

THE COLONEL

Number 59

Summer 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: what about the money?

Things are looking good. A glance at the news story opposite shows that our society's wheels are finally starting to turn. A good number of projects are not only agreed and ready to roll, but one or two are actually out of the starting blocks.

From all this, there are two 'matters arising' I'd like to bring to your attention. Firstly, the Millenium Survey, which has been given the go-ahead by AGM.

We desperately need someone to run this project. It won't be a trivial task. Gangs of members will (hopefully) be roaming the countryside, measuring, recording and photographing remains in a lot of detail.

This effort must be organised and run in a methodical manner. The volume of material is likely to be huge: and meaningless unless it's properly collated, stored, analysed and produced. That's quite a workload.

Nigel Bird has some ideas on how to proceed, but can't be fully involved. Can you help? Is so, please contact him a.s.a.p.

Secondly, the question of cash donations

to preservation groups has opened a can of worms. AGM refused money to help the K&ESR out of its money muddles, but did allocate £200 to donate to various projects.

That's a good start. But it seems mean when we have a cash mountain of around £3000. And of our subscription incomes, just under half is pure 'profit'. At current membership levels, that's about £400 a year.

It is written into our constitution that "the society shall make every effort to promote the preservation and conservation of buildings, features and equipment from the lines run by the Colonel."

Preservation efforts are always starved of cash, while we seem to have more than we know what to do with. We could afford to donate at least £400 a year without touching our reserves. Shouldn't we be doing so? Your opinions, please. *SH*

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AGM 2000 sets targets for video, Web-site and funding

Various important initiatives were launched at the society's AGM on April 29. These include proposals to compile a video of archive Colonel-related footage, a society Web-site to attract new members, and cash donations to relevant preservation groups.

New membership secretary David Powell is investigating the possibility of working with an established **video** maker, and has already made significant progress.

"In essence, we have initial agreement in principle to enter into a partnership arrangement with one of the big professional video production companies," David reports.

"This means that they will take responsibility, and shoulder the risks, for the final production and marketing of our video, while the society is involved with the initial production in return for promoting our society."

First off, we need to track down available material, preferably unpublished and predating the preservation era. David makes a plea to members: "Do you have, or know of, any archive film material, not matter how shaky, faded or short, illustrating any of the Colonel's railways?"

If the answer is yes, contact David at the address, phone number or email listed at the foot of the opposite page.

Colonel editor Stephen Hannington was allocated £150 of society funds to start up a **Web-site**. He has already secured the Web space needed, and registered the 'domain name' www.colonelstephenssociety.org.uk

The AGM also allocated £200 of CSS money to be donated to projects undertaken by Colonel-related **preservation and conservation groups**. The committee will meet in July to decide exactly how such funds should be allocated and for what.

Also given the go-ahead was the **Millennium Survey** project, proposed by treasurer Nigel Bird. Nigel is prepared to

draw up a check-list for the work that needs to be done, and asks volunteers to contact him, stating which line they would like to survey.

However, he feels unable to dedicate the necessary time to the essential task of co-ordinating the survey work. We therefore need a volunteer who is prepared to keep a record of who is doing what, to provide guidance on how to proceed, and to maintain an archive of the results. If this means you, please contact Nigel.

At the AGM, it was also suggested that there would be merit in sending out **lists of members and their addresses** with a future issue of *The Colonel*. David Powell will be asking if there is anyone who would prefer to be left off the list.

Also scheduled for the next *Colonel* is a short **questionnaire** to find out what you want from the society, what your specific interests are, and what help or information you might be prepared to give.

Finally, the Welsh Highland Railway and the East Kent Light Railway Society have been tipped off that the ex-WD **camping huts** at Wellington Heath village hall will soon be available due to impending demolition.

The WHR was not interested (*see overleaf*), but EKLRS chairman Dave Harris will be paging the opinion of his fellow committee members. He recognised the huts' historic significance to the line: one used to stand behind the platform at Shepherdswell.

■

** More detail and full updates on the above projects, and your reactions, will be reported in the next issue of The Colonel.*

News

Welsh Highland revival

Heavy rainfall has delayed the re-opening of the rebuilt northern section of the former Welsh Highland Railway until (fingers crossed) 14 July. Originally, trains were due to start running on the new four-mile Dinas-Waunfawr section on 27 May.

This section is part of the former North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway, originally opened in 1877, that was rebuilt by the Colonel in 1921-23 and extended by him through to Portmadog to become the Welsh

Highland Railway [*see Colonel 57*]. Traffic last ran on the line in 1937.

Heritage Railway magazine reports in its June issue that peace has been declared between the Festiniog Railway, which is rebuilding the northern section of the WHR, and the Welsh Highland Railway (Porthmadog), which aims to rebuild from the southern end.

This puts an end to the sometimes acrimonious relations between the two rival factions in their bids to resurrect the WHR. The Porthmadog group, based at Gelert's Farm near Porthmadog station, plans to start work on the Pen-y-Mount to Portreuddyn section, subject to approval by Gwynedd Council.

They were approached by CSS member Adrian Gray earlier this month to see if they were interested in the pair of ex-army camping huts – examples of which were installed by the Colonel on the S&MR and EKR – from the soon-to-be-demolished village hall at Wellington Heath, Herefordshire [*see Colonel 50*].

