

# Tenterden Terrier



Number 94

Summer 2004



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# The Kent & East Sussex Railway Company Limited

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## DIRECTORS

Norman Brice – *Chairman*; Graham Bridge; Daniel Jenner; Derek Dunlavy (Managing);  
Paul Hutchinson; Brian Janes; Carol Mitchell; Bill Morgan; John Weller

## COLONEL STEPHENS' RAILWAY ENTERPRISES LIMITED (A wholly owned subsidiary)

**DIRECTORS:** Norman Brice – *Chairman*; Graham Bridge; Derek Dunlavy; Brian Janes;  
Keith Jones

## COMPANY SECRETARY & REGISTERED OFFICE:

Nick Pallant, Tenterden Town Station, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6HE.

Telephone 01580 765155 Fax: 01580 765654 email: enquiries@kesr.org.uk

**GENERAL MANAGER** ..... David Lloyd

## OFFICERS:

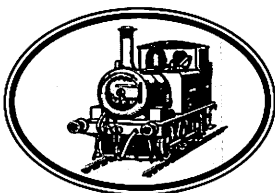
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**Finance Committee** – Philip Shaw (Chairman); Norman Brice; Tom White;

**Employment Committee** – Carol Mitchell (Chairman); David Lloyd; John Weller; Chris Mitchell

**Membership Secretary** ..... Stella Nuttman, Tenterden Town Station, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6HE

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*Editor*.....Philip Shaw

*Assistant Editor* .....Duncan Buchanan

*Consultant*.....Tom Burnham

## *Editorial Office*

109 High Street, Tenterden,  
Kent TN30 6LB

Email: philipshaw109@hotmail.com

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## **FRONT COVER**

*Terrier 32678 about to leave shed having taken water,  
23 May 2004* (Tom White)

## **FRONTISPIECE**

*John Hicks repairs a platform barrow, while John Miller displays the finished product and other trolleys at Bodiam* (John Liddell)

## **BACK COVER**

*32678 approaches Ropley Up distant signal during a visit to the Mid-Hants railway on  
13 March 2004* (Mike Esau)

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# Editorial

## Getting Steamed Up

Driving a steam locomotive is, for most people, only a dream. Yet, the opportunity is there for anybody to take the controls for a day and enjoy the unique experience of working on the footplate of one of our 100 year old locomotives. A limiting factor for the Railway is, of course, the capacity of the line, because we cannot easily run courses when we are also operating a normal

daily service. Nevertheless, this is an activity that can and should be progressed further. Steam Experience Co-ordinator, Paul Wilson, has already developed the theme by segmenting it into steam tasters, introductory and advanced driving courses. We could, and perhaps should, increase our advertising to bring the steam experience to a wider public. Not only has this the potential to become a significant source of income, but, more importantly, it could whet the appetites of participants to join our volunteer workforce and learn to fire and drive passenger trains.

# Lineside News

Compiled by Duncan Buchanan

## Commercial

### Marketing

Another issue of the *'Terrier'*... another Marketing Manager! What keeps happening to us?!

I have to say from my experiences to date it's definitely been so far so good. It's clear that there are many dedicated, hard working volunteers and employees and I really think that enthusiasm shines through and is picked up on by all our visitors.

My main role over the rest of this year is to develop and fine-tune a marketing strategy that should help to steer and focus us all in the same direction over the next three years. There's obviously been a lot to learn in order to be able to achieve a sensible and supported plan, but that's one of the things I love most about starting new jobs... in my time I've had to immerse myself in dog food, cat litter, Marks & Spencer's bras and Mexican food (not literally obviously) and I am now really enjoying the challenge of learning all there is to know about the Railway.

The year to date has been a mixed one. There have been some ups and downs but we have worked hard to ensure we are in a great position going in to the summer months.

The dip we have been experiencing in visitor numbers is being felt by the rest of the tourism industry with lower than average visitor numbers being experienced virtually across the board.

The evening events on the Pullman are in great demand as always, and we have a full and busy

schedule planned for the next few months.

Paul Sayce did a fantastic job of managing the Railways presence at Railfest 2004 in York, and with the help of a few, now exhausted, volunteers managed to do us proud. The Railway will be attending several more external events over the course of the summer with the next two being the Kent County Show (July 16th - 18th) and Eastbourne Airbourne (August 12th - 15th). We are still in need of some more volunteers to help out at these two events, if you are interested, please contact Kathryn Flood or Lin Batt.

The February Thomas event was marred by freak weather conditions and a few operational issues that resulted in revenue being lower than expected. However visitors seemed unfazed by the blizzards experienced over the 2nd weekend and we only received 2 cancellations. At the time of writing we have just completed the first June Thomas weekend, which was exceptionally successful. At this stage we look set to reach our revenue target, and as importantly, the feedback from the public has been full of praise with visitors of all ages really enjoying their experience

We have decided to repeat the Open Day which took place earlier in the year and plan to hold another one during the weekend of the 4th and 5th September. We also want to use the opportunity to hold a big party to thank all our fantastic volunteers and members. It is anticipated this will be on Saturday 5th September in the evening, so please make a note in your diaries and

further details will follow in due course.

Advertising activity is in full swing with event specific and generic ads being featured most weeks locally. We have also been working hard to secure editorial coverage and have had several excellent pieces featured on Meridian News and lots of event coverage in the local press. Brian Janes has also been busy giving interviews for Radio 4 and Meridian on the history of the railway and on the area in general – all of which is great for raising the profile of the Railway and in keeping us in the minds of potential visitors.

We are now working on next years timetable and programme of activity. We will be looking at further developing the activities that work well for the Railway, capitalising on their success and trying to introduce more of the same. One thing that has become very clear during the last few months is that when everyone works together, communicates and pulls in the same direction, we never fail in putting on fantastic entertainment for all of our visitors. There are several very busy months ahead and if we can maintain the momentum already in place we should have a very successful, and hopefully, fun, summer!

### **Shop**

At the start of the season, with passenger numbers 16% down at the end of May, business has looked a bit sparse at times but, at the time of writing, we have managed to keep our takings to within a couple of percent of last year's. And we are ahead of a rather pessimistic budget. Of more concern is the acute fall off in shop volunteers. Thankfully we have new volunteers but these have not been sufficient to replace old friends and the end result is dependence on the shrinking few. The parcels office at Bodiam was set up three years ago as a shop but never opened for lack of volunteers and now there are days when the Tenterden shop looks like following. Writing this we are contemplating running Thomas with 2 volunteers a day when we need 6! Do we really want to replace volunteers with paid staff like other railways were the profit made to improve the railway drops from about 45% of shop turnover to something like 15%?

Shop takings this year have, for some unknown reason, swung strongly towards Railway Books and DVDs and Videos, where our range is continuously widening, and away from traditional souvenirs. We just adapt, but guessing stock levels is an exercise in crystal ball gazing. With the DVD revolution well under way we have combined the two current videos of the railway into one telling the story of the railway from opening right up to

the Bodiam opening. A further video/DVD is nearing production stage and an old favourite 'Trains to Tenterden' has just been re-issued in both formats.

Problems with the makers have temporarily halted the availability of OO model wagons and any new models, but we have been assured that supplies of the K&ESR and Huxford wagons will be available in July.

One item of good news is that the new Guidebook has arrived. It is designed to inform and to sell the virtues of the railway. A sumptuous publication with lots of great photographs, a potted history and an illustrated journey down the line, it is excellent value at £3. We hope and expect to sell it in thousands – so don't delay, buy one and sell one to a friend.

With the busy season looming we are looking to retaining or keeping our contribution to the railway at or above last years record high. If you can help us with this please contact Brian Janes on 01580 714032 or on the railway.

### **Catering**

There has been precious little reinvestment in station catering, or visitor facilities generally, for many years (indeed there rarely has been any budget allocated for non-food catering expenditure). Our increasingly demanding customers expect and deserve to receive good value during their time with us. Visitor surveys regularly list good catering facilities to be within the top three customer requirements (after ease of access/parking and cleanliness of toilets). Good news, therefore, in that planning for replacement of the catering department portacabins to the rear of Tenterden buffet is at last gathering pace. This redevelopment cannot come too soon – the existing buildings are seriously decayed and it is unlikely that they could withstand another winter. Current plans show a timber framed structure abutting the rear of the existing building. In the short term this will house dry stores, chiller and freezer rooms, laundry area and staff messing facilities. However provision will be made to enable the removal of the existing kitchen from within the buffet to the new building, incorporating significantly improved counter displays and cooking facilities. This will also enable the entire floor space within the buffet to be given over to customer seating. Investment in these facilities will be an expensive undertaking. Indeed the second phase is likely to be significantly more costly than the construction of the building itself.

The first weekend of 'Thomas' services was a resounding success for the catering department. A last minute acquisition was a professional soft ice cream machine. This improves considerably our margin on this popular product. Keith Jones ran a BBQ adjacent to the tram, which combined with sales of soft ice cream, exceeded the income generated in the buffet. The tram also proved a popular feature and certainly eased the lunchtime crush that has restricted sales hitherto. Initial indications are that providing all catering in house has made a significant improvement to our income.

### **On-train catering**

Several problems have arisen with the RMB of late. The water boiler has developed a work to rule attitude all of its own. This was closely followed by the demise of the carriage batteries, bringing darkness to our light and a halt to all catering equipment. Some hasty improvisation by André Freeman and Phil Wood saw basic facilities restored. New high-capacity cells have now been fitted to ensure reliable operation. Thanks to a donation from Bodiam Castle, a fridge freezer is now installed, which has considerably eased working and also enables our customers' wine to be chilled!

The tireless efforts by all have resulted in several coach operators again featuring us in their 2004 itineraries. Indeed one has now doubled their scheduled business with us and we have arranged to provide train services on Wednesdays in October especially for their parties. We have some particularly heavy group catering bookings this year and much of this is repeat business. However we are particularly short of volunteers to assist with these services. If you enjoy meeting the public, we have just the job for you! Contact Dave Tibbatts at Tenterden Station.

### **Wealden Pullman**

Kitchen Car RU 69 entered the Carriage & Wagon shed in early January for much needed work to the kitchen floor. Although it had been replaced previously, problems became apparent two years ago with the aluminium chequer-plate flooring. This surface was extremely difficult to clean properly, necessitating several hours on hands and knees with a scrubbing brush together with significant quantities of cleaning fluid. Despite our best efforts, this inevitably found its way to the plywood structure beneath. The chequer-plate had become very 'spongy' and presented significant trip hazards at joints. Accordingly a three month gap was created in the busy Pullman

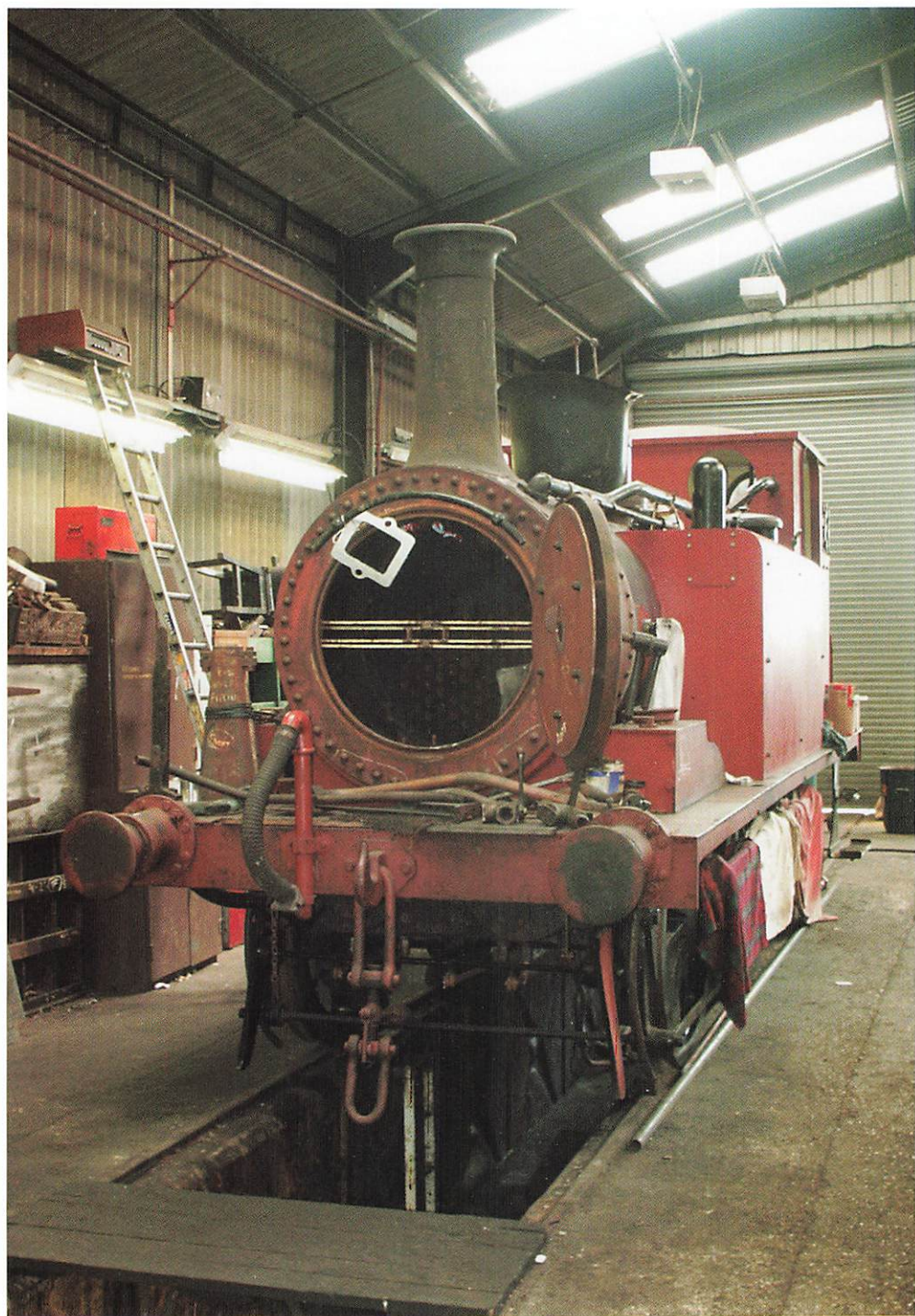
schedule for rectification works to be carried out.

