



THE COLONEL

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CONTENTS

2 - Editorial.

3 - News

6 - Letters

8 - The Triana Fiasco part 3

12 - Welsh Narrow Gauge

Update

14 - Sentinel Railcars

16 - Chairman's Corner

THE JOURNAL OF THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY
FOR THE ENTHUSIAST OF THE LIGHT AND NARROW GAUGE RAILWAYS OF COLONEL HOLMAN F.

Editorial: What about the PD&SWJR?

As expected, the overwhelming opinion is that our coverage of the preservation scene *should* include the Welsh Highland and Ffestiniog railways, as evidenced by the letters on pages 6 and 7.

Fortunately, good ol' Hugh Smith has volunteered to keep us up to date with progress on these lines. Less fortunately, I have been unable to secure updates on the Rother Valley and East Kent organisations, thanks to the distractions of Christmas. I hope to remedy this in future issues.

This issue sees the final part of equally good ol' Laurie Cooksey's excellent account of the HM&ST's abortive attempt to buy a loco from Kerr, Stuart. The fact that the Tramway's directors decided instead to buy a second-hand machine from the PD&SWJR links in to two further areas of interest.

Firstly, in the light of Nigel Bird's suggestion on page 7 that we survey the remains of the Colonel's lines, and allied to our commitment to cover the present scene,

can anyone supply a reasonably detailed account of the PD&SWJR as it now stands, given that it, too, is a remnant of the Colonel's empire on which trains still run?

Secondly, does anyone have a trackplan and/or details of the station buildings that stood at Callington, the terminus of the PD&SWJR? John Scott Morgan states in his book *The Colonel Stephens Railways* that the buildings on the line were "very similar to Tenterden Town station in design", although photos show that Calstock, at least, was very nearly the twin of Bodiam, not Tenterden. So what was Callington like?

Finally, as the news story opposite shows, membership has fallen again this year. I look forward to a rigorous debate about this at the AGM in April. In the meantime, Happy Christmas to you all! *SH*

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AGM 2000 to be held on

Next year's society AGM is to take place at Kidderminster Town station on the Severn Valley Railway on Saturday 29 April. The precise venue is the library above the station's nearby museum, and the meeting will start at 12.00.

The agenda for the AGM is as follows:

- Apologies for absence
- Actions from the previous AGM
- Chairman's report
- Treasurer/membership secretary's report
- Election of officers:
 - Treasurer
 - Membership secretary
 - Editor
 - Publicity Officer
 - Committee member
- Subscriptions for 2000/2001
- Publicity & Exhibition matters
- Any other business.

After lunch, members will have a guided tour of the museum, which contains items

mainly of GWR interest.

Access to the SVR station, which is directly opposite the BR station at Kidderminster, is free to members, as is the tour of the museum, plus coffee and biscuits during the AGM. Buffet lunches will be available at the SVR station, and there should be time for a trip up or down the line on the railway's steam trains. Members will have to dig into their own pockets for these items, however.

For those travelling by road, the SVR is well signposted in and around Kidderminster, while train travellers will have only a short walk from the BR station.

Proceedings have been organised by Les Spratt, who will be happy to provide contacts for overnight accommodation for those who need it. You can call him on 01902 568435.

Apologies to those members who had requested a Sunday date for the meeting: it simply wasn't possible to arrange. ■

Membership numbers fall again

Preliminary reports just in from membership secretary Nigel Bird reveal that we have received 160 membership renewals, as of 7 December, including nine new recruits since the last issue of the *Colonel*.

This puts us back to the membership level of 1993, which Nigel described as "not bad". The other side of the coin is that 40 have *not* renewed, revealing that we have had, as Nigel puts it, "a high proportion of one-year-only subscribers".

He expects that maybe a few more renewals will drift in later, as has been the case in previous years. The final picture will be revealed at the AGM in April.

Total membership as of April 1999 was 208, whilst the previous year we had 218 members. There has therefore been a fall in the roll-call of 23% in the last year, and 27% over two years. Food for thought. ■

News

Progress towards Bodiam

Trackwork at Northiam has been realigned to provide through running towards Bodiam, reports Adrian Kennedy of the K&ESR permanent way dept. and CSS member.

Attention is now focusing on re-laying the goods yard sidings at Bodiam, including the building of a spiked, flat-bottom rail point on wooden sleepers that duplicates the original. Light, flat-bottom rail will also be used on the siding serving the cattle dock.

