

# Tenterden Terrier



Number 97

Summer 2005

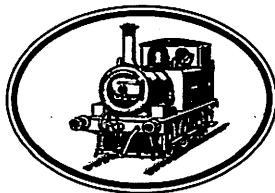


JOURNAL OF THE KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY





# Tenterden Terrier



Number 97

Summer 2005

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*The Tenterden Terrier is published by the Kent & East Sussex Railway Company Limited three times a year on the third Saturday of March, July and November.*

*Opinions expressed in this journal are, unless otherwise stated, those of the individual contributors and should not be taken as reflecting Company Policy or the views of the Editor*  
ISSN 0306-2449.

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Printed by Hastings Printing Company Ltd,  
St. Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex.

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## FRONT COVER

*The Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Admiral the Lord Boyce, GCB OBE DL, on the occasion of a civic visit to the railway, with Tenterden Town Mayor, Cllr Michael Hickmott, and Catering Manager, Andre Freeman in Pullman Car Barbara, 16th April 2005. (Bill Oates)*

## INSIDE FRONT COVER

*USA No 21 in W.D. livery for the Victory in Europe event approaches Cranbrook Road, 8th May 2005 (Ian Scarlett)*

## BACK COVER

*Driver Heidi Mowforth blowing down Wainwright at Rolvenden, 8th May 2005 (Ian Scarlett)*

# The Kent and East Sussex Railway Company Limited

(Limited by guarantee and not having a share capital).....Registered Charity 262481

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Norman Brice – Chairman; Graham Bridge; Daniel Jenner; Derek Dunlavy; Paul Hutchinson; Brian Janes;  
David Lloyd (Resigned 25th May 2005) ; 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; Geoff Crouch

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Events Co-ordinator (appointed 4th July 2005).....Yasmin Logronio  
Catering Manager .....Andre Freeman  
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Customer Service Assistants .....Lin Batt, Yvonne Bates, Caryn Roberts  
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**Employment Committee**.....Carol Mitchell (Chairman); Graham Baldwin; John Weller; Chris Mitchell

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

# Editorial

## Goodbye to the Farmer's Line

It is good to see that efforts are being made to enhance our branding. In some areas we are very successful. The Railway's history is a strong point and the name certainly conveys its location. The Wealden

Pullman is well established as a provider of quality hospitality; some of our branded merchandise has provided a real impetus to shop sales. New initiatives, such as our own "Levers Alone" bottled beer and "Terry the Terrier" will help to fill the gaps. Less effective have been the generic descriptions that we have used notably "The Farmer's Line" or "The Hoppers Line". Is there a single slogan that we can use to convey everything we are and everything we do?

# Lineside News

Compiled by Duncan Buchanan

## Commercial

As this edition is printed we will have launched "Levers Alone", a beer brewed exclusively for us by Rother Valley Brewery. 4.3% ABV, with an excellent label depicting the inside of a signal box, and appropriate levers. This will be on sale in the buffet (to those not working!) and in the shop for take away. Coming soon - our own house wine too in association with Tenterden Vineyards.

Our first experience of Corporate volunteering went well with a small team from Pfizer re-building the p/way hut between Wittersham Road and Northiam. They had a long day but returned to Tenterden in the cab of the Crompton smiling but very dirty. We hope other teams from Pfizer will join us for other activities.

Visit Britain are working on a project which will result in them having 360 degree images of major tourist attractions. A photographer is coming here in July to do 360's of Tenterden, Rolvenden, Northiam and Bodiam stations, and Pullman Cars Theodora and Barbara.

A TV crew from Japan visited our "Days Out With Thomas" event to film Thomas as part of a documentary for what was described as an equivalent of Blue Peter for Adults. They got some great footage!

Good Housekeeping conducted a photo shoot at Bodiam on Friday 1st July.

We have welcomed some work experience students in recent weeks. Maria Wood

(Highworth GS) spent 2 weeks at Rolvenden as work experience for her proposed career in heavy engineering, Rosie Bates (daughter of Yvonne) 2 weeks Leisure & Tourism and Daniel Perkins (Swadlands) 2 weeks in catering.

In addition Amelie has been doing a sterling job (or is it a euro job?) in sales & marketing with Graham Siver. Amelie has been working on organising our Family History Day, and has been putting together an education pack to assist our sales efforts in 2006.

We have agreement from KCC for a campaign of brown tourist signs around the town. These will be erected soon. We have done this in conjunction with the town Museum. You will not be able to drive into Tenterden without seeing a Steam Engine sign. The new sign on the A274/A28 junction is very helpful.

### Catering

Following the successful February 'Thomas' event, the new buffet store was cleared for industrial quality flooring to be laid. We are extremely grateful to Malcolm Price, proprietor of MP Floors, Hawkinge, for his very competitive quote and for completing the work on schedule despite considerable disruption to his workload resulting from the heavy snow falls experienced at that time. A spot inspection by the local Environmental Health Officer passed well, with our commitment to continuous improvement being favourably noted.

Since that visit, further significant improvements have been made. The 300 Club generously supported the purchase of a walk-in chiller room when one became available at short notice: this was yet another item acquired via 'eBay', the online auction website. It has, since installation by James Veitch, proved a godsend. Similarly the Maidstone Area Group have funded a new built-in freezer room. This has enabled the large and motley collection of domestic freezers to be removed. These two facilities have dramatically improved our storage of chilled and frozen goods: stock is correctly rotated, is held in more efficient quantities and we have the capacity to take advantage of special offers. The more efficient new facilities also provide significantly reduced electricity consumption together with lesser heat generation. The temperature state within both these new rooms is computer monitored: staff are automatically alerted by mobile phone if an alarm condition or power failure occurs at any time. Whilst the monitoring equipment was relatively expensive, it was funded from gratuities and was less than the value of goods that could be spoilt should a failure go unnoticed.

Construction of the replacement counter and kitchen areas within the new extension will continue this year with the hope that it will enable the removal of the original servery over the brief winter break in January. It will then be possible to accommodate the coach traffic that forms a significant proportion of our current business.

Following legislative changes that take effect later this year, it has been necessary to licence Tenterden Station site for some of the activities we have hitherto carried out. These legal reforms were intended to simplify requirements that previously may have hindered the development of tourist attractions such as ours. However one benefit of these alterations is that following successful inspection, training and a Magistrates Court appearance, we are now licensed for the sale of alcoholic beverages in the station buffet and shop (sale of alcoholic drinks on board trains remains exempt from licence requirement). The 'K&ESR Centenary Ale' offered previously proved very popular, so this year our friends at the

Rother Valley Brewery have produced another specially commissioned ale. An attractive label has been designed by our marketing department, who also provided a suitable name: why not come and make a purchase for quality assurance purposes!

Sale of local ales proved particularly successful for the buffet at the recent 'Thomas©' event and has contributed to the continued increase in "spend per head" experienced – at times some 22% above last year's figures. Our ice-cream machine (and operators) worked flat out to keep pace with demand whilst the 'Thomas©' BBQ again performed very well, breaking previous records by some margin.

### **Wealden Pullman**

March 6th was a significant date in the history of the operation for it saw the first dining train incorporating both our Hastings Pullman Cars. Thanks to the efforts of the restoration team, 'Theodora' took her place in the formation and now forms the Bar Car, seating 15 people. The Official launch took place on 21st May, on which occasion we were also pleased to host the AGM of "The Pullman Society". Thanks to the generosity of one of their members, 'Theodora' is now fitted with some original Pullman antimacassars. Further items of interest will be added in due course. Much favourable comment has been received from the general public and Pullman aficionados alike. Given that 'Theodora' remained out of traffic for longer than she had ever run in Pullman service originally, it is a testament to the quality of restoration that no problems have arisen. Whilst retaining the ambience of her 1920's styling, 'Theodora' carries some very modern equipment. 230V mains power is available, produced by a silent electronic inverter that doubles as a sophisticated battery charger when the set is stabled. Computer data sockets are fitted, which permit computer presentations, networking and public address announcements to be made throughout the train (the CD player facility has proved particularly popular with staff preparing the train for service on Sunday mornings!).

Sister Car 'Barbara' was repainted to match 'Theodora' and looks suitably resplendent. Although 'Barbara's' toilet installation



*Members of the Tuesday group constructing the Pullman Ramp*

*(Bill Oates)*

remains incomplete, underframe pipework is fitted enabling work to proceed whilst the vehicle remains in traffic.

Two conferences have been held in 'Theodora' so far this year, with valuable experience gained. Charters operated to date have all passed successfully, although one of our repeat business customers brought (for the third year running) a heatwave with them. For the interest of readers, it was noted that the temperature in the kitchen remained at around 49°C (120°F) for in excess of 5 hours and had dropped to a mere 37°C (98°F) when recordings were downloaded at 2 am!

Although the Pullman viewing ramp proved somewhat controversial, the benefit of being able to show potential clients over the train is enormous: many such visitors had previously found it impossible to board the train whilst stabled in the dock. It is also a considerably safer route for tired staff to disembark during the hours of darkness.

We are pleased to welcome a number of new staff to the team, several as a direct result of the Volunteer Recruitment Weekend earlier this year. New volunteers are of course welcome at any time: contact Meg Gooch at Tenterden Town Station or email [Meg@kesr.org.uk](mailto:Meg@kesr.org.uk).

## **Shop**

The giants of the High Street might be claiming that the recession is biting and the customer has reduced spending power, but results in the shop so far beg to differ.

The great leap in sales at the winter Thomas has largely continued into the season so far. Even the coldest and most miserable May we can remember, with passenger numbers plummeting by 15% over 2004, still produced a 5% increase in sales in the shop. By the last week of June we were sustaining an increase of 26%, with 22% in non-Thomas sales to demonstrate it is a not just another Thomas phenomenon. No one can really explain why we have been so successful, but we are immensely grateful for it and for all the volunteers who contribute to the sales team.

June Thomas again welcomed Christopher Awdry and Helen for the first weekend to sign books and boost our sales and shop morale. In soaring and really uncomfortable temperatures the faithful few sold 22% more than the equivalent Thomas last year, including great volumes of books. The second weekend continued the trend with the final Sunday recording the second highest Thomas sales total ever (the other top four being last February!).

So things have been going pretty well so far

this year. Two new team members, Andrew Morrison and Alan Joyce, together with the always-versatile Charles Lucas now giving the shop virtually a day a week, have considerably eased the burden on the regulars. Everyday sales are still buoyant, helped by our friends the TTIs, who as well as coping with customers and those infuriating paper tickets still manage to sell the Guide Book in impressive style. They are running a little competition as to who can sell most - but we are not saying who are the achievers or the wooden spooners - all do their best and, with design and printing costs already well covered, are well aware that every sale contributes £3 directly to our coffers.

The DVDs and the models predicted with

confidence in the last Lineside News have still not materialised due to supplier problems. Other lines do however trickle in, from a new fridge magnet and a new postcard of Pullman Barbara to polo shirts and fleeces. Special versions of these are available in Navy, with the new embroidered logo, are of the best quality and are available at a special, virtually cost, price. Contact the shop if you would like one.

Finally, after 5 years as Honorary Shop Manager, Brian Janes has said he would like to hand on the reins so he can do other things. Roped in at a time of great financial crisis, he said he would fill in for a few months! He hopes there will be a queue to take over. Where have you heard those tales before!

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## Motive Power

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It is amazing how easy it is to get involved with the most engineering of activities. The loco works has recently put out an appeal for old toothbrushes (this is the old manual type not the modern machine ones!) as they are used to clean out threaded holes. Surely a few members have some spare old brushes to help the Loco works? Meantime any spare old tools, especially wire brushes or old worn out chisels, are always welcomed. Call in at the works any time.

Three work experience students have been at Rolvenden in recent times. Maria Wood and Oliver Jenner have done their work experience and both hope to pursue careers in engineering. Brian Webb attends each week and has worked on Charwelton's

frames but still finds time to maintain a journal of his activities.

Interfleet students will attend again in September, although their numbers may be reduced due to a cutback on recruitment. No 65's boiler seems a likely candidate for their attentions.

The Lambton Tank is still expected to arrive during August on loan from the North Yorkshire Moors railway. However it has to complete its overhaul first.

### Steam Locomotives

No 3 'Bodiam' (32670): Work is concentrated on painting the loco in its blue undercoat. Other input has been much reduced due to maintenance on the running fleet taking priority. The steam test should take place as soon as possible after the intense summer running period is over.

No 12 'Marcia': The major work undertaken recently has been the installation of the vacuum brakes. The train pipe spools for installation between the frames have been completed and the spools under the running plate and into the cab are being fabricated. The small bore pipework, for the train pipe to brake cylinder, has been ordered and is due for delivery in July.



*Gemma (see page 11)*

*(Nick Wellington)*

Other major items for this system have





*A crowded platform at Bodiam on Steam to Victory weekend, 23rd April 2005*

*(John Liddell)*

now been obtained consisting of the drivers brake valve, duplex vacuum gauge, vacuum release valve and the vacuum ejector. It had been hoped that a small conventional brake ejector, such as a Dreadnought or Davies and Metcalf, could be sourced but as this was not possible a simple ejector was purchased from South Coast Steam Ltd.

Mike Hart of Railway Wheel Set and Brake Ltd. has very kindly provided a drivers brake valve handle and a new rolling ring for the vacuum cylinder. He just happened to have these under his garage bench! Lawrence Donaldson has provided a vacuum relief valve. Mac Macintosh has been making up the vacuum cylinder support assembly and piping connections to the cylinder. Terry Harvey has been fettling and polishing the rough castings of the new rims for the cab back spectacles. Dave Brailsford has fabricated mounting brackets for the vacuum pipe dummies and connection spools for the flexible vacuum pipes.

No 14 'Charwelton': The frames have now moved outside for storage to allow more work on the running fleet to take place. They are now substantially complete. When the boiler is offered up to the frames, efforts will be made to improve access to the motion to ease the problems

with oiling up. Boiler work continues, mainly as an apprentice training project, which it is hoped will be complete by the autumn to make room for other projects.

No 19 'Norwegian' (376): Due to come out of service in the autumn for its postponed overhaul. However things could change very quickly should any problems occur.

No 21 'Wainwright' (DS238): A 3 month extension to enable running throughout the summer has been obtained before the planned overhaul takes place. There have been problems with a leaking regulator that have required the engine out of service for a period of time.

No 22 'Maunsell' (65): Following a visit by Derek Dunlavey and Lawrence Donaldson to Israel Newton, the boiler makers, the work, to replace the firebox, is well underway with the crown stays being fitted. Some delays have been due to tooling delays. However it is intended to have the boiler completed by August. Meanwhile the new ashpan is being prepared to be fitted with hopper doors and refitted to the frames – as a fill in job.