Following removal of all kitchen equipment, plumbing etc, the floor covering was lifted to reveal a surprisingly sound sub-structure, which, after thorough drying, required only localised repairs. A new (easy clean!) one-piece non-slip floor covering has been fitted to prevent re-occurrence of this problem. Given the additional time now in hand, the fairly intense usage and our complete reliance upon the availability of this vehicle, the opportunity was taken to carry out some unplanned preventative maintenance and enhancement of facilities. Corroded bodywork has been repaired and a partial repaint has been undertaken. This has seen the welcome reappearance of the vehicle in its original guise as 'Diana' and will ensure the vehicle remains presentable and watertight. Whilst all kitchen equipment was removed, it was thoroughly stripped down for overhaul. This revealed that the frames of both ovens were corroded, one beyond repair. Fortunately another had been purchased at a bargain price at auction last year. Although this was designed for natural gas, we were able to convert using parts from the condemned unit. During refitting, alterations were also made to enhance facilities and comply with current environmental health guidelines (including hot running water to all sinks!). Following the very successful trial of an inverter (a clever bit of electronics that produces 230 Volts mains from the 24 Volt coach batteries), further labour saving electrical equipment has been fitted together with a bottle cooler behind the bar. These works have been financed in conjunction with the Wealden Pullman Improvement Fund. For those unfamiliar, all gratuities received by staff aboard the 'Wealden Pullman' are retained for projects such as this and benefit both customers and staff.

In order to comply with new working hours legislation and allow for further development of services, additional core staff have been employed on a seasonal basis. The Wealden Pullman remains under the leadership of Meg Gooch, who now also rosters staff, whilst Sunday Luncheon trains are now the responsibility of Carol Douglas. Despite the perpetual problem of volunteer shortages, we have continued to deliver all of our existing services. Indeed we featured in the Daily Telegraph as one of the few 'heritage railways' renowned for "providing excellent cuisine".

If you would like to assist with these ever popular (and profitable) services, contact Meg@kesr.org.uk or at Tenterden Station.





32670, Bodiam, progresses in Rolvenden Shed, 7th June 2004

(Brian Stephenson)



# Operating

There have been several promotions within the operating grades. Brian Atkins, Trevor Tremethick and Jonathan Marsh have all passed firing tests and are now in the new grade of Probationary Fireman (the old grades of Cleaner and Passed Cleaner are now known as Trainee Fireman and Probationary Fireman respectively to more accurately reflect the status of the staff in those grades). Martin Sherwood has passed his Guard's exam and Roger Temple has completed his Signalman's training and is now passed to operate Tenterden Box. Roger is now also learning Wittersham Road box. Existing Signalmen Kent Evenden and Nick Wood have added Rolvenden to the list of signal boxes they can work.

After more than a decade of service, Fred Waller has announced his retirement from signalling. We hope that Fred will still pop in to see us from time to time and give us the benefit of his advice and pass on some of his knowledge to his former colleagues. We would like to take the opportunity to thank Fred for all he has done for the railway during his time with us.

Meanwhile on the sick list, David Strivens is recovering from a nasty fall at home and Graham Bridge has been suffering from a bad back. We very much hope that these two gentlemen will be feeling better and back in circulation very soon.

'A' Block is now used on most of the two train timetable days and has been performing well with very few teething problems. Most of the regular staff have received their training on the new system, the remaining few will receive training as part of rostered turns. The use of 'A' Block has reduced the amount of signalmen required on many days, thus easing the pressure slightly on our hard-pressed Roster Clerk Tony Pratt.

At Rolvenden, footplate staff have been working hard to improve the appearance of the loco fleet and engines are generally much cleaner than they were in the past. John Collard has worked wonders with the black paint to smarten up the smoke boxes of several locos that were looking tatty due to burnt paint from the high temperatures. Kevin Jones has also painted the fence between the yard and the running line that

was becoming very untidy.

The oil store has also been cleaned right out and all the old contaminated and unwanted oils and greases disposed of. It is intended to remove all the old life expired oil tanks from the roof of the oil store as they become empty and fit a temporary roof to extend the life of the existing container for a few years until funds can be allocated to building a new brick oil store.

The new running store is now fully operational and the old brick built store has been demolished. Thanks to everyone who has helped with all the tasks above that have helped to improve the general appearance of the depot.

The last few months have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of staff training. As well as training all our staff on the new 'A' Block system and the Incident training days in the winter, the department has improved the training on offer to assist staff in gaining promotion. A successful and enjoyable freight training day enabled several members of the footplate crew and Trainee Guards to experience working a heavy unfitted freight train down the steep incline of Tenterden Bank. In addition several senior Firemen have been receiving all day driver-training sessions under the watchful eyes of a Footplate Inspector where they have been able to prepare, drive and dispose a locomotive performing all the tasks of the Driver. Hopefully, with the experience gained, some of these Firemen will soon be in a position to pass out as Drivers.

Steam Raiser training has been reviewed and improved and a one-day training course covering the required theory has been run. Several Trainees are currently learning the practical side of Steam Raising and will hopefully soon be taking the first step on the footplate promotion ladder.

With plenty of training on offer and vacancies in all grades, there has never been a better time to join the Operating Department. For anyone prepared to show commitment and with a willingness to learn, qualification for many grades can be achieved in quite a reasonable time. We need more people to qualify for all grades to enable us to further expand the timetable; you are assured of a warm welcome if

you choose to join us. Whether you are interested in footplate work, signalling or becoming a Guard we would be pleased to have you as part of our team. Please contact Operating Manager Pete Salmon on

01580 761097 (office hours) or e-mail [Pete@kesr.org.uk](mailto:Pete@kesr.org.uk). Alternatively, visit the departments website at [www.kesr.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.kesr.fsnet.co.uk) for more information and an online application form.

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## Motive Power

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The Reverse Osmosis water treatment plant is now progressing. Testing of the equipment will be witnessed before delivery from the manufacturer. In the meantime work has started at Rolvenden to prepare electrical supplies and drains to accept the plant.

### Steam Locomotives

No 3 'Bodiam' (32670): Work on this engine continues as a fill in between other work on the running fleet. Assembly of pipes, valves and associated items continues. More volunteer effort will, as usual, provide instant improvement in progress.

No 8 'Knowle' (32678): In service. The engine had a very successful visit to the Mid-Hants gala in March. As usual its diminutive size was cause

for comment, even the more so when it was expected to haul a two coach train over the whole length of the, mountainous, railway. However it coped well and compared well with others on the 'branch line' trains.

No 10 'Sutton' (32650): The locomotive has now left the railway permanently, on 4th April 2004, for the Spa Valley Railway, though we still have some obligations to fulfil. Firstly one of the coupling rods was borrowed, to enable Knowle to get into service more quickly, and must be replaced. Additionally new oil boxes, repairing the regulator, supplying a Furness lubricator and returning the air pump governor valve, currently being used as a pattern to make a new one for Bodiam, must be done.



*Locomotive parade at Rolvenden with Norwegian in the foreground, 7th June 2004*

*(Brian Stephenson)*

No 11 'P Class': In service.

No 12 'Marcia': Work continues to progress this engine.

No 14 'Charwelton': In store.

No 19 'Norwegian' (376): In service.

No 21 'Wainwright' (DS238): In service. The loco represented the railway in York at the Railfest in early June. It is the only currently working example of this type of engine and was thus wanted to represent something different from the big engines. In this it succeeded and many comments were received to the effect that it was nice to see an engine in its working state rather than yet another fully bulled up engine. We were allowed space to provide a display stand, which was manned throughout the Railfest by Sue Wood and Martin MacFarlan.

No 22 'Maunsell' (65): Work continues to replace the firebox at Israel Newton. The Kent & East Sussex Locomotive Trust expects to contribute substantially to the next, and largest, bill. To expedite matters we continue to seek contributions which can be sent to the Trust Treasurer at Tenterden Station.

No 23 'Holman F Stephens': Nearing completion of its overhaul. Graham Clifford and Frank Lambert have volunteered regularly and have installed the chimney and cab floor. A steam test is expected before final painting.

No 24 'Rolvenden': In service

No 25 'Northiam': In service.

No 30 GWR Pannier (1638): In service

## **Diesel Locomotives**

No. 20 (GWR Railcar): Attention is currently being given to a number of the infamous 'just jobs' on No 20, namely various tasks that need to be completed before panelling the exterior can commence. For the benefit of the uninitiated, these tasks are of the type that do not amount to a lengthy written description on a job sheet, but are quite time consuming to undertake in reality!

No 40 'Ford' (BTH): Work on the water circulating pump along with new diaphragm seals means that the engine can now be considered as having entered traffic. Thus the continual problems with getting special permission to run the engine for diesel weekends will hopefully be eased.

No 44 'Dover Castle' (Class 08): In service and proving to be a continuing hit during the Thomas weekends. Now that the previously troublesome voltage regulator has been replaced the starting problems have been overcome.

No 46 (Class 03): Plans to use this engine for the diesel weekend in mid-July have had to be abandoned as replacing the timing chain with the engine in-situ has proved not possible.

Class 33 'Ashford': In service.

Class 108 DMMU: In service. It has been running on three engines during the early part of the season. The DMMU has proved very capable of keeping to time with a 25% reduction in power, such is the slackness of the comparable steam schedule.

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# **Rolling Stock**

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## **Millennium Project**

### **Woolwich Coach (K&ESR No 67)**

The very rapid progress reported in the Spring 2004 edition of the Tenterden Terrier has continued. The vehicle is virtually complete with all structural work, interior and exterior panelling, doors, roof canvas, and glass in place. Some, fittings, grab handles for example, were trial-fitted but then taken off again to allow for the next important stage – the paintwork. This is well advanced, the early LMS livery (similar to that carried by the balcony saloon) has produced a stunning finish, particularly once Alan Brice

started work on the black, yellow and red lining. Upholstery is in the hands of the same Maidstone contractor who undertook similar work on the Family Saloon. The Company Secretary has grappled with the regular (and complex) task of claiming the 50 per cent contribution towards restoration costs from the Millennium Commission and is pleased to report that payment of six installments has been received with a seventh in preparation. Special mention should be made of the much-admired efforts of Ron Nuttman producing replacement brass grab handles and door locks. Ron, who is a retired toolmaker, located a foundry which was

able to cast the basic items and then 'fettled' them using his not inconsiderable skills ready for use on the coach. His production of the door locks, with all the intricacies of their safety mechanisms, has attracted what can only be described as awe-struck praise and solved the problem of replacement which seems to tax C&W departments throughout the heritage railway movement. By early June the Woolwich coach was only a few weeks away from its preliminary trials and was on target to join the vintage train for the peak season.

#### **Pullman Car Theodora**

This second vehicle of the Millennium Project should be off to a flying start once work on the Woolwich Coach is complete. The bogies remain at our contractors' premises at Sellindge and are progressing well. The underframe has been shot-blasted by a specialist company and undercoated in epoxy based paint, this work saving the department many weeks of work so that efforts can be concentrated on the bodywork.

#### **SE&CR Family Saloon (K&ESR No 84)**

Although perhaps taking something of a back seat whilst efforts have been concentrated on the Woolwich coach, work has nonetheless continued on this popular and attractive vehicle. The lustrous purple-maroon on the South Eastern & Chatham Railway has again been applied, and to the eyes of this writer at least seems to be ever nearer to the legendary original than the earlier

renderings. Sign writer Meg Gooch has once more been at work on the lettering and it is hoped to release the vehicle to traffic around the same time as the Woolwich.

#### **Running Fleet**

In between everything else, time has been found to bring various vehicles from the service sets in for their annual checks (which are in addition to the regular two monthly examination schedule). Hopefully the resulting adjustments and renewals will provide a relatively trouble-free season. During the early part of the year Maunsell BNO No 4443 (K&ESR No 54) suffered serious flats on one bogie due to a hand brake being left on. The affected wheel sets were rapidly replaced with spares we keep for such eventualities and the damaged pairs have now been tyre-turned, again by our contractor at Sellindge.

#### **Mess Room**

At last, the new C&W mess room has been commissioned and brought into use. People actually seem to be making an effort to keep it clean and the competition to grow the Railway's largest cobweb seems to have ceased! Seriously, you need to offer people a decent working environment if you want them to volunteer and, as always, if anyone would like to join the C&W workforce they will be very welcome. If you would like to give it a try, C&W Manager Paul Sayce (work phone number 01580 765511) would be pleased to hear from you.

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## **Infrastructure**

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#### **General Manager's report**

It seems strange writing this last General Manager report for the Terrier but, subject to the appointment of a new GM, I will be retiring in October. I would like to thank everybody for the support I have had. Despite the unpopular decisions that had to be made, the Railway is now on a sound financial footing and ready to enter a phase of development.

