



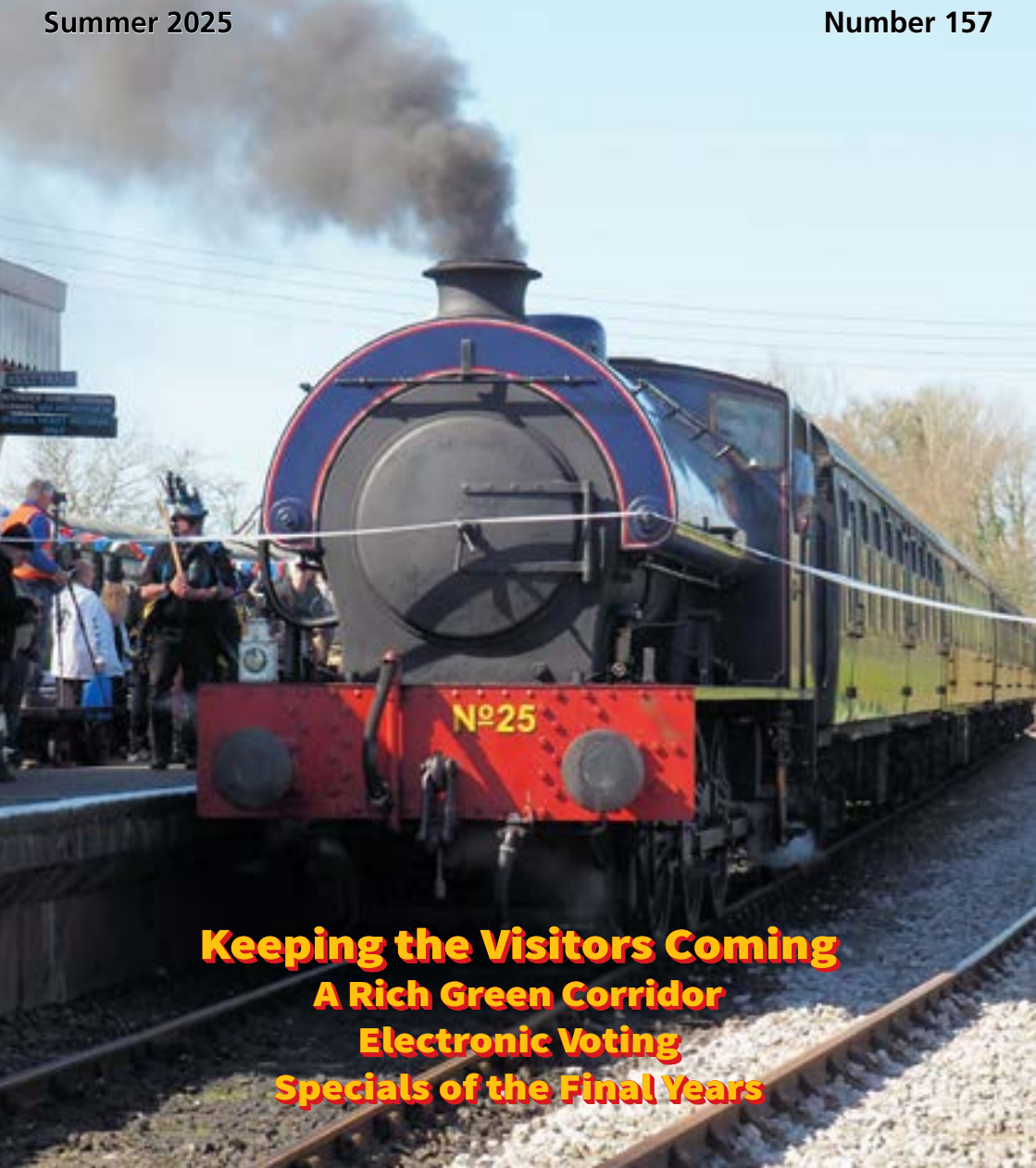
JOURNAL OF THE
KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY

200th
Years of Train Travel
Since 1825

Tenterden Terrier

Summer 2025

Number 157



Keeping the Visitors Coming
A Rich Green Corridor
Electronic Voting
Specials of the Final Years

ISSUE NUMBER 157 SUMMER 2025

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FRONT COVER

No.25 Northiam breaks the white ribbon at the Bodiam 25 celebrations on 5th April.

(Phil Edwards)

BACK COVER

Farewell No.25, seen here on the Wealden Pullman. Sorry to see you go.

(Fraser Douglas)

JOURNAL OF THE KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY



Bodiam 25 logo and flag.

(Roger Marks)

Tenterden Terrier

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Editorial

Goodbye to Old Friends – and Looking to the Future

The past few months on the K&ESR have been a time of mixed emotions. The 25th anniversary of the Bodiam extension matched the celebrations in June last year of the 50th anniversary of first reopening in 1974. These were occasions for both nostalgia and fond memories. The same time period has, sadly, once again seen the passing of valued friends and volunteers, not least that of former Chairman Geoff Crouch. Appropriate tributes are to be found in the obituaries section and elsewhere in these pages.

We have also said goodbye to another old friend, Hunslet Austerity No.25 *Northiam*, which, as

reported in *Lineside News*, is leaving the railway. Such changes are of course not uncommon in the heritage sector, but *Northiam* has a particular place in many people's affections having been on the K&ESR since 1977. To honour this departure we have included a number of photographs of No.25 in this issue of the *Terrier*.

Looking ahead, Board members are actively planning for the future of the railway, particularly in the light of the anticipated extension of services to Robertsbridge in 2028 and the issues affecting heritage railways everywhere and the tourist economy in general. Our Chairman, Derrick Bilsby, has written at length about these developments in *Lineside News* and this should help to keep members informed about what is being done to safeguard and secure *their* railway.

Nick Pallant



Bodiam 25 celebratory cake.

(Roger Marks)

CHAIRMAN'S SPRING REPORT

“Preserving the past by delivering a sustainable and resilient future”

In this, my second report as Chairman, I will focus on the immediate changes we are making to address the changing world we live in. I will also set out the business transformation process we are initiating to secure the longer-term future of our railway. Our General Manager, Robin Coombes, will review our day-to-day services and the events we've successfully delivered since my last report.

What I must say first is a big thank you to everyone who plays a role in our railway.

It took a lot of hard work and many long hours to deliver the successful 'Dwarves of Steam' Gala. This type of first-class event – the first of its kind – sets us apart from other Heritage Railways, and it meant our 2025 season got off to a great start. I am now looking forward to the 1940s Weekend, the Diesel Gala – which builds on the success of last year's event – and the other initiatives that are taking place throughout the year.

It is with regret, and much sadness, that I must tell you about the passing of someone who has played a significant part in our railway for several decades. Geoff Crouch, our former Chairman, recently passed away peacefully at home following a long illness. Geoff has been a great supporter and friend of the railway for many years. “He leaves behind a legacy that will not be forgotten.” Before stepping down late last year as Finance Director and Deputy Chairman, he was instrumental in guiding us through some of the most challenging periods in our history.

It is appropriate therefore that I start with an update on the financial situation. As I write this report, we are finalising the 2024 accounts with the auditors.

Working towards sustainable and resilient finances

In my previous report I told you that our mission for the 2025 fiscal year is to build greater sustainability into the financial management of our railway. I am pleased to be able to tell you that, following detailed discussions, we have received a £200,000 grant from the Rother Valley Railway Heritage Trust to cover some of our non-operational costs – a much-needed infusion of cash. This, plus other actions, are all part of

our mission to improve our financial sustainability going forward.

Following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, this clearly demonstrates that we are working closely together as one railway, at all levels, as we jointly seek to deliver a sustainable business when the extension to Robertsbridge opens in 2028.

As part of the agreement for securing the grants, we have undertaken a budget review. The actions that have been implemented are designed to ensure that our losses are minimised and our cash position remains stable for the rest of the year and beyond.

We have now started preparing to create the budget for 2026. Our objective is to improve our resilience and balance the books by year-end. We have been fortunate that, year on year, we have been the beneficiary of bequests from members and supporters, and 2025 is no exception. It will be difficult, but operationally we must break any reliance on this type of income as it cannot be guaranteed.

While we are making good progress, it's clear that we are not out of the woods yet. The current economic situation remains challenging and shows no sign of abating. We are not alone: this affects all heritage railways and the tourist industry more generally. In part to address this, we have established a Finance Review Group under the leadership of trustees Ian Legg and David Nibloe. The group meets monthly to analyse the management accounts, recommending changes as necessary to mitigate adverse financial fluctuations.

The group has introduced new processes and procedures. The creation of supporting financial information and documentation will enable us to identify more quickly fluctuations in both revenue and costs, so that the General Manager and the leadership team can take more timely action to sustain the agreed budget.

We have started to make strategic changes to the business

'Project 28' has been established under the leadership of trustees Neil Sime and Julie Wilkinson, who are leading a team of people with a broad cross-section of skills and

experience. Their remit is to deliver a ‘Business Transformation’ path that will lead to a sustainable, resilient and financially sound

Heritage Railway business in readiness for the opening of the extended railway to Robertsbridge in 2028.

The model being adopted

Business Transformation Model	
<p>Market-driven</p> <p>We will understand and make informed decisions about the services and experiences we deliver to meet our customers’ needs.</p>	<p>Product-led</p> <p>We will understand how much our products (days out, experiences etc.) cost to deliver and determine a calendar of services to deliver them.</p>
<p>Cost transparency</p> <p>We will clearly define our operating and go-to-market costs and manage them effectively.</p>	<p>Margins and pricing</p> <p>We will understand the margins for each product or service we deliver; acknowledging that this can and will vary.</p>

Delivering strategic changes

A market-led approach means looking for insight into our customers’ needs, the size of the market and trends for tourism attractions.

We will design products, services and experiences, including everything we deliver to our customers – family days out, Pullman dining experiences, railway experience days, special charters, galas, teas, events including Santa, gift vouchers – to meet those needs. This will give us the best opportunity for commercial success, ensuring our sustainable future.

We need to ensure we deliver our products, services and experiences at the right price with the right calendar and the right resources to ensure our long-term resilience.

Changing the management structure to support business transformation

The first steps have been taken to establish ‘Management Support Groups’ with appropriate and relevant professional skills. These groups have delegated authority to develop strategic plans for their specific areas of the business. The group matrix is designed to create improved communication and cooperation by encouraging departments and individuals to work together as a single coherent team.

The ‘Management Support Groups’ will provide much-needed support for the General Manager who will focus on the safety, standards and financial health of the railway. These are the

three things that could permanently close down our railway if not managed effectively.

Management Support Groups established to deliver the following business aspects

- Risk & Compliance
- Safety
- Finance
- Fundraising
- Project Management & Assurance
- Railway Operations & Resource Management
- Traction & Rolling Stock
- Commercial – Events, Marketing and Media Relations
- Retail Sales
- Civil Engineering & Infrastructure
- Staff & Volunteer Coordination

Migrating the focus

The ‘Management Support Groups’ each have a director (or former director) leading them. This provides the necessary support for the ‘Project 28 – Business Transformation Team’ and direct access to the ‘Executive Steering Group’ which has been set up to ensure that decisions can be made between Board meetings.

Contributing to Project 28, these groups will deliver the Business Transformation Plan. This will include sustainable and resilient financial management, operational efficiency, safety compliance and improved product delivery to our customers.



The evening sun shines on the Pullman.

(Joel Pearson)

It will also help us achieve improvements to our customers' experience, improve the wellbeing of our people and, importantly, give greater satisfaction to our volunteers and paid staff.

Summing things up

In a short space of time we have collectively achieved a great deal – some of it visible and much that is not. However we cannot be complacent: the amount of work still to be completed should not be underestimated.

For now 'Project 28' is focusing its attention on delivering an events calendar, timetable and resource plans for 2026. I fully understand the frustration the 2025 plan has caused everyone, and I am determined that it will not be repeated.

We have introduced a new process for the development of the timetable and resource plans for 2026, which will mean that rosters can be published in good time and not at the last minute.

Careful review showed that the problem lay not with individuals but with the process itself.

