



JOURNAL OF THE  
KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY



# Tenterden Terrier

Summer 2024

Number 154



**50th Anniversary Photo Gallery**  
**Britannia at Robertsbridge Turntable Inauguration**  
**CFBS Twinning Visit**  
**Strategy to 2024**  
**Robertsbridge – Our Original Junction**

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FRONT COVER

*Southern No.2678 with  
K&ESR No.15 Hastings at  
Tenterden Town on 1st June.  
(Neil Instrall)*

JOURNAL OF THE KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY



*Mogul super power: 4MT No.76017 and U Class No.31806  
at Wittersham Road on 2nd June.*

*(John Wickham)*

# Tenterden Terrier

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# Editorial

## Four Days to Remember

We make no apology that this editorial has the same title as the photo feature beginning on page 23. The Kent & East Sussex Railway has held some memorable gala events over the decades but this year the four days 31st May to 3rd June were outstanding. The railway certainly celebrated the 50th anniversary of the official reopening on 1st June 1974 in style.

*Britannia* arrived at Robertsbridge on Friday 31st and crossed the boundary onto the tracks of the Rother Valley Railway – something that was beyond the wildest dreams of relatively recent times, let alone those of the K&ESR's heritage pioneers of 63 years ago. The same day saw the K&ESR and the RVR sign a Memorandum of

Understanding that made the railways one, and looked to the future. By way of contrast, Saturday 1st at Tenterden Town was a time for looking back and a recreation of the 1974 reopening ceremony. Following a VIP Special for volunteers of the 1961–74 era (your Editor was among those invited) Saturday's and Sunday's service trains featured locos of the home fleet plus two visiting Mogul 2-6-0s. Once at Bodiam passengers were able to travel by classic bus to Robertsbridge for a shuttle service on the line between the junction station and Northbridge Street. To round things off, U Class No.31086 operated a photographic charter on Monday 3rd June.

All the above had the feel of the K&ESR achieving another stage in its maturity as one of Britain's premier heritage railways. It was a foretaste of times to come – times we can look to with cautious but growing confidence.

*Nick Pallant*



*1st June 1974: Bill Deedes launches the reborn K&ESR.*

*(John May)*

## FROM THE CHAIR

Fifty years – half a century – is a long time. It's nearly twice as long as a railway entrepreneur called Holman Stephens owned and managed a small light railway on the border between Kent and East Sussex. It's a longer period than that railway existed as an independent entity. And it's very nearly as long as that railway carried commercial passenger traffic.

Yet it is the amazing length of time that we have been welcoming fare-paying visitors, and continually evolving as we have been doing so.

Considered from this perspective, the current railway is not just a preserved continuation of the old one, it's a living entity in its own right.

Others have written in detail about the events and milestones of the past 50 years. They've done it far better than I could, and I won't attempt to follow them here. But I would like to pause and pay tribute to all those who have made the Kent & East Sussex Railway the successful, innovative and welcoming family that it is today. Our founding fathers; my predecessors in the



*Mike Hart (left), Simon Marsh (centre) and Gardner Crawley signing the Memorandum of Understanding between the K&ESR and the RVR at Robertsbridge station on 31st May.*

*(Robin White)*

Chairman's seat; the visionaries; the grafters; all our people, paid and volunteer; and our supporters and friends. Many are sadly now with us in spirit only. Without you we wouldn't have weathered the storms, and we certainly wouldn't have developed to the extent we have. Yes, there have been the inevitable disagreements; but, when the chips were down, we have always pulled together for the common good. Thank you, one and all.

We now need to plan for the next 50 years.

No-one owes us – nor for that matter any other heritage railway – a living, and we have no absolute right to exist. For all kinds of reasons the external environment is far more challenging than it was in the 1970s and subsequent years, and those challenges will almost certainly increase, possibly quickly and always unpredictably.

Despite all the upbeat stories in the magazines, and we have rightly been contributing our fair share, the underlying fact is that the heritage railway sector is at serious risk of running out of steam. We shall all have to change to avoid that eventuality. The old ways will no longer cut it. Railways will need to get far better at pooling their skills and resources, some sacred cows will have to be slaughtered for the greater good, and we must always act in the knowledge that the paying customer of the 2020s and beyond, and indeed the volunteer, is a very different person from his or her forebears from the 20th century.

I am pleased to say that we are well placed to deal with all this. Yes, money is tight, and we can't take anything for granted, but unless there is a major contingency – as opposed to the less major ones which are happening all the time – we shall be OK, and hopefully more than that. We are in far better shape than many of our fellow railways up and down the country.

We now have in place detailed and real-time monitoring of our business performance, and the Board supports the General Manager and his team in devising and implementing the numerous adjustments that are necessary to ensure we keep going.

We are also busy working up the partnerships that we will need, including an important one with other railways in the south of England. The

development of a strategy to take us to 2030 and beyond is well advanced. Increasingly we are looking up and out rather than down and in, as has often been the case in the past.

That 2030 strategy will of course be heavily influenced by the extension to Robertsbridge. We shall need to ensure that we maximise the benefits and minimise the risks. But, in our 51st year, let us applaud the determination of our friends in the Rother Valley Railway who are demonstrating real progress on the ground. When that work is complete, the dreams of the original preservationists will have been fulfilled,

albeit in a way and in a world few of them could have imagined.

I accept that some of the above might sound a bit gloomy amongst our anniversary celebrations, but actually it's a new set of challenges to which we are already responding. We shall continue to do so.

In the meantime, when we can pause for breath, let's enjoy the summer and the sights and sounds of vintage steam trains in Kent and East Sussex.

*Simon Marsh*  
Chairman

## MOTIVE POWER

### Rolvenden MPD

They say a week is a long time in politics. So, too, is it in reporting for the *Terrier*. No sooner had the last Rolvenden report gone to press, confirming that *Knowle* was waiting for funding for repairs, than she was in the shed, up in the air, with her wheels out! What followed has been a Herculean effort by all at Rolvenden, both staff and volunteer, to get *Knowle* turned out for the anniversary gala weekend at the start of June. We are delighted to be able to report that repairs to axle boxes, horns, bearings, rods, journals and just about everything else were completed in time, and *Knowle* was on the front of the train for those who were present in 1974. Our thanks to all involved in making this happen.

Another engine that nearly missed the big party was **76017**, as a problem had been found with the regulator assembly. The repair took considerable time – it was described by Richard Moffatt as three days of sanding alone – but 76017 also took its place at the gala.

*Hastings* is another loco that has been undergoing adjustments lately. New lubrication feeds to the cylinders have been installed, together with a new mechanical lubricator, along with modifications to the vacuum brake system to avoid issues with water. *Hastings* returned to service in the middle of May, and has performed well since.

Austerities *Swiftsure* and *Northiam* were the mainstays of the service in the early part of the season, and have continued to prove reliable, with only minor stops for running repairs. Regrettably there is still no news about the timetable for repairs to *Bodiam/Poplar*, though

if what happened with *Knowle* is anything to go by, by the time this has gone to print, we might expect that to change!

We are pleased to report that Andrew Hardy, and his company Rapido Trains, have purchased *Marcia*, securing her future on the K&ESR.

Steam engines were put aside for one weekend in April, when we ran our first diesel gala for more than ten years. Class 20 **20087** and class 14 **D9504** performed duties together with Class 37 **37714** from the Great Central Railway, and sole surviving Class 17 **D8658**, normally based at the Severn Valley Railway. Surprise of the show, though (if a home engine could be called a surprise) was our own Class 03, **D2203**. Having looked very tired lately, the 03 underwent a 'blitzkrieg' paint job, led by Jack Marlow and Matthew Webb, with assistance from George Harman and Brian Webb amongst others. Well done all of you for turning out an engine we could really be proud of.

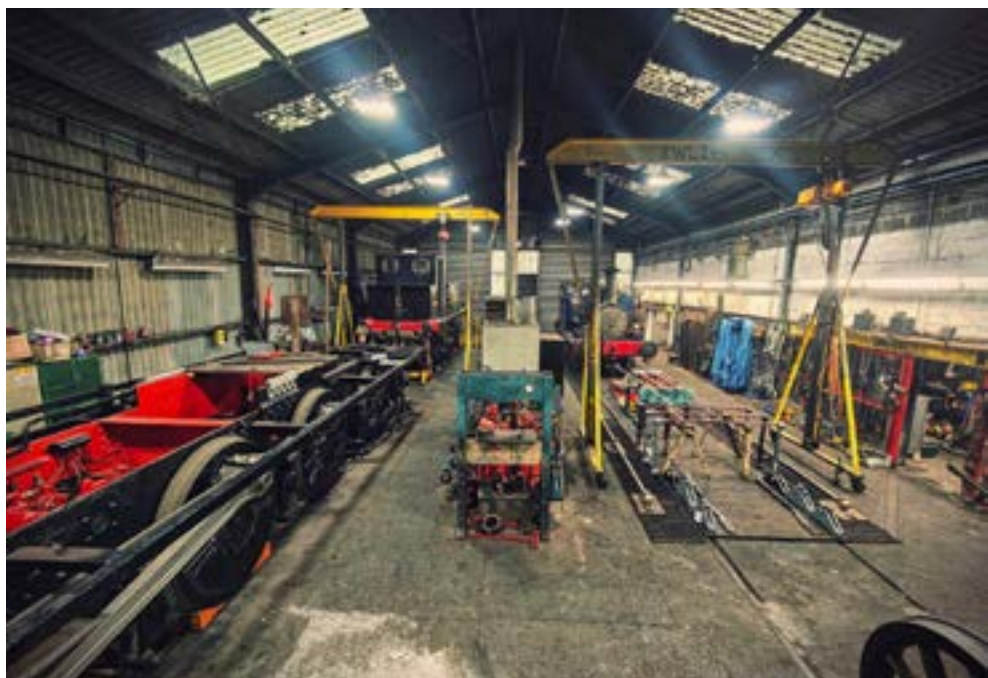
A special event took place on Saturday 6th April. Class 14 **D9504** was named *Jon Grimwood* in a fitting tribute to a much-missed member of our railway family. Members of the Grimwood family were present for the naming, and a special train ran, hauled by D9504. Unfortunately the loco decided to throw a spanner in the works and failed during the trip. The train was rescued by the steam engine that had also been in service that day. Happily the problem turned out to be nothing more serious than a loose electrical connection.

We will be taking delivery of another engine in July. The railway is hiring in **08359**, owned by



*The Grimwood family with the newly named Class 14.*

*(Robin Coombes)*



*The newly tidied Rolvenden shed. 4253 is to the left, while Knowle is in the centre, with Hastings to the right.*

*(Liam Head)*

Mark and Christopher Stuchbury. This loco has been on hire at the Bodmin & Wenford Railway recently, and will come to us via servicing, performed by Martyn Normanton at the Avon Valley Railway. We look forward to having 08359 with us, as 08s have proved themselves in the past to be capable of any shunting we need to do and, as some will remember, D3174 was even used on a Sunday lunch train! We thank the Stuchburys for agreeing to bring the engine to the K&ESR.

Lastly, a superhuman effort has been made in and around Rolvenden shed to remove all the clutter and scrap that had built up. Visitors to the shed during the gala were able to move around without risking significant harm to life or limb. It has been a great effort by all involved, and it would be wonderful if it could stay like that. Please think before you dump something in the shed!