Gauging trials of the main Northiam-Bodiam line have been successfully completed, while work on occupation

crossings and rail welding is still in progress.

Ballasting of the Bodiam 2000 extension, due to open for services in April, was completed at the end of September, using 18,000 tonnes of ballast transferred by ship from Falmouth to Rye Harbour, 15 miles from Northiam.

The platform at Bodiam has been rebuilt and extended to take five-coach trains, while the interior of the station building is being refitted using 1898 plans of Northiam station.

Unfortunately, the original K&ESR Terrier *Bodiam* will not be available in time for the re-opening of the Bodiam section since it is undergoing heavy repairs. It is hoped to be back in service in 2001. ■

Abbey station and Rye & Camber in *Railway Bylines*

The December issue of *Railway Bylines* includes a four-page article on goods operations at the truncated Shrewsbury Abbey station, erstwhile terminus of the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway, after 1960, including photos taken in 1981.

This is followed by a photo feature on the Rye and Camber tram with four snaps, of which three have been published before. Copies of the magazine are available from our own Nigel Bird for £4 each, including postage. See his advert on page 6 for details.

Also advertised in the same issue is a new edition of Stephen Garrett's book on the K&ESR. No further details are available as we go to press, but this will be followed up in the next issue. ■

Trevor Charlton back in

Albyn Austin reports that etcher Trevor Charlton is back in business following a long illness. Members may know that Trevor produces etched zinc body components - mostly the sides and ends of coaches and passenger-rated stock - in a variety of scales.

These not only include main-line stock supplied to the Colonel's lines, but also some bespoke vehicles such as the Pickering steam railcar and bogie coaches from the K&ESR.

Jolly good they are, too. Trevor's address is 206 Dower Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B75 6SZ. ■

The Colonel needs YOU

Once again, the Colonel Stephens Society will have a stand at the Modelworld exhibition in Brighton from 18 to 20 February inclusive. We need volunteers to mind the stand on each of the three days. This is a good chance for us to spread the word and recruit new members, so please help make the most of the opportunity.

We have a good quality photo-display and a variety of hand-outs. If you can also bring some models, memorabilia or

whatever to add to the display, so much the better.

Duties are not onerous, consisting mostly of minding the stand, chatting to members of the public and handing out membership application forms.

The more the merrier: if we can get two or three people each day, then a rota system can be implemented that will allow you a look round the show – which covers most other modelling disciplines as well as railways – for free! To volunteer, please contact Dave Sutton on 01293 541224. ■

Events

If you know of anything happening of interest to members, such as steam trips, exhibitions or talks, please let the editor know.

Dec 27 - Jan 3: Steam trains on the K&ESR, featuring Terrier 2678 and the Norwegian 2-6-0, with Victorian and SR Maunsell trains, and including a 'Millennium Eve Special'.

January 9: 'Light Railway Day' on the K&ESR, with Terrier 2678 and the Maunsell coaches running between Tenterden and Rolvenden only.

January 22 & 23: City of Canterbury Model Railway Society model railway exhibition, Kingsmead Leisure Centre, Canterbury, Kent. Stephen Hannington's K&ESR layout *Rye Town* in EM gauge will be there.

Gazelle and Selsey in the Terrier

Gazelle's early years are featured in the first part of an article by CSS member Tom Burnham in the latest issue of *The Tenterden Terrier* (no. 80. Winter 99), the house journal of the preserved K&ESR. It recounts the years of her private ownership up to 1894.

The same issue also carries the concluding part of Stephen Garrett's account of the Southern Railway's 1934 survey of the Selsey tramway, prior to the takeover that never happened. It includes some interesting timetable and traffic details, plus some previously unpublished photographs. ■

Dispatches

Letters to the editor

Thumbs up for the Welsh narrow lines

Yes, the Festiniog and Welsh Highland railways should be included despite coverage elsewhere. After all, the revived Kent & East Sussex is widely reported in the railway press and you wouldn't leave that out, would you?

The Caernarfon-based Welsh Highland is really a new railway on the old trackbed (see page 11) with little of the Colonel's cheapskate engineering and dubious operating practices, so all being well, it won't be the commercial disaster that the old railway was!