No 25 'Northiam': Several efforts have been made to resolve problems with wheel clearances. Solving one problem simply seems to create another and so now work is

needed to the axleboxes. It is aimed to complete this before other locos come out of service.

No 30 GWR Pannier (1638): The loco is due to have its crown stays changed soon.

However it is preferable to keep it available for the September Thomas event and this will limit the available time. It performed well during the recent Thomas event in June.

### **Diesel Locomotives**

No. 20 (GWR Railcar): Work continued with another week of work in the Carriage and Wagon shed.

No 40 'Ford' (BTH): In service

No 44 'Dover Castle' (Class 08): In service  
Class 33 'Ashford': Now in need of body work repairs. This is under consideration as a winter project.

Class 108 DMMU: In service

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## **Rolling Stock**

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The early part of the year has been busy with much routine maintenance undertaken together with significant landmarks on the restoration front. Overall, one of the most productive 'closed seasons' we can remember.

### **Coaches**

Pullman Car Theodora (K&ESR No. 51)

Work on this prestige vehicle was completed by the target date of 14th February 2005. Theodora was test run during the same week attached to a normal service train and her first day in service was Sunday 6th March. The car has subsequently run regularly with the Wealden Pullman set which now consists of sister car Barbara, Mark 1 RU No. 69 Diana (in Pullman livery), Theodora and one of the Maunsell NBOS. This season will be the first to see the two Hastings gauge Pullmans running together in regular service on the K&ESR. An official launch ceremony was held in the early evening of Saturday 21st May to coincide with the AGM of the Pullman Society which was hosted by the K&ESR at Tenterden Town. The Society's Chairman performed the customary ceremony and the Millennium Commission was represented by Commercial Director Jerry Michell. Members of the Carriage & Wagon restoration team were also present together with K&ESR Chairman Norman Brice.

Pullman Car Barbara (K&ESR No. 52)  
Repainting of this vehicle to bring it up to the same 'as new' standard as Theodora was completed in mid-February.

Maunsell CK No. 56

After seven years in service following its

initial restoration, this attractive coach took Theodora's place in the shed and was given an intermediate overhaul. Major tasks included a complete repaint of the body and a thorough overhaul of both bogies. Both toilets have now been made to work again, which should be a useful plus point with passengers and on-train staff. No. 56 left the shed during the week commencing 6th June.

Mark 1's

The annual maintenance programme has included door lock maintenance, axle box pad exams, and all the other necessary pre-season checks. Several replacement doors have been constructed using new door skins purchased several years ago. Replacement batteries have been obtained for the RMB buffet car. The third class compartments on CK 86 are being decorated and reupholstered to complete the refurbishment of this vehicle. It is planned to carry out bodywork repairs and repaint SK No. 63 in the none too distant future.

### **Vintage Coaches**

The general winter maintenance programme has included the vintage vehicles. The as-and-when restoration of the GER Brake (K&ESR No. 81) continues, repanelling being underway on the Tenterden platform side and various replacement timber components being manufactured. In particular, four replacement doors are nearing completion at the time of writing.

The eagerly awaited start on the SE&CR Birdcage (K&ESR 61) actually happened in



*Members of the Carriage and Wagon team who contributed to the restoration of Pullman Car Theodora, 21st May 2005*  
(John Liddell)

early June when it replaced CK No. 56 in the shed's 'long-term restoration bay'. Work on the bodywork and the bogies is now progressing. To give the project a good start the underframe was first shotblasted and primed (outside the shed!) by a contractor. Donations towards the project continue to be necessary as detailed in the leaflet enclosed with the previous issue of the Terrier.

### **Infrastructure**

A general clear-up (another general clear-up) has been underway and attention has been given to Health & Safety matters generally with the useful advice of Engineering Manager Lawrence Donaldson. The wood working machine shop is being enclosed by a partition and the now very necessary dust extraction equipment purchased.

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## **Infrastructure**

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### **Company Secretary's Notes**

Geoff Crouch (volunteer P. Way Manager) was co-opted to the Board of Colonel Stephens Railway Enterprises Ltd. on 21st February 2005.

David Lloyd resigned from the Board of The Kent & East Sussex Railway Company Ltd. on 25th May 2005.

Richard Brooks has been appointed to the volunteer post of Rolling Stock Administrator. Richard, who is due to

qualify as a solicitor later this year, has also stood in for the Company Secretary at two Board meetings which I was unable to attend.

Finally, a reminder for your diaries that the Annual General Meeting will be held at 2.00 PM at Tenterden Town Hall on Saturday 8th October 2005. A formal notice will be issued following consideration of the audited accounts for 2004 at the July Board meeting.

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## Permanent Way

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Our major Project this winter was the replacement of the old point outside the signal box at Tenterden. Months of planning and two weeks of hard work on the ground saw the project finished well within budget and, we hope, to everyone's satisfaction. Another job, unanticipated at the beginning of the year, was the replacement of Rolvenden level crossing. Two major projects in three months stretched resources to the limit, but as ever, volunteers turned up in sufficient numbers and both jobs are now history.

A "team building" exercise by Pfizer Pharmaceuticals enabled us to re-build the derelict P.Way hut between Hexden and

Rother bridges. We managed to jack and pack the chimney (!) which had been leaning at an angle for many years following water erosion. P.Way volunteers demolished the remains of the old hut prior to Pfizer's arrival, leaving them a clear site ready for construction. The hut has been christened "Hemsley's Hotel" in honour of long serving and hard working volunteer Peter Hemsley. Two further huts are planned in the next 2 years.

We have a new machine for loading ballast. This will save thousands of pounds over the next few years in plant hire. Another addition to the Frim (Richard Halliwell) fleet.

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## S&T Engineering

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The renewal, and relocation of no.13 points by the PW outside the signal box at Tenterden necessitated not only dismantling and removing the equipment in the affected area, but following installation of the new pointwork, designing and fitting replacements.

The foresight of those who located the signalbox so far back from the track, even though it looked a little strange has now been appreciated!

The box certainly looks better closer to the track, although it meant that less room was available for the "leadaway", (the collection of cranks and pullies found outside a box). This required us to start again, laying in new precast concrete "horses" and platework to support the cranks and pullies. During this work the foundations of the old water tower seen in the old postcard views of the station were found – this led to some ingenuity being applied and drilling into the foundation and using Rawlbolts and studding to secure the plates.

New ducts and chambers were provided "across and under" the track and alongside it to carry the signalling and telecomms multicore cables. Some of the cables previously were in unknown positions, and had to be either isolated or hand-dug to find

them as the work progressed; now all our cables are both grouped together in duct, and site records kept of their location. A new water supply has been installed, and an uprated electricity supply fed from the Carriage & Wagon shed, which itself had the benefit of a new uprated supply last year.

Other works that have resulted from the layout alterations, include installation of electric point detection, in order that the "Home" signals can be made adjustable by the Signaller, to compensate for the wire expansion in hot weather. This will probably be done next winter..

A track circuit has been installed to protect the new pointwork (and trains for that matter) from inadvertent operation whilst a train is passing over it, also to comply with the HSE requirements in respect of facing points.

Apart from the station side crossing gate requiring replacement due to rot, the gate post was now too close to the revised track, hence a new post and gate were required. The existing gate post was already too short resulting in the gate dragging on the road. A new gatepost was fabricated by "Frim" Halliwell in the traditional way using rail, and a new gate supplied by local craftsmen at British Gates Ltd. at Biddenden.





*Repairs underway at the level crossing at Rolvenden, 21st April 2005*

*(John Liddell)*

A number of less common faces to S&T work were press-ganged into these activities, including Martin McFarlane, Peter Spratling, Glen Lipscomb, Chris McNaughton, Jamie Douglas, and Doug Ramsden. The team was under the direction of S&TE Manager Nick Wellington who took a whole month off work to lead the group.

On the telecomms side, a rearrangement of circuits allowed a new "junction" pair of lower resistance and better quality to be brought into use between Rolvenden and Northiam. Other work has enabled calls to Northiam exchange to be made directly from Rolvenden exchange, and also improvements made to the exchange equipment at Rolvenden in the way it handles "tandem" or through calls between other exchanges.

A (volunteer) vacancy exists for a technician to specifically look after our batteries. We have a fair number of (rechargeable, float charged) batteries that are in need of occasional maintenance, topping up, testing and general attention, along with various uninterruptible power supplies etc. This work would suit someone of a retired status, as the work is not normally physical. Some electrical experience would be helpful but not essential. The sheer

number of batteries in use on the railway now makes it logical to create this as a specific task.

The manager would also like to create a two man team to work on painting signals, signal boxes and fittings, thus leaving technical staff to concentrate on other things. This would be an opportunity to improve those items which are in the public eye and to help arrest deterioration. A head for heights, good general fitness and either midweek or weekend availability are key essentials of these posts (sic). Enquiries or expressions of interest in all these opportunities should be to Nick Wellington, on 0870 879 1671, email [vacancy@UAX13.org.uk](mailto:vacancy@UAX13.org.uk)

Sadly Gemma, our station cat at Tenterden was put to sleep in May, following discovery of a large stomach tumour, after she had grown thin and lethargic. Gemma was a feature of Tenterden Station since around 1992 or earlier, when she moved here out of choice, preferring her own territory, to cohabiting with another cat and a dog at a house in Station Road. Many customers, both young and old would see Gemma, and she became another part of the visitor experience, almost by chance. She will be sadly missed by all of us. (Photo on page 6)

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# People

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## **Admiral Sir Lindsay Bryson**

Admiral Sir Lindsay Bryson, Patron of the Kent & East Sussex Railway, died on 24th March aged 80. Following a successful naval career, Sir Lindsay held several positions in industry before becoming Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex in 1989. Sir Lindsay, a resident of Brighton, was a supporter of a number of local heritage projects in East Sussex, including the Brighton West Pier Trust, Sussex Opera and the Brighton Festival Trust.

## **Eric Graves**

Eric Graves, Chairman of the Kent & East Sussex Ashford Area Group, died in June aged 76. Eric had served as a volunteer on the Railway for over 30 years acting as a guard, arranging model railway exhibitions and other activities for the Ashford Group. He was a supporter of the Bank Street Methodist Church in Ashford and also raised funds for the 1st Kennington Scout Group. Our sympathies go to his widow Wenda and to his family.

## **Lorna Gabrielle Johnson**

Lorna Johnson died on 14th June after a long illness. Her husband, Norman, was at her bedside. Over many years, Lorna wholeheartedly supported Norman's volunteer work on the Railway. She, herself, was also an active volunteer, working in the buffet, washing up on the dining trains, lineside clearance and much more, until gradual oncoming health problems caused her to give up gracefully to take on more sedate home pursuits of reading, embroidery, classical music and various armchair sport on TV. Formerly a Lincolnshire lass, she came south upon marrying Norman in 1956. An unassuming person, she was instantly loved by all she came in contact with. She will be missed by all who knew her. Our sympathy goes to Norman and members of the family in their sad loss.

## **Yasmin Logronio**

Yasmin joined the team on 4th July as Events Co-ordinator. Yasmin graduated from Leeds University with a BA in Event Management. The theory that she has learned will be an excellent basis for her first "proper" job here and the knowledge that she has will ensure some good results for our activities at the end of the summer and in 2006.

## **Andy Baldock**

Andy has been a volunteer in the carriage & wagon department for about two and a half years. During the months of listening to that lively and hard-working bunch, he came to realise that the railway was looking for a Volunteer Liaison Officer, but had been unable to fill the post, so he applied for the job!

His role involves working with the membership secretary Stella Nuttman and Volunteer Support Officer Stan Kemp in what can only be described as a human resources group. Between them they fulfil a role which has at its core the welfare of that invaluable person- the volunteer. They handle the recruitment and placement of individuals who come forward as well as ensuring that, should they so wish, people have someone to talk to outside their own work area. It's in this area that Andy is the man to contact. A fellow volunteer who can see their point of view and if necessary speak on their behalf. He is here to act as a "sounding board" and if anyone needs to speak in confidence then that confidence will be respected.

Stella, Stan and Andy are all willing to help wherever possible and Andy will act as a general contact if anyone is not sure who to talk to. Andy can be found in the carriage shed at Tenterden on most Saturdays and you can write to him there as well. His home telephone number is 01892-824752 ( 7pm to 9pm) or leave a message on the answer service.

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# Groups

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## Northiam Station

In January 2004 we were greatly saddened by the passing of Mille Durrant who devoted her life (with husband Jim – Station Agent) to keeping Northiam alive. A rose bush has been planted in her memory. We also lost the services of Margaret Read to illness. Husband Lawrie still manfully holds the fort in the booking office. He ran the Booking Clerks roster for many years.

Happier times lie ahead however. Stations in Bloom in August showed what Northiam can do and visitors returned again and again to view and photograph the displays. Grateful thanks are due to those who put in so much hard work (in particular Dick Sellman our resident gardener who chose wisely in his selection of plants) and other station staff who planted and kept up the watering on an almost daily basis along both platforms. John and Jean Thorn, and Ron Sparrow were chiefly involved here. We should also mention Robin Dyce who manufactured a never ending supply of "window boxes" which were sited along the fences. This year the theme will be of conifers surrounded by Busy Lizzies (for easier maintenance) and the usual hanging baskets along the awning.

Serious concerns arose when the Booking Hall and Office floors suffered deterioration. The Northiam team agreed to make a donation towards the cost of ripping out the old floor, putting in a concrete base and then new linoleum to top it off.

"Victory in Europe (Steaming Home) Weekend" was highly successful. One member of the team, Les Collett, brought his group of strolling players down to lead and encourage visitors to join in community singing of the highest order. Alan Wilcox accompanied proceedings on piano but was largely drowned out by the noise of arriving and departing trains, not to mention the vociferous melodies he wafted across the weald.

Northiam is still alive with what is now a greatly reduced staff.

## Bodiam

The retaining wall alongside the platform

siding, was completed in time for Easter. All the eroded material which had part buried the track, has been put back where it belongs and the sleepers are again exposed. We have gained up to four feet on the width of the yard and the site looks much tidier.

Noting the rather sorry state of some of the 'luggage' put out at Tenterden Town, an experiment has been tried by varnishing several trunks to see if they cope better with rain. The trunks, on a trolley, pushed under Bodiam's canopy overnight are then put along the platform while trains are operating. After a couple of months this seems to have been a success with no signs of deterioration.

Active plans are being made to lay a PMV body on a prepared base at the far end of the site to provide a workshop for the maintenance team. This will allow us to vacate the goods office and make it available for public use as originally intended. One day, if volunteers can be found, this might even become a small retail area to serve passengers waiting for trains.

All the mile posts, which have lain for some years in Rolvenden's field, have now been transported to Bodiam. There, the concrete is treated with stabilizing solution and they are re-painted ready to be put out along the line. These posts are copies of the originals put in place by W.H.Austen in the mid-1930's (a few of the originals are stored in the Museum at Tenterden Town).