The new GM will have a different role to mine. He or she will focus on the next ten years through the Marketing Strategic Plan.

What of the last almost three years? The financial situation has changed dramatically from an almost bankrupt company into a closely monitored controlled business with strict budgets. The Managers have done a fantastic job by

working within the budget system but it has not been easy.

The volunteers have also responded to the call and I echo my sentiments in saying once again "there is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer".

Recently you will have seen many changes to signage and display cabinets around the Railway. This is part of the interreg project which has made available funds for projects that benefit the customer. Other items included in the scheme are the buffet extension, website, computer upgrade, tram, vintage coaches repaint, canopy at Rolvenden, gardens, station improvements, bilingual signage and leaflets, fencing, carriage shed and loco shed extensions.



Many have asked how does it work. We submit an application for funds for certain projects and we then have to match fund with the same amount of money. This is where the volunteers' efforts are taken into account. Each volunteer working on a project completes a time sheet and his or her input is then calculated into cash terms and allocated to the project; it is called notional labour. The amount claimed is calculated according to the skill needed to complete the job. Full time staff working on projects also complete time sheets and this also is claimed against the project. Therefore, the project money pays for all the materials and volunteers generally make up a considerable proportion of the labour costs.

Harry Hickmott, despite now being the Mayor of Tenterden, is performing miracles in covering the station staff roster and we have very few gaps. Some of the staff covering Northiam have also been qualified to operate the gates under 'A' block working which relieves the train crew.

The stations are looking better thanks to the Tuesday gang and gardening group who are fighting weeds constantly at this time of the year. The re-paint of the tram will be completed shortly and the Tenterden site looks cleaner. Thanks to Phil Wood who keeps the inside of the

coaches clean and to Peter Taylor who constantly battles the elements to polish the outside of the coaches.

Our staff and volunteers work extremely hard to make the railway a success. Once the railway was seasonal; now the pressure is constant as our season becomes longer and the non running days are fully utilised dealing with advance bookings or just catching up. Already our order books are filling for 2005 with coach bookings and we are running additional trains on Wednesdays this October to suit coach tours.

We have the ability to continue our success and with the dedication I have experienced during my time as GM the railway will remain a premier tourist attraction.

### **Frittenden Road – Brian Janes**

I am sorry to report that Frittenden Road station building has been destroyed in an arson attack. Passing the station site this morning I noticed that the station had gone. I called in and spoke to the tenant Mark Hollamby (Branchline Joinery). He told me that it happened on the last day of October in the evening shortly after he had left for the day. Virtually nothing remains of the building except the deep brick foundations.



*The Mayor of Tenterden, Harry Hickmott, with the Teddy Bears, 15th May 2004*

*(John Liddell)*

A shame after 50 years of virtual disuse.

Mark himself was very welcoming and comes from a family of railway interested people. His Grandfather was stationmaster at Cranbrook.

*Biddenden station also seems to have suffered similar fire damage recently – Ed.*

### **Bodiam**

The Bodiam Maintenance team now routinely work on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The team still consists of the three Johns, Hicks, Liddell and Miller plus Pam & Sheila Stevens on gardens. At last we have three picnic tables on the picnic area – which were occupied as each was assembled and have seen good use ever since.

The gardens look very good now and the areas of grass are kept well mown. In the mini hop

garden a few of the hops failed over the winter, probably because the ground was water-logged, but these have been replaced and now are growing strongly reaching to the height of the strings, about 10 feet.

Bodiam's big event is the annual 'Hoppers Weekend' and plans are well underway for this year's event on 11th and 12th September. A band has been booked for the Saturday evening and catering will be settled shortly. Otherwise the usual attractions will be available each day plus we hope some innovations.

So far this year another platform bench seat has been rebuilt, one sack barrow has been repainted, one 4-wheel trolley has been completely rebuilt with all new timber and a sack hoist trolley is nearing completion.

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## **Permanent Way**

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The Bodiam Headshunt project was finally given the green light in June (see separate article Siding to Quarry Farm) and we have begun to assemble the materials needed. Rail will be collected from Northiam and Bodiam and concrete sleepers from Ewhurst. The last week in August will see the Headshunt laid and the missing Culvert replaced. The first three weeks in September will see a push further westwards (under the aegis of the RVR) by approximately 700 metres to within 90 metres of Udiam farmhouse. No track will be laid, but the formation that was flattened into the field all those years ago will be rebuilt complete with

drainage and fencing. Within our boundaries we will maintain patrolling and increasing the number of blue waterbutts in an effort to limit fire risks.

With the donation of a Fork Lift Truck we can be a lot more self sufficient at Wittersham Road and will not have to spend thousands of pounds each year hiring in plant for loading purposes. Thanks to Boris Perkins and to Frim (Richard Halliwell) for coaxing the fork lift back to life. Clive Lowe's tamper has done a good job on Orpins curve and, when the regulator is fixed and further stone laid, the 10mph restriction will be returned to it's original position.

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## **People**

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### **Bernard Cordingly 1933 – 2004**

The Hayes Free Church was packed to capacity on Monday 5 April 2004 for the Funeral of Booking Clerk and former TTI, Bernard Cordingly. The Railway was represented by Harry Hickmott and Ken Dow. They were not the only ones in uniform as members of the St John's Ambulance Brigade were also present. Both groups represented areas of interest to Bernard.

The service opened with a welcome from a Scottish Piper and concluded with Bernard being carried down the aisle to the sound of a piercing train whistle followed by the excitement

of a roaring steam express – perhaps the Duchess.

On the preceding Sunday 13 members of the family had visited Tenterden and witnessed the locomotive carrying the headboard prepared in Bernard's memory. The son had remarked that Bernard would have been particularly impressed that one of the trains had been double headed.

For several years Bernard had worked at Tenterden but following the physical changes in the Booking Office he travelled the extra miles to Bodiam where he had enjoyed the rural atmosphere of the line. We will miss his amiable, friendly form on the K&ESR. (KWD)

# Groups

## Tuesday Group

Since the last report, in March, the Tuesday group have divided much of their time between the station areas of Tenterden and Northiam.

At Tenterden we cleared the site after the removal of the MK1 coach. The toilet block had a complete repaint and a walkway was constructed between the platform and the tram.

A new corrugated tin roof was fitted to the Maidstone Area Group's waste paper collection container which is situated at the rear of the site. This was necessary as there was a severe case of rust in the roof and the paper for recycling was getting very wet.

The platform edge white line has been repainted at both Tenterden and Northiam.

New Running-In boards have been purchased from A N B Signs (Lewes), 2 for Tenterden and 4 for Northiam. In the past these have been constructed using marine ply and painted but have not lasted more than 4/5 years. The new ones are made of aluminium and powder coated and, hopefully, will have a longer life. The two at Tenterden are currently being erected.

At Northiam we are still slowly working through the repairs to No 1 cottage which, in primer and with the surrounding weeds killed off, is beginning to look a lot better. With all the 'just jobs' which keep turning up, I think it will take the rest of the year to finish the cottage. However, together with the gardening that has been undertaken around the station site, when it is all completed it will amount to a vast improvement.

The current project at Northiam is the construction of a Crossing Keepers Hut to replace the 'Bath' by the ground frame.

We have a new, very welcome, addition to the Tuesday Group – Stan Kemp – who is pretty useful with a paint brush and has use of a real man size 'four wheel drive' strimmer!

As usual any new volunteers are always welcome.

## InterReg Committee

The weekend of 15 and 16 May saw the members of the InterReg Committee hard at work again visiting our twin railway, the Chemin

de Fer de la Baie de Somme, with whom we have a joint programme worth £79,000 to the Kent & East Sussex Railway under the EU's cross-frontier development programme.

On the Saturday morning Mike Bunn and Mike Grant joined CFBS President Jean-Marc Page and his management team at a meeting with French regional Government representatives to review progress to date and to consider the possibilities of a further programme for 2005-06.

On Sunday, Bill and Dominique Morgan, together with Norman Brice and Laura Lowsley, were active in promoting K&ESR to the residents of St Valery and visitors to the town, as well as to the British enthusiasts who participated in the Fleche D'Or (Golden Arrow) rail tour. This latter was a steam-hauled main line rail tour using traditional Wagon Lit carriages and which stopped at Noyelles long enough for the participants to ride on the CFBS special service to St Valery Quai. Dominique,



Laura Lowsley manning the K&ESR stand at St Valery, 16 May 2004 (Norman Brice)

Laura, Bill and Norman passed the length of the CFBS train handing out our own timetable and Pullman leaflets to the 300 or more visitors, many of whom expressed interest in visiting and dining. All in all, a very useful and enjoyable weekend, funded by the InterReg programme.

### **Gardening Group**

Life in the garden, at this time of year, is hectic, attempting to clear ground and put as many plants in as possible to try and beat the weeds.

I hope everyone has noticed all the hard work which is being done by a very small group of people in order to give the railway a real 'lift'.

Northiam is now coming into its own with all the hanging baskets, pots and troughs which Dee Wilcox and The Friends of Northiam have filled with bedding plants. The roses planted during the winter months are now starting to bloom as are the new lavenders next to the station building and the new hedge is growing well.

The whole appearance of the station has been enhanced. The flower bed in the car park area is full of plants and as the season progresses we hope it will make an attractive splash of colour.

Our current project is to try and beat the rabbits, but I think I know who will win! We have started to plant up a vegetable patch by the picnic area but, unfortunately, the rabbits at Northiam seem to be very ingenious when it comes to a tasty cabbage for tea!

Tenterden is gradually coming under control and once we can find enough railway sleepers to complete the area around the beech tree, we will be able to finish the new rockery. We have a large number of plants waiting to be planted which will die unless we get them into the ground very soon. If anyone has access to railway sleepers please can you help us out? We must clear up the station as soon as possible.

The main focus of the gardening group now is our event 'Stations in Bloom' on 7th/8th August. By that date we hope to be on top of most of the gardens but sadly Wittersham Road has not developed as hoped. However, thanks to Sue & Jolyon Vickers, Pam and Sheila Stevens and others the platform area will look good. We have decided that a major overhaul will be carried out at Wittersham Road at the end of the season. So we hope it will be under control by next year.

We are very pleased to welcome Carol Dyce (who everyone knows) who has joined the team and is an enormous boost. Robin has been a great supporter and has made several flower troughs for Northiam and the two outside the booking office at Tenterden. Meanwhile Phil Wood has painted a number of old fire buckets which will be distributed around the station.

We would like to involve more people in the care of the floral decorations as we need to keep everything watered. It would be very useful if station staff would help keep their stations looking attractive by spending just a few minutes between trains watering the various pots, troughs or hanging baskets.

We hope everyone appreciates the gardens as they are for everyone to enjoy as well as to create an attractive ambience along the length of the railway.

### **Museum**

This is the first report on Museum activities this year. Elsewhere in this journal, is an account of interesting information which has come to light regarding our relics of the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead carriage No 7. These consist of two parts of a door, which are on display.

Recent acquisitions include a Burry Port & Gwendraeth Valley timetable for August 1909, the first month of passenger services following Stephens conversion of the line from a mineral only railway. The poster is printed in black and red on white paper and is in excellent condition. It is assumed to be a printers proof copy because there are minor errors which have been annotated.

We have also been fortunate to have been donated a silver salver originally presented to Peter Benge-Abbott, to mark the end of his chairmanship of the Kent & East Sussex Railway Association in 1970. The salver has been donated by Mrs Benge-Abbott in memory of Peter who died last November. The K&ESRA was superseded by the Tenterden Railway Company formed in 1971 which succeeded in purchasing the line we know today.

We lose one of our stalwart attendants in June. Peter Southgate, who worked 20 days in the Museum in 2003, leaves us to live in Tasmania. We wish him good luck at his new home 'down under'.



# The Woolwich Coach

Brian Janes celebrates the return of the K&ESR's first coach of the preservation era and welcomes its final entry into passenger service after 40 years, thanks to the Millennium fund and the restoration skills of our Carriage and Wagon Department's employees and volunteers.



*Alan Brice working on the Woolwich Coach, 7th June 2004*

*(Brian Stephenson)*

If you want to move lots of people with minimum effort then the four-wheeled coach takes a lot of beating. The Victorians knew this well and in an era of small engines, bogie carriages were adopted with caution, as the passenger demanded more comfort and facilities. But the poor regular urban traveller (or commuter to use the American term currently in use) had little choice and the railway companies kept the four-wheeler in such service for as long as it could.

The North London Railway was predominantly a people mover and the now lost nine platform Broad Street Station handled some 27 million passengers in 1902, all of whom travelled in four-wheeled coaches of the humblest

description. Nemesis however followed in the Edwardian era in the form of the electric tram and underground. Traffic fell away so that by 1913 numbers were only 45% of those a decade earlier. Four-wheeled coaches fell into rapid disfavour; very few were built by other railways after about 1902 but conservatism ruled on the North London and such coaches continued to be built. Decline continued and to secure essential funds to provide better facilities the North London fell under the sheltering wing of the London & North Western Railway management in February 1909. They planned a comprehensive electrification but had to do something quick. Remarkably they decided to build more four-wheelers!

At the turn of the century the LNWR had gone through a rapid process of improving its carriages. By 1909 its Wolverton Works had progressed from the mean low roofed rigid eight-wheelers of the Webb era to produce some of the finest high (Elliptical) roofed carriages ever built. For some reason however the low tare weight argument of previous eras resurfaced and some otherwise thoroughly modern bodies on 6-wheeled underframes were provided for Birmingham Suburban services. Even more remarkably, nearly ten years after everybody else had abandoned the idea they put similar bodies on four-wheeled chassis. The Woolwich Coach is a unique survivor of this aberration.

