



JOURNAL OF THE
KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY

Tenterden Terrier

Spring 2026

Number 159



The Cavell Van and Dover 2025
Visitor Numbers 2024/25
CFBS Twinning Weekend
O1 Class on the K&ESR

ISSUE NUMBER 159
SPRING 2026

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

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

ISSN 0306-2449

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Printed by

Wealden Print

Cowden Close

Horns Road

Hawkhurst

TN18 4QT

FRONT COVER

76017 - a favourite in 2025

(John Chapman)

BACK COVER

Dusk at Robenden

(Fraser Douglas)

JOURNAL OF THE KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY



Evening sky at Cranbrook Road

(Phil Edwards)

Tenterden Terrier

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Editorial

Old Themes, New Ideas

We have written elsewhere that distinct eras of the post-1974 Kent & East Sussex Railway seem to be marked by the comings and goings of General Managers. With the departure of Robin Coombes from the post of GM just after New Year another phase begins. A farewell retrospective from Robin is to be found on page 33 and the Chairman's item in Lineside News gives details of the interim arrangements while the future structure is considered. The Railway has been round the Non-Executive Board / Executive Board / General Manager circuit a number of times over the decades and it will be interesting to see how it all finally settles down this time.

We are glad to see that after last year's successful event we are to have another model railway exhibition at Tenterden Town station during August. Time was when there wasn't much overlap between the modelling and heritage sides of the railway hobby. Over 60 years ago I had the somewhat mixed experience of belonging to a now defunct model railway club which had a very jaundiced opinion of the developing heritage movement. They even managed to adapt one of the racist slurs of the time when mentioning a particular Welsh narrow gauge line! Thankfully all that is a thing of the past, and whether its 4mm, 7mm or 12 inches to the foot these aspects of the study of railways are now mutually supportive and have much in common. Long may it continue.

Nick Pallant



Sun, steam and shadow at Tenterden Town

(Phil Edwards)

CHAIRMAN'S WINTER REPORT

“We continue to make progress”

Santa Special Success

We finished the year with another successful Santa season which required a lot of hard work and long hours by numerous volunteers and staff. People still travel far and wide to come to our railway at Christmas time, because of the welcoming atmosphere created by everyone. I would like to say a big “thank you” to everyone who made it a success, I really appreciate the time and commitment that contributed to the successful running of this annual event.

Changes to the Leadership Team

As I write this report, we are finalising temporary leadership arrangements following the announcement that the General Manager was to leave our railway at the end of the 2025 operating season.

The decision to manage the railway without a General Manager was not taken lightly. It has been born out of necessity as we continue to address the difficult financial environment faced

not only by our railway but the heritage sector more generally.

The decision taken was purely on financial grounds: we could no longer afford to continue with the current leadership structure. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the contribution that Robin Coombes made to our railway, including helping to increase our profile. Despite the pressure of many aspects of the role, he remained always in good humour, and for this and all his efforts over the last three years we owe him our sincere thanks.

Temporary Leadership Structure

The Board has given delegated authority to the Executive Support Group (ESG) to manage the day-to-day direction and leadership of the railway. Each of the Trustees that make up this group have accepted responsibility for supporting the specific areas managed by the leadership team. The members of ESG are Derrick Bilsby (Chairman), Matthew Hyner (Deputy Chairman and People Director), Ian Legg (Finance Director), Julie



Swiftsure attacks Tenterden bank

(Tony Eaton)

Wilkinson (Commercial Director), and Paul Vidler (Estate Director).

A disposition statement has been issued to reflect the temporary changes to ensure compliance with the Safety Management System and other supporting documentation.

Plans for a Permanent Structure

The ESG is currently working on a plan for permanent leadership changes which we are planning to introduce in spring 2026. Primarily this will affect the structure of the Engineering Departments at Rolvenden and Tenterden, plus all aspects of the Operating Department necessary to meet personnel changes and meet the many new challenges of operating the extended railway to Robertsbridge. ESG is being supported by people with long-standing domain experience in the leadership areas affected by the need for change.

Creating Sustainability and Resilience

Finance - We have made good progress towards sustainable finances throughout the 2024-2025 financial year, with the budget overall successfully delivered. We are continuing to work towards sustainable finances during 2025-2026 fiscal year. The budget that has been agreed is challenging but necessary.

Addressing the delivery timescales of the timetable - We promised we would settle and publish the timetable calendar for 2026 before the end of 2025. This has largely been achieved, and our timetable planners are now working to ensure that traffic arrangements are published at least 12 weeks ahead of operations. Further changes to the planning process are planned for 2027 – work on this has already started.

In support of sustainability - In parallel, we are working on projects that will create an environment of improved resilience as we prepare for Robertsbridge in 2028.

Mileage-based maintenance - The Board has approved the Traction & Rolling Stock Group (T&RSG) recommendation to adopt a mileage-based maintenance regime. Implementation has already started ready for the 2026 operating season. This will improve carriage availability whilst reducing maintenance costs, more importantly easing the pressures on the Carriage and Wagon Department.

Wheelset recalibration - The T&RSG are also

working up a technical proposal to recalibrate the minimum tyre and flange thickness of our wheelsets. The analysis for this has been completed and we expect a proposal to come to the Board in early 2026. If adopted, this will extend the life of our carriage wheelsets by up to 10 years, allowing us to plan and budget more effectively, the capital expenditure requirements associated with tyre turning and eventually for wheelset replacement - all very expensive items.

Solar power - We have been successful in obtaining a grant from Ashford Borough Council to assist with the cost of installing a 56 solar panel array on the roof of the Carriage & Wagon extension. The payback on this project will be achieved in 18 months, after which it will make a positive contribution to reducing our energy costs at Tenterden while demonstrating our environmental commitment to the local community.

Creating a Locomotive Strategy

The objective is to progressively reduce the number of commercially hired locomotives by preparing a fleet of locomotives owned by groups associated with the Kent & East Sussex Railway. In the meantime, we have extended the hire agreements for the two J94 locomotives currently resident on the railway for the 2026 season.

Together with Rother Valley Railway Heritage Trust (RVRHT), we are working to achieve a cost-effective, sustainable, resilient, and suitable locomotive fleet ready for the opening of the Robertsbridge extension.

The extensive overhaul of RVRHT-owned Manning Wardle locomotive *Charwelton* is approaching completion - including fitting a new boiler and cylinders - and is expected to be ready for use very soon.

RVRHT has now also been able to secure the 10-year loan of GWR locomotive No. 4270 through the great kindness of its owner, to help further strengthen the railway's fleet.

While locomotive No. 4270 is in all-round excellent condition, its boiler is due for removal for a 10-yearly examination, along with the replacement of its boiler tubes before it returns to operation. To complete that work, RVRHT has formed a partnership with the 4253 Locomotive Group, based at the railway's Rolvenden workshops, who will look after the work on No. 4270 and oversee its use on the K&ESR.

With their own loco GWR No. 4253 well on the way to being ready to enter service, this new agreement will therefore progressively result in three additional locomotives being available to the K&ESR. More news concerning No. 4270 will follow later this year, once it has arrived at Rolvenden.



We plan therefore to have 4253, 4270, USA No.65, No.14 *Charwelton*, No.15 *Hastings*, Terrier No.70/3 *Poplar/Bodiam* available ready for the opening of the railway to Robertsbridge in 2028. Subject to the appeal being successful Pannier 1638 would also return **so please support our on-going appeal if you can.**

In addition, diesel traction - Class 14 and Class 20 - will work some passenger trains on quieter days and provide emergency relief during high fire risk, while the Class 03 and Class 08 and Ruston diesel shunters will undertake depot pilot duties at Tenterden, Rolvenden and Robertsbridge. The Class 108 DMMU, Class 205 DEMU Thumper, and the W20W GWR Railcar will run the timetable in the off-peak season and on special diesel days.

Looking to the medium and longer term we are currently reviewing the potential repair and restoration of No.19 *Norwegian* with the Norwegian Locomotive Trust, and the return to service of the oldest diesel electric locomotive in the country, affectionally known as the *Ford*, with the Kent & East Sussex Locomotive Trust. Work also continues with the Terrier Trust to ensure that the railway always has an iconic Terrier locomotive available well into the future.

Getting Ready for Robertsbridge

Passing loop at Austen's Bridge - Subject to ratification at the next K&ESR – RVRHT liaison meeting in February, it has been agreed that a passing loop will be constructed between Austen's

bridge and Salehurst (to be known as Austen's loop). Initially it will not be in use when the railway opens in 2028. Signalling of the loop will be undertaken when traffic demand justifies its installation.

Providing a sustainable and resilient interchange at Northiam - We are working on plans to install the old Tovil footbridge at the level-crossing end of the station platforms. I am pleased to report that we have received a grant award of £30,000 and an offer of a further £20,000 for the next phase of the work from the Railway Heritage Trust.

We are now seeking further funding of £75,000 to complete this project. The footbridge has already been moved to specialist contractors to assess the condition and to establish the extent of repairs necessary.

Investigations are also being undertaken with a view to providing treated water at Northiam, including a watering facility at the Tenterden end of platform 2.

Timetable planning for 2028 and beyond -

An initial meeting has taken place involving staff and volunteers from the K&ESR and RVRHT. The base timetable envisaged will be a two-train service: one starting out of Tenterden and the other out of Robertsbridge, each doing two return trips, passing at Northiam. Different timetable scenarios will be developed over the coming months but with only one train between Northiam and Robertsbridge at any one time.

Finally: Together we have delivered a successful 2025 Season

With all credit to everyone, volunteers and our paid staff, we have closed the 2025 season with an improved financial out-turn as planned, and we have been able to agree a sensible but challenging budget for 2026.

Without you and your continued support, none of this would be possible. I'd like to express great thanks and appreciation from me and my fellow Trustees for the determination and dedication you have put into keeping our railway running for the enjoyment of our passengers during 2025.

We can now look forward to an improved and prosperous 2026 for our railway, and I hope this will be the same for you and your families.

Derrick Bilsby
Chairman – Kent & East Sussex Railway

Loco Report

This report has to start with a sad piece of news. After a number of years of sterling service, Liam Head decided that it was time for a change, and left Rolvenden in November. Liam's knowledge regarding water treatment had helped contribute to ours being some of the best protected boilers in preservation, and his ability to turn his hand to anything will also be much missed. We wish him all the best going forward, and are pleased to be able to report that he will continue to volunteer at Rolvenden when time permits.

Once again, the year ended with the Santa trains, handled this year by 76017, *Swiftsure* and 68032. As per last year, we really had no steam redundancy, with *Hastings* and *Knowle* already laid up by December. We suffered a couple of broken springs on the *Austerities* late in the year. Hopefully, with the additional funding for track maintenance as outlined by Derrick Bilsby, we will reduce the eye-watering bills for these repairs!

On the steam front, we were hoping to be able to bring you an update on *Bodiam/Poplar* in this issue, but we understand that matters with our insurers are at a key stage, and that more information will be available next time.

Knowle will be available for service for the 2026 season, but it has to be borne in mind that it is right at the end of its "ticket", and is almost 150 years old! It has to be treated with real care, and not overworked.

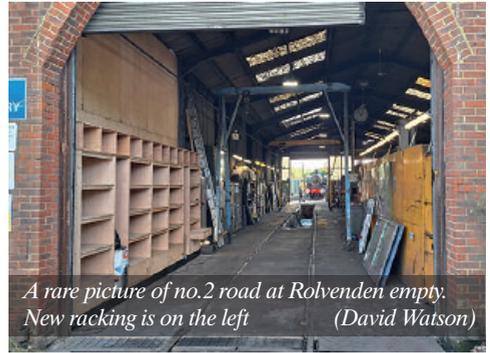


Marcia, mid-repaint at Rolvenden
(Andrew Hardy)

Marcia is at present in the shed at Rolvenden, receiving some repairs as well as a repaint. Owner Andrew Hardy is reverting the engine to its

original Peckett green livery. While we look forward to seeing her finished, we have to admit that the pinkish undercoat raised a few eyebrows!