### **4253 Locomotive Company** – *Kelvin Williams*

As mentioned in the last report, 4253's brake cylinder had to be replaced. The new one arrived on Friday 24th May, and on Sunday 26th it was reassembled ready for testing and installation into 4253. A full test of the vacuum brake system



*The tubing of 4253's boiler nears completion at HBSS. (via HBSS)*

will then be carried out. If all goes well the bunker will be re-fitted to the frame.

The boiler is still being worked on at HBSS, with all the tubes now installed. The hydraulic test is scheduled to take place in June, and when it passes the boiler will be returning to Rolvenden. In the meantime we have been preparing various other components as well as all the crinoline strips and cladding sheets ready for cladding the boiler.

In addition to the above we have been commissioned to build a tender tank for the Maunsell Locomotive Society based at the Bluebell Railway. The tender is for their engine 30541, a Q Class 0-6-0. The money being paid to our group for this new build will be a much-needed injection of funds towards the completion of 4253. It is fortunate that we have a large group of volunteers, which allows us to not only prepare 4253, but also to do this additional work.

Our situation also allows us, when called upon by the shed staff at Rolvenden, to assist in their work. Recently we helped with the work being carried out on Terrier 2678, and helped them in relocating two water tanks to a new location as part of a general tidy-up of the yard.

### **GWR Railcar W20W – Chris Mileman/ Neil Edwards**

Sadly there is very little progress to report this time as the railcar was transferred to the Carriage Storage Shed at Rolvenden on March 8th and, apart from sorting out and cataloguing the cases of remaining components, the team have been assisting with other projects in Carriage & Wagon in the meantime. However, having missed an opportunity on May 21st due to a shortage of crew, we are delighted to report that W20W returned to C&W at Tenterden on Wednesday May 29th.

Since the last Terrier and its departure, the team had made good progress:

- The Headcorn-end controller has been permanently fitted, with its associated foot throttle bar installed and connected and the controller wiring loomed in and connected for final testing.
- The luggage compartment panelling's countersunk screw holes have been filled, rubbed down and primed in preparation for final painting.
- The ceiling centre trunking has been painted to match the ceiling sheet material.



*The Railcar arrives back at Tenterden.*

*(Neil Edwards)*

- Scotia trim fitting around the floor edge has commenced in the saloons.
- The redundant heater water tank cabinet in the luggage compartment has been re-installed. The internals have been redesigned to accommodate catering utensils etc. for future 'jollies' when back in service.
- The pressure vessel inspector has undertaken a thickness and hydraulic pressure test on both air reservoir cylinders. This successful preliminary test resulted in the inspector being satisfied with their basic condition, enabling him to issue an approval for the next stage to proceed. The cylinders have been reunited with the vehicle so that a final, full air pressure test can be performed. Once this is satisfactorily passed and the cylinders formally certified, the initial live testing of the air-control systems will be performed.

The fault with the second dynamo has still to be fully diagnosed, although the fear is that it may be a winding issue. The vehicle is able to correctly operate on one dynamo but would lack any redundancy, which the design allows for. An

ex-lorry dynamo may fit the bill if all else fails.

We chose not to proceed with the curtains as the chosen material was expensive and there was no certainty that the pattern was ideal. With the pressure off, the search for a suitable material will continue.

A new metalwork contractor has been identified and a start date will be agreed once a work plan has been agreed with Alan Brice. This work will commence at the Rolvenden-end and once completed will give the team the opportunity to complete the small saloon while metalwork proceeds at the Headcorn end. Similarly the date for the railcar lift will have to be planned in with other C&W demands and resource availability. Both jobs are on the critical path.

The photo shows W20W back in Tenterden on May 29th, about to be shunted back into the shed. It would be lovely to think that next time it sees daylight it will be under its own power.

As ever, any assistance for the final push would be welcome. Just get in touch.

## ROLLING STOCK

### **Carriage & Wagon – David Brailsford**

**Mk1 Kitchen Car 69 Diana:** The department's major focus is on this vehicle, with much to do both externally and internally. More areas of corrosion have been found in the coach ends and this is being dealt with as quickly as we can, but it has meant that the gangways have had to be removed to allow work to take place. The

Headcorn end buffer beam plate has had to be renewed due to corrosion underneath. As the vehicle will be fitted with different windows, held in by rubber surrounds, new radiused top sections have been welded in. New wooden window sills have been made and await fitting.

The steam heat radiators have been re-installed, and the covers are being put back. The fitting of



wooden wall panels and supports is required to finish this job correctly. Sections of the passenger compartment ceiling have been fitted and the lamps can now be fitted into their supports, installed by the GWR Railcar gang, once the holes have been cut. The roof is being painted, but this is not straightforward, due to all the vents and fan cowls over the kitchen. The toilet compartment is being transformed into a cupboard. Recently Diana was moved further up the shed to allow the Railcar to return from the Carriage Storage Shed at Rolvenden for another period of work.

**Mk1 Brake 73** has received a new luggage door frame following the collapse of the old one. It is hoped that this coach will receive some new wheelsets during the summer as the current ones require turning due to flange wear. To facilitate the change staff have been preparing four wheelsets that were acquired from the East Kent Railway a few years ago.

**Mk1 TSO 68** has had an 18-month exam carried out, and the opportunity was taken to repair a section of guttering that was coming away from the roof. A broken door frame was also replaced.

**Pullman Car Theodora** has also received an 18-month exam, with attention to the bogie bolster blocks and installation of an overhauled vacuum cylinder.

Unfortunately staff have had to undertake a

fairly intense session of overhauling and cleaning vacuum cylinders on some of our Victorian coaches, after water and corrosion were found in the cylinders on the **Metropolitan** coach, the **Woolwich** coach, the **Family Saloon** and **SECR 2947**. Some of the work had to be carried out without access to a pit, which led to a bit of head scratching. The District coach and the GER six-wheeler remain to be done, but they will have to wait until resources are available. The culprit locomotive has been identified and measures have been taken to stop the problem happening again. The Family saloon has also had some work done on the bogie bolster blocks.

Our Friends from the Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme came over to help us with a number of tasks over the weekend of 19th/20th April. Work in the carriage shed was centred around the **Ling** wagon and the 'Frimtrol', and preparing wheelsets for a changeover. Great progress was made thanks to everybody's efforts. We managed to outshop the 'Frimtrol' with new floorboards in less than a week! Thank you to everyone who assisted with this weekend; a great time was had by all involved.

Sadly we have to report that Julian Coppins has not been well recently. He is out of hospital and currently recuperating at home. We all sincerely hope that Julian will soon recover and return to once again amaze us with his skills and storytelling.



*The 'Frimtrol' with newly installed deck boards.*

*(David Brailsford)*

# OPERATING

## Signalling – Tony Ramsey

The calendar year began with our traditional post-Christmas lunch in the Tenterden Town Buffet, when we also made presentations to Clive Norman and Richard Smith to mark their retirement as Signalling Inspector and Roster Clerk respectively. Clive opted for a new stereo system while Richard chose a crate of fine wines. We extend our thanks to Sean Webb and his colleagues for serving an excellent meal.

In March our planned annual departmental meeting had to be hastily rearranged when we discovered the railway wanted to run trains on the original date! In the event we held a joint meeting with the Guards' Department, which was enhanced by Joel Pearson's excellent training video on 'Stop and Examine' (now available via HOPS).

The operating season then commenced with the arrival of the Easter school holidays, presenting us with a busy schedule of turns to be covered, followed by an even busier schedule for the

hugely successful diesel gala. Thank you to everyone who helped.

We are pleased once again to record several successful passing-out turns: Rolf Habing, Matt Saunders and David Taylor (Cranbrook Road); James Lloyd (Rolvenden gates); Adam Rose (Northiam gates); Martyn Butler and Lesley Lee (Northiam box). Congratulations to you all.

Twelve years ago the Signalling Inspectors proposed a major revision to the Rules, Regulations and Instructions (RRIs), which led to the formation of the RRWG (Railway Rules Working Group). In April this year the Group held its 80th meeting. Meetings these days are less frequent than in 2012 because there are fewer changes to the RRIs to consider.

This is indicative of just how much progress has been made over the past 12 years in ensuring that our RRIs are of the highest quality regarding their technical content and presentation. The Group was pleased to hear that the K&ESR RRIs have recently been



*Night time at Tenterden.*

*(Robin White)*



*Crews on the Class 17 at the diesel gala.*

*(Caroline Warne)*

adopted by the North Yorkshire Moors Railway as the basis for their own RRI's.

Finally, we are sorry to have to bid farewell to Margaret Leadbeater, who has decided to retire as a Tenterden Town Signaller, although happily she will continue to help on the Wealden Pullman. Thank you, Margaret, for all you have done during your time with us.

### **Guards Department – Pete Spratling**

I am sad to have to report that a long-serving volunteer, Peter Taylor, has passed away; he was 81. He joined the K&ESR in 1968, and served as a guard for many years, passing out in July 1999. Peter was a familiar face, especially covering many mid-week turns. He retired as a guard in 2018, but continued to volunteer and helped in the museum.

Thanks to everyone who helped with the diesel gala, and to the guards who gave up more than one day to help ensure the event went smoothly. Passenger numbers were good.

Another big thank you also to everyone who helped with the 50th anniversary gala, which again was well attended. I was there on the

Saturday, and it was the first time in many years that I had seen a queue over the level crossing!

I'm pleased to advise that John Frampton passed as passenger guard. Well done!

Chloe Cameron and Steve Holloway have completed the guard's training course and are progressing well. I would like to thank Colin Ingram and Patrick Favell for running the course, and for all the hard work involved in producing a new version, as the material has been updated.

I would like to thank the volunteer committee for their hard work in recruiting new members to the department. We are always looking for volunteers and anyone who would like to train as a guard.

### **Station Masters – Geoff Colvin**

This year has been one of real contrasts on the platforms. There have been days with just three services operating, when time has allowed frequent cups of tea and conversations. Sometimes the world, or at least the railway, has been put to rights. Others have meandered around matters trivial.



*Kai Bass on duty at Tenterden. (Geoff Colvin)*

I believe that it is sometimes underestimated how valuable these opportunities are for many of our number, the chance regardless of background and circumstances to be part of a community with shared aims, to have a sense of belonging, to add something to our lives and to contribute as well. The ‘men’s shed’ movement has gathered momentum in recent years, providing its members the chance to create, converse and connect. In many ways the railway may be viewed as a ten-and-a-half mile long shed, and one which is most definitely not just for men.

As well as conversation there have been opportunities to view the world, whether it be

Bodiam Castle bathed in spring sunshine or the great tits making their annual nest in the weighing machine at Northiam – half an hour easily spent watching parents rushing back and forth with grubs for their hungry brood. Then fledging, young birds making tentative flights, sometimes into the waiting room, and then gone. Will we see them again next year?

At the other end of the spectrum have been the galas and the Forties weekend, with everybody available pressed into action. No doubt there will be much other coverage of these so no need for me to go into detail. As always, the people on the platforms rose to the challenge. My thanks go to each and every member of the team.