It had been announced in *The Locomotive Magazine* in March 1910 that two rakes of the new stock each comprising two sets of five coaches, were to be built specifically for the Broad Street - Richmond services and these duly appeared in late 1910, receiving wide publicity in the press. *The Railway Magazine*, well known at this period for its fawning attitude to the railway companies, went into ecstasies. They reported that "...the LNWR directors had provided ...improved rolling stock...steam heated with ...brilliant illumination... obtained from compressed coal gas (*a thoroughly old fashioned system* - Ed). The new stock gives general satisfaction". A further two rakes were built in 1911.

These carriages were, I believe, the last four-wheelers built in England. However the Caledonian Railway had the dubious distinction of getting R & Y Pickering to build some carriages, which bore a remarkable similarity to the Wolverton coaches, in 1920 for the severely curved Balerno Branch near Edinburgh.

Despite their retrograde features the North London carriages were nevertheless, in body terms, modern vehicles. In December 1909 the LNWR had prepared diagrams for various lengths of suburban carriage based on existing standard body modules and the four-wheelers followed this plan. Built to the prevailing excellent Wolverton standards, as restoration has shown despite the neglect of the last half-century or so, they seem to have proved satisfactory in service. Our coach was one of a second batch supplied in 1911 (despite a

spurious LMS cast builders plate on it claiming 1910). These coaches were designed to, and always worked in, fixed numbered sets in their mainline service. Moved off the Richmond service after electrification on 1st October 1916 they were then used on the services over the Great Northern Railway to Potters Bar and Alexandra Palace. At first the sets were pulled by beautiful antediluvian North London locomotives but latterly by the more prosaic LMS 'Jinties' on one of their few regular passenger workings. Again, displaced by bogie stock in 1936, they graduated to the quieter Broad Street - Poplar service and the sets seem finally to have been withdrawn around 1939/40.

Woolwich Arsenal was a huge site requiring an extensive internal transport system for goods and workers, and from mid-Victorian days had an internal railway system. During the Victorian period it operated a narrow gauge system with a passenger train every thirty minutes to deliver workers from the entrance gate throughout the site. The narrow gauge passenger service was discontinued in 1923, when it became too costly to run. The standard gauge had come to the Arsenal in 1890 and had, during World War 1, extended to over 120 track miles with a reception area of 16 tracks and nearly 50 locomotives. A passenger service consisting of 18 4-wheeled coaches had been introduced during the war and ran from 3rd Gate to Crossness a distance of some 3 miles. Services were extended to replace the narrow gauge service but unlike its predecessor the new service was confined to 3rd class accommodation only. The service was no express; it proceeded at a stately maximum of 12 mph, reduced to 3 mph in the frequent foggy weather. Inevitably motor buses were gradually introduced for internal transport and by 1947 the rail passenger service was limited to a service from the South Road to the Quick Firing Cartridge Factory.

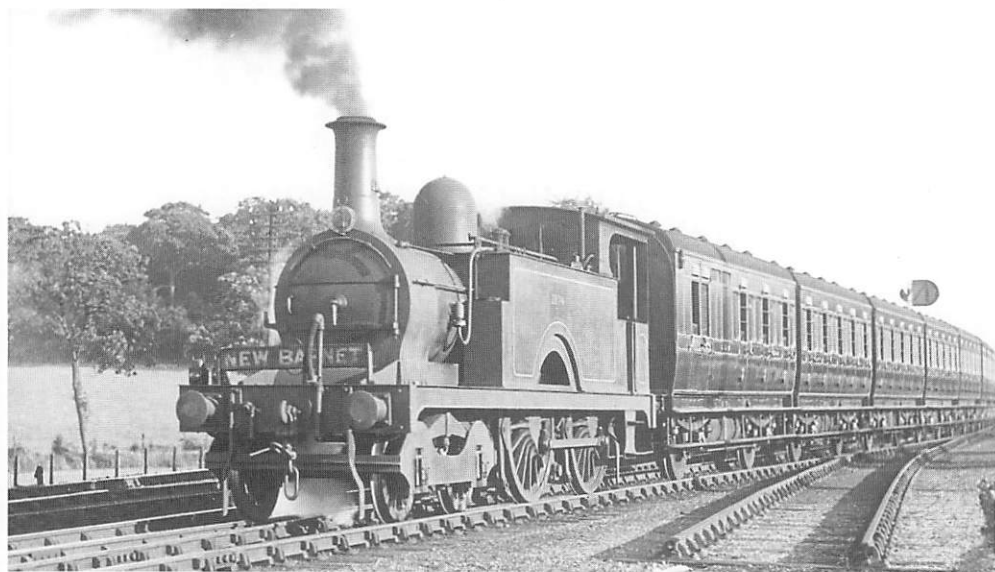
Much of the rolling stock used by the Royal Arsenal Railway was old main line stock and probably about 1940 our coach was acquired from the LMS, perhaps with its set, perhaps separately. On arrival at Rolvenden the coach had long grab handles down to footboard level on all doors (even those locked out of use), which suggests it was adapted for passenger

use away from platforms. At some time, probably on the RAR, it acquired replacement long buffers at its non-brake end of a matching pattern to the other end. A standard LNWR fitting they may have come from another NL/LNWR brake or set-end coach at Woolwich. When the standard gauge passenger service was finally abandoned, many coaches were adapted as mobile workshops, etc. From its internal layout in 1964 the Woolwich Coach had been used latterly as a 'mess room'. The Arsenal was in a state of continual contraction from the end of World War 2 and finally ceased to produce munitions in 1967, much of the site disappearing under Thamesmead new town, although a core of historic buildings remains.

The Woolwich was the first piece of passenger rolling stock to arrive on the revived K&ESR. After some bureaucratic delays caused by the Arsenal's requirement that if it had ever carried explosives the body must be burnt before sale, it was purchased for £50 (a month's wages with overtime for the author at that time) and arrived on 16 August 1964. It had been converted into an open saloon in its time at Woolwich with slatted wood bench seats surrounding a centre table, in which useful form she was regularly used for early Committee meetings. Painted in grey primer

with red brake ends that she had never previously carried she was the only coach at the railway's 'press day' on 3rd October 1964. Charwelton pulled her backwards and forwards between Tenterden and Rolvenden and carried the press on a trip to Northiam. Soon she was bedecked in K&ESR ivory and Kentish brown livery and by early 1966 had padded seats restored courtesy of a scrapped Maunsell coach. However so far as is known she never entered into passenger service but earned some much needed revenue as a film prop on several occasions. Worn out wheels were her downfall and by 1975 she was out of use. She had a swan song however, repainted to appear in the middle of the famous locomotive cavalcade of 1976. But years in the sidings had taken their toll and a total rebuild had become necessary. An initially sound coach brought down by lack of resources at the crucial time.

Restoration became a priority again with the intervention of a 'generous benefactor' and as interest in the Victorian train in the 1990s grew and the lack of ample luggage and brake accommodation on the train became apparent. The coach body was de-mounted in 1999 and work carried out on the underframe as resources permitted. However a real breakthrough came in 2003 with the securing



*One of the 1910 North London Train sets in LMS livery works empty to Potters Bar after a Broad Street to New Barnet service in 1925.*  
(Rail Archive Stephenson/F.R.Hebron)

of grant from the Millennium Commission. The usual C&W team, reinforced with dedicated resources, made for rapid progress and the enthusiasm generated made for some particularly careful reconstruction work, in restoring the long lost interior from photographs and in myriad details such as brass fittings.

Missing from this tale until now has been the subject of Numbers, perhaps because the carriage has always been referred to in preservation as the Woolwich Coach. This was certainly simpler. Apparently arriving without a number it was dubbed No 31 but became 101 by the late 1960s, only to become 67 in 1978. Its mainline number was always unknown but during the restoration process considerable research was undertaken and the identity of these brake coaches was established as NLR Nos 89, 90, 101, 102, 108-11. Although several underframe components carry numbers like 117 and 119 these do not correspond to known coaches and it is possible that these were intended for further coaches that remained unbuilt and were used as spares. A door pillar

on the brake compartment carries the faintly incised number 109 so there is now little doubt that this is its identity. As the new panelling will carry paint better than the original varnished Burma teak finish, the coach will carry an LMS livery and number 7965.

The late Cuthbert Hamilton Ellis, a great carriage historian and Victorian enthusiast, described how the spartan nature of North London stock inspired him in childhood to choose a trip on the line as a birthday treat! In 1934 this enthusiasm even encouraged him to make a special excursion with his young wife to Finsbury Park to show her what Mid-Victorian trains were really like. He reported that he "found her suitably impressed". Now that's what preservation should be about.

#### *Sources*

*LNWR Society; LNWR Liveries, published by HMRS; The Locomotive Magazine, 1921; Holding the Line, Nick Pallant, Alan Sutton Publishing; Wesley Harry, Royal Arsenal Historical Society; Various K&ESR Stock Books; Various issues of the Tenterden Terrier; Railway Observer, December 1952.*

# MAIDSTONE MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION

SENACRE TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE  
Sutton Road A274 (A229) Maidstone

Next to Safeway Superstore

**23rd & 24th October 2004**  
**10am - 4:30pm**

**Admission: £3.50 Child (4-16yrs) £1.00**

**20+ Layouts in most popular scales and gauges**  
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**Buses 12 & 82 from the town centre stop right outside.**



# The Railway Experience

**Philip Shaw outlines the programme of events for our popular driving courses, during which anyone can learn to drive a steam engine.**

One of the most popular visitor attractions on the Kent & East Sussex Railway is the introduction to driving- and this is despite the fact that it is by far the most expensive! Participants to the introduction courses join us for a day and are taught the basic skills required to drive a steam engine. Under the eye of an experienced instructor, each course member takes the controls, and first learns how to move off and stop an engine smoothly within the confines of Rolvenden yard. As the day progresses, his or her skills are developed by learning how to stop accurately at a pre-determined point and then how to uncouple the engine from its attached brake van, move away and then back up against it. We always use one of the smaller engines on the courses – a Terrier or the P class, because they are more difficult to drive than, say, an Austerity and hence more interesting.

Each course, which is confined to eight persons, commences at 9.00am at Rolvenden and finishes at 4.30pm, with a lunch break, during which a meal is provided. Everybody spends about two hours on the footplate, and when not on the footplate on the balcony of the attached brake van. In addition, about one hour is spent in the signal box, where there is the opportunity to chatter to the signalman about the basic principles of signalling the line.

Recently, we have introduced an advanced course for those who have already taken the

basic course. For advanced candidates, we always use our Norwegian tender locomotive. Each course is confined to two people and includes two return trips to Bodiam, with two coaches attached. Participants drive and fire in rotation and the courses only take place on days when we do not have any service trains.

We had completed 12 course days by the end of June, virtually all of which were fully booked. Everybody professes to have enjoyed the experience and a further bonus to us is that we have also recruited some new faces to our volunteer workforce. We have plans to introduce a diesel locomotive driving course if there is sufficient demand.

Anybody interested in these courses should contact our Commercial office on 01580 765155 for information. The price for a basic course is £185, which includes a cooked lunch and also one year's free membership to the Kent & East Sussex Railway Company. Every participant will also receive a certificate of achievement. We also offer the opportunity for anybody who may be interested in joining the courses to take a footplate taster ride, from Tenterden to Bodiam return, for £50.

Whatever you decide to do, we guarantee that it will be fun! Overalls are provided and all you need to do is turn up in strong, sensible footwear. A course voucher also makes a marvellous and most unusual special present for someone who has everything!



## Hoppers Weekend

**Saturday & Sunday, September 11 & 12**



Re-living the days when hundreds of Londoners came 'down hopping' in the hop gardens along the line. Bodiam becomes a hopping station with displays, hoppers' huts, barbecue and beer tent. Appearances by Pearly Kings and Queens. Late night train from Bodiam to Tenterden.

*No advance booking necessary.*



# The Railway Experience

*Photographed by Brian Stephenson at Rolvenden on 7 June 2004*



# New Siding to Quarry Farm

Mark Yonge explains how Rother Valley Railway Ltd has made it possible to improve the operating arrangements at Bodiam station and also outlines that Company's longer term plans for re-instatement of the Bodiam to Robertsbridge link.

Readers of this journal will be aware of the existence of Rother Valley Railway Ltd, an independent company, formed to rebuild the link between Bodiam, the present terminus of the line and Robertsbridge. In furtherance of this, the RVR has been acquiring or leasing parcels of land as and when they become available and collectively they account for about one third of the three mile route length. Planning permission has been obtained to rebuild the whole section; a Transport & Works Order will be required in due course.

The Kent & East Sussex Railway Company land ownership terminates at a point some 300 metres from Bodiam level crossing and is marked by a buffer stop. Beyond this, the RVR owns most of the half mile section of line to the

site of Junction Road (B2244) halt terminating short of the halt, at the boundary of Udiam Farmhouse, which extends over the trackbed at this point. Beyond this, the main physical barrier to re-instatement is the Robertsbridge by pass, which breaches the trackbed and is incorporated in the re-routed A21 road from Hastings which meets the M25 at the Sevenoaks interchange. The Railway originally crossed the old A21 through the village on the level and from this point The RVR owns the trackbed to Robertsbridge station itself.