The article on Snailbeach Junction was interesting, but the author is in error when he describes the LNWR/GWR layout as a passing loop. The loop's purpose was to enable the standard gauge loco to shunt the yard and return to Shrewsbury without having to go all the way to Minsterley to run round.

Further information on the standard/narrow gauge interchange at Pontesbury may be found in Andy Cuckson's article Pontesbury Junction in issue 144 of *Industrial Railway Record* volume 13, pages 103-119.

This describes the evolution of the track layout with plans showing the arrangements at various stages of the SDR's history and a selection of photographs. Letters from John Benson and Andy Cuckson appeared in IRRs 146 and 148 respectively, with further info.

Hugh Smith, London

Warts'n'all!

We are the Colonel Stephens Society, dedicated to the life and works of Holman F. Stephens: all of it, whether he was only marginally involved in other areas or not. Should we forget that, through the WC&PR, he was also involved with shipping?

You ask: "Are these covered well enough elsewhere?" To use this criterion, we should ignore Kent, for that is more than well enough covered. No! We cover the life and works of Holman F. Stephens,warts'n'all.

Doug Ware, London

Millennium empire survey proposed

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*Letters to the editor***Dispatches**

Yes, we should include anything on the WHR/FR, as they were part of the empire. I have an idea *re* former Colonel lines: it would be a useful reference for the future if we looked at each of his lines as at the end of the century; what structures remain, stations, embankments and so on.

Perhaps members could get involved and do a report. It would have to be pretty comprehensive to be worthwhile, not just 'bridge X still in situ', but a methodical examination - without trespass of course - of the whole route. It would also give our members more to be involved in, which at present is lacking.

Nigel Bird, Ceredigion

An interesting idea. Any other thoughts on the idea of a 'Millennium Survey'? More to the point, are there any volunteers? These are the sorts of ideas we should be airing at the next AGM.

Ed.

Shrinking membership: not enough going on

On the rapid turn-round of members, I think that the main reason is that the society is not very active. In recent years, the contents of the *Colonel* have been a bit thin in some issues, and recent AGMs apart, there have been few organised tours or lectures on the railways.

I know the membership costs are very modest, and the editors depend on what articles get sent in, but I'm not surprised members let their subs lapse. Perhaps the society should widen its remit to include all light and minor railways?

I'd be willing to organise a Cumbrian

weekend with visits to the Ravenglass and Eskdale (which has been 3ft, standard and 15in gauges at avrious times), Copperas Hill on the Lowca Light Railway, and perhaps the Keswick – Troutbeck section of the Cocker mouth, Keswick and Penrith if we had time.

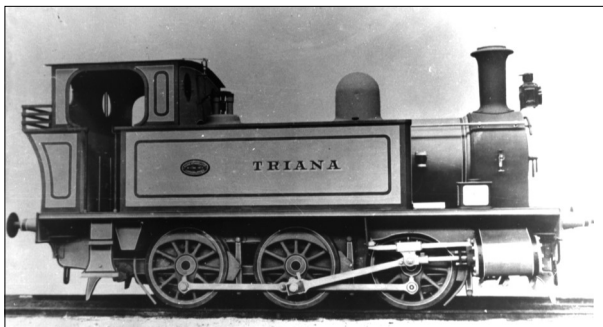
Albyn Austin, Whitehaven

Info sought for S&MR wagon transfers project

I have been in correspondence with Dragon Models about producing some S&MR dry print transfers for wagons in 7mm scale. I would be willing to fund/guarantee the initial purchase and we would have to get in the queue. The big problem is that Chris Basten needs some really good quality prints of stock with the required lettering to get this iniatiative under way.

I have all the standard references with articles on S&M, but none appear to include what I believe to be a good side-on picture. Any ideas? Has anyone any suitable photographs in their own collections which they would be willing to let Chris borrow?

*David Powell, 'Gateways', Bledlow Road,
Saunderton, Princes Risborough, Bucks.
HP27 9NG*



THE TRIANA FLASCO

Part 3

Laurie Cooksey's saga of the Selsey Tramway's attempt to buy the above locomotive in 1912 concludes with the directors' desperate bid to prevent makers Kerr, Stuart from delivering the by-now unwanted machine.

On the 12th of June, HM&ST secretary Henry Phillips wrote again to Sanden Street: "I saw Mr Heron Allen today re engine, and he advised me to write to Kerr, Stewarts as per enclosed copy. Both Mr Clayton and Mr Garland agreed to this letter going and I posted it today. I received today a copy of Mr Stephens' letter of the 5th. inst. to Kerr, Stuarts. The directors fail to see anything in it to which Kerr, Stuarts should object."