However, Adrian reports: "The idea met with a cooler than lukewarm response when I broached it. There is a definite wish not to clutter Gelert's Farm with 'maybe, one day' projects.

"With the prospect of a start on rebuilding at the southern end of the WHR now realistic, there is a desire to concentrate on that above almost everything else. I guess, too, that as the huts were never a WHR feature they don't arouse much enthusiasm!"

■

*** Lots of good information about progress on the Festiniog-managed work on the WHR can be found on the Web at:**

www.bangor.ac.uk/ml/whr

Glowing praise

In case you missed it - and your editor certainly did - the Model Railway Journal number 119 has favoured our society with a thoroughgoing thumbs-up, describing The Colonel as an "excellent little newsletter".

Taking up on the theme of the editorial comment in the last Colonel, all about the apparent inexhaustibility of original material on the Great Man's empire, the MRJ's 'Misc.' column on page 157 notes the six-page Callington Special report on the PD&SWJR and David Powell's unearthing of the photo of long-lost S&MR rolling stock, taken in 1960.

The MRJ concluded with a backslapping: "The Colonel Stephens Society should rest assured that there's plenty more out there, and when it is eventually reeled in, there will still be the task of re-evaluating existing research to make it all fit together."

Couldn't have put it better ourselves: thank you, MRJ.

■



15,000 folks go to Bodiam

In the first month of running regular services over its new extension to Bodiam, the K&ESR carried 15,000 passengers: more than double the usual number.

It was also well over half the total number of passengers carried by the railway for the whole of 1931!

The picture shows Terrier number 2678 and Austerity number 25 *Northiam* about to break the ribbon to officially re-open the extension on April 2.

Daily steam services will be running on the K&ESR, now 10½ miles long, until the end of September. There will be three per day during the week, plus extra trains at weekends.

The railway has also survived its shock financial crisis reported in the last *Colonel*. It has raised £85,000 of the £100,000 it asked for in an emergency appeal to members in March.

Finance manager Tim Leigh, who was appointed at the beginning of this year to sort out the organisation's finances, is satisfied

with the result.

"We're quite happy with it," he said. "£100,000 would have been nice, but £85,000 is £85,000 more than we had at the start of this year."

The Colonel Stephens Society's recent AGM turned down a proposal to donate £250 to the Tenterden Railway Company, proprietor of the line, on the grounds that the crisis was of its own making.

Leigh said that the TRC's finances are now "back under control", although money will be tight for the foreseeable future. Another general appeal for funds is unlikely: the company will now concentrate on fundraising for specific projects.

Leigh said: "Instead of pouring money into a bottomless pit, if they can target it at a

continued from previous page

particular carriage or locomotive, they will be

continued overleaf ►

News

RVR supporters set to licence

The Rother Valley Railway Supporters Association has provisionally agreed to licence the former K&ESR site at Robertsbridge station from the Rother Valley Railway (East Sussex) Ltd.

The RVRSA, originally set up as a support group for RVR (ES) Ltd, would acquire formal occupancy status for the site at the erstwhile K&ESR junction on the Hastings-Tunbridge Wells main line.

This would give it greater autonomy to develop the site. If the agreement is fully ratified by members, the aim could be to eventually run brake-van rides over the 400 yards of track from the station to the first bridge towards Bodiam.

The association's committee is now fine-tuning the details of the agreement and will convene a meeting with members to seek final approval of the handover.

Current RVRSA projects include building a platform, completion of boundary fencing, and trying to raise £50,000 to reinstate the first bridge.

RVR (ES) Ltd has insisted on a final

decision by October. It leases the site for a peppercorn rent from a private individual and wants to devolve responsibility for aspects such as health and safety and utility bills at Robertsbridge to the RVRSA.

Meanwhile, RVR (ES) Ltd is continuing in its attempts to buy the 3½ mile former K&ESR trackbed between Robertsbridge and Bodiam, of which it has already acquired a third. The cost of reinstating the route is estimated at £5 million.

If successful, the aim is that the K&ESR preservation group will run the trains, while the Rother Valley company will assume a Railtrack-style responsibility for the infrastructure. ■

*Info on the RVRSA is on the Web at:

www.wizo.com/rvr

able to see a concrete result a year or two down the line."

This approach exactly aligns with the recent CSS AGM resolution to donate society funds only to specified projects (*see AGM report, page 9*).

The first such K&ESR project is likely to be the restoration of Pullman car *Barbara*, for which £10-20,000 will be needed.

Meanwhile fall-out from the financial debacle continued with the resignation as chairman of Robin Dyce, who is succeeded by Norman Brice. Finance director Bernard Sealy has already also resigned. ■

* STOP PRESS *

Pullman car *Cambria*, a resident of the Robertsbridge site, was burnt out in what local police believe to have been an arson attack early on Sunday 18 June.

Built by Clayton in 1920 and in the process of being restored, the Pullman is a write-off and will have to be broken up for scrap, according to the RVRSA's Julia Hastings, a shareholder in the vehicle and CSS member.

"This attack was certainly deliberate and not set by the usual vandals," she said. "Whoever did it knew exactly what they were doing when they set the fire." ●

Summer trains on the East Kent

Trains will be running on the East Kent Railway between Shepherdswell, near Dover, and Eythorne every Sunday between now and September. Four or five trains will traverse the two-mile route each day, depending on passenger demand.