As a result of a recent initiative, the RVR has agreed to make available to the K&ESR Company some 200 metres of formation that it owns beyond Bodiam so that the track can be re-instated. This will be done in August by the



*The buffer stop at Bodiam, which marks the end of K&ESR company land*

*(Brian Stephenson)*





*The trackbed beyond the buffer stop looking towards Udiam Farm, 15th April 2004*

*(John Liddell)*

K&ESR Permanent Way department will enable parked rolling stock to be re-located from existing sidings and thereby enhance the visual appearance of Bodiam station, which is the key heritage site. The cost of the track materials is being met by a generous donation from the K&ESR Maidstone Area Group.

Concurrently with the development, the RVR company will also re-instate the embankment beyond this point, utilising contractors. This is necessary because some 600 metres of route were ploughed out and returned to nature by the owner of Quarry farm. The contractors will also remove some closely wooded areas along the route and as a result, the track formation will be completely restored to a point some 90 metres from Udiam Farm and near to the former Junction Road Halt. The original formation went through Udiam Farm but the planning consents are to divert northwards over the River Rother and pass the B2244 on the level on the other side of the river. This will, of course, involve considerable engineering works. A landscaping scheme for this option has been

submitted to Rother District Council for approval. There are no immediate plans to re-lay track at this stage. The remaining formation between Udiam to a point east of Salehurst remains reasonably intact. Plans have been made to re-instate bridges in the Robertsbridge area. The key issue of the A21 crossing has been the subject of much discussion. A level crossing is a possibility, but the ideal solution would be to tunnel under the road itself. This would be very expensive if undertaken as a single project, but less so if incorporated into any plans to make the entire southern section of this busy road a dual carriage way.

The Robertsbridge project in its entirety is essentially a long term one and as such no time frame can realistically be put on it at present. The plans have been formulated and drawn up by Mike Hart, Peter Barber and Gardner Crawley and works completed so far have been funded by donations. The participants are keen, energetic and enthusiastic. They will keep interested parties abreast of developments.

# Colonel Stephens in West Somerset

How Colonel Stephens became a director of a railway with no track or stock

The West Somerset Mineral Railway is not regarded as a 'Colonel Stephens railway'. None the less, he was a director of the company for more than seven years, albeit during a period when the railway was closed, and indeed when its track had been lifted.

The history of the WSMR is detailed in the late Roger Sellick's definitive book on the subject. In brief, the line was authorised in 1855 and was opened from the Bristol Channel at Watchet Harbour to Gupworthy in stages from 1857 to 1858. It was a standard gauge line some 13 miles long, including a rope-worked 1-in-4 incline at Comberow. Its raison d'être was to carry iron ore from mines in the Brendon Hills to Watchet for shipment to South Wales, and its main promoters were partners in the Ebbw Vale Company, then one of the foremost firms in the iron and steel industry. The WSMR was leased by the Brendon Hills Iron Ore Co. for 7 years from 29 September 1859, and then by the Ebbw Vale Company for 55½ years from 24 June 1864. The Ebbw Vale Company was liquidated and reorganised as the Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron & Coal Co. Ltd. in 1868, and this new company took a fresh lease of the railway for 51½ years from 25 March 1868 at the same rent and terms as before.

Following an inspection by Captain Tyler of the Board of Trade, a passenger service started in 1865 from Watchet to the foot of the incline at Comberow. Passengers could in fact continue in open wagons free of charge and at their own risk up the incline and on the upper level of the railway. However, passenger traffic was never very important, apart from chapel excursions.

The broad gauge West Somerset Railway (forerunner of the present preserved railway) was opened in 1862 from Watchet Junction (later Norton Fitzwarren) to Watchet, where there was a branch to the harbour, although not to the pier already served by the WSMR. A separate company extended from Watchet to

Minehead in 1878. The branch was initially worked by the Bristol & Exeter Railway, and was eventually acquired by the Great Western and converted to standard gauge.

The Brendon Hills ore proved particularly suitable for the Bessemer steel process which transformed the iron and steel industry in the 1860s, and the mines and railway were modestly prosperous for some years. Ore production for the period 1858-1883 amounted to more than 723,000 tons, with the peak production of 46,000 tons in 1877. Up to 3,000 tons a month were shipped through Watchet Harbour, which could accommodate vessels of up to 500 tons. From about 1879, the South Wales steelmakers found that they could import Spanish iron ore more cheaply, and the Brendon Hills mines lost their market, finally closing in September 1883. Many of the miners moved away, and the township of Brendon Hill became largely derelict. From that date the train service was reduced to two mixed trains a day, run at a considerable loss. Most of the stock apart from one engine, a Sharp Stewart 0-6-0ST named 'Pontypool', two carriages and a few wagons were gradually returned to Ebbw Vale. In 1892, the Ebbw Vale company proposed that it should stop working the line and that the WSMR company should be wound up. The WSMR directors considered the proposed compensation inadequate, and rejected the proposal. The service was reduced to one train a day in January 1898, and then in November 1898 all rail traffic ceased, by an agreement under which the Ebbw Vale company continued to pay the minimum rent specified in the lease of £5,575 a year (which guaranteed a dividend of 5% on the ordinary shares) and to meet its other obligations (including a minimal level of maintenance) for the remaining term of the agreement. The 0-6-0ST 'Pontypool' and a smaller Neilson 0-4-0ST shunter were removed to Ebbw Vale, but the other rolling stock was evidently not considered worth moving, and was left to decay at Watchet



*Re-opening day at Comberow, 4 July 1907 with former Metropolitan locomotive No 37*

*(Colonel Stephens Historical Archive)*

station, with windows and doors broken and the bodywork rapidly disintegrating.

Watchet Harbour continued to be used for general coastal traffic, and indeed was rebuilt at a cost of £25,000 in 1904 after it was badly damaged by storms in December 1901 and in 1903.

Some attempts were made to revive the railway. The Somerset Mineral Syndicate was formed in 1907 to reopen the mines and railway, in the hope that an Osman briquetting kiln built at Washford would increase the value of the product and make the ore easier to ship. The Colton mine was reopened but the Syndicate's hopes proved unfounded and the railway was closed again in 1909. The Syndicate was wound up in 1910.

A R Angus Ltd., a company organised by an inventor from Sydney, Australia who had patented a system for automatic train control, leased a portion of the line at the Watchet end in 1911 for test work, which continued until early 1914. He later conducted trials in Sweden and Russia, and finally on the Dyke branch near Brighton, in 1920-21.

H L Hopwood, the author of numerous articles in the *Railway Magazine* in the early years of the 20th century, visited the WSMR in September 1913, and walked over the line from Washford to Comberow which he found "to be a most desolate spot, with little or no sign of population, and looking at the grass-grown incline, he could not help contrasting its then neglected condition with that of some years previously, when traffic had been in full swing". He then ascended the incline to Brendon Hill, which "proved a formidable climb, especially as a camera and tripod were carried, and walking was rendered additionally difficult by the neglected state of the permanent way". In general, "the whole equipment was in fair order", but "owing to the exposed situation of Brendon incline, this section had suffered to a greater degree".

As the WSMR was closed to traffic at the outbreak of the Great War, it did not come under the control of the Railway Executive. However, the Ministry of Munitions requisitioned the rails and other permanent way material under the Defence of the Realm Act in January 1917, and the Ebbw Vale company arranged for them to be lifted by a

local contractor, Thomas Barton Peel. Part of the trackbed was then used by the Timber Supply Department of the Board of Trade for a narrow gauge tramway to carry timber from Watchet to sawmills at Washford from September 1918 to early 1920.

Three of the four directors of the WSMR in 1917 had connections with the Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron & Coal Co. J H Robinson, the chairman of the WSMR and a former Ebbw Vale director, Edward Coulman, the Ebbw Vale solicitor, and John W Beynon (later Sir John Beynon), who was a director of the Ebbw Vale company and went on to become its chairman and managing director. They clearly saw no point in continuing to pay rent for a railway with no track and no serious prospect of ever reopening and called an extraordinary general meeting of the company for 22 November 1917 to consider a resolution from the directors to abandon the railway.

This development was not well received by those of the shareholders who were not interested in the Ebbw Vale company, and the opposition was organised by the fourth director of the WSMR, Frederick Pring Robjert (1859-1938), a Newport stockbroker, who suspected that the other directors had been holding meetings to which he had not been invited. He was supported particularly by the Sun Life Assurance Society, the Bristol Building Society and a Mr Darby (presumably a descendent of the celebrated ironmaster Abraham Darby IV who had been one of the founding partners in the Ebbw Vale ironworks in the 1850s and a WSMR director in the early days). The rebels called another extraordinary general meeting for the previous day, 21 November 1917, which was boycotted by the other three existing directors. The meeting voted to remove them from office, and elected three new directors in their place, in addition to Robjert who now became chairman. The new deputy chairman was Sidney Herbert, a London stockbroker who specialised in the finance of smaller railway companies. He had been responsible for the financial reorganisation of the Stratford-upon-Avon & Midland Junction Railway, and had orchestrated shareholder revolts which had resulted in changes of management of the Cambrian Railways and the Isle of Wight Central Railway. Robjert and Herbert were

already chairman and deputy chairman respectively of the Mold & Denbigh Junction Railway. Also elected was Richard Davies, a partner in a Chesterfield, Derbyshire, firm of solicitors, Davies, Sanders and Swanwick. They had been much involved in railway promotion in the East Midlands, and another partner, Dixon Davies, had become a director of the Great Central Railway. Finally, Colonel Holman F Stephens was elected as the only member of the board with practical experience of railway construction and management. It is very likely that he was recommended by Sidney Herbert; Stephens had been brought in as part-time engineer of the Isle of Wight Central Railway for a period in 1911 by the new management which resulted from Sidney Herbert's manoeuvres (see *Tenterden Terrier* No 45, Spring 1988) and at the time in question was engineer to the Edge Hill Light Railway (see *Tenterden Terrier* No.77, Winter 1998), of which company Sidney Herbert was also deputy chairman. Like the WSMR, the Edge Hill was built to serve ironstone deposits, and Stephens' presence on the board would no doubt have added credibility to proposals to rebuild and reopen the WSMR. As this never occurred, Stephens seems to have taken little part in the company's affairs beyond attending meetings and collecting his fees.

At the meeting on 22 November, the previous board's motion to abandon the railway was lost. The new board elected Harry Milner Willis, to make up the prescribed number of five directors. Willis acted as company secretary to a number of limited companies, including the Mold & Denbigh Junction Railway, of which Robjent and Herbert were directors. The board also appointed Davies, Sanders and Swanwick as their solicitors, as the company's previous solicitor, Edwin Hellard of Stogumber, Somerset, who had been the company secretary since 1877, had continued to act for the old board. The first of a number of lawsuits which were to occupy most of the company's remaining existence followed immediately, when J H Robinson and his colleagues claimed that the new directors had not been validly elected. Mr Justice Astbury found in favour of the new board on 7 December 1917, and Edwin Hellard returned to his position as secretary. Hellard acted jointly with Davies, Sanders and Swanwick as solicitors to the WSMR thereafter. Robjent

took the lead in directing the company's affairs, and fortunately much of his correspondence with Edwin Hellard has survived in the Somerset Record Office.

General meetings of the WSMR, like those of many smaller railway companies in the pre-grouping era, were held at the Great Eastern Hotel, Liverpool Street, and the new directors usually held board meetings in London as well, often at Willis's offices in Walbrook. In addition to their fees, the directors received expenses of five guineas (£5.25) for attending meetings if they resided outside London, and two guineas (£2.10) if they were in the London area. This caused some consternation amongst the directors when the company was required to deduct income tax from expenses payments not covered by receipts! Like most of his fellow directors, Stephens was unable to provide the evidence which Edwin Hellard requested.

The capital of the WSMR consisted of

Class A 6% preference shares	£32,500
Class B ordinary shares	£42,500
Debenture stock	£30,000

J E G Lawrence (the business partner of the Ebbw Vale solicitor, Edward Coulman), now brought an action against the WSMR on behalf of himself and other holders of the debenture stock (who were mostly connected with the Ebbw Vale company). This action aimed to make the railway treat the rent received from the Ebbw Vale company as capital, and not use it to pay dividends on the ordinary shares, as the WSMR's existing assets were insufficient to cover the repayment of the debenture capital. The case was heard in June 1918 before Mr Justice Eve, who ruled that not only could the WSMR continue to distribute the rent as dividends (provided the interest on the debentures had been paid first), but that the debenture holders (who had no vote at general meetings) had no right to bring an action against the company, provided their payments were not in arrears. The case is still quoted in legal textbooks.

Meanwhile, the new directors had a number of other problems to deal with. T B Peel had largely finished lifting the track – he was dismissed by Robjent as “by profession a tailor”; before the war he had worked in his father's tailor's shop in Watchet, but had now



set up in business on his own account as a "commission shipping agent". However, in January 1918 the Ministry of Munitions stopped further shipments of material (perhaps they had realised what a poor state it was in), and the remainder was left dumped at Watchet and Washford. Protracted negotiations with the Ministry ensued and eventually resulted in payment for the material that they had actually taken. As late as March 1918, T B Peel was found to be breaking up a wagon in the yard at Watchet on questionable authority; he defended himself by pointing out that it was fit only for scrap.

The railway was under the superintendence of Norman L. Hole, who had a workforce of three labourers plus another man to look after the line above the Comberow incline. Norman Hole had been employed by the Ebbw Vale company, who had insisted on approving every item of maintenance work. In practice, this had been limited to work needed for legal obligations and public safety to bridges, fences and retaining walls, and repairs to tenanted property. The track and railway buildings had been allowed to decay more or less unhindered. Mr Hole was now employed directly by the WSMR and expenditure was approved by Robjnt, although costs were controlled as tightly as ever.