The Business Transformation Team will publish articles in future editions of the *Terrier* explaining our tactical and product strategy, and the importance of sales and marketing to expanding our income opportunities. We are looking at ways to make savings by introducing new and revised exam content, and the introduction of a hybrid mileage-based maintenance method for our rolling stock.

Finally I want to express my personal thanks to those of you who have volunteered to be part of this essential process. The changes that you are bringing about are critical if we are to deliver the sustainability, resilience and longevity that we all want to see for our much-loved railway.

*Derrick Bilsby
Chairman*

FROM THE BOARD

No sooner had the last Terrier gone to press than we received the sad news that Geoff Crouch, my predecessor, had passed away. You'll see tributes from Derrick on the work that Geoff did for the railway as well as his full obituary in this magazine. I will always remember our meetings over a meal in the Star at Rolvenden discussing finances and the management of the railway through some very difficult times when we exchanged hats as Chairman, Deputy and Finance Director. It really did not matter what role each of us had – we were of one mind in making the railway survive prosperously.

Thank you, Geoff; your legacy lives on in the railway.

2024 results

The 2023/24 accounts have now been finalised, and the summary results are included with this mailing. I won't repeat what is written there, but suffice to say that last year we made a £124,700 loss. This clearly is not sustainable in the long term and, as Derrick says in his article, there are many actions under way to improve the long-term viability of the railway.

Despite this loss we continue to pay down the mortgage and invest in both rolling stock and infrastructure.

Some detail on 2024

In the last edition of The Terrier I focused on how our special events contributed to the railway. This time, I will give some insight into the 'ordinary' passenger numbers.

In the year 2023/24 we carried around 42,600 passengers on non-event days. Of these, about 23% were adults, 21% seniors, 22% adult groups, 27% families with children. The balance consists of complimentary, child groups and privilege tickets.

In addition there were about 22,400 passengers on event days, 2,700 platform tickets, 700 on Fish & Chip or Travelling Tavern trains, and 3,200 travelled on the Wealden Pullman. Around 8,500 passengers had some form of on-train catering.

Our average load outside the Santa season was about 65 passengers per train.

Looking forward

It must be said that the year 2024/25 has not got off to a good start from an income point of view. Although we did much better at Christmas than last year, we did not quite hit the optimistic budget. A successful Dwarves of Steam Gala and a well-attended 1940s event, plus some good days with our partners Fox & Edwards, have been the highlights financially.



Where some of the money has gone – Theodora emerges from a repaint looking stunning.

(Ian Legg)

We anticipate that the offer of on-train dining on *Diana* – the Rother Valley Limited – will fill the gap in the market between the prestigious Pullman service and cold-plated cream teas and ploughmen's lunches. Although later than planned, we look forward to its imminent launch.

As has been reported elsewhere, a simple train ride is no longer enough to attract the volume of passengers needed to keep the railway afloat. On-train catering, in all its forms, as well as events and experiences are what we need to provide.

On the other hand, costs are coming under control. Notwithstanding the rise in employment costs (National Insurance and National Minimum Wage increases), we are within budget. As I write this in mid-May, we look like we will break even on the year.

Gift Aid

Gift Aid is a government scheme that allows charities to claim the income tax value that is made by a donor. However, there are a number of limitations: the donor must be a UK taxpayer; the value of the donation must be greater than any benefit the donor may get in exchange for it (so a trivial benefit of say a newsletter on the charity activity is OK, but free travel is too much); and the value of the Gift Aid claimed by the Charity must be less than the total tax paid by the donor.

There is, inevitably, bureaucracy involved: we have to collect the donor's details and make a formal claim with declaration, etc. On the plus side, of course, the railway gets an extra 20% value. Last year this was worth £23,000.

Passengers can make a Gift Aid declaration at the time of booking. For K&ESR, we do this by giving free site access for a year, rather than charging a higher fee as The National Trust do, for example.

Finally

As a member I'm sure you want the railway to prosper and improve. Remember the K&ESR in your will: it's easy to do (it's important you quote the charity number) – the details are on the website at kesr.org.uk/donate/ If your estate would qualify for inheritance tax, there are financial advantages to your heirs to making bequests to charities.

We are always happy to receive whatever you wish to give, but it helps enormously if any donation or legacy is made without restriction. This means the money can be used for any project that will benefit the railway. The Board is committed to using donations to further the development of the railway.

Ian Legg
Finance Director

MOTIVE POWER

Loco Report

The Locomotive Department has been as busy as ever since the last report. The shorter close season this winter means that running maintenance had to be started a lot earlier, with the resulting knock-on that overhaul work had to stop. This is disappointing, but with so few staff, only so much can get done. Volunteer labour has been forthcoming, but we could do with more to allow us to move ahead on providing the service engines we need.

On the Terrier front, the replacement rods for *Bodiam* are still awaited, while *Knowle* continues in traffic, subject to regular checks and maintenance. We have to bear in mind that she is almost 150 years old, and really needs to be treated with care.

We hosted the very successful Dwarves of Steam gala in April, at which *Marcia*, *Knowle* and

Hastings were joined by the Port of Par Bagnall *Judy*, visiting from the Bodmin Railway, and Kerr Stuart 'Willy the Well Tank', normally based at the Flour Mill, but visiting from the Swindon & Cricklade Railway. Getting five small engines out for both days presented different challenges to usual, not least how to water a well tank loco in the usual Rolvenden 'pit stop' window. The challenge of getting a hose designed for going into higher mounted tanks to feed a well tank was solved with some ingenuity and a traffic cone!

Marcia had her annual boiler inspection before the event, her first since returning from her brief limbo while she was for sale. We are pleased to be able to report that no issues were discovered. Lubrication work on *Hastings* was completed in time for her to take a full part in the gala, and there have been no issues arising since.

As far as the main service is concerned, we reached the end of an 'era' on 27th May, when



The Rolvenden pit crew improvising watering 'Willy the Well Tank'. (Ed McNaughton)

Northiam worked her final service on the railway (for the time being, at least.) We are given to understand that, since the change of ownership, and due to contractual commitments with other engines, the company could not afford to hire *Northiam* from the new owner. As a result, she will soon be leaving the line for the foreseeable future. It is a shame to lose such a reliable engine, but we have to remember that nothing



Swiftsure waits at Rolvenden. (Fraser Douglas)

lasts forever. Had we been told, when *Northiam* first arrived in 1977, that we would have three ex-GWR (and Barry scrapyards) tank engines at the railway, there might well have been some incredulous looks. Now, with the length of the line to increase, our business has to find ways to reduce overheads, and we cannot be completely reliant on hired-in motive power.

Sadly, as alluded to earlier, the overhaul on *Maunsell* has all but stopped, due to the need to conduct maintenance on the running fleet. One engine, 76017, is in the last full year of its boiler certificate, and all engines coming to the end of their time require more care and maintenance. *Swiftsure* continues to provide sterling service, though it does also need proper management. We can't just run it until it drops because "it's a Bucket". Even the youngest Austerity tank is now over 60 years old.

Speaking of old things, work has been continuing on repairing the Ford diesel. Richard Stone has been leading repairs at Rolvenden, and he would welcome any offers of assistance.



D9504 sits on Orpins Curve while out on test. (Jack Marlow)

At the time of writing, a C-exam is being undertaken on 08359, our hired-in Class 08. The work is being undertaken in the shed at Rolvenden, led by Jamie Douglas. Life-expired coolant hoses have been replaced with modern silicon replacements. The drained coolant was found to be good enough to be reused. Other works included straightening the rear brake hose to make it easier to couple, and replacing oil filters.

Another engine to receive a fair amount of attention was D9504, our resident Class 14. After repairs and maintenance the loco returned to service at the start of May, working a couple of test trips with no issues. D9504 has since seen use in service, and still looks magnificent.

4253 Locomotive Company

– Kelvin Williams

Since our last report, work has continued on the boiler with the completion of the crinoline cage. Work has now begun on the fitting of the cladding sheets – pictured below.



Cladding being fitted to 4253's boiler. (via 4253)

We completed the building of the tender body for the Maunsell Locomotive Society's Q Class loco, based at the Bluebell Railway. This departed in April, making room for our next project: the building of a bunker for 5164, a GWR Large Prairie. More news on that in our next report.

GWR Railcar W20W

– Chris Mileman and Neil Edwards

A lot has progressed since the last update was written in January.

Following an inspection of the bogies and wheelsets, the bogies were signed off by the Independent Competent Person (ICP) and reunited with the vehicle on 29th January. The air system installation and connections to bogies have now also been completed.

Work then progressed on the brakes. The existing C&W stock of brake shoes was checked for compatibility with the wheelsets, and the ICP has approved use of this type of shoe. A complete set of brake shoes (16 of them) was then fitted to the vehicle. Handbrake components were identified and both handbrake columns fitted, lubricated, connected and adjusted. All mechanical linkage between vacuum cylinders and the bogie's braking system has been reinstated.

One item associated with the air control system, which has been a cause for concern for many years, was a missing electro-pneumatic (EP)

valve. With the assistance of the project's ICP, a company which provides modern EP valves to the railway industry has been approached. A suitable equivalent item has been identified and now, with the approval of the ICP, it will be soon be ordered. Once delivered, the existing pipework will need to be adapted to suit the fitting of this modern replacement item.

By the end of April our metal fabricator, Tom Newell, had completed all the sheet metal panels for the Headcorn end cab. The Railcar team then drilled the fixing holes into the panels while they were still in place, to ensure perfect alignment would be achieved when they were offered back up. The panels were then carefully removed for the arduous task of pressing the countersinks and drilling the corresponding large holes in the underside panels to be undertaken. Once completed the reverse sides were painted, in preparation for the panels to be permanently attached to the vehicle, which has now been achieved.

That just left the dome to be undertaken to complete the job. The existing dome was initially considered potentially viable for re-use. After some trial fitting and a reassessment as to the



New carpet installed at one end. (Neil Edwards)

level of effort required to achieve a satisfactory finish, it was decided to re-create a new dome using a cut-and-shut method of construction. The existing light fitting was removed from the old dome and then carefully crafted into the newly rolled dome panels, as per the Robertsbridge end. It goes without saying that this has created a lot more opportunities for filling and sanding of the countersink pressings.

Cab glazing will follow once suitable replacement 24V windscreen wiper motors have been sourced (any recommendations welcome) and their mounting holes have been drilled. Driver's cab glazing (Robertsbridge end) is also partially completed.

The team are very grateful to Ron Nuttman for making a new passenger door lock case and keep, to replace a missing item. This superbly crafted item has now been trial fitted and looks a treat. Ron is also undertaking the long outstanding and difficult task of machining the resilient rubber engine mountings from blank specialist compound material.

The newly fabricated stainless steel exhaust pipes have been fitted to both engines by Mike and Steve Artlett, completing the vehicle's exhaust system.

Internally, our flooring contractor completed the Marmoleum flooring in the luggage compartment, large saloon and vestibule area on 5th February, and in the cabs (once the ply topping to the cab floors had been installed) on the 20th February. All of the large saloon floor inspection hatches' metal edge trims have been fabricated and fitted by team member Dave Drury, allowing the seating and wooden trims to be installed during March.

In the saloons, the luggage rack poles have been prepared and spray painted (copper) and have been installed along with the refurbished brackets. To complete the job new luggage rack netting has been sourced, procured and fitted, which proved to be a complex task.

To enhance the look and feel of the small saloon, a carpet flooring has been specified. To meet this requirement a Wilton-manufactured carpet of a suitable design was selected. It is hoped the Wilton quality will withstand the footfall wear and tear. It was fitted on 23rd April and it certainly looks and feels contemporary to the vehicle.

As soon as the carpet was laid the seating was refitted. Apart from some varnished wood



The restored GWR first aid box. (Neil Edwards)

capping for the bulkhead seat backs, the saloon areas are now virtually complete. In the luggage compartment the wheelchair restraints and the seating for those accompanying the wheelchair passengers is outstanding. Everything has been carefully covered to protect the finished interior while work continues externally.

Wiring of the large saloon underfloor battery compartment has continued. This includes installing a number of fuses and fuse boards, starter motor feeds and switching for the various feeds. In addition, some of the cab wiring has progressed. More wiring needs to be undertaken, however, as most of this is being developed from scratch. It will take some time to complete, as there are no drawings available for this aspect.

