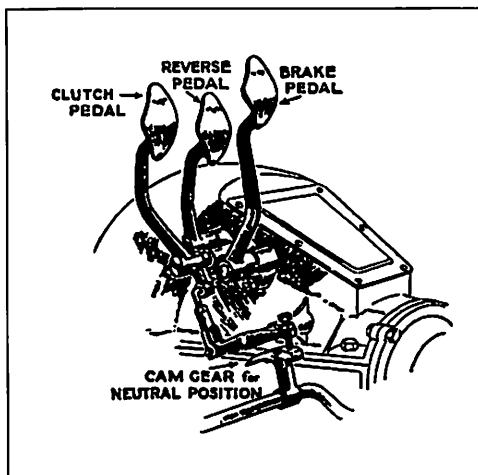
Midway between the low gear position and that in which top gear was engaged there was an intermediate point, at which the low gear was disengaged and the clutch was also out of action.



This was neutral, and in order to make this possible for this pedal position to be retained without requiring the driver to keep his foot down, a very clever interconnection was made with the handbrake lever, whereby the latter, on being pulled back, thus holding the vehicle stationary, inserted a small cam shaped arrangement under the clutch operating mechanism.

As you can see the handbrake was used for much more than holding the Railcars stationary.

The central pedal controlled the reverse gear which was brought into action exactly similarly to the low forward gear. It will be



obvious from the explanation that has already been given that when either of these gears was in engagement the top gear clutch must be completely out of action.

Therefore, before depressing the reverse pedal, the driver must see that his handbrake lever is in such a position that the discs are disengaged. Pressing down the reverse pedal would then permit the car to travel backwards.

In addition to the gears as described so far, the second Railcar set was fitted with the Supaphord Patented Auxiliary Gear Box, which gave an extra two gears forward, and reverse.

With very few cars on the roads, there were not many people with driving experience about, and the steam drivers, fitters and firemen, who had to drive the Railcars when they were introduced, had no experience of the Internal Combustion Engine, or Infernal as it was more commonly known at that time.

With no self starters, one very quickly learned that having mastered starting the thing, one did not stall it, as this meant setting up all the controls again and leaping off the platform into the four foot, ducking under the buffer beam, cranking it up, and climbing up on the platform again. This was often repeated several times, with various alterations of ignition, and hand throttle positions, before it restarted.

As I mentioned earlier horse manure was a vital part of the emergency equipment carried at all times, this also included the spanner which tightened the band drives on the gearbox. The terrific vibration on the radiators caused them to leak a lot, and whilst ample provision was made for carrying a good supply of petrol, it was vital to carry an even greater supply of water.

A return journey to Headcorn from Rolvenden on a hot summer's day was not unlike crossing the Sahara desert. Towing the parcels truck meant low gear all the way up the bank to Tenterden with a change of feet pressing on the clutch pedal occasionally to prevent your legs going dead. After boiling most of the way up the bank the radiator needed topping up for a

repeat performance up St Michaels bank, with luck making High Halden before topping up again.

Frittenden bank was the only obstacle coming back, albeit a tough one, with sometimes a fill up at the summit before proceeding on to Biddenden. No doubt readers of the Terrier have seen photos of Nelson Wood carrying a petrol can, maybe it was a petrol can, but it was an old one used for carrying water and was always kept in sight.

In addition to the foot band brake, which was mainly used for stopping at Stations, there was a wheel handbrake which applied a pair of cast iron shoes to the front pair of wheels. This was used when descending banks to save wear on the band brake.

In emergency such as suddenly being confronted by half a dozen big steers that had broken through the fence on to the track, the right hand rapidly wound the wheelbrake on, the left hand pulled the handbrake on, and the right foot pushed the footbrake on, after of course remembering to slam the hand throttle shut first.

A unique warning system that was used to warn traffic that the Railcar was approaching a level crossing, was a tubular whistle which was hinged to the end of the exhaust pipe, and normally held away from the pipe by a spring. A length of wire connected the whistle to a handle by the driver's seat.

What an ingenious idea I hear you say; It was, if you were going, for example, uphill towards the Cranbrook Road Crossing (ungated in those days), in low gear and nearly full throttle, the whistle produced a sound resembling a cage of startled budgerigars. In fact it scared all birds away for miles around.

It does not take a lot of working out what happened on the downhill crossing of Cranbrook Road trying to whistle with the throttle shut – Nothing! This was overcome by partially applying the brake, going into neutral and opening the hand throttle, pulling the whistle lever at the same time. Ready of course to stop if you saw any traffic coming.

Many first time passengers suffered severe trauma after hearing the chirruping banshee opening up beneath their feet.

Based on the standard 1st & 3rd Class Railway rating, the Ford Railcars came about 7th Class. The seats were made up of narrow wooden slats, covered initially by strips of thin carpet tied to the seat with tapes. This did help to cut down the impression of the slats on one's posterior a little. Unfortunately once the tapes had worn out, and they kept falling on the floor, other uses, such as doormats, were found for them.

Passengers who were brave enough to tolerate the cold (there was no heating on the Fords), usually carried an extra item of clothing to fold up as a cushion to prevent being branded on the rump. It was known for one driver to conjure up a mat with no tapes, that he had hidden under his own seat, for an elderly lady passenger, or a particularly pretty young one.

There were no demisters or windscreen wipers on the Fords, and it was very difficult for the driver on a very frosty first trip to see just where he was, it was a case of hoping that the hole he scraped through the ice on the windscreen at one Station would last long enough to see to the next Station.

The backrests on the passenger seats consisted of a 4" wide strip of wood attached to an iron frame, hinged to the base of the seat, enabling it to be moved according to your preference for a forward or rearward facing seat.