One of the last acts of the old board had been to commission an Exeter surveyor, T H Andrews, to draw up plans of the line, and his report was duly submitted in March 1918. The new directors were, however, interested in the cost of putting the railway "into good repair and proper working order and conditions for the purpose of using it under modern conditions for the conveyance of traffic" – either as a practical policy or to support them in negotiations with the Ebbw Vale company. They appointed Robert Elliott-Cooper (1845-1942; later Sir Robert), an eminent consulting engineer and a past president of the Institution of Civil Engineers, who came down to inspect the line in April 1918 and reported the following month.

Negotiations with the Ministry of Munitions eventually led to the WSMR being paid £12,505 for the material which had already been despatched. The rest of the material at Watchet and Washford included 50 tons of flat-bottomed rail, 15 tons of bullhead rail, seven

push trolleys, two pump trolleys and one motor for a trolley (out of repair). It was all advertised for sale in October 1919. Several prominent dealers declined to tender, including the Bute Works Supply Co. who commented that one of their staff had called at Watchet while in the area the previous year, but had not seen anything the company would be interested in. The successful bidder was Thos. W Ward, who did not bother to make an inspection as their long and wide experience of permanent way materials allowed them to make a fair estimate of value. They were wrong where the WSMR was concerned; when the sleepers they had bought at a good price reached their works, they were found to be barely fit for firewood and not worth the cost of carriage.

In February 1919 the WSMR deposited a Parliamentary Bill which sought relief for the company from circumstances arising from the Great War. In particular, it proposed that for the purposes of the working agreement with the Ebbw Vale company, all the works necessary for putting the railway in good repair should be deemed to have been completed before 29 September 1919, the end date of the agreement between the companies, notwithstanding that the works were actually carried out after then, "provided that such works shall be executed within two years from that day". As the Financial Times pointed out, the object of the Bill was "to enable the railway company to repair the railway at the expense of the Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron and Coal Company".

If this move was intended to put pressure on the Ebbw Vale company to reach an agreement it seems to have succeeded, as later that month the parties agreed to appoint Sir Lynden Macassey (1876-1963) as arbitrator. The four-day hearing took place in March. A legal point was referred to the High Court, and following an unfavourable decision, the arbitration went against the WSMR.

At this point the fate of the railway was decided, whether or not it was realised at the time. Robjnt wrote to Edwin Hellard on 19 March 1920, "I understand the Mining proposition is at present under consideration by large Steel Manufacturers, and I am still hoping something may result, but of course the present position of the Railway as a

dismantled concern, is a very different proposition to a line which we had hoped the Court would have held the E V were bound to put into good running order; and I suppose unless we can get the Steel people to entertain the Mining proposition fairly quickly, the best course in everyone's interest will be to get an abandonment order as soon as possible, but there are, as you know, difficulties in the way of getting even that done".

While the legal processes were grinding slowly on, the directors followed up a suggestion by Sir Robert Elliott-Cooper that the Great Western Railway might be interested in acquiring part of the trackbed of the WSMR to give them access to the other side of Watchet Harbour and to the paper mill at Wansborough. Even after some initial confusion had been resolved, when the GWR thought they were being invited to take over the whole of the WSMR, the offer was declined. The GWR Engineer's Office commented that a proposal for a siding connection to Wansborough paper mill had been put forward in 1913, but fell through as the paper company were not prepared to pay the tolls proposed.

The WSMR had appealed against the decision of the High Court, and on 6 July 1920 the Court of Appeal (Lord Justices Atkin and Younger) found for the WSMR and remitted the award to the arbitrator. Sir Lynden Macassey awarded the WSMR the cost of repairs to bridges and buildings actually made up to 25 September 1919 (about £9800) and an additional item of £20,647, subject to some further legal points raised by the Ebbw Vale company. The parties returned to the courts, and in March 1922 Mr Justice Rowlatt ruled in favour of the WSMR, in particular deciding that the railway company could have put the line in order before 25 September 1919, if the Ebbw Vale company had not repudiated liability.

The Ebbw Vale company appealed yet again, but on 5 July 1922, shortly before the case came for hearing, an agreement was reached between the parties that the Ebbw Vale company would pay the WSMR £14,500 in settlement of all claims whatsoever. The amount of the settlement was not published at the time. The directors were now able to report to the shareholders that "the litigation

between the companies is, therefore, at an end", and the half-yearly meeting of the WSMR on 4 October 1922 was followed by an extraordinary meeting at which a resolution to apply for abandonment of the undertaking was passed.

A Bill was accordingly drafted and considered at the next half-yearly meeting on 28 March 1923, and the West Somerset Mineral Railway (Abandonment) Act received the Royal Assent on 2 August 1923.

1924 saw the retirement of Edwin Hellard as company secretary after some 46 years in the post; H G Derwent Moger of Stogumber solicitors Channer and Channer was Acting Secretary for the remainder of the company's existence.

All the company's fixed assets apart from land and buildings had already been sold, and the latter went at an auction sale at the West Somerset Hotel in Watchet on Friday 8 August 1924. The West Somerset Free Press reported that great interest was taken in the disposal, the large billiard-room at the hotel being crowded with residents from all parts of the district once served by the long disused line, as also others interested in the company". The auctioneer was Mr Stanley Hosegood (of Risdon, Gerrard and Hosegood) and those present included F P Robjent (but apparently none of the other directors), H A Sanders (of Davies, Sanders and Swanwick), H G Derwent Moger, P Duddridge (Edwin Hellard's chief clerk) and Norman Hole (the superintendent). A total of £3,019 was realised, several hundred pounds more than the reserve prices. A number of the company's tenants took the opportunity to purchase the freehold of their cottages. There were also a couple of sales to directors – Mineral Cottage in the parish of St Decumans was bought by Sidney Herbert, and a piece of land at Watchet by H A Sanders, F P Robjent, Sidney Herbert and his brother Alfred Herbert jointly.

The last general meeting was on 7 July 1925, when the final accounts showed that the debenture holders had received 70% of the value of their holdings, but holders of the ordinary and preference shares got nothing. On the same day, the directors met for the last time and resolved that the company be wound up.

Writing in 1921, H L Hopwood wondered whether the removal of the track would be "the final chapter in the history of the West Somerset Mineral Railway. Such, however, would appear to be the case, for in view of the present day high cost of labour and materials and the thinly populated district served, it seems hopeless to expect that the railway will ever be re-opened". In hindsight it is clear that lifting the track certainly began the final chapter, even if there were some twists and turns before the story reached its end. The Brendon Hill mines never reopened and the WSMR never became one of Colonel Stephens' railways. Nor did F.P. Robjent's rebellion do more for the ordinary and preference shareholders than pay their dividends a few years longer. More compensation was undoubtedly extracted from the Ministry of Munitions and the Ebbw Vale company (which was in poor financial health itself) but only at the cost of substantial expense on litigation.

As a postscript, although it is nearly ninety years since the metals of the West Somerset

Mineral Railway were raised, public interest in the 'old mineral line' and in the much longer history of iron ore mining in the Brendon Hills have not diminished. In 1999 the Exmoor National Park Authority purchased the incline and winding house, and since then work has been done to remove undergrowth and to conserve historical features. In April 2004, a group headed by the Exmoor Society received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to enable a full project design to be drawn up for the WSMR and its associated industrial past, including iron mining sites and the communities that worked there. This will lead to the conservation of these places and will help people learn more about them through high quality interpretation and better public access.

*Assistance from Miss Liz Grant and other staff of the Somerset Record Office is gratefully acknowledged.*

**Tom Burnham**

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# Rails at Rye Harbour

Whilst Colonel Stephens students naturally concentrate on the East Side of the River Rother and the holiday delights of the Camber tram, railway life thrived on the West Bank. In an article first published in *The Narrow Gauge*, the Journal of the Narrow gauge railway Society, Kevin Payne sets out the complex history of Rye Harbour industry and its railways The original article has been slightly amended.

## Origins and early years.

Rye Harbour stands at the mouth of the River Rother in Sussex and has served as a port of kinds since the sea retreated in the Middle Ages and left the town of Rye behind.

Rails arrived at Rye harbour as a result of Government insistence that whoever built a railway from St Leonard's to Ashford should contribute £10,000 to improvements of the Rother and the harbour facilities.

The South Eastern reluctantly built the line as a pre-condition of the opening of its route from Tunbridge Wells to Hastings and, having parted with the £10,000, built a line from Rye to Rye Harbour with a view to exploiting traffic with France.

The branch consisted of a long siding that commenced at a junction some 800 yards south west of Rye station. The connection trailed back from the down line, curved sharply to cross the Royal Military Road, bridged the River Brede and ran across the low-lying lands south of the Rother to terminate on the estuary shore. The completed length was a little under two miles and the line opened for goods traffic in March 1854.

At this time Rye Harbour consisted of a Martello Tower, a Naval Signalling station, a few cottages and fishermen's shanties and a hulk that rested in the muddy salt flats at the edge of the Rother.

In the early years, rails ran directly onto a wooden pier and a pair of wagon turntables gave access to sidings running out among the shingle dunes. The present Tram Road follows the line of these sidings. In common with a number of other such ventures on the Kent and Sussex coast, the branch did not attract a significant continental traffic and no passenger service was ever provided. However, local goods traffic did develop.

Rye Harbour is built on shingle, or 'beach' as it is known in Sussex, and by 1872 a pattern of extraction and use of shingle that still exists had been established. A long siding had been laid from near the present church to the beach head on Rye Bay, this eventually became a bifurcated siding of considerable length and quality which survived until at least 1910 and was used to load shingle into open wagons. At the end of the sidings on the site of Tram Road was a concrete works. This latter was probably used to make blocks for the harbour development and by 1898 had closed.

By this time another concrete works was in operation; Elliot's Patent Stone Company had a plant a little to the east of the present school. The site was provided with an internal narrow gauge tramway with numerous wagon turntables and its location is marked today by a row of cottages built for its employees.

Being isolated, Rye Harbour was a good location for a chemical works. By 1895 Messrs. Forbes, Abbott and Lennard were distilling tar at a works on the shore of the Rother some half a mile west of the present church. Their plant was soon served by a siding which curved off from the SER, ran between the oil tanks and terminated at a landing stage. There was an internal narrow gauge system and some of the track was mixed gauge. The narrow gauge was definitely two-foot in later years, but one local resident has stated that it was initially three-foot.

The Rother Iron Works in Rye advertised its services as railway agents in the late nineteenth century and through the pages of the 'Machinery Market' of April 1st 1885 sought a small three-foot or standard gauge tank engine for hire. Could this have been for use in constructing the chemical works?

The SER branch carried away shingle for use as railway ballast and building aggregate, large

pebbles to grind glaze in the Staffordshire Potteries, finished concrete and 'patent stone' products and coal, principally for Hastings, which had been unloaded from coasting vessels. Incoming traffic included timber, lime, chemicals used in the hardening of 'patent stone' and sundry tools and machinery parts.

Rye Harbour continued to grow, acquiring more cottages, a life boat station and a church; in 1905 it became a separate parish. As well as the trades described above, there was some fishing carried on and much goods was trans-shipped from coasters to Rye Barges, a slim species of sailing barge which was used to serve the villages along the Rother and its tributaries. These were a significant competitor to the Rother valley portion of the Kent & East Sussex Railway in its early years.

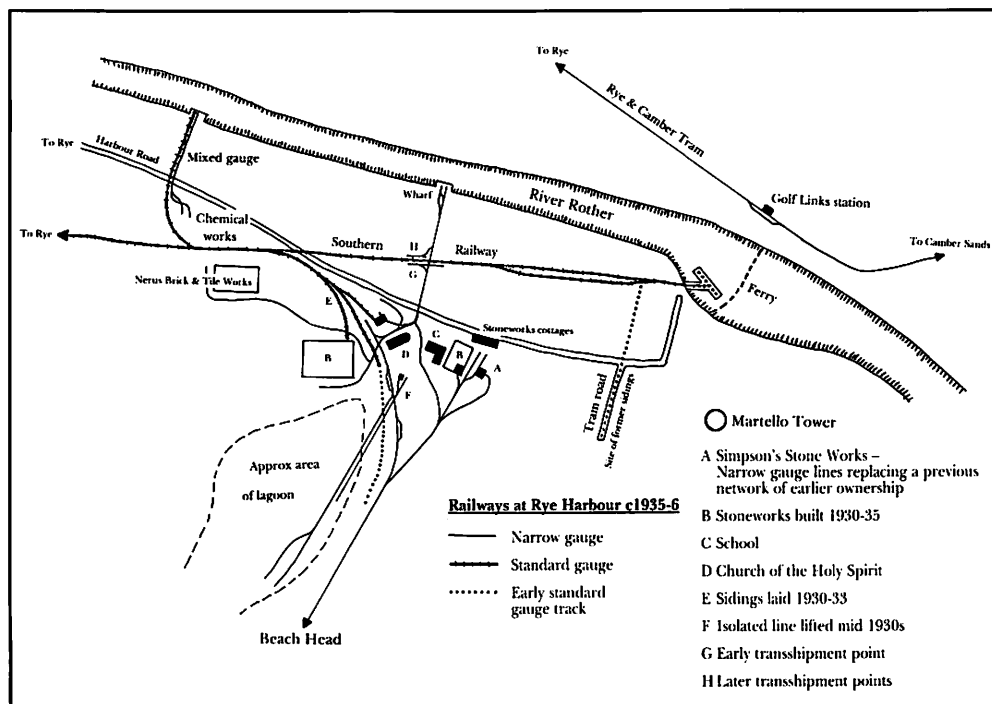
### The Twenties and Thirties.