Recently a Villiers motorized trolley was donated to Bodiam. At one time it was licensed for road use and was first registered in 1954/55. Originally it was pedestrian operated but at some point it had a bicycle seat added. We are investigating how it might be put back into running order.

The maintenance team work at Bodiam on most Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the year.

## News from the Rother Valley Railway

Towards the end of last year we were contacted by the Rother District Council planning department informing us that as the Company had failed to submit one

drawing of the landscaping scheme plan by January 2000 (sic), our planning permission, originally granted in 1995, had, in their opinion, lapsed.

This turn of events came as a bolt out of blue and we naturally sought advice. Informed expert opinion was that we should abide by this rather extra-ordinary decision notified as it was almost five years after the event and despite us keeping the Planning Department advised of work throughout that time.

We were advised to submit a fresh planning application and this we consequently did back in March. Recently the Planning Committee resolved that authority be delegated to the Head of Planning to grant permission subject to conditions and to further consultation with the Environment Agency on one or two matters.

There have however been two brighter notes. After the last Report, K&ESR agreed to sell us sufficient concrete sleepers to lay our run-round loop at Robertsbridge and these are due to be collected from Wittersham Road shortly. The necessary funds were raised by means of a very successful 'Sponsor a Sleeper' appeal to our members and supporters.

In addition, I had for some time been in contact with the South East England Development Agency regarding the fate of a lot of redundant track materials near to the former Betteshanger colliery site. The East Kent Railway had first refusal on this material, but in the event they were unable to proceed and the lot was then offered to and donated to ourselves. We gained approximately one and a half miles of bullhead rail together with a huge and interesting quantity of chairs, screws, keys and fishplates, three turnouts, one buffer stop, a quantity of point timbers and a colour light signal post! We are not quite sure about the latter but it was going begging so it was thrown on the lorry anyway. It was a mammoth undertaking for us to recover and transport this material back to Robertsbridge but it was successfully achieved thanks to our stalwart volunteers. This material will now be sorted and stored until it is required.

### **Tuesday Group**

Since the last Terrier nearly all our time has

been spent at the Tenterden site. Our involvement in the massive project of the Pullman Dock has come to a conclusion and now it has all been painted and when the plants mature it will soften and, in time, will become an accepted part of the Tenterden platform.

Many people were involved in the construction of the Dock in addition to the Tuesday Group – Dave and Mathew Stubbs, Phil Woods and Nobby (Gordon Lilley) to name but a few.

New information signs have been erected by the Information Hut and in the car park at Tenterden and also at Rolvenden and Northiam stations. (Has anybody spotted the cat in the window of No 1 cottage?). Both pump trolleys in front of the Buffet have been repainted and the wooden floor on one was completely replaced. A new Colonel Stephens type fence, complete with gates, has been erected around the picnic area in front of the Museum to replace the previous rather tatty chestnut fencing. Those of you who have been into the offices during the last month cannot have failed to notice the splendid new steps in place which were made by Ron and Steve Dunn. On recent Tuesdays Alan Goss could be seen in the Carriage and Wagon yard whittling away at both ends of a huge piece of solid oak which is part of John Liddell's project to refurbish the yard crane.

Recently we have welcomed new Tuesday members – Mark Taylor, Mick Veness and Ian Tottman.

If you would like to join us please contact Graham Hopker on 01303-862811.

### **Museum**

For the Museum this has been a disappointing year so far in terms of numbers of visitors. We had 1643 visitors to the end of May, 145 down on 2004, but slightly up on 2003. Let's hope the weather improves and there are queues of people for the rest of the year!

Interestingly two public museums have contacted us to transfer archive material to our care. The North Somerset Museum at Weston-Super-Mare has sent us papers and plans relating to the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway, and the National





*Station Master Chris Wood puzzled over a new TPWS loop at Tenterden, 1st April 2005 (Ken Dow)*

Railway Museum at York has sent us two registers from the Kent & East Sussex Railway.

Another recent acquisition has been a Potteries, Shrewbury & North Wales Railway debenture stock certificate issued in 1869 to the Warden of All Souls College, Oxford. Having lain derelict for 30 years, this railway was re-opened by Holman Stephens in 1911 as the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway.

We have also secured a K&ESR brass uniform button with an embossed engine design, probably dating to the 1920's. This means we now have examples of all three designs for K&ESR buttons known to have been issued between 1904 and 1948.

Although it has not been mentioned for some time, the Museum website <http://www.hfstephens-museum.org.uk/> continues to be developed by Brian Janes and Keith Johnson. Regular articles are contributed to the area known as Colonel Stephens Topics and a start has been made on enlarging the potted histories of the Colonel's railways. First to be added are the Snailbeach District and the Bere Alston to Callington section of the Plymouth, Devonport and South Western Junction. Take a look next time the computer is on.

Two new members have joined the attendants roster this year, Father Michael

Clifton and Fred Fisher, and we are pleased to have them on the team. We send best wishes for a speedy recovery to two attendants laid low by illness, Richard Wall and Richard Parkins.

### **Gardening Group**

We are now into a particularly busy time of year with the weeds growing so quickly and all the tubs to plants up for the summer season.

A great deal of time has been spent at Tenterden in an effort to tidy the station and to get the garden looking good for the rest of the year. The Pullman Dock has meant making changes and I hope now that things are growing the whole appearance of the platform will settle and be a convivial area for our passengers.

Phil Woods has created another masterpiece with the railway sleepers opposite the signalbox – who needs Ground Force! As the area matures it will take on its own personality and be as popular as the rockery area on the platform.

The garden between the offices and the front fence has been extended to the rear access road, thus removing the weedy area which was occasionally mown and which was usually untidy.

Thanks to Lesley Collins' father, the tubs around Tenterden have been changed into their summer attire with beautiful red

begonias. Pam and Sheila Stevens have produced more perennials to help fill the flower beds and Carol Dyce has kindly given annuals to fill some of the boxes at Northiam. Many of the new plants around the stations have been grown or been given by friends which has made things so much easier and of course not put pressure on the Railway's funds. Dee and Alan Wilcox have organized the flower baskets and tubs on the platform at Northiam through The Friends of Northiam again this year so we can look forward to another spectacular display. Have you spotted the Station Master's vegetable garden at Northiam?

Thanks to members of the Tuesday Group for the help received from them.

Fortunately there is always a set of muscles around when help is needed for lifting that heavy bag of compost, or a pair of willing hands to help with a bit of shoveling or weeding.

Rolvenden is beginning to blossom although there is a problem with the brambles from next door! Neighbours are always a

problem if they don't garden. However with the help of a little weedkiller the brambles will be overcome.

Sadly we have not had time to get to Wittersham Road so the garden is suffering rather but once Northiam is back under control it is hoped to spend some time there.

Fortunately by putting more perennials in the gardens they should be easier to maintain. However help is always needed so if anyone out there would like to give an hour or two to help garden at any of the stations you will be most welcome. At this time of year the most important assistance is with watering. Station staff could help tremendously if they would water the tubs and buckets at Tenterden, Rolvenden and Northiam "between" trains. Please if you have a spare few minutes to help keep your station looking good, pour a little water into the tubs and buckets to keep things alive.

If you would like to help with gardens at any of the stations please phone Veronica Hopker on 01303-862811.

# THE K&ES 300 CLUB PRIZE WINNERS

## HAVE YOU JOINED THE 300 CLUB YET?

### January 2005 - drawn - Pullman

1st	G P Brice	No. 552	£60.00
2nd	Peter Wilson	No. 148	£45.00
3rd	James Veitch	No. 417	£35.00
4th	J E F Davies	No. 555	£25.00
5th	A F Moore	No. 144	£20.00
6th	Chris McNaughton	No. 286	£10.00
7th	A Lillywhite	No. 401	£5.00

### March 2005 - drawn - Pullman

1st	Clive Norman	No. 391	£80.00
2nd	Mr A M H Baker	No. 190	£60.00
3rd	A W Stokes	No. 547	£50.00
4th	Ron Davies	No. 035	£30.00
5th	Dave Green	No. 083	£20.00
6th	David Bowden	No. 098	£15.00
7th	J R Crawford	No. 171	£10.00
8th	P B Munson	No. 454	£5.00

### February 2005 - drawn - Pullman

1st	A W Dixon	No. 164	£60.00
2nd	Tom Webb	No. 413	£45.00
3rd	M J Andrews	No. 549	£35.00
4th	Clive Norman	No. 388	£25.00
5th	A Edge	No. 472	£20.00
6th	Jeremy Nelson	No. 425	£10.00
7th	Ros Debling	No. 103	£5.00

### April 2005 - drawn - Pullman

1st	Peter Glen	No. 240	£100.00
2nd	P S Rand	No. 509	£100.00
3rd	Miss J Osbourne	No. 292	£100.00
4th	J E F Davies	No. 555	£100.00
5th	D K L Morgan	No. 085	£85.00
6th	Dick Becket	No. 327	£75.00
7th	Kent Evenden	No. 021	£65.00

To join the 300 club, Phone Brian Heyes on 01622 744509 or Chris Garman on 01424 441645 for an application form.

Registered with Ashford Borough Council, under Section 5, Schedule 1 of the Lotteries & Amusements Act, 1976

# Book Reviews

*British Railways Steam Locomotives 1948-1968* by Hugh Longworth, published by Ian Allan (under the OPC imprint). 320 pages of text and black and white photographs, size 293mm x 216mm, price £35. ISBN 0860935930

The product of years of research by the author, this comprehensive study of the steam locomotives of British Railways, tracks the history of the 20,000 locomotives inherited by the new organisation in 1948, together with subsequent acquisitions and new builds up until the last locomotive was constructed in 1960. Eight years later, virtually every locomotive had been withdrawn, the vast majority being consigned to scrap. The book is arranged within sections corresponding to the four constituent grouped companies that existed prior to nationalisation, together with an additional section comprising British Railways own builds and a package of acquired austerity locomotives. Within the categories, each locomotive is listed, under the various classes, with columns giving the building date, the number that the locomotive was allocated under the March 1948 re-numbering, subsequent re-numbering (where appropriate), build date, builder and date of final withdrawal. There is also a thumbnail sketch of each class with technical data and other information. The author admits that the majority of the information has been collected from previously published sources, which is duly accredited- the Ian Allan ABC series of British Railways locomotives, 1946-1968 must have been invaluable in this respect, but this does not detract from the importance of this work. Here, in one volume, is all the basic information on a vast subject in a clear, attractive and easy to locate format. Appendices, giving chronological and alphabetical information add to the enjoyment of the book. However, the text is interspersed with a random selection of photographs of a few classes of locomotives, which adds little of value apart from perhaps enhancing the marketability of a specialist publication. Having completed such a monumental task, the author might consider a further volume, charting locomotive history up to 1948- but

that would be an even greater undertaking.  
PDS

*Railways Restored 2005* edited by Alan C. Butcher published by Ian Allan. 224 pages of text and photographs, 235mm x 170mm laminated card covers, price £13.99. ISBN 0711030537.

The 26th edition of *Railways Restored* maintains the usual high standard of previous years. Some 200 heritage sites are listed and each attraction is categorised as to whether it operates to a timetable service (in which case the timetable is included at the back), as a steam centre, museum, railway centre or simply as an attraction. There is a comprehensive guide to locomotives and rolling stock of each organisation and useful visitor information, such as addresses, telephones, facilities for disabled visitors and times of opening. Thumbnail location maps of sites might be a useful addition, although OS references are given.. The contents of the two main national collections at York and Covent Garden are included. The headings throughout the book are bold and clear and the index, which arranges attractions within counties, enables easy reference to any site. This guide is more comprehensive than any other on the subject and is well worth buying if price is not a serious consideration. As a guide it is noticeable for the inclusion of only a limited amount of advertising.

PDS

*The Ramsgate Tunnel Railway* by Peter A. Harding published by the author. 32 pages of text in A5 format. Card covers. Price £3.50 and available at the Colonel Stephens Railway Shop. ISBN 0952345897

Peter Harding has completed his nineteenth booklet on rural branch lines and light railways with a study on the Ramsgate Tunnel Railway. This short pleasure line opened in 1936, incorporating part of the main line section of railway which linked Ramsgate Harbour with the Minster to Broadstairs line, closed by the Southern Railway in 1926. The main purpose of the line, apart from the novelty of running through an extensive tunnel, was to link an amusement park on the beach known as "Merrier England" with a location at Hereson Road Ramsgate, convenient both for Dumpton Park station and also the adjoining race course. Built to 2 foot gauge and operated by an overhead electric cable, the 1300 yard long line was an unusual

attraction and popular in its time. Closed during the War and again in 1957 for a brief period following a rock fall, it struggled on until 1965 when the operators, Pleasurama Limited, decided to close it after a relatively minor accident. No doubt at the time it was seen to have a limited future, yet had it managed to survive the destructions of the 1960's it might still be here today. An excellent little book with no less than 50 photographs.

**PDS**

(An article of the Ramsgate Tunnel Railway by Norman Johnson appeared in Tenterden Terrier no 85, Summer 2001)

*London and South East – an add-on for the Microsoft Train Simulator developed by Making Tracks for First Class Simulations. RRP £24.99. Available from the Colonel Stephens Shop at Tenterden Town Station.*

This fascinating programme will appeal to many K&ESR members, featuring as it does the London and South East Network routes from Charing Cross, Cannon Street and London Bridge to Crystal Palace, Redhill, Croydon, Caterham, East Grinstead, Uckfield, Bromley North, and Tunbridge Wells plus Tonbridge – Redhill. It is perhaps a sign of the times that the programme is set in the 'halcyon' 1970's, although one has to admit (even to a steam era leftover like this writer) that the railway aspects of that era have now acquired the rosy glow of 20/20 hindsight.

Additional rolling stock provided includes, 4 CEP's, 4 VEP's, 4 CIG's 2 HAP's, both types of 4 EPB, a Motor Luggage Van, Hastings Diesels, the ever popular Cromptons and Class 71 electric locomotive. Alternative green and blue/blue grey liveries are provided. On the freight side there are some period-appropriate vans and wagons as well as a Queen Mary brakevan.

The quality of the scenery graphics are very variable. Out in the country it's reasonably convincing and the central London and Croydon simulations are excellent. PC computers are, of course, not in the same performance league as mainframe simulators and some compromises have been necessary. This becomes quite amusing when one reaches the suburbs, the Hither Green area beyond the railway fence appearing much as it would have done in the late 1860's! Similarly, New Cross and Deptford appear to

have been devastated (although I recall that my former employers had, not too long previously, been much more successful in this respect than the Luftwaffe). The representation of Hither Green MPD seems fairly accurate - my ego asks if the relevant Oakwood Press title was consulted - although to be picky the dumped engine from a SR 350hp shunter, which was a feature of the place, seems to be missing. The minimalist approach taken elsewhere works at Tonbridge and Orpington but doesn't at High Brooms, East Grinstead or Dunton Green. At the latter place, the still extant traces of the Westerham branch are completely missing. Generally speaking the shortcomings in the landscape are less apparent if you stick to the cab view and don't treat the simulation like a giant train set.