Alongside this activity has been the day-to-day business of ensuring that we have the capacity to keep on doing the routine. Bodiam Crossing Keeper is a role that has been difficult to fill at times in the past; the result has frequently been that the Station Master has been required to undertake the task. This spring however has seen no fewer than five new keepers passed out: John Alexander, who has added this to his regular appearances at Northiam, and four newcomers – Dave Yates, Ian Sharp, Charles Stewart and Derek Wright. We welcome them all warmly and hope some will be persuaded in true K&ESR fashion to take on additional roles in the future.

It has been remarked that Station Masters tend to be men of a certain age with grey hair. There may be something to this – the average age at the moment is 72 – but it is not exclusively the case. I am delighted to welcome Kai Bass, who has qualified at Tenterden and helped to push the average age down a bit at the same time!

## COMMERCIAL

### **Booking Office – Peter Morgan**

‘Beware of what you ask for – you may actually get it’ is, I think, the wording of the old adage. My entry in a recent edition of the *Terrier* on the possibility of self-service ticketing in our booking offices had not long appeared, when it was pointed out to me that a certain major heritage railway in the north of England actually has such a ticket machine where customers can serve themselves – and that it is quite well used!

Recently I was informed that the confirmation e-mails sent to those who have prebooked their

tickets online now have a QR code at the top. I enquired further and was told that the mobile phones used by our travelling ticket inspectors (as part of their equipment to sell tickets by credit card) will soon have an additional app loaded that can also read the QR codes at the top of these pre-bookings. This will enable the railway’s computer database to know that pre-booked passengers who board at a station with a closed booking office have actually travelled on the train.

It will also be a way of ‘queue busting’ on busy days at stations such as Tenterden, as some of



*Dinosaurs visiting Wittersham Road.*

*(Robin Coombes)*

those pre-booked customers could be sent directly to the train to have their bookings ‘completed’ onboard by the ticket inspector. Our booking clerks can then dedicate themselves to taking new money from ‘walk-up’ customers. It is also hoped that, eventually, the ‘zappers’ in our busier booking office windows – already used to discover the amount of money available to be spent when gift cards are presented – can be used for this additional purpose, instead of having to ask for booking reference numbers (which people often have difficulty in finding amongst the tiny text of their mobile phones) or having to search through a list of names which may include 23 Smiths or Joneses!

How we are judged as a tourist attraction begins from the very moment our customers arrive on our premises. Having to join a line to obtain tickets from the booking office, when they have already booked their tickets on-line, is one of the biggest current frustrations of our passengers – which hopefully the development that I have described will do much to eliminate. Although we must maintain our vital image as a heritage railway, we must also do everything we can to improve the visitor experience, and technology can have a key role in this.

### ***TTIs – Murray Motley***

The Travelling Ticket Inspector cohort has had a lively year so far. It started off with a glance back at 2023 when we celebrated our achievements at our annual team meeting in March. It was good to welcome three new TTIs into the cohort, plus at that point we had a further four in training. Of those, Terry Kempton and Adam Holland have now passed their assessments and are out working trains – congratulations to them. We were able to proudly reflect that in 2023 our cohort of 24 trained volunteers managed to cover 97.2% of all booked passenger workings: this was a great achievement.

Then it was into three different weekends of fun, starting with the diesel gala – a very different clientele to usual, but all of them having a really good day out. The atmosphere was superb, if a little claggy at times! We enjoyed improving our knowledge of all things heavy oil, which allowed us to engage in some fascinating conversations with our enthusiastic public... not least of which was learning why some people lean out of the window of a train being pulled by their favourite diesel loco giving salutes and shouting “My Lords!” Enough said!

'May the Fourth' (be with you) was next. The day proved particularly interesting character-wise, as it was also the first of the Fox & Edwards 'Extinction Express' events. This meant we were checking Darth Vader's ticket alongside that of a Tyrannosaurus Rex (or at the least the good folk who had come to see him). As a devoted 'Trekkie' my instinct was to depart on the 10.20 to the Bodiad quadrant at Warp Factor 6, but apparently they don't do that in *Star Wars* and besides, the USS *Swiftsure* was running on impulse power only that day so it might not have worked...



*New platform staff in training.*

*(via Murray Motley)*

Scarcely a breath drawn and it was the Forties weekend. We had some amazing passengers on the trains in some superb outfits. A great compliment was unknowingly paid to us by passengers congratulating us on our 1940s style uniforms; laughs all round when we explained that they are what we always wear! The Walmington-on-Sea Home Guard platoon was on duty both days, and it turned out they had their own ticket stamp. One of us challenged Captain Mainwaring on this but got called a 'stupid boy', so he stepped back to let Sergeant Wilson sort it all out.

We have seen much television and film-related activity on the railway recently. This made me reflect that when we go out and about on the trains and stations we volunteers are all actors in

a ten-mile long theatre. There is often talk of modernising certain areas – for example should we have electronic tickets? But if we did that, how do we show younger passengers the theatre of the ticket inspection? If everything is done via a glowing screen, what chance do we have of striking up conversations about our wonderful railway? Building on this theme, in the next few months you'll hear about our plans to train ourselves as on-train guides, while creating a new post of Assistant TTI. More will follow; keep your eyes open if the ideas appeal.

Anyway, I've hogged the limelight enough now. I'd just like to conclude with a big thank you to all the people who have made, and continue to make, the various events happen, so we can all have such a wonderful stage upon which to act.



## An Apology

We managed to get the caption to the photo on page 32 of the Spring *Terrier* completely wrong! (Pullman Car item). The photographer was in fact André Freeman, and the interior components were from *Isle of Thanet*, not *Lydia*. Apologies have been offered to all concerned.

*The Pullman bathed in evening sun.*

*(Ian Scarlett)*

## Infrastructure – *Brian Richards*

### What's happening in Tenterden car park?

Over the past couple of years the car park has suffered from a number of bays being full of silt, making them unusable. The raised island timbers failing, and areas of stone being eroded by flowing surface water that didn't reach the drains, resulted in a generally messy car park.

The car park is now being upgraded, including:

- improving its appearance
- increasing the number of spaces
- marking out each bay
- new walking routes
- relocating lamp-posts
- a landscaped wild flower area
- improved drainage.



*The newly stripped Tenterden car park..*

*(Brian Richards)*

So far the old raised islands have been removed, as they were rotten and unsightly. The first of the lighting ducts has been installed, and a new drain installed to collect the spring water from the field. Keeping the car park open while the work is going on can be a bit of an issue, involving early morning starts to get things done before passengers arrive. The old sleepers from the islands are being used temporarily to mark out the parking areas.

### Buildings restoration

The restoration work on the Tenterden station buildings and signal box has been hampered by bad weather on Wednesdays, when the group works, but the new cladding for the booking office will be fitted in the next couple of weeks. The signal box has had a lot of rotten timber

removed and replaced. Thanks to a donation from the Tenterden Lions, we are now able to get the correct profile cladding for the signal box; this will be fitted in the next month or so.

## Permanent Way – *Paul Jessett*

It's been a very busy period for the P.Way department since the last report. Our big winter job was to relay the through road at Wittersham. This was still in wooden sleepers and had been the subject of much fettling over the past few months to keep it serviceable. The decision was made to relay using concrete sleepers but to retain the bullhead rail. As with any relay the stripping out is relatively straightforward and, with the signal wires disconnected, the entire track section was removed by the end of the first day. There then followed a couple of days of removing the wallow in the middle of the through road, and surveying and levelling to get it to the same profile as the platform road. The weather was not kind to us, but with a mountain of spent ballast repositioned, the sleepers and rails went back reasonably easily. The 05 tamper was then run in over the overhauled section. A big improvement to what was there before!

With the extension to Robertsbridge on the horizon, the department has started to do an extra day a week at Robertsbridge when there is stuff to get on with. With the turntable in position, the three-way point that will serve the engine shed and turntable was positioned, installed and connected to the turntable. The two engine shed roads will be completed when the shed and inspection pits are completed. The buffer stops were installed at the end of the headshunt, as well as on the turntable stub road. During a working session in early May we were visited by Michael Portillo and a film unit, for a forthcoming series on closed railways that is under development. He was, as always, very supportive of the railway preservation movement, and helped secure the final chair screw in the headshunt.

During a break in the wet weather in April an opportunity was taken to clear the debris that had built up around Newmill Bridge. With all the local flooding in this area thick layers of silt and floating debris had built up to a point where parts of the bridge were sitting wet. With the help of a fire pump to provide a high-pressure water supply, all the silt was washed from under



Michael Portillo with RVR and K&ESR members on the turntable at Robertsbridge.

(Paul Jessett)

the bridge and the metalwork cleared of debris. This enabled the structural engineer to carry out his annual inspections.

Some level crossing maintenance at Tenterden and Bodiam was completed during the period, with the fishplates that are buried in the road dug out and renewed. While at Bodiam we combined this task with escorting a road-rail lorry from 'Lankelma' out to Junction Road, to carry out some soil sampling in connection with the future extension.

The usual patrols were carried out as per our plan, with some additional checks being made prior to and following the Diesel Gala. We carried out two runs of the weedkilling train this spring and, at the request of RVR, continued on to Junction Road. Some slight modifications to our usual pattern of work have been made following a line survey by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

## Forestry & Conservation – Steve McMurdo

In this 50th anniversary year we start our report with a look back to the type of work the equivalent of today's F&C were undertaking around the time of the reopening. None of our

current team were yet volunteers, and the historical details have been obtained from the online *Tenterden Terrier* archive which includes a wealth of information from the past 50 years.

The Spring 1974 edition of the magazine advised readers that *“the seemingly interminable task of scrub clearance continues onwards towards Wittersham Road. Mark Yonge now has the project under his control and preparations are being made for extensive use of weedkiller.”*

Morale was clearly on the rise by the Summer 1974 issue: *“A chainsaw has been purchased and has been proved to be a very valuable tool in the rapid clearance of unwanted trees.”*

The optimism continued in the following issue: *“John Miller has been busy as acting manager of the Clearance Branch... they have made excellent progress in the jungle towards Wittersham Road.”*

By mid-1975, John Miller had become the official manager of the Clearance Department and in the Letters to the Editor section reassured an anxious correspondent that his department *“is well aware of the need for conservation and that we are not trying to create a bare and featureless railway”*.



Mr Miller went on to say “*We have been careful to leave as many trees as practicable which include oak, silver birch, hawthorn, willow and alder.*” To this very day those sentiments continue to be upheld by our 21st century Forestry & Conservation department.

Two final comments from early 1975 demonstrate the determination and ingenuity of those involved: “*Members of the Maidstone Group have successfully cut back bramble growth on Wittersham Bank with an electric hedge trimmer powered by a portable generator*” and, over an unspecified period but perhaps most impressive of all, a “*Hayter lawn mower mounted on the front of a flat trolley has battled its way through the jungle... between Wittersham Road and Bodiam.*”

Moving on to 2024 and our own present-day activities, the location for the planting of the ten large elms donated by Kent County Council was finally agreed to be alongside the Rolvenden Carriage Shed sidings, where they can be seen from passing trains and be readily accessible for ongoing monitoring and attention.

The size of the trees necessitated their movement to the site by telehandler and the use of a small excavator to dig sufficiently deep pits to plant them in. Unfortunately incessant rain produced a waterlogged site, resulting in a number of abandoned attempts at planting them; but the project was finally completed at the beginning of April. The Rolvenden elms appear to have settled in and we look forward to seeing them thrive over the years ahead.