Phillips' letter to Kerr, Stuart impressed upon them the contents of his letter dated 3rd June in which he stated: "The engine is to be to specification agreed by this company's engineer".

That same day Street wrote to Phillips admitting: "I am heartily sick of the whole business of this locomotive. Of course, the whole trouble has arisen owing to, during my absence, nothing having been treated about the locomotive, and now Mr Stephens and Kerr, Stuart not being able to hit it off, and I suppose that the result will be that we shall have no engine."

Stephens also wrote to Phillips on 13th June: "The present situation appears to leave the contractors in the saddle. If I am not to supervise the construction of the engine, I

cannot be responsible for any defects. The statement that the engine is from stock [is] upset by the agreement to alter the firebox from steel to copper. This shows that the boiler is not built yet at any rate."

Kerr, Stuart, after acknowledging Phillips' letter of 13th June, suggested: "The price of the engine and the terms of payment, especially in view of your present financial position, do not justify our proceeding with this contract unless our letters are accepted in their entirety.

"Will you please say whether you accept our letters dealing with our present attitude as regards Mr Stephens, or whether you do not. We await your reply to this question by telegram tomorrow morning. Please see that there is no further delay."

Phillips' telegram on 15th June told Kerr, Stuart in no uncertain terms: "This company will enter into no contract except subject to the approval of its engineer."

Following a board meeting on Thursday, 20th June, Phillips wrote to Kerr, Stuart: "Further to my telegram of the 15th inst, I was instructed at a meeting of my directors today to inform you that as you cannot see your way to meet with Mr Stephens, this company cannot go any further in the matter.

"I was also directed to inform you that the board take objection to your remarks re the financial position of the company."

By return, Kerr, Stuart firmly advised: "In reply to your letter of 20th, we regret we cannot cancel this contract except on satisfactory terms. We have told Mr Stephens that we will see him if he will call at this office.

"Please note that the locomotive will be forwarded on or about the 15th of next month as arranged, but this is only possible by working all day and all night continuously and the cost of such hurried work is, as you are doubtless aware, not inconsiderable.

"Our remarks respecting the company's position were based upon the mortgages and charges registered in 1908 and 1911."

Although not recognising the tramway company's engineer the letter continued: "On the 4th inst. we wrote to Mr Stephens asking him for the name and number (if any) which he required painting on the engine, also the colour.

"We have not received a reply, but unless we receive definite instructions from you, we shall assume you do not require any name and shall paint in our standard colours, namely black with red and grey lines.

"We did not acknowledge your letter and telegram of the 15th inst. because they referred to future contracts and not to the one that had been made, and we did not wish to be guilty of a quibble.

"In case this was intended as 'cancellation', we hasten to assure you that it was not received as such, nor could it from the grammar used be treated as such."

Unbelievably, the letter concluded: "Would it not be advisable for you to call here, with or without Mr Stephens and or Mr Street, as it seems to us that something has transpired since you placed the order with us of which we have not been advised which makes the contract one that you would prefer to cancel. If this office is inconvenient, another in London would be equally agreeable to us."

The following day Phillips told Kerr, Stuart: "We do not admit there is any completed contract. If you are of opinion that such exists your obvious course is to proceed with its specific performance. Whatever work you have done, are doing, or feel disposed to do upon the locomotive, the subject of this correspondence, has been and will be at your own risk as per your letter of May 25th to Messrs. F. Street & Co."

Acknowledging receipt of correspondence that had been passed between Phillips and Kerr, Stuart, Sanden Street advised Phillips on 24th June 11: "These people have also written a most insulting and lying letter to F. Street & Co. Ltd, and they appear to be the most extraordinary firm."

"I am heartily sick of the whole business of this locomotive."

That same day, Kerr, Stuart wrote again to Phillips explaining: "We were given an order for a standard locomotive to be forwarded by July 15th, otherwise it will be useless. To effect this delivery we are working all days and all nights, and if we stop for a day we cannot fulfil our contract with you - so we dare not stop.

"On the other hand, for some reason you have not explained to us, you appear to wish to cancel the contract. If this is so we would again ask you to arrange an interview as quickly as possible to decide what payment will be made to us to cancel the order, for the longer we work on this locomotive, the larger will be the otherwise needless sum spent on overtime.