This did seem an unnecessary luxury, remembering that the Col. had been in at the design stage. I think he himself realised it later when watching passengers alighting from the Fords at the end of their terrible journey. They just did not know whether they were coming or going!

Lighting was very frugal. Fords only used a 6v system until well after the war, and the interior of the cars was illuminated by two bare 3w. sidelight bulbs. Only one headlamp was used to save the batteries.

Springing on the Fords consisted of one transverse spring across each axle. The

chassis was attached at the centre of each spring, front and rear with stops on the rear axle only to prevent excessive roll. This was very noticeable when stepping on to the running board at the front entrance door. A gusting side wind could cause severe nausea.

Headwinds made timekeeping difficult, when blowing on the vast flat front of the body, but certainly helped make up time on the return trip.

What a contrast to the automobiles of today. Can you imagine any driver tolerating an oil consumption of 1 gallon of oil for 500 miles. In those early days petrol was delivered to Rolvenden in 50gall. steel barrels at 1/- to 1/3 a gallon. In today's coinage 5p to 6p a gallon or approx. 1p per litre.

We hated them, but still repaired them, then cannibalised them, till they just could not run any further than the Hay Road at Rolvenden. Now they are no more than memories to me.

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Passengers to Pontyberem

Conversion of the BP&GVR to a Light Railway

Although the group of light railways managed from his Tonbridge office are what one usually thinks of as the "Colonel Stephens railways", they were by no means the only lines with which H.F. Stephens was involved. Particularly in the earlier part of his career, he was in demand as a consultant to advise on railway works, particularly when an application for a Light Railway Order was involved. One line employing his services in this way was the Burry Port & Gwendraeth Valley Railway, a mineral railway in South Wales which decided to start a passenger service.

opened in 1869, in part using the alignment of a former canal – which resulted in problems in later years because of the substandard dimensions of the old canal bridges and the steep gradients where the canal barges had been raised by inclines. As one might expect, flooding has also been a recurrent problem. A branch to Kidwelly was opened in 1873, connecting with the Gwendraeth Valleys Railway (an independent concern, associated with the Kidwelly Tinplate Works) and with the Great Western (which had been converted to standard gauge in the previous year). A



'Victoria', a Fairlie Patent 0-6-6-0T, built in 1866 and rebuilt to standard gauge in 1873 on a miners' excursion train of Pontyberem Colliery Co. wagons in the late 1890's.

(Col. Stephens Historical Archive)

In order to understand Stephens' involvement with the BP&GVR, it is necessary to know something of its earlier history, although as a detailed book on the subject by Mr R Bowen is to be published shortly, only an outline will be given here. Connecting the anthracite mines of the valley of the Gwendraeth Mawr in south east Carmarthenshire with the harbour at Burry Port near Pembrey, the "main line" of 13 miles from Burry Port to Cwmmawr was

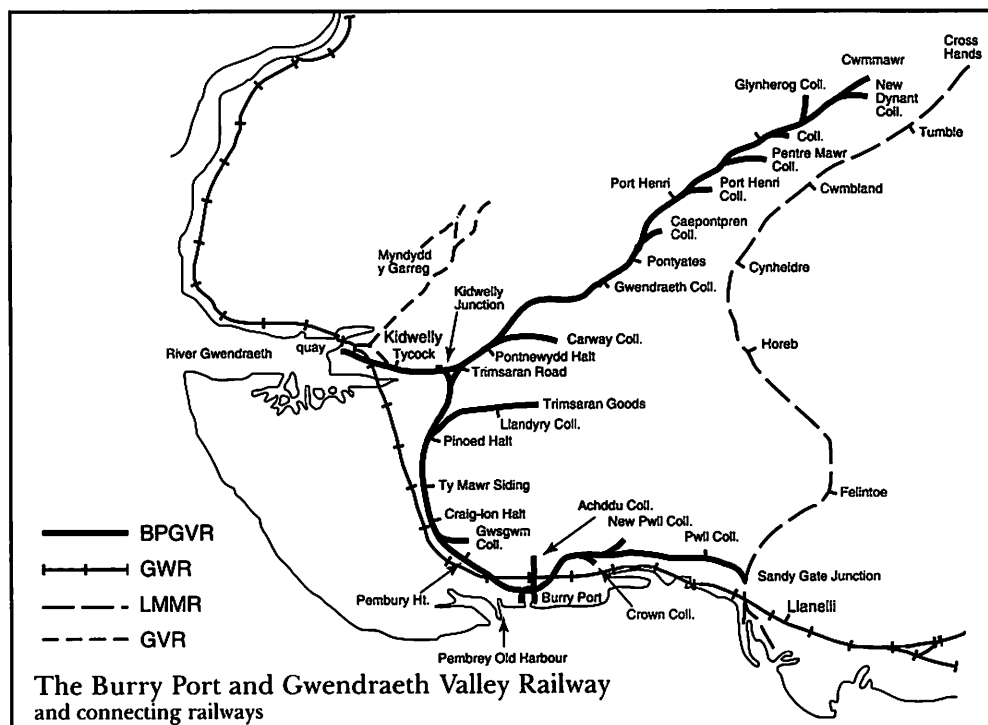
final extension took place in 1891, when tramroads between Pembrey and Llanelli were converted to provide a link between the BP&GVR at Burry Port and the Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway at Sandy Gate Junction. The total route mileage was then some 21 miles, including minor branches to collieries.