Unfortunately, the railway's only workable steam loco, Barclay 0-4-0ST *Spiritfire* (right, exiting Golgotha tunnel), is out of service with firebox problems. Services will therefore be headed by the railway's Class 33 six-coupled diesel *The Buffs*, hauling – believe it or not – a 2EPB two-car electric set (running dead, of course).

The East Kent Light Railway Society, which runs the refurbished remains of the EKR, is currently working on extending the platform at Eythorne, its northern terminus. This needs to be able to accommodate three-coach trains, instead of the present two, to satisfy Railway Inspectorate requirements.

The society has also unearthed the former 18-lever signal box from Barham station on the nearby Elham Valley line and plans to erect it at Shepherdswell in a non-functioning capacity this summer. The 1908-built box had been used as a parts store by a garage in Barham village.

Less good news is that the hoped-for, half-mile extension to the site of Tilmanstone colliery is “probably not on the cards now,” according to EKLRs chairman Dave Harris.

The whole 29-acre site has been sold by government agency English Partnerships to an as-yet unknown buyer. The society had hoped to buy a small part of the site to resurrect the station that once served the now-closed colliery.

But hope springs eternal: “Once we see who's got it, we can talk to them and see if we can squeeze in a bit,” said Harris.

■ ** The membership secretary of the EKLRs is Brian Hancock, 33 Beauxfield, Whitfield, Dover CT16 3JW. Tel: 01304 821007.*

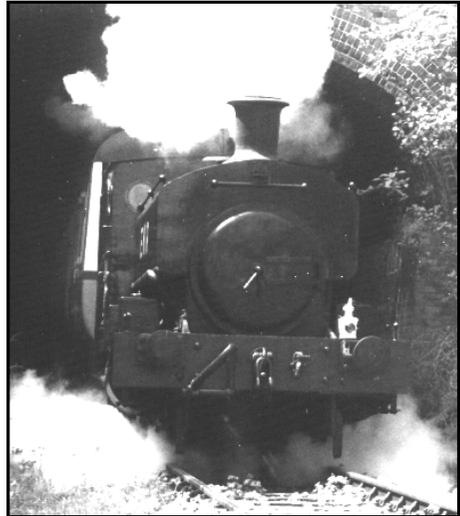


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Dispatches

Letters to the editor

Two more on the PD&SWJR

I arranged a trip over the PD&SWJR about six or seven years ago and, even if there has been a change, it is well worth a visit. The station at Bere Alston, where the train from Plymouth now reverses, is a private dwelling.

From there the single-car DMU rumbles down the slope to Calstock and over the viaduct. This is still a thrill and last year (or was it the year before?), I paddled down the Tamar in a canoe, under the viaduct to Calstock Quay, where we stopped for lunch.

The post office there sells some postcards of the stations, but not the one at Callington. The line stops at Gunnislake, but bits of it beyond there can be walked.

We sat on the edge of the old island

platform waiting for the return train, watching common lizards basking on the sleepers. I have a funny feeling that the platform has gone or is going.

There is a road bridge at Gunnislake very like that at Kinnerley Junction and remains can, or could, be found at Chilsworthy Platform.

I seem to recall that about seven years ago the station at Latchley was sold as a private house. Since Son & Heir lives near there, I will try and have a look at the line when I am next visiting.

Martin Brent, Ledbury

There is an article on the building of Calstock Viaduct in *Archive Magazine** issue number 2. I think this is the first time such a detailed account has appeared, and the stunning progressive photographs by local bank manager Frederick Paul are truly remarkable for their clarity and detail, and are worth examining closely. There are views of all those concrete blocks actually being cast on site, for instance.

Neil Parkhouse, one of the *Archive* editors, who wrote the article, did a lot of original research on the subject. As he says, the Colonel was actually employed as a consultant working under the East Cornwall Mineral Railway manager Captain Sowden, and was engaged for his expertise on light railway matters.

The Colonel's job was to convert the 3ft 6in-gauge line to standard gauge, purchase suitable rolling stock and deal with the matter of buildings. He must have brought some brisk military efficiency to the little line, for a

few hours at least: the gauge conversion was carried out in one weekend!

For anyone interested in the old PD&SWJR, I can thoroughly recommend a copy of *Archive* issue 2, cover price £5. Although it's been around for some time, there may still be the odd back number available. Try ringing the *Archive* shop on 01594 844776, or call at the shop at 47-49 High Street, Lydney, Glos. GL15 5DD. It's well worth a browse, and Neil and Heather Parkhouse are always helpful.

Peter Barnfield, Bristol

* *Editor's note: Archive is an independently published, roughly quarterly magazine covering industrial history subjects, including railways, canals, coal mines and so on.*

MINUTES OF AGM 2000 AT KIDDERMINSTER

Attendance at the society's thirteenth AGM, held in the library at the Severn Valley Railway's Kidderminster station on 29 April, consisted of a fairly impressive 15 members: more than double the number attending last year's event.

Several important initiatives were launched, including a video compilation, donations to preservation groups and the creation of a society Web-site.

Apologies for absence were received from membership secretary Nigel Bird, Roger Crumblehome, Alan Garner, Matthew Gicquel, Chris Holden, Ron Mann and Dave Sutton.