We had two interesting donations during May. An original Great Western Railway first aid box has been acquired, and Robert Milford from the Museum has restored it. This he has done to a magnificent standard, and the results of his efforts now proudly resides on the driver's bulkhead in the luggage van. In addition, although air horns have long been fitted to the Robertsbridge end, we were lacking a pair for the Headcorn end. Much to our delight we have been contacted by Luke Arnold to say that he had a pair of GWR railcar horns that we could have. A huge thank you goes out to Luke.

Looking forward, the team hope to run the engines up during June/July depending on the availability of Paul Morris, the engine rebuilder,

who has agreed to assist and witness this event. Also, we hope to complete a static vacuum brake test with Alan Brice's assistance.

W20W also needs to be taken along the line for a gauging and clearance testing process. This is required as the Railcar has never been over much of the current route, as either it didn't exist, or has been significantly altered, since

the vehicle last ran over K&ESR metals!

We are pleased to say that as part of the Diesel Gala it is planned that the Railcar will be available for viewing by the public, both internally and externally, on 18th, 19th and 20th July.

There is still a way to go, but we are getting there!

OPERATING

Signalling – Tony Ramsey

We begin the season numerically in good heart. Although numbers inevitably fluctuate, we currently have 45 qualified and nine trainee signalmen, and 30 qualified and five trainee crossing keepers. However, as public running began rather earlier in 2025 than in recent years, we did not get quite as long a 'winter break' as usual and we were unable to hold our traditional departmental lunch and departmental meeting. In addition the subsequent decision to reduce the numbers of trains being run has presented us with several logistical challenges.

We congratulate David Bray for qualifying as a crossing keeper by passing out at Cranbrook Road. We also congratulate David Taylor and James Lloyd for passing out at Northiam gates – their second and third crossings respectively.

We wish to take this opportunity formally to thank St Leonards Railway Engineering Ltd for their excellent work in repairing two of our paraffin-lit gate lamps, which were leaking. These should now serve us well for many years to come.

Many of you will probably have seen our intrepid

Signalman Training Officer, Joel Pearson, out and about around the railway with his camera, creating a series of short training videos. You can find a list of these, together with direct YouTube links, by going to HOPS>Tools>Operations>Operations Documents>Training Folder>Signalling training Videos. Alternatively, e-mail Joel at kesrsignalmantraining@gmail.com for a copy of the list. Our thanks go to all those who have (willingly or unwillingly!) agreed to be filmed.

Sadly we have to say farewell to several members of our department. After 25 years' service, Nick Wood has had to retire for health reasons from his roles as a signalman at Tenterden Town and Rolvenden; he had the distinction of being our oldest signalman! Mike Goodwin has retired from his roles as a Rolvenden and Wittersham Road signalman, due to other pressures. John Slocombe has also decided it is time to retire as a Tenterden Town signalman, although he continues as a booking clerk and crossing keeper.

Dave Blackman has retired as a crossing keeper, also for health reasons, after 12 years' service. We thank them all for their contribution to the railway.



Our way through the woods: looking up from Cranbrook Road.

(David Bray)



Volunteers have been cleaning carriages on Thursdays to make travelling in them a more enjoyable experience for our customers. Shown here are some of our cleaning team on a trip to Wittersham Road to clean the off side of the carriages.
(Robin Coombes)

Station Masters – Geoff Colvin

The story of the platform team in 2025 so far has been the usual mixture of slow days and frantic activity, a pattern that was similar last year and I suspect has been so for much of the K&ESR's life.

The Dwarves of Steam Gala weekend brought different opportunities, including for some the rare chance of a platform assistant turn at either Rolvenden or Wittersham Road. The Diesel Gala will offer further variation, and is eagerly awaited; even many of those who find such things not to their personal taste will pitch in because of the benefit a successful event will bring.

Alongside these there have been a range of other events, including the Green Fun Day promoted by Sustainable Tenterden (which had over 500 attendees). South East Water gave away 400 water saving devices and 60 children from Tenterden Infant School produced artwork to adorn the station for the event. The K&ESR benefited by

the sale of more than 300 platform tickets, as well as increased custom in the buffet. The event was clearly of mutual benefit to both organisations. More may be discovered about Sustainable Tenterden and the Repair Cafe they run from their website www.sustainable-tenterden.org

As always there have been changes in the team. Michael Robertson has decided to call time on his career as station master. My thanks go to him for many years of service and his willingness to work wherever the need arose; such flexibility makes the task of the roster clerk so much easier.

Joining the ranks of passed out station masters have been David Bray and Paul Richardson at Tenterden, with Charles Stewart and Peter Stonely at Bodiam where the crossing keepers team has seen the addition of John Frampton, Martin Christoff and Mike Ayres.

New recruits are always welcome: if you are curious about what the station master does, the video of Murray Motley in action on the K&ESR YouTube video channel will give you an idea.

COMMERCIAL

Travelling Ticket Inspectors – Murray Motley

Have you ever wondered what a travelling ticket inspector actually does? Of course, we, inspect tickets, no surprise there. However, of our top priorities this is number three, after our first of

safety and second of making sure passengers are having a great day out. Beyond that our list of tasks numbers around 50 individual activities, so quite a lot to think about!

One of our more interesting jobs is carrying out a passenger count on each train, for which we use

a mechanical ‘clicker’ device. As we walk through the train a click on the button for every passenger results in an overall total at the end of the journey. Normally this is something we do without thinking; it’s just a number on a piece of paper. Sadly, too many times since the New Year we have been entering numbers in low double figures or even single figures – so often that the pattern has become noticeable. These unpalatable results have contributed toward the railway’s difficult decision to withdraw some trains from the timetable. Helpfully that has, in turn, led to much better loadings on the remaining trains, so a positive impact on costs at least.

For the TTI cohort it also means working harder, as a busy train not only wears out a lot more shoe leather but is also a great deal more interesting, and hence rewarding, to cover. This does leave spare resource however. Fortunately, there are a number of initiatives coming along to generate more business, which will require us to sometimes work in a different way; all this of course makes the job more challenging but we’re keen to play our part in bringing and retaining new business for the K&ESR.

More generally, feedback from passengers on the train continues to be very positive. They love the view out of the window, remark on what a

friendly railway we are, and often talk about how they “used to go to school in a carriage like this”. We do our best to build on this, engaging them in conversation and feeding back their comments to our colleagues whose job it is to come up with ever more imaginative ways to draw people in. The Paddington Bear and Peter Rabbit events are good examples of this.

Continuing on a positive theme, I wrote in the last edition of the *Terrier* about our new 4407 travel tickets. I’m delighted to report that these have now been matched with a donation of three brand new shoulder bags to take the larger pads. Even better, our heritage (and rather unreliable) iPhone 5 bank card readers have now been replaced with new, lower cost, Samsung phones which not only stay charged for a whole shift but do not require a separate card reader. This makes the entire process of collecting fares so much easier and, combined with the Gift Aid capability of the new tickets, means we can gather in revenue more easily, which can only be a good thing.

We look forward to a busy summer, with a number of interesting special events combined with the right equipment to do a decent job. Now that is an enticing prospect, and a great thing to be able to report!



Marcia enjoyed a weekend at Chatham Dockyard, returning steam to their track for the first time in years. She is seen here in the company of Andrew Barclay Overlord, outside the Slips. (Andrew Hardy)

Forestry & Conservation

– Steve McMurdo

It is essential that regular inspections are made of the line to identify any potential threats to safety which could be caused by the ten miles or so of trees, shrubs and vegetation bordering our railway. As well as carrying out our own surveys, we also receive regular notifications from those other departments regularly active on the line such as Permanent Way, Signal & Telecommunications, train crews and others. These reports and observations are recorded and prioritised for attention.

Despite these precautions, the unexpected can happen – though fortunately only rarely. Such an incident occurred on a windy Easter Saturday afternoon, when part of a very large ash tree fell alongside the line, just outside Tenterden station. This was a day on which a full public service was in operation. Staff on duty at Tenterden station immediately attended the tree and found the majority was fortunately not obstructing the line. This meant they could use available hand tools to cut back those parts which were.

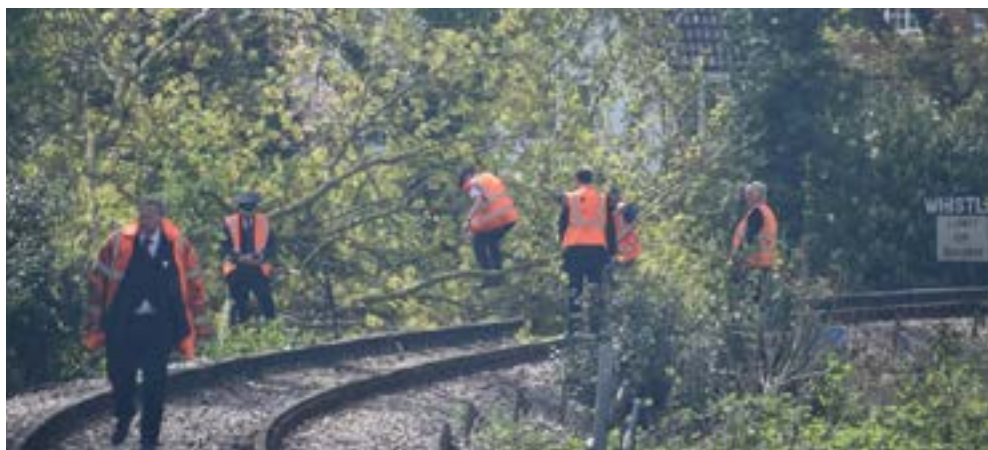
Our weekly working day on the line is a Friday, but upon being made aware of the emergency, we were able to locate several of the team who were in the area on non-railway business and able to quickly attend that afternoon. They made sure all was safe to enable trains to continue uninterrupted, but concluded that this would be subject to a full clearance of the remainder of the

tree and removal of all debris as soon as possible. This took place over the following few days.

One noble tree was lost due to age and decay, but we can take some comfort in that we have planted many hundreds of native woodland trees in recent years and will continue to do so. As an example, a large number were planted last year in the attractive wooded area along the boundary with Tenterden cemetery. We revisited the site earlier this year and were encouraged to find the majority had settled in, meaning only a few replacements were needed.

We also repaired the metal ‘estate’ fence along our boundary with the cemetery, considerably enhancing the appearance of this tranquil wooded area – which can be seen both from the trains and from the public crossing and footpath here.

As happens each year, the onset of spring and warmer weather means the strimmers, chain saws and hedge cutters are in intensive use and we can finally get back to the previously unreachable waterlogged areas of the line. Typical tasks since our last report have included the controlling and cutting back of overgrown lineside foliage at various locations. If left unchecked this would obstruct the view from the footplate. This work will include visits to the more picturesque, remote and hard-to-reach stretches of line, far from the sounds of traffic and the distractions of modern life. Undeniably enjoyable, particularly if the weather is dry.



Members of staff tackling the ash tree at Tenterden.

(via Facebook)



Members of Network Rail's team with our own volunteers at Bodiam.

(Paul Jessett)

Permanent Way – Paul Jessett

It has been a very busy winter period for the team. Since the last edition we have installed two pedestrian gates at Harvesters User Worked Crossing for the use of walkers. These were supplied to us by the people who look after footpaths in the area, but the installation was up to us. The ground on both sides of the track needed to be raised by about 4 ft. Bags of used ballast and spoil from other jobs were layered in while the gates themselves were held in place. It makes a change from digging holes to put posts into!

Next up was a job that had been in the planning for some time. We were offered twelve Network Rail operators from the Southeast area to help us complete a task of our choosing. Some were S&T managers, some PWay people and some office-based staff. It is not often we get a chance like this! We decided that as Bodiam run-round loop was overdue for a relay, we should go for it. A condition of the loan was that the site would be run as a NR site with all the necessary Health and Safety in place. The task in itself was easier to say than do: unbolt all the fish plates, pull out the rails, lift out the sleepers, relay with new ones, ballast and tamp!