The railway pursued an unprofitable existence during the latter half of the 19th century, spending the years from 1881 to

1898 in the hands of a receiver. Coal traffic was worked by an assortment of locomotives, including two double-boilered Fairlie engines, 0-4-4-0 "Mountaineer" and a 0-6-6-0 "Victoria". From 1899, however, the BP&GVR shared in the prosperity of the South Wales coal industry and in 1900 was able to pay the first dividend on its ordinary shares, of 5%. This was raised to 6% in 1905 and to 10% in 1906 at which level it remained for the rest of the company's independent existence. From 1899 to the Grouping, the BP&GVR's affairs were in the capable hands of Mr Arthur Morgan, General Manager, assisted as the Engineer and Locomotive Superintendent first by Mr Robert Carr and then, from about 1907, by Mr John Eager. Considerable improvements to the track were made, and the collection of miscellaneous locomotives were replaced between 1900 and 1907 by seven 0-6-0ST engines, two from Chapman & Furneaux and the rest from Avonside. One of the Avonside engines, No.2 "Pontyberem" of 1900, was sold in 1914 and has, remarkably, survived to the present day to be preserved

by the Great Western Society at Didcot. Incidentally, one of the old locomotives, a Manning Wardle 0-6-0ST of 1881, "Cwm Mawr", went to Avonside in part exchange for a new locomotive of the same name and was resold by them to the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway, where it became No. 3, "Weston".

The line had no powers to carry other than coal and goods traffic, but towards the end of the 19th century the colliery companies requested the railway to carry miners to and from the pits. It was agreed in 1899 that each colliery should pay £2 10s a week for a special train leaving Pontyberem every day at 4.45pm (with, presumably, a corresponding working up the valley in the morning) and calling at each colliery. The carriages seem to have been owned by the collieries rather than the railway, although the latter did consider buying one in 1904 for the princely sum of £20 – which may indicate the general standard of accommodation. On Thursdays, one of colliery coaches was run to carry the pitmen's wives to market, and passengers



seem, also to have been accommodated in the brake vans of coal trains, a charge of sixpence being levied for carrying some small item of luggage, in lieu of a passenger fare.

Further unofficial carriage of passengers occurred in connection with the "Mabon's Monday" holidays. These holidays were named after the bardic title of William Abraham, a Liberal MP and the first president of the South Wales Miners' Federation, who had been instrumental in negotiating the closure of the pits on the first Monday of each month – largely as a device for restricting production of coal. The miners used the day to attend union meetings while their families visited the seaside, and it was customary to run free trains to carry them. These trains consisted of open colliery wagons, cleaned and provided with wooden benches by the men, with ladders to enable the passengers to climb in and out.

Such proceedings were unlikely to meet with the approval of the Board of Trade, and the company was severely criticised by the Inspecting Officer, Colonel Yorke, following a collision between a colliers' train and a light engine near Burry Port in August 1903, when one person was killed. Despite this, and despite a series of petitions and resolutions from the communities of the Valley, calling for a passenger service,

the directors were very doubtful where the potential traffic would justify the cost of conversion. Eventually, in 1908 the secretary, Mr Seaton Taylor, met officials of the Board of Trade and the Light Railway Commissioners to find what would be involved in working parts of the line as a light railway, under the Light Railways Act of 1896. When he reported the results of the interview to the April meeting of the directors, it was decided that "with a view to ascertaining the probable cost, an Engineer of experience in similar applications should be consulted". One of the directors, the Hon Sidney Peel, agreed to make enquiries, and as a result, Holman F. Stephens was asked to inspect the line, to report on what was needed to introduce a passenger service from Burry Port to Pontyberem, to estimate the probable cost. His report was ready in June, and Stephens attended the Board meeting in July to discuss it. Matters proceeded apace, and by the end of the year an application for a Light Railway Order had been deposited and Stephens had agreed to send a representative to carry out a detailed survey and prepare plans of the new works, which encompassed not only the main line from Burry Port to Pontyberem but also most of the Kidwelly branch.

Only two objections to the proposed Order were received by the Light Railway



Burry Port terminus soon after it opened in 1909. The convenience was later built where the name board is and the run-round loop was re-aligned.
(Col. Stephens Historical Archive)

Commissioners. These were from the Llanelli Urban District Council, which requested that passenger services should be extended to the line from Burry Port to Sandy Gate Junction and Llanelli, and from 103 residents of the Pontyberem district, who signed a petition asking for the service to be extended beyond Pontyberem to Cwmmawr. The Commissioners considered that the BP&GVR could hardly be required to extend its proposals, and as no other objections had been received, they recommended approval of the application without a local public inquiry being held.

Meanwhile, tenders were accepted for signals to be supplied by Tyer & Co. and electric staff equipment by the Railway Signal Co. Stephens was not responsible for the provision of rolling stock for passenger trains, which was arranged by Morgan and Eager, and on their advice, the Board agreed to start the passenger service with a new locomotive, a Hudswell, Clarke 0-6-0 side tank costing £1,670 (it was delivered as No. 8, "Pioneer") and ten secondhand carriages (in need of repair) from the Metropolitan Railway for £600. The carriages were all straight-sided, 8-wheeled,

8 compartment thirds, made redundant by electrification. They were lighted with acetylene gas, using individual gas generators on each carriage, and as this system was similar to that adopted on the Kent & East Sussex and the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire, it is likely that Stephens gave some unrecorded advice. Last but not least, the Board approved Stephens' proposed fee of £400 plus expenses (his eventual account was for £464-0-1d).

In the hope of keeping the expenses to a minimum, Stephens wrote on 19 March 1909 to a Mr Stokes of the GWR at Paddington:

"I am engaged in the reconstruction of this line which has a Junction with you at Burry Port. May I ask you if I can be favoured with an occasional pass between London and Burry Port pending the reconstruction?" The request was somewhat brusquely declined.

