



THE COLONEL

Number 58

Spring 2000

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

Editorial: all over bar the shouting?

With the AGM in the offing, it's encouraging to find a well-stocked mailbag debating some of the fundamental issues that face our society - take a look at page 5 and you'll see what I mean.

All kinds of proposals have been put forward, although it's alarming to see that more than one member has suggested winding up or merging the society with related others.

In this issue, Keith Patrick echoes an earlier worry of my own, which is that the Great Man and his works have been dead for so long that we'll run out of things to say about them, so maybe the society will simply grind to a halt.

I doubt it, now. Take this issue's Callington Special as an example. Following a plea in this column for more information on this relatively unsung outpost of the Colonel's empire, enough material came forth to fill no less than six pages - and it could have been more.

Admittedly, not all of it is original, but most of it is, especially Peter Barnfield's

excellent photos: a real find. And look what David Powell has dug up, on page 12, about previously unknown relics on the S&MR. You read it here first!

Even the reiteration or reprinting of material published elsewhere, and compiling it in a single source of information - this very journal - is a worthwhile exercise and service to we Stephensophiles.

The Callington example proves what can be done when a lead is given. Another example is Nigel Bird's proposed initiative for surveying surviving remains, which has elicited an enthusiastically positive response already.

Let's hope we can translate that into action and prove what we can do when we try. There's life in the Colonel Stephens Society yet. *SH*

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AGM 2000 at Kidderminster

Make a date in your diaries, if you haven't already done so, for the society's 12th AGM at the Severn Valley Railway in Kidderminster. It will take place in the library above the museum at the SVR's station at 12.00 on Saturday 29 April.

Chairman Derek Smith requests that all those planning to attend should let him know so that he can notify the SVR's caterers of the numbers expected. You can call him on 01743 249088.

The day itself is being organised by local member Les Spratt, who can help find overnight accommodation for those that want it. His number is 01902 568435.

Member will have free access to the station, which is opposite the BR premises, and a guided tour of the museum.

However, meals, apart from coffee and biscuits during the meeting, will have to be paid for.

Steam trains will be running on the SVR, but the society is not paying for any trips on them either.

Les Darbyshire will be standing down as publicity officer and Nigel Bird is relinquishing the membership secretary's role.. David Powell is standing for the latter position, but nominations are required for publicity officer. All other committee members are standing for re-election.

■

● *See page 13 for more on AGM matters*

Volunteers needed to staff society stand at

We have once again been invited to attend the Warley model railway exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham on 4 and 5 November. However, our usual local stand-manning stalwarts Ned Williams and Les Spratt are unfortunately unavailable to take up the offer.

Is anyone prepared to take the job on? We must reply to the invite soon or we will lose the opportunity. If you want to do your bit for the society, you can pick up the photo-display stand at the AGM (*see above*).

If you can't make the AGM, but still want to be involved, until we elect a new publicity officer, contact the editor. Form an orderly queue, now...

■

S&MR wagon transfers: your help still required

David Powell is still on the lookout for good side-on photos of wagons and coaches - including BQC wagons - as source material for a range of transfers he is planning, as detailed in the last *Colonel*. If you can help, contact him at Gateways, Bledlow Road, Saunderton, Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 9NG

■

Kit-building service offered

If you have a light railway kit you need completing, get in touch with CSS member Ian Hammond, giving details of requirements, for a quote. All gauges in 4-7mm scales catered for. Contact: Hammond's Modelmaking Services, 9 Malvern Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 2HH. Tel: 01284 766002.

■

News

Centenary sees Bodiam reopen as Rother Valley group raises £900

Regular passenger services began visiting Bodiam station on the K&ESR for the first time in 46 years on April 2 when the Tenterden Railway Company (TRC) reopened the final part of its line to public traffic (*see feature, page 14*).

The event took place 100 years to the day since the opening to passengers of the original Rother Valley Railway, which became the K&ESR in 1904.

Also marking the centenary was the Rother Valley Railway (East Sussex) Ltd, which hopes to restore the K&ESR's 2-mile missing link between Robertsbridge and Bodiam (*see Colonel 56*).

It held a Centenary Celebration at Robertsbridge on March 25/26 - the 100th

anniversary of the start of goods services on the line - which raised £900.

Completion of the Bodiam project will focus attention on the long-discussed possibility of a merger of the activities of the RVR and the TRC.

"The K&ESR still have not made their final decision as to whether they will either take over or merge with the RVR," said Julia Hastings, events and projects director of the RVR, and CSS member.