"We are, therefore, willing to cancel for an agreed consideration, but failing such a consideration the locomotive will be delivered to you as per contract and we shall require the original terms fulfilling, notwithstanding any views that you may

hold to the contrary.”

Referring to Kerr, Stuart’s letter to him dated 4th June, Stephens wrote to Phillips: “You will remember that Kerr Stuarts ‘trusted I should not favour them with any further correspondence’. They now suggest I should give them an appointment! I need hardly say I shall not do this without the express instructions of the directors.”

After another board meeting, Phillips advised Kerr, Stuart on 27th June: “Your

“These people have written a most insulting and lying letter and appear to be the most extraordinary firm”

letter of the 24th inst. has now been before the directors of this company and I am directed to say that if you are of opinion that there is any completed contract for delivery of engine, our solicitor will advise you as to your position in the matter. The directors of this company do not admit any contract, and will not accept delivery of the engine.”

Still not prepared to give up, Kerr, Stuart stubbornly replied: “We regret that your letter of yesterday does not contain either any question of remuneration in the event of our cancelling the order, or any proposition for a meeting to discuss such a thing.

“Consequently we are compelled to proceed with that speed which the limited time for the execution of this contract has made necessary and we shall, unless arrangements are made in the meantime, forward the engine as arranged.

“Please note that the locomotive will be tested in steam very early during the week after next and if you, or any of your representatives, wish to be present in order to make any minor suggestions that they may consider necessary, please arrange accordingly.”

On 1st July, Street wrote to Phillips,

having received copies of Kerr, Stuarts’ latest letter to the tramway company. “These people evidently mean to be nasty,” he wrote.

He then asked: “Will you please inform me, by return, if you have bought the second-hand engine that Mr Stephens recommended, as if this deal is not yet completed I think that this matter should stand over for the present, otherwise we might be saddled with two engines, although I am of the opinion that Kerr, Stuart have no claim against the company.”

Also that day, Phillips had a meeting with the company’s solicitor, Mr. Tyacke, who then wrote to Kerr, Stuart on the tramway’s behalf: “Re locomotive. The correspondence had been laid before us by the directors of the Hundred of Manhood & Selsey Tramways Company Limited and we have advised them that, in our opinion, no contract has been entered into between them and yourselves. And we have also advised the directors not to accept the locomotive if you attempt to deliver it.”

A directors’ meeting was hurriedly arranged for 6.40pm at Sharp Garland’s Chichester residence, Ivy Bank on 2 July. It was attended by Sanden Street, Heron Allen, Sharp Garland, Stephens, Clayton, Tripp and Tyacke.

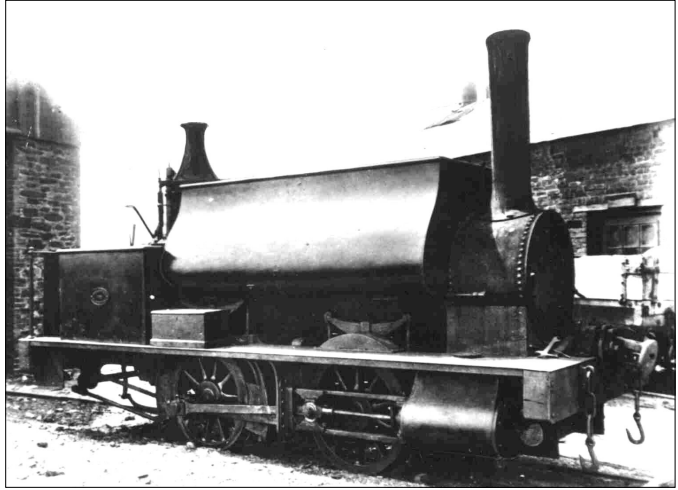
Tripp asked if the board would agree to the company’s solicitors consulting a Common Law counsel before the matter went any further. After consideration, it was resolved that if a writ were issued against the company, the solicitors should then at once take counsel’s opinion on the matter.

The secretary then wrote to the LB&SCR advising them that if the engine should arrive, the company would refuse to accept the same and, being assured that the tramway company’s request would receive the main line railway’s “special attention”, the correspondence concerning the Triana locomotive came to an abrupt end.