Nonetheless, work proceeded during the first half of 1909. The station buildings at Burry Port, Pontyates and Pontyberem, modest corrugated iron structures typical of Stephens' railways, were built by Powell &



One of the BP&GVR Avonside 0-6-0 saddle tanks, apparently without the benefit of vacuum brake, entering Pontyates with a passenger train for Burry Port. (Col. Stephens Historical Archive)

Co.; a dispute with the Great Western over the ownership of part of the site of the BP&GVR's Burry Port terminus delayed construction of that Station (it was eventually resolved, some months after the new station opened, by an exchange of land). Tyer's bill was rather higher than originally expected, as additional signals were provided on the Kidwelly branch. Stephens sent down a Mr Burfoot to do the signal wiring, but he seems to have fallen foul of the BP&GVR management for reasons now unknown.

The Light Railway Order was confirmed by the Board of Trade on 30 June 1909, and the opening was fixed for the Bank Holiday Monday, 2 August. The BP&GVR Board decided to dispense with ceremony, but to allow Mr Morgan to spend £5 on entertaining the press to luncheon (not a large sum even in those days) and to give the employees an extra day's pay. None the less, many local people crowded the trains for their first official ride on the railway. A photograph shows Stephens standing proudly beside the first passenger train from Burry Port.

Four down and three up passenger trains were offered between Burry Port and Pontyberem on weekdays only, with an extra train each way on Saturdays. These trains were third class only and used four of the ex-Metropolitan Railway carriages (Nos. 1 to 4), while the remaining six carriages were used for workmen's trains, which in addition to serving collieries on the main line also ran over the Kidwelly branches as far as Ty Coch Halt. The new service proved a success, with over 10,000 passengers having been carried by the end of August. The Directors were sufficiently confident to approve the purchase of another new locomotive (No.9) from Hudswell, Clarke (despite No.8's propensity to run hot), and to seek further secondhand carriages. A modest improvement in passenger amenities was made, with expenditure of some £52 on lavatories approved in December 1909 and two old colliery coaches being bought at £5 apiece to be used as shelters. Ponthenry also seems to have acquired a station building at about this period; built in brick it was otherwise

similar in size and style to the earlier corrugated iron examples.

Mr Morgan also arranged for the printing of a poster advertising the trains, whose spirited design included a map of the railway and its connecting lines, surrounded by vignettes of the docks and outer harbour at Burry Port, the stations at Burry Port, Pontyates and Pontyberem, the company's offices, and two Welsh dragons. This expenditure was offset to some extent by the receipt of £45 per annum for advertising on the stations and in the carriages.

Despite the petition which has been submitted even before passenger services had opened to Pontyberem, asking for an extension of the Light Railway Order to Cwmmawr, it took the Directors some time to decide whether to go ahead. The main reason for this was that the gradient of the old mineral line was as steep as 1 in 14 or 15 where the original canal had used a cable worked incline, and the tracks would clearly require expensive rebuilding to allow passenger trains to run. However, in the first half of 1910, it was decided to purchase the land for a realignment so that the gradients could be eased little by little. Stephens was again called upon to advise on the requirements for a Light Railway Order for the Cwmmawr extension, although not for extensions to Kidwelly and Sandy Gate, which had also been requested. His first report was submitted in September 1910, a preliminary report with plans and sections in February 1911, and detailed estimates and plans in March 1911. Incidentally, a fee of 150 guineas plus out-of-pocket expenses was agreed for Stephens' work on the Cwmmawr extension.

The Light Railway Order for the extension was confirmed on 4 October 1911. By this date, the purchase of land for the realignment of the track and for the terminus at Cwmmawr had been completed, and on Stephens' advice the contract for the additional signalling work had again been awarded to Tyer & Co.. Progress with the regrading work was, however, slower than hoped, although more men were to be taken on in the spring to supplement the 25 being employed on the project over the

winter of 1911-12. In the hope of reducing costs, the directors asked Stephens whether the Board of Trade was likely to sanction a gradient steeper than 1 in 40. The answer was evidently negative, as 1,000 yards at a gradient of 1 in 40 was eventually achieved. Other works required for the extension included the provision of a single platform and the usual corrugated iron booking office cum waiting room at the terminus at Cwmmawr, while at Pontyberem a second platform was added to make it a passing place.

The extension was inspected for the Board of Trade on 14 January 1913 by Colonel C. Drewitt, who pronounced himself entirely satisfied. It was opened on Wednesday 29 January, the *Llanelli & County Guardian* reporting that "the first train left Burry Port at 9.45, to which was attached the Company's Saloon, with the General Manager (Mr Arthur Morgan), the Engineer (Mr J Eager) and others. The station at Cwmmawr was decorated for the occasion, and the train entered with grand salute of detonators. A large number of people witnessed the arrival, and many patrons availed themselves of travelling on the first day of the opening. Great credit is due to Mr Morgan, the general manager, and Mr J Eager, the engineer, for this improvement". No doubt the local paper considered it more politic to award the credit for this achievement to a Burry Port man than to an English Consultant, but it is to be hoped that Stephens had at least been invited to join the official party in the saloon. This was, incidentally, an ex-Lambourn Valley Railway four-wheeled vehicle with open balconies, which the BP&GVR seems to have used only for officers. Three sister vehicles were sold by the Lambourn Valley Railway to the Selsey Tramway.

Passenger traffic was buoyant during and immediately after the Great War, and further carriages (secondhand from London & South Western and North London Railways) and locomotives were acquired to handle it. However, in 1921 it was badly affected by a national coal strike which lasted the three months and gave a foretaste of the more serious problems which were to follow in the 1920s and 1930s.