We understand that *Charwelton* will soon be leaving the Flour Mill, with its next destination likely to be Wittersham Road. The RVR have reported that some of the repairs have thrown up real challenges, but these have now been overcome. It will be very interesting to see just what *Charwelton* can do with both a new boiler and new cylinder block! It is believed that, in K&ESR terms, she will become a class 4 engine, which means she will be able to haul the Pullman on her own.



A rare picture of no.2 road at Rolvenden empty.
New racking is on the left (David Watson)

Hastings has continued to impress whenever called on. She is a fine engine, and a real credit to the efforts owner Mike Hart, and others, put in to both the overhaul and subsequent refinements.

Writing the loco report this time last year, we reported that *Maunsell's* boiler had been reunited with the frames, and it was hoped that she would be in service in the 2025 season. Well... that didn't happen. Simply put, keeping the running fleet going meant that staff were not able to progress the overhaul. Now with even fewer numbers, it is hoped that the overhaul can be finished in time for *Maunsell* to be available for our Summer running. It is essential that we have at least three class 5 engines available for the Santa season, or we would have to hire in again, at considerable cost, if anything was actually available.

Our hired *Austerities*, *Swiftsure* and 68032 continue to give good service. It is clear that Road and Rail Steam Services turn out very good engines, and Steve Latham gives excellent support to them, too. He has helped us at Rolvenden with

tasks unrelated to his engines, and some of our team have learned how to undertake some tasks thanks to him. It is clear that our relationship with R&R has been very beneficial to us, and will continue for the time being, at least.

We had also hoped to bring you an update on 1638 this time round, but as with *Bodiam*, the situation is moving at present, and we hope to have a full update for the next *Terrier*.

Sadly, 76017 has turned its last wheel in anger for us, at least for the present time. Having been with us for the last two years, its boiler ticket has now expired. It will be returned to its owners in the near future. 76017 was the subject of a day's cleaning at Rolvenden on the 31st January, so we will be returning the engine to its owners in the best possible state. Our thanks to those that turned out on the day, and put in all that effort.

One of the constant problems at Rolvenden is storage. There is more equipment than space, and previous efforts to tidy up the shed have lasted for a while, but things have a habit of getting steadily worse. However, a new storage unit has been built at the Tenterden end of no.2 road, complete with additional insulation behind it, to help keep the shed warmer in Winter. This is a welcome addition, so well done to those who have done the work.

4253 Locomotive Company

Kelvin Williams

Four months on from our last report, work is progressing steadily on the installation of all the pipework connecting the gauges, taps, levers etc on the back plate within the cab. Fabrication of thin metal plates of various sizes and bends connecting the back plate to the cab front wall continues. Not so easy considering the angles that need to be bent into the pipes and plates.

Work has begun on finalising the ashpan that has been stored under wraps for a few years. This included the constructing of hoop supports for the already installed water pipes. We had 'fixed' this system to pegs within the ash pan, but were advised by other railways, that their experience was that the pipes break apart due to contraction/expansion. Our new hoop brackets will allow for this movement.

Our second team of volunteers are continuing the building of the bunker for 5164, a GWR Large Prairie. We have reached the stage where having

built it to ensure it all fits together correctly: We have taken it apart again, so that additional welding can be conducted, as well the riveting required. The first session of riveting occurred on the 18th January.

We have also held our Annual General Meeting in the Tenterden Buffet, where the accounts and engineering reports were presented to the 60 shareholders who attended.

In addition to the reports, it was decided by a unanimous vote that 4253 Locomotive Co Ltd, and The Rother Valley Railway Heritage Trust enter a joint venture whereby locomotive 4270 is brought to the K&ESR.

RVRHT were able to secure a 10-year loan of this locomotive through the kindness of its owner to help strengthen the railway's fleet.

4253 Locomotive Co Ltd will look after the work required to bring 4270 back into service, and oversee its use on the K&ESR. Further details will be notified through our Facebook page and our Shareholders Newsletter.

GWR Railcar W20W

Neil Edwards & Chris Mileman

Work has progressed steadily with the myriad of tasks still to be completed before W20W is ready for commissioning.

Externally, cab gutter sections at both ends have been welded to main gutters, welds ground back and painted. The damaged Robertsbridge-end bogie guard irons have been repaired and strengthened and painted. Assistance was provided by 4253 volunteers and Jack Marlow on these tasks. The air horns and some of the pipework has been installed and air horns tested, much to the 'amusement' of all those in the workshop at the time! Final connection and the fitting of the driver's actuator is still to be completed. In addition, the sander pipework has been fabricated and is being fitted to all four sandboxes. Windscreen wiper fitting holes were drilled in transom rails x 4, allowing windscreen glazing to be safely fitted in the Headcorn-end cab. Four pantograph windscreen wiper arms have been identified and purchased by a team member. Ron Nuttman has been kind enough to evaluate the task of adapting the wiper arms to the new motors and will carry out the work off site.



4270 at work

(Icons of Steam)

Internally, cab skirting and wooden box trunking has been prepared and fitted to both cabs with more jobs in hand. Driver/Guard communication bell and bell pushes, genuine A.E.C. bus type, have been purchased by a team member, the wiring has been installed, tested and proved working. Cabling installation has continued within both cabs for control, auxiliary equipment, lighting and power wiring.

Mechanically, two compressor jackshafts universal joints x 4 were refurbished and/or replaced. We are grateful to Mike and Steve Artlett for progressing and funding this work.

Some initial testing was commenced during January:

- Air system charged from workshop supply. Air pressure retained in system for 20 - 30 mins.
- All E.P. valves manually operated and proper operation of air motors witnessed.
- Electrical power connected to the control circuitry for the first time. Both cab controls powered up as expected
- Driver's controls exercised, including clutch,

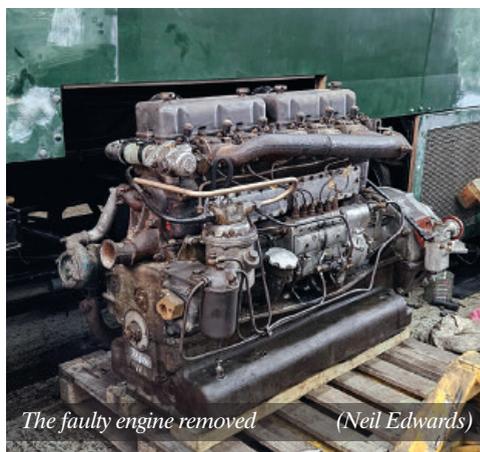
Fwd/Rev, High/Low, gear select and throttle.
All air valves operated as expected

- Gearbox and High/low function checked and all the various gear selection operations confirmed.
- Fwd/Rev function tested from both cabs for correct operation. Confirmation of correct wiring and air pipes achieved.
- One air seal was identified as leaking on south-side Fwd/Rev final drive mechanism. No other issues were identified.
- The final drive has been dismantled and the air piston removed to allow the piston seal to be taken to the supplier for identification and confirmation of availability. New seals are now on order.
- Heater fuel tank tested for leaks.

Restoration Highs and Lows

The highs in this period include the successful testing of the electro-pneumatic controls for the first time, but unfortunately it seems that with every high there is a low. The low and the downside during this period was the failure, in September, of the north-side engine during a

witnessed test undertaken with the assistance of the engine rebuilder. During the test the engine exhibited an issue which resulted in overheating of the cylinder block around number six cylinder. On the advice of Paul Morris, the engineer, it was agreed to return the engine to his premises for further examination and rectification as necessary. During the next few weeks the engine was drained of all fluids and removed from the railcar before having a steam clean and made ready for strip-down. The engine was transported to Paul Morris Enterprises workshops, in mid-December, with the costs being very kindly covered by the transportation company. The initial engine assessment received is that the issue is limited to number 6 piston and cylinder which it appears had nipped up in the bore. The cause and further information are awaited along with likely timescales and any costs to repair.



Obviously, this is a disappointment for everyone involved but it is better that the problem has arisen now rather than later in the commissioning process, or even when running in service. Unfortunately, that is what tests are for: not all tests pass first time!

Although this issue will be seen as a potential delay to the return to traffic of the Railcar, this does not necessarily have to be the case. While the engine is being assessed and rectified, all the work required to complete the rest of the vehicle's renovations is being undertaken concurrent with the engine rebuild. It is therefore possible that the overall timescale to restoration completion may not need to be extended by any significant amount, although this is dependent on no further issues being identified with the engine.

On-Track Machines

Jamie Douglas

DR73434: This machine has now returned from an extended period out of service from July 2023 until mid-2025, during which time we undertook significant refurbishment of the tamping units, weld repairs to cracks in the tamping unit frames, repairs to the engine bay roof panels and we continued the repainting of the machine. Over the summer we completed the commissioning of an improved tamping depth control system, following which the machine carried out some tamping jobs around the railway. Also, the engine-bay doors have been repaired and repainted into black with lettering and the BR cycling lion emblem on the transmission bay doors. The machine was transported to the Bluebell Railway in December to undertake some contract works and will remain there until early April.

DR73315: This 07-275 Points & Crossings machine arrived on the railway in early September 2025. It was first preserved in around 2006, carrying out contract works for Railway Support Services (RSS) and based mainly at the Gloucester Warwickshire Railway, before moving to the Bluebell Railway, where it spent several years in open storage. It will require a certain amount of body and working system repairs. The current priority with this machine is to make sure each system fundamentally “works” before working through a comprehensive recommissioning program to thoroughly test the machine to bring it into full service.

“Do we need *another* tamper?” I hear people ask ... The opportunity arose to purchase this machine, and we felt that it has a purpose to fulfil in supporting tamping on the K&ESR. First, the preservation of an 07 points and crossings tamper alongside our 07 plain line machine ensures that the 07 series tamping machines, that maintained the UK rail network from the 1970s until well into the 2000s, are properly preserved. And it provides the opportunity to tell the story of track infrastructure maintenance - as part of the educational element of the K&ESR's charitable status. Second, during the period of refurbishment works on DR73434, there were times where the K&ESR had no tamper cover, as DR75201 was out on external hire at the same time. The aim with DR73315 is that, in time, it will give our fleet some resilience, allowing us to have one machine under maintenance/refurbishment/repair, another



The new decals on 73434

(Neil Edwards)



75201 on display at Ashford

(Jamie Douglas)

out on external hire, whilst retaining the third to carry out tamping at the K&ESR.

It is also worth noting that the external hire of the on-track machines has brought in tens of thousands of pounds in additional income, used to fund the refurbishment and upkeep of the machines – essentially meaning that other railways are subsidising the upkeep of the K&ESR track infrastructure.

DR75201: Following a successful hire to the Bluebell last year, this machine was displayed at the Southeastern Railway Ashford Depot Open Day on August Bank Holiday 2025. The event was a great success, and I'd like to say a big thank you to the organisers for having us there – we were really pleased to have been invited and were delighted how much engagement we got from visitors!

DR77329: The ballast regulator continues to support the railway, but does require some repairs to one of the ballast conveyor belts. This work will have to be carried out by contractors, which we hope to arrange as soon as practicable. In the meantime, this limits its abilities to ploughing only.

DR98211: A great deal of work has been carried out over a number of years on this machine, including significant repairs to both cabs and the engine bay by our good friend, the late Jon Grimwood. However, in the last 6 months we have made a real effort to bring this versatile machine closer to a return to service. This work has included calibration of the speedometers,

installation of built in tail lights, replacement of work lights for new LED units, resealing of the slewing cylinders on the loader to cure a hydraulic oil leak and completion of the 24 monthly maintenance. Given the length of time the machine has been out of use, we have had to go through the various hydraulic, pneumatic and electrical systems carefully to ensure safe and correct operation.

Other Machines: In addition to the machines already mentioned, 4 other tamping machines also exist around the railway. The most interesting of these is probably DR74108, an 05 series tamping machine dating from 1964. This is one of the oldest tamping machines surviving in the country, if not the world. However, this has not been used for about 30 years, with much of this time spent stored under the trees at Wittersham Road. Sadly, we just do not have the resources available to restore this machine, even just cosmetically, and so have spent time over the past few years trying to find a new home where it might find a better future. Despite a promising start, we have been unable to find somewhere to take this on, and so it is likely that it will be scrapped. Secondly, the two American tamping machines (the yellow one many of you will have seen working around the railway over the years, and the orange one in the trees at Wittersham Road) will also be cut up for component recovery and scrap over the coming year. Finally, DR75202, the sister machine to DR75201, will also hopefully find a new home this year – we are very aware of the space limitations around the railway!