Kerr, Stuart did not try to deliver the engine: it was returned to stock until completed as works

The winner: after all the fun and games, the HM&ST opted to buy Hesperus for £250 from the PD&SWJR instead of Triana. Here she is in her East Cornwall Mineral Railway days as a 3' 6" gauge 0-4-0ST. She later acquired a cab, trailing wheels and a somewhat more modest chimney.

(Photo: Les Darbyshire)



number 1196 of 1913 and exported to the Uruguay Railway at Montevideo*.

Colonel Stephens got his own way and “a little Plymouth & Devonport” 0-4-2T engine, Neilson works no. 1661 of 1871, entered service on the Selsey Tramway as *Hesperus* in August 1912**. She cost just £250 and served the tramway faithfully for 15 years. The two-train time-table, one of the main reasons for wanting to buy an extra locomotive in the first place, did not come into operation until September 1912. ■

* The Tenterden Terrier No. 16, Summer 1978: house journal of the Tenterden Railway Company.

** See Colonel numbers 32 and 33 for drawings and description by Ron Mann.

This article has been compiled mainly from copies of documents held by the West Sussex Record Office, Chichester, reference Raper 210, by courtesy of Messrs Raper & Co, with acknowledgement to the West Sussex Record Office and the County Archivist.

UPDATE ON THE WELSH NARROW GAUGE

Hugh Smith, who has accepted the commission of North Wales narrow gauge correspondent, reports on the West Highland and Festiniog railways.

Rebuilding progress on the WHR

Construction of the Dinas Junction to Waunfawr section, which is due to open on 25 May 2000, has begun at Waunfawr, working north towards Dinas Junction. A second worksite is to be set up at Rhostryfan Road (*near the original Tryfan Junction - see map opposite*), from which work will proceed in both directions.

The aim is to have two track gangs following the contractors who replace the fencing, restore the drainage and prepare the formation to receive the track.

Unlike the Caernarfon to Dinas Junction section, there will be no main contractor. The work will be divided into smaller contracts that small and medium-sized local firms can tackle. The intention is to employ as much local labour as possible.

Waunfawr station will be a terminus for the first year, before becoming one of the principal passing places of the new railway. It will have an island platform with footbridge access. The old station building – or what's left of it! – is so decrepit that it needs to be taken down, so the opportunity is being taken to resite it on the new platform,

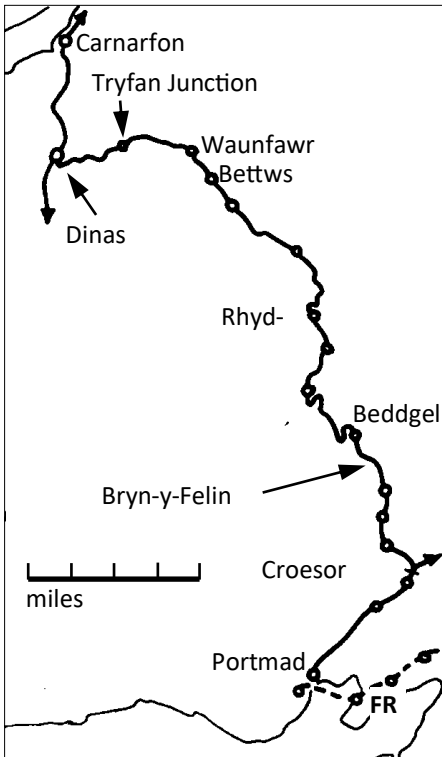
rebuilt in the original style. The buildings at Tryfan Junction and Bettws Garmon will also be rebuilt in due course.

The Bryn-y-Felin girder bridge, which carried the old WHR over the river Glaslyn at the northern end of the Aberglaslyn Pass, is likely to be removed in the near future as it is rusted beyond repair and is in a dangerous condition.

It was a standard design by Fox & Partners for very light lines in Africa, has not been painted since it was installed in 1923 – indeed, some say that it was never painted at all – and has no drainage holes to release trapped rainwater, hence its poor condition.

Back in the early 1960s, Lawrence Brydon, a founder member of what later became the WHLR (1964) Ltd and a civil engineer by profession, inspected the WHR bridges and reckoned that they had ten years of useful life left if nothing heavier than *Russell* ran over them.