Predictably the rain continued for weeks and this, combined with the warmer weather at the start of spring, caused rapid growth of greenery alongside the line. This necessitated an earlier start to the annual strimming and cutting back programme to maintain visibility of road, foot



*Tree planting at Rolvenden. (Sioux Thorn)*

and agricultural crossings, and of course signals. We also dealt with removal of undergrowth around and under signal cables, including the lengthy section from Wittersham Road up to and beyond the summit of the bank.

The lineside is finally drying out, and we expect to be returning to some of the harder-to-access locations to attend to various planned major projects.

## GROUPS AND ASSOCIATES

### Museum Notes – Philip Shaw

There have been some management changes in the Museum. Brian Janes has resigned as Curator for family reasons and Philip Shaw will act as Curator for the time being, pending the appointment of a successor. Bob Clifford has had to reduce his workload for health reasons. Robin Tait has taken over the museum attendant rostering, while Tom Burnham is assisting with the maintenance of the accession register. Brian

and Bob are fortunately still closely involved with museum affairs and Brian has masterminded brilliant upgrading of some of the showcases.

On the maintenance front, Peter Blakeman has continued to upgrade our lighting systems which are now almost entirely in LED format (which is essential to ensure the collection is free from fire risk). The four station lamps (Northiam, Hawkhurst, Brambledown Halt and Pontesbury) are now fully wired up and lit. Matt Stubbs



*A vision of things to come? Britannia passes Robertsbridge Cricket Club.*

*(Philip Noakes)*

continues to help with alterations – his carpentry skills are invaluable – and Bob Milford, our artefact restorer, is always on hand when new items arrive and need attention.

Visitor numbers towards the end of May were 4,900, well up on last year's figure of 3,800, and sales of donated books and models were buoyant.

We have acquired a number of new exhibits since our last report. These include Baldwin cast iron works plates from Ashover locomotive *Guy* (later transferred to Hummy), on long-term loan, and from Snailbeach locomotive No.3, purchased privately with a grant from the Colonel Stephens Society. This has enabled us to take off display the Ashover replica, mistakenly cast in brass and something of an irritation to those with a knowledge of the subject.

Two generous benefactors have purchased Burry Port & Gwendraeth Valley nameplate *Pioneer* and K&ESR nameplate *Tenterden* at auction and they are on display. The latter is in ex-loco condition, which makes it much more interesting purchased at auction an early Burry Port & Gwendraeth Valley train staff. Other acquisitions include O gauge K&ESR models from the collection of the late John Hooker, donated by his daughters, and a large scale model of a SE&CR 'F' class locomotive, made by the late Bob Fridd, for the Hawkhurst display.

Martin Smith's donation of his father's papers includes copies of directors meetings from the

Shropshire & Montgomeryshire and large-scale plans of Cranbrook and Hawkhurst stations. From the archives of the Colonel Stephens Society comes a manuscript of the Book of Reference for the Central Essex Light Railway, possibly the only surviving copy.

In furtherance of our desire to widen the interest in the museum, we set up a table at the coffee morning of the Tenterden & District Local History Society on 6th March.

Finally we welcome young James Matthews to our team, but we are still short of attendants to staff the museum. Please do get in touch if you would like to be included on the roster.

### **Gardening Group 1 – Carol Usher**

We started back in February and completely tidied all the gardens on site. We had to remove a few plants in the signal box garden so that repairs could be made to the signal box. We now have the lovely job of replacing them with smaller plants so that they are more manageable. One of our volunteers, John Wheller, kindly donated many plants that he had taken cuttings from in his own garden and grown on, so we will be planting some of these in the signal box garden.

Several of us have had health problems over the springtime but we are all back again, healthy and raring to go. We have planted all the pots and hanging baskets ready for the summer, and are

now waiting for them to fill the area with colour.

We have continued to keep the gardens tidy – a bit like the Forth Bridge, you get to the end and start again! As there are only four of us at the moment it is never ending; a very hard task but a battle we are winning.

A big problem that we came across was the 'topiary trains' that are on the lineside by the signal box: we found they were badly damaged by box tree moth caterpillars. After taking advice, we soaked them with a bug spray and, fingers crossed, it looks as if we might have saved them. We have decided not to trim them at this present time in the hope that new growth will come through. Watch this space for further news about the outcome.

We are always looking for more help. If anyone has a couple of hours spare on a Tuesday morning from 10am, please speak to someone in the office, who will pass your details to me.

We will continue to care for the gardens at Tenterden station and watch them spring into life for the summer months. The best job ever!

## Gardening Group 2 – *Veronica Hopker*

**Rolvenden:** The shrubs in the pots have managed very well through the winter months, with very

little help from visits from me. Unfortunately, mainly due to the very wet weather, I did not manage to stop at Rolvenden on my way to Northiam each week. However, the shrubs seem to have survived, despite the watering system shutting down. I intend to try and sort out the best way to keep things growing. If there is anyone working at Rolvenden who would like to keep an eye on the pots it will solve the situation. Please contact me if this is something you could help with.

**Northiam:** The Picnic Garden is looking very good at the moment, as the plants and shrubs are growing well and beginning to flower. Liz Brown, who looks after the garden, has now added annuals to all the tubs on the platform. We are now moving into the summer period when everything starts coming into bloom.

The Tuesday Group have given the hedge, which runs the length of the platform, a trim to keep it looking tidy. Liz and I have made a start on attempting to clear the weeds which have appeared under the hedge during the winter months.

Our large compost container in the car park is developing well.

Doug Ramsden of the Tuesday Group has planted up the window boxes on Cottage No.1,



76017 seen at Northiam, working its first turn on the K&ESR.

(Alan Crotty)

which always gives the cottage a 'lived-in' look.

The Memorial Garden is slowly undergoing a 'change' in that we are making it a wildlife-friendly area, in order to retain a quiet atmosphere for people visiting the area. The original seat which has been in the garden for many years in memory of the late Stan Kemp has, sadly, completely rotted away after so much wet weather. However the space has already been booked, and a new seat will be installed in due course.

The Wildlife Group have looked closely at the wildlife situation at Northiam and have made a few recommendations for us to take forward. The area is very wildlife friendly, so we now have to ensure that we maintain and, possibly, add to it by growing more wild flowers!

### **Bodiam – Malcolm Burgess**

There are times when the Bodiam team could be forgiven for thinking someone in charge of the weather has something against us. There can only have been two completely dry Tuesdays since the beginning of the year!

Life at very wet Bodiam in March might have been described as 'The Big Dig'. Making use of a mini digger hired for a short period, Brian 'Digger' Richards dug out around the old septic tank in front of the waiting room to properly connect the toilets to the new sewage system. He also took advantage of the hire to dig a couple of drainage trenches in the field, to try to reduce

the pooling of water in the camping coach parking area.

Meanwhile some of the Wednesday group tackled problems in the ladies' toilets, which required some extensive panel removal to get access to the cisterns. Then it was down to the Bodiam group to reinstate the ground, yard and toilets and make them presentable for the public in time for Easter!

On a more positive note, a short spell of warmer weather brought out a lovely display of daffodils and primroses, and arrived in time to string the hop poles ready for the emerging plants.

A rare Tuesday without much rain enabled us to complete the freshening up of the paintwork to the platform elevation of the station building. The remainder was tackled as and when weather and services permitted, and the majority has now been completed.

The emergence of fresh growth in and around the station lifted everyone's spirits, and the site is becoming increasingly colourful. The flower garden adjacent to the main entrance is now in full bloom and will no doubt attract the usual compliments.

Elsewhere, grass cutting has begun in earnest, the hops are growing well and the ravages of the new field drains have been made good. Work is still needed to the ladies' toilets to reinstate the décor, eliminate final leaks and replace defective taps.

The new concrete pad at the entrance to the



*Flowers on display at Bodiam.*

*(Malcolm Burgess)*

waiting room will need attention to provide a smooth surface, and preparations are being made for the installation of a new PA system to cover both the platform and the yard more effectively.

The entrance steps to the Cavell Van have been repainted and are now in position, while several of the blue and white direction signs around the station have been freshened up.

### **Tuesday Group – Graham Hopker**

As seems to be the norm these days, the weather – rain/drizzle – has had its effect on the Tuesday Group activities. As I write this, they tell me that summer is coming – hmmm!

Platforms 1 and 2 at Northiam have been white lined, and repairs to damaged coping stones were made on platform 2 with the help of a young work experience volunteer for one day.

Again, weather permitting, we are renovating all eight of the platform seats. Being left outside in

all weathers for the whole year, it does not take too long for the dreaded wood rot to set in!! The idea is that, once renovated, we will take them in off the platforms for the winter period (when trains are not running) and store them under tarpaulin.

The usual general maintenance around the station has been ongoing and a couple of rather large potholes in the road by the front entrance were repaired, together with replacing part of the plastic rain drain channel covering alongside the brick wall by the entrance road and station building. This had broken due to traffic over it, and has now been replaced with galvanised steel grating which should last much longer.

I would like to welcome a new member, Jeremy Nobbs, to the Tuesday Group. We also welcome Steve Dunn back to the group on a regular basis, as he has recently retired. Steve has worked with the group, when available, since the extension to Bodiam, in 2000.



*Repairing and repainting the platform edge at Northiam.*

*(Graham Hopker)*



*What happens when, as controller, you tell the driver to “Drop down the loop, and sit on the dummy,” and the driver in question is Matt Green!*  
(Sarah Tagart)

# Four Days to Remember: The 50th Anniversary Gala



*At 9.37am on Friday 31st May, No.70000 Britannia, which had arrived at Robertsbridge under its own power, backs its accompanying Mk.1s across the boundary and on to the Rother Valley Railway.*

*(Phil Edwards)*

*Later on 31st May, the dedication took place of the ex-Hither Green turntable at Robertsbridge.*

*Left to right: Mike Hart OBE, Chairman, Rother Valley Railway Ltd; John Smith, CEO, GB Railfreight; Andy Savage MBE, Chairman, Railway Heritage Trust; Lord Peter Henty of Richmond Hill and Imber, Chairman of Network Rail; Huw Merriman, former MP for Bexhill & Battle.*

*(Alan Crotty)*





*A further highlight of Friday 31st was the naming of GB Railfreight's electro-diesel No 73128 as Kent & East Sussex Railway. Taking part were Lord Henty; Huw Merriman; Steve White, Managing Director, Southeastern Railway; Allan C Baker, former rolling stock engineer; Chris Green, former BR Sector Director, London & South East; Geoff Mee, former Managing Director for Network South East's South East Division; Mike Hart; John Smith, CEO GB Railfreight; Derrick Bilsby, Director, CSRE.*

*(Phil Edwards)*



*On Saturday 1st June, K&ESR Chairman Simon Marsh greets everyone at the 50th anniversary of the official opening. The other three people in the picture were all present in June 1974; these were (left to right) Adrian Landi, driver of the rear engine (Bodiam); Mike Artlett, fireman on Sutton, and Graham Williams who was the guard.*

*(Alan Crotty)*





*K&ESR heritage era founders Tony Hocking (microphone) and Gardner Crawley recall the early days of the original Preservation Society and pay tribute to the outstanding work of the late Robin Doust in the 1960s. (Phil Edwards)*