London and South East comes with fifteen interesting activities (i.e timetabled duties) some of them being reasonably difficult. Having previously downloaded earlier Southern (steam) locos and stock from UKTrainsim.com (detailed in an earlier issue of the Terrier) it has been possible to also try out a Schools class plus five Bulleid coaches on a semi-fast duty rostered for a 4 CEP. This has made me further appreciate the skill needed to drive a steam loco. Equally, it's interesting to drive a Hastings diesel over the Settle and Carlisle line, whilst (getting silly) over in Montana Cromptons perform pleasingly well over Marias Pass.

The programme loads well and integrates easily with the basic Microsoft Train Simulator. Performance can be somewhat jerky in urban areas where the computer is working flat out to process the huge amount of data presented to it. Running the defragmentation routine seems to help with this and a K&ESR volunteer who worked on the original simulator programme advises that turning off the sound will probably improve matters. This can also help with the clash I had earlier noticed between the winter option and Windows XP. Performance can, of course, vary between computers and your machine might be happier than my domestic laptop when running London and South East.

Overall, great fun and value for money even if the price is a little steep. The shop staff tell me that an improved version will be available shortly.

**NP.**



# Branded and Licensed

*General Manager, Graham Sivyer, highlights some recent achievements in marketing the railway*

## Branding

Graham Sivyer and I were doing some brainstorming recently to get some copy written for the label for this year's bottled beer "Levers Alone". It struck me that this line has suffered from a couple of failed attempts at a new brand name. "The Hoppers Line" and "The Farmers Line" spring to mind.

Changing a brand name isn't easy. People still remember "Marathon" bars and "British Railways".

The former had one successful name change, but the privatisation and franchising of our railways has left customers unsure about who actually they are going to travel with, and this is coupled with a lack of consumer confidence.

Fifty five per cent of our customers are repeat visitors. They have confidence in our brand and our product. No need to change our name then!

We see a really good example of branding at our Thomas days. Parents and children have confidence in the product, and its licensees, of which K&ESR is one. Our last two events have seen record breaking days in the shop as our visitors buy Thomas goodies in a style

that would suggest they will never be available again.

The K&ESR has an excellent reputation for providing a memorable visitor experience to close on 100,000 people every year. Giving it another name may cause confusion for as many seasons it takes to re-establish itself.

I do quite like the strap-line "the friendly railway" however, as it reflects not only what we do so well (being good with customers) but portrays an image of strong inter-relationships, with not only the railways own members, but with the community at large.

Our neighbours, "The Bluebell" and "The Lavender Line" have names that conjure up distinct images, and around which they can produce distinct merchandise. For us it's a slightly different problem.

We do, however, possess a strong brand in "The Wealden Pullman" which is well established as a provider of quality hospitality, and around which we can develop other products.

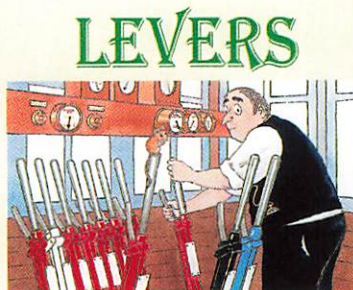
"Kent & East Sussex Railway" does not flow easily off the tongue, but it is important to be consistent with the image we project.

We can enhance and promote products within our brand name. Development of our product for children "Terry The Tenterden Terrier", promotion of our quality dining

'Levers Alone' is brewed exclusively for the Kent & East Sussex Railway. The 10 1/2-mile line descends from Tenterden through the picturesque Rother Valley and passes a stone's throw away from the Rother Valley Brewery before reaching its destination in the shadow of the magnificent National Trust castle at Bodiam.

Opening as Britain's first rural light railway, it has transported visitors and goods since 1900. Known affectionately to a generation of hop-pickers as the 'Hopper's Line', it transported them on their annual holiday to the Hop Gardens of Kent & East Sussex.

Nowadays the railway is home to the luxurious Wealden Pullman and is famous for the Col. Stephens Museum at Tenterden Station. For further information about the K&ESR visit [www.kesr.org.uk](http://www.kesr.org.uk)



## ALONE

HAND BREWED ALE

Rother Valley Brewing Company was established in Northiam in 1993 on a hop farm overlooking the River Rother that marks the boundary between Kent & East Sussex.

Traditional Sussex hops have been grown on the farm adjacent to our brewery for over 200 years and the family who have farmed this land for nearly a century have maintained the tradition and grown all the hops used in this brew.

Rother Valley Brewing Company brew cask ales and bottled beers for distribution to many public houses and shops in Kent and East Sussex.



ABV 4.3%

500ml

experience, as above, and our "Railway Experience Days" which also have an excellent reputation.

We already have some own branded confectionary, jams, pencils, badges etc. and we are about to add wine and beer giving a greater range of products that have tourist appeal, in our shop. All bear our name and logo.

Brian has just acquired some new polo shirts and fleeces, with an embroidered logo. Navy blue is available to staff and volunteers only, at a price that covers cost + a contribution to design costs.

Wear these with pride. You are promoting the brand and our image.

### Licensed to Entertain

Much has been written in the national press about the simplification (allegedly) of licensing laws, which from November encompass places of entertainment. Because we entertain – through Punch & Judy (that's the way to do it), music, plays etc. we need to be licensed.

We brought forward our application and have obtained a licence to sell beers, wines and spirits for on sale (in the buffet) and off sale (in the shop). This new measure has got off to a good start, as a locally produced beer, or a cold glass of wine or lager, is a great enhancement to a ploughman's lunch or even as accompaniment for a salad.

The Colonel might be turning in his grave at the definition of Tenterden Town Station as a place of entertainment!

Nevertheless, that is what we do we entertain our customers, as they watch our locomotives manoeuvre around the place, or when they come to watch enactments like the excellent Steaming Home event. "Santa Specials" and "Days Out With Thomas" are nothing but entertainment experiences, aimed at the younger family members.

When I started here I commented that we are all performers on stage. Perhaps I should be glad that the Government have recognised this. I might have done so without the red tape that surrounds the licensing applications!

K&ESR has always been a place of entertainment, and I don't just mean one particular team member's pranks and stories. With this latest recognition I say blow your whistles, wave your flags, smile and entertain. From November we will be licensed to do it!

### Your patronage will help us!

Show your membership card and the Railway will receive a donation equivalent to 10% of the total amount that you spend on accommodation, meals, drinks & functions at the London Beach Golf Hotel, St. Michaels, Tenterden, Kent.



## TENTERDEN KENT



- Set in 97 acres of beautiful Wealden Countryside.
- only 1 mile from the Historical Town of Tenterden.
- Parkland Golf Course with US PGA standard greens.
- 26 Bedroom Hotel, 24 with balconies overlooking the golf course.
- 3 large function rooms.
- Superb Restaurant, Spike Bar and Coffee facilities.
- Private Dining rooms.
- 20 mins from the International Terminal at Ashford.
- 40 mins from the Channel Ports.

Best Western

**LONDON BEACH  
GOLF HOTEL**

Ashford Road, St. Michaels, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6HX

Tel: 01580 766279 Fax: 01580 763884

E-mail: [enquiries@londonbeach.com](mailto:enquiries@londonbeach.com) [www.londonbeach.com](http://www.londonbeach.com)



# Letters to the Editor

## Placing a call to Bodiam

Sir, Without wishing to criticise Chris Lowry's excellent article I feel I must point out that the implication that the contractor left us with the telegraph poles out to Bodiam "individually numbered and forming useful reference markers for the subsequent track laying" is not quite correct.

On the strength of my work for the S&T department, Nick Wellington asked me to undertake the simple task of nailing a few numbers to telegraph posts. I had a trial run doing this for various replacement posts between Rolvenden and Wittersham (while doing so I inadvertently gave two adjacent posts the same number – has anyone noticed I wonder? I think I went back and called them 67A and 67B or something like that to fit into the main sequence). A week or two later I found myself let in for the real hard work – would I number all the posts from Northiam out to Bodiam?

One sunny, cloudless day I set out in the early afternoon armed with a lightweight ladder, a bag of assorted numbers, nails tools and unbounded optimism that this would be a piece of cake. Up a pole, band – bang, down the pole, pick up the ladder and a gentle stroll in the sunshine to the next one and repeat the operation. What could be easier than that? The trouble was it didn't work out like that. Great fun at first, but the further I walked along the track – which was in-situ at this stage – the more difficult it seemed to become. The ladder gradually became heavier and heavier, the poles further and further apart and less accessible and numbers I required more difficult to find. Even the hammer grew in size. After about an hour or so I had to find a shady spot and have a rest and a cool drink. Alas I had only a modestly sized bottle of water which, as it turned out, was woefully inadequate. I think it took me at least a couple more hours before I turned the last corner and Bodiam Castle and the station were in

sight. By the time I got to the crossing gates and had thankfully nailed the last wretched number into the last pole I had had more than enough.

The station was, as expected, deserted and devoid of any facilities – not the least a supply of water. Completely exhausted I collapsed on the platform and either by radio or mobile phone borrowed from Nick Wellington – I can't remember which – called for rescue. After what seemed like an age, during which time I was able to helpfully inform a couple of rambblers that the next train wasn't due until "next year" – Nick turned up and conveyed me back to Northiam.

Two hastily gulped down mugs of tea saved me from death due to dehydration, although I had indications as I drove home to Canterbury that it had been a near thing! The only thing that spoilt the day was being informed that there were no plans to actually make use of the carefully numbered poles by putting wire on them. It is good to hear that after all this time my near supreme sacrifice was not in vain.

Canterbury, Kent

Tony Pratt

## Pannier Tank No. 1638

Sir – the excellent photo on the cover of "Tenterden Terrier" no 96 reminded me of a comment from a passenger last summer when I was on TTI duty: "What on earth is that GWR loco doing here? The Great Western Railway would surely not have had anything to do with the Tenterden railway, except maybe to close it down!"

I was bound to point out that due to lack of authenticity on someone's part, the letters "GWR" had been painted on a locomotive that NEVER had been part of the Great Western Railway.

No. 1638, like the other members of Class 16xx and the more powerful Class 15xx, was designed by F.W.Hawksworth and built for BRITISH RAILWAYS, the GWR having already ceased to exist. The only adornment which No 1638 would have had





*Pannier tank 1638 in GWR livery, 8th May 2005*

*(Ian Scarlett)*

on her tank during her short life on BR metals (?14 years) was the BR "Lion" logo, and of course she would have been turned out originally in unlined black, though if she had gone back to Swindon for an overhaul she might well have been repainted in dark green.

So, as a "Southern" man, I should be delighted if someone will paint over that offending "GWR" logo. Surely "K&ESR" would be much better!

Chatham, Kent

John A. Smith

### **The K&ESR today**

Sir – I write as a former working member (Education Officer, Signaller, and Terrier Trust Secretary) for 18 years between 1985 and 2003. Visiting Kent over Easter I looked forward to seeing the K&ESR again and was delighted with some of the things I saw, especially the two beautifully restored Pullmans and the effort that has gone into clearing up some of the former eyesores, particularly the derelict stock at Wittersham Road. I also enjoyed an excellent modestly

priced all-day breakfast, eaten in style in the restaurant car.

However, I was very disappointed by the utterly dead atmosphere on the railway, with a service of only five trains in each direction and large numbers of empty seats on what in the past was regarded as the busiest weekend of the year. I arrived at Northiam just after 3pm Saturday to find that it was already impossible to make a round trip visiting Bodiam and Tenterden. Only five trains on what was billed as a "Special Events Day" really is pathetic. Not long ago there would have been at least twice that number; while on the same day this year there were 14 departures from Romney to Hythe, the North Norfolk Railway (Where I am now Signaller) had 14 return trips and even the little Spa Valley Railway ran six.

I know very well the K&ESR is still recovering from financial crisis and cannot afford to run trains that lose money but I suggest that the policy of cutting everything back to the bone is counter-productive. When I travelled on the second departure



from Tenterden on Sunday 27th March there were only 84 passengers on arrival at Bodiam and a mere 45 on the journey back, showing a continuing fall on averages of recent years. The poor service meant that at Tenterden there were periods of around 45 minutes when absolutely nothing moved. Surely one of our small engines could be used with a couple of vintage coaches to provide a shuttle service to Rolvenden and back or at least along the platform and up the headshunt, as we did in the past. How can we expect to retain visitors at Tenterden to spend more money as advocated in the current edition of the "Tenterden Terrier" if there is nothing for them to look at?

I also find it depressing when months go by without any mention of the K&ESR in the enthusiast magazines. Compare this situation with that at the Bluebell Railway where several pages in April's "Steam Railway" and "Heritage Railway" were devoted to the repainting of their E4 class engine in lined black livery for use on photographic charter specials, all the work being done and paid for by photographers. This is the sort of free publicity the K&ESR could enjoy when "Terrier" No 32670 returns to traffic this year, the same group of photographers having offered to pay for and do the work of putting the engine into black livery for a short time while it runs in before going into its long-term blue Rother Valley Railway livery next spring. However, it was turned down at the Terrier Trust AGM on the grounds it would be "too difficult to arrange" – negative attitude that will surely cost the railway dearly in terms of lost potential revenue from the running of photographic charter trains which other railways are very keen to operate.

Please can we have a little more flair and imagination in the running of the K&ESR, which has so much going for it if the present "cut back" "Can't do" attitude can be overcome.

Attleborough, Norfolk Gerald Siviour

*General Manager, Graham Baldwin, replies*

*Timetabling from Northiam appears to have been an issue here for some time. I hope to address that in some small way in 2006.*

*I understand your comments about the number of services generally operated on K&ESR. In my comparatively short time here I have seen nothing to suggest increasing the service dramatically, although visitor numbers have been consistently above last year since October. The reference you make to visitor numbers really justifies the current timetabling. Comparison with Spa Valley Railway is unreasonable given the length of journey and journey time. I am surprised by your suggesting that K&ESR should be running twice the number of trains as the physical layout and passenger numbers would make this not only very long days for all concerned, but would be an ingredient of financial suicide. Easter visitor numbers were similar to last year. Given that Easter was so early I am satisfied with that performance.*

*Prudent financial management is essential as part of the recovery of this railway. There are several projects being undertaken that you will not be aware of, that are part of the recovery programme, and I can only respectfully suggest that you are patient!*

*As we embark on a campaign to improve our offering (including the tidying up that you observed) the nature of our services will change in line with visitor numbers. I wish to see more use of our excellent Vintage carriages next year. However, I am sure you understand why we will not be offering journeys up the headshunt. Visitor numbers have to improve from a very disappointing 2004.*

*Part of the changes I am making here involve a change in our Sales and Marketing operation. On the back of these changes I hope you see more of the K&ESR in the enthusiast magazines.*

*I note your comments about the Photographic Charter that was turned down by the Terrier Trust last year. This was effectively outside the control of the K&ESR.*

### **How we organize the finances**

Sir - Living so far off not only do I receive a great deal of pleasure reading the magazine but can often see things impartially.