Action from last year's AGM

- There was no mention of the proposal from the West Midlands group for a Light Railway Exhibition this year.
- The *Colonel* index was published in issue number 55.
- Nothing had been done regarding the suggestions to have a talk at the AGM; and to have another meeting apart from the AGM during the year.
- Hugh Smith reported that the archive material from the collection of our late member Ivor Gotheridge has not yet been catalogued, but is available for research. Any interested parties should contact Hugh at 31B Carnarvon Road, London

E15 4JW.

Chairman's report:

"2000 promises to be an important year for our society. Apart from some remedial action required to reverse the loss of a quarter of our members, we need to look at future developments and the possibility of holding a study day on one of the Colonel's old railways.

"One member has offered to organise such an event on the same principle as those held by the Glyn Valley Tramway Group in the last few years.

"The loss of so many members in two years is very worrying, but not fatal. We will recover. We need to get our message out to those who have not heard of our society, let alone joined us. I feel we do not have to join any other organisation [as suggested in earlier society correspondence]. The Colonel did not join the Amalgamation in 1923, and I see no reason why we should.

"A special 'thank you' to our editor Stephen Hannington. He is doing a wonderful job, just like he did when he was our editor before.

"Also, I wish to thank Les Darbyshire, a real Stephens stalwart who has undertaken most jobs in the society: chairman, editor and publicity officer [and is now standing down]. It was Les who pulled us back from the brink when the membership records had gone

haywire and the society was on the point of collapse. I know we are all very grateful for his efforts.

“Nigel Bird is standing down as our membership secretary. Thank you Nigel for all your good work and welcome to David Powell, who is standing for the membership secretary’s post.

“Thanks also to Les Spratt who has organised our day at Kidderminster for the AGM.

“I see a bright future for our society, and many thanks for all the help I have received since becoming your chairman.”

Membership Secretary’s Report

In his absence, Nigel Bird submitted the following writtent report as membership secretary:

“As at 20th April 2000, membership stands at 187, a fall of 21 from a year ago. Sadly, this seems to have been the trend for the last couple of years, and warrants some discussion/action, I feel.

“The lack of a regular publication schedule for *The Colonel* until the recent change of editor may well be a major factor. Hopefully this problem is now resolved. The society offers little else but *The Colonel*, so prompt publication and an interesting content are vital.

“A further 27 members have joined since the figure of 160 published in *The Colonel* 58, but most of these are very late renewals rather than new members. I would request all members to renew promptly after the renewal slip is received in September. This helps keep the workload down as late renewals are treated as ‘new’ because they have been deleted from the database.

“As previously indicated, I wish to stand down from membership secretary – a job I took on temporarily about four years ago! – due to other commitments.”

In response, the meeting agreed that those who fail to renew their membership should be sent a reminder notice roughly two months

after their ‘final’ issue of *The Colonel* (the Autumn issue), and receive no further issues until they renew.

Treasurer’s Report

As treasurer, Nigel also supplied the following written report:

“The society continues to remain in a good financial position, despite falling membership. Our cash at the bank has increased by £452.41 in the last year, plus we have £2110.15 on deposit [*see statement opposite*].

“Once again, I see no need to increase membership fees, which are at present:

UK: £5

UK (joint, same address, one *Colonel*): £8

Overseas: £6

“As we have reasonable funds and a falling membership, I strongly suggest we carry out an advertising campaign in a few British railway publications to try and recruit new members. I am happy to stand for re-election as treasurer.”

Election of Officers

Nigel Bird was re-elected as treasurer, Stephen Hannington was confirmed as editor, and Stuart Marshall was re-elected as committeeman. David Powell was elected as membership secretary.

The post of publicity officer remains vacant: David promised to approach Julia Hastings, who had indicated her willingness to take on the role, with a view to co-opting her.

Derek Smith is willing to stand for re-election as chairman next year, when his current three-year stint will expire.

Subscriptions for 2000/2001

It was agreed that annual subscriptions should not be changed.

Publicity & Exhibition matters

The society will be represented at the forthcoming Warley model railway exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham on 4 and 5 November. Les Spratt and Dave Greensall will be manning the stand, assisted by David Powell.

The meeting discussed the possibility of using a video display unit on the stand at exhibitions, showing archive footage of The Colonel's railways.

This lead on to the idea of compiling a video for general distribution, possibly in association with a professional video maker. David Powell agreed to investigate the options.

Stephen Hannington agreed to set up a Colonel Stephens Society web-site, since it was believed that this could serve to attract new members. The sum of £150 was allocated to development costs, which include registering the name of the site and renting Web space.

Stephen is also to compile a list of Colonel Stephens model railway layouts owned by members that could be made available to exhibition organisers, since there have in the past been requests from this quarter. All those with suitable layouts are requested to contact him at the editorial address given on page 2.

The meeting also urged members to pursue any opportunities they can to promote the Colonel Stephens Society at other relevant events, such as club and society meetings. A display stand is available to anyone who wants to use it, while Les Darbyshire and Chris Redwood are available as speakers on the Colonel's railways.

Any Other Business

A) Stephen Hannington agreed to compile material from past *Colonels* under the headings of each individual constituent railway. Such '**line files**' could then be made available to new members wishing to catch up on their favourite railway, or to existing members who want all such material available in a single document.