Year	Third Class	Workmen	Total
1910	110,447	255,672	366,119
1915	158,024	271,644	429,668
1919	187,377	355,944	543,321
1920	190,972	347,808	538,780
1921	116,970	312,332	429,302

On 1 July 1922, the BP&GVR became part of the Great Western Railway, as a subsidiary company in terms of the 1921 Railways Act.

The collection of secondhand carriages was in poor condition, especially the stock used for workmen's trains which had broken windows and even missing doors. It was soon withdrawn and replaced by standard low-roofed GWR four-wheeled carriages dating from the 1890's, those used for miners' trains being painted plain brown and having only wooden seats. An interesting coincidence was that some of these carriages had been built for London suburban services and so had round-topped doors like those of the Metropolitan stock they had superseded. By the 1930's the GWR's supply of old four-wheelers was running low and the company had no bogie stock suitable for the line, as the maximum height allowed was only 11ft 6in, compared with 13ft 6in on most of the rest of the GWR system. Swindon Works therefore built a batch of bogie stock specially for the line in 1939. This composed six brake thirds and one third, with low arc roofs but otherwise similar to the steel-panelled suburban stock being built at the period. The best of the four-wheelers continued in use, running with the bogie stock until passenger services ceased.

The total number of passengers had fallen to 83,965 in 1938 and to only 35,645 (mainly miners) in 1950, and so it is not surprising that British Railways decided to withdraw passenger services on 21 September 1953. What is perhaps more surprising is that much of the system remains in use for coal traffic to the present day, as outlined by R.C. Riley in the Winter 1992 edition of the *Tenterden Terrier*.

Tom Burnham

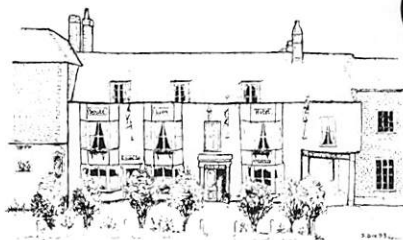


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Letters to the Editor

Locomotives

Sir - In the Spring 1995 issue of the 'Terrier' I wrote expressing my concern at the movement towards introducing main line diesel locomotives to the K&ESR. The Editor in fact printed a pre-emptive reply from the Operating Director attempting to justify this course of action.

Nothing in the reply from Mr Lewis causes me to modify my opinions which I know are shared by a large number of the active membership.

The advisability of diesel standby power is not disputed, but we have had this for many years in the form of the Class 14, No.49, with a second loco potentially available. With a tractive effort equal to a small Bulleid Pacific and a top speed of 40mph they are ideal for our purpose. Why do we need anything bigger?

Similarly, the Class 03, No.46, has been doing invaluable work at Tenterden as a C&W shunter and has also acted as station pilot on busy weekends.

Apart from the return to service of certain steam locomotives and passenger stock the K&ESR has been going steadily nowhere since the re-opening to Northiam and financially we have been racing downhill. I am convinced that this will continue to be the case unless we adopt a concerted plan to do what we are best at, the running of a small period country railway. Irrelevancies such as the acquisition of large diesel locomotives out of personal interest should be firmly resisted. If the Board do not have the willpower to enforce such discipline we will continue to be dragged down into a morass from which we will find it extremely difficult to extract ourselves.

D.J Strivens Tenterden, Kent

Sir - I think the Spring issue No.66 of the *Tenterden Terrier* is the most distressing that has ever been issued. We are told that our railway now owes nearly £400,000 which costs us nearly £1,000 a week to service. I do not see how we are ever going to repay

such a massive debt and continue with the extension to Bodiam etceteras.

But the most serious threat which has arisen and which seems to be increasing with every report is the introduction of diesel locomotives. We seem to have been invaded by a group of diesel enthusiasts who have been allowed to dump their locomotives on us, some of which are apparently in need of repair. Are these repairs to be dealt with by our workforce which is already struggling to deal with our own steam locomotives, 9 of which are still awaiting repairs for one reason or another. None of the Terrier locomotives seem to be in service.

The letter from D.Strivens in the Terrier gives a good description of what is going on and I agree with everything he says. A reply by the Operating Director, Chris Lewis, to the Strivens letter tells us that the diesel policy was put together by a sub-committee. I would suggest that the sub-

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committee, which consisted of both pro and anti diesel members, had no authority to agree to anything, let alone to agree to what amounts to the take-over of our railway by diesel enthusiasts. We are not told how many pro and anti diesel members were present at the meeting. I wonder why!

Furthermore it appears that one of the diesel supporters is a member of our Board of Directors. We are also told that a D7594 Trust has been set up presumably to further the interests of the diesel supporters and among the shareholders appears the name of the Chairman. What hope have we, the ordinary members (in my case since 1968) to save our railway from what I think is an unwanted intrusion into our Steam Railway. I would be interested to learn what benefit will accrue to our railway by intrusion.

B J King Aylesford, Kent

Vintage Carriages

Sir – May I, through the pages of the 'Terrier', remind TRC members of the Adopt-a-Coach scheme operated by Carriage and Wagon department. Under the scheme, persons or groups who volunteer are responsible for the week to week cleaning of a Vintage vehicle of their choice. 'Adopters' are expected to:

- Be available on a regular basis (this is where a group would come in handy – you could organise your own roster).

- Maintain the interior and exterior of the vehicle to an agreed high standard of presentation.

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Tuition in cleaning techniques will also be available if necessary. If you would like to learn how to spot simple faults and report them to the Carriage Examiners that can be arranged too.

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If you are interested in this scheme please

write to Andy Fielder, Vintage Carriage Restoration Foreman, Carriage & Wagon Department, Tenterden Town Station, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6HE.