*Ready for the smashing of the ceremonial champagne bottle: Simon Marsh, Tony Hocking and Gardner Crawley with Sarah Tagart, Chairman of the Volunteer Committee. (Alan Crotty)*





*VIP guests on 1st June: Pioneering volunteers from the 1961–74 era on the Kent & East Sussex Railway.  
(Caroline Warne)*

*Train crew for the VIP Special: Sarah Tagart (guard) on the loco with (left to right) Matt Fisher,  
Dan Dickson, Luis Castellion, Adrian Clark-Monks and Ed McNaughton.  
(Phil Edwards)*





*The VIP Special, hauled by No 32678 and K&ESR No 15 Hastings departs from Tenterden Town Station. The headboard is the original from 1974. (Phil Edwards)*

*The VIP Special at Haystacks en route to Northiam. From Northiam the VIPs were able to travel by service train to Bodiam and onwards to Robertsbridge by classic bus. (John Wickham)*





*On 1st June, visiting Standard 4MT 2-6-0 No.76017 makes a splendid and nostalgic sight at the head of a rake of green Mk.1s. (Phil Edwards)*

*Also on 1st June, the Swanage Railway's U Class No.31086 approaches Robvenden with the Vintage set. This locomotive is the last survivor of the conversions from the K Class 2-6-4 tank engines; in its original form it was named River Torridge. (Phil Edwards)*





*More familiar motive power: K&ESR No.25 Northiam at Wittersham Road on Sunday 2nd June.  
The headboard was carried during the visit of the late Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in June 1982.  
(John Wickham)*

*Britannia at the head of the Robertsbridge Junction–Northbridge Street shuttle, which was  
organised by the Rother Valley Railway.  
(Alan Crotty)*





*On the morning of Sunday 2nd, GBRf Class 73 No.73128 brings up the rear at Robertsbridge Junction Station. GBRf driver Taylor looks out before hauling another shuttle to Northbridge Street. (Alan Crotty)*

*As a postscript to an amazing Gala Weekend, No.31806 ran a photo charter on Monday 3rd June. (Phil Edwards)*



# KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY 300 CLUB PRIZE WINNERS

## January 2024

1st	Anthony Frost	No. 1077	£100
2nd	Bernard Epps	No. 514	£90
3rd	R Lukehurst	No. 100	£80
4th	Robert Cheesman	No. 850	£70
5th	L J Flisher	No. 614	£60
6th	Gerry Coombs	No. 219	£50
7th	Richard Crumpling	No. 872	£40
8th	Leslie Baker	No. 333	£30
9th	Nigel Thomas	No. 362	£20
10th	Graham Southon	No. 1289	£10

## March 2024

1st	Mike Blee	No. 974	£160
2nd	Colin Brown	No. 1362	£140
3rd	Tony Mighell	No. 111	£120
4th	Chris Wood	No. 717	£110
5th	Richard Seddon	No. 261	£100
6th	Peter Spooner	No. 1214	£90
7th	Margaret Remnant	No. 248	£80
8th	A J York	No. 1230	£70
9th	Miss S Stevens	No. 316	£60
10th	Mrs J Blee	No. 968	£50
11th	Roger Allin	No. 628	£40
12th	Steve Newman	No. 1310	£30
13th	Lynn Thorogood	No. 641	£20
14th	C Garman	No. 160	£10

## February 2024

1st	Geoffrey Crouch	No. 881	£100
2nd	Tony Hutchins	No. 394	£90
3rd	Martin Simmons	No. 888	£80
4th	Mr T I Palmer	No. 419	£70
5th	Susan Brackley	No. 755	£60
6th	A J York	No. 1229	£50
7th	Douglas Ramsden	No. 269	£40
8th	Mrs Doreen R Cave	No. 937	£30
9th	Mrs A P Crawford	No. 169	£20
10th	Pat Greenwood	No. 469	£10

## April 2024

1st	Peter Hubbard	No. 254	£100
2nd	Roger T Price	No. 1245	£90
3rd	Lionel Marchant	No. 1030	£80
4th	Roger Chaplin	No. 565	£70
5th	Richard Seddon	No. 540	£60
6th	Mr & Mrs J P Fry	No. 646	£50
7th	Paul B Harrison	No. 654	£40
8th	John B Wickham	No. 567	£30
9th	Paul Mineham	No. 827	£20
10th	Mrs Christine Rigby	No. 1091	£10

To join the 300 Club or for more information contact Chris Garman and Colin Avey at [kesr.300club@yahoo.com](mailto:kesr.300club@yahoo.com)



Also 'topping and tailing' at Robertsbridge, 66718 Peter, Lord Henty of Richmond Hill and Imber.

(Phil Edwards)

# Strategy to 2024

In the second half of 2019 the Trustees developed a five-year strategy running from November 2019 to October 2024. It was a blueprint for the development of the railway to set us on a firm footing for the next phase of our history, as we looked ahead to what was then the possibility of running trains to Robertsbridge. The Summer *Terrier* of 2021 carried a summary of the key points and now, as the five-year period comes to an end, it's appropriate to look back and reflect on what was achieved and what was not, with work now well under way on plans to 2030.

To recap, the railway's purpose is enshrined in our Articles:

*'To preserve, restore and operate any part or parts of the railway extending from Robertsbridge in Sussex to Tenterden in Kent as a permanent exhibition and museum for the advancement of technical, historical and general education and for the permanent preservation, display and demonstration of steam and other railway locomotives, rolling stock, equipment and relics of historical, operational and general interest and educational value.'*

Our strategy sets out how we approach achieving that purpose. We encapsulated our vision in the short statement:

*'To preserve our railway as living history – making memories that matter.'*

Of course, challenges immediately arose with the railway closed to visitors within six months of the start of the period due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Questions were raised at the time: Is the strategy still relevant? Does it need wholesale revision? The conclusion was that the approach was sound and while unprecedented external events would no doubt impact our ability to deliver some specific targets, the direction was still absolutely the right one.

We set out ten topics, each designed to deliver our vision and to delight our visitors. Here is a flavour of our progress in the period. Any achievements are down to the collective effort of everyone, employee or volunteer, who dedicates their time to ensure we can welcome the general public here.

**Structure and Governance** – *We will develop a business-led organisation with people at its core*

A dry subject perhaps, but good governance is critical to the success of any organisation, and especially one as complex as ours. The Board has worked with a clear remit to provide strategic direction and to both support and challenge the management team who operate the railway day-to-day.

A number of groups were established to drive forward specific areas of the strategy, ensuring both focus and additional resource to assist delivery. These include the Safety Review Committee, the Finance Committee and Review Group, the Fundraising Working Party, the Project Assessment Committee and the Environmental Sustainability Working Group. Thanks are due to the members who have come forward to play critical roles in chairing or participating in these groups. More about their specific achievements below.

Additionally we are well progressed with a root-and-branch review of Company Policies to ensure that they are up-to-date and fit for purpose.

**Safety** – *The safety of our people and our visitors will always be our top priority*

We committed to an open relationship with our regulator, the Office of Rail and Road, and to adopting a collaborative approach on safety matters with the Heritage Railway Association and other heritage lines. This we have done with Neil Sime, our Safety Director, taking up the chair of the HRA's Operations and Safety Committee and involved in the work to develop an industry-wide standards body.

We set ourselves specific targets in respect of our maturity against the ORR's Risk Management Maturity Model, and here our progress has been slower than we had wished. This was undoubtedly partly as a result of the need to focus on the wholly unexpected area of Covid safety for the first half of the strategy period. Together we managed the re-opening of the railway effectively, seeking to reflect the wide range of risk tolerances of both visitors and volunteers – from 'let's get back to normal' to 'infection wary'.





*Education at the core – Evacuation.*

*(Robin Coombes)*

To reach the next level of maturity we need to manage safety more consistently across all departments, rather than each area having distinct protocols. We have made some progress but there is much more to do.

**Commercial and Resources – We will enhance our services providing memorable visitor experiences**

After the disruption of the Covid period new offerings have been developed in a bid to attract a wider range of visitors. In fact, the need to achieve this goal became all the more urgent with a general decline in visitors experienced across tourist attractions nationally. While maintaining the high standards of our established events such as Santa Specials and the 1940s weekend, we have introduced Steampunk, Dinosaurs and even Star Wars! We have developed new partnerships such as that with Fox & Edwards, whose customer base and marketing expertise reaches beyond our traditional base. We have also held galas that appeal to the enthusiast community.

Partly accelerated by the need to carefully control Covid safety in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, our aim to achieve a significant increase in online bookings has been achieved.

This brings many benefits, including managing our resources to meet known demand.

Thanks to the support of the LEADER fund and the generosity of our members, a major milestone was achieved in bringing into service the new Pullman kitchen car, securing our flagship Pullman dining service for years to come. Two new Pullman cars have found a home at our railway.

Once kitchen car *Diana* is back in traffic, we will expand our 'A' set dining offer, and we are working on enhancing our marketing approach and further experiments such as bird-watching trains.

**Finance – We will generate funds for continuous investment**

The three major sources of income that underpinned our plan were (i) visitors, (ii) donors who support our special appeals and remember us in their will, and (iii) grant-givers.

The unexpected impacts of the pandemic and the subsequent cost-of-living crisis have threatened visitor income and driven up our own costs. Despite positive work developing the commercial offering, in common with many local attractions



*Education at the core – Poplar visits Poplar.*

*(Chris Davey)*

and heritage railways in general, our visitor numbers remain lower than pre-Covid. However the Fundraising Working Party have developed a much stronger capability in their area, with over £800,000 of grant funding received in the past four years. Members and friends have continued to support appeals, most recently including for the Great Western Railcar, Heritage Buildings and now the 50th Anniversary appeal for loco 1638.

Inevitably external events turned the focus onto survival. To develop a sustainable railway for the future and invest in all the projects we wish to deliver, we will need continued income from all three categories.

**People** – *We will expand, enable and equip our volunteer force*

The work of the Volunteering committee has brought many benefits. We have seen an unprecedented number of new volunteers in recent times, with a new online system introduced for potential recruits and regular taster days. Committee chair Sarah Tagart received a thoroughly deserved national award from the HRA for her work leading this area.

The committee undertakes regular surveys of volunteers to understand issues and inform priorities, and our recognition scheme has been

revamped with regular ‘thank you’ trains run for those reaching specific milestones and provision for special awards for those whose contribution has gone above and beyond.

The Board articulated the Values and Behaviours that are expected of our railway family, ensuring we can enjoy our time here in a supportive environment.

There are many pressures on the availability of volunteers. People are generally retiring later and inevitably some of us cannot continue in our roles as we get older. On the other hand, flexible working makes it easier for some people to give of their time. We are working to adapt to a changing world.

**Education and Skills** – *We will enhance our approach to education across all audiences*

The team at the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum have continued to develop their exhibits and provide a facility that enhances the visitor experience and is at the core of our educational purpose.

Our highly rated Evacuation Experience for schools has been expanded, now running in both May and September. Young Engineers days were introduced, featuring Chris Vine, and these have proved very popular.

We participated in an innovative partnership led by The Terrier Trust, along with the educational specialists Global Learning London, to take the loco *Poplar* to London and develop a National Curriculum-linked educational programme with local schools.