During the period between the First and Second World Wars, Rye Harbour was the scene of frenetic activity. This seems to have had two causes; the shingle-based industries expanded massively, and a breach of the sea wall defending the Pett Levels in 1926 led to the construction of groynes along Rye Bay as far as Cliff End.

By 1928, the former Elliot works was in the hands of one E A Simpson. At some stage the internal narrow-gauge system had 'broken out' and seems to have taken over the course of the early siding toward the beach head. The gauge of the old internal lines is unknown, but the extensions were two-foot gauge. E A Simpson concluded a siding agreement with the Southern Railway in 1928, and this led to the construction of a new siding which probably used the northern part of the early beach head siding.

Expansion of the old patent stoneworks continued, but shortly a new and bigger works began to take shape just west of the church. Either E A Simpson was joined in his enterprise by others (or he decided to protect his personal assets) and Simpson (Rye Harbour) Ltd was formed. This company took over the first siding lease in March 1930 and concluded additional agreements in December 1930, June 1931 and May 1933.

The new stoneworks were joined by the Nerus Brick and Tile works a little to its west; this too seems to have been an E A Simpson project. The various plants were linked by a plethora of two-foot gauge lines, which also extended to the





beach head and to a wharf on the SR line.

Necessary sea defence works on the extensive Rye Harbour beach and Pett levels works required a lengthy narrow gauge tramway. The Body responsible for these works was the delightfully named Rother and Jury's Gut Catchment Board who began work installing a series of groyne that formed a barrier to control shingle movement. A two-foot gauge tramway was laid along the top of the barrier. The purpose of the tramway was to bring up construction materials and on completion of the works, to enable shingle to be brought back from the western end of the beach. Construction seems to have begun at Cliff End – the western extreme of Rye Bay – probably because Cliff End was then the only spot on Pett Level which had a made-up road leading to it. Here a temporary single-track alignment traversed the shingle scrub, while earth-fill retaining piles were sunk into the beach to form a breakwater running alongside the shore. On completion, this work had the appearance of an embankment, and a permanent double-track was laid on its formation. The 'Jubilee' panel track system was used for both temporary and permanent alignments. This portable track incorporating flat-bottomed rails and steel sleepers had been developed during the First World War for use over shell-torn ground, and as such, was ideal for laying on shingle.

This lengthy tramway was first used in 1934 and was connected to the existing lines at Rye harbour, the exact boundary of ownership being far from clear. By 1935 the rail facilities were very complex and the narrow gauge crossed the SR on the level to reach its own wharf on the Rother estuary. It was now possible to travel nearly five miles from the Rother to Cliff End, Fairlight by two-foot gauge train and two and, at times, three-shift working was carried on in the various works.

Products of the works were many and varied; sand, graded stone for road surfacing, coated stone, calcium silicate bricks and tiles and finished concrete products such as lamp-posts and blocks, which were probably used on local sea defences and certainly went to Dover Harbour. Much of the raw material came from the beach head, but in 1936 or 1937 this had to stop because of erosion problems.

Early in 1937, Hall and Company opened a

shingle pit at Rye Harbour, to the rear of the church and worked as a lagoon using floating dredgers. This operation seems to have constituted a takeover of the extractive arm of S (RH) Ltd, leaving them with the finished products division. The standard gauge sidings were underlet by S (RH) Ltd to Hall & Co., the consent of the SR to this action being dated 11 September 1939.

Precisely when locomotives were first employed on the Rye Harbour two-foot lines is unclear, but it is certain that Robert Hudson Ltd delivered Hunslet machine No 1706 to an unspecified customer at Rye Harbour in 1933 and that this was followed later in the same year by No 1733. Spares for both were ordered by S (RH) Ltd in 1936. The locomotive design was a 'tidied up' copy of the well known 'Simplex', the radiator being mounted in one end of the engine housing rather than ahead of it, no cab was fitted. A Lister 20hp engine drove via a plate clutch to a standard Hunslet gearbox giving speeds of 2.3, 4.6 and 7mph, final drive was by roller chains. Former employees refer to these locomotives as 'The Listers', so setting a trap for unwary rail enthusiasts.

The Rother and Jury's Gut Catchment Board 'Simplex' No.7025 of 1936 was certainly used on the line to Cliff End. The R&JGCB also owned 'Simplex' No.7021 of 1935. This probably worked on the extension of the East Pier at Rye Harbour, a contract for which was placed in 1935, and may also have operated to Cliff End.

In 1936 S (RH) Ltd took delivery of Hibberd locomotives Nos 1970 and 1971 which joined the other machines already at work and were housed in a corrugated iron shed on the old Elliot site.

In 1938 Hunslet No 1706 was sold back to its maker by Hall & Co., presumably having passed to them from S (RH) Ltd. After refurbishment it was sold via Hudsons to Williamson Cliff Brickworks, Stamford, Lincolnshire where it survived until 1970, being the last of its type in the UK. No 1733 went direct from Rye Harbour to Catton Hill Quarry, Buxton. These departures seem to mark the change from beach head to lagoon extraction of shingle.

During this period, if not throughout its existence, the standard gauge line was operated as a siding. Trains consisted of trips from Rye Station Yard, during which the guard was accompanied by a "competent man" who worked

the ground frames and crossing gates en-route. Despite the presence of a run round loop at Rye Harbour, locomotives were permitted to propel trains down the branch. There was a limit of twenty-five wagons and the train was headed by a brake van "of not less than ten tons" from which the guard and his companion kept look out. S (RH) Ltd sidings had a ground frame and wagons were exchanged at a point agreed between Mr Simpson and the Rye Station Master; the chemical works had hand operated points.

### Post War Years

On return from war, Hall & Co employees found the Hibberd locomotives in poor condition; they were repaired and used in the lifting of the narrow gauge tracks out to the beach head and from around the works at Rye Harbour. An isolated section of the R&JGCB line between the lifeboat station and Winchelsea Beach seems to have survived this scrap drive. Their work done, the Hibberds were consigned to Hall & Cos. Eastbourne depot by lorry, there to be cut-up.

R&HGCGB 'Simplex' machines Nos 7021 and 7025 seem to have been placed in store in about 1950 when the coastal defence work was, for the time being, completed. In 1952 they were sold to W E Colebrooke Ltd for use on a shingle extraction line that passed below the erstwhile Rye and Camber Tramway on the north bank of the Rother.

The situation regarding ownership of the various shingle based works in the immediate postwar years is far from clear. The benefits of the siding agreements were with Spun Concrete Ltd who had acquired Simpson's business, (presumably the finished products division which had survived the arrival of Hall & Co.) but Hall & Co. were using them as underlessees.

In 1951 Mr C Gould established another concrete works near to the school, and in the early years this too boasted a short narrow gauge line; but the site was moved slightly to the west and the line abandoned.

This plant is still in operation under the Gould name, but since 1977 has belonged to Caxton Reinforcement. Hall & Co continued to extract shingle by lagoon dredger, but in 1960 their Hunslet locomotive No 2119 of 1940 was observed on an isolated length of two-foot track near the end of the standard gauge line.

Meanwhile, the chemical works underwent various changes of ownership, becoming successively the Rye Chemical Company, part of South Eastern Tar Distillers, Smith and Son (Oil Distillers) and ABCO Petroleum. The first recorded narrow gauge locomotive at this site arrived in circa 1957, a Ruston Hornsby two-foot machine from the WD at Liphook. In 1960 Lister No 4460, built in 1932 arrived, to be joined in 1969 by Hibberd No 2562 of 1942.

In latter years the line was used to transport waste materials for dumping, but this activity ceased in 1970 and the tracks were lifted. The Ruston and the Lister were cut-up locally at an unknown date, the Hibberd passing to H Hooker, Scrap Merchant at Rye in mid-1971. The chemical works is still in operation, refining oil and reprocessing solvents.

During the fifties traffic on the standard gauge branch declined steadily, the tracks being used to store partially completed wagons from Ashford Works for a period. Then the line was transferred to the non-operational account, the official jargon for 'closed'. The land was subsequently sold in small parcels to various users including the local councils.

The continuing processes of industrial development, particularly in the last ten years, sea defence work and shingle extraction and the establishment and development of the nationally important Rye Harbour Local Nature Reserve established in 1970 have left few traces of what may well have been the longest narrow gauge railway in Sussex; several feet of two-foot track lie embedded in the floor of the ruined Nerus works and cropped rails serve as fence posts. The remains of standard gauge sidings have been known to occasionally emerge from the shifting shingle, but Rye Harbour as a community is now almost as forgotten as it was before the railway arrived.

### Editor's Acknowledgments:

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# A Question of Attribution

An investigation into the identity of the last remaining Stephens' era Carriage by Brian Janes

As a museum assistant you tend to get a bit blasé about exhibits, especially when working on other matters when the museum is closed to the public. However, for some reason, at a quiet time my attention was drawn to an exhibit nestling behind the glass of the Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Railway exhibit. Two beautiful pieces of 19th century woodwork lay there and on one the faded lettering 'No 337' and '1st'. They are attributed as part of an, ex-Metropolitan Railway carriage, bought second hand by the Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Light Railway. Having just received in the shop a copy of the book *Metropolitan Railway Rolling Stock* by James R Snowden, curiosity confirmed that the panel was from a 'Jubilee' all-1st four-wheeler built by Cravens in 1892

for the then new extensions to Rickmansworth and Aylesbury.

Time passed, and whilst researching for the Museum website in the standard WC&P history books, it appeared to me that the railway only had one 1st class carriage, No 7, and that it was said to have been saved by the London Transport Museum. News to me, but was it still there? Over to the Heritage Railway Carriage Register on the web. There it was at <http://www.vintagecarriagestrust.org/se/CarriageInfo.asp?Ref=3409>. But its previous identity, like the other WC&P ex Met. carriages, was unknown. E-mail to a very helpful LT Museum in the shape of Robert Excell. Yes, it was at the reserve collection at Acton, but not much was known



*WC&P coach No 7 at the London Transport Museum Acton, 12th May 2004*

*(Brian Janes)*

about it. Would we like to see it? Yes, please.

Where had our pieces come from? Into the Colonel Stephens Museum Archive. The pieces had come in 1992 from Mr D A Wright of Faringdon, Bucks, who had rescued them when a carriage body had been broken up at Shrivenham around 1980. They had "come from a 1st class compartment in a composite coach".

This was odd. The Jubilees were never built as composites and so far as I knew the only 1st class carriage was with LT at Acton. Did our pieces originate from the Acton body? We took the pieces out of their case, and on the back of the piece from the top ventilator there was the number 337 plus a V (probably the individual door number).

Off to see Robert Excell and the LT Museum file. As he had said, thin. In 1974, at a time of low ebb for the Museum collection after they had lost Clapham and lived in exile at Syon Park, there came an offer. A Mr Gould of Faringdon, clearly an enthusiast, asked "Would they exchange an ex-Metropolitan Railway carriage body (in a property adjacent to the A420 at the East End of Shrivenham) for a platform seat for the lady on whose land it was?" A survey was undertaken with photos showing clearly that it was WC&P No 7. A swap was arranged at a nominal cost of £39.50 for a seat from Amersham Station and the coach body was moved on 29th August. There was then some inconclusive debate about how the body might be displayed. It was thought it would be best to cut it down to one or two compartments for restoration and part display. Fortunately for posterity this work was not undertaken, the body languished at Ruislip and is now in perfect storage conditions at Acton. A precious and unique survivor of the Stephens' railways had survived.

However reading the LT file some disappointment set in. Mr Gould positively identified it as Met. No 353 (another all 1st) with a badly decayed body at nearby Watchfield carrying 337 on 4 door ventilators and 354 (yet another 1st) on one. Well it certainly was WC&P 7, but what was its Met. number? Down into the vast store past some very distracting material to see the body.

There it was, much as it had come from Shrivenham. Four opening doors had been taken off and lay inside. They were all accompanied by parts embossed 337 and differing door numbers (VII etc). All interior paintwork was obliterated with white paint and the other four doors, probably sealed shut in about 1907, were inaccessible. No sign of Mr Gould's 353: 337 it must be.

The WC&P had acquired these Met. carriages by July 1907 some four years before Stephens took over. As they were equipped with short buffers they were, according to a contemporary press report, used in at least one set of 3. This would imply 2 sets plus a floater or possibly 1 x 3 and 1 x 4. When so formed an internal passageway was cut through the compartments on one side and most doors sealed. The remaining doors were equipped with sloping stepboards with an elongated grab rail to help people climb from the railway's many ground level platforms. There was also a corresponding rail inside the lower part of the opening door to further ease boarding. To enable fare collection, communicating doors were cut into the inner ends of the carriages in the set. This measure, seemingly so typical of Stephens' methods, was in fact carried out quickly, and was alluded to in the local press in September 1907. It was certainly carried out before June 1909, some 2 years before he took control. At some stage, probably before WW1, they were reformed into 3 x 2 sets with a floater (No 7). So formed they lasted to the closing of the railway in 1940, when the GWR took them to Swindon for scrapping or sale.

Inspection of No 7 revealed much else of interest. The interior had been stripped but the exterior walls were sound, and much interior detail on them, including three mirrors, survives. The rather crudely fashioned exterior iron grab handles fitted on the WC & P were all there, as was one of the interior walls. But most fascinating of all were the end doors. As a floater or the centre of a three set, the carriage had these at both ends. Measuring about 5ft high by 18" wide and clearly not meant for use by someone of my build they were crudely fashioned. One was from tongued and



*WC&PR coach No 7 at Shrivenham in 1974, in use as a garden shed*

*(Transport for London)*

grooved board and as a concession to the weather simple wooden beads over the board joins. The other door was even lighter with a softwood frame exposed to the elements. A simple carriage lock was fitted to both to stop use by the general public. The door openings were simply cut and faced both sides with strap iron. These doors date from the coach's earliest WC&P days as evidenced by a photo dated June 1909. It is amazing that they survived the intervening years.