"The board of the K&ESR does not seem to have much enthusiasm for the project, but many of its working volunteers are all for coming to Robertsbridge."

TRC marketing manager Sandra Marsh said: "As far as we're concerned, there hasn't been any talk about merging at all."

Garrett's K&ESR book

Stephen Garrett's definitive history of the Kent & East Sussex Railway, published by Oakwood Press, has recently appeared in its third edition. Revisions include expanded sections on the line's early days, plus a larger chapter covering the preservation era from 1961 onwards.

Several new photos and maps also make an appearance, including a rare road-side view of Wittersham Road's unique station building.

Track plans of all stations are included, plus timetables and comprehensive rolling-stock details such as liveries.

Stephen also admits to the correction of a few earlier errors, such as the Great Man's middle name being not Frederick, but plain Fred. Shame on you, sir! ■

Financial crisis

The TRC currently has more urgent matters on its mind. Following a recent investigation, it has discovered that it owes far more money to creditors than it realised, resulting in the resignation of finance director Bernard Sealy.

In a letter to members in February, TRC chairman Robin Dyce has appealed for donations, hoping to raise £100,000 by the end of March.

"Unless this is achieved," he wrote, "the future of the railway is in jeopardy."

As *The Colonel* went to press, it was not known if this target has been reached. **NB: The society will debate making a donation to the TRC - probably a large one - at the forthcoming AGM.**

■

Dispatches

Letters to the editor

As I am probably the only member of the society in this area, I shall be happy to do a survey of the PD&SWJR along the lines (no pun intended!) suggested by Nigel Bird.

As a matter of fact, I walked from Bere Alston to Tavistock last summer, mainly because there are persistent rumours down here that the line is going to be relaid. It was not a total success as much of the trackbed seemed to be impassable, and I also came across the "Git orf my land" approach.

I suppose I ought to offer to take in the North Devon & Cornwall Junction Light Railway as well, but I do not want to bite off more than I can chew. If there are any other CSS members this way, we can no doubt get together on the project.

Christopher Redwood, Crediton

Like Nigel Bird, I have been thinking about the recording of Colonel

Stephens' 'remains'! Such recording should include sufficient detail to enable enthusiasts previously unfamiliar with a particular area to locate features in the record.

I am retiring back to Kent and hope to get involved with both the present K&ESR and EKR lines whilst continuing my long-standing interest in the history of all Stephens lines, which dates back to the last passenger train on the old EKLR.

I would be very happy to record the details of the unrestored parts of the EKLR, which I have been exploring fairly recently, or to work with some other member/s on this or any other of the lines in Kent and Sussex.

Rev Michal Darby, Platt Bridge

With the turn of the year, century or millennium, whichever you prefer, is it not time now to re-assess the direction, if any, that the society is taking? The Colonel has been dead for some 69 years now, and surely no new information of any major nature can come to light.

Those still living who can remember him must now be extremely thin on the ground, and those who can remember his railways working must again be fairly few and rapidly diminishing.

The physical artifacts of his railways, many now long demolished, are also few, and I applaud Nigel Bird's suggestion to record what little remains, and would throw myself whole-heartedly into this project, as I have discussed with him.

In the longer term, the continuing future of this society worries me. This is not a diatribe aimed at the officers and committee of the society, but perhaps a wake-up call to those members, like myself, who rarely contribute, but are happy to receive *The Colonel*

intermittently, and do nothing else.

In the last issue, the fall in numbers was highlighted, and I think this is due to the 'historic' aspect of our society - the paucity of new information and the need to dig around to unearth what information we need - rather than a lack of interest. In this computer and Internet-driven world, there is little space for the 'olde worlde' interests of yesterday.

Maybe it's time to consider amalgamating ourselves with the Kent and East Sussex Railway, (or invite them to amalgamate with us!) and ensure this society's aims and ambitions survive, rather than watch a steady decline in its fortunes.

In his Crew Green dugout,

Keith J Patrick, Crew Green

CALLINGTON SPECIAL

PD&SWJR IN PRINT

Following an editorial plea for details of Callington station, the terminus of the Plymouth, Devonport & South Western Junction Railway, several members generously complied. First up, Michael Bussell supplies some references and a general description of the railway.

I know of two illustrated books that feature the PD&SWJR. *Callington Railways* by Roger Crombleholme, Bryan Gibson, Douglas Stuckey, and Charles Whetmath (Forge Books, Wokingham, 3rd edition 1997) contains several photos and a track plan of Callington station, as does *Tavistock to Plymouth* by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith, one of their numerous studies of particular lines (Middleton Press, 1996).