The preparation started a couple of weeks prior to the task. 205 concrete sleepers, loaded at Northiam yard, were delivered to site and laid out on bearers, so as not to kill the grass verge next to the site. We had to make sure all the fishplate

nuts and bolts were free, measure and pre-cut four 60-foot rails to iron out some of the short rails and staggered joints that had been identified.

The plan was to involve our new volunteers with the installation of the new track, so they would be able to see their achievements at the end. To facilitate this the entire PWay team arrived at Bodiam on the Monday morning and unbolted the fish plates, unkeyed the rails, lifted the rails out to the side (assisted by the Road Railer) and lifted out all the old wooden sleepers in the loop and stacked them onto a wagon. This was completed by mid afternoon!

The next day a contractor (Andrew Wood of RVR fame) arrived with one of his 13-ton 360 machines to level the site, ready for the new formation. On Wednesday morning the orange Network Rail team arrived, and after tea and a site briefing, set to work shadowing some of the resident PWay team with the installation. It became clear very early on that these guys were here to put in a shift, and soon started to really get stuck in. We split the group as they were doing so well, and we put the second team to work changing point timbers at the far end of Bodiam platform and in the back siding. Some 20 or so timbers were replaced; a big task in itself.

A nice touch was that the NR team brought their own barbeque equipment with them, so at lunchtime they laid on burgers and sausages to feed us all and keep us going through the afternoon. By the end of their first day we had

completed just over half of the relay. The NR team retired to their hotel, and I think there were a few early nights. The following day was very much the same, apart from the weather. By lunchtime it was pouring, so an early lunch was taken. Even though it continued to rain, everyone wanted to crack on, as some had a fair way to travel home. So, by mid-afternoon the task was completed, and the tampers arrived. This gave the NR guys a chance to have a look at what they had achieved and we gave them a tour of the machines.

The new track is a superb installation, with no gaps in the rails, evenly spaced sleepers and some nice curves at either end. Many photos were taken, contacts were exchanged, and we

said our goodbyes. A special thanks must go to Peter Barber for organising the NR team to come and visit us.

The last day was spent ballasting, tamping, regulating and tidying up, as we were very aware Bodiam was to receive a visit from the SE area tourist body the following week. Our thanks go to the Ops crew for running backwards and forwards to Wittersham Road to get additional ballast, and the tamper lads for a super finish. With all the stock safely back at Rolvenden we were able to start to deal with all the wooden sleepers taken out of Bodiam loop. These were de-chaired and the components sold on, helping towards the cost of the new materials.

GROUPS AND ASSOCIATES

Museum Notes – Philip Shaw

The museum committee formally decided in February to appoint Chris Jackson as Hon. Curator in succession to Brian Janes, who stepped down last year. Thanks were expressed to Brian for his leadership over many years, and we are delighted that he is continuing as a regular museum volunteer. The March 2024 issue of *Trackside* magazine included a liberally illustrated article about the museum, an excellent review which provided some valuable publicity.

Winter is of course one of our busy periods as we continue our ongoing work to consolidate, improve and repair public areas for the coming season. Usually this is an orderly process, but this year it was comprehensively disrupted. Firstly, much of the available space in the main hall had, for several weeks, to be devoted to the storage and sorting of a very large donation of model railway equipment and books. Then came the totally unpredicted decision to open the railway from the beginning of February. At such short notice we just couldn't open immediately, but managed to do so for a very successful half-term week. Much planned work was deferred although a substantial, and expensive, upgrade to the electrical system took place between weekend openings. This task was undertaken in house by Peter Blakeman, saving us a mountain of money.

Some housekeeping projects were also completed over the winter, including a wide-ranging revision of the display about the Hawkhurst branch, featuring a number of recently acquired artefacts, and a model of the C class locomotive that worked



Members of the C&W dept. handing the Cavell Van back to the museum team. (Brian Janes)

on the last service day. We have also acquired several more 7mm scale models of appropriate locomotives, including *Earl of Mount Edgecumbe* and an O2 tank for the Callington display, an E1R tank for the North Devon, and two SE&CR O1 class locos for the K&ESR and EKR cabinets.

Amidst all this the Cavell Van, after a full season of visitors and a Remembrance Day service for local schoolchildren at Bodiam, found its planned spot in C&W where, after a heavily used 15 years, it underwent an extensive internal overhaul plus a new set of doors and partial repaint. With the museum team stretched to breaking point, this was undertaken by a small team of C&W volunteers, to whom many thanks are due for an excellent job.

On the visitor front we are managing well. Continual timetable changes have meant we have had to experiment with our hours. Opening



The Cavell Van back at Bodiam, with miniature Burrell road engines in the yard. (Heidi Mowforth)

early is now simply to advertise our presence, for very few passengers have time to linger before taking the first train, but we can also entertain those potential passengers missing the first train and sometimes having to wait some hours for the next.

Footfall still largely reflects reductions in railway passenger numbers, and both last year and this spring and early summer were disappointing; last year on some very quiet days casual non-railway visitors nearly equalled railway visitors! Nevertheless we are still more than holding our own, and hosted 15,057 happy visitors by season's end – a figure only surpassed in three pre-Covid years and none since. This year's figures look to be similar and by the end of May we had had almost 6,000 visitors, swelled of course by the extra opening days.

Additional opening commitments and relatively buoyant visitor numbers can only be supported if we have sufficient attendants to man the museum. We have therefore been very pleased to welcome two new volunteers so far this year.

Donations per head remain in slow decline and, as ever, total yields are below running costs. Donations of good quality railway books and second-hand model railway equipment have

continued to arrive at regular intervals, providing plenty of sales stock to help towards costs.

External fundraising continues to support the acquisition of artefacts as and when they become available. Recently we have bought at auction the BR smokebox number plate for O2 class No.30216, a regular on the Callington line from the 1920s till the 1950s. Also, the station board from Petrockstowe station on the North Devon was acquired with the help of a generous grant from the Colonel Stephens Society – a fitting addition for that line's centenary year. Various interesting photographs have been added to our collection, including a bundle relating to the Callington branch.

Work continues in the archives with a constant need to sort, scan and record both this kind of new material and previously undocumented items, as well as update existing records. Ongoing archive work remains a very important part of our work although handicapped, like many activities this year, by illness and infirmity. A new volunteer, now working to update our long-neglected display records, is therefore really appreciated.

Thus, as always, progress has been made despite an under-resourced team and the continuing requirement to husband the museum's funds in order to bolster the railway finances. We remain, as ever, optimistic that our work can continue successfully to meet the challenge.

Tuesday Group – Graham Hopker

Following the improvement in the weather, the Tuesday Group were able to complete the work in the Memorial Garden by laying additional concrete slabs next to the extended Memorial Wall. Three flower pots were placed on the slabs to enhance the appearance of the area.

Our big project is the conservation of the two cottages at Northiam. These buildings were originally living accommodation and so it was decided to try and conserve them rather than allow them to fall into total disrepair. The Tuesday Group therefore embarked on a huge programme of restoration on the two buildings. Much of the wooden exterior of no.2 cottage was in a very dilapidated state and has had to be replaced, which has been a huge task. The rear of no.2 has proved to be a real problem, as a well was discovered at the right-hand corner. Frim and Paul Rand have been following the progress of the renovations and have been very helpful.



There was a hole, and the Tuesday Group were looking into it! (Graham Hopker)

A nest of bees was found in the rear of the cottage and a local beekeeper was called upon to assess the situation. He advised leaving them where they were as he thought they would soon be moving themselves.

Large sections of the cottage have been replaced since the last report. Trenches have been dug around the two cottages to enable drainage pipes to be laid.

Doug Ramsden has kindly planted the window boxes on the front of cottage no.1, together with a flower trough which he has placed on the ground at the front.

When all the work to the two cottages has been completed the remainder of the site will be tidied. We have already started the tidy-up, and two skips of rubbish have been removed.

Gardening 1 – Carol Usher

Gardening is back in full swing at Tenterden. This year we have welcomed Katy to our team, and she has fitted in very well. David helps out too, if he hasn't got one of his other hats on. So our team is growing, which we need. There is so much to do. We welcome anyone else who is interested in gardening.

We started the year by cutting back as much as possible and clearing any weeds. Then, when all the spring bulbs appeared, we tried to stay away from the beds as we didn't want to damage them; so basic weeding and tidying of the station was done. The bluebells were beautiful this year and, now that they have finished, we can get back onto the gardens to give a good weed-and-tidy-up.

The hanging baskets and tubs outside the station have been planted up and put in place – fingers crossed they will bloom and fill out well. The clematis by the station master's office are stunning this year.

Although we have had a very dry spell, everything in the gardens seem to have taken off very well. We are trying hard to keep up with it all.

We are currently busy with our compost. We have three compost bins, which all have excellent compost in the bottom, so we are taking the top off and digging out the good compost, spreading it on the gardens, where we can, and putting back the top to start the process again. This is done, normally, on a yearly basis, but we are turning it all year to get the best from it.

The sleepers that support the garden on the Pullman dock are slowly being replaced by the Wednesday group, and we are very grateful for how careful they are being not to disturb our growing plants. So, a big thank you to the group.



Members of the team turning the compost. (via Carol Usher)

Gardening 2 – *Veronica Hopker*

The Memorial Garden at Northiam is expanding, with the addition of another section of 'wall' being added to enable further commemorative plaques to be included.

In February, on a day when it was too cold to garden, Liz Brown and I spent time cleaning and sweeping the station's waiting room. This had been neglected as the windows needed cleaning and the whole area was very dusty. We had been asked if we could check the building as our Publicity Department would be showing people around the railway.

Unfortunately the weather was very wet for several weeks, which meant we could not do anything in the garden as it was waterlogged. We have more seed which we can broadcast, so now the weather is warming we will try scattering more. I also have a couple of trays of plants which will be added to the area, to see if they can survive.

This year we had an increase in flowers early on. All the daffodils planted at the beginning of the year put on a show for us, and we hope they will increase their numbers.

In April, after the Tuesday Group had finished building the new section of Memorial Wall and laid the concrete slabs, four pots were planted up with annuals and placed by the Wall.

Doug Ramsden kindly gave me some hollyhocks for the garden, which have been planted, together with a few plants I have grown.

The section of wildflower garden on the opposite side of the railway line, next to the picnic area,



Northiam is passed by Knowle at Northiam station.

(Ian Scarlett)

has been left to wait and see what comes up after last year. It is full of plants, so we look forward to seeing what flowers appear!

In time we hope to extend the wildflower area, but much depends on how much is eaten by the rabbits.

Liz Brown has worked hard keeping the picnic garden flourishing. She has also spent a lot of time keeping the garden by the hedge which runs the length of platform 1 on the car park side looking attractive with bluebells, roses and gladioli.

We must give a big thank you to the Forestry & Conservation Group for the excellent job they have done of clearing the brambles from the area between the Memorial Garden and the farmland. We hope this will stop the rabbits for a while if their 'cover' has been removed!

Finally, a thank you to Mark Taylor of the Tuesday Group who mows the picnic lawn and the patches of grass in the Memorial Garden and attached field.

Bodiam – *Malcolm Burgess*

Work at Bodiam this spring has centred around preparations for two notable events: the 25th anniversary of the re-opening of the station in 2000 and the annual 1940s weekend. The team has ensured that the station looked as good as it could for both events, with much decoration and cleaning, and several of us helped set up and dismantle the various gazebos, services and stalls for each occasion. Feedback has been that both were very successful, and will no doubt be reported on in detail elsewhere. We missed the contribution of one of our stalwarts, Chris Wady, who had a serious accident some months ago. He is on a long road to recovery and we wish him a successful outcome.

Sadly the ambition to replace our long-serving hop poles has not been realised, and we have had to reinforce the existing ones as best we can. There will come a point when the life of some items can be extended no further.

Management reorganisation has meant that we have lost the valued support of former infrastructure manager Brian Richards, so we have to carry on with such resources as we can muster.

The very dry spring has meant that the grass has

not grown as readily as in previous years, so the frequency of cutting has reduced. However, some highly desirable rain will no doubt stimulate growth very quickly if it arrives. The hop garden is looking very good and we have had some specialist advice on how to keep it at its best.