The body was partly covered in badly deteriorated garden shed blue/green paint and, on one part creosote that had probably been used in its time at Shrivenham. However the body has substantial traces of faded red on one end and fainter traces at the other. Examination showed that it is almost certain that the red was confined to the ends only and the body side livery was always varnished wood. The screwed on cast number 7 had disappeared since 1974

(hopefully into store) but its outline was still very clear.

Although this carriage is definitely WC&P No 7, and in all probability Met. No 337 (of which The Colonel Stephens Railway Museum inadvertently has a piece), the references to other ex 1st class Jubilee coaches in the Gould correspondence intrigued me. As you will recall I had previously thought that the Weston, Clevedon and Portishead had only one such coach.

So I followed up with a visit to the London Metropolitan Archive which holds the Metropolitan Railways' records. They were very helpful and I found, in the Stores Committee minutes for 16th July 1907, a report of the sale. The numbers of the carriages were given as 337, 339, 347, 322, 353, 354 and 355. Jim Snowdon's book tells us that 322 was an 1889 built short wheelbase



4 doored 2nd brakes and that 339, 347 and 355 were similar but 1892 built with a longer wheelbase. Something wrong here for the WC&P coaches, although the wheelbases corresponded, were all five doored 3rd brakes. Jim got his information from other researchers and official returns but I think the numbers of the 2nd and 3rd class brakes got transposed somewhere. An even bigger surprise to me though was that the remaining three, 337, 353 and 354, were 1892 built 1st class four door carriages. Three, not one! And Mr Gould back in the 1970s had reported all three numbers in the Acton body and the derelict one nearby.

So how come the Acton body was complete and numbered 337 yet our Museum had door panels that were taken from another coach. This was as much of a mystery as when my curiosity started this quest. Probably some unexpected swap around at Clevedon works as they strived to keep the coaches going.

Still, we in the Museum have gained a real insight into some of the cruder aspects of light railway operating methods.

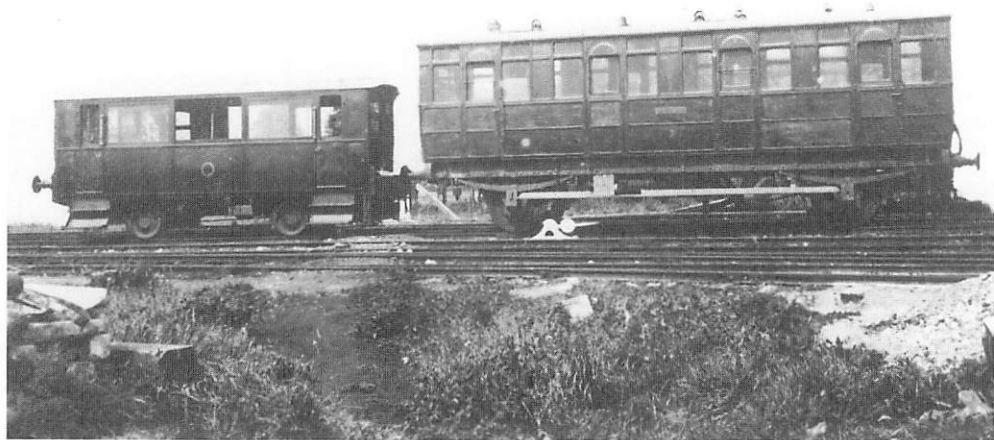
LT Museum has seen on our panels samples of 1907 Met. Railway internal paint work and lettering which they had not seen before. Further we have alerted LT Museum to the importance of the carriage in a wider than LT context. We very much hope that this knowledge will ensure that the carriage is kept complete in its present unique state. We have inspected the last remaining Stephens' era carriage body. We have tracked down the probable original identity of seven of the WC&P coaches. And we enjoyed the hunt.

What more could you ask from a hobby?

**Brian Janes**

*Sources and Acknowledgments:*

*The Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Railway, Christopher Redwood. (Sequoia publishing, 1981); The Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Railway. C G Maggs Oakwood Press, 1990); The Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Railway. A Pictorial Record. Peter Strange (Twelveheads Press 1989); Colonel Stephens Railway Archive; London Transport Museum and staff, particularly Robert Excell; London Metropolitan Archive and its helpful staff; Jim Snowdon*



*Drewry Railcar No 1 with coach No 7 on the WC&PR, 1922*

*(Colonel Stephens Historical Archive)*

# Letters to the Editor

## Pickering Railmotors

Sir – In my article 'Reflections on the K&ESR's Pickering Steam Railcar' published in *Terrier* 88 (Summer 2002) I took the view that H F Stephens was the moving light in the development of this advanced experimental vehicle rather than the view that the railmotor was a reject from another railway (possibly the Mid Suffolk Light) or a speculation by Pickering's.

I have recently been researching in a weekly newsletter called the *Transport and Railroad Gazette* (subsequently the periodical *Railway Gazette International*) and in the June 23rd 1905 edition and came across the following news item, which is clearly based on a Stephens' Press Release – "Stephens-Pickering Rail Autocar. (We here illustrate) a steam rail autocar which was built to the designs of Mr H F Stephens, Managing Director of the Kent & East Sussex Railway, by R Y Pickering & Co., Limited, of Wishaw.

To secure economy in working the car has been constructed in as light a manner as possible consistent with the work it has to do. It has also been made as wide as possible to give the utmost possible accommodation in the length, which is only 27ft.

There is accommodation, in ordinary circumstances, for 31 passengers. For an unusual rush of passengers the luggage compartment can be utilised for their accommodation, as it is provided with folding seats, and can accommodate 10 extra people. In ordinary working this luggage compartment has accommodation for the ordinary parcel traffic and passengers' luggage.

The car is driven by a pair of engines with 5½in. cylinders supplied by steam from a multitubular boiler. Steam can be shut off and the brake applied and the whistle blown from either end of the car."

To my mind this not only clears up some detailed points such as convertible seating in the guard's compartment but more importantly puts Stephens centre stage in the design concept and removes any lingering doubts about his central role.

Sissinghurst, Kent

Brian Janes

*No known photographs exist of the railcar in use on the line. It is believed that it was withdrawn from service circa 1912 following a failure at Wittersham Road. Thereafter it languished at Rolvenden until circa 1940, when it was broken up. The frames are believed to be incorporated in the water tower at Rolvenden – Ed.*

## A Question of Image

Sir – In the spring edition of the *Terrier* (Number 93) Barry Holmes makes reference to the Image and Heritage Groups and suggests "if they had their way 1638 would be disqualified from running on our railway for being post – 1920s". As Chairman of the Image Group I thought I ought to correct this impression and clarify what the group did say.

The Image Group report, which was approved by the Board, described the Kent & East Sussex Railway as "the Genuine Light Railway" and defined the ambience and style as "The Genuine Rural Light Railway is of a historically independent railway using simplicity of design and construction; run in economic terms to create an ambience of a bygone experience of heritage trains passing through an area of outstanding natural beauty". Members will understand therefore that the Image Group took a pragmatic view and did not specify a precise historic period or type of locomotive or rolling stock.

However, the previously adopted Heritage Policy, which the Image Group referred to, does specify as follows "Locomotives, carriages and wagons based on the line will be restored as near as possible to their original condition. Where for technical, operational or commercial purposes a vehicle or locomotive is modified or improved, it should be carried out in such way as to minimise or eliminate changes to its visual appearance. Exceptions may be made for service engineering vehicles but alterations to any vehicle should be reversible.

Locomotives based on the line will carry appropriate liveries, as follows:

- Locomotives that actually ran on the line prior to nationalisation are to be painted in (one of) the livery (ies) carried when working on the line pre-1948, e.g. No 3 in K&ESR green or blue, No 2678 in appropriate SR style.
- Locomotives of a type that ran on the line prior to nationalisation are to carry a livery originally applied to a member of that class when working on the line but with their own number.

- Other locomotives of pre-nationalisation main line design (SR, GWR, LMS LNER or pre-Grouping) are to carry their appropriate company liveries.

- Only British Railways constructed or modified locomotives are to carry post-1948 liveries.

- Industrial or military locomotives are to carry a choice of a K&ESR livery or an appropriate pre-preservation livery”.

In its conclusions the Image Group did recognise that the matter of locomotive and carriage and wagon policies would be a very contentious issue and, with the passage of time, recommended that the Heritage Policy including locomotive and carriage and wagon policy should be reviewed. I believe that this review has still to take place.

Tonbridge, Kent

Robin Dyce

Sir – Only a Blackbird disturbed the silence. The early summer sun bathed the platform in a gentle light as I waited for the train. A solitary passenger walked to the opposite end of the station engaged with something that had attracted his attention. Sleepy minutes passed until I was aroused by the signalman opening the level-crossing gates as a prelude to our train’s arrival. Back in his box, a muffled sound, as the guardian of the railway pulled off the signal. I looked down the track as far as the green vegetation would allow, to glimpse the progress of my awaited train. Apart from the solitary passenger at the water-tank, only I had business with its arrival. Presently the sound of a little engine drifted across the field, a plume of white steam marking its progress behind the trees. Reluctantly, the greenery released the little engine with its motley mix of wagons and varied small coaches. The engine’s exertions were replaced with the panting of her air pump as the wagons and coaches finally drew to a stop opposite my seat. An air of relative activity ensued as half a dozen passengers alighted onto the platform. Yet how few of those welcoming cushions on the coaches would play host to a passenger as our little train continued its way through the beautiful countryside?

Was this 1930 at Tenterden? No, it was Sunday on the Mixed week-end early in June. Some time ago one would not have been able to walk down the platform for the crowds of eager passengers. So why when such an authentic train was running, were there so few passengers?

Then I looked at the railway from a different perspective, that of the public. Each time I have arrived at Tenterden, it has been on the footplate and usually engaged in searching for signs of water in the sight-glass or willing the steam gauge to allow just that last little bit to get to the end of the platform.

So what did I realise from this different angle? Well to start with, what had happened to my lovely station? Tenterden had been the jewel in the crown yet it now resembles a Disney world, but without the crowds! The lovely gardens had been decimated to give needless tarmac to the historic platform. The sleepy siding with a slumbering wagon now had a TRAM residing in it, and not even an authentic one at that! The hedges on the bank denied one a dramatic scene of the approaching train, always a K&ESR speciality. The platform starter has a non-historical blade (and before anyone says it had to be put there due to the recent ‘Spads’, I would argue that this is a training issue rather than altering the image of the railway to suit). So a few items have changed some might say. However, take a run down the line and see the changes made in recent times, and it becomes clear that it is the whole railway that suffers from a prostitution of its historical image in the pursuit of mis-guided commercialism and an agenda to turn the safe-working into something akin to West Coast Main-line standards! I thought Bodiam was too far down the line to be effected, but no, outside contractors have a coach in the back platform selling refreshments over which the railway has no control nor the image the railway would want to portray.

Some years ago, an ‘Image’ committee was set up to put in place various methods of making our infrastructure as historical as possible. Indeed, we were able to get away from our J94 and Mk1 image, to that of the Vintage train era, a bold move indeed when looking at seats per train. It really doesn’t matter what you run on the line for different tastes, it can be diesels one day, big trains the next and vintage the following day, because they all go back in their boxes at the end of the day. It is the infrastructure that remains reflecting a permanent image of our line. This must be protected and pursued. We have lost it completely. We don’t know if we are the only remaining standard gauge light railway in the country or a large company branch line trying to emulate the Bluebell (no contest).

Unless we have something unique, we stand no

chance of attracting the public in a very competitive tourist market. I would hope we are not too late in altering course and getting back to the railway we originally fell in love with and decided to resurrect.

Coulsdon, Surrey

Glenn Roofthoof

### **K&ESR tickets**

Sir – I am writing if any of our readers can throw any light on an aspect of Kent & East Sussex tickets, which is a subject on which little has been written. K&ESR Edmundson type tickets issued to stations within the line are, of course, common and we have a good selection in our museum collection. This includes several examples issued off the line (eg New Eltham to High Halden return) although these are all for specially advertised arrangements. The Southern Railway had through rates from the London Termini to Tenterden Town and other stations on the line, because these are shown in pre-war ABC timetables. However, we cannot recall seeing any examples of Southern Railway standard tickets (as distinct from excursions etc) pre printed from London Termini (eg Cannon Street) to K&ESR stations and vice versa under

either the K&ESR or Southern Railway heading. Did they exist?

Tenterden, Kent

John Miller

### **Austerities**

Sir – In Brian Jones's article he asks where RSH 7086/43 WD 75050/K&ESR No 27 is at the present moment. She is sitting under cover about 200 yards away from 68078 AB2212 at Sellindge. She is now owned by Southern Locomotives Ltd and has been since 1st April 1998. When restored she will be named NORMAN after the last owner.

London, NW3

Colin Alliez

### **Locomotive appearance**

Sir – I notice from photographs that the USA No 21 'Wainwright' appeared at the recent York Railfest event still with a large scrape of paint off its left hand side tank. That the engine ran in service for weeks here, with no one having the time to dab a little green top coat on the sore, should be surprising, but that it appeared in this condition at a prestigious event is quite astonishing.

Tenterden, Kent

John Miller



*DS238 on show at Railfest in York with Sue Wood and David Slack.*

*(Martin MacFarlane)*