In neither book is the track plan reproduced from an original source - unusually in the case of Mitchell and Smith, who normally use large scale Ordnance Survey renderings - but both plans appear consistent in layout, if not in scale and orientation of tracks.

Photos in both books show that the station building at Callington was a single storey structure clad probably in corrugated iron, similar to but not obviously identical with those on other Stephens lines.

Mitchell and Smith note that it housed the offices of the PD&SWJR until the Grouping in 1923 (probably not too demanding a task!). Less typical for a hardly-busy branch terminus was an overall timber roof covering the platform line, with some elegant scissor trusses, also probably clad with corrugated iron sheeting on its approach road side. Originally a lean-to roof covered the

adjacent track: serving as a carriage shed?

For such a modest railway the presence of a two-track engine shed appears generous, although the line had two nice purpose-built Hawthorn Leslie 0-6-2Ts. These were drawn and written up in *Railway Modeller* December 1997.

Callington station was closed in November 1966, when the line was truncated at Gunnislake. This village and neighbouring Calstock are in Cornwall on the west side of the river Tamar, and the railway continues to provide a speedy if infrequent route to Plymouth.

Calstock viaduct is a magnificent twelve-arched viaduct built of concrete blocks. Mitchell and Smith credit the design to the line's engineers Galbraith & Church, rather than to Stephens who was only the associate engineer (*sic*).

His appointment was terminated in 1910, when he was clearly too busy to accept an invitation to serve thereafter as the line's engineer.

The PD&SWJR was the successor to the earlier East Cornwall Mineral Railway, a 3ft 6in gauge line opened in 1872. At Calstock an incline down to the quay was later replaced by a wagon lift. This is an area full of interest for the archaeologist of railways and mining.

I was last there in 1967 on an all-day tour of the Tamar valley by rail, coach, and boat organised by publishers David &

Charles in connection with the launch of their *Industrial Archaeology of the Tamar Valley* (Frank Booker, 1967). This book contains a short but lively account of the line's construction.

If one would be interested to know whether the Callington station buildings are still standing. Such information could be included in the 'field guide' to the Stephens lines suggested by Nigel Bird.

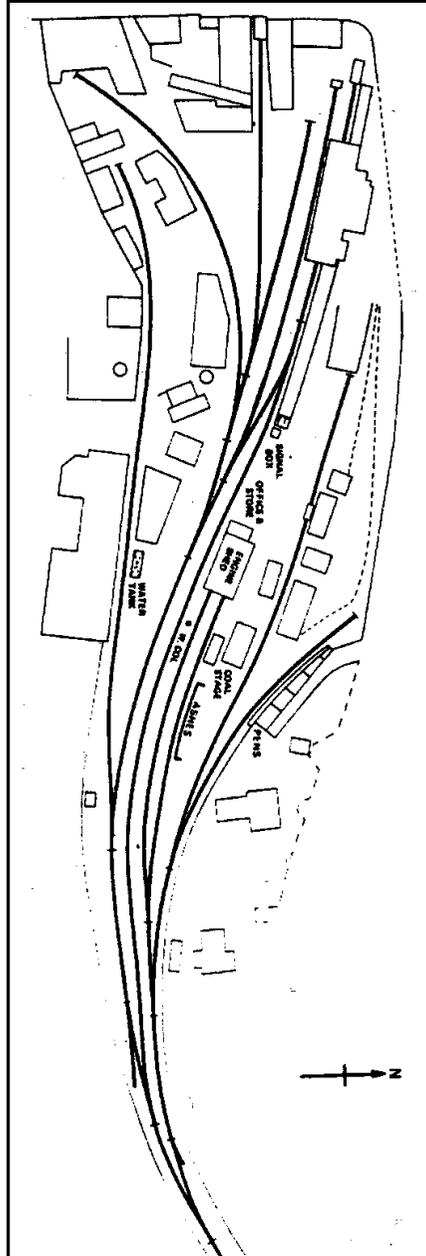
■
NB: Christopher Redwood, in his letter on page 5, has volunteered to survey the PD&SWJR route as part of the proposed Millennium Survey project.

The track plan on the right, revealing an attractively laid-out station with lots of interesting elements, is from A Historical Survey of Southern Sheds, by Hawkins & Reeve, published by OPC in 1979. Dated 1952, it was sent in by L. Hage and accompanies four photos of the station and a brief description of the site.