More than 1,000 people visited the loco on display at the DLR and in May 2024 a group of children from *Poplar* participated in our Evacuation Day. We aim to widen our connection with this inner-city community in the coming years.

**Infrastructure** – *We will prioritise infrastructure alongside rolling stock and visitor investments*

We have invested in our permanent way, with one of our most significant capital projects being the full replacement of the Northiam level crossing at a cost of over £90,000.

Additionally we have prioritised the care of the heritage buildings in our care. With the support of a grant from a charitable trust and the response to our appeal, work is well under way with the restoration of the Tenterden station building and signal box.

Significant upgrades have been made in our IT infrastructure, with most of our services now ‘in the cloud’. There is more to be done, however, to provide IT that is fit for the future.

**Heritage** – *We will value heritage as our unique selling point*

There have been both successes and setbacks in relation to our locomotive fleet. It was wonderful to see both *Knowle* and *Poplar* in action for our late Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. Regrettably soon afterwards *Knowle* was withdrawn from service and *Poplar* suffered a failure while at the Bluebell Railway. Thanks to the efforts of our Loco department, *Knowle* should be back by the time you read this and work is due to commence shortly on *Poplar* following an extended insurance claim.

Locos in our own fleet have not always lasted for their full ticket and so we have had to hire in engines to fulfil our customer offer. We look forward to the fulfilment of the vision of the 4253 Group and to the future return of loco 65.

Carriage & Wagon have turned out some superb renovations, including the Family Saloon and *Petros*, which is so important to our provision for wheelchair users.

We were able to secure grant funding from the Association of Industrial Archaeology to accelerate the return of the Great Western Railcar. Much work has taken place ahead of her return this year or next.

**Sustainability** – *We will operate with responsibility for our environment and community*

The Environmental Sustainability Working Group have taken great strides in helping us to operate the railway in harmony with the natural environment through which we run. Grant support has enabled us to understand the natural habitats that exist along the line and how we can encourage the natural diversity along our wildlife corridor. We are working collaboratively with local groups, something which builds advocacy in the community and demonstrates that we take our environmental responsibilities seriously.

The Forestry and Conservation Group have planted many trees, helping to offset the carbon we use. These include some disease-resistant elms as part of the reintroduction scheme following the ravages of Dutch Elm Disease.

**Robertsbridge** – *We will maximise the opportunities and manage the risks of extension*

We supported our friends at the Rother Valley Railway with the detailed work required for the Public Inquiry held into the extension, and share their delight at the government’s approval for the scheme. We have established close working relationships between our organisations with the construction phase now commencing and the finer detail of how the line will operate in the future now to be worked through.

In all our activities we have spent time deepening connections with the community, including links with local MPs and councillors. We have taken an active role in the heritage railway movement nationally, as witnessed by the visit of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Heritage Rail last summer.

As we now formulate the strategy to 2030 there is much to do, and we cannot rest on our laurels. We have ground to catch up in some areas and there will no doubt be new priorities to meet the demands of changing times. Look out for detail of the strategy for the coming period in a future edition of the *Terrier*.

David Nibloe, Trustee  
dnibloe@kesr.org.uk

# CFBS Twinning Visit

Over the weekend of April 20th/21st the K&ESR welcomed members from Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme (CFBS) for the latest twinning 'working weekend', further strengthening a partnership which has blossomed over the past 28 years. This was the first official visit from the CFBS since the passing of Michael Bunn, who had been leader of the Twinning Committee and a linchpin in the relationship between CFBS and the K&ESR. We hope that we did him proud.

For those who aren't familiar with CFBS, it is a predominantly metre gauge heritage railway on the coast of Northern France, operating each season between Le Crotoy and Saint-Valery Port via the SNCF mainline station Noyelles-sur-Mer. The line is operated using metre gauge locomotives and carriages, but it also features dual gauge tracks from Noyelles to Saint-Valery Port which enable standard gauge locomotives and carriages to operate. In addition there is a metre gauge branch from Saint-Valery Town to Cayeux, which operates on limited days each year; at other times you can cycle along this stretch on specially adapted rail buggies.

The weekend commenced informally on the Friday afternoon with the arrival of CFBS members in Tenterden. A social rendezvous with K&ESR members at the Old Dairy provided an opportunity to catch up and confirm the plans for the weekend ahead.

Saturday featured the main working event, with the majority of the group helping with projects in the Carriage & Wagon shed under the ever-helpful and watching eyes of Alan Brice and his team. Work was undertaken on the Ling wagon, which received its final top coat of black paint prior to lettering. The Frimtrol (Weltrol) underwent a significant transformation during the day, receiving a descaling prior to painting and re-boarding of the floored area.

CFBS members also took up roles in both Catering and Operating alongside the regular weekend workers. Turning first to Operating, Aurélien, one of CFBS's *Chefs de Train*, took control of the flags under supervision on the B set – something which they let me do when I visited Saint-Valery back in 2022. It was a great day showing Aurélien our railway and operating methods, not least the difference in scale! On the

Catering side, two CFBS volunteers took on the A set trolley, serving refreshments to our customers throughout the day. This proved to be quite an eye-opener for them as they only have one catering train, run by an external caterer.

After a hard day's graft, and a bit of a scrub-up, we were honoured to be able to host the CFBS group that evening on the Wealden Pullman, where they joined our regular guests including some visitors from Belgium – a truly international train. A big 'thank-you' to the Pullman team for their efforts, and to the engineering staff at Rolvenden for a rather hurried fix to the loco ashpan to enable the service to operate.

The CFBS puts a good deal of emphasis on bringing over volunteers who have never been to the K&ESR before so that they can inject new blood into the twinning arrangements. Sunday was an opportunity to show off the railway to our visitors, starting on the first train of the day and making the first stop at Rolvenden to view the workshop. Kelvin Williams was on hand to talk through all the progress being made on 4253, and on Terrier 32678 which was having work done to its motion. This was followed by a visit to the carriage storage shed, especially to see the newly acquired Pullman cars *Lydia* and *Isle of Thanet*. Although access was not possible, photographs of the cars' interiors made up for this; and there was a short talk on the plans for these important additions to the Wealden Pullman.

It wasn't just carriages that were to be seen in the shed, with 376 *Norwegian* catching the eye of some who recognised the locomotive from when it visited the CFBS *Fête de la Vapeur* steam gala in April 2016, running on their standard gauge tracks.

Boarding the next train, we made our way down the line to Northiam. It was here we visited the signal box – something which CFBS don't have, as all movements are controlled by radio. This gave an opportunity to see the lever frame in action, which that day was being worked by Lesley Lee. One of the group, Jean-Marc, is a signaller with SNCF, and he was keen to see how the electronic levers of Le Tréport-Mers-les-Bains compared with Northiam's mechanically operated outer home!



The CFBS party at Tenterden Town; Elliott Waters is on the far right.

(via Elliott Waters)

Following the quick lesson in signalling we took the next train to complete the journey down the line. At Bodiam there was time for important essentials such as ice cream, and a look around the Cavell Van which tells the story of the Unknown Warrior, before heading back to Tenterden. Meandering through the East Sussex and Kent countryside, many of the line's highlights were pointed out including Great Dixter, the many oast houses and Cricket Bat Wood, before a spirited run up Tenterden bank.

After a visit to the Colonel Stephens Museum, and a swift reacquaintance with the Old Dairy to toast a successful weekend, it was time to wave *au revoir* to those who had trains and ferries to catch back to France, bringing to a close another enjoyable CFBS/K&ESR twinning weekend.

The official 'working weekend' exchanges take place every 18 months, with K&ESR volunteers

due to join their CFBS colleagues in France in October 2025. Between now and then the K&ESR will be represented at the CFBS's *Fête de la Vapeur* on 12th/13th April 2025, and although there will be no K&ESR loco present this time there will still be plenty to see.

However that's not to say there won't be anything sooner, on both an official and unofficial basis; the relationship built between the people of the two railways continues to blossom nearly three decades after it was established. Our thanks go to everyone who assisted in making the weekend a success, with special mention to Kevin Bulled, David Brailsford, John Ascher, Chris Garman, Peter Hubbard, Norman Brice and Laura Clark-Monks, plus all the Catering and Operating colleagues who enabled the weekend to run as well as it did.

*Elliott Waters*

# OBITUARIES

## Keith William Harwood OBE

11th June 1944 – 25th January 2024



*Keith at Northiam with his wife Pat.*

*(via Paul Rogers)*

Keith was born at Hove five days after D-Day. He lived in Fishersgate for the first five years of his life, before moving to Old Coulsdon in Surrey (he was to spend the next 30 years of his life in the county). Following primary school he attended Chipstead Valley Secondary and left at 15 to join the civil service in the Ministry of Transport. He had a distinguished 44-year career as a civil servant, and in recognition of this he was awarded the OBE in the year 2000. He retired in 2004.

Following retirement Keith involved himself in various volunteer activities, including many years as a director of the Bexhill Community Bus and treasurer of Bexhill Amateur Theatrical Society. For 17 years he was involved in various roles on the Kent & East Sussex Railway, where on occasion he would be accompanied by his wife of 50 years, Pat. His great regrets were not to see completion of our railway to its junction with the main line at Robertsbridge, or the

Brighton Atlantic project at the Bluebell.

Keith was a lifelong bus and train enthusiast, and a prolific photographer. He took many lasting images of the final days of steam in the Surrey and Sussex area during the 60s. Some images from his extensive collection have been published. His other passion was a love of football; his formative years ensured he was a Crystal Palace supporter although, living in Sussex, he felt an allegiance to Brighton & Hove Albion!

Keith was a thoroughly decent, honest person who was liked by everyone and was always cheerful. He never had a bad word for anyone and always saw the best in people. On the K&ESR he had a simple philosophy: he was there to enjoy the day and, more importantly, the visitors too.

It was a pleasure to know him, and he will be sorely missed.

*IF*

# Peter Taylor 18th April 1942 – 2nd April 2024

Peter Taylor, who volunteered for 34 years on the Kent & East Sussex Railway, passed away peacefully on 2nd April at the Chilterns Court Care Centre in Henley-on-Thames.

Among other roles on the K&ESR Peter was a volunteer guard, and he particularly loved the Santa Specials. He was a life member of The Terrier Trust. A keen railway enthusiast from childhood, he took many rail tours throughout his life, including one to China. A prized possession was a replica 60007 number plate from A4 class *Sir Nigel Gresley*. The locomotive carried the plate from London to Edinburgh in July 2015 and Peter won the draw for the plate at Newcastle on the return trip. He was also a member and supporter of the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust, which has constructed the A1 class *Tornado*.

Peter was born in Chapeltown, north of Sheffield, where his father, also a railway enthusiast, worked for the Yorkshire Electricity Board. He went to school locally, going on to study civil engineering at the University of Leeds. On graduation in 1963 he moved to the Maidstone area working for Kent County Council Highways Department, where he was involved in many projects such as the A21 Sevenoaks Bypass, until retiring in 2002. Because of his winning smile his colleagues nicknamed him Smiley.