Norman Brice's excellent article on finances asked "if only 10% of our visitors came back once more". Looking at the traffic figures it is clear there exist problems in the shoulder months of October/November/March. So

why not offer a voucher to any adult booking from now until September, a 2 for 1 voucher for use in these slow months. It would have date expiry of course.

My wife and I are in the tourist industry – "bums in beds", the railway is in the "bums on seats" business and we find an off-season incentive will help. I feel you have to offer people something to come back because most are not "enthusiasts" – they will feel they've "seen and done" the line in a single visit. A generous incentive will work in bringing back a percentage of them.

Don't give up – just be more imaginative.

Melrose

C. John

### **Competing for the leisure pound**

Sir – Whilst some members already do so, it would be very beneficial if all members always carried the Railway's "Business Card", i.e. the K&ESR Timetable and Guide, as one never knows when an opportunity to promote the railway may arise.

Positive promotion is far better than having our leaflets mainly remaining static in Tourist Office etc. racks. However, such offices may help one to restock leaflets rather than having to trouble Tenterden. Of course it is important to carry and issue our leaflets in good condition as a grotty leaflet may imply a grotty railway!

East Grinstead, Sussex Alan Lawrence

### **Terrier No 3 Bodiam**

Sir – I was very disappointed to hear that the Trust has rejected the idea of painting the locomotive in plain black as No 32670 for a short time prior to its official launch in Rother Valley Railway blue. The inspiration for this idea was that the locomotive ran in this livery on the K&ESR just after nationalization. The cost of this work could have been met by the photographers, led by Geoff Silcock and help would have been offered for the preparation and painting of the locomotive.

I expect you know that a similar exercise, funded by the photographers, has recently been successfully carried out on the Bluebell Railway with the 'E4' 0-6-2T Birch Grove, which has been turned out in British

Railways lined black as No 32473. This initiative has created an enormous amount of interest with comprehensive coverage in the principal railway magazines such as Steam Railway and Heritage Railway, first class publicity for the Bluebell Railway.

On the Bluebell we are lucky that our Commercial Manager, Tim Baker, has an enlightened attitude to such initiatives and recognizes the value of ideas suggested by the photographers and enthusiasts, supported by their expertise and contacts. These assets are essential for the successful running of events of the railway such as 'Branch Weekend', 'Goods Train Day', 'Giants of Steam' and so on. I think that this positive attitude, supported by attention to detail and an effort to make our trains as authentic as possible, contributes in no small way towards the steady increase in passenger numbers the bluebell enjoys.

Sadly on the K&ESR things seem rather different since I note from page 26 in the last issue of the Tenterden Terrier, that passenger numbers are declining. It seems to me therefore that every initiative ought to be taken to help the K&ESR to reverse this trend, such as the temporary repainting of Bodiam.

The appearance of Bodiam as No 32670 and the interest this is bound to generate, with widespread coverage in the national railway press, would surely be an ideal platform to publicise the official launch of the locomotive as Rother Valley Railway No 3.

With the availability of No 32678, there is also obvious scope for the appearance of two "British Railways" liveried Terriers together, a wonderful prospect, which I think might be a preservation first. Surely this opportunity is too good to be passed by! It would also demonstrate an imaginative and enlightened approach to the event, not only by the Terrier Trust, but also by the KESR.

I very much hope that the Terrier trust will re-think its decision to the benefit of all.

Ham, Richmond, Surrey Mike Esau

*We are always in need of quality photographs to illustrate the heritage aspects of the railway – Ed.*

# How we did in 2004

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Total net debt £m	0.87	0.94	1.02	1.22	1.32	1.28
Total net assets £m	1.74	1.66	1.58	1.43	1.45	1.32
Debt/net assets	50%	57%	64%	85%	92%	97%
Gross income £m	1.33	1.33	1.18	1.14	1.33	0.91
Paying Passengers	90,415	94,727	90,991	96,414	107,992	70,919
Income per passenger £	14.73	14.05	12.96	11.78	12.34	12.84

## Philip Shaw, Chairman of the Company's Finance Committee, outlines some key points from the 2004 results

The Company's 2004 accounts were due to be approved by the Board on 16th July and will be posted to members in September, ahead of the AGM in October. Some of the key features of the year were as follows.

Draft figures show that profits were down from £47,149 (pre an exceptional item) in 2003 to a figure of around £16,000.

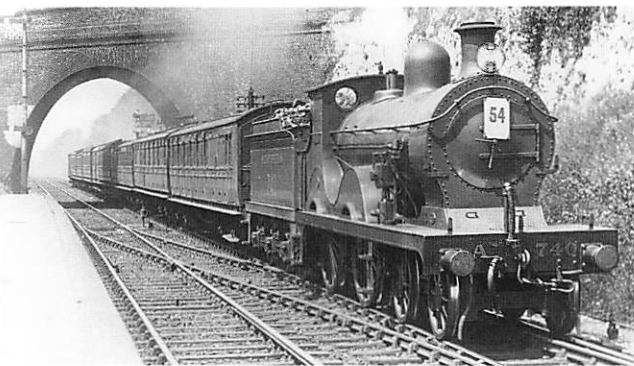
However, this is not a particularly meaningful measure of our performance as we always re-invest most of our income back into the business. As a charity, we have responsibilities both to our members and to the wider community and we have no shareholders. Budgets are first discussed with managers and then approved by the Board in the autumn, for the following calendar year. In the decision making, the key point is how the income and expenditure forecasts will impact on our short and longer term cash requirements.

The table above shows that total net debt fell for the fourth year running and at the end of 2004 stood at £0.87m. This compares with the peak of £1.32m reached at the end of 2000 in the aftermath of the opening of the extension to Bodiam and our well publicised administrative problems. For the second year running we have set aside £50,000 to a reserve to meet our obligations to redeem the bearer bonds, the first tranche of which (£169,473) becomes due for repayment in 2007. This means that this

money will not be allowed to be spent on other things. In fact, our total "cash in the bank" at December 2004 was £169,473, so we are already reasonably confident of being able to meet our 2007 bond repayment commitment without taking on new debts. Total net assets continued to rise, reflecting infrastructure improvements, and the ratio of total debt to fixed assets in 2004 fell to 50% compared with 97% in 1999. This is a very significant measure of our prudent cash management.

Total gross income during 2004 was virtually unchanged at £1.33m and reflected a 5% fall in passengers during the year and also a £60,000 (50%) reduction in income from donations and covenants. A more positive trend was achieved in the total gross income generated per passenger, which was up by 5%. In fact, income per passenger has risen sharply in each of the last three years. Fare increases have played a part in this, but we have also been highly successful in achieving a bigger income contribution through the gift shop and catering. Had we been able to reverse the decline in visitor numbers – the 2004 figure was no less than 16% down on 2000, the year we returned to Bodiam, then the positive impact on our finances would have been dramatic. Our special events, booked parties and catering trains always do well, but the numbers of turn up and go passengers have continued to decline. Can we reverse this trend? We certainly hope so and we are working very hard to achieve it.

# A Young Man's View of Hopping



*Personal recollections by Norman Johnson*

In the aftermath of World War Two, I lived close to Chelsfield Southern Railway station. A youngster with time on my hands, I was able to sit on the roof of our (by then disused) brick air-raid shelter and watch the trains go by, a half-hourly suburban electric service out to Sevenoaks and steam hauled coastal expresses and lengthy loose-coupled goods. Amongst others, the Schools and King Arthurs became familiar sights. In 1947 came the sleek Bullied West Country pacifics in malachite green lined with broad bands of gold –

## FIRST IN THE FIELD

*New "WEST COUNTRY" Engines*

**LOOK OUT FOR THEM ON THE**

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

Screamed the SR's publicity posters.

Then came the spotless Golden Arrow headed by Merchant Navy 21C1 "Channel Packet", a schoolboy's dream indeed and all on my own doorstep!

One day I was surprised to see a non-corridor train hauled by a very ancient steam engine pounding up the 1 in 120 gradient to Knockholt summit – and then another, and another. It was early autumn and I was about to learn that the Southern mothballed a fleet of Edwardian engines and coaches for much of the year – stock for the Hoppers. This was something really different – I was in my element!

As is well-known, the counties of Kent and East Sussex were famous for hop-growing. Early in September, the mass exodus of the pickers from the East End began. To them it was a paid holiday, to the Southern an annual

*A down Deal express passing Chelsfield in the 1920's headed by Wainwright's D class 4-4-0 number A740. In the 1940's similar stock would be cascaded to form the Hopper's specials.*

*(Real Photographs)*

logistical headache. For a week or so, special hop-pickers trains would pass through Chelsfield heading for the hop-gardens, destinations Paddock Wood, Headcorn, The Hawkurst and Maidstone West branches and Robertsbridge amongst others; and there were through trains to Bodiam on our own Kent and East Sussex Railway. All available stock was pressed into service, truly vintage engines and non-corridor coaches most of which probably hadn't seen the main-line since hop-picking the previous year. Every train was packed, not only with hoppers, but all manner of support items necessary for a working holiday of up to three weeks duration, suitcases, bags, bikes, prams, kids, dogs, caged birds, mattresses – you name it, they took it! The splendid Edwardian engines, regulator wide open, roared up the gradient through Chelsfield Station, the fireman's shovel a blur, smoke and exhaust steam shooting proudly into the atmosphere [what would present day steam enthusiasts give to experience such a sight! And I feel very privileged indeed to have been able to witness it]. Other times, the sheer weight of extra traffic would prove too much for the system and special would follow special, crawling from one signal section to the next, driver and fireman leaning from the cab with looks of resignation typical of railwaymen countrywide. About three weeks later the trains would take the hoppers home, the on falling gradient towards Orpington, nothing like as spectacular as the outward journey.

So, the next time you visit the K&ESR's annual hopping event, you will know how East Enders travelled to the hop gardens in "the good old days!"

# The Newport & Four Ashes Light Railway



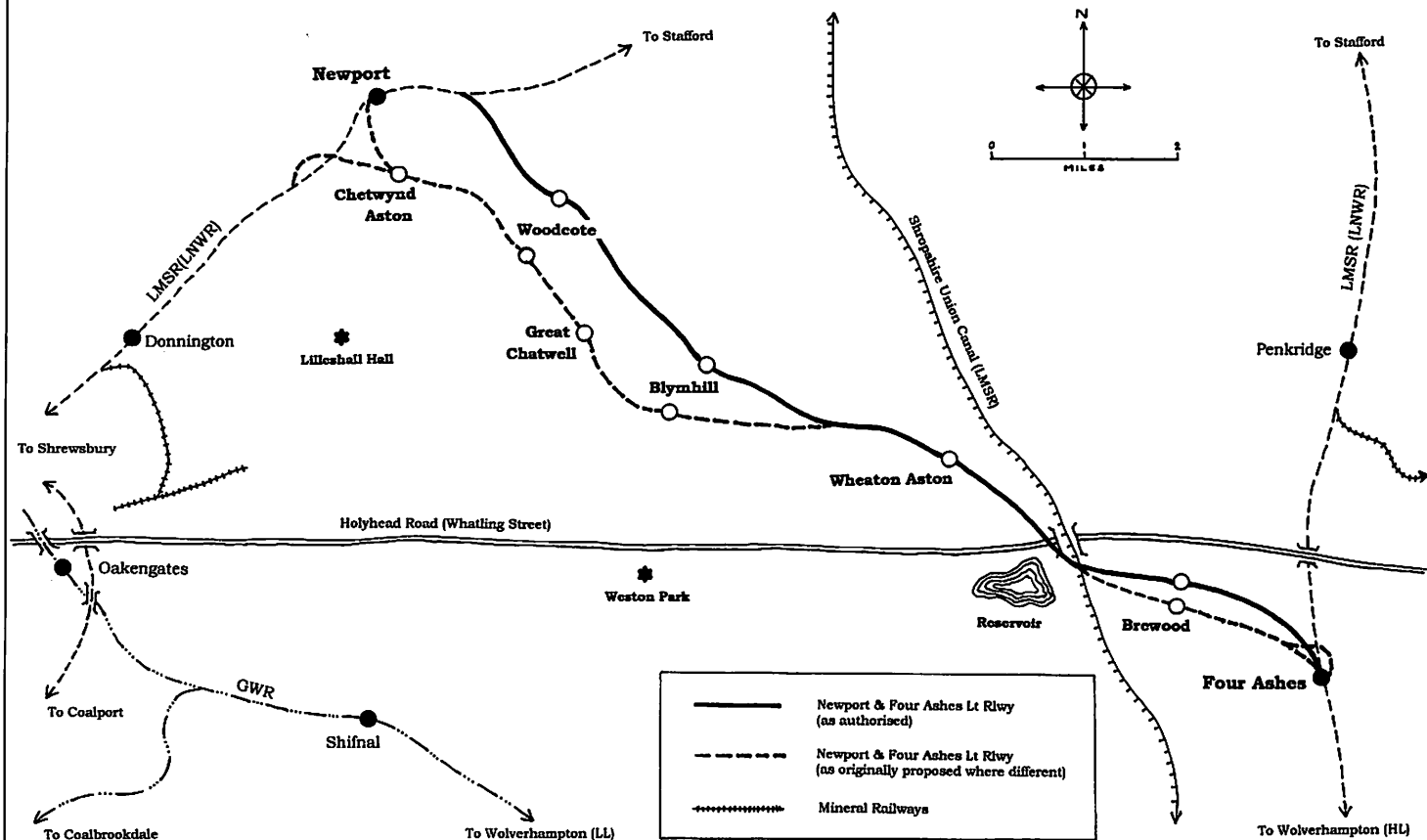
*In the mid 1920's, Colonel Stephens was still planning new light railways, despite rapid improvements in the national road network, which were adversely affecting rail travel. Tom Burnham tells the story of one of his most fascinating projects which never came about.*

The Newport & Four Ashes Light Railway was promoted by Colonel Stephens and his associates during the early 1920s. Colonel Stephens described the Shropshire County Council as "notoriously friendly towards light railway enterprise in the district", and the Newport & Four Ashes was the last of several in the county with which he was involved. He had been instrumental in reopening the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Light Railway in 1911, considered taking an interest in the Bishops Castle Railway and in 1922 acquired and reopened the narrow-gauge Snailbeach District Railways. In 1919 he had been the engineer for the Shropshire Light Railway, which would have extended the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire from Shrewsbury to Market Drayton, but was turned down by the Light Railway Commissioners. Although the Newport & Four Ashes was authorised by the Ministry of Transport in 1925 it was never built. With hindsight we can see that the conditions which allowed a general purpose, agricultural light railway to be even a marginally paying proposition no longer existed after the Great War, in so far as they ever did. We shall first look at the setting of

the light railway and its proposed route, together with some of the personalities involved in its promotion, and then consider the failure of the project in the light of some of the reasons put forward for building it.