Nick Pallant

Secretary Friends of Vintage Carriages

Is It All Necessary?

Sir – As one of the original founders of the old Kent & East Sussex Railway Preservation Society I have read the many comments on the Railway's public image and future direction which have appeared in recent issues of 'The Terrier'.

Although a traditionalist myself, I feel that good arguments have been put forward for the use of modern traction on the Railway, and I am quite sure that Col. Stephens would, indeed, have purchased equipment such as the Hastings Diesel unit if he were still running the line today, although I suspect that he would have applied the K&ESR livery and lettering to such stock when it became due for repaint rather than perpetuating the livery of a former owner. I do feel that it is regrettable that although the K&ESR is the only preserved railway on standard gauge in the country with its own identity there is not a single item of coaching stock on the railway now in the line's own distinctive livery.

I would, however, like to support the members who have criticised excessive expenditure of signalling installations on the Railway. Whilst I am aware that the Health & Safety Executive (Railway Division) has to approve signalling arrangements, I understand they do not normally insist on excessively complex systems, and will approve simplified schemes if these are appropriate to their circumstances. In the case of Northiam, the existing layout, in which points and signals are operated from a ground frame, has already been approved, and operated successfully for several years. Why, therefore, must large sums of money be wasted on building another signal box at Northiam, the effect of which will be to further dilute the light railway image?

Robin W Doust

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

the White Hart



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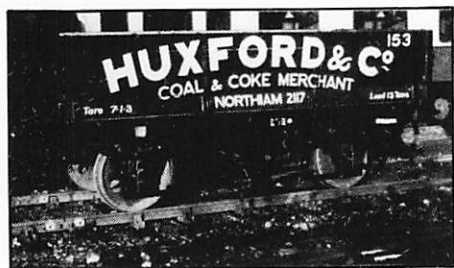
THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

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The Last Days of the Headcorn Extension

Part II

In the last issue, Doug Lindsay recounted how he became involved with the lifting of the track on the erstwhile Headcorn Extension, and how this lengthy process was achieved. He now continues the story of his experiences.

The capacity of the bogie-bolster dictated that only about three lengths-worth of sleepers could be accommodated safely before we had to run to Biddenden to unload and this operation was equally noisy and dangerous! The shorter of the two sidings at Biddenden, the one immediately behind the platform, was the unloading area for sleepers, so on arrival back at Biddenden the train was reversed into this siding. Once stationary, two steel hawsers, which were affixed to the country end of the bolster wagon and lying loose beneath the sleepers and coiled up at the front end, were thrown over the pile of sleepers and attached to two steel piles driven into the ground by the earth buffer stop. A shout

was raised to ensure everyone was clear, then the train was sharply pulled away, the hawsers thereby pulling the sleepers off the rear of the bogie-bolster wagon again amid much noise of splitting, tumbling timber and resultant dust and dirt flying in all directions. The act of all these sleepers, with chairs attached, being dragged off the back of the wagon day in and day out did not do the exposed buffers much good at all and by the end of the contract they were in a very sorry state. Having deposited the sleepers on the siding and reversed slightly to allow the hawsers to be detached and replaced along the floor of the wagon, we pulled forward alongside two steel bodied wagons which were berthed on the second siding. One of the gang then threw the fishplates and bolts into one of the wagons whilst another member threw the timber keys onto a great stockpile of these keys which were eventually sold off to locals for



Biddenden Station slumbers devoid of track at the end of 1955 and well before eventual conversion to a dwelling.

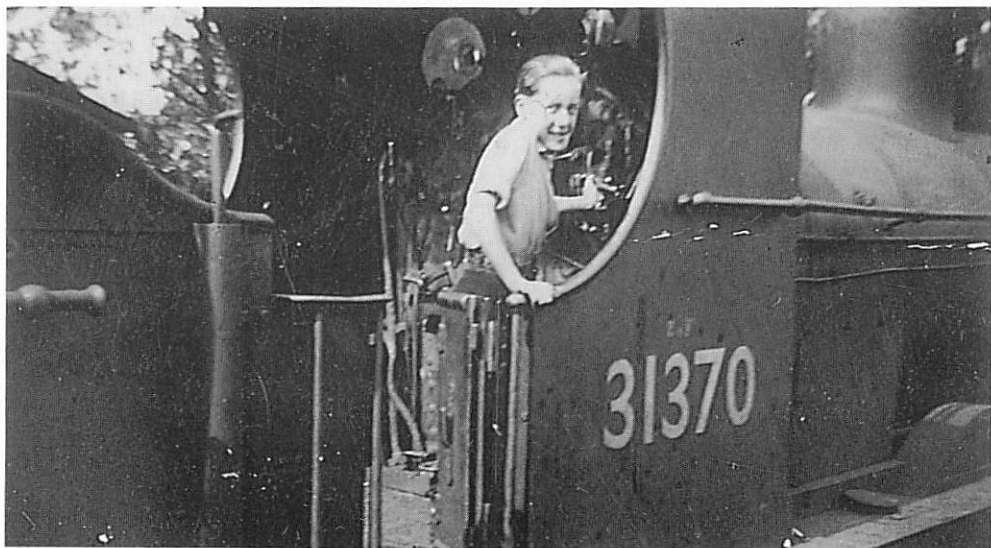
(Doug Lindsay)