ROLLING STOCK

Carriage & Wagon

John Wheller

Maunsell NBO 4443 (K&ESR no.54)

Work continued throughout the autumn to complete the refurbishment of the NBO, to have it ready to re-join the Wealden Pullman, which in turn would allow our other NBO to be released for use on the Santa Specials. Most doors on the traditional rolling stock open outwards, which causes problems with water ingress. On timber framed coaches, this causes the timber to rot, and 4443 is no exception. In order to try and mitigate this, rain strips have been fabricated and fitted over all the doors, and the rotten areas repaired. The Headcorn-end corridor buffing plate was bent

and has been replaced, and all ironmongery removed and repainted. Large sections of the timber step boards have been replaced and, along with the solebars and underframes, have been repainted. The coach has been jacked up and the bogies run out for safety checks and general servicing, with minor repairs carried out. The final painting to the exterior of the coach was completed on time, but the signwriting and lining was only completed to the shed side before the coach had to go back into service. With the completion of the Santa Specials and the last Pullman train on New Years Eve, the NBO re-entered the shed to have the lining and signwriting completed. While this very time-consuming work was taking place the ceilings in most of the coach are being replaced, as the old moulded



NBO 4443 newly outshopped

(John Wheller)

“hardboard” is life expired. It is being replaced with the same low maintenance plastic product that has been successfully installed in the GWR Railcar.

BR Mark 1 TTO S4355 (K&ESR no.68)

Work continued with the completion of the “blood and custard” external painting and varnishing. While the external work was in progress, the disused toilet was converted into a cupboard for the use of the train crew. Works completed, the coach left the shed at the end of October.

BR Mark 1 CK Sc25446 (K&ESR no.63)

The coach spent a week in the shed in early October for a B-exam and service. While in, the opportunity was taken to carry out minor repairs to some of the internal ply panelling in the corridor and on some of the doors. Works completed, the coach left the shed to go back into service.

BR Mark 1 BSO S9269 (K&ESR no.73)

No.73 followed no.63 into the shed for an 18-month exam and service. Works included adjusting the ride height and packing out with steel shims, servicing all the door locks, and finally a vacuum brake test. Works completed, the coach rejoined the fleet at the end of October.

BR Mark 1 BCK W21245

This coach followed no.73 into the shed for a

major restoration and rebuild. The BCK is the most recent coach acquisition having been used in the recent past by Riviera Trains on the mainline, on steam specials. The coach is suffering from all the usual Mk1 coach issues of rusting steel, asbestos, water damaged timber work and a large amount of filler. Having said that, its nothing that we haven't dealt with before. Having been used on the main line, the coach is equipped with air brakes and electric heating and will need to be reconfigured to vacuum braking and steam heating, although it is being considered to retain the air braking for future use. Plans were considered to convert the luggage end of the coach for the use of passengers who use wheelchairs, but it was not possible to comply with current regulations and retain the guard's facility in the space available. An alternative coach is being considered for future conversion for use on the “B” set. The coach entered the shed at the end of



The work on W21245 starts

(John Wheller)

October for what will probably be a two year rebuild. Work commenced with the strip out of the luggage area, removal of doors and windows etc. Work has been concentrated on the Robertsbridge end where, following the removal of the corridor connection, the rusting steelwork has been removed and the crash pillars repaired. Due to the extent of the asbestos within the coach, (far more than usual due to the electric heating,) internal work has stopped until the specialists have removed it all, and made the coach safe. Work continues, however, on cleaning up the aluminium windows and all the doors. One of the problems the shed faces is where to store all the items taken out of the coach. The seating needs a clean dry location, and the hundreds of small and not so small parts need numbering and kept safe. Despite the size of the shed, it is not so big when full of coaches, so we use box vans as much as possible so as to keep the shed from being too cluttered.

12 Ton Box vans M501346 and M515184 (the KitKat van)

Both these vans entered the shed in December to

provide storage for items removed from the BCK. Unfortunately, it was found that on the KitKat van the roof leaked, and the shed side door was in need of replacement. The leak to the roof has been repaired and a new sliding door made in-house and refitted. Both vans are now full of BCK parts.

The Woolwich Coach (K&ESR no.67)

This coach also entered the shed in December for repairs to its body work. It has been necessary to lock out compartments, as the access doors had become unsafe due to rotten wood and swollen doors, due to water ingress and damp. It was found that some of the door jambs on the shed side had decayed and needed replacing. This has been done, together with a section of the ply panelling and timber tracery. This section is currently being repainted and the coach will undergo an 18-month exam and safety check before leaving the shed.

BR Mark 1 TSO S15927 (K&ESR no.86)

S15927 entered the shed in January for an 18-month exam and service.

OPERATING

Signalling

Tony Ramsey

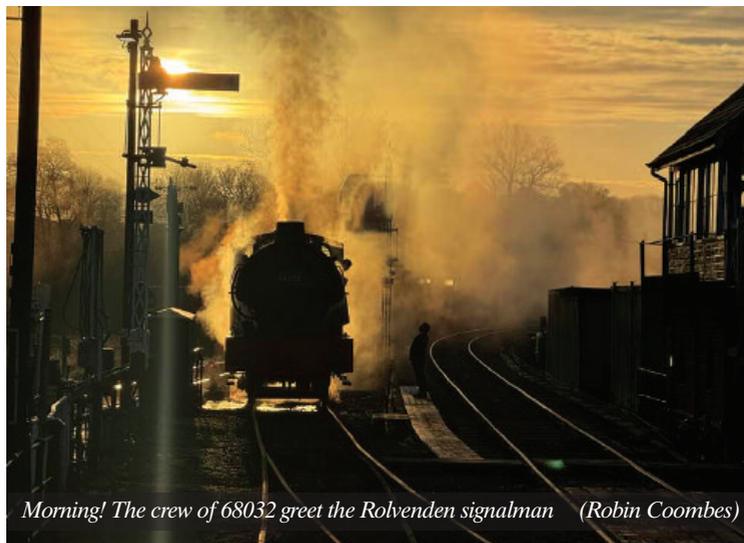
The period covered by this report has inevitably been a quiet one, except for the Santa Specials which, from a signalling perspective, seemed to run very well. Thank you to all who helped by undertaking a box turn, a crossing turn or a lamping turn (or even all three!).

There have not been any signalman passing out turns recently.

However, we congratulate returning volunteer Oli Bournes and new volunteer Dick Denyer, both of whom have passed out as crossing keepers at Cranbrook Road, and new volunteer Andy Hobdell, who has passed out as a crossing keeper at

Rolvenden gates.

The inspectors are currently in the process of revising the presentation of the Special Instructions to Signalmen and Crossing Keepers. It is hoped the amended format will make them easier to use. We are also pleased to report that



Morning! The crew of 68032 greet the Rolvenden signalman (Robin Coombes)

new green flags have been provided at the level crossings. It is hoped that these will represent an improvement for both crossing keepers and traincrew.

Regretfully, we have to say farewell to Cranbrook Road Crossing Keeper Frank Bortoli, who has had to retire on health grounds. Thank you, Frank, for the contribution you made during your four years with us.

Finally, we were delighted that we were able to resume the tradition of a post-Christmas departmental lunch in the Tenterden Buffet. We extend our thanks to Sean Webb and the Catering Team for an excellent occasion.

Station Masters

Geoff Colvin

There is always a temptation when writing these reports to look backwards, events to describe and people to thank. This morning the sun is shining after what feels like months of rain, crocus and the first daffodils are flowering in the garden. We are a week away from the first services of 2026, perhaps time to think ahead instead.

Among the aspects of K&ESR life that give me greatest pleasure is being involved in supporting newcomers to the platform, those who have decided to give volunteering with us a try for the first time or those who fancy a different role for a change.

Most newcomers start with a spell as a platform assistant, a great way to find out about the Railway; learning how we deal with safety, customer care and to help manage the station routine. Some people decide that this is the perfect role for them. It works particularly well for those who, for whatever reason, cannot commit to a full day's volunteering. For others it is the first step on a journey that will lead to places they may not have imagined at the outset.



Sunset at Wittersham Road

(Col McLaughlin)

The recruitment team has been working overtime through the autumn. As a result, we begin the season with a dozen new faces starting their training, ages ranging from 16 to “retired”. I look forward to getting to know them all and watching them progress.

Some will be undertaking their first shifts during the visit of the Gruffalo. These themed events are proving popular; many visitors experiencing the K&ESR for the first time and providing an opportunity to encourage return visits. The timetable calls for a focused burst of activity with just 15 minutes between arrival and departure. Returning passengers, many small children, to be helped from the train, coaches tidied up and then those travelling on the next train shown to their seats. This is all followed by smiling and waving on departure. We have a reputation as a friendly railway to nurture.

This year should also see the regular appearance on platforms of young volunteers who have been the initial members of the Youth Heritage Scheme. The enthusiasm and thirst for knowledge of this group has been inspiring. If this is maintained the K&ESR will be in good hands in years to come.

A brief look backwards is required, to congratulate Roy Cooper on passing out as Station Master at Bodiam, and to say thank you to all the team for successfully negotiating 2025, including 264 turns covered during Santa.

Travelling Ticket Inspectors

Murray Motley

Have you read Nick Pallant's excellent first history of our railway "Holding the Line"? If not, may I commend it to you as a superb description of the line's early history in preservation. You will learn that back in the early 1960s there were many dedicated young people, some in their early teens, giving as freely of their time as today's volunteers do. What struck me is the sheer number of youngsters at that time who helped give us what we have now. Over the ensuing decades more have come along so that today we have the precious entity called the Kent and East Sussex Railway with which we are entrusted.

Ah yes! But time waits for no one! If our railway is to continue to thrive and prosper we need to welcome and encourage further cohorts of youngsters – kindle their interest and encourage them to get involved. So last year, under the guidance of Tori Jones and Matt Hyner, we set up the Youth Heritage Scheme, open to young people 13 years and older where we encourage enthusiastic individuals to come and join us, get involved and start what may be a life-long journey of railway enthusiasm. For reasons of safety and legality there are limits to what they can do but one area in which they can be fully involved is as platform assistants and assistant travelling ticket inspectors.

We have a small group involved in various areas and two in particular William and Ben, have joined the TTI cohort as trainee TTIs. Their enthusiasm, dedication and willingness to learn is inspiring and they can certainly teach this sixty-something retired railwayman a thing or two! In due course, one would like to become a signaller, the other to get involved in the engineering department but age precludes this for a couple of years yet so we have encouraged them to make a start with us in the TTI team. It has been wonderful to watch colleagues, many of them considerably older than these two, welcome and encourage them to get involved. It is my hope to have both of them passed out as competent Assistant Travelling Ticket Inspectors by the end of the Easter Holiday but for now, they have been helping on both train and platform. It isn't just these two however and I really hope others in the group will become more involved in the different areas of our railway. Why? Because these youngsters are part of our future and every bit as valuable as those early pioneers and their successors to whom we owe so much. Some of them are still around today ... you know who you are!

So, if you come across any of our Junior Heritage Volunteers on the railway, say hello and give them some encouragement. Maybe they'll be checking your ticket next time you're out on the train!



Our staff at Dover, telling the story of the Cavell van

(Sarah Harvey)

Permanent Way

Paul Jessett

Autumn and winter remain the busiest periods for the Permanent Way team. With limited access to the line during the summer running season, maintenance activities accumulate and must be completed before the start of Santa services. This year we have hosted a variety of visiting locomotives - from small “Dwarves of Steam” engines to a Class 50 for the Diesel Gala.

Although we operate as a light railway, we are committed to following industry best practice, even with the age of many of our track components. The team has been actively patrolling the railway to identify and address defects, though persistent wet weather after Christmas delayed several major planned works.

New gates have been installed at Harvester’s Crossing, requiring the footpath level to be raised by two metres and replacing the previous flooded stiles with swing kissing gates. Additional work has included jacking and packing along Hexden straight and replacing numerous seized fishplate bolts.