Besides railways Peter had many enthusiasms, all outdoor. He was a scoutmaster for over 50 years at St Luke's, Maidstone, known by the nickname 'Trant'. His influence on generations of scouts is still appreciated today, with many saying that he changed their lives. He drove a series of white short-wheelbase Land Rovers, which he would pack with scouts for adventures all over the country. A moving tribute to him, with dozens of appreciative comments, is at [facebook.com/stlukesscouts](https://www.facebook.com/stlukesscouts) In 2021 he was awarded the Scout Association's highest honour, the Silver Wolf.

Independently of the Scouts he was a keen hill-walker and caver, among other things helping to map the Ibbeth Peril Cave in Denddale, Cumbria. He also volunteered with



*Peter Taylor*

*(David Watson)*

the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, restoring countryside, riverbanks and footpaths.

Peter was also a man of faith, being a churchgoer and a member of Subud, an inter-faith spiritual organisation. He attended the Subud group in Tonbridge, taking on a number of responsibilities.

Never married, he lived in various locations around Maidstone before settling in his own house in Allington. By the end of 2021, approaching 80 years of age, he needed more care than could be provided remotely, so moved to the Chilterns Court Care Centre in Henley-on-Thames, less than five minutes walk from his nearest relatives.

Peter will be remembered, among other things, for his fierce independence, his loyalty, his boundless enthusiasm, his selfless devotion to many causes, his wry humour (often at his own expense) and that smile. On 16th April he was buried alongside his mother at St Peter's Church, Tankersley, South Yorkshire, following a private family funeral.

*DW*

# THE NEXT GENERATION: Daniel Davies



*Dan as Guard on the Wealden Pullman.*

*(via Daniel Davies)*

Dan clearly remembers visiting the K&ESR as a child with his family yet, despite being fascinated by the steam railway, he recalls equally clearly that he never considered volunteering. That only changed at the end of 2022 when he met his partner, Albie. “He works as a conductor with GWR, based at Bristol Temple Meads, but we are both mad about railways, so we decided to volunteer. He joined the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, while I joined the K&ESR.” I asked him why he chose us. “It was local, it was friendly, I was treated with respect and could start immediately, so it seemed the obvious choice.”

Why did he choose to train as a guard? “I wanted to be in an operating role, and at the same time be able to interact with the public. As a guard, you can immediately see the effect of what you do.” But have we lived up to his expectations? “You have exceeded them. I thought I would be much more restricted but from day one I have been encouraged to do everything. I imagined it would take years to qualify, yet I was given responsibility immediately.

I feel I have made progress very rapidly.” Looking ahead, Dan still has a few parts of the training to cover; but he hopes to be ready to pass out later this year.

I ask him if there is anything he dislikes about the role, but he is unable to name anything. However, when I ask him what he especially likes, he surprises me by immediately answering “Shunting!” I press for reasons why. “Because it entertains the public. Also, as they observe me working, that helps me to feel I am being genuinely useful. I also love despatching a train from the station. There is something special about that moment when the public and fellow staff are both watching you and it is your responsibility to decide whether it is safe for the train to start. I hope I am helping people to enjoy their day. I have noticed at some other heritage railways that the guard is an almost invisible role. That seems wrong to me: we should be prominent, and if thereby I can encourage a single child or adult to volunteer and become part of this ‘living history’ I shall be hugely satisfied.”

As usual, I ask if he has had any embarrassing moments. “Once, when I withdrew the hose after tanking up the carriages, I was standing in the wrong place and got absolutely soaked. Neither my supervising guard nor I could stop laughing! Fortunately it was a very hot day, so I quickly dried out.”

Dan grew up in Faversham. He left school when he was 17 and, after doing various jobs (“the last one was as a cycle mechanic, but I got made redundant”), applied to join the RAF, as he has always loved flying. He is now a Survival Equipment Specialist (known colloquially as a Squipper). What, I ask, does that involve? “Looking after all the protective equipment and survival packs for our crews and passengers, including things like seat-belts, harnesses, night vision goggles, life rafts – even edible candles in case of emergency. My role is to maintain everything so we can be 100% sure it will work in any critical situation.”

He is currently based at RAF Benson in





*Davies D, Air Specialist Class 1.*

*(via Daniel Davies)*

Oxfordshire, with the rank of Air Specialist Class 1, but hopes to be promoted in due course to Corporal. He could be moved to a different base but is determined he will still volunteer with us. He describes himself as a transport enthusiast but is also keen on board games and go-karting and has recently developed an interest in photography.

Throughout the interview, Dan comes across as a thoughtful, sensitive and caring individual. This is reinforced when I ask for any concluding thoughts and he talks about mental health, revealing that he has suffered bouts of depression. “I think it is very important to talk about mental health and recognise that difficulties can be quite common. People are not always ‘happy-happy’.

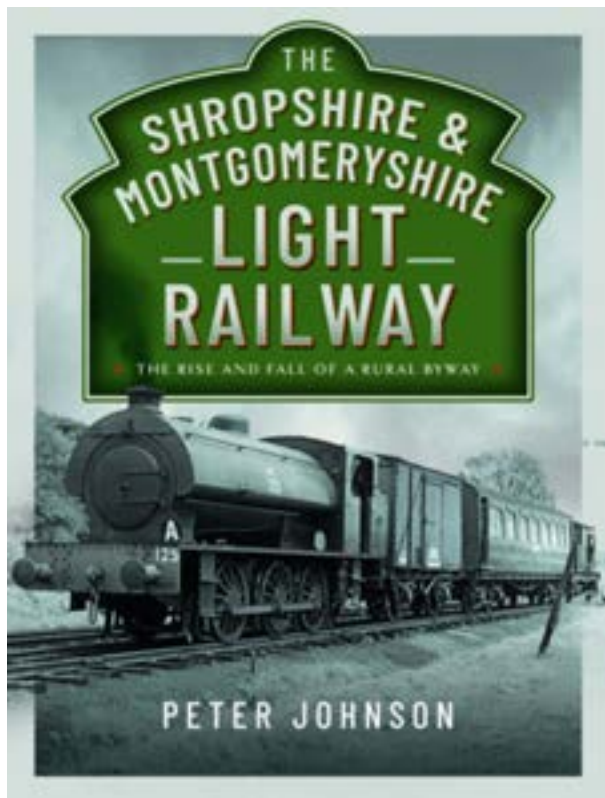
“Of course, mental health affects different people in different ways, but it shouldn’t be ignored just because it’s often not visible. It needs to be addressed. After all, you wouldn’t expect someone who had broken a leg to be able to work normally. The sooner mental health is taken as seriously as physical health, the better.” Something, surely, for all of us to ponder.



*Tony Ramsey*

*Dan in full operational kit.*

*(via Daniel Davies)*



## **The Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Light Railway** **The Rise and Fall of a Rural Byway**

**Peter Johnson**

*240 pages, hard cover, 282×216 mm. 200 colour and b&w illustrations. Published by Pen & Sword Transport. ISBN 978 1526 77 6174. £38.*

In many ways the Shropshire and Montgomeryshire Railway (aka ‘The Potts’) was not one railway but four, with only the trackbed in common. First opened as the Potteries Shrewsbury & North Wales Railway in the freewheeling 1860s by a swashbuckling charlatan named Richard France, who caused much of the riches invested in its building to vanish, it folded, almost uniquely for a Victorian railway, after 15 years or so of ramshackle running. Concerted efforts by some interesting characters to revive it in the next ten years came within an ace of succeeding, but it took that champion of rural

railways Holman Fred Stephens to bring it back to life in April 1911 under the title of the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Light Railway. On its beam ends by the late 1930s, and contemplating part closure, it was taken on by the Military and became devoted largely to military purposes until 1960.

Holman Stephens revived the original PS&NWR trackbed, which had been taken over and part remodelled – unsuccessfully – by a new owner, the Shropshire Railways, which continued to own the line. Stephens’ new operating company reopened the railway in 1911 to much local rejoicing but, in common with all rural railways, it was hit by road competition and lost its passenger services in the mid 1930s leaving marginally break-even mineral traffic but little else. In 1941 the army leased the railway, constructing ammunition and stores depots along its entire length and it became extremely busy. Nationalised, the railway continued to be operated by the Army until closed in 1960, except for tiny vestiges at either

end which lasted two decades or so.

This work is an enlarged edition of the author’s 2008 *Illustrated History of the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Light Railway*, published by OPC, taking advantage of now-available digital records. These add some human interest, although the author’s interest in the last resting places of the many railway managers is perhaps unusual. The work is strong on the story of the earliest iterations of the railway and this is enhanced by the newspaper research. It suffers from the relative dearth of good records during the Stephens period proper, to 1930, but then improves considerably with the aid of Austen’s company minutes, falling away again in the army period. This balance is evident in the length of the sections devoted to each running period with some 108 pages on the old Potts, 55 on the S&MLR proper and 35 on the military with a further 32 pages of appendices largely devoted to statistics.

Once you get past the poorly conceived, and only marginally appropriate, cover design the book is, like most Pen & Sword publications, produced to the highest quality print standards. Perhaps the cover price is high but it is widely available, like most of this publisher's works, at a substantial discount. Although the book remains perhaps the published foundation work for the fascinating history of this surprisingly complex line, it must be a source of regret that much additional recent published research has not been integrated. The work contains much interesting minutiae but errors and misunderstandings mean it lacks the expected precision in rather too many areas.

BMJ

## **Gresley's Master Engineer, Bert Spencer** **A Career in Railway Engineering & Design**

*Tim Hillier-Graves*

*240pp, hardback, 248×175 mm, c300 b&w photographs and diagrams. Published by Pen & Sword Transport. ISBN 978 1399 04 5070. £28.*

Railway enthusiasts and others always tend to attribute the design of a steam locomotive to the chief engineer. However many of the details and sometimes even the main outline of a design should perhaps be attributed to assistants and head draughtsmen. Notable amongst such men at Ashford were Robert Surtees on the work of Wainwright and James Clayton with Maunsell. For Nigel Gresley on the LNER such helpers were influential – notably Bert Spencer, who was his technical assistant on locomotive design from 1925.

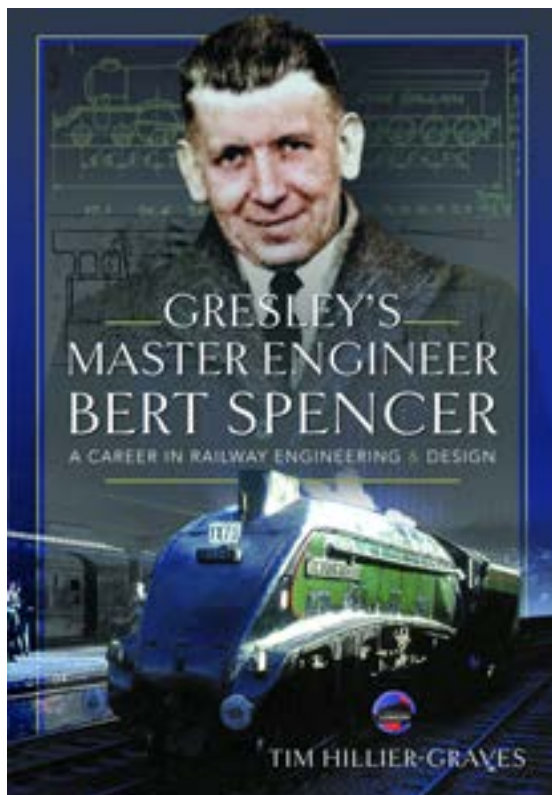
Spencer was trained as a draughtsman at Doncaster and, coming to Gresley's attention, was asked to draft out the cab for his new pacific locomotives (A1/A3). At the tender age of 23 he drew up an entirely new design with generous side windows; can we really imagine what *Flying Scotsman* would have looked like with the GNR's customary enlarged Stirling-style plain bent steel roof? Spencer went with Gresley to Kings Cross on the formation of the LNER as one of a small leading design team, together with no less than Oliver Bulleid before his SR days. He worked on every subsequent development and experiment, leaving notes and reading papers on the thinking behind such matters. All this has

been edited and brought together in this book to produce an important personal narrative of his life and work, illustrated with many interesting photos taken by Spencer himself.