B) Nigel Bird's proposal that a detailed

Financial Statement for year ending April 2000

Balance brought forward: £991.30

INCOME

Subs received:	£873.50
Sale of back issues:	£47.27
Sales of badges:	£2.50
Current a/c interest:	£4.22

Sub Total: £927.49

EXPENDITURE

Printing/postage of The Colonel:	£475.08
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Current account balance at 10.3.00:	£1443.71
Deposit account balance (including interest):	£2110.15

Total: £3553.85

Unsold badges (4 @ £2.50): ~~£10.00~~

continued overleaf →

survey of the remains of the Colonel's lines should be undertaken by members was accepted. The meeting understood that Nigel has guidelines available, and Stephen Hannington agreed to contact him to see if he is prepared to manage the project. The next step will be to recruit 'line co-ordinators' for each railway via *The Colonel*.

C) Derek Smith reported that the **yard crane** from the former terminus of the S&MR at Shrewsbury has received a new jib and rope at a cost of £150. It has been moved to the Broomfield Railway, a 7.25in miniature railway near Shrewsbury, but the proprietor recently died of a heart attack. The future of the site is therefore uncertain.

D) The idea of **amalgamating** the society with another was dismissed. A more positive mood was noted at this year's AGM compared to the previous one, and it was agreed that there was no need to panic about membership numbers, which have a natural tendency to go up and down. However, the society should not be complacent.

Les Darbyshire also pointed out that he had always regarded the society as primarily a "correspondence society", so its lack of activities should not be a cause for concern.

E) The proposal to form a **West Midlands area group**, first floated in 1996, was discussed. It emerged that no progress had been made. The meeting agreed that members should be encouraged to form formal/informal area groups of this kind. David Powell plans to distribute to members copies of the membership list to encourage such contact.

F) There was a suggestion that the society undertake the creation of **full-size replicas** of Colonel Stephens railway vehicles, such as the Rye & Camber diesel loco or the WC&PR's Muir Hill tractor. Hugh Smith pointed out that the restoration of the Kerr Stuart diesel number 4415 [see *Colonel 56*] alone will cost up to £30,000. The suggestion

was thus rejected on the grounds of cost.

G) Stephen Hannington proposed that a **donation** in the region of £250 be made to the Tenterden Railway Company, which runs the preserved K&ESR, to help it through its current financial crisis. The meeting rejected the proposal, but agreed to allocate up to £200 in total to fund "specific projects" being undertaken by Colonel Stephens-related preservation societies.

H) Martin Brent reported that the ex-Army **camping huts** at Wellington Heath [see *Colonel 50*] are scheduled for demolition in July, but will be available free to anyone that wants them. Michael Darby is to ask the East Kent Light Railway Society if it is interested, while Adrian Gray is to approach the Welsh Highland Railway. Funding towards the cost of transportation could be made available from the society, it was agreed.

■

**For a progress update
on AGM decisions,
turn to page 3**

MONTY'S MEMOIRS

Part One

Former K&ESR engine driver Monty Baker is one of the Colonel's last surviving former employees. In this the first of a two-part serialisation, he reveals how

The morning PT session at Tenterden C of E school could not come soon enough for me to get into the playground. It gave me a grandstand view of Tenterden Town station on the K&ESR. If I was lucky, the 11.20am Tenterden to Headcorn train would be coming into view, punching up the 1 in 50 gradient [from Rolvenden] to finally stop, simmering, at the platform.

How I wanted to be down there! At 11.20, a shrill blast on the whistle and she was away. With a crisp bark on the exhaust and a plume of steam, the train disappeared into the cutting above the goods yard, coming into view again racing along the far end of the large embankment.

Eventually it disappeared into the cutting of St Michaels tunnel, leaving a trail of smoke as the fireman tended his fire. Then the spell was broken and it was back to the classroom. I was hooked at 11 years old: not on glue sniffing, but on the aroma of hot oil and steam.

My grandfather, Walter Goodman, used to drive Bennett's horse bus from Tenterden to Headcorn railway station. He became redundant when Colonel Stephens opened the Headcorn extension of the K&ESR. He got to know the Colonel at this time, dropping him off his bus close to wherever the construction workers were on the new Headcorn section.

Once the line was open, the horse bus finished and grandfather went to work managing the gents' outfitters department at Bristows in Tenterden High Street, later Adin Coates. Once the railway was running,

Colonel Stephens visited shopkeepers and other businesses to canvas trade for the railway. He bought shirts, collars and other clothing from my grandfather when staying at the White Lion.

It was in the shop that I first met the Colonel. My grandfather introduced me and told him I was railway mad. The Colonel said if I was still keen when I left school, he would teach me to run a railway. That was my only meeting with him. Regretfully, his health deteriorated and he died in 1931.

My grandfather took me on the train to Wittersham Road or Northiam when he went fishing on the River Rother, so I had met some of the old station agents on the line. I particularly remember Arthur Taunt of Tenterden station, who was a rotund, Dickensian character with a large, drooping walrus-like moustache.

He was also a coal merchant with his own coal wharf in his station yard, with his own private-owner trucks that carried his coal in from the collieries. They had A. TAUNT in large letters on the sides, and can be seen in some of the old photos.

I applied to Bill Austen at Salford Terrace at the beginning of 1933, reminding him of the Colonel's promise. He replied, telling me to report to George Dobell at Tenterden station to be interviewed by him. George tested me on writing and arithmetic, then said I could start next Monday morning.