As originally envisaged, the line would have been just over 14 miles long, linking Newport (Shropshire) on the Wellington to Stafford line with Four Ashes on the Wolverhampton to Stafford line. It ran roughly parallel to the Wellington to Wolverhampton main line of the Great Western, and about six miles to the north of it. Both ends of the light railway would have connected with lines worked by the London & North Western Railway; the line through Newport had in fact been built by the Shropshire Union Canal & Railway in 1849 but was leased to the L&NWR. The line through Four Ashes had been part of the original Grand Junction Railway, opened as early as 1837. The L&NWR itself became part of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway group at the beginning of 1923.

If the light railway had been worked by the LM&SR as the promoters hoped, it would have given that company its own route from the joint line at Wellington to Wolverhampton, independent of the Great Western. However, the Newport & Four Ashes was not designed for main-line through traffic, and in any event the days of inter-company rivalry in new lines had passed.





Much was made at the public enquiry of the relative isolation of villages such as Brewood and Wheaton Aston. This may have been so as far as the railway era of the second half of the nineteenth century was concerned, but before the arrival of the railways the area to be served by the light railway was close to two important trunk routes. The main line of the Shropshire Union canal, completed as the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction Canal as late as 1835, cuts across the countryside, its long straight sections and heavy earthworks in marked contrast to the earlier narrow canals of the West Midlands. The Holyhead Road (later the A5 trunk road) runs from east to west, crossing the canal under the Stretton aqueduct. The famous engineer Thomas Telford was responsible for both projects, and is commemorated in the name of the new town that includes Newport within its boundaries.

There had been previous attempts to build railways in the Wolverhampton-Stafford-Wellington triangle; a Brewood & Wolverhampton Railway was authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1874, but the powers were abandoned in 1879. A railway on a similar route to the proposed light railway was discussed in the 1890s, but no action resulted. Brewood Parish Council had at least agitated successfully with the L&NWR for some improvement to the train service at Four Ashes and for better facilities at the goods yard there for loading cattle. But the only time the station was really busy was on August Bank Holiday, when special trains carried passengers for the annual Brewood Show, hauled by whatever relics of the L&NWR could be steamed from Bushbury shed.

By the early 1920s, although some places along the route of the Newport & Four Ashes still had no public transport other than the horse and cart, the situation was changing rapidly. The Wolverhampton Corporation Tramways had extended motor bus services to Brewood and Wheaton Aston. These were generally regarded as unprofitable, but were provided as a public service, and perhaps with an eye towards eventually widening the municipal boundaries. Newport had "profited by the efficient service of the Midland Red 'Bus Company'" (as the Newport & Market Drayton Advertiser put it) since 1920, although the rest of the district was "sadly lacking in transport facilities and as yet hardly touched by the ubiquitous Midland 'buses'". Private motoring was of course a possibility for those who could afford it. Newport had

acquired its first petrol pump in September 1922, but travelling any distance by car was still somewhat of an adventure, and the local paper thought it useful to print a weekly bulletin detailing the state of repair (or more often disrepair) of the more important through roads.

The area to be served was essentially agricultural – "a grass country, a milk producing neighbourhood all through", as it was described by Mr George Cambridge, a Shropshire county councillor. Besides milk, a lot of potatoes were grown, and both went mostly to Wolverhampton and Birmingham. The population of the intermediate villages was about 6000. Minerals had not yet been developed, although there were said to be useful sand deposits, and gypsum had been found when drilling a borehole for water at Ivetsey Bank, near Blymhill.

The potential for coal mining in the locality is worth looking at in more detail. The light railway lay between two very historic areas of coal and ironstone working. About four miles south-west of Newport lay Donnington Wood and Lilleshall, from which the east Shropshire coal and iron industry extended down to the River Severn at Coalbrookdale. A similar distance east of Four Ashes was Cannock, south and east of which were the pits of Cannock Chase. In 1914 the Holly Bank Colliery Company Ltd. (under its go-ahead manager J.C. Forrest) had begun exploration west of the South Staffordshire boundary fault, which had been regarded as the end of the coalfield given the mining methods used in the district up to the late nineteenth century. The search for coal was halted by the war, but was successfully restarted afterwards. The result was a new colliery, Hilton Main, only three or four miles from Four Ashes. Sinking started in December 1919 and the official opening was in September 1924. Coal was worked at depths up to 800 yards, which was considered the economic limit for coal mining in the Midlands at that time. It may be significant that the Holly Bank Colliery company had taken a lease on an area of land west of the main line of Four Ashes and extending nearly to Brewood, presumably with a view to exploration. However, the coal measures continued to dip towards the west, and would most likely have been too deep for economic mining.

The Holly Bank company had in fact been involved with two earlier light railway projects. In November 1898 a group of the company's

directors had proposed the Essington & Ashmore Light Railway, which was intended to connect the original Holly Bank colliery at Essington with the Midland Railway's Walsall to Wolverhampton line at Essington and the L&NWR at Darlaston. The scheme did not proceed because of opposition from the L&NWR. The second scheme was the Wolverhampton & Cannock Chase Light Railway, the latest of several attempts to improve railway access to the coalfield, which was authorised by a Light Railway Order of 1912. The line as a whole was never built, despite interest in acquiring it shown by the L&NWR and L&MSR. However, part of the route was used for the mineral railway from Holly Bank to Hilton Main colliery, built between 1922 and 1924, when the Newport & Four Ashes project was evolving.

Although the network of mineral railways that once threaded their way through the coalfield is now no more, and in most places all traces of them have been obliterated by land reclamation and redevelopment, there is still some railway interest to be found, albeit on a miniature scale. The Hollybush Garden Centre operates an ambitious 7¼ inch gauge miniature railway, running mostly over reclaimed colliery land.

The promoters of the Newport & Four Ashes Light Railway were Lieut-Colonel Holman F. Stephens, Jeremiah MacVeagh and Sir Cecil Paget. Boswell and Tomlins, surveyors of Darlington Street, Wolverhampton, were employed to make the preliminary surveys and advise on the local aspects of the scheme. In November 1922, an application for a Light Railway Order was deposited with the Ministry of Transport, and details of the proposal aroused great interest in the locality.

The draft Order provided for five directors of the company that would build the railway, and named four of the first directors as Colonel Stephens and three well-known Wolverhampton businessmen. These were: Sir Charles Mander (1852-1929) of The Mount, Tettenhall, who was head of the well-known family paint business and a considerable benefactor to Wolverhampton; Loftus Balfour Moreton (1859-?) of Moseley Hall, Bushbury, who was a wholesale hardware merchant and had been High Sheriff of Staffordshire in 1908; and Cllr James Thompson (1863-1934) of Ludstone Hall, Shropshire, who was deputy mayor of Wolverhampton at the time.

The route proposed in the original application

was to have been some 14½ miles long and was to join the Wellington-Stafford line at two points: a connection north of Newport station facing towards Stafford, and one on the west side of the line, which would have crossed over the main line and skirted the south of Newport to join the northern connection. The railway would then have passed through Blymhill, Lapley, Stretton and Brewood, with a bridge over the Shropshire Union Canal near the Belvide reservoir, to join the Wolverhampton-Stafford line just north of Four Ashes station. A further spur was to cross over the main line to terminate at a point on its eastern side. Stations or halts were to be provided at Chetwynd Aston, Great Chatwell, Woodcote, Blymhill, Wheaton Aston and Brewood, at least two of which were to have passing places. It was also intended to have a goods siding near Stretton, not far from the canal bridge. Timber traffic would be dealt with using a travelling crane, which would be taken from station to station as required.

The train service was expected to comprise about four trains a day, plus an occasional extra on Saturdays, stopping at all stations. Colonel Stephens said at the public inquiry that "they would be mixed trains unless traffic developed for passengers to an unexpected extent. It matters very little whether they are mixed trains or passenger trains, because the distance is so short". The promoters hoped "to come to a working agreement with one of the companies, possibly the North Western, but failing that we are quite prepared to work the line ourselves" and had indeed allowed £14,350 for rolling stock in the estimates. According to the Newport and Market Drayton Advertiser it was hoped to obtain "running powers into Wolverhampton High Level station, giving Newport passengers a through run to Wolverhampton, thus avoiding the customary change and tedious wait for connections at Stafford". The question of the Newport & Four Ashes does not appear to have been considered at Board level by either the L&NWR or the LM&SR (not surprisingly, as they were preoccupied with Grouping at the time), so we do not know what working arrangements might have been made had the light railway been built. The maximum speed was to be the usual 25 mph.

The initial estimate of cost was £166,000, but by December 1922 the estimate had gone up to £213,385, a considerable increase. The authorised share capital was to be £125,000 in

£10 shares, with the remainder financed by loans.

There was much discussion of the project in the local press and by the local authorities. The Wolverhampton Express and Star noted that "in some parts the only regular service of transport is still the carrier's cart", and reported approvingly that "as far as possible the contracts will be given locally, and the unemployment situation in Wolverhampton will undoubtedly be relieved by the scheme, in which large numbers of unskilled labourers will be required", while an editorial in the Newport and Market Drayton Advertiser, although finding it "unnecessary to allude to the latent advantages which may follow the construction of a line of rail through a fertile and untapped district", went on to observe that the line would "absorb much of the surplus labour in the district and give an impetus to various local trades". The paper went on to suggest continuing for a further twelve miles from Newport to Market Drayton, via Sambrook, Hinstock and Cheswardine.

Most of the local authorities were generally in favour of the line with certain reservations, particularly regarding the layout of the junction with the L&NWR line at Newport. Newport Urban District Council resolved that it would "prefer that the junction with the L&NWR should be on the Marsh Estate and not on the other side of the town, but they were not prepared to place any obstacle in the way of this railway being brought into Newport as it would be a VERY EXCELLENT THING for the town and neighbourhood". The Newport Town and Marsh Trustees (who owned a substantial amount of land in and near the town, the revenue from which funded civic improvements) also disliked the proposed route through the residential district of Chetwynd Aston and also felt that "it might be better that the junction should be somewhere near the Trustees' land with a view to the development of the Marsh Estate". They communicated this view to Colonel Stephens, who had no objection to a junction on the east side of Newport station provided the Pall Mall Trust, whose land would be used, withdrew their objection.

Cannock Rural District Council withdrew its opposition following a meeting between the Council's engineer and surveyor, Colonel Herbert M. Whitehead, and Colonel Stephens, at which it was agreed that the

approaches to road bridges over the light railway should be no steeper than 1 in 30. Staffordshire County Council favoured the scheme in general but decided to maintain its formal opposition in order to obtain clauses in the eventual Light Railway Order to protect main roads. Brewood Parish Council gave the railway their hearty approval, "believing that it will be a boon to the countryside".

Mr George Cambridge (farmer and shire horse breeder, of High Hall Farm, Blymhill), addressing the Shifnal Rural District Council, believed that "the line would open up all that neighbourhood to the Birmingham markets". To laughter from the other members, he added that the objections to the original route were because it "came rather too near the handsome gates of the drive leading to Lilleshall Hall", adding that "another objection to the original scheme was that the line would cut through the Newport Golf Links, which was a very serious objection".

A conference of local authorities from the Shropshire end of the light railway met in Newport in January 1923 with representatives from Shropshire County Council, the Newport Urban and Rural District Councils and the Newport Town and Marsh Trustees, together with an observer from Shifnal Rural District Council. The meeting approved the proposal provided a more satisfactory route was found. There was particular objection to the crossing of the main Newport to Wolverhampton road, and again a junction on the east side of Newport station was preferred.

Lengthy negotiations with landowners over an alternative route began and continued during 1923, although precise details have yet to be established. An intriguing (but as it turned out premature) report to Shifnal Rural District Council in January 1923 stated that the Earl of Bradford's agent had received a telegram from Colonel Stephens to say that the Pall Mall Trust had withdrawn their opposition to the revised route. The Earl's country seat of Weston Park was not far south of the proposed line and Colonel Stephens may have been acquainted with him as the Earl's father (the 4th Earl, who died in 1915) had been the first chairman of the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Light Railway.

The Ministry of Transport (which had not long taken over responsibility for light railways from the Board of Trade) held a public inquiry into the application at the Victoria Hotel, Newport on 1 February 1923. The Light Railway Commissioners were

represented by Mr Alan D. Erskine and Mr M. Kissane, while Jeremiah MacVeagh appeared as counsel for the promoters. The other promoters, Colonel Stephens and Colonel Paget, were also present, as were representatives of the local authorities, landowners and other interested parties. Opposition to the line was not great, as the promoters had already agreed to make considerable deviations to meet objections from local authorities and landowners, not only near Newport but also between Brewood and Four Ashes, and had also decided to abandon the spurs crossing the main lines at Newport and Four Ashes. Most of the landowners affected had agreed, although the Pall Mall Trust was still holding out.

John Forrest, director of the Holly Bank Colliery, described the prospects for coal in the area, although without mentioning that his company had leased land between Four Ashes and Brewood. He believed that the depth to the top of the coal would be about 800 yards near Four Ashes – at the limit of what could be economically worked, becoming much deeper towards Newport. "Many years hence there can be no doubt that what is in the ground today will be proved. This railway will cross what may be a coal field eventually, at a depth." Asked if he was in favour of the scheme, he replied "I am in favour of any mortal thing that helps the district to get the coal away. The more we get the better."

Colonel Paget declared that "I am not personally acquainted with the route, but I have studied it, and have come to the conclusion that the railway seems to be a thing that is wanted." He had not, however, made any estimates of the likely traffic. Mr R.W. Leach, managing director of the Audley Engineering Company of Newport explained how his company had to cart 800 tons a year to and from Newport station. Goods going south were first taken to Crewe where they were usually transferred to different trucks to continue their journey. The light railway would be a help, particularly if there was a siding to the factory. (Audley Engineering manufactured cast iron valves and was once Newport's largest employer. Founded in 1869, it is still in business under the title of Serck Audco, although the Newport factory closed in 1999.)

Questioned as to the likely traffic receipts, Colonel Stephens remarked that "small industries give a greater paying tonnage than many people very often imagine," quoting

61,000 tons of stone a year from a quarry (Criggon) on the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Light Railway, 42,000 tons from a quarry (presumably Black Rock) on the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway and 173,780 tons from "one colliery partially working" (presumably Tilmannstone on the East Kent). However, no estimates of probable revenue or working costs had been made for the Newport & Four Ashes.