The proposed wildlife area around Robin's Wood has been cleared, and we try to keep the invasive Himalayan balsam under control while maintaining a wildlife-friendly environment. We thought we had lost our bee swarms, but at least

one has been re-introduced and we hope for some delicious honey this year. The visitors staying in the camping coach have been entertained at dusk in recent weeks by a family of badgers which come out to play, apparently unconcerned by the observers on the decking.

Inevitably the regular team is getting older and some tasks become more difficult. New younger (and fitter) volunteers will always be welcome for our very friendly crew, working in arguably the prettiest station on the line.



Members of the Bodiam team taking a well-earned rest.

(via Facebook)

The Terrier Says Thank You

Jon Elphick, who has been responsible for the layout and design of the *Tenterden Terrier* since 2014, is retiring from the editorial team, this being the final issue to benefit from his considerable professional skills and much valued advice. He has worked for us as a volunteer, and over the years enabled significant savings to be made in the production of the house journal. He has put up with changes to content, proofreading amendments and changes of printer with unending patience and gentlemanly courtesy. Thank you Jon, it's been a pleasure working with you.

Nick Pallant, Editor

Bodiam 25



No.25 approaches Tenterden Town on 5th April, ready to work the first train of the day. (Phil Edwards)

Town and railway in unison. K&ESR Chairman Derrick Bilsby with Cllr Sue Ferguson, Mayor of Tenterden. (Roger Marks)





Cutting the celebratory cake at Bodiam on 5th April. L to R, Cllr Richard Thomas, Chairman, Rother District Council; Cllr Sue Ferguson, Mayor of Tenterden; Derrick Bilsby and Norman Brice, former K&ESR Chairman. (Phil Edwards)

Classic K&ESR: No.2678 with a two-coach train at Orpins Crossing, the last in the Stephens ungated tradition, on 5th April. (Phil Edwards)



Dwarves of Steam Event



This almost looks like narrow gauge! Marcia with the Vintage Train on 26th April.

(Phil Edwards)

Port of Par low height Bagnall Judy at Tenterden Town on 27th April.

(Phil Edwards)





Pure light railway: Marcia in a sylvan setting, again with the Vintage Train, on 27th April. (Alan Crotty)

‘Willy the Well Tank’ (Kerr, Stuart 1918) approaching the Tenterden Town home signal on 26th April. (Alan Crotty)





*Also taking part in the 'Dwarves' event, current K&ESR regulars Hastings and No.2678 on 26th April.
(Phil Edwards)*

*Marcia at Rolvenden on 27th April carrying the headboard of Rapido Trains UK. Rapido organised the 'Dwarves of Steam' event in conjunction with the K&ESR.
(Phil Edwards)*



See also page 38

How Do We Keep Visitors Coming?

Julie Wilkinson, appointed as a Trustee in January 2025, looks at the subject of marketing.

Having recently been invited to join our Board of the K&ESR, I eagerly signed up for my first Heritage Railway Association conference. Not having been to such a conference before, I approached the organisers to ask, “Who is presenting about marketing?”

About three weeks before the conference, the message came back: “Could you?”

Me? Stand up in a room full of railwaymen? People who understand the heritage railway industry inside out, and have years of knowledge that makes them experts? The first thing I had to be was honest. I may know my subject well, but I am new to the heritage railway sector! When we talk in railway terminology, it can sometimes feel like a foreign language. What’s familiar to you can be a complete mystery to a newcomer like me. The four foot, the six foot, the cess – it takes some getting used to.

You can say the same about marketing. After years in the not-for-profit and charity sector, marketing for the likes of The Open University and the British Standards Institution (BSI), it’s easy to forget that not everyone knows what a UTM link is, or GA4 code, or how to calculate the ROI of a campaign. Whether we’re railwaymen or marketers, we need to respect each others’ expertise – and acknowledge that we have our own professional languages.

What is marketing?

This is one of the many official definitions: “Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably.”

In a charity or not-for-profit world, ‘profit’ can be a tricky subject. Like all other attractions, we must get the balance right. Are we reaching enough of the right people at the right price to cover our costs, or make a modest operating profit? There are exceptions – Evacuation Days do little more than cover their costs, but it’s important that we educate, keep history alive and stimulate the next generation of visitors and volunteers!



(via Julie Wilkinson)

It’s natural that most people think marketing is the stuff they can see and touch – leaflets, posters, social media posts. The sign that says we’re running trains today! But marketing starts before the design of a service or product (or in our case, experience). Is what we’re planning right for that audience? Is it the right price for their pocket? Are we offering value for money? We need to know which visitors are most likely to come, and when. There’s little point in putting on a family day during school term time. It might seem obvious but taking time to think “Who is this for?” can make all the difference.

Anticipating customers’ needs is a whole other discipline! Market research, whether quantitative (mass surveys) or qualitative (interviews or focus groups) can help us to keep up with trends and adapt accordingly. Is gin still a thing? Do people still want real ale? What worked last year may no longer be popular. We can rely on published data, like the Visit Britain Sentiment Report, which suggests people are looking for more ‘free things to do’ in their

leisure time, and that more will take ‘fewer days out’ to save money.

Designing new experiences to keep our existing customers interested is a good way to test new ideas, but trying to find new audiences as well increases the risk. We must ask ourselves: can we afford to fail? Keeping an eye on the competitive landscape is equally important. Two of our closest competitors are offering a full year’s access for a single ticket price – how does that make us compare in terms of value for money?

In my research for the HRA presentation, I came across this article, written nearly 25 years ago:

“There’s a lot of competition out there, and... the outlook for the crowded leisure industry isn’t all that certain. Despite the difficulties of recent years, we have a firm foundation to build on, and a chance to secure our position among the many visitor attractions of South East England.”

–Simon Marsh, *Tenterden Terrier*, Winter 2001

It suggests that the challenges – and the opportunities – we’re facing today are by no means new!

What can we learn about our visitors today? We’re already collecting useful data and conducting surveys. We have postcode and ticket ‘type’ data (adult, senior etc.) that give us age profiles and location ‘heatmaps’. At the K&ESR we have a great reputation for good customer service, with helpful and friendly station and on-train volunteers. All this contributes to a positive customer experience. With the proliferation of social media, if visitors have a great time, they are likely to tell people about it; and if they don’t have a great time... they will also tell!

How do we know what’s working?

We know that when we offer the right experience at the right price, we sell out! Just look at the success of the 1940s weekend, the Pullman dining experiences, birdwatching trains and our Santa Specials to name just a few. What’s more worrying is the decrease in ‘turn up and ride’ traffic, so we need to create ‘reasons’ for people to come. We’re reviewing statistics on activity, media exposure, web visits and booking conversions. And much as it could use a freshen up, if around 85% or more of our bookings come via the website, that suggests there’s nothing technically wrong with it.

What I’m hearing from other heritage railways and tourism offices is that innovation and agility are key. There’s the railway that uses the online booking system to decide if it needs to put on an extra carriage tomorrow; the one that no longer commits a timetable to print – allowing the online version to be changed as and when; and one that doubles up experiences for maximum profitability while enhancing the customer experience. The idea of combining December diners with carol singers I thought was inspirational.

Again, back to Simon’s article: *“We shouldn’t be afraid to learn from others – this is not the same as slavishly copying them.”*

I asked how many in the HRA room had marketing represented on their Board. I counted a few hands in a room of about a hundred. Are our heritage railway colleagues taking marketing seriously enough? Are we? My feeling was that we’re doing pretty well! Is there a mythical golden egg that’s the answer to all our prayers? I don’t believe so. But if we can pull more of the right levers, even by relatively small amounts, those incremental changes could be significant.

Wrapping up, then, my key summary of the HRA talk, and to share with you here in the *Terrier*... to be sustainable and resilient, we must:

- Understand our target audience and their needs – and if we don’t know, we must ask them!
- Design and deliver the right experiences. That might mean tearing up the timetable and starting again, but it’s more likely to mean incremental improvements to reduce costs and increase revenue.
- Deliver value for money at the right price – a delighted customer will come again! And may bring a friend next time...
- Make decisions based on evidence – not just because we’ve always done it that way.
- There is no ‘one size fits all’ – we must do more of the things that work for us.

Finally, going back to the article written nearly a quarter of a century ago:

“One thing is for certain: if the visitors don’t continue to flow, and if we don’t welcome them, we shall become little more than a full-size train set which will pretty soon be unsustainable.” 🚂

Proxy Votes and Electronic Voting

Carol Mitchell explains some important changes relating to the Annual General Meeting.

Those of you who were at the 2024 AGM may remember that I raised concerns about the difficulty in voting by proxy for the AGM due to the very small window (14 days) in which to submit your vote. In those 14 days you had to discover the names of those seeking election to the Board and read their election addresses before posting your vote. As a consequence proxy votes had fallen from roughly 100 to six. This was a problem which had only arisen since the amendment to The Articles of Association in 2018.

By 2018 it had become clear to the Board that the requirement to submit names for election no later than 12 weeks before the AGM was causing problems with members trying to submit nominations too late. The Board therefore decided that the time limit should be reduced to allow nominations to be submitted closer to the actual meeting. Due to Covid and the restrictions on live meetings, it wasn't until 2023 that it became apparent that the unintended consequence of the time changes was making it virtually impossible for members to obtain and lodge proxy votes in the 14-day window allowed under the revised Article 36.2. Even those living in the Tenterden area faced a challenge; any member living further away was effectively disenfranchised.

I submitted a proposal to the Board that The

Articles of Association should be amended to increase the time frame for lodging a nomination from 14 days to 42. This was accepted, and the proposal will be included on the Agenda for this year's AGM. If members vote to accept this change it will be implemented from 2026.

This would then give the membership five weeks (or roughly a calendar month) to get their paperwork by post, e-mail or download, make up their minds who to vote for and send the proxy forms in to get them to the registered office by the regulation two days beforehand.

It was also proposed that electronic voting should now be offered both for proxy and direct voting for those unable to attend the AGM, with effect from the 2025 AGM.

Membership Secretary Colin Avey has been asked by the Board to introduce this. As soon as voting is open we will send a link to those who have supplied us with an e-mail address (similar to those who receive their *Terrier* digitally). This will access a form which, when completed, will link to the membership database to verify the eligibility of the person seeking to vote. Once this has been confirmed, the vote will be recorded in a spreadsheet.

For those wishing to, it will still be possible to submit a paper-based proxy vote. 🚂



Summer in the Rother Valley.

(Robin Coombes)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Light Railway **A Journey Along the Narrow & Bucolic**

John Scott-Morgan

232 pages, hardback, 246 × 260mm. 215 b/w illustrations. Published by Pen & Sword Books, George House, Beevor Street, Barnsley S71 1HN, 2025. ISBN 978 1 39904 834 7. £25.

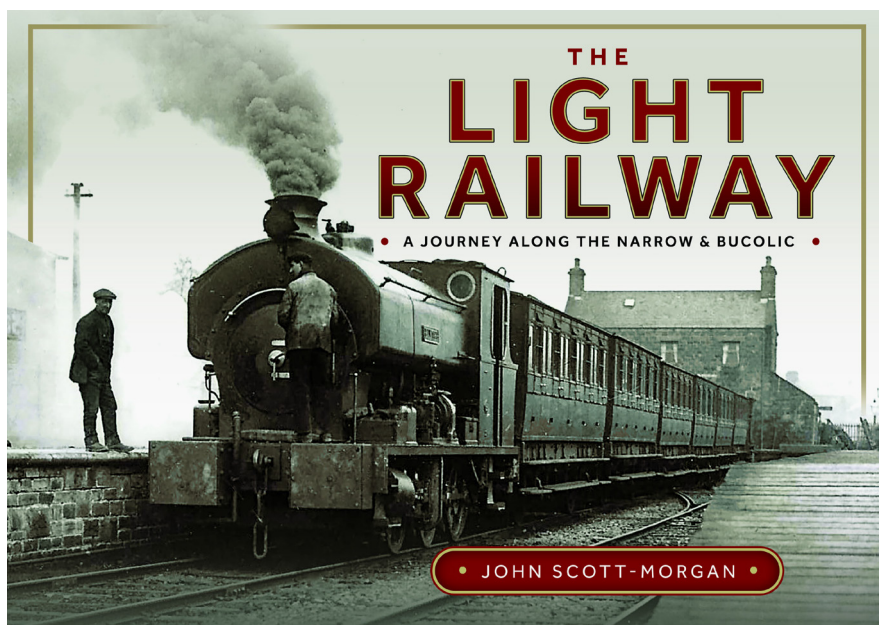
Light railways, often independent, are a source of endless fascination to some, and this work seeks to cover, through a selection of pictures of each, such railways in the whole British Isles including Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Although many consider the true start of light railways in Great Britain to be the Light Railway Act of 1896, in fact many railways which later came to be described as such were built long before. Perhaps an accepted definition of a light railway would be one built to basic standards to supplement and fill gaps in the national system. The selection of railways included in this photo album must be necessarily a personal one, but I doubt if lines such as the Ffestiniog or Isle of Man railways would have ever accepted that they were less than main lines... and as for bucolic, well!