My hours of work would be 7.30am to 5.30pm with an hour for dinner (sandwiches), which had to be taken in stages according to

the midday shunting of the yard by the train from Robertsbridge. This could be, and often was, up to an hour late in arriving, having roped off trucks at every station and shunted the empties out ready to be returned to Robertsbridge by the 4.30pm. My wages were to be 10/- (50p) with a deduction for National Health stamp of 4d (2p). It was a six-day week.

My duties were to clean the urinal with disinfectant – there was no flush – sweep out the office, waiting room and goods room, after sprinkling the wooden floors with water to lay the dust, then sweep the platform. Farmers then arrived with milk churns for the 8.00am to Headcorn. These had to be unloaded and rolled to the platform. Some held 9 gallons and the big ones 17 gallons.

Once a week I had to clean and trim the wicks of all the signal lamps and hand lamps, refill them with paraffin and replace them in their positions. The Tablet & Staff machine's brasswork was polished every day, and I worked my way round cleaning all the station windows as I got time. If the water crane overflowed, I ran to the wind-pump to shut it off, and vice versa.

By the end of 1933 I had been sent to relieve the agents at Rolvenden and Bodiam. The agent at Rolvenden was Jimmy Norton, who also ran the printing shed next to the station building. He printed tickets and advertising material for the Colonel's other railways, and also privately for local dances, fetes and so on.

It was also his duty to sweep out the two carriages left in the platform each afternoon, as well as wash the outside with a long-handled broom if necessary. One can understand that with such a diversity of duties, he did need the occasional relief, apart from his one-week annual holiday.

I was then told to report to Eastry station on the East Kent Railway. Lodgings were found for me for 10/- a week, and my wages were increased to 12/6d (62.5p) a week. For a 14 year old, this was sheer boredom: two trains a day with an odd weekly pit-prop special from Richborough Port. Any parcels

for traders in Eastry had to be delivered on an old sack-barrow half a mile to the village.

This was becoming a frustrating way of learning to run a railway, and I took solace in the arms of a beautiful girl who worked in Eastry baker's shop. I impressed her by taking her to the pictures and buying her chocolates. Alas, I became deficient in the petty cash to the extent of 3/- (15p).

Found out

Mr Carnell, the senior station agent at Staple station, found out and I was relieved of my post, so bringing my youthful romance, and my career, to a premature end. By scrounging a ride in the guard's van from Shepherdswell to Dover, and then to Ashford and a lift to Tenterden, I arrived home.

My mother was in tears, having received a letter from Bill Austen informing her of my misdemeanour, and demanding that the East Kent Railway be reimbursed by the sum of 3/- (15p) forthwith, or else! My mother naturally thought that the 'or else' meant, at the least, deportation to Australia.

I never did forgive Bill Austen for inflicting such trauma on my mum, a widow on 10/- a week pension. The letter also ordered me to appear at 23 Salford Terrace to explain how I had practically run the East Kent Railway into bankruptcy.

I ran the gauntlet down the hallway of the office, past Mr Iggulden and Mr Osborne, chief clerk and clerk respectively, who peered disdainfully at me. I was ushered in front of THE DESK, the one now preserved in the Tenterden museum. Yes: the desk that I covered in front of all those years ago, awaiting my sentence and deportation papers.

I awaited the invitation to sit, and would I like a cup of tea? It never came. Bill Austen sneered at me over his half-moon glasses. Actually, he always looked like that: I cannot recall ever seeing him smile. After reading me the Riot Act, he produced a letter he had been sent by driver Nelson Wood of the K&ESR. He was an earlier protégé of Colonel Stephens on the Bere Alston -



Sheer boredom: Eastry station on the East Kent Railway, where the frustration of hanging around for a mere two trains a day drove the young Monty Baker to seek solace in the arms of a beautiful local shop girl - and financial ruin. Photo: Les Darbyshire collection

Callington branch of the PD&SWJR, and the Colonel had brought him to the K&ESR.

Nelson had repaid the cash for me and requested that I be transferred to the loco department at Rolvenden, where he guaranteed to look after me and see that I behaved myself.

It was to be my last chance, and I took it. It was a dream come true as I was a steam addict at heart and hated the thought of being a station agent, no matter how senior.

Pulling gratefully on my forelock and bowing from the waist submissively, I backed out. This time I looked disdainfully at Messrs Iggulden and Osborne, who no doubt by now had already placed bets on deportation.

■

Part Two of Monty's Memoirs, to be

published in the next Colonel, will deal with his time on the K&ESR as a driver.

RESEARCHING

David Powell recently trawled the archives at Shrewsbury and unearthed the following gems about the Great Man's northern outpost

Readers of *The Colonel* may recall an earlier article (*Colonel 29*) by Ron Mann on the 1866 Manning Wardle, works number 178, which spent some time on the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway as its No. 4. This led to correspondences about the correct spelling of the name – Morus or Morous – and its derivation.

Recently, I had the opportunity to examine the copy of the S&MR board minutes held by the Shropshire Record and Research Centre at Shrewsbury. The record of the meeting held on 4 November 1931 includes an entry about the loan of No. 4 to the “West Sussex Railway” being converted to a sale (for £50).

This item is clearly headed “Morus”, as is a subsequent entry in the minutes for 1 January 1932. So it would appear that the correct name was indeed Morus and the MORUS plate seen by Bill Willans at Kinnerley in 1928-29 (*Colonel 29*) should have been the one fitted.