The various local authority representatives, including Colonel Whitehead, engineer and surveyor of Cannock Rural District Council, and Mr Cambridge of Shifnal Rural District Council, spoke of the generally favourable effects on the district of better transport facilities, but were particularly concerned with the state of the local highways. They hoped that the railway would take some of the heavy motor traffic off the roads – "not only are the roads too weak to carry this traffic but they are too narrow". The ratepayers would also benefit from the possibility of bringing in roadstone by rail. "For road making we are not able to get Shropshire stone, which is very excellent. The freightage makes it impossible. This railway would enable us to be linked up with Shropshire, so that it would be possible to have the stone brought practically straight on to our roads to be repaired instead of hauling the material seven or eight miles by motor," declared Colonel Whitehead, adding that the Council was at present using Clee Hill stone.

After the public inquiry, the promoters continued to discuss the deviation with the landowners along the route. In February 1924 they submitted an amendment to the original application for a Light Railway Order (under Rule 38, with the agreement of the Ministry of Transport). This abandoned Railways No.2 (the north facing connection at Newport) and No.3 (the branch crossing over the main line at Four Ashes). Deviation Railway No.1 started with a junction with the LM&SR line from Wellington to Stafford immediately north of Newport station. It ran alongside the main line for about a mile before turning to the south east and following a course to the north of the original alignment, which it joined about seven miles from Newport. Just over three miles of the original route was retained, before Deviation Railway No.2 diverged, and again kept to the north of the original alignment before joining the LM&SR immediately north of Four Ashes station (see map). Although the deviation aroused fewer objections, it does seem to have been further away from the villages along the

route in several cases. The deviation reduced the number of public roads to be crossed from twenty-three (five by bridges and the rest on the level) to eighteen (twelve by bridges and only six on the level). The total length was reduced from 14½ miles to just under 13 miles, and this might have been expected to reduce the estimated cost of land and construction. However, the extra bridges and heavier earthworks required to give easier gradients on the road approaches to the bridges offset the savings. The deviated line was in fact more easily graded than the original; the steepest gradient on the deviation lines was 1 in 150, while there were gradients as steep as 1 in 50 on the original alignment.

Reporting on the application, Alan Erskine stated (with a degree of scepticism) that "the promoters pointed out the difficulty of producing any reliable figures to show what the prospective traffic on the railway is likely to be, but taking into consideration the results of other lines in similar districts they think that they may reasonably suppose that it will prove remunerative. They have mentioned a figure of £41,200 for the gross receipts, which equals £61 per mile per week. This does not include anything for coal traffic from pits which may be sunk in the district when the mineral area is developed, and seems to be an optimistic figure which is not likely to be reached until the railway has been running for some years and the district has developed."

The cost of land and construction for the line as deviated was now estimated as £173,240, and the authorised capital requested was £260,000 comprising £36,400 in ordinary shares, £93,600 in preference shares and £130,000 in debentures. Mr Erskine felt that the total capital powers were higher than was strictly necessary, and he was dubious about the high proportion of preference shares. The promoters "were unable to point to any definite promises of financial assistance, but they submit that, if an Order is granted, there is a reasonable prospect of the capital being raised". They intended to approach the local authorities for support, particularly Wolverhampton Corporation where there was a good deal of unemployment (although the response of the authorities at the public inquiry to this idea had been very non-committal). They would also approach the Unemployment Grants Committee to guarantee interest on part of the capital (the Committee had been set up in 1920 to give grants to accelerate schemes of public utility, particularly in areas with high unemployment).

It was still hoped that the LM&SR would work the line "on reasonable terms".

In view of the general support expressed for the railway and the fact that there was no serious opposition to the revised route, Mr Erskine recommended that the promoters be given the opportunity to put their scheme into effect. Thus, the Newport & Four Ashes Light Railway Order was finally made in February 1925 – two years after the public inquiry.

We now know that the capital required was not forthcoming, either from private investors or the public purse, Colonel Stephens and his fellow promoters were not able to realise their plans, and the Newport & Four Ashes Light Railway was never built. A number of factors can be suggested which made the proposal, unduly optimistic in 1922, quite unrealistic by 1925. These had an impact on the likely revenue, the availability of capital, or in some cases, both.

Perhaps the most important was the rapid improvement in the road network following the Roads Act of 1920, and the equally rapid growth in the number of motor vehicles available to use it. This not only meant that existing railway stations could serve a larger radius, but that over moderate distances – like the eight or nine miles from Brewood to Wolverhampton – it would be quicker and cheaper to use road transport throughout. Road improvements were also an obvious object of any funds which central or local government might have available for public works projects to alleviate unemployment.

1925 was a bad year for the coal industry. Holly Bank Colliery Company had had a strike in 1923 and in 1925 was heading into the national coal dispute that triggered the General Strike of the following year. The original Holly Bank colliery closed in 1927 and in 1936 the whole company went into liquidation, although the modern Hilton Main colliery was taken over by another firm. In the second half of the 1920s, the company was thus preoccupied with survival, and would have lost interest in an expensive new prospect west of Four Ashes, on the margin of technical and economic feasibility – no doubt to the great relief of the residents of Brewood.

Finally, a slow journey by infrequent mixed train, and probably a change of train at Four Ashes, would be quite unable to compete with the motor buses of Wolverhampton Corporation or Midland Red for passenger traffic.

# Keeping an Independent Voice

*Long acknowledged as the champion of light railways, Colonel Stephens was probably largely responsible for ensuring that light railways were given the option of retaining their independence from the Grouping of railways in 1923. Brian Janes has unravelled the facts.*

Some incidents in life have strange consequences. In 1914 the occupants of a speeding car tried to race a K&ESR train at Biddenden's ungated crossing, lost and tried to sue the railway. (See Tenterden Terrier 42 'Bad Day at Biddenden' and the Museum Website Topics article 'A Nasty Accident') In taking this action they unknowingly set in train a campaign to maintain the rights and independence of light railways through collective action. A process that continues today.

Holman F Stephens had by the time of the accident established a considerable reputation as a creator and manager of Light Railways. The effrontery of the motorists in bringing the court case and their initial success certainly brought out his fighting spirit. During the prolonged fight he obviously felt the lack of mutual support of the kind the larger lines enjoyed through their 'Railway Companies Association' that the smaller lines could not join. He now began to lead the way in seeking a voice for small railways in political circles.

## Getting Started

Stephens approached the many small independent railways that existed by the end of the Edwardian era. He had, by his own account, an initial meeting with several, unspecified, railway companies at some time in mid-1915 and then set up an 'Association of Minor Railways' with himself as honorary Secretary. At an early date he approached the Exeter Railway, which was a short, GWR worked, line from Exeter to Ashton. It had the virtue of having a grievance against the GWR and a Chairman, Vincent W Yorke, who was a well-connected city man and Director of the Westminster Bank. It is through this company's records that these early papers have survived.

The document formally setting up the organisation was circulated in proof in

June 1915 and stated:

*"... it was resolved to form an Association of the minor Companies with, amongst others, the following objects:*

- (1) Mutual support generally.*
- (2) Combined representation to the Government, Board of Trade, and Light Railway Commission, also protection of interests in the event of a scheme for the nationalization of Railways being brought forward: also questions arising during controlled period and on the cessation of the same.*
- (3) Combined representation to the Main Line Companies.*
- (4) Test cases, combined action.*
- (5) Information re technical subjects.*
- (6) Scheme of combined General Insurance.*
- (7) Labour questions.*
- (8) Financial questions.*
- (9) Standardising general stores with the object of combined purchases if desirable.*
- (10) Rating and Taxation questions, combined action.*
- (11) Issue of a quarterly pamphlet.*
- (12) Occasional Meetings for the purposes of discussion. Arrangements for the use of small meeting room in London to be used as rendezvous for the Companies concerned.*

*"It is proposed that the Association be controlled by a Council consisting of a President, a Vice-President, and four members who shall be nominated and elected year by year by means of postal ballot."*

Stephens was most anxious to get Yorke involved and wrote 'I may tell you that the question of a subscription is immaterial'. Influence was more important to Stephens than cash.

Stephens then used the final outcome of the Biddenden court case as a pretext to write around to many railways using the document as a recruiting flyer

He also wrote to his close acquaintance, Sir Herbert Walker, at the time the acting Chairman of the Government's Railway Executive Committee that ran all the railways of Britain in wartime, to alert him to the formation of the Association. On 31st August 1915 he wrote



*"My Dear Walker,*

*I also send you for your private information some particulars of the Association of Minor Railways which has been formed.*

*It is rather a job for me to work at it as I should like to as I am mobilised.*

*However it passes the time o' nights.*

*Yours Very Truly*

*H F Stephens"*

In a letter to the Exeter Railway in October Stephens claimed that several companies had joined the Association but, possibly due to his military commitments, any trace of the Association now disappears for some months.

### **New Threats**

In May 1918 we can pick up the threads again when Stephens proposed a new recruitment letter and circular to be sent out to 83 British and Irish (Southern Ireland was of course not separated till 1922) independent Railways signed by the Chairman of 12 Companies (1). By June 1918 the Association had 15 members with F Ullmer, of the Shropshire Railways (which were controlled by the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire which Stephens effectively owned) as its Secretary. Stephens and his associates were in the driving seat of the Association and were to remain so, although with important contributions from C E Drewett of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway and W.T.D.Grundy the General Manager of the Derwent Valley Railway. Initially Yorke, and probably others, must have also been active till the events of 1920 (see below). By now the Association was renamed 'The Association of Railways'

The underlying reason for the revitalisation of the Association was that although the War was still raging (indeed the last massive German offensive was only just being halted) eyes were turning to reorganising the railways after the War .The June circular stated

*"It is felt that if the railways are 'controlled' the Board of Trade [soon to be Ministry of Transport -ed] should be approached as to their position after the crisis, if they are not 'controlled' the government should be approached for assistance if necessary. It seems essential that assistance should be secured from the government in order that the*

*companies might have reasonable protection after a termination of the present crisis.*

*"The Railway Companies Association is engaged in looking after the interests of the larger companies which interests are not in all respects identical with those of the 'lesser undertakings', it is in direct touch with the government.*

*"It is most desirable that companies should band themselves together for defensive purposes, in the event of a proposal for Nationalisation, or even a form of Control, being brought forward by the government hereafter."*

Stephens's precious independence was threatened.

### **Influencing Events**

With the Association now properly established it began to make some impact on Government. In summer 1918 a Parliamentary Select Committee had been formed to study transport. As early as August 1918 H Bonham Carter, at the Ministry of Reconstruction, had written to the Committee Chairman 'few [light railways] are commercially successful



Geddes - "A pike in a carp pond stirring up all the little fishes and gobbling up a good deal of them"

concerns, although several are well worked, notably those by Colonel H F Stephens of Robertsbridge'. In November the Committee recommended that all the railways be brought into a unified control; although Light and other smaller Railways were not specifically mentioned. By Early 1919 the Government set out to implement change and introduced a Bill to set up a Ministry of Ways and Communications (soon changed to the simpler Transport) with the full power and structure to run the railways centrally itself. The authoritarian Sir Eric Geddes (2) was appointed to run it. The Times later compared him to a 'pike in a carp pond stirring up all the little fishes [and] gobbling up a good deal [of them]' Light railways were to come specifically under his remit.

The Association got to work both behind the scenes and in Parliament. In the Commons debate on the Bill in March, Geddes was quite rude about the more primitive sort of light railway, proposing road transport to meet such needs. So on April 4 in the Bill Committee there were moves by several MPs (Messrs Green, Marshall Stephens and Joynson Hicks) to remove light railways from the new Ministry's remit. A promise was made to review the situation and status of light railways. In those days such a commitment had meaning.

The battle was joined. Stephens had written to Yorke the previous day

*"I have been asked to write to you and ascertain if you will agree to be co-opted on the Parliamentary Committee of this Association.*

*"Two members have responded owing to the fact that they do not reside in London it is desirable to have a member who is available for meetings in London without inconvenience.*

*"I am glad to say that our efforts greatly assisted the fight to get Clause 4 of the Transport Bill (3) withdrawn by the government and Sir Eric Geddes has agreed to receive a deputation from the Association at an early date."*

Yorke accepted and in his thank you letter Stephens commented

*"Geddes is quite unsympathetic with the minor lines and this means his people are putting all the things they can to oppose the claims of the smaller companies and to get hold of them at break-up prices.*

*"Your friends at Paddington are not the best of settlers in a purchase deal I fear."*

Behind the scenes Stephens was also at work. Can it be co-incidence that at this time the Eccentric Club, of which Stephens and his close associate Jeremiah MacVeigh were prominent Members, entertained the entire Railway Executive Committee at its premises in Ryder Street and the future of railways was reported as being discussed?

With the powers of the Ministry of Transport settled it got down to work. During the War the Board of Trade had established a Railways Advisory Panel in addition to the Railway Executive Committee. Although apparently superfluous, this Panel must have influenced the powers that be, for when the new Ministry was created it was required to establish advisory committees for all sectors of transport including one for Light Railways.

Stephens now wrote to Yorke on 20th September 1919

*"Sir Eric Geddes has asked the committee [of the Association] to nominate some persons with practical knowledge of location and administration of secondary railways and it is suggested that Mr C E Drewitt [sic] of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway and myself should be nominated to render any assistance that Sir Eric may require.*

*"Do you agree to this please?"*

*"It is as well that the Association should be in close touch with the Ministry of Transport without doubt as otherwise we stand but little chance of getting any inside information. The Railway Companies Association will give us none of course."*

Yorke must have by this time become Chairman of the Association for Stephens to address him thus.

Geddes stated in Parliament in May 1920 that the Light Railways Committee had been appointed in March (arrangements had been finalised in January) but had not met. In the meantime its members had been asked to inquire into the operation of Light Railways (see below). In practice all the transport Advisory Committees seem to have been little used and I have been unable to locate any records of a formal meeting of the Light Railways Advisory Committee. It was of itself however already virtually irrelevant because of other moves behind the scenes.