Scaling from this diagram indicates

Callington '52 →

that the train shed was roughly 110 feet long, while the station building itself comes out at around 43ft by 17ft, plus outbuildings: truly monumental by the Colonel's standards. Does anyone know what the buildings cluttering the southern and western parts of the site were?



CALLINGTON SPECIAL

I WAS THERE...

Peter Barnfield recalls details of the Callington station he knew and photographed in the early '60s

The buildings along the PD&SWJR route all differed slightly. Calstock, as suggested, was much like Bodium, not Tenterden. Gunnislake was, of course, on an island platform with canopies on both sides with no pillars. The building at Luckett had three doors, three windows and five pillars fronting the platform and, apart from the canopy, was very similar to Callington.

The last time I was at Callington station was 1962. At the terminus, the overall roof was a self-contained structure which was not actually joined to the building alongside. It was positioned very close and there was some sort of seal at roof level and at each end, but I believe it to have been a standard design plonked down in the right place.

Certainly the building had its normal doors and windows facing in under the roof and there was, I think, an extra lean-to bit at the buffer stops end that was the ladies room, approached via an extra, slightly lower doorway in the corrugated cladding at each end of the train shed.

There were also sliding doors in the side cladding inside the train shed. The way out was definitely at the Gunnislake end of the train shed, and there was a sliding door here opening into the yard.

[Editor's note: Peter was initially uncertain about the sliding door arrangements, but his photos subsequently revealed that there were two sliding doors at the Gunnislake end of the train shed.

Peter remembers parcels being loaded through such a door, so it may be that one was for passenger use, and the other for

goods. The forecourt appears to have been level with the platform surface at this point.]

There was no run-round loop in Callington station, and trains had to reverse out to alongside the engine shed to the loop there.

A nice 'Colonel Stephens' touch at Luckett, the next station down the line from Callington, was the combined running-in board/fire bucket stand:

In 1962 there were only four buckets on the top row, the five hooks below being empty!

■



For notes on the following pair of Peter's photos, see page 12.



Photo 1

Photo 2



CALLINGTON SPECIAL

NOTES ON PHOTOS

Peter Barnfield sent in a fine selection of photos he had taken of the former PD&SWJR in BR days, plus some observational notes. We focus on the station buildings.

Photo 1 was taken on Saturday 18 August 1962 while the loco was running round the 3.15 mixed train, comprising two coaches and three vans, from Bere Alston.

The supporting pillars of the train shed stand right up against the front wall of the station building, intruding a little into the concrete plinth on which the building stands.

Starting from the left, we see a bike-shed, above which is the glazed side wall of the train shed. Next to that, the tall, dark shape is not a door, but a first-aid stretcher cupboard.

Between two posters is a 4x4-pane window in the train-shed wall facing the forecourt. Below a sign saying 'Ladies Room' - unique for one of the Colonel's establishments! - is a door at a lower level than the others, suggesting maybe a lean-to extension at this end of the building.

To the right are the doors and windows of the station building proper. These are revealed through rectangular cut-outs in the train-shed side sheeting, which consists of corrugated iron on a timber frame.

Between the two external pillars of the train shed, to the left of the coach, can be seen the first of the two sliding doors standing ajar. The second was to the right of this one, obscured in this view by the second pillar.

Photo 2 was taken on 27 August 1961 when Ivatt Class 2MT number 41316 was in steam on the passenger service and sister engine 41317 was dead on shed at Callington.

It shows Lockett station, whose building is very similar in design and dimensions to that at the terminus,

although the end window is of a different pattern, and there is no 'Ladies Room' lean-to extension on the far end.

Peter believes that the building on the left is the original East Cornwall Mineral Railway station. The *Callington Railways* book refers to it as the station master's house, which may be how it was adapted for use after the rebuilding. Can anybody shed any light on this?

According to the staff, an O2 still worked the line on some days. Peter rode behind this some years earlier as it was hauling the ex-LSWR gate stock that was a later characteristic of the line.

The summer Sunday passenger service was unusual in the area - the other lines didn't bother - but Peter reports that it was well-used when he was there. He writes:

"From Lockett one could see Bere Alston and trains on the main line hugging Dartmoor - superb setting!

"Bere Alston down to Calstock (and water stop) was taken at quite high speed by the mixed train - far faster than the 15mph restriction - but the sharply curved climb up to Gunnislake was at walking pace with plenty of long whistles at ungated crossings." ■

More of Peter's photos will appear in future issues as space permits.