Spencer emerges from this work as a faithful, introverted and highly talented assistant who remained resolutely in the background playing an unsung yet key role in the development of some of this country's outstanding locomotive designs. He is particularly noticed for his work on valve gear (which actually predated the infamous Castle trial) and the advanced and experimental aspects of Gresley's work whilst balancing out some of his senior colleague Bulleid's more outlandish ideas. Production is to the usual high Pen & Sword standards, though the injection of myriad photos does mean that most of them are disappointingly small.

Highly recommended reading for all those who are in any way interested in the later development of the steam locomotive, whether on the LNER or any other main line company.

BMJ



# Robertsbridge: Our Original Main Line Junction



*Brian Janes looks at the original station arrangements of 1900, if only to compare and contrast them with what is planned and under construction today.*

Robertsbridge was originally simply an intermediate station on the cheaply built South Eastern Railway line from Tunbridge Wells to Hastings, completed in 1851/52. However its station buildings were excellent, being to an Italianate design by William Tress, and still essentially there today. The platforms were of the customary SER staggered style with a board crossing at the north and south ends of the down an up platforms respectively. To the east were a few sidings served in the earliest days by wagon turntables, with a slightly detached goods shed which also remains today.

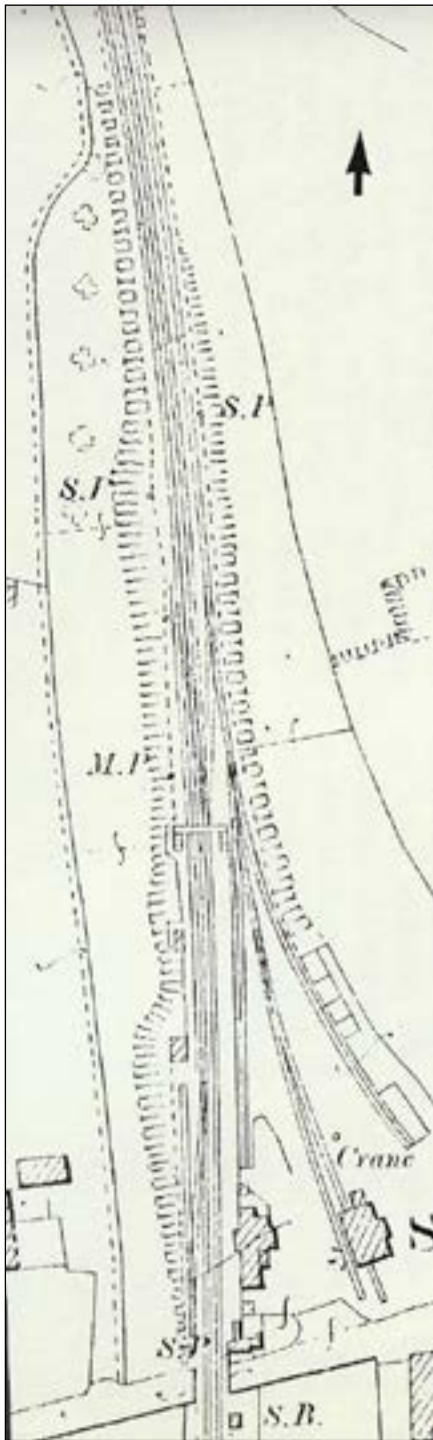
Robertsbridge remained a quiet country station, for the village scarcely grew despite being on the new main line railway and on the main London–Hastings road. Then, in 1895/6, it was chosen as the point where the Rother Valley Railway would make its junction with the SER. Quite why it was chosen is lost in the mists of time. The local topography required a south-facing junction, when going a mile or two north up the valley to Etchingham would have allowed a flatter, north facing, connection.

With the coming of the new line the authorising Act (which preceded the Light Railway Order) made the apparently logical provision to share the station, paying rent to the SER and contributing to its costs. This was a decision Stephens always looked back on with regret, for it amounted to hundreds of pounds a year that the line could ill afford. It was a mistake he was never to make again on any of his railways: he thereafter built independent stations, as soon demonstrated at Headcorn Junction. In anticipation of the arrival of the RVR (Stephens had laid out the survey pegs in 1897/8) the SER had adapted its platforms extending both down and up to the north and south respectively enabling the opening of a goods siding on the down side for use as a bay. It also erected a footbridge to bind the station together by a less

dangerous path than a board crossing. When built, the RVR proper stopped at a junction to the goods lines and then ran onto the main line, by then SE&CR, using its running powers. The connection to the main line was controlled by the SE&CR's second signal cabin (to become known in BR days as Robertsbridge A) to supplement its existing box which had no clear line of sight to the new junction.

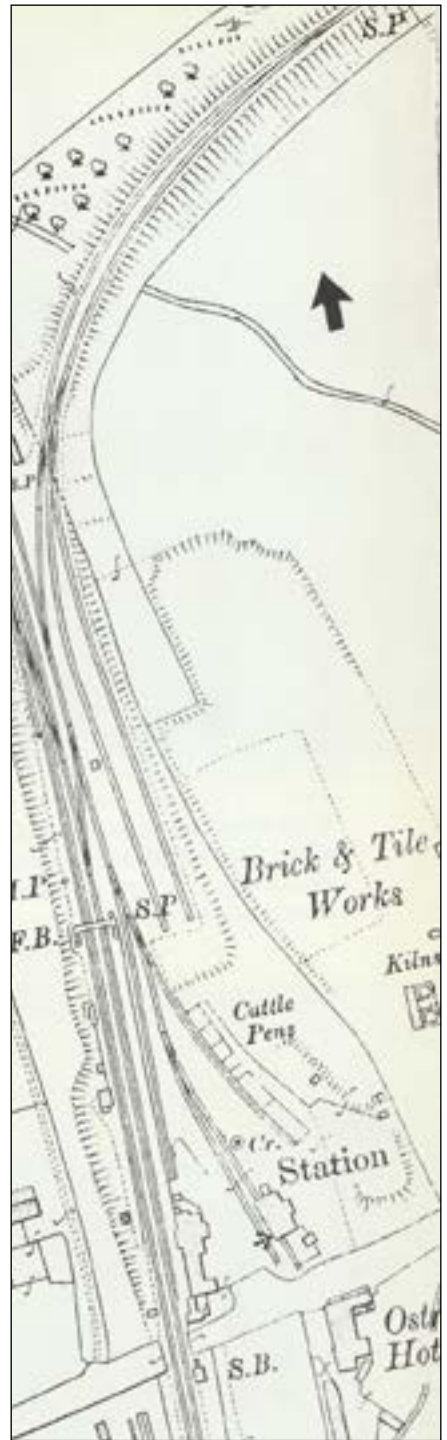
RVR track was limited to a loop which fed two sidings before the junction, requiring the constant use of a propelling movement from the bay platform every time there was a loco run-round. The light railway seems to have made little use of its sidings, except for permanent way stores for Robertsbridge, as its traffic was either light parcels or through traffic. For many years the land was advertised for industrial use and was indeed used at times for building-related businesses and a lime works. There has been unsupported speculation that the land was earmarked for an independent station or even for an alternative through station for the abortive Pevensey line, which had originally been separately authorised to terminate on the other side of the main line. The land is of course currently in use for the new station, which has been imprinted with the hallmarks of an old SE&CR station rather than something Stephens might have built.

Working the junction had a charm of its own. Wagons were continually detached from and attached to the light railway mixed trains, and there were also local trips to what became Hodson's Mill sidings. Working round the limited main line goods traffic had to be carefully co-ordinated. A photo essay illustrating the complex moves required for one through working of a horse box van appeared in *Tenderden Terrier* 138, Summer 2018. The small signal box was of course in constant use and in theory was worked by the main line's porter signalman rather than a full-time operator.



Robertsbridge 1898.

(CSRM)



Robertsbridge 1909.

(CSRM)



*Robertsbridge, looking north, with 'A' box to the right of the picture.*

*(CSRM)*

However there seems to have developed a more casual routine with the light railway's train personnel (for there were no K&ESR station staff, the line contributing to SE&CR staff costs) regularly controlling matters in the dedicated box. This caused British Railways near apoplexy when they found out, and thereafter access was

placed firmly under the control of the main 'box. The junction operation as a whole seems to have been rather a nice casual affair with staff of both lines cooperating readily, the nearby Ostrich Hotel lubricating matters and sometimes dictating actual light railway departure time. It was a true long lost country junction. 🚂



*Terrier No.32655 stands with its single-coach train in the K&ESR bay at Robertsbridge.*

*(CSRM)*

## Notes for contributors

Our printers are set up to receive largely digital text, and this is an advantage to us as it keeps the cost down. This is increasingly important, so please try to follow the guidelines set out below.

### Content

The *Tenterden Terrier* majors on K&ESR news, features on the railway past and present, and historical articles on other railways, particularly in the South East.

There is only one criterion here: any written or photographic contribution must be interesting to the reader, not just to the writer. It should only exceed 2,500 words if you trust the Editor to do his worst to shorten it – or put in a special plea for a two-parter.

### Text

Copy should be sent in electronic form in word-processor format (Word is best). No need to worry about the typeface or size, but please keep it simple and do not include page numbers. Sending by e-mail attachment is the simplest method, but you can send by CD, if carefully packed.

Typewritten copy can be scanned to extract the words for printing, so can be accepted; but the Editor's task will be easier if you ask a friend to turn it into digital form. Please do not embed photos within text – submit photos separately.

### Photos

Prints, negatives and transparencies can always be accepted, but generally speaking negatives and transparencies need to be of particular interest or quality to justify the necessary work.

For news and current events digital is preferred, especially if the picture is as least as good as more traditional formats. Unless used to accompany an article, a low-resolution jpeg copy of the original is initially requested. Typically the longest dimension should be no greater than 900 pixels, or resized as a copy for the web. We will request a full-size image if for possible future use, but please bear in mind that the image/file needs to be typically suitable for cropping to a minimum of 1,800 pixels (longest dimension) for A6/half a page or 2,700 pixels for A5/full page.

We can also accept pictures saved to DVD, CD or USB memory stick.

Our request for a full-sized image does not guarantee inclusion in the next or any future edition of the *Tenterden Terrier*.

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*(Limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)*

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*Surely a unique combination: D8568, 20087 and 37714 triple heading during the April Diesel Gala.  
(Phil Edwards)*



*A Diesel Gala might-have-been. Is this what a post-1954 K&ESR passenger service would have looked like?  
(Phil Edwards)*