The new gate at Harvester’s (Paul Jessett)

Long-standing railwear issues have resulted in flattened railheads, accelerating flange and wheelset wear. Late last year and into this year, we are host to both a single-car track recording vehicle and a block rail-grinding machine from Schwebbau during their commissioning for TfL. Their track recorder identified priority areas, allowing the block grinder - along with a rotary-stone grinder en route from Germany to its London Overground contract - to reprofile the railhead from Rolvenden signal box to Northiam

gates over five days. This work has improved ride quality and reduced flange wear, with further grinding planned when the machine returns.

We are also pleased to welcome our new Independent Competent Civil Engineer, Charles Hamer, who has begun inspections of our bridges and culverts. Charles brings extensive experience from major UK nuclear infrastructure projects, and we look forward to receiving his reports and recommendations.



Grinding at Newmill Bridge (Paul Jessett)

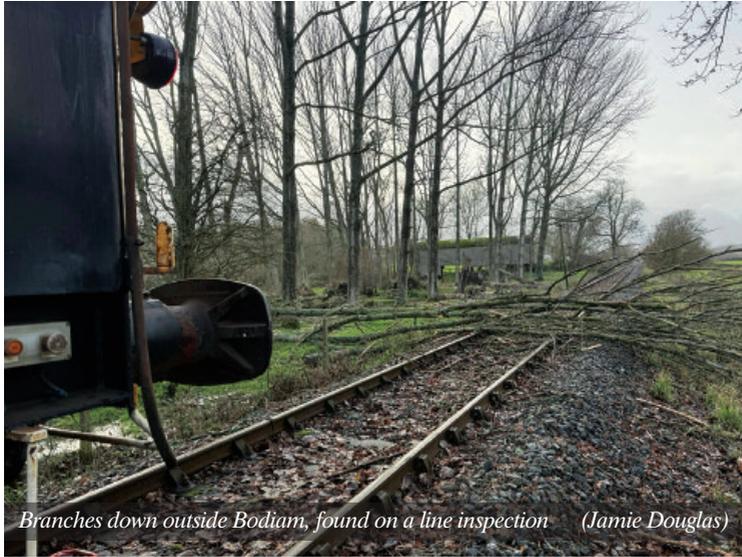
During the consistently wet Fridays in January, the team focused on track work inside the Rolvenden carriage shed. When the shed was constructed, we ran out of worn rail for two of the roads, resulting in the installation of rail in unusually good condition. It has long been our intention to replace these with worn rail, which will now be cascaded into running lines as appropriate. The indoor environment also allowed us to trial the newly recommissioned TRAMM - our thanks go to Clive and Jamie for their work on this.

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a demanding year for the P.Way department. The railway relies on its volunteers, and you don’t need specialist skills or high fitness levels to contribute. Tasks such as laying out pads and clips, holding the levelling line, or hand-tightening fishplate bolts are all valuable. For those wishing to take on more complex roles, training will be provided. If you - or family members - are interested in helping, even for just a couple of hours, please speak to us or contact Frim, myself, or any member of the team. Your involvement will support our planning for upcoming tracklaying sessions, and you will be able to say you played a part in this significant achievement.

Forestry & Conservation

Steve McMurdo

The team has had a busy and varied past few months working along the line in our never-ending mission to keep vegetation under control. We're a year-round operating group and have experienced some challenging conditions over this winter, caused by the seemingly endless rain. Certain parts of the line have been even more of a challenge to actually reach than in previous years.



Branches down outside Bodiam, found on a line inspection (Jamie Douglas)

We still made time to organise our annual November fund raising event, when the Tenterden Christmas market was being held. The Railway was closed when this was on, and we have raised decent amounts of money for the K&ESR over the years by organising the opening and operating of our station car park as a paid for facility for motorists visiting the market.

This year, we were present for 6 days (6 long days, some might say) and managed to generate just over £3,000, which went straight into K&ESR funds. It did seem the event wasn't quite as well supported by the public, and our takings were consequently lower than previous years, but still extremely worthwhile.

The Railway asked our department to assist in the preparation of a secluded piece of land beyond the carriage shed at the very far end of our Rolvenden field. This is being developed as an extensive conservation area, facilitated by generous financial

support and expert guidance from various sources and overseen by Kent County Council. The scheme comprises the requirement of the restoration of an existing large pond in the wooded part of the site, which has now been significantly extended and deepened. These works required the use of a large tracked excavator and it was necessary for us to fell various trees around the boundary of the pond to enable access into the area, so that this could go ahead. Whilst this may at first hearing have a certain irony, it should be noted that the terms of

the KCC agreement include the supplying of no less than two thousand tree whips to us, comprising blackthorn, dogwood, dog rose, oak, field maple, hawthorn, hazel and fifteen larger and established elm trees. These were carefully selected and are particularly relevant to the environment being created here. The additional elms will supplement the ten we planted nearby in 2024. The trees arrived at Rolvenden in January and we have made a start on

their planting. The elms have already been added to the line of the existing ten and can be seen from passing trains. The whips will be strategically spread across the site and will also be planted alongside the railway itself at nearby locations to create hedging in the Wittersham Road direction. Preventative action is essential so these trees are not attacked by the Rolvenden rabbit population and other consumers. The whips being spread across the site will each require a supporting cane and tube-shaped tree protector. The elms being considerably larger are supported by stakes and tree guards.

We have planted thousands of trees over the years and (somehow) an efficient teamwork solution has evolved with each person knowing their place and adopting a role such as marking out the location, selecting and bringing trees to planting spots, actual planting, application of tree guards etc.

Poetry in motion? Maybe not entirely ...

GROUPS AND ASSOCIATES

Bodiam

Malcolm Burgess

While the “quiet season” provides opportunities to undertake tasks that are much more difficult when trains are running, inevitably winter weather can restrict our ability to tackle outdoor jobs. Low temperatures and wet conditions are not conducive to applying paint or mixing mortar, and the ground is too often too soggy for any meaningful garden work. On the positive side, the natural water supplies need replenishing if we are to avoid use restrictions next summer. As a consequence, we try to find sufficient jobs that can be done inside, using the limited indoor workspace that we have.

Heritage platform seats need regular painting if they are to be kept presentable, and to prevent



Ron Gray repainting a bench

(Malcolm Burgess)

deterioration. However, they are extremely heavy and difficult to manoeuvre, as well as taking up a lot of space, so the only dry area we have to tackle these is in the waiting room/museum. Before a seat can be repainted it has to dry out for a couple of weeks. Ron Gray has been working hard to get one completed before we have to free up the waiting



Adrian Freeman cleaning the station canopy

(Malcolm Burgess)



Colin King starts to prepare the Bodiam flower beds

(Malcolm Burgess)

room again for the February visitors. We wait to see whether there will then be time to deal with another before Mothers' Day!

We have an extensive collection of platform trolleys at Bodiam, all of which are kept outdoors and thus deteriorate quite quickly. Graham Holden and Jim Barnes have been busy restoring two of these in the workshop, leaving limited space for other projects. Before Christmas, Graham completed the mammoth task of repainting the south facing roof elevations of both the toilet block and the station building. They now look extremely good.

Weather and the effect of steam locomotives coat the station building in a lot of grime. Adrian Freeman has already made a start on washing down the platform facing walls and canopy so that we stand a chance of starting the new season in a presentable state. In the PMV, I am refurbishing some of the signs from around the station so that passengers know where (and where not) to go.

Although the weather is really not too encouraging for gardening, Colin King has already started tidying the front garden as the first shoots of new growth appear. Bags of compost have already been deposited on the hop garden, ready for spreading

as the days get a bit warmer.

The new chairman came to talk to the group in December about the issues for Bodiam when the link to Robertsbridge is completed. Among other matters the toilet block is beginning to look quite tired internally and we have suggested that a refurbishment would be beneficial before the link is open. Meanwhile Bruce Sharpe has been making some improvements to keep things reasonable for the time being.

Gardening 1

Carol Usher

Happy New Year to all our readers.

We finished the gardening mid-November, clearing leaves, generally tidying up where we could and emptying hanging baskets into our new compost bins. We spent two mornings digging out the compost from the old bins, distributing it around the beds, and then installed the donated bins. Now we just need to start them again. That won't take long with all we have to cut back.

We helped out in the catering dept in November, packing up the goody bags for the Santa Special trains. All good fun. A few of us helped out in

December to distribute the bags on the trains. What a fantastic atmosphere it was, everyone having lots of fun and so grateful for the day they had. What a privilege it was, as volunteers, to be a part of it all.

This year, if we ever get started with all the wet weather we are having, we are planning on replanting the signal box garden. We are looking for drought resistant plants, as this garden is difficult to water. There is so much to do at Tenterden station, we are always busy.

If anyone has any spare plants or cuttings from the garden, we will gladly find a home for them. Also, we are always looking for like-minded people to join us in our gardening group. If you have a few hours spare on a Tuesday morning, do come along and introduce yourself. No experience necessary.

Gardening 2

Veronica Hopker

In my last gardening report I was pleased to let our readers know that the Memorial Wall has been extended, due to the growing numbers of families wishing to record the service their late family member has given to the Railway. We have been very pleased at the reaction to “the wall” and are endeavouring to increase the gardens to create a meaningful area for families to visit.

As mentioned previously, we do have a problem with the rabbit population, despite the wire mesh round the base of the fence surrounding the whole garden. They continually find ways to dig under the fence and then appear in the middle of the small flower bed! They must have radar!

More bulbs have been planted in the gardens, together with more seeds scattered, so we are now waiting to see what appears before doing anything further. We had a reasonable display of small bulbs during the summer and hope they will return in future.

The area between the road and the memorial garden is also being developed. There is the seat, created by the Tuesday Group from a wheel-set, together with a few trees. David Holman suggested we create a space for quiet contemplation in this area, where family members can wander through the grass and flowers which we will plant later this year. This is currently “work in progress”, and will be developed during the year.

Liz Brown spread her usual “magic” around the

picnic garden and the station, by keeping the gardens blooming and the pots on the station flowering throughout the season. Liz has introduced a small pergola to brighten up the middle of the picnic area. It will give the whole garden a new look.

Due to age and a decline in our health Graham (leader of Tuesday Group) and myself have decided to cut back on our commitment to Northiam but will continue to work whenever we can. David Holman will be taking over the continued care and progress of the memorial garden.

Tuesday Group

Andrew Limpkin

With big changes at the top at Tenterden, there is also change for the Northiam Tuesday Group. Graham Hopker, who has run the Tuesday Group for nearly 30 years, has decided to hand over his keys. So, as of January 2026, I will take over, with the help of the great Northiam team. We all intend to continue Graham’s legacy and get the site ready for the opening of the Robertsbridge extension.



Graham and Veronica will still be active with the group, and we look forward to continuing to work with them. The Tuesday Group would also like to thank Mark Taylor, who has been involved with us on the gardening team for about 20 years. Mark has had to retire from the group for personal reasons. We all wish him well.

Clive has installed new sockets along the station wall for the Christmas lights. After helping with the Santa Specials, we carried on with the winter maintenance work at Northiam. We have done further work on staff cottage 2, and had a good clear up around both cottages. We have also started a deep clean and repaint of the station

toilets. Steve Dunn has made a replacement louvre window for the disabled toilet, as the window was found to be rotten beyond repair, and we have replaced the light fittings with energy efficient LED ones.

As we approach spring, we hope that with help from other KESR departments, we can really get Northiam looking great for the summer.

Museum Notes

Chris Jackson

As anticipated, the museum finished the 2025 season with almost exactly 15,000 visitors up to the end of October, an average of almost 100 for each of the 157 opening days. Donations were slightly up on the total received in 2024, while the healthy sales takings benefited from some substantial donations of model railway equipment as well as many second-hand books, and other memorabilia, during the year.

Attention then turned to preparing the Cavell Van for its much-anticipated return to Dover Marine station, after more than 80 years, to take part in the South Eastern Railway Remembrance parade and service at the beginning of November. This was a particularly poignant occasion, falling exactly 105 years after the van was used for the repatriation of the Unknown Warrior in November 1920.