S&MR RELICS REVEALED

David Powell unearthed this intriguing photo that reveals the ultimate fate of



While sorting out some papers, I came across the above photograph, taken during the SLS Railtour to the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire on 20 March 1960. The location is the siding behind the Nissen hut at Kinnerley. The picture shows the light 4-wheeled baggage trailer purchased to run with the Ford railmotor set, but rarely used.

In their excellent book *The Colonel Stephens Railmotors* [Irwell Press 1995], the authors Stephen Garrett and John Scott-Morgan advise that the baggage truck was photographed in the 1930s, but its subsequent fate was unknown. This photograph shows that this wagon, still complete with all its fittings, was still in existence in 1960.

Next to the baggage truck is another four-wheel, inside-bearing wagon. This is a flat truck loaded with what appear to be the remains of the rectangular water tank from the Kinnerley engine shed. The wheels are solid, but larger than the baggage wagon.

It has basic wagon brake gear: however, the brake lever appears to end alongside the solid wheel, while the brake lever ratchet is fixed between the V-hanger and the wheel. Was the brake gear recycled from a scrapped open wagon? In which case, could this open, flat 'engineers' department' wagon be the remains of the inside, unpowered trailer purchased with the Ford railmotor?

Finally, the siding's 'buffer stop' is a grounded, outside framed brake van body. Where did this come from? It is not one of the original brake vans. The veranda is enclosed and the diagonal bracing does not match that of the two originals. Presumably this body is the remains of a War Department acquisition, but can any members throw some light on its source?

■

AGM 2000: THE FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS

Editor Stephen Hannington provides some food for thought on some of the issues worth debating at Kidderminster at the end of this month

Rightly or wrongly, the year 2000 has been heralded everywhere as a landmark year, so this year's AGM – we might call it AGM 2000 – has a certain significance. Standing on the brink of a new millennium might be a good time to take stock and plan our future.

One of the most important issues facing us this year is that of membership numbers. As reported in the last *Colonel*, our ranks have fallen by about a quarter since last year: unless membership secretary Nigel Bird has any surprise new recruits to report at Kidderminster.

That's the bad news. The not-quite-so-bad news, to put things in perspective, is

that we are no worse off than we were in 1993 in terms of numbers (*see table*). Membership peaked two years ago and has been slipping ever since.

Does it matter? Are there really any more dedicated Stephensites out there to be had anyway? Or is the membership decline symptomatic of something the society is doing wrong? That's for the AGM to consider.

On a related matter, we will be needing a new publicity officer, as Les Darbyshire has chosen not to stand for re-election. Fancy the job?

Nigel Bird will be relinquishing the membership secretary's hat - David Powell has offered to don it - but is prepared to continue as treasurer. All the other committee members are willing to serve another year if the members choose.

Then there is the rather intriguing idea put forward by Nigel in the last *Colonel*, which seems to have struck a chord with several members: the Millennium Survey. This project would involve a thorough exploration of the remains of each of the *Colonel's* lines, to be written up in a series of reports for posterity.

This obviously requires volunteers, some of which have already come forward (*see Dispatches, page 5*). This ought to be an enjoyable task for those so inclined, but needs to be done in a fairly rigorous manner if it is to have any value.

Possibly a guideline survey document could be drawn up to give some

MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

1989.....	129
1990.....	150
1991.....	164
1992 <i>Not given in report</i>	
1993.....	158
1994.....	171
1995.....	183
1996.....	200
1997.....	213
1998.....	208
1999.....	160

continued on page 15 →

BODIAM REVIVED

Stephen Hannington was aboard the first public passenger train to enter Bodiam station on the K&ESR for more than 45 years. Here is his report.

On 2 April 2000, regular public passenger trains returned to Bodiam station on the Kent & East Sussex Railway for the first time since January 1954. And it was exactly 100 years to the day since the very first passenger train had called there.

This was the culmination of 2½ years of effort by the staff, volunteers and supporters of the Tenterden Railway Company, which now owns and operates the K&ESR, and completes the renovation of all 10½ miles of the TRC's route. The new 3½ miles cost £2½ million to restore.

Evidence of the popularity of the occasion is given by the fact that nine trains were run that day, of which all bar the last two were already full, or nearly so, by the time the first was due to depart. Four locos were sharing the turns: Mogul number 376 *Norwegian*, ex-Butlins Terrier number 2678, USA tank number 65 and Austerity number 25 *Northiam*.