As far as the derivation of the name is concerned, I like Alan Cliff's suggestion (*Colonel 31*) that the classically taught Colonel was showing off his knowledge of Homer by naming this diminutive 0-6-0T after a Trojan warrior.

However, my perusal of the Board records suggests that No. 4 was not the only S&MR locomotive to carry an incorrect nameplate. The minutes of 2 June 1930 include a reference to “the potential purchase of The Severn by Messrs Ward for £47”.

This sale then fell through when the LMS, presumably, refused to allow the wreck

to be towed over its main line, and No. 2 was broken up at Kinnerley. The point of interest is that the record clearly refers to The Severn, while the nameplates were just SEVERN.

These observations raise an interesting point of protocol. Should we, when writing about incorrectly named locomotives such as these two, refer to them by their correct names, or use the convention of quoting their incorrect nameplates?

Furthermore, do any readers know of other Colonel Stephens locomotives that may have carried incorrect nameplates in service?

Other gems noted during this visit to the Research Centre include:

Terrier boilers. The Minutes of 9 October 1930 agreed that the boiler from No. 7 should be swapped with that of No.8, and No.7 would then be scrapped. Whether this actually happened does not appear to be recorded, although the late Eric Tonks states that both these Terriers were taken out of service in 1930. (*Tonks E S, The Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway, page 67*)

Railcar Accident. The same Minutes record that “the railcars” had been badly damaged in a derailment on the night of 23 September 1930. The driver was subsequently “discharged” and another engaged. Presumably, this was the Ford railcar set, since Eric Tonks records the Wolsey-Siddeley set as having been withdrawn in 1929 (*Tonks E S, Ibid page 71*).

Mixed Trains. The Minutes of 28 April 1932 record agreement to the introduction of mixed trains. Given that regular passenger

services over the entire system were withdrawn on 6th November 1933, this suggests that mixed trains were only a feature of S&MR operations for a period of some 18 months.

However, the formal introduction of “mixed trains” could explain Eric’s note that LMS timetables continued to show a daily train after this date, when this was actually a goods working (*Tonks E S, Ibid page 53*).

Stone Traffic. A recurring topic in the 1930 and 1931 Minutes is the handling of stone from Criggion for the Liverpool to Manchester arterial road. The client wanted this delivered via Llanymynech, while the Colonel insisted on the longer and presumably more lucrative route via Shrewsbury.

This traffic was initially some 50 wagon loads a day, later increasing to 65-70. I have read somewhere (can anyone remind me of where?) that the working limit was 18 wagons. Roger Carpenter (*The Criggion Branch, page 47*) suggests that the Criggion branch was limited to between 5 and 10 loaded wagons or up to 15 returning empties.

This means that far from being a sleepy branch line, the S&MR would have handled some 3 to 4 stone trains each way, every day on the main line, and perhaps double that over the Criggion Branch, over and above the time-tabled traffic.

PO Coal Wagons. Another regular feature is the source of locomotive coal with what appeared to be different names (and the latest best deal!) in successive Board Minutes. Names I jotted down included United Westminster and Wrexham Colliery in 1930.

Colonel Stephens. The Board members were obviously charmed and impressed by Colonel Stephens. The Minutes of 4 November 1931 record his passing on the 23rd October and described him as: “a man of striking personality and a very warm heart and that this was best exemplified in his unbounded hospitality” and “a privileged colleague and a much valued friend.”

Access to the S&MR Board Records

Sadly, I only had about an hour and a half to spare in the library and I only had time to skim through the Board records. These appear to have much more information to give up and are likely to introduce new leads to follow, possibly in the archives of the local papers.

For example, what was the reference to a meeting at the Shire Hall on the 21st February 1919, regarding the application of the Shropshire Light Railway Order, all about?

Should any society members wish to view the microform copy of the Board Minutes or copies of local newspapers, I recommend that they contact the very helpful staff at the Shropshire Record and Research Centre, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury (a short distance from the main line railway station and opposite the entrance to the Castle) in advance on 01743 255350 to book a film viewer.

The reason for booking ahead for a viewer is that the Research Centre is very popular, and packed, most of whom appear to be searching for their ancestors! For the S&MR records, ask for film MF 117. Opening hours are: Tue 10am-9pm, Wed-Fri 10am-5pm and Sat 10am-4pm.

Please note that, to have access to any original documents or maps, you will need a reader’s card. To obtain one of these you will need to arrive with two passport photographs of yourself and some proof of identity, such as a driving licence.

Happy researching!



RHYMNEY RAILWAY VAN AT ROLVENDEN

Stephen Hannington describes how he constructed a 4mm scale model of an unusual prototype that found its way from Wales to the Weald

There's a well-known photo of Rolvenden yard on the K&ESR that shows, amongst other things, a GWR van in one of the sidings [*Branchlines to Tenterden, Middleton Press, photo 63*]. Nobody gave it a second thought, until Graham Bracewell of the Welsh Railways Research Circle took a closer look.

With the help of the Science Museum, he enlarged the section showing the van and found it to be a rarely-photographed 10ton goods van built by the Rhymney Railway, not a standard GWR type as had previously been assumed.

An article with scale drawings subsequently appeared in the society's magazine *Welsh Railways Archive* volume 2, number 7. Adverse as I am to the over-hyped GWR, I nonetheless decided that a 4mm scale model of such an unusual prototype with an undeniable link to the K&ESR was in order.