The commemoration was followed by half a dozen public visiting days, hosted in conjunction with the Port of Dover. These were very well attended, with almost 1,700 people travelling from far and wide to come and see the van. Several of them had direct connections to the story, including relatives of Rev. David Railton, and the driver of the Unknown Warrior's train. A new edition of Brian Janes' book had been produced in time for the visit, and this generated healthy sales, in addition to the many generous donations towards the upkeep of the van. Particular thanks are due to Elliott Waters, who co-ordinated the arrangements with Southeastern and Alleleys, and to all the volunteers from across the K&ESR family who helped to staff the van during the visit.

This winter's work programme has seen a complete recarpeting of the museum, replacing the life-expired tiles which had been in place for upwards of 25 years. Many thanks to Carol and Terry Quick for a generous donation of nearly-new replacement carpet tiles, and to Matt Stubbs and Peter Blakeman for installing them. We have also

embarked on a long-planned 'refresh' of the East Kent Railway displays.

Recent additions to the collection include a cast 'Trains Cross Here' warning sign of the pattern used at both Tenterden and Northiam; this has been installed in the main corridor. January saw the arrival of a Webb & Thompson electric train staff machine, of the type used on the K&ESR from the late 1920s. The museum already had three example staffs from the Tenterden – Rolvenden and Northiam – Bodiam sections; now we also have a matching machine. Many thanks to Nick Wellington for tracking it down, and to Dave and Matt Stubbs for collecting it from South Wales.



The newly arrived staff machine (Chris Jackson)

Meanwhile, work continues in the archives to catalogue and record the many historic records as well as newly-acquired photographs and documents.

We are now gearing up for the 2026 season, with the museum reopening with effect from March 29. Our intention is that the museum will be open every day that the railway is operating, up to the end of October. This will depend to some extent on the availability of volunteer attendants. Although we have seen a couple of additions to our ranks in recent years, age and infirmity continue to take their toll, and more volunteers would always be appreciated. Please contact me if you would like more details.



As its time on the K&ESR comes to an end, 76017 is seen at Bodiam on New Year's Day 2026 (Phil Edwards)



Hastings at Bodiam on 29th August 2025 with, L to R, Driver Ian Scarlett, Fireman Edward McNaughton & Trainee Fireman Zoe Clark-Monks

(Ian Scarlett)



75008 approaches Cranbrook Road with a Santa Special on 20th December 2025

(Phil Edwards)



68032 climbs Tenterden Bank on 13th December 2025

(Phil Edwards)



68032 on shed at Rolvenden on 15th August 2025 while 76017 takes water

(Ian Scarlett)

Tenterden Terrier Online

Members of the Kent & East Sussex Railway can receive the Tenterden Terrier in electronic (PDF) format. Help save money and volunteer time by registering at <http://kesr.org.uk/tenterden-terrier-online>

You can, if you wish, still receive a printed copy; but the more people requesting PDF copies only the greater the saving in both printing and postage.

KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY 300 CLUB PRIZE WINNERS

September 2025

1st	Margaret Sandra	No. 018	£160
2nd	Neil D Clark	No. 052	£140
3rd	Richard Crumpling	No. 875	£120
4th	Richard Sharp	No. 1182	£110
5th	Peter Jeffries	No. 610	£100
6th	Richard Sharp	No. 1126	£90
7th	Dave Tibbatts	No. 498	£80
8th	Ivor H Davies	No. 459	£70
9th	Geoffrey Broadhurst	No. 1401	£60
10th	Roger Chaplin	No. 566	£50
11th	Steve Newman	No. 1312	£40
12th	Graham Southon	No. 1289	£30
13th	B J West	No. 548	£20
14th	Robin M Tinsley	No. 881	£10

October 2025

1st	Mr E Stockdale	No. 281	£100
2nd	Ken George	No. 356	£90
3rd	Clive Norman	No. 392	£80
4th	Mr S Foster	No. 353	£70
5th	Mrs Pat Coombs	No. 220	£60
6th	Mrs S R Adlington	No. 375	£50
7th	Ken George	No. 359	£40
8th	Paul Gurley	No. 677	£30
9th	Robin M Tinsley	No. 879	£20
10th	Graham Hopker	No. 1191	£10

November 2025

1st	Mr A R Bainchi	No. 136	£100
2nd	Mark Jenner	No. 1205	£90
3rd	Frank Wenham	No. 360	£80
4th	Martin Keable	No. 317	£70
5th	Michael Staff	No. 768	£60
6th	Paul Chandler	No. 1324	£50
7th	Roger Humphries	No. 1318	£40
8th	Andrew Bolton	No. 926	£30
9th	Peter Cole	No. 607	£20
10th	G W Bennett	No. 131	£10

December 2025

1st	Caroline Warne	No. 1304	£250
2nd	Ray Mulligan	No. 1301	£200
3rd	Chris McNaughton	No. 008	£175
4th	Richard Seddon	No. 541	£150
5th	Mrs Pat Greenwood	No. 1163	£125
6th	David Jeffrey	No. 1346	£100
7th	Peter Bainbridge	No. 1228	£90
8th	Kent Evenden	No. 192	£80
9th	David Orpin	No. 1033	£70
10th	Colin Avey	No. 982	£60
11th	Kevin Bulled	No. 1009	£50
12th	Ron Mortimer	No. 1353	£40
13th	Matt Hyner	No. 811	£30
14th	Mrs M E Bignell	No. 580	£20
15th	Ian Scarlett	No. 898	£10

To join the 300 Club or for more information contact Chris Garman or Colin Avey at 300Club@kesr.org.uk
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The Cavell Van and A story of Logistics, and more



The Cavell Van ready to leave Wittersham Road

(Elliott Waters)

Throughout November 2025 the Cavell Van which, of course, usually resides at Bodiam made a very special trip to Dover Western Docks. As part of Railway 200 it returned there for the first time since 1920 to take part in a Remembrance ceremony at the station.

Built in 1919 by the South Eastern & Chatham Railway at Ashford, the van was a prototype and given number 132. Before it had a chance to enter general service, it was used for some very special roles. First came the transportation of the body of nurse Edith Cavell from Dover to London Victoria, as part of its repatriation from Belgium back to the UK. The van then made two further trips, one carrying the remains of Captain Charles Fryatt and the final one carrying the body of the Unknown Warrior. Following these special journeys, the van then entered general service and finished its career in 1991 at Guildford as a general

stores van before purchase from British Rail for the Kent & East Sussex Railway. Its full historic significance was meanwhile uncovered and the van consequently underwent an extensive restoration in 2010, a project headed up by Norman Brice¹.

This year's story began on 5th November 2024, when a Southeastern senior manager approached me; he had recently been to Norwich and learnt about Edith Cavell's story. He asked, "What do you think, Elliott? Can you make it happen?" Tasked with doing exactly that, I approached Brian Janes, the then curator of the van, who enthusiastically said, "Yes, absolutely." It's there that the wheels on the project started to turn.

However, it's not as easy as just sticking the van on a low-loader and taking it to Dover. The old Western Docks station is now a cruise terminal and UK border point: the platforms have been in-filled, and there's no longer rail access. There were many (metaphorical) bridges to navigate if this was

nd Dover 2025

aking history

to happen. The Port of Dover was appraised of the idea and immediately agreed to the concept - providing that Southeastern manage the project and seek the relevant permissions from the Port as required. Easy, or so you would like to think!

Many planning meetings and site visits to both Dover and Bodiam took place, and the idea was shaped in to reality. Before we knew it, the plans were drawn up, measurements taken to understand step heights and platform offsets, the haulier had been booked, traffic requests submitted, and finance secured. It was decided the van would be placed across the old track bed in what is the cruise terminal's baggage area, for with the infilling of the platforms, beneath the old station footbridge is just too low to bring the van in through the front. This meant it would be adjacent to the monumental SE&CR war memorial adding a new focal point to the Remembrance service, standing near where HMS *Verdun* unloaded the coffin of the Unknown Warrior 105 years ago.

With plans finalised, the biggest risk to the project was the weather, particularly the autumn tides at

Dover. These can result in the closure of the access road to the cruise terminal as waves regularly crash over the harbour wall and land on to the roadway with considerable force. If this was to close on delivery day, the event could be in jeopardy.

Fast forward to Monday 20th October. The track is laid in Dover, and the Cavell Van has arrived at Wittersham ready for its journey to the Western Docks. Looking out of the window before leaving Ashford, it looked very grey, windy, with intermittent light showers. Not the ideal weather for transporting a railway van across Kent, or for unloading at Dover. After a quick phone call to Dover port, they confirmed we could still access, but swells were gathering so there would be a chance the access road could close. With that in mind it was off to Wittersham Road to meet the haulier and see how far we could get. At exactly 9am a large Allelys truck turned up with two escorts. Before we knew it, the van was winched on to the low-loader and we were ready to go. A quick call to the port confirmed we could still access and were ready for our arrival, so next stop Dover.



The van's arrival in Dover

(Elliott Waters)



The Cavell Van in position and some of the K&ESR members who made the occasion happen. L to R, Colin Duncan, Norman Brice, Chairman Derek Bilsby and Elliott Waters

(Elliott Waters)

After a steady drive along the A28 to Ashford and then the M20, Dover was firmly in our sights. Waves could be seen coming over the sea wall, but at arrival to the port entrance we were given the green light and in we went. Only one small journey remained and the van would be unloaded before sunset - or so we thought.

After all the careful planning, when opening the harbour side doors these were found to have a small section of scaffolding above which stood in the way of allowing unloading. Without this being removed, we risked unloading the van the wrong way round so it wouldn't be able to be accessed, which was far from ideal. A frantic call by the port to the scaffolding company, and two hours later the scaffolding was in the process of being removed as the sun was starting to set over Dover.

Scaffolding removed, unloading commenced. Slowly but surely, inch by inch, the van was winched off the trailer and on to the small section of track. Millimetre precision, the van carefully rolled in to its end position and on went the brakes. We'd done it!

The last piece of the jigsaw was access to the van. To meet the difference in height, after many measurements of the van at Bodiam and discussions with Southeastern's safety team - a bespoke set of lightweight stainless steel steps were manufactured, which Southeastern have since donated to the K&ESR for use once the van returns home to Bodiam.

After 12 months of planning and weeks of logistics, the Cavell Van was back in Dover and ready for the annual Southeastern Railway and Port of Dover Remembrance service. Coinciding with the Torch of Remembrance journey to Ypres, the service is traditionally held on 5th November. The day of the 2025 service had arrived. It was heart-warming to see how many people appreciated and were moved by the van's attendance and its historical significance. The K&ESR received many votes of thanks throughout the service and was well represented by several members giving up their time to attend. The van then went on to a series of public viewings at the port, giving visitors the opportunity to learn more about its story and that of the K&ESR.

For an event that started as a 'what do you think', to navigating the logistics and challenges along the way, it would not have been possible without the support of Chris Jackson, Brian Janes, and all volunteers who supported its journey and during its visit in Dover. For that, I sincerely thank you. This poignant event, marking Railway 200 and the first time the van has partaken in a remembrance service at Dover Western Docks, will go down in history as a momentous occasion.

Elliott Waters

¹ *The full story of the van, the distinguished person's remains it carried, and its restoration can be found in the newly enlarged and republished 'The Unknown Warrior and the Cavell Van' book available from the K&ESR bookshop at £4 plus postage.*

Robin Coombes Looks Back

It's a wet Tuesday in January. I'm sat in front of the fire, with a cup of tea, rain lashing the window and for the first time in over three years I'm not glancing at the clock wondering what I should already be dealing with. I don't miss that. But I do miss the Railway.

Being General Manager of the Kent & East Sussex Railway really was a dream job. I've joked that it was 'working in paradise', usually before listing the 47 things that had gone wrong before breakfast – but that carries a serious truth. To be entrusted with the K&ESR at this time was a privilege. And more than that, it was stewardship: holding something precious, complex and occasionally infuriating in trust, knowing all the while that your job is not to own it but to pass it on in better shape than you found it.

I had fun. Proper fun. We did, tried and learned a lot, sometimes the hard way, and if I leave with one overriding feeling it's relief mixed with pride. Relief at handing on the executive safety responsibility (which never leaves you, as it shouldn't), and pride in what a determined group of staff and volunteers can achieve.