The author's selected lines cover most that you would expect, with between one and six photos

of each – mostly of stationary trains. They are grouped into geographic areas rather than by lines, gauge or independent ownership; indeed several were run by main line companies even before the 1923 (1925 in Ireland) grouping or nationalisation. Even after 1948 some remained distinctive or independent, either because they were considered closed, regarded by managers as irrelevant to national needs, or (certainly in the case of the Derwent Valley, Easingwold and North Sunderland) because they considered it better to leave them well alone as cost-effective feeders.

As the author states, the work is not designed to be a definitive history but a pictorial tribute, and the range of photos used will be very familiar to many. As the publishers will only supply a digital copy for review it is difficult to assess overall quality, though the publisher's standards are usually very good. One could have wished that more care had been taken with the long captions, for perhaps too many contain misapprehensions, simplifications, errors and even typos. The book nevertheless serves as an accessible primer for the next generation of the delights of lines that served their localities well before the all-conquering motor lorry, bus and car swept most of them aside.

BMJ



Military Branch Lines

**A selection of branch lines
that once served military
establishments & installations**

Bob Bunyar

*90 pages, 90 photos/illustrations
(44 b&w & 43 colour). Published by
Wylthyme Publications. No ISBN
number stated. RRP £11.99.*

This is Bob Bunyar's seventh book. Working as a volunteer with the Swanage Railway possibly ignited his interest in this subject matter, as that heritage line had links with the military during both World Wars. There are many books about branch lines, but there are few on military branches – and this one offers a unique insight into them.

Although the author has concentrated on the South West, his list of military branch lines does not include the Welsh Borders. It nevertheless throws up some interesting examples across Dorset (five), Wiltshire (five), Wales (two), Berkshire (one) and Hampshire (one).

Bob informs us that photos of these lines are hard to come by, as during both wars entry and photography would of course have been restricted. He has nevertheless managed to source a superb cross section of photos which, added with his own, provide 'then' and 'now' images in addition to photos of WW1 German prisoners working on the building of the Bovington branch.

These lines were built either during wartime or before hostilities broke out, but some from the WW1 era were not built until the end of 1918 or just after the conflict ended. Some even became mothballed or closed after only a short period of use.

For railway enthusiasts there are plenty of photos of sidings, carriages and locomotives, along with information on when the lines were built and subsequently closed. Only one described in this book is still in use today: the line at Ludgershall in Wiltshire.

Some readers may already be aware of some of these lines – Bovington Camp for example, where



MILITARY BRANCH LINES

**A selection of
branches and sidings that once served military
establishments and installations**

By Bob Bunyar

that Great War invention the tank was tested and where today the Tank Museum is nearby. Not far away the Swanage Railway had sidings built to house howitzers, while other lines and camps included in the book are much less known.

Enthusiasts who like branch lines will find much of interest in this book, in which the author offers diagrams and maps in addition to the supporting photos. There is still evidence of many of these railway spurs, if you know where to look.

The amount of work put into *Military Branch Lines* is clear to see and it is a reasonable assumption that there are many more lines around the country that could be included in a future edition. I understand that Bob Bunyar is already planning a second volume.

This is an enjoyable book which presents an interesting subject in an accessible manner.

DW

Letters to the Editor

Steaming to Victory

Sir – I was Chairman for both the 1985 and 1986 events (recalled in ‘Sequitur’, *Tenterden Terrier* 156). My predecessor for those summer events was someone called Derrick Bilsby.

I must have the most tolerant wife as we got married in 1984 and our two kids were born in the events’ two years. For one meeting my wife was playing bridge so I took Sarah, a few months old, down to Tenterden with me. When we broke down on the M20 on the way home and I called the police, explaining the situation, the operator said, “And where is her mother?” They then phoned Elise and said, “This is the Kent Police,

no need to be concerned...” Of course the first four words had sent her into total panic.

Clive Dunn was living in the Channel Islands and insisted on being paid in cash. I have a 1986 picture of him holding our newborn Paul on the footplate of a camouflaged Austerity. Paul is now 39 and a hospital consultant.

The events were great fun but involved a huge effort and a lot of investment. Shortly afterwards the railway correctly decided that the risk was too great, although today’s 1940s Weekend captures something of their spirit.

*Martin Wolfson
by e-mail*

KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY 300 CLUB PRIZE WINNERS

January 2025

1st	Daniel Snowden	No. 306	£100
2nd	Roger Diamond	No. 435	£90
3rd	Graham Lusted	No. 945	£80
4th	Ian Scarlett	No. 899	£70
5th	Rosemary Geary	No. 418	£60
6th	Mrs N Leutchford	No. 802	£50
7th	Mrs C Rigby	No. 1087	£40
8th	Patrick Nairne	No. 638	£30
9th	Tom Webb	No. 411	£20
10th	Janet Anstiss	No. 427	£10
11th	Mrs M E Bignell	No. 061	£10

March 2025

1st	William Eggleton	No. 592	£160
2nd	Mr A Gore	No. 1079	£140
3rd	Tony Greenwood	No. 1189	£120
4th	G A Aldridge	No. 147	£110
5th	Keith Howell	No. 537	£100
6th	Gillian Freeman	No. 914	£90
7th	Lionel Marchant	No. 1047	£80
8th	Lynda Shepherd	No. 183	£70
9th	André Freeman	No. 050	£60
10th	Colin King	No. 242	£50
11th	Martin Keable	No. 317	£40
12th	Matt Hyner	No. 810	£30
13th	Talbot J Stone	No. 366	£20
14th	Mr Carol Dyce	No. 904	£10

February 2025

1st	Adrian Clark-Monks	No. 270	£100
2nd	Mrs Pat Greenwood	No. 809	£90
3rd	Graeme Elgar	No. 618	£80
4th	Roger Chaplin	No. 589	£70
5th	John Emmott	No. 056	£60
6th	Richard Crumpling	No. 867	£50
7th	Peter Bainbridge	No. 1226	£40
8th	Grace & David Johnston	No. 367	£30
9th	Barbara Dominy	No. 472	£20
10th	Stephen Bush	No. 931	£10

April 2025

1st	Dave Tibbatts	No. 497	£100
2nd	Nigel Thomas	No. 074	£90
3rd	Mr M J Cheney	No. 698	£80
4th	Richard Seddon	No. 572	£70
5th	Daniel Snowden	No. 306	£60
6th	Trevor Meadows	No. 1108	£50
7th	Jon Elphick	No. 822	£40
8th	Trevor Tremethick	No. 123	£30
9th	Colum McLaughlin	No. 068	£20
10th	Richard Crumpling	No. 861	£10

To join the 300 Club or for more information contact Chris Garman and Colin Avey at kesr.300club@yahoo.com

Registered with Ashford Borough Council under the Gambling Act 2005, per Paragraph 39 of Schedule 11

The Terrier Trust CIO

Vacancy for a Hon. Treasurer who will also be a charity trustee

The Terrier Trust's objectives are to advance the education of the public about the engineering achievement and legacy of steam railway engines, in particular Stroudley's 0-6-0T Terrier class locomotives. The Trust owns Terrier 2678 *Knowle* and 75% of 3 *Bodiam*/70 *Poplar* (the K&ESR owns the other 25%), both of which are based at the K&ESR under long-term hire agreements.

The Hon. Treasurer's role is voluntary one and the job involves supporting the Trust's trustees by maintaining the charity's accounts (using an Excel spreadsheet), paying invoices and preparing financial reports as required for the trustees, the members and the Charity Commission. Being a small charity, the job does not involve a large time commitment, but timeliness is important. As a charity trustee, together with the other trustees, the job holder will be responsible for running the charity in accordance with its charitable objects. The trustees communicate mostly using e-mail, and most of our trustees' meetings are held online using Zoom.

Please contact the Chairman, Tom White, for further details:
chairman@terriertrust.org.uk or 07980 010884.



(The Terrier Trust)

OBITUARIES

Geoffrey Alan Crouch

15th February 1958 – 3rd April 2025



(Alan Crotty)

On 3rd April this year the Kent & East Sussex Railway lost one of its modern-day giants, after a brave battle with cancer. Geoff was 67.

Towards the end he was seldom able to visit the railway, so to many he will remain a name rather than a face; but his influence was immense.

Originally coming from southeast London where he attended Langley Park Grammar School in Beckenham, Geoff was a businessman and retailer. By all accounts he had a happy childhood, and he worked hard at his studies. After moving to Kent, he served for many years as the sub-postmaster at Cranbrook and owner of the town's convenience store. When he became our Finance Director he kept a close eye on the railway's outgoings from the shop's back office, and he was always ready to welcome visitors there.

He joined the K&ESR in 1994, and from then onwards gave his time, energy and formidable expertise in multiple ways. He was a very successful Permanent Way manager from 2000 to 2011, leading a number of projects and never being afraid to stand up for what he believed

was necessary for his department. Inevitably his personality and skills led him towards the Board, on which he had spells as Chair, Deputy Chair and Finance Director. Advancing ill health forced him to stand down as Deputy Chair and Finance Director in November last year, although he remained active as a Board member until his very last days. In fact, he remembered to send his apologies in advance for the meeting which took place a few days after he died!

Throughout his service as a trustee and director, and in whichever of his various roles, he was a constant rock in times that were often turbulent and dominated by personalities. He displayed strength of character, unflappability, integrity, a firm grip, broad shoulders and an ability to solve problems – not to mention an uncanny ability to pull rabbits out of hats. His only agenda was the wellbeing of the railway. In pursuit of this he was the right person to guide us through some of the most challenging periods of our history. Much of what he did was necessarily unseen, but it was vital.

He didn't suffer fools gladly, and he hated waffle, but underneath what could be a formidable

exterior he was a source of support and advice to any who needed it. Three sayings in particular stand out for me: “Nothing is ever as good or as bad as it seems,” “Eat the elephant in small chunks,” and “Don’t lose sleep over it.”

He was one of those very rare people with the knack of always making you feel better after a conversation with him.

Away from the railway, his main interests were his family to whom he was devoted, and the prevention of cruelty to animals, something about which he was passionate. In earlier years he dabbled in motorbikes and punk rock. More recently, despite his illness, he involved himself

in securing justice for the wrongly accused sub-postmasters.

When the end finally came, so well had he concealed the severity of his illness that it seemed quite sudden, and his advice was being sought right into his final hours. Geoff’s funeral was held in Cranbrook church on 13th May, and there was a very good turnout from the railway, something which undoubtedly helped his family mourn their loss.

He may have gone, and he will be badly missed by many, including this writer, but his legacy will not be forgotten.

SM

Thomas Robert Featherstone

25th March 1948 – 9th October 2024

Tom Featherstone was born in Maidstone as the youngest of three children of musical parents, his father being a professional organist. The family lived at Bearsted within sight and sound of the trains passing through the station there.

Tom attended Eylesden Court School at Bearsted and later Oxford Brookes University, graduating with a degree in Business Studies and Civil Law. Following university, Tom worked for Bowaters in north Kent for three years before leaving to join his brother and a cousin in the family firm of Featherstones Stores which had a chain of seven department stores across Kent.

In 1973 Tom joined the Maidstone Young Conservatives, where one of the first people he met was Judith Birchall who was serving as the Membership Secretary. The pair were married in 1975, although not before Judith’s brother had co-opted Tom as crew for his sailing dinghy.