firewood, and very good fuel they made too as they had been pressure soaked in creosote prior to being installed in the track. In fact I used to take some home each evening and they lasted throughout the next winter on our lounge fire! Having now unloaded the train of all materials, we would proceed back onto the 'main line' and reverse down the line again to the lifting site. I had also now gained the job of flagman on Biddenden Crossing each time we passed over the then B2078 (now A274), as well as that of tea-maker and washer-up. It was on the lengthy trips to and fro from Biddenden that the Billy-can procedure took place, how we managed is beyond the imagination now, but more often than not by the time we arrived back at the railhead tea was brewed ready for the gang there! Meanwhile, whilst we were collecting more lifted track, the gang at Biddenden set to, to clear the last batch. This was a very systematic operation as well. With the aid of a small mobile Jones crane the sleepers were hoisted out from the heap left on the siding and two men would remove the chairs, notably without the aid of power driven tools, but just using 'T' bar spanners, a lengthy job in itself. The chairs were then either stacked for re-use or, if damaged as most were, heaved into the same wagon as the fishplates, the 'scrap iron' wagon, whilst the chair bolts were thrown into the other wagon parked adjacent. The sleepers, meanwhile, were carefully inspected and placed into three distinct categories, 're-usables', 'roadmakers' and 'firewood', and neat stacks were built of each category. A well known local haulage company, Fagg's Fleet of Ashford, had contracted to remove the sleepers and their lorries were a constant sight in Biddenden yard for that summer. The re-usable sleepers were sold back to BR and were taken to whatever Permanent Way depot required them, the 'roadmakers' were sold to local farmers or civil engineers for site use and the 'firewood' category were sold off to anyone, or if stock built up too much, were burned on a great fire in the station yard. This fire was built very near to the old cattle dock on the 'long' siding which came down almost to the road and had a separate gate leading to

it. The timber built dock, very similar to that recently rebuilt at Bodiam, was falling into disrepair, and the track in front of it was still the original flat bottomed light section rail on half-round sleepers, which had been installed on the opening of the line just fifty years before.

Thus, this very lengthy process of track lifting continued, and in today's terms, a very labour intensive operation. In all, the gang consisted of some seventeen members plus the BR crew of driver, fireman, guard and PW ganger 'Nip' Daniels who had been assigned to the contract case of any difficulty with the existing track between the site and Headcorn, which was still BR's responsibility until it was actually lifted.

As the lifted sections reached each 'rail dump' the mode of operation was temporarily changed. Before the length of track between each stack of rails was lifted, the train would collect an empty bogie-bolster wagon (a mainline-worthy one!) which would have been collected from Headcorn that morning and brought to Biddenden. This would be attached as the last wagon and propelled to the railhead where the crane would be used to load all the stacked rails, which when loaded, carefully in this case, and chained down, would be sent to Headcorn with the loco at the end of the day, or earlier if water was required at lunch time, prior to despatch to a specified steelworks, or Geo. Cohens scrapyard, whichever was the case. The movements of loaded bolsters of rail and loaded wagons of scrap iron onward from Headcorn were pre-arranged as work progressed, as was the incoming of empties in order that work wasn't held up. Once the rail dump was emptied of all rail, sometimes two wagons were required to clear it, then the normal procedure of lifting could continue and a new dump formed some quarter mile ahead. The summer of 1955 was, in the main, a really lovely one with fine warm sunshine day after day and work progressed well until it was stopped by the ASLEF strike which lasted from May 28th until June 14th, for without a loco in attendance track removal had to cease. Not all footplatemen were on strike, it was only members of ASLEF, and



The Author on the footplate of '01' Class 31370 at Biddenden, August 1955.

(George Fraser)

some NUR members managed to run an emergency service on the main lines, but as the hired loco was obviously not a priority working Geo. Cohens gang were without motive power for over two weeks. This did, however, enable the yard at Biddenden to be cleared of the now large stockpile of sleepers and it also allowed maintenance to be carried out on the cranes and equipment. Also some of the gang, all of whom were on 'piecework' rates, took some holiday in this period thereby not losing any money when work re-commenced. As for me, on my visits to Biddenden, I had to be content with just making the tea for the yard gang whilst they went about their work, a far cry from being on the loco all day!

Once a settlement was reached and the locomotive was supplied once more, work got under way, and due to the strike the schedule had slipped back, so this meant extra effort being put into the lifting to get back on target. Indeed, just after the strike period, the highest number of panels lifted in one day was recorded, that figure being seventeen lengths. In today's terms, with all the modern machinery available, that figure would seem very small I am sure, but forty years ago it was almost a miracle to lift that much in one day, let alone strip the sleepers

and stack them ready for disposal. I well remember the glee with which the gang received their pay packets that week, for they were all paid by the length! It was during those highly paid weeks that they elected to actually pay me as well, not a fixed amount, but generally all the loose change that they each received in their pay packets, with amounted to a very useful sum. I was now being paid for something I really enjoyed doing, it was really a blissful experience!

Whilst I enjoyed very much receiving these 'perks', it allowed me to buy extra Ian Allan ABC's and film for my camera, various members of the workforce earned theirs as well. Ambrose, the man in charge, made a point of collecting all the rail posts which supported "Whistle" boards, speed restriction signs, trespass notices and so on. These were pulled from the ground with the crane as each one came within range, loaded on to the bolster wagon and on arrival at Biddenden were stacked separately away from the 'legitimate' scrap. I clearly remember Ambrose doing deals with local scrapmen for these items, and of course at that time, heavy steel and cast iron had quite a scrap value. The actual timber Whistle boards themselves were carefully removed by 'Nip' Daniels before the posts

were taken out of the ground and he took these home as his 'perk' and eventually built a garden shed from them in his garden at Headcorn! Each level crossing sported at least two whistle boards and two 10mph speed restriction notices so the spoils were quite good! On reaching a road level crossing, the length of track that was actually across the public highway was left in situ and did not form part of Cohen's contract, it was left to the highway authority to remove these and make good the road surface. For some time after the lifting, many former crossings retained their rails in the road as well as the 'Trains Cross Here' signs which used to warn traffic of the crossing and a local newspaper wag from the 'Kent Messenger' printed a picture of the crossing at High Halden Road, showing the sign still in place but a trackless station, with the caption "What Trains Cross Here? – Ghost Trains!" In fact a few months previously the same newspaper had shown a picture of the crane in action lifting the track actually at High Halden Road Station. Another sign of the times perhaps, when the closing and lifting of railways was really *news*.