Unless you've done the job, it's hard to convey how wide the brief really is. On any day it might be a door lock that doesn't work, safeguarding issues, social media storms, a strategic decision that will echo for years, carefully handling a bruised ego, or, far more often, acts of kindness from people unexpectedly stepping up when it matters. The range is immense, responsibility constant and you are truly only as strong as the weakest link, human or otherwise.

It was always a team effort. Nothing meaningful was achieved alone. I've been hands-on when needed, cleaning carriages, clearing snow, walking sites in horizontal rain, and watched others do far more than their 'share' without fuss or fanfare. We survived storms, literal and metaphorical: snow in 2022, funding pressures, post-Covid realities, and all the unseen strains in running a heritage railway today.

There were highlights aplenty. Awards that mattered: TripAdvisor, Muddy Stiletto, Beautiful South, HRA, many on the national stage, including Geoff Colvin's Tourism Superstar award, and a growing sense that the K&ESR was noticed across

the sector for trying new things and doing them well. Innovative events like Mr Doodle brought fresh audiences and energy. We welcomed an extraordinary range of visiting traction: the Standard 4, 257 Squadron – the K&ESR's first ever Pacific (and no, no bridges fell down), an SR U class, *Judy* for the Dwarves of Steam, all those diesel 'firsts' and the long-term arrival of a Class 205 marking another step forward.

The 50th Anniversary was genuinely special; the naming of Class 73 *Kent & East Sussex Railway* at Robertsbridge, *Britannia* running shuttles into the extension. And I'll remember May 2023 – when the Transport & Works Act Order was granted; it was the point when Robertsbridge stopped being an aspiration and became real. The work now underway is substantial, and while completion around 2028 may feel a way off, the direction of travel is clear.

I'm particularly proud of how the railway's profile grew – in the media, in the heritage sector, and in how it was seen as a place willing to lead, not just preserve. Safeguarding, youth engagement, and thinking seriously about the next generation were not "add-ons"; they were central. If this railway is to thrive beyond nostalgia, it has to belong to people who haven't yet fallen in love with it.

I'll miss the cut and thrust – the pace, the unpredictability, the sense that today *really* matters. But I'm moving on, including to an update to my doctoral work. It's no longer ivory-tower theory. Covid alone changed everything and the lessons are now written in lived experience, not footnotes.

But most of all, I must celebrate the unsung heroes: people who turn up, keep going, fix things quietly, make the tea, spot the problem before it becomes an incident, and care deeply about getting it right. They are the Railway.

This is a handover, not a farewell. Stewardship means knowing when to step aside and let others carry it forward. To the next generation – in all senses – I wish you joy, resilience, and the occasional dry Tuesday by the fire, looking back and knowing it was worth it.

To the rest of you – yes, even the cynical old hands – thank you. It's been a privilege.

VISITOR NUMBERS 2024/25

The data in the following tables is derived from our ticketing system, Merac. In addition, a number of bookings and passengers are not processed by this system, notably when we hire trains to third parties such as Fox & Edwards. Therefore, the raw system figures are adjusted to take these passengers into account and correct any errors that the booking system has.

Regular Trains

This saw a small uptick on last year, mainly due to early season running in February. Events in 2025 were down on the previous year, mainly due to the successful Gala in 2023 inflating the May figures.

Of note is the economic conditions that have affected traffic throughout the year, especially in the group market. Needless to say, greater effort is being made to attract this business in the coming year.

Events

These had mixed fortunes, with Steampunk continuing to disappoint, with only 425 passengers on the one day. It will be dropped next year.

1940s and associated Schools Evacuation days attracted nearly 2,000 passengers, broadly the same as last year. The Diesel Gala attracted about 1,300 passengers, but due to high costs will not be repeated in 2026. Spellbound Express replaced the Magic Express of last year over October half-term. 823 passengers were carried over four days. Last year this was 378 passengers on two dates. It made a healthy net contribution.

Santa

This is the big showpiece of course. To some extent the volumes are dependent on the calendar, but also economic conditions and promotion. Although we anecdotally had many repeat visitors, a customer survey showed that only about 60% had been before. Therefore, more marketing was needed to keep the numbers up. The actual numbers have been fairly consistent over the last three years, but this year services had at times plenty of capacity. First Class bookings were strong early on, but bookings tapered off as economic

Santa	Trains	Passengers
2023	81	12,890
2024	59	12,790
2025	65	12,373

conditions deteriorated through the year.

Food and Special Trains

Pullmans

The number of Pullman customers was down in 2025 compared to 2024, in part due to the short formed train early in the season when *Theodora* was under overhaul. It must also be said that, in common with many other hospitality businesses, attracting new customers has been difficult, and we will need to reinvigorate our marketing efforts. We believe this is due to the general economic downturn, and anecdotally, perhaps, a reluctance for our mainly older clientele to eat and drive late at night.

In 2024/2025 we ran 26 lunch trains and 25 evening services, including charters. In 2023/2024 there were 24 of both.

Fish and Chip Specials

The steam hauled services proved more popular than diesel, with ten run in 2025 compared to eight in 2024 and 774 passengers compared to 629 the previous year.

Other Special Trains

We did not run any Real Ale services; it has been difficult to find a suitably attractive proposition. However, we did run a Murder Mystery evening, with a meal option. This proved promising despite a short lead time for promotion, and in conjunction with our partners at BLOODS (Bexhill Light Operatic & Dramatic Society), we will offer a number next year. As another charitable organisation, this also speaks strongly to our not-for-profit mission.

Fright Night was again a sell out and we are looking at running two nights next year. We also introduced early birdwatching specials, and these will take place in the spring next year too.

Financial Year	2023/24	2024/25	Change
Adult	13,655	12,183	-11%
Senior	10,743	13,002	+21%
Family & Child	27,022	26,574	-2%
Groups	10,786	4,194	-61%
Priv/Complimentary	3,567	3,462	-3%



2024/25 Financial Year								
Month	Operating Days	Regular Passengers	Events	Pullman Trains	Other Evening Trains	Experiences	Platform Tickets	Total Visitors
November 2024	1		802					802
December 2024	11		13,754	211			11	13,976
January 2025	1		324				43	367
February 2025	11	3,241		86			26	3,353
March 2025	10	984	403	362			31	1,780
April 2025	20	3,934	1,179	316	80	114	548	6,171
May 2025	21	4,173	2,173	311	67	28	664	7,416
June 2025	18	3,463	1,177	253	73	35	719	5,720
July 2025	21	5,182	767	343	221	10	159	6,682
August 2025	25	8,714	367	169	257	40	382	9,929
September 2025	18	3,153	1,235	345	76	3	234	5,046
October 2025	18	2,411	1,055	375	248	2	101	4,192
Totals	175	35,255	23,236	2,771	1,022	232	2,918	65,434

2023/24 Financial Year								
Month	Operating Days	Regular Passengers	Events	Pullman Trains	Other Evening Trains	Experiences	Platform Tickets	Total Visitors
November 2023	4		231					231
December 2023	14	942	12,659	233			7	13,841
January 2024	1	305					20	325
February 2024	7	1,927					17	1,944
March 2024	5	1,036	532	418		60	24	2,070
April 2024	20	3,951	997	730	78	5	518	6,279
May 2024	23	3,504	4,407	302	166	2	379	8,760
June 2024	19	3,512	3,996	241	71	21	805	8,646
July 2024	22	6,311	609	179	167	68	555	7,889
August 2024	27	11,038	643	120	162	3	100	12,066
September 2024	16	2,517	2,675	436	83	3	182	5,896
October 2024	11	1,797	1,573	536		4	92	4,002
Totals	169	36,840	28,322	3,195	727	166	2,699	71,949

THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR AND THE CAVELL VAN

Brian Janes

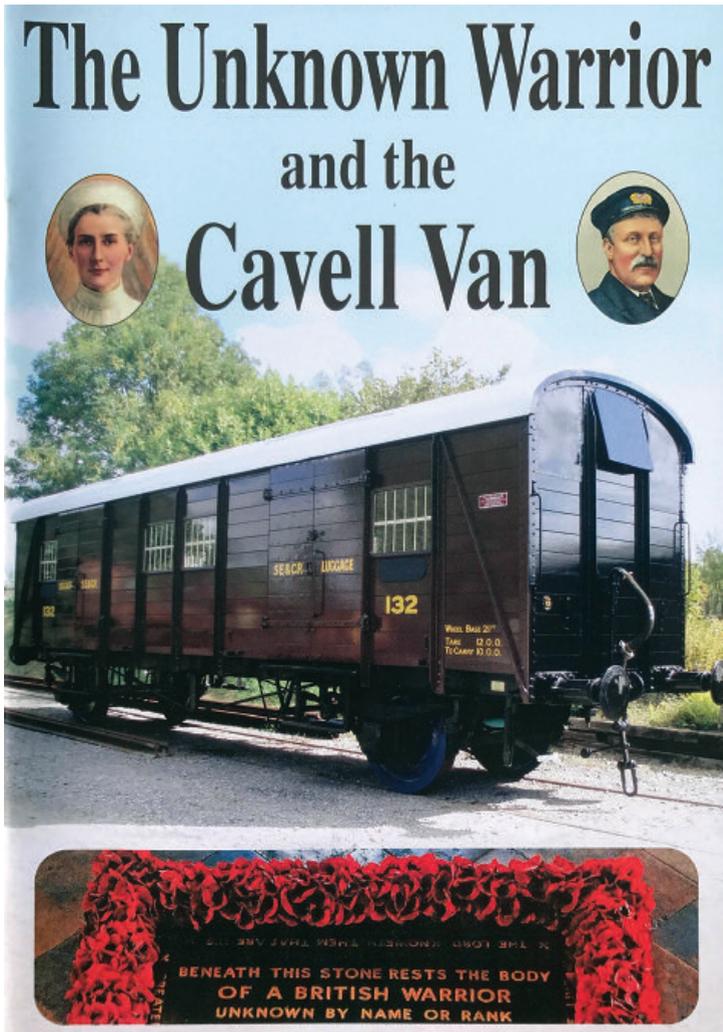
Profusely illustrated. Paperback, K&ESR, available (including online) from the Gift Shop at Tenterden Town Station. No ISBN number. £4.00

This is the second edition of a booklet first published in 2011 about an item of rolling stock that is, with due respect to Terrier No 3 *Bodiam*, the most historic item on the Kent & East Sussex Railway.

On a somewhat mundane level, South Eastern & Chatham Railway van No 132 is the prototype of around 1,500 vans that were, for decades, a feature of the Southern Railway/Region. They are present in some numbers in the heritage scene, even lending their underframes to the restoration of four wheeled vintage coaches. Unlike their equivalents for carrying passenger luggage and perishables on just about every other railway, their aesthetics did not match the company's coaching stock. Originating during the final decade of the SE&CR, they were instead part of a range of four wheel and bogie vans that owed much to the

humble box van in their design concept. This was a value for money approach typical of what made the Southern the most financially successful of the Big Four.

But there is far more that makes the Cavell Van so iconic. It reached that status because of its part in the honouring of three national heroes following the horrors of World War One. The individuals concerned were Nurse Edith Cavell and Captain Edward Fryatt, both the victims of what were even then considered war crimes, as well as the symbolic Unknown Warrior. The part played by what was then known as the 'Special Van' was its use to carry the remains of these persons between Dover and London in, respectively, May 1919, July 1919 and November 1920. This reviewer will not attempt to outline the stories behind these events but instead suggests the reader discover them for his or herself through the



author's highly accessible prose. It is nonetheless worth adding that such was the impact of these events that, in the way of railwaymen, any van of this type became known as a 'Cavell'.

The latter part of the booklet details the history of the Cavell vans, or PMVs, as they became more popularly known and continues with a detailed account of No 132's preservation, itself a complex

story, on the Kent & East Sussex Railway and the restoration effort. This attracted interest at a national level and beyond railway circles. The van's present day place on the Railway and its travels to various commemorative venues in recent decades are covered, including the events described in the item on page 28 of this journal.