With the couple living in Bearsted, Tom left Featherstones and joined Judith’s family’s saddlery and riding business Birchall’s Riding Shop in Maidstone. Birchall’s was founded by Judith’s grandfather in 1897, and Tom and Judith continued to run it until making the decision to retire in 2004. At this point they sold the business, which continues to trade at Pleasant View Garden Centre, Chart Sutton.

Despite his career direction, Tom always had a keen interest in things mechanical and embarked on the restoration of his beloved 1970 Lotus Elan S4, a project which he completed in 1987. He and Judith covered many thousands of miles in the car



(via Judith Featherstone)

while navigating and travelling their way round Europe on classic car rallies. The red Lotus later became a familiar sight at Rolvenden Yard.

Tom's association with steam railways began when he attended a three-day firing and driving course with Clive Groome's Footplate Days and Ways at the Bluebell Railway in 1988. This encouraged him to join the more local K&ESR the following year, starting in the loco workshop at Rolvenden and progressing into the footplate grades, leading to him passing out as a driver in 1999. He and Judith had moved to Wittersham by this time and Judith was also volunteering at the railway, working in the station buffet at Tenterden.

Tom later became qualified to drive the Class 108 diesel unit, but his first love was steam. He

became a trustee of the Norwegian Locomotive Trust although he maintained that No.376 was his third favourite engine – his actual favourites being the Terriers No.3 and No.8.

Tom passed away on 9th October 2024 after being diagnosed with cancer in 2023, just five months short of his 50th wedding anniversary. His funeral service, attended by a number of K&ESR friends and colleagues, was held at the Parish Church of St John the Baptist, Wittersham on 14th November. Tom greatly valued the friendships he made at the railway and will be remembered for his skills, for his kind and gentle manner and for being a good engineman. Our condolences go to Judith and family.

IS

Peter Bolton 3rd January 1948 – 1st February 2025

Peter Bolton was born in Ashford, but he grew up in Dollar in Clackmannanshire, a traditional small town at the foot of the beautiful Ochil Hills. He went to the local Board School and then on to Dollar Academy, a famous independent school. It was a very privileged time, and he excelled not just academically but also in the Cadet Force. This gave him opportunities to take part in camps in places like the Orkneys but also in courses at the Army School of Engineering (REME), gaining practical skills. The family house had a large loft, and Peter and his father took this over to build a model railway, which would become a lifelong interest. The house was also close to Dollar Station on the Devon Valley Railway, which ran from Stirling to Dollar and then on to Dollar Mine. He spent many hours trainspotting, even managing to get the occasional illegal cab ride to the mine, and some of the photos and cine film he took are now in Dollar Museum.

After a Natural Sciences degree in metallurgy at Cambridge University, Peter moved to Sheffield University. There he later met his future wife, Janice, when she arrived from Cambridge as a postgraduate metallurgist. Paths separated for a while when Peter returned to Scotland and Janice started working in the Midlands. He had wanted to work for British Rail, but failed the medical due to colour blindness, so applied for the Civil Service. He passed the exams and was posted to Hastings to the Department of the Environment computing department in 1973. Janice moved to join him, and they married, set

up home in the village of Westfield, and became parents to sons Andrew and David.

Peter had become a member of Kent & East Sussex Railway on his move to Hastings, and spent weekends digging trackbeds. Family life meant more time was needed at home, but two sons also gave him an incentive to build another model railway in the loft. After 13 years a house move meant this railway was dismantled, and it was rebuilt in a large garden shed with a complicated track system, buildings and a huge collection of all kinds of model railway items, all catalogued and indexed. He was a longstanding member of Ashdown House Railway Society (Hastings) too, helping to exhibit their huge layout at shows.

After the IT work at Ashdown House was privatised in 1993, Peter moved to the MOD, supporting IT in defence housing round the country. He took early retirement in 2009 and soon returned to K&ESR, volunteering three days a week in the Carriage and Wagon workshop, gaining a reputation for meticulous painting. He was very particular about keeping his brushes and equipment clean – woe betide anyone who interfered with 'his' bench! He spent 15 very happy years doing something he enjoyed; he certainly went out in the morning with a spring in his step.

During his 15 years with the Carriage and Wagon department Peter worked as a volunteer on most of the vehicles that visited the shed. Sometimes he was to be found touching in



(via Janice Bolton)

panels on a coach that had received some damage or was suffering from the effects of the weather. His varnishing skills were also excellent. He would also carry out lettering on the wagon fleet but his greatest pleasure was to be involved on a full repaint of a coach or some large item of rolling stock. In 2014 he was complimented on his workmanship on the BNO Brake, fleet number 54.

His model railway skills were easily transferred to a full size vehicle. Compliments for excellent painting skills were given for his work on TSO 64 in 2016 and again in 2019 for a stunning job on Maunsell CK 56. He willingly assisted Alan Brice with the repaint of TTO 68 in 2018; the 'blood and custard' livery was a credit to their combined efforts. Then there was the repaint of Pullman cars *Barbara* and *Theodora*, SE&CR Birdcage 1100, *Petros* and the Woolwich coach. The department were given an award by the Heritage Railway Association for the standard of restoration on the Woolwich, completed post COVID.

Peter was eagerly awaiting the opportunity to complete the painting of the Great Western Railcar, but sadly that was not to be. C&W have lost an exceptionally talented volunteer, and as a railway we should thank him wholeheartedly for his efforts. It will be hard to maintain his standards, but in his honour every effort will be made.

Peter was a member of many other heritage railway societies, and he and Janice visited them all over the country. He was also obsessed with buses, so holidays would also include visits to a bus, tram or trolleybus museum as well as railways. His enormous collection of model buses and books filled a spare bedroom, and he spent hours researching the Scottish Alexander buses. The results of all this work will eventually go to the Scottish Bus Museum.

Surprisingly, and possibly unknown to his K&ESR friends, Peter joined in Janice's interest in English country dancing with enthusiasm, and they were regulars at many folk dance festivals around the country. He was a competent caller too, helping to run the Hastings Country Dance Club with Janice, and a guest caller at other local clubs. Many East Sussex folk dance friends attended his funeral in March.

It was a big shock when Peter was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer in spring 2024. Initial plans for surgery were abandoned when despite treatment the cancer spread, but he remained reasonably well until the autumn, when he could no longer manage to work in C&W. The exit music at his funeral was 'Flower of Scotland', a reminder of his younger days spent at Murrayfield supporting Scottish rugby.

DB, with thanks to Janice Bolton



'Willy the Well Tank' and Vintage Train in an evocative sylvan setting.

(Phil Edwards)

THE NEXT GENERATION:

James Lloyd



James Lloyd exchanging tokens at Wittersham Road.

(Alan Crotty)

One day back in the summer of 2023 I was working Rolvenden gates, accompanied by Travis Sims, when we noticed a young man in an orange jacket taking photographs. We started chatting to him and discovered he and his family were staying in Tenterden on a week's holiday, so he had taken the opportunity to visit the K&ESR. Travis offered to show him round the shed, and I invited him to join me in the signal box later in the week. Thereafter 'recollections vary'! My impression is that he offered to become a volunteer; his version is that I forced him to join us! Either way, James duly signed up and began training as a Crossing Keeper. His availability is inevitably limited as he does not live locally, but he qualified as a Rolvenden Crossing Keeper at Easter 2024, subsequently passing out at Cranbrook Road last summer, and this year he has joined our Signaller Training Course.

I ask him what he thinks of the K&ESR. "It is very welcoming. Everyone has been keen to show me round and share their experiences to encourage me. I like the sense of responsibility as a Crossing Keeper, given that the gates are not interlocked, and it also helps you to become

familiar with the timetable and trains. The signalling course is much harder but it's very enjoyable; we are a very mixed group yet get on well together. Joel's videos and the model railway are really good ways to learn."

James grew up in Colchester, Essex. "As a child I was inspired by my model railway, so my dad encouraged me to volunteer at our local heritage railway, the East Anglian Railway Museum based at Chappel & Wakes Colne station. Together with three other young volunteers, I began by stripping down and needle-gunning an old, rusty three-lever ground frame, then reassembling it so that it worked. From there, I was encouraged to become a Crossing Keeper and Signaller and to get involved in shunting and S&T maintenance." He hopes to train as a Driver once he reaches 21, later this year.

When asked about any embarrassing moments, he initially feigns amnesia. When pressed, he recalls: "When I started shunting at Chappel, I screwed down the handbrake and uncoupled a vehicle, then authorised the Driver to proceed. Suddenly I heard a loud twang and realised the vacuum hoses were dragging as they weren't properly

free! And when I first tried switching out the signal box at Witt Road, I went wrong and got the system locked up, so had to drive to Rolvenden to get another token to free it. Unfortunately I had arranged to meet friends at The Old Dairy after the turn. When I eventually arrived, they inevitably asked “What time do you call this?”

After school James went to the Colchester Institute, where he did a one-year course in electrical and electronic engineering, followed by a further year in general engineering. He covered topics such as machining and computer-aided design. He is now in the second year of a three-year apprenticeship at the Port of Felixstowe. “In this role I cover a wide variety of engineering practices applied to a wide variety of assets”, he explains. “For example, I might do scheduled maintenance or unplanned repairs to the cranes. I have also had to replace the bogie sets on a rail-mounted gantry crane.

“Once I am fully qualified, I plan to work at the Port full-time as an engineer. This will involve some weekend working, but with days off in lieu,

so I hope to be able to fit in the volunteering (both here and at Chappel) around that.” I have suggested to him several times that he should transfer to the Port of Dover and live in Ashford to be closer to the K&ESR, but so far to no avail!

James (“mad about trains”) still lives in Colchester, together with his father (“mad about buses”), mother (“mad about craft”) and younger brother (“mad about cars”). He has a model railway (4mm scale), which he is constantly developing. “At present I am building an extension with additional scenery to accommodate full-length HSTs. The latest challenge is to interlock the signals with the points.” He is a keen railway photographer (search *col37284* on Instagram). “And I like walking, as long as it is railway related. I recently explored the former K&ESR line to Headcorn.”

To conclude the interview, I ask James to sum himself up. With a glint in his eye he responds, “A well-balanced person has a range of hobbies. I’ve only got one!”

Tony Ramsey



James (now with beard!) working the ground frame at Northiam.

(Tony Ramsey)

A Rich Green Corridor

Imagine. Just imagine. A rural byway winds and unfolds between banks of flowers and the successive blossoms of blackthorn, hawthorn, elder and dog rose. Traffic is sparse. In winter it is almost deserted and even in mid-summer passing trains rarely exceed a dozen a day. Passers-by are even rarer. Almost undisturbed, birds perch, call and rest between nesting or feeding. Clusters of blooming flowers attract swarms of damsel flies and butterflies. Can you picture it?



Dr Nikki Gammans of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust confirms her colleague's identification of forage plants to be protected.

(Keith Barron)

Since the publication of my article about biodiversity on the Kent & East Sussex Railway in the Winter 2024 issue of the *Tenterden Terrier*, we have received the final report from Adonis Blue, the KWT Consultancy Services. Their Biodiversity Enhancement Plan focuses on advice for managing the variety of habitats along the line, consolidates on 2023's breeding bird and bumblebee surveys, and adds the results of the 2024 reptile and butterfly surveys.

In the previous article I reported on the numbers for red- and amber-listed bird species. The new report tells us that the route supports eight birds on the Kent Local Strategy Priority Species list: corn bunting, lapwing, linnet, marsh tit, nightingale, turtle dove, yellow wagtail and yellowhammer. The last-named, with its 60

territories, is clearly in abundance compared with national decline.

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust's report recorded a final tally of 103 plants (flowers, shrubs and trees) and offered specific advice on managing sections of the line for key species and clear planting advice for enhancing biodiversity and supporting bumblebees at stations. In April we ran a special train so that the BBCT could help us identify sites for special protection.

2024 was a poor year for butterflies and we only surveyed the line once. Nevertheless at least 15 species were identified, including priority species small heath. I know from having walked the line many times with our bird surveyor in 2023 just how much more abundant butterflies can be. That year red admirals were prolific. Our



Bumblebee Conservation Trust survey of a meadow at Rolvenden.