The van poses some interesting modelling challenges. Firstly, the planking is flush with the outside face of the framing: something not obvious from the drawing. Secondly, the wheelbase is unusual at 9ft 9ins. On top of that, the Rhymney buffers and axleboxes are non-standard too.

To reproduce the flush planking, I at first toyed with scribing it all, but was doubtful I could do a sufficiently neat job. The solution was to build the carcass out of 40thou plastic and apply the framing and planking panels as overlays. The framing was represented by 1.5mm x 20thou Evergreen strips, and the planking by Slater's embossed 20thou sheet.

The Slater's planked sheet is less well-

defined than the Evergreen product, but was more accurate for the plank widths needed. Light sanding of the back face was necessary to get it to sit flush with the plain strip. A useful tip for cutting this material is to score it on the rear face and snap it, giving a burr-free front face with a nice clean edge.

End, top and bottom framing was first fixed in place. The framing and planking pieces were then assembled dry within this frame to check for fit. When everything was exactly right, the pieces were attached one at a time using solvent.

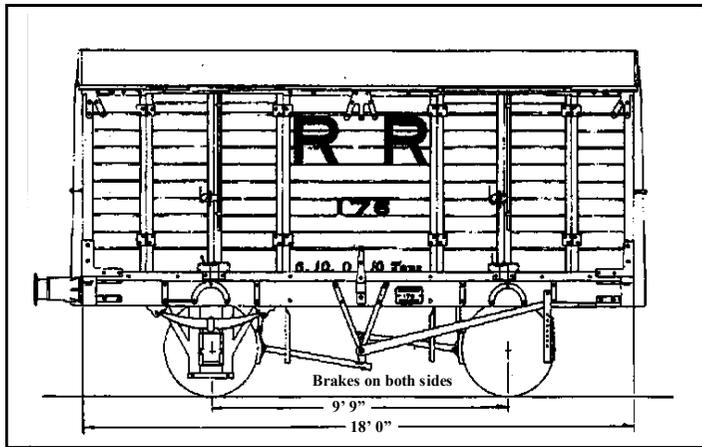
Bodyside strapping, which gives vital character to such a flush-sided vehicle, was added with 10thou x 1 or 1.5mm strip. After overnight hardening, this was sanded down to reduce the thickness, then bolt-head details added with plastic chips.

Wheels were mounted in MJT etched W-irons. The weird wheelbase means that no standard brake gear parts are available: at least, not that I could find. The problem was solved by using cast parts intended for a 9ft wheelbase, separating the shoes/hangers/push-rod component into two halves by removing the central tumbler. They were then mounted on the underside of the chassis the correct distance apart.

The tumbler was not reinstated, since its absence is not noticeable once the V-hangers are in place. Operating levers of the correct length were also sourced – I think – from ABS (or is it now Four Most?), and pinned in place with brass wire.

The buffers are certainly Four Most's

Part of Mike Lloyd's drawing of the Rhymney van, reproduced from Welsh Railways Archive



GWR small-head, self-contained van buffers, part number F.303. I chose these because they seemed closest in broad outline to the Rhymney ones. Then I noticed that Mike Lloyd's drawing (above) from the *Welsh Railways Archive* appears to show just such buffers fitted. It is based on measurements made by A.M. Gunn in the 1920s, so presumably these were a later addition by the GWR, although the drawing shows RR livery.

For the axleboxes, I chose MJT's GWR grease boxes, catalogue number 2245. These don't quite agree with the drawings, but I had some in stock and they seemed appropriate. Solebar strapping, incidentally, also came from the MJT W-iron fret and are secured by plastic solvent, which seems to work.

The number of the Rolvenden van is not readable from the photos, but the WHA article gives a comprehensive list of numbers plus build and scrap dates, so I chose one – 47835 – that fitted the period.

Lettering and numbers came from HMRS Transfers sheet 11. When dry, these were given a light wash of the original body colour to tone them down.

The result makes an interesting addition to my Rye Town layout and has already

attracted comment at a recent exhibition. Now I have to build the SR special cattle van that accompanies the Rhymney van in the Rolvenden photo. I've had the Chivers kit for this in my possession for years now, yet I decided to scratchbuild the Rhymney van first. Odd how inspiration strikes, isn't it?



Thanks to the Welsh Railways Archive for permission to reproduce the above drawing. Enquiries about the availability of Volume 2, number 7, which contains two full sets of drawings and a complete history of the vans, should be addressed to:

Ray Caston, WRRC chairman, 22 Pentre Road, Bassaleg, Newport NP10 8LL. Telephone: 01633 891419.

Back issues normally cost £2 plus 50p post.

LIVERY NOTES ON THE SELSEY TRAMWAY

Ron Mann has compiled details of the painting schemes applied to the Selsey Tramway's locomotives and rolling stock and reveals a colourful crew

LOCOMOTIVES

* **Selsey** – Dark blue, lined out in vermilion, with polished brass dome and smokebox door hinges. Brass numberplate on bunker sides and a copper cap to the chimney.

* **Sidlesham** – NER green with black banding and white lining. Polished brass numberplate and safety valve cover, with a copper-topped chimney.

* **Hesperus** – As painted on the PD&SWJR: dark blue with red lining and buffer beams. Smokebox and cab roof were black.

* **Morous** – Unlined black over an earlier livery of red, with the name in yellow inside the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire oval.

I realise that red was not the regular colour of the S