NP

HERITAGE RAILWAY GUIDE, THE SWANAGE RAILWAY

Richard Marks

144 pp, comprehensively illustrated in monochrome and colour, paperback, Pen & Sword Transport, George House, Beavor Street, Hoyle Mill, Barnsley,

South Yorkshire, S71 1HN. 2025, ISBN 978-103616614. £16.99

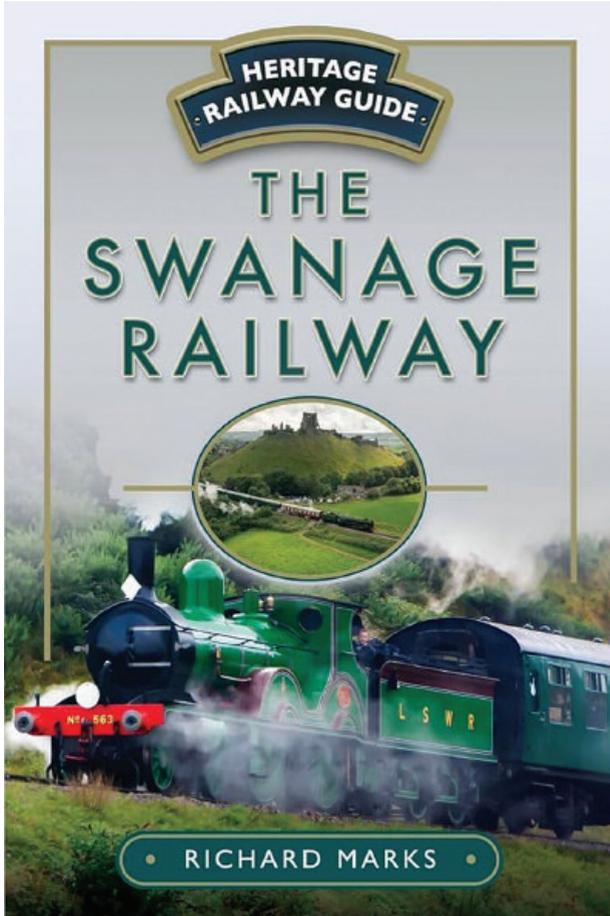
This book, the first of a new series, seems to be an interesting attempt to 'ride two horses at once'. It is written in a style likely to appeal to a casual visitor to the Swanage Railway but to include enough detail for the enthusiast looking for a 'primer' about this heritage line, a fellow member of the Southern Six. In aiming for both markets, this reviewer would judge it to be reasonably successful.

In taking this dual approach the book ventures beyond the confines of the railway and looks at much else of interest in the surrounding area. This is best illustrated by listing the chapter headings:

- *Getting to the Railway*
- *A Brief History of the Isle of Purbeck and the Swanage Railway*
- *The Railway Stations and Other Things To Do*
- *A Trip Along the Line*
- *The Locomotive Fleet*
- *Heritage Carriages*
- *Why Not Stay Awhile? Other Places to Visit Nearby*
- *Sources and Further Reading*

At £16.99, and probably available at a discount, this book is reasonable value for money whilst its information about this part of the magical county of Dorset gives it a definite 'edge'. It was prepared with assistance from the Swanage Railway. The next in this new series is about the Kent & East Sussex Railway. We await its publication with interest.

NP



OBITUARIES

Colin Deverell

**28th November 1923 –
15th December 2025**

It is with great sadness that we record the passing, at the age of 102, of Colin Deverell, former Kent & East Sussex Railway volunteer and one of Tenterden's most distinguished residents.

Colin was a long time supporter of the railway, having been the Chief Booking Clerk during 1975-80. His membership of and interest in the Railway nonetheless continued, and a footplate trip was arranged for him during the celebrations in 2014 for the 40th anniversary of reopening. He was absolutely delighted with this and said that it had "made his life"; but there was much more to that life.

Colin Deverell was born in Croydon and after learning engineering skills with the Oliver Typewriter Company he found his way to Croydon Airport, then in its legendary 'Great Days', and

became an employee of Rollaston Aircraft Services in 1939. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1941, and trained as a flight engineer. Colin completed 30 operations from RAF Wrattling Common and RAF Tuddenham against various targets in Germany including the strategically vital attacks on the Peenemunde research centre where the notorious V-weapons were being developed. During a raid on Stettin (now Szczecin, Poland), the last of a further four operations, Colin's aircraft was attacked and he burnt his hands extinguishing an on-board fire. At age 19, he was promoted to flight lieutenant and awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. In 1944, he took part in ten special operations that required low-flying, to release boxes of equipment to the French Resistance - something which would not be forgotten. He was demobbed in 1947.

Colin moved to Tenterden in 1966 and, in addition to joining the K&ESR, later became Honorary President of the local branch of the Royal British Legion. In 2018 his part in those low-level special operations was honoured when the French State awarded him the rank of Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur.



(Alan Crotty)

Colin's funeral was held at St. Mildred's church, Tenterden on 30th January 2026. Our condolences go to his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

NP, with thanks to CAC for her help in researching this item

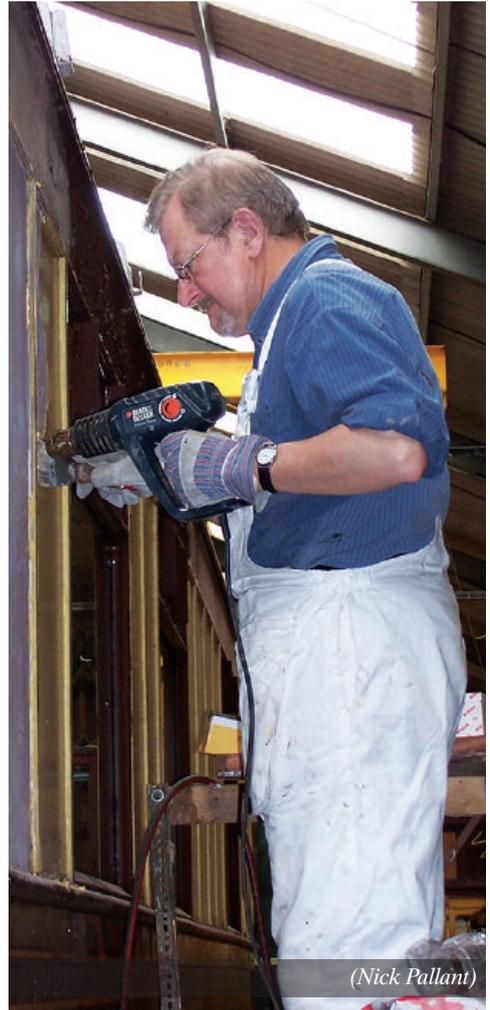
Frank Kent

**26th February 1949 –
6th October 2025**

It is with much regret that we have to report the passing of one of the stalwarts of the Carriage & Wagon department. Frank Kent was a resident of the St. Leonards and Bexhill areas throughout his life. His enthusiasm for railways began early and he sometimes recalled that during school games lessons he had seen the Kent & East Sussex goods loco on its way back to St. Leonard's shed. His interest in the K&ESR led him to join the preservation scheme during the 1960s, and with a short lapse during the 'bad years' at the end of the decade had been a member ever since.

On leaving school Frank worked for the Greater London Council (GLC) in administrative roles and commuted daily on the Hastings line via Tonbridge. The necessary early morning start seems to have done nothing to dim his enthusiasm for railways and he became a member of his local model engineering society. Following the abolition of the GLC he was made redundant and had some months without work before gaining other public sector employment, once again in London. It was around this time that he became a Carriage & Wagon volunteer and when asked during 'signing-on' at the Jobcentre what he was doing with his time, he was able to reply he was volunteering for a registered charity!

Frank undertook a variety of roles in C&W being equally happy to carry out an axle box pad exam or paint a vintage carriage, something he became increasingly skilled at. He was a member of the Friends of Vintage Carriages, later taking on the role of Chairman during group meetings. He was also a member of the Loco Trust and part owner of the Class 33 locomotive formerly on the Railway as well as, at home, having a model railway collection he described as 'generically Southern'. During the



(Nick Pallant)

Bodiam extension works he took part in the track laying with the P Way department. He was the epitome of a calm, steady and unflappable personality made all the more appealing by a wry sense of humour. Away from railways he enjoyed historical novels by the likes of Bernard Cornwell and also obtained a degree through the Open University.

Health issues led to him firstly having to give up driving and later caused him to decrease his attendance as a volunteer. He was last noted on the Railway during the model railway exhibition in August 2025. Frank's funeral was at Hastings Crematorium on 13th October and our condolences go to his family and friends.

NP

THE NEXT GENERATION:

STANLEY HAPGOOD



Stanley Hapgood working the Bodiam level crossing ground frame

(Ian Legg)

Although Stanley Hapgood has always been keen on trains, his decision to volunteer with us was both sudden and recent. “I have been aware of the Railway since I was a child. Whenever we were in the area, I used to beg my mum to take me there, but we somehow never managed it. I had also seen pictures of it in railway magazines. In early 2024 I joined the Spa Valley Railway and explored several roles there including TTI, platform assistant and guard. Then on a whim in early 2025 I decided to visit the K&ESR. I thought it would be great because I had never seen it, and the idea of a Colonel Stephens railway with BR livery seemed to make it aesthetically unique. The guard on my train (John Frampton) recognised me from the Spa, made me welcome and showed me various aspects of his role. I hugely enjoyed this and thought it would be good to intersperse my turns at the Spa with turns here, so John put me in touch with Pete Spratling, and I signed up as a trainee guard.”

What is so enjoyable? “Guarding is a multi-disciplinary role, with a flow-chart of duties throughout the day. You are not just dealing with train dispatch and safety but also communicating with passengers and helping to improve their day, as well as gaining an insight into all aspects of operating, including working level crossings and ground frames, understanding signals and controlling the run-rounds at Bodiam. It is interesting to compare this approach with the Spa’s, where they tend to focus more exclusively on the train. I also love the variety that comes with special events such as the Dwarves of Steam or the Diesel Gala, while the K&ESR landscape is just idyllic.”

At the same time, he is candid about the less enjoyable aspects. “I admit I am less keen on shunting; I find it hard to judge distances, and it doesn’t help that some of the hand signals used are different from the ones we use at the Spa. I need to work on improving my confidence here. I can look like I’m annoyed with something, although

usually that just means I’m concentrating. I know I tend to rush around, but the Railway is helping me to calm down. Nevertheless, I have found every turn very fulfilling, and all the interaction has been positive; the K&ESR has lived up to my expectations 100%.”

As usual, I enquire about any embarrassing moments. With what sounds like a sigh of relief, Stanley answers, “I haven’t done enough turns yet to make any real mistakes. But earlier today I dropped my phone while taking pictures as we rounded Orpins Curve; I had to ask the crossing keeper to retrieve it and give it back to me on the return working.” He also recalls an incident from the Spa during their beer festival. “I was sitting in the rear cab of their Class 207 ‘Thumper’ and needed to switch on the light. I pressed what I thought was the right button, but it turned out to be the engine cut-off. Fortunately, the train kept moving, and the driver managed to restart the engine. For that, I earned the nickname ‘Stanley Shutdown!’”

Stanley is an only child and grew up in Hornsey, north London, where he gained A-levels in maths, physics, geography, Italian (“it helped that I have Italian relatives”) and Spanish. He is now studying geography at the University of Manchester, where he lives in a hall of residence. “I love geography because it is such a wide-ranging subject and it has the potential to help develop the joined-up thinking needed by the world. I love travel and seeing new places, so I wanted to move away from London, and Manchester is great because it is full of industrial heritage and it’s so easy to travel around with all the tram and local railway lines.” Among his other hobbies, he cites cycling, music (he plays the piano and viola and is in the university orchestra) and photography.

I ask about any longer-term plans. “You can’t predict the future because there are so many options: I’m still trying to choose which modules to pursue next year! I might do a year abroad and / or a master’s. Ultimately, I would love to work in the transport industry – preferably rail.”

Once again, it was a genuine pleasure to have the opportunity to interview such a talented and versatile young man and to realise that – despite all the challenges we face at the K&ESR – we are still managing to attract volunteers of such calibre.