There were days when the weather wasn't as idyllic as we care to remember, and on really wet days, of which there were a few, lifting stopped and everyone retired to the station building at Biddenden and drank yet more tea, and more often than not, gambled with a set of playing cards kept especially for that purpose. At times, work was stopped for other reasons, notably if the crane got bogged down on the trackbed due to the poor drainage, often taking at least a whole day to jack out of the mud. It was on one of these occasions that George Fraser and I decided to explore the loft at Biddenden Station, I recall that it was a very hot day, and once we had removed the access hatch and found a ladder to get up there, it was pitch dark, so, without a torch to hand, George got his tallow inspection lamp from the loco, and with that alight we made our way up to the loft. No thought was given to the danger of this escapade, a lighted lamp in a wooden framed loft in the height of summer! But what a veritable Aladdin's Cave of items we found. The floor of the loft was about a foot deep in

paperwork over the whole area, there were literally dozens of brand new, rolled posters from all sorts of Railway Companies, even Pre-Grouping ones, there were whole packets of unused K&ESR timetables from the 1920's and 1930's, masses of bundles of Memos from the Colonel's office to the various Stationmasters at Biddenden and Frittenden Road, a wide variety of K&ESR Handbills advertising 'Cheap' Excursion fares to such places as Tonbridge Show and to London for Christmas Shopping. The list was endless, indeed there was so much paperwork there that it was just too much to take in. Some had been victim of the rats and mice, and were chewed beyond recognition, but the vast majority of it was in very good condition. Having disturbed a lot of this we decided to take some as 'souvenirs', in fact some of the timetables we took out under the awning and nailed on the wall as if to encourage passengers, along with one or two pictorial posters. One dare not think of the value of these items today; the content of that loft would be worth thousands of pounds now. I did however retrieve many items to save in my own embryonic collection, namely timetables, wagon labels, waybills, goods receipt books, booking office ledgers and memos, most of which are now in Colonel Stephens Museum Collection, but I have forever wished that I had been more sensible at the time and saved much more.

On another of these non-lifting days, the fireman and I decided to take a ride on the pump-trolley which was resident in the P.Way Hut at Biddenden. We managed to get it onto the track and set off towards Frittenden Road, and although the undergrowth was very thick, we seemed to make progress very easily towards the North. It was a little like the 'Telegraph Hill' syndrome, the track appeared to rise out of Biddenden, as even the fireman was surprised at our progress, whereas we were actually going *down* towards Frittenden Road, and after reaching the crossing there we decided to head back. This was a very different story bearing in mind there were only the two of us, and I was only a lad of 13 at the time, the resistance of the adverse gradient and the undergrowth was too much for us. Also, there were two large gas



'01' class 31064 returns to Biddenden with another load of lifted sleepers. 'Nip' Daniels on the platform. Note stacked sleepers in yard and very overgrown track. (Col. Stephens Historical Archive)

bottles stowed on the trolley which were used for cutting up the scrap rail, probably the personal property of Ambrose for his illicit deals, so we jettisoned these which did make the return journey just possible without resorting to pushing the trolley on foot. However, on arrival back at Biddenden I remember we were admonished for leaving the bottles beside the track and the fireman had to ensure they were collected that evening, en-route to Headcorn, and stowed safely in the brake van for return the next day. Needless to say I didn't venture out on the pump trolley again, in fact I never set foot on one again until the late sixties at Tenterden, well after preservation was under way.

Quite apart from the numerous public road level crossings, seven between Tenterden and Headcorn, there were several farmers' accommodation crossings. At most of these there were five bar gates on each side of the track, most of which were in good order and painted white, and nearly every one of them sported a neat brass plate with the inscription; 'K.E.S.R., SHUT THIS GATE, Penalty for leaving open 40 shillings'. As Ambrose seemed to be in charge, and also

removed the various other signs as we progressed, I suggested to him that I would like one of these brass notices for my collection, he was quite happy for me to take, not just one, but as many as I wanted. So as each accommodation crossing was reached I left the loco, complete with screwdriver and junior hacksaw and removed the notices. This task was not as easy as first expected, for the ever diligent K&ESR administration which affixed the notices, having driven the six brass screws well in, then proceeded to hammer the screw heads to close the screwdriver slot thereby reducing the risk of removal! This meant that I had to saw a new slot in each screw head before it could be removed, making the job quite time consuming, quite apart from the illegality of the operation and the risk of damage to the sign itself! In total I collected thirteen of these notices over the period of lifting, and rather stupidly gave them all away except the one which remains in my collection to this day, and only during the last part of 1994 one was sold at auction in Sheffield for £80. I do wonder if that particular notice was originally one of those I removed forty years ago.

(To be concluded)

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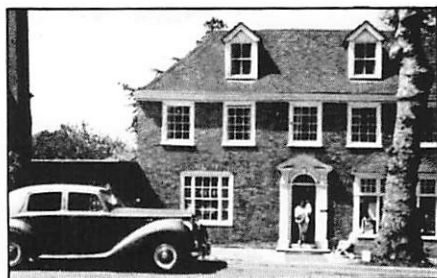
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