## Success

Geddes, who was noted for his authoritarian, pushy nature was probably becoming irritated by the gnat bites of special interest pleading for light railways. He cut the Gordian knot by deciding, probably in November 1919, to exclude Light railways from the re-organisation that we now know as The Grouping. His Director General of Traffic (a typical Geddes title this!), Sir Philip Nash, after wide consultation within the senior officers of the Department, wrote to Stephens:

*"There remains the question as to the organisation which will be necessary for the purposes of co-ordination of Light Railway systems, when or if a system of grouping the main railway companies is adopted as the solution of the railway problem at the end of two years. It is thought that in the event of the main line railways being grouped it will be found more convenient to exclude light railway undertakings from such groups, particularly in regard to ownership, although possibly for operation the group railway may conveniently undertake the same in certain instances. Under such conditions of exclusions it will be necessary for light railway interests as a whole to be co-ordinated, and the Light Railway Advisory Committee, which is now suggested, could then be enlarged to include all such Light Railway undertakings as are not covered by the main line groups.*

*"If the suggestions now made in regard to the formation of a Light Railway Advisory Committee to represent such Light Railway undertakings as are not now represented in the Railway Clearing House, appear to you as a suitable proposition, I would suggest that you should get to work and formulate definite proposals to that end to be placed before the Minister."*

The decision to exclude Light Railways was formalised when a clumsily titled and poorly written, but concise, 4 page Government White Paper came out in June 1920. Entitled *'Outline of proposals as to the future organisation of transport undertakings in Great Britain and their relation to the state'* it set out the proposals for future groupings of the main line railways. It stated

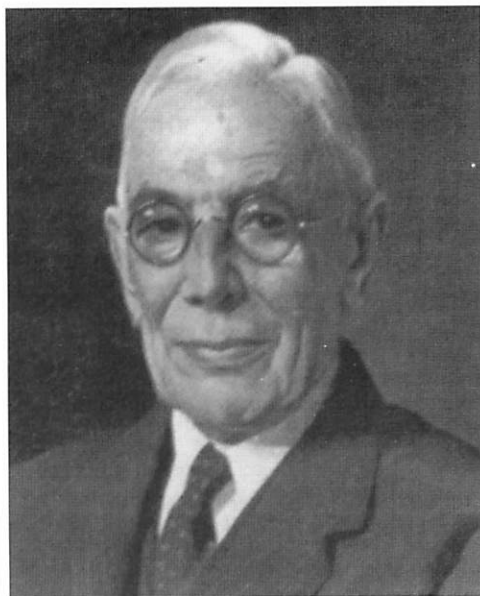
*"In each case the new group would absorb any independent broad [i.e. Standard -ed] gauge lines within its area, but railways which may be classified as 'light', whether existing or future, will be wholly excluded from this grouping arrangement..."*

*"... It is proposed to exclude Light Railways from the grouping arrangements. Light Railways must rely largely for their prosperity and development upon the goodwill and assistance of the main line companies... It is essential [however] that they should have no grounds for fearing competition from [Light Railway Companies]. It should therefore be provided that if the Light Railway is changing character and is in fact becoming an ordinary railway or is competing for main line traffic, the group company may absorb the Light Railway on fair terms..."*

*"The construction and management of Light Railways ... should be in the hands of separate undertakings... The policy of grouping Light Railway systems so far as possible as a means of securing economy in management, maintenance, repairs etc is considered wise and experience has already shown that this can be done successfully."*

This must have been music to Stephens' ears and the last sentence icing on the cake – direct praise for Stephens' methods that he might have written himself.

Geddes was clearly closely engaged in writing this most personal White Paper and the direct reference strongly suggests that Stephens had been bending exalted ears. Stephens had certainly made friends in the Department itself. General Sir Philip Nash,



Yorke – a well connected city man and director of the Westminster Bank

the Director General of Traffic, was close enough to Stephens to send him a note of thanks for the pot of cream he had sent him! Of long term practical value, working directly with the Director of Finance and Statistics, Sir George Beharrell - a long term associate of Geddes - was one John Pike, later to be a director and chairman of several Stephens lines

### **Setback**

Unfortunately, soon after this victory, Stephens suffered a setback for his Association and his desire for a world filled with independent small railways. The crushing financial power of the big companies was beginning to be felt. Those small railways who were already worked by the bigger companies or who were financially weak saw a way out of their management and financial problems. These companies did not share Stephens' enthusiasm for independence and foresaw that their future was to be absorbed by the Groups. By July 1920 several of these railways had formed what was effectively a breakaway 'Association of Smaller Railways'. This was led by the likes of Sir Sam Fay of the Freshwater, Yarmouth & Newport (and still GM of the Great Central and just out of a very senior War Office job) and Sidney Herbert of the Stratford on Avon and Midland Junction Railway, a noted financier who profited by turning round share prices of minor railways. (4)

The new association focussed aggressively on financial matters in the run up to Grouping and met Geddes on several occasions. Stephens, with huge magnanimity, not to say generosity, suggested to the Exeter Railway that its best interest now lay with the new Association. It must have come very hard for Stephens after fighting the independent corner so successfully. Yorke and the Exeter Railway faded out of Stephens' purview although they had before them a stiff and influential fight with the GWR before being absorbed.

Geddes had been clear about the need to exclude light railways that he considered as irrelevant to his wider purpose but there was still infighting in the industry and his officials had difficulty sorting out the sheep and goats amongst minor railways. What was the definition of an independent light railway? As late as January 1921 the

Ministry's Traffic Department was trying to draw up categories and in frustration was suggesting that most should be included in the groups, or, in extremis, be operated as Light Railways Group. Behind the scenes though each railway seemed to be finding its own salvation. For instance the prosperous Burry Port & Gwendreath Valley Railway, that Stephens had so successfully reconstructed, was told by the Ministry of Transport that it could remain independent but the GWR's terms were too tempting. This confusion persisted in the first draft of subsequent legislation.

Strangely a member of the founding group of the 'Smaller Railways', the Festiniog, ultimately remained ungrouped, whereas Stephens' close ally, the Lynton and Barnstable, became part of the Southern after some behind the scenes deals with the London & South Western Railway management. But that, as they say, is another tale. The new grouped companies subsequently absorbed most of this breakaway Association's members so it had a short life and was last recorded in 1922.

### **Looking to the Future**

Stephens' Association had already achieved, in public, its primary objective and despite the Ministry's internal qualms there was very little attempt by other interested parties to change the Government's mind and attempt to include light railways in the Groups. But there was still work to do. Stephens presented what was for him a long paper to Nash in the run up to the legislation, which was considered in depth. He now concentrated on more detailed financial questions like compensation for the period of Government control. It seems he and the rival Association together may well have been influential in securing what was a relatively good deal for the independents. He was also concerned about charging powers in case it lessened light railways income (and gave evidence in person to a government panel), local authorities' powers to lend to small railways and the powers of large companies to take over independents. Jeremiah MacVeagh, who was an MP, spoke for the light railway case during both the Second Reading and Report Stage of the Railways Act 1921 that implemented the White Paper proposals

Elsewhere Stephens and his Association

continued to have influence on the new Ministry's thinking. As will be recalled the members of the Light Railway Advisory Committee were asked to serve on a new committee that came to be called the Light Railways (Investigation) Committee to review light railways and their legislation. They were an illustrious company with very senior Ministry people dominating the Committee. The Chairman, Sir Alexander Gibb, Director General of Civil Engineering and also head of one of the largest consulting engineers in the world; his deputy Mr Bradford Leslie previously an Indian railways engineer. Sir John Aspinall was the Ministry's Consulting Engineer and one of the few locomotive engineers to rise to be GM and Director of a major railway (the Lancashire and Yorkshire) who had a long-standing interest in light railways. V M Barrington Ward was the Director of Railway Operations Branch and was later knighted after being a senior officer with the LNER and on the Board of the British Transport Commission (British Railways). Col. J W Pringle was Chief Inspecting Officer of Railways and Col. J A S Gray was an assistant director. Stephens had with him Messrs Drewett, Grundy and A H Loring (Chairman, East Kent Railways). The final member was a Mr E W Oakley, whose position I do not know.

The Committee reviewed all the light railway companies in Great Britain and Ireland, and technical and financing aspects thereof, meeting regularly from April to July 1920. It is clear from correspondence that Stephens was central to the operations of the Committee. He advised in several areas and wanted Light Railways to be defined (always a hazardous exercise) as Railways of Local Interest (heavily influenced here by the French term 'Chemins de Fer Intérêt Local'), a term that would have stood the test of time. One of the findings of the Committee was that many light railways were often inefficiently run but weighted down by heavy construction costs.

Unfortunately matters conspired against the effectiveness of the Committee. The Ministry was under heavy fire for being overbearing and officious and Geddes was to leave the political scene after the passing of the Railways Act. As we have seen, the Groups swept in many independents. The Irish independents went their own way to be grouped in the Great Southern Railways in 1925. Road transport was moving into the ascendant and 1922 was a catastrophic year for branch and light railways as traffic decamped to the roads. As Geddes had foreseen the days of light railway expansion, and even need, were done.

### Hollow Victory

In the whole Grouping saga Stephens had fought hard and won a major battle but he had lost the war. The Groups were not going to let any new independent railways become established if they could help it. Most of Stephens' railways were either to fall under the influence of the Main Line companies or fail in the next twenty years. Even Stephens' great projects of the 1920's, the ND&CJLR, the Gower Peninsular Light, the Worcester and Broome, the Newport and Four Ashes and the Southern Heights, were all destined to be worked by those companies. At the very end of his life Stephens was forced by circumstances to try to negotiate with the GWR



*Pressing on despite the grouping. Arthur Neal M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to Ministry of Transport, cuts the first sod of the independently promoted Hallwill to Torrington line on 30th June 1922, whilst Col Stephens looks on.*

and LMS to jointly or separately work the Festiniog and Welsh Highland railways (5). A complete reversal of the position taken 10 years before. Independence certainly had a price.

### **The Aftermath and Decline**

Stephens Association still had life in it. Entries in the Railways Year Book commenced in 1921 when its influence was at its peak. According to the Year Book entries it "*... was formed in 1912 in the interests of the smaller railway companies not party to the Railway Companies Association, with the object of co-ordinating action and realising mutual support in the event of the nationalisation of railways. Also in regard to combined representation to the main line companies, schemes of combined insurance, standardisation of stores etc. In 1914 it was decided to extend the functions of the Association to include questions that had arisen during the period of Government control and with the cessation thereof, so far as the controlled undertakings represented in the membership of the association were concerned.*"

Stephens seems to have been elaborating for effect; if the Association existed in 1912 it was only in his own head.

In 1921 its Officers were listed as Chairman: A.H.Loring; Council: C.E.Drewett, W.T.D.Grundy, Lt Col H.F.Stephens, Hon Secretary R.Ullmer Address: 12 St Helens Place, Bishopsgate, London. The secretary later moved to 16, Devonshire Square E.C.2 situated in an unfashionable part of the city off 'Petticoat Lane'. This personnel was largely unchanged till 1927 and even though the Lynton & Barnstable had lost its independence Drewett continued to serve in a personal capacity. Then H Montague Bates and Jeremiah MacVeagh, Stephen's close associates, took over, as the council members and A Chick became secretary. By this time it was very much Stephen's personal committee although 20 railways were claimed as members. In 1929 the ever interested Grundy came back, Stephens had finally taken the Chair and renamed the group with his now favoured title 'The Association of Railways of Local Interest'. Over the next few years death took its harvest, and membership and the Secretariat then circulated amongst Stephen's friends, heirs and employees.

Meaningful work was still being undertaken. We can see from surviving records that Stephens still had good relations with the Ministry with his projects and concerns. The last papers I have so far been able to trace that show active lobbying are from 1928 in connection with the Railways (Road Transport) Bill. There was probably a lot more activity but the papers now seem lost.

After Stephens' death it seems clear that the Association petered out. Austen had great problems sorting out Stephens affairs and many of his close associates died. The need for the smaller railways to consult together was also perhaps not so apparent in the early thirties as they struggled with the Depression, road completion and subsequent receivership or closure. The last Yearbook entry was for the 1933/34 edition issued in July 1933.

### **Phoenix Rising**

However this was not to be the end of the local railways co-operation. The road threat to the railways continued to increase, they were fighting the 'Fair Deal' campaign against road transport and there was further talk in the air of nationalisation. Stephens' ideas of collective support regained its force and in October 1938 a meeting led to the formation (some may say reformation) of an Association of Minor Railway Companies. It seems the moving force in this was that stalwart of the earlier Stephens association the Derwent Valley Light Railway, and in particular it's General Manager and later Chairman, S J Reading. It had largely the same membership as the earlier organisation (6). The new body met as occasion demanded, with a lot of work behind the schemes by officers, till around 1952.

The Association now became virtually moribund but remained in the custodianship of the DVR. However the need to group together for mutual support in the face of Government was still potent and with the rise of a new group of railways, what we now know as Heritage Railways, its time had come again. In 1970 Allan Garraway, of the Festiniog Railway, set about reviving the organisation with the help of Derwent Valley officers. Becoming the Association of Independent railways in 1988 it later merged with the Association of Railway Preservation Societies to become



today's Heritage Railways Association – a name familiar to us all.

May we therefore claim that Colonel Stephens was not only the primary architect of small railway independence after 1923 but also Godfather of today's Heritage Railway Association?

#### **Notes to text**

(1) The company chairmen were from the North Wales Narrow Gauge; Weston Clevedon & Portishead; Listowel & Ballybunion. ; Lynton & Barnstable; Wirral; East Kent; Kent & East Sussex; Tralee & Dingle; Southwold; Shropshire & Montgomeryshire; West Somerset Mineral; and Exeter. The Cleobury Mortimer & Ditton Priors Chairman seems to have dropped out at a late stage

(2) Eric Campbell Geddes had been a distinguished railwayman, deputy GM of the North Eastern Railway and the Director General of Transport in the latter half of the Great War, First Lord of the Admiralty.

(3) This would have been Clause 4 of the Ministry of Transport Bill that would have authorised the Minister to acquire railways by a simple Order in Council rather than after parliamentary scrutiny. It was dropped after stern opposition at Second Reading.

(4) Other founding members seem to have been the Isle of Wight Central; Sheffield District; Mold and Denbigh; Festiniog; Didcot Newbury and Southampton; South Yorkshire Junction; Harborne; Breton and Merthyr; and East and West Yorkshire Union. The Secretary was H A Saunders. Later members included Cannock Chase & Wolverhampton; Mansfield; Mawdday; Liskeard & Looe; Forth Bridge; North Lindsey; North Sunderland; and the Wirral

(5) The Welsh Highland was such a drain on the Receiver's (Stephens) resources that in April 1930 he told the principal creditors, the local councils and the Ministry of Transport, that he could not carry on. The councils approached the LMS and the GWR individually to take over and were turned down flat. The MOT then applied pressure and in February 1931 the LMS and the GWR agreed to work the railways jointly provided that the interested parties guaranteed working losses. They did not take up the offer and the railways struggled on with a different receiver after Stephens's death.

(6) Its membership in 1938 comprised the remaining Stephens Railways; Festiniog; North

Sunderland; Nottingham Colwick Estates; South Shields Marsden and Whitburn; Stocksbridge; Cannock Chase and Wolverhampton; Barrington; Corringham; Easingwold and Derwent Valley, Swansea and Mumbles, and the Romney. By 1954 only the last seven plus the Felixstowe Dock and the moribund Snailbeach District remained.

#### **Sources and Acknowledgements**

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Allan Garraway  
Philip Shaw  
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**Published 16 July**

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