Tony Ramsey

CFBS Twinning Weekend

The weekend of 11th and 12th October 2025 saw Kent & East Sussex Railway volunteers taking part in another visit to our friends at the Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme (CFBS), our twin railway in France



The first group of K&ESR volunteers arrived at the CFBS's St Valéry depot on the Friday evening and were warmly welcomed by CFBS members. The main event started on Saturday morning, when they were joined by the rest of the K&ESR group. This year the respective twinning committees had arranged a series of 'workshops' covering different aspects of the CFBS operation.

The first of these was 'École Vapeur' (Steam School). This was all about learning to prepare,

fire, and then drive a metre-gauge steam loco under the guidance of CFBS drivers. Naturally, anyone familiar with driving and firing locomotives will have found much in common with our motive power, but there would obviously be differences in these narrow gauge locos. Happily, this proved to be a very successful activity with smiling faces all round!

The second group, which was based in the CFBS engine and carriage sheds, undertook and joined



Entente Cordiale. CFBS and K&ESR members united in camaraderie

(Elliott Waters)



Pedal power on rail; about as 'green' as it gets!

(Elliott Waters)

in maintenance activities. Work included painting a carriage underframe, light maintenance to the wagon fleet, and a guided tour of the carriage fleet. These routine engineering tasks are common to both railways and the K&ESR visitors were pleased to help keep the CFBS fleet running.

A further activity was much in the tradition of cultural exchange and organised specifically for the occasion. This was 'A very British Tea Time', an export of 'Afternoon Tea' popular at so many venues in the UK. K&ESR volunteers, complete with immaculate Pullman uniforms, served tea and cakes onboard Somme saloon car to 22 pre-booked guests for one round trip from St Valéry Quay to Le Crotoy. Feedback from passengers was very positive, the Pullman uniforms creating much interest prior to the departure from St Valéry.

During the evening there were the traditional speeches and toasts - including time to remember Michael Bunn of the K&ESR Twinning Committee who, sadly, had passed away since the previous visit. There was then time for some French culture, an excellent meal cooked by CFBS volunteers.

The Sunday was a much more relaxed affair; CFBS had organised a charter train along the

lesser used Cayeux branch. Once there, K&ESR volunteers were able to experience the 'Vélorail' - a pedalo on-railway wheels. (An earlier and more basic British version of the idea is to be seen in the Colonel Stephens museum at Tenterden.) This provided an exhilarating and spirited run up and down the branch before the train returned to St Valéry for a pre-departure lunch at the close of yet another successful twinning weekend.

These occasions are much more than just operating and maintaining either railway. They have created firm friendships, provided valuable experience and knowledge, built confidence, and provided opportunities for learning. This all helps towards broadening horizons and providing experiences in different areas that would potentially be unreachable.

'Merci beaucoup' to all those at CFBS whose welcome and hospitality was, once again, exceptional, and who worked tirelessly to create a varied and enjoyable weekend for all - and to the K&ESR members, new and returning, who supported the twinning event.

With thanks to Elliott Waters for his help with this item.

01 Class Locomotives

Charles Judge outlines the use of locomotives that were oh-so-familiar in photographs but were only on the line for a relatively brief period

For the first 30 years or so of our line's existence it depended heavily operationally on the use of two 0-6-0 tender engines, the Ilfracombe Goods, *Rother* and *Juno*. Despite myths to the contrary the two Terriers, *Bodiam* and *Rolvenden*, played a lesser role even to the extent of ceding primacy on the Tenterden-Robertsbridge section to the ex GWR Manning Wardle *Hesperus*. With the coming of the 1930s the tender engines fell by the wayside, with reliance on the arrival of the new No 4, a saddle tank clone of the Ilfracombes and *Hesperus*, supplemented by *Bodiam* and locomotive hires from the SR for the old RVR section. It is perhaps important to recall that our line was very definitely one of two halves with the heavier gradients at the northern end and lighter axle loads necessary on the southern even though much of the traffic was

at that end. An ideal locomotive was therefore a moderately powerful, preferably tender, but lightweight engine.

With the coming of wartime traffic the K&ESR's relatively lightweight locomotives were overcome and, although records are sadly missing for the early part of the conflict, larger locomotives were most likely used throughout the line, almost certainly utilising SR ex-LSWR 3440, on hire from August 1940. With the coming invasion of France matters were more urgent, and larger if still very moderately sized, help was called for in the shape of 40 year old SER Class O1 0-6-0s. Now the line was perhaps more formally split into two at Rolvenden, which although always the operational centre, now became a more formalised engine change point.



Changeover day at Headcorn Junction

(N.R. Knight / CSRM Collection)



One coach formation leaving Biddenden

(N.R. Knight / CSRM Collection)

The 'new' incoming locomotives were originally designed by James Stirling for mainline goods services on the South Eastern Railway and designated Class O. The first batch was built in 1878 and by 1899, 167 had been built. They were typical Stirling pattern locomotives, with low pitched domeless boilers, steam reverse gear and rounded cab with tenders having springs above the running plate. With the coming of the South Eastern & Chatham Railway in 1899, they were

supplanted by Wainwright's larger C Class 0-6-0, and moved to secondary services. From 1904, the class began to be fitted with the newly designed, larger H Class domed boiler, an excellent steamer. The locomotives were now strikingly different in appearance with a higher pitched domed boiler and the Stirling cab replaced by one of Wainwright design. There were eventually 59 such reboilered locomotives re-classified as Class O1. By now the locomotives weighed 41 tons 1 cwt with a



Mixed train at Orpins Curve

(Photographer not known / CSRM Collection)

maximum axle weight of 14 tons 10 cwt, well above the then 10 tons that was usual on the Rother Valley section.

The first recorded O1 on our line was SR No 1426 on 1st December 1942 and her 18 months of service here are commemorated by the presence of her works plate in the Museum. She was followed by the loan of four of her sisters (Nos 1248, 1373, 1390, and 1370) over the remaining period of independence. They seem to have been largely used to help with the heavy traffic originating from the temporary airfields established north of Tenterden, though No 1373 in particular is known to have worked between Rolvenden and Robertsbridge despite her 'high' axle load.

When the K&ESR was nationalised in 1948 an immediate decision had to be taken on motive power and, although Terriers (A1Xs) were selected for the RVR section, O1s were chosen to run the Headcorn extension. Eight were selected to be retained mainly for service on the Headcorn to Rolvenden section of the K&ESR, the East Kent Railway and light duties at Ashford and Dover. At nationalisation in 1948, there were 55 surviving O1s, including those acquired from Stephens' East Kent Railway, but withdrawal was rapid thereafter, leaving our little specialist band.

The normal operation for the class was for one, or occasionally more, to be based, with of course a Terrier for company, at Rolvenden, with changeover trips to Ashford for washout etc.

Throughout its passenger carrying existence K&ESR trains were largely mixed trains. Delays were inevitable and whilst this mattered little at first the evolution by the mid-twenties of good roads and motor buses gave a faster alternative for a faster age. On the independent Kent & East Sussex Railway if you were in hurry you caught the railmotors, for all their relative discomfort, rather than a steam hauled mixed train, but with discontinuance of railmotor services in the 1930s the problem worsened. 'Normal' delays became chronic. With the usual Southern keenness to gain traffic, improved supplementary passenger services were introduced centred on connecting services via Headcorn to London, and to compete, however inadequately, with what to our eyes was the excellent six daily London express bus services. The odd result was that O1 tender engines with one coach found themselves running when in independent pre-war days an economical railmotor had been used. Goods continued of course to be run as mixed with a tendency now to direct traffic north to Headcorn to overcome the limitations of Robertsbridge yard. The O1s were of



January 1954, the last day and 31065 leaving Shoreham Lane tunnel

(Photographer not known/CSRM Collection)



Sad duties in 1955 for 31064. Track lifting at Biddenden (Photographer not known / CSRM Collection)

course well suited to take on this burden.

The service in 1947 was something like;

'Eastbound'

- 8.15 am Robertsbridge – Tenterden passenger only
- 11.20 am Robertsbridge – Tenterden mixed
- 5.50 pm Robertsbridge – Tenterden passenger only
- 7.45 am Rolvenden – Headcorn passenger only
- 11.10 am Rolvenden – Headcorn mixed
- 4.45 pm Rolvenden – Headcorn mixed

'Westbound'

- 6.55 am Tenterden – Robertsbridge passenger only
- 8.50 am Headcorn – Robertsbridge passenger with two through road vans for miscellaneous 'smalls' (ex Bricklayers Arms and ex Tonbridge)
- 12.30 pm Headcorn – Tenterden passenger only
- 4.35 pm Tenterden – Robertsbridge mixed clearing perishable and London market traffic and empties for Bricklayers Arms
- 6.40 pm Headcorn – Tenterden passenger only

The two extra passenger trains Tenterden-Headcorn were, perhaps not surprisingly, unsuccessful, but seem to have continued to the closures of January 1954.

With the closure of the Headcorn extension O1 use had come to an end as they were deemed too heavy. 31064 and 31065 had the privilege of working passenger trains on the last day of the Headcorn extension, Saturday 2nd January 1954.

The line was now serviced from St Leonards shed by the eternal Terriers with O1s banished to the melancholy task of lifting track. Lifting between Tenterden and Headcorn was completed on 28th December 1955, using 31048, 31065 and 31370 in rotation.

All the O1s were eventually withdrawn between 1958 and 1961, with only one surviving into preservation. A great loss to the preservation movement, for how useful they all might have been. 31065 was given general repairs at Ashford in February 1960 and, on 11th June, 1961, piloted 'C' Class 0-6-0 No 31592 on the last Hawkhurst branch passenger train. From there she spent a few days shunting the West Yard at Tonbridge, before returning to Ashford, where she was withdrawn on 24th of that month, with no less than 1,388,742 miles to her credit. There was talk of officially preserving the veteran locomotive by restoring her to original (Stirling) condition and she was at first stored on Ashford shed and then in the works there. However the expense of rebuilding her back to her original state being too great, instructions were given in August 1962 for her to be broken up. This vandalism was clandestinely forestalled with the help of BR employees who were K&ESR members. The engine was purchased privately by the late Mr. Lewis Evans, reportedly for use on the revived K&ESR, but although she has once revisited her old haunts, she is currently operating on the Bluebell Railway.

Number	Builder & Date	On K&ESR
1426	Sharp, Stewart. <i>August 1897</i>	1st December 1942 – 7th April 1944, the longest wartime service of any O1. Withdrawn August 1948.
1248	Ashford, May. <i>1896</i>	October 1944 – March 1945. Withdrawn June 1951.
1373	Sharp Stewart. <i>September 1891</i>	19th October 1943 – January 1944, 7th April – 20th June 1944, 6th November 1944 – 19th January 1945. Withdrawn July 1951.
1390	Sharp, Stewart. <i>October 1893</i>	March 1947 – March 1950. Withdrawn April 1951.
1370	Sharp, Stewart. <i>August 1891</i>	18th January 1944, until 7th March 1944. March 1950, January 1954. Withdrawn February 1960.
31434	Sharp, Stewart. <i>September 1897</i>	June 1947, 26th January – end 26th April 1948. Withdrawn August 1959.
31048	Ashford. <i>December 1893</i>	July 1949, till closure. Withdrawn May 1958.
31064	Ashford. <i>November 1896</i>	From July 1951 and worked the last passenger train, the 3.40 pm from Headcorn to Tenterden on 2nd January 1954, leaving a few weeks later. Withdrawn May 1958.
31065	Ashford. <i>September 1896</i>	July 1951 – 1954 working passenger trains on the last day. Withdrawn June 1961.

Source: CSRMArchive



31065 as preserved; seen at Tenterden Town station on 23rd April 2009

(Nick Pallant)

Notes for contributors

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

Content

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

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

Text

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

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

Photos

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

For news and current events digital is preferred, especially if the picture is as least as good as more traditional formats. Unless used to accompany an article, a low-resolution jpeg copy of the original is initially requested.

Typically the longest dimension should be no greater than 900 pixels, or resized as a copy for the web. We will request a full-size image if for possible future use, but please bear in mind that the image/file needs to be typically suitable for cropping to a minimum of 1,800 pixels (longest dimension) for A6/half a page or 2,700 pixels for A5/full page.

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

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

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