(Paul Vidler)

surveyor also noted damselflies and dragonflies: large red damselfly and common blue damselfly; emperor dragonfly, brown hawker, four-spotted chaser, banded demoiselle and ruddy darter. Given the number of lineside ditches and water crossings we know these are abundant. Hence, too, the presence of hobbies – a small predatory bird which eats dragonflies.

Reptile surveys produced extremely fertile results. These surveys involved laying mats at all the stations and returning between June and September to count individuals. The predominant species was the slow worm, 34 of which were identified on 28 June – rated as exceptional. The greatest profusion of slow worms – male, female and juvenile – were found at Rolvenden due to the dense scrub and marginal grassland there. The second most prolific was on the margins of the scrub behind the less-used up platform at Northiam. In addition a very small number of grass snakes and lizards were also found.

Independently, one of our supporters, John Sinclair, has begun bat surveys at Tenterden, Wittersham Road and Northiam stations. Common and soprano pipistrelles have been identified at all stations; brown long-eared at Tenterden and Wittersham Road; and noctule bats at Wittersham Road and Northiam.

Their presence lends weight to the advice that in addition to bird boxes, many of which are already sited at stations, we should install bat boxes. John has yet to survey Bodiam station, but given the sizeable roosts in the Castle, we should not be disappointed.

In appendices to our report, there are lists of species known to be within 1km (0.62 miles) of the line, including bats and birds, and maps which show priority habitats that are within 1km of the line. These help to confirm how the 10.5 miles of the Kent & East Sussex Railway provide a vital biodiversity corridor.

Keith Barron

The Specials of the Final Years

Brian Janes looks at Enthusiasts Specials to our line after its partial closure in 1954.

When regular passenger traffic was withdrawn from the Kent & East Sussex in January 1954, there was still a thriving traffic in seasonal hop pickers specials and the associated hop pickers friends passenger shuttles between Northiam

and Robertsbridge. However when the latter services (which were diesel hauled) finally expired in September 1958, only the few passenger specials aimed at enthusiasts remained. All were notable occasions.



*The Branch Line Society Special awaits its main line connection at Robertsbridge on 12th April 1958.
(N. Simmons/CSRM Collection)*

Branch Line Society Special

The first such special, on 12th April 1958, was perhaps the most unusual. Running in the year of the last of the hop pickers traffic it was confined to the K&ESR line only, relying in those relatively car-light days on a main line service connection (12.05 pm from Charing Cross), using the then freshly introduced Hastings diesel units, to get people from London to Robertsbridge. The whole tour was arranged on a party ticket from London combined with a 'Special Day Excursion' trip on the line.

The K&ESR line special was formed of four Maunsell Hastings line 'Restriction 0' coaches

topped and tailed by 32636 (*Fenchurch*) and 32678 (*Knowle*). Leaving at 2.13 pm with a leisurely trip to Tenterden (arriving 3.34 pm), after a 20 minute turnaround and watering in the remains of Rolvenden yard it was due back at Robertsbridge at 5.08 pm or thereabouts.

Locomotive Club of Great Britain 'The Rother Valley Limited'

The next special was a much grander affair run on 19th October 1958, ostensibly to mark the end of steam on the Hastings line. Hauled by E1 4-4-0 31019 it was routed from Paddington. A long-term K&ESR supporter, the (then



Also on 12th April 1958, the BLS Special climbs Tenterden Bank. (N. Simmons/CSRM Collection)

teenaged) Doug Lindsay, travelled on this and graphically remembers being amazed to see a rake of *green* coaches amidst the recently reintroduced brown and cream Western Region carriages. Further the roofboards were lettered 'Paddington-Tenterden-Bexhill-Newhaven-Victoria' – probably the first and only time Tenterden was a destination of a train from Paddington.

The train was routed via the Greenford loop to join the West London Line and then wending south via Battersea, Crystal Palace, Norwood and the Oxted line. The train stalled leaving Tulse Hill up the sharp gradient. In those days it was simply a matter of waiting for the next 4-SUB coming along; that just buffered up behind, a whistle from the loco and response on the air whistle from the electric unit, and it was on its way. Thereafter, and uneventfully, the special traversed the now-closed spur to finally pick up the main SE&CR line.

Later, after pausing for an hour or so at Robertsbridge to allow passengers to transfer to a separate train on the K&ESR, the special wandered on to Bexhill West before returning to Crowhurst. There the two Terriers which had worked the K&ESR train picked up the special and hauled it to Hastings. The train then reversed again and behind O1 Class 31258 went to Lewes and Newhaven before returning to

London, this time to Victoria via the Brighton line behind Schools 30905 *Tonbridge*.

All the main line work was in the relative luxury of seven Hastings line Maunsells plus Car 180, until that year Pullman *Camilla*, which served refreshments. At Robertsbridge the 'all change' had however led to everyone being crammed into two-coach Pull & Push Set 723 (ex-LB&SCR) and three (ex-SE&CR) non-corridor 100-seater seconds. Nonetheless, the lucky transferees not only had the honour of travelling on our line but travelled behind *Knowle* (32678) and the yellow-liveried Brighton Works shunter (DS377 *Morden*) with guard Douglas Vidler (an ex-K&ESR man!). DS377 (a number it only had for a year) had been rapidly summoned from the still-just-operating Brighton Works to substitute for 32636 which had failed.

Although due out at 12.40 pm, the trip up the K&ESR seems to have left half an hour late and no doubt the planned five-minute stops at each station were delayed as the passengers poured out to take photos. Taking water at Rolvenden was a much photographed event, particularly when attending to the rear loco entailed holding up the road traffic for some time, including making a bus late!

Film of this train is available in the Railway Roundabout film series, and is on YouTube.

The 'Ramblers Special'

A year passed, and on 18th October 1959 the 'Kent & East Sussex Special' ran. Although sometimes attributed to the Ramblers Association it was actually organised by G.R. Lockie of Upper Norwood, London. The Ramblers Association had a regular programme of excursions from London (largely organised by Mr Lockie) to various Southern destinations, but always to open stations rather than to goods-only lines like the K&ESR. This Special ran from Victoria via Clapham Junction, Streatham Hill, Crystal Palace, Beckenham and Bromley then, possibly via Swanley and Otford, to Sevenoaks and Robertsbridge. It was scheduled to return to London Bridge via Orpington and Bromley, Beckenham Junction, West Norwood and Tulse Hill.

This train was well advertised and popular. It consisted of ten coaches – eight Hastings Maunsells, a Pullman (believed to be *Theodora*, then numbered 184, later S 7874) and an ex-SE&CR 100-seater non-corridor. As this exceeded loads for the Hastings line, two L class locomotives (31760 & 31768) were required. Such a train could not be accommodated on the K&ESR, so one three-coach Maunsell set and the non-corridor were left at Robertsbridge –

though, probably for the first time, but not the last, a Pullman traversed the K&ESR. Oddly the usual nicely presented headboard was also left behind at Robertsbridge, possibly unintentionally.

To cope with six heavy corridors two Terriers were required and followed the BR requirement to top and tail rather than double head. 32670 *Bodiam/Poplar* was used at the Robertsbridge end and at the Tenterden end for the first, and only, time, the notional A1 DS680 *Waddon*. The latter was originally intended to be a P class, but one had not been on the line for some time and it's possible, given the load, that the operating authorities had, wisely, got cold feet.

The service was due to leave Robertsbridge just after 2 pm and return at 4pm but this timing was probably over-optimistic. A roofboard from this special is in the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum, as are headboards from the 'The Rother Valley Limited' and the 'The South Eastern Limited'

The Final Run

The memorable final run, marking closure by BR, was the 'The South Eastern Limited' rail tour of 11th June 1961.

The last goods working had been the 7.55 am



The K&ESR Special of 18th October 1959, with DS680 at the head of the train and 32670 banking. This appears to be at Cranbrook Road.

(Photographer not known/CSRM Collection)

working from Robertsbridge on Saturday 10th June 1961 (probably with loco 11223). So the next day, 32670, the immortal *Bodiam*, along with sister No 32662 (*Martello*), a rare visitor, topped and tailed the ceremonial 'last train' from Tenterden to Robertsbridge. This was the Locomotive Club of Great Britain's 'The South Eastern Limited' special to mark closure of both the Hawkhurst branch and the K&ESR, both lines with strong Colonel Stephens connections, and the end of steam on Kent's railways.

This was probably the most popular of all the tours. It was originally planned to have a load of seven Hastings line restriction corridor vehicles – six Maunsells and a Pullman (*Theodora*). Applications flooded in, and eventually a ten-coach train was made up of eight Hastings line restriction vehicles including a Pullman and two 100-seater ex-SE&CR non-corridors. Because of the increased load the train was double-headed throughout, with various combinations of locomotives, two L Class 4-4-0s, one H, an O1 and a C being used at various times on the journey.

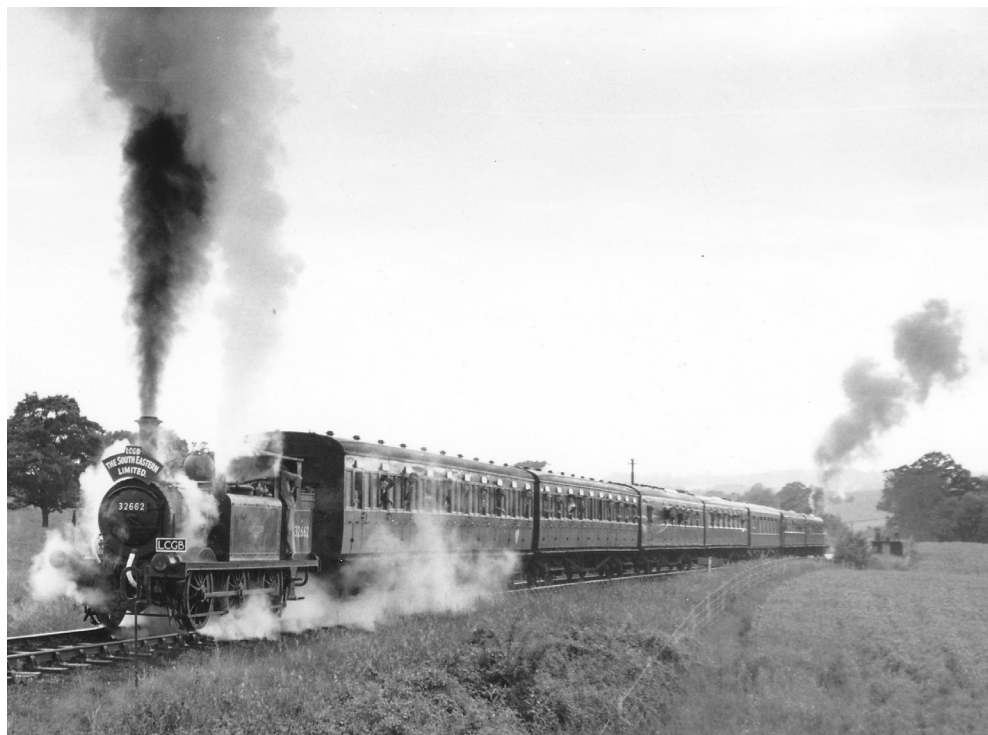
At Robertsbridge a three-car Maunsell set was dropped off and the remaining coaches filled with their passengers. Seven vehicles remained with the usual topping and tailing by the Terriers; but it was an overload and it showed. Tenterden Bank took 20 minutes against the 10 booked, and overall nearly an hour was lost on the K&ESR leg. The train left Robertsbridge 35 minutes late at 3.45pm, finally reaching Tenterden at 5.20 pm, 50 minutes late, after coping with the crowds and great struggles over the last few yards. The train finally left Tenterden at 5.51pm (56 minutes late) getting to Robertsbridge 1 hour 10 minutes late at 7.05pm.

The crew of *Bodiam* was recorded as driver D.B. Kennard and fireman Bob Blair (ex K&ESR) and that of 32662 as passed fireman J. Edwards and fireman F. Roberts.

And the price for all this joy: between 12 shillings and sixpence and 32/6 (today between approx. £10 and £25).

The heritage era loomed.

Sources: CSRM Records, Doug Lindsay



The South Eastern Limited struggles up Tenterden Bank on 11th June 1961.

(R.E. Stone/CSRM Collection)

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 at 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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