An interview with Mr Brydon was published in *The Snowdon Ranger* no. 17, published by the Welsh Highland Railway Society in August 1997. ■



The route of the Welsh Highland Railway, which originally opened from Dinas Junction to Rhyd-ddu in May 1877. Tryfan Junction was the junction for the Bryngwyn branch, which served quarries and lost its passenger traffic in August 1877.

The Colonel took over and extended the line via Beddgelert to Porthmadog in 1923. The line was never financially viable, however, and was closed in 1937: it was dismantled in 1941-42.

The WHR presently is in operation on the former standard-gauge trackbed between Caernarfon and

Historic paintings of Ffestiniog Railway

Now into its third year, the joint project between the London Area Group of the Ffestiniog Railway Society and transport artist Edward Paget-Tomlinson continues apace. Copies of five new paintings will be on sale from autumn 1999, of which two will be of particular interest to Colonel Stephens Society members.

The first shows the interior of Boston Lodge erecting shop in the mid-1920s, with locomotives *Livingston Thompson* and *Princess* under repair, and the distinctive figure of Colonel Stephens in conversation with driver David Jones.

The other shows Kerr Stuart diesel 4415 (see *Colonel 56*) with a train of slate wagons passing Boston Lodge works, viewed from the end of The Cob. Proceeds from the sale of this picture will help to fund the restoration of 4415.

Of the earlier paintings in the series, the following depict the Stephens era:

- *Merddin Emrys* at Aberglaslyn in 1923 (nearly sold out);
- *Russell* and *James Spooner* at Tan-y-Bwlch;
- *Moel Tryfan* and *Prince* at Duffws in 1926; and
- Baldwin 4-6-0T and petrol tractor at Croesor Junction in 1929.

Framed copies are A4 size, price £15 each plus £6.50 p&p. Most are also available in A5 format, mounted but unframed, at £6.50 each plus £1 p&p.

For a full list of available pictures, or to order copies, write to: Phil Hawkins, 21A Belsize Road, Harrow Weald, Middlesex HA3 6JL. Cheques should be made payable to Ffestiniog Railway Society. ■

WHY DIDN'T THE COLONEL USE SENTINEL RAILCARS?

Albyn Austin ponders an intriguing might-have-been.

The Colonel was always prepared to invest money to save costs. He was also keen to use British machines run by British fuel. Thus, when the Sentinel Wagon Works of Shrewsbury began to build steam-powered railcars based on the boiler and mechanism from their steam lorries, it seems surprising that the Colonel didn't buy at least one.

The first one went to Jersey – at 3'6" gauge – in 1923, and a standard-gauge version was exhibited at the Wembley exhibition of 1924. Following this, Gresley carried out trials on the LNER, which subsequently bought 85 of these vehicles between then and 1933. It also purchased 11 similar type cars from Claytons. Sentinels were also sold to the LMS, which had a small fleet, as well as the Cheshire Lines Committee and the Axholme Light Railway.

The cars were tested on the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway on at least one occasion, but the Colonel resisted the temptation to retain the machine. In appearance, the Sentinels resembled a normal coach, but with glazed windows in the end for the driving compartments. One end contained a boiler that drove an engine unit via chain or shaft drive onto one of the bogies.

The units required only two men to run them and cost about half as much to run as a conventional locomotive-hauled train. The LNER calculated that they cost about 1/1d per mile. Compared to the Colonel's rail motors, they were much larger, faster and more comfortable. The later, more powerful

ones could tow a van or two. However, on poor track they tended to give a rough ride.

The early LNER cars were rather underboilered, but later ones had bigger boilers. The early ones used a steam lorry boiler that had a grate area of four square feet (!) and needed high-quality coal to get a good head of steam. They were rather temperamental steamers and required constant co-operation between driver and fireman to match steam output to demand, as their little boilers quickly lost pressure.

Maintenance also demanded experienced fitters and some cars were always poor performers. However, the best cars handled by experienced crews and maintained by staff familiar with their quirks produced some remarkable performances with very high annual mileages over lives of up to 20 years. The engine compartments were very warm and firemen called them 'sweatboxes'.

The Colonel probably resisted the temptation to purchase one for several reasons. Firstly, the K&ESR's Pickering steam railcar was an expensive flop, and perhaps the S&MR staff reported that the Sentinels required special care to get the best out of them.

Secondly, by 1924, when the Sentinel railcars first appeared, the WC&PR, K&ESR, S&MR and the Selsey Tram all had internal combustion railmotor sets. Replacements were only required in 1927, when the two Shefflex sets were bought. Maybe traffic had fallen to such an extent that the Sentinels were just too large by then.