I travelled in the first train of the day, which comprised five period coaches: the former LNWR saloon in LMS red, SECR bogie saloon number 177, LCDR 4-wheel third number 2947, GER six-wheeler number 81 and Metropolitan Railway four-wheel third number 100.

The trip to Bodiam took a little under an hour at true light railway speeds, including pauses while two returning trains passed at Wittersham Road and Northiam. These carried specially invited guests, rather than fare-paying hoi-polloi like us.

Northiam station now boasts a signal box and water tower so that, with its two extended platforms and extra station building, it now presents a fairly imposing sight for one of the Great Man's lines.

Beyond Northiam, the new stretch of track snakes up the Rother Valley in fine style. The track has been superbly relaid

and neatly fenced, and is probably in far better shape than it has ever been. It is an attractive section of line, with gentle slopes to the south and the broad, flat plain of the former tidal marshes to the north.

The champagne was already flowing as we entered Bodiam station after a short wait for road traffic to clear. Many smiling faces greeted us from the platform as we steamed triumphantly in, and there was an air of quiet jubilation as we scrambled out of the train to explore the new works.

From the outset, the aim was to preserve as much as possible of the station's character. Bodiam and Northiam were inherited from BR in almost original condition, but while Northiam's goods yard has become a car park, that at Bodiam has been retained and refurbished.

This includes a rebuilt, sleeper-faced cattle dock and relaying of both sidings in spiked, flat-bottom rail. The yard has been surfaced with cinders, with the track buried up to the rail-head, while the platform has been rebuilt and lengthened.

A new toilet block has been built on the site of the former coal storage area, disguised as the offices of 'Huxford, Coal & Coke Merchants'. With black-painted planked cladding, it blends in well.

The station building has been beautifully renovated, and a photo display in the old goods office told the story of the resurrection of this last stretch of line and its station. And Bodiam at last has the run-round loop often ascribed to it erroneously in the past.

The TRC has done an excellent job of returning the Bodiam section to public use, and of preserving the character and atmosphere of this unique little station.

We only had 15 minutes before the return journey, but a suitable interlude to explore the nearby castle and linger awhile in the goods yard to soak up the

Work in progress: track laying at Bodiam during the rebuilding. The loop point in the foreground lies partly across the new level crossing alongside the station. The garden behind the seat has also been lovingly reinstated.



atmosphere is recommended. That's what I plan to do next time – and hopefully soon. ■

AGM 2000

→ continued from page 13

consistency to the individual reports, indicating the level of detail and content required.

Then there is the question of what we do with them when they are finished. Should they be published in *The Colonel*, or merely archived and made available on request? Should they be constantly updated as the years go by? Who is to coordinate the whole undertaking?

A 'stop press' addition to the agenda is a proposal to make a donation to the K&ESR to help it through the financial crisis described on page 4. Some committee members - those that could be contacted -

are in favour of this, but felt that the idea should properly be put to a members' vote for a final decision.

Finally, all sorts of good ideas have been floated at previous AGMs, but all too often they get quietly forgotten about subsequently. This is usually because no-one comes forward to take charge of them and make them happen. I hope the same does not happen again this year. ■

Chairman's Corner

WHR RETURNING AS NEW

After a public enquiry had turned down the rebuilding of the Welsh Highland Railway, the decision was overturned by the deputy prime minister, who gave approval to the rebuilding of 22 miles of line through the Snowdonia National Park.

This has already started on the Dinas to Waunfawr section (*Colonel 57*), helped by an award of £4.3million from the Millennium Commission.

The line from Carnarfon to Dinas has been laid on the former LNWR standard gauge trackbed. A cycle path has also been laid alongside, fenced off from the railway.

In the Aberglaslyn Pass, the Festiniog Railway has responded to two consultant's reports, warning of rock falls, by closing the tunnel section from 24 August 1999.

Gates have been installed at either end of the section and in the portals of the long tunnel. The latter have been specially

made for the bore.

Also, a safety fence has been erected. This has been the target of serious vandalism in the last few weeks, and it is to be hoped that this will not happen when the line is up and running.

It would seem that Porthmadog town council is worried about what will happen with road traffic when the line crosses the Britannia Bridge.

It has suggested that the two narrow gauge stations should remain in the town, so through-passengers would walk between them and spend money in the shops.

I think the Colonel and Bill Austen would both be pleased to see one of their lines being rebuilt, almost as new.

Derek Smith

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