Not a Sentinel, but nonetheless a rare example of a bogie steam railcar on a light railway. This is an ex-GWR vehicle, built by Kerr, Stuart in 1905, at Pateley Bridge station on the Nidd Valley Railway near Bradford, from Kidner's Minor Standard Gauge Railways (Oakwood

Thirdly, at about £3000 per car, the Sentinels were much more expensive than the railmotors. The 1927 Shefflex set cost just £750, for instance. Also, the Colonel's cars could be run by one man and running costs were perhaps half those of the Sentinels. However, whereas the Fords averaged about 15 mph, the Sentinels would probably have been much quicker, as their top speeds were 50 to 60 mph (*Somewhat over-specified for a light railway! Ed*).

In the 1930s Bill Austen, the Colonel's right-hand man and successor, was able to acquire a cheap Drewry railcar from the Southern Railway for the WC&PR, the only line to retain a relatively large traffic in passengers. Might he have been tempted by a cheap, second-hand Sentinel from the LNER or LMS for the K&ESR?

What a pity that a Sentinel never ran in the Colonel's dark blue livery... but I suppose you could have seen an LNER one on test on the S&MR. ■

REFERENCES:

* *Colonel Stephens' Railmotors*, by Stephen Garrett and John Scott-Morgan. ISBN 1-871608-46-5. Published by Irwell Press.

* *Locos of the LNER Part 10B*. ISBN 0-901115-66-5. Published by RCTS.

* There is also a two-volume history of the Sentinel company and its heroic efforts to modernise steam traction and compete with diesel and petrol technology.

Editor's note: Two Sentinel locomotives were tested on the S&MR in 1927, as described by Bill Willans in Colonel 16, and were hauling trains from the Criggion quarries as late as 1950. There are photos of these operations, but does anybody know of any pictures of the railcar on the S&MR?

Chairman's Corner

A VISIT TO DITTON PRIORS

The series of successful study days run by the Glyn Valley Tramway Group (GVTG) in recent years was continued this year by a visit to the Cleobury Mortimer & Ditton Priors light railway on 25 September.

The morning dawned bright and warm as about 40 members and friends assembled in Ditton Priors village hall. After introductions by Bernard Rockett and Peter Griffiths of the GVTG, our first speaker was Chris Magner of Bridgnorth, author of a book on the CM&DP. He took us through the early efforts to get a railway built.

The Light Railway Order was granted in 1901, but it was not until 1907 that work started on the construction. The contractor was Bott and Stennett and the engineer was William Foxlee. The line was opened on 13 November 1908 and was a success from the start.

In 1922 the line was absorbed by the GWR, and in 1939 was taken over by the Admiralty to serve a naval armament depot. The line closed in 1969, when the bridge over the Bewdley-Cleobury Mortimer road was removed by the army in March of that year.

Our second speaker was John Hinton from Birkenhead. He is 81 years old and remembers the CM&DP in its working days.

After coffee, we were treated to a wonderful talk and slide show by Alf Jenkins, who lived in the Clee Hills, overlooking the valley in which the railway was built, where his father had a pub on Butterley Hill. Alf took us through the early industrial history of Titterstone Clee hills.

Coal had been found at Clee Hill some

time in the 1820s, but the big problem was transport. It was not until the Bitterley incline was built that it was possible to move heavy loads down to the main line at Ludlow.

At the same time as coal was being mined, stone was also quarried at Clee Hill, and soon it had taken over from the coal mines. About 2000 men were working a vast quarry at the top of the hill by 1925.

Lunch was taken at the Howard Arms pub. This is very small inside, so our party was divided into two. Whilst the first group had lunch, the other visited the site of Ditton Priors station.

After lunch, led by Keith Beddowes, we started a walk-about, including a visit to some houses built of concrete on the 'post-and-panel' system by the Abdon Clee Stone Quarry Company in 1917.

We then travelled by car to the bottom of the Abdon incline, which was built in 1907 to serve the quarries on the hills. This is now tarmaced and is about 10 feet wide. The lower section is on a gradient of one-in-four for about 900ft, easing to one-in-six up to the top, which is about a mile from the bottom.

It had been a very good day, with plenty of interest for all. I look forward to seeing what the GVTG has in store for next year.

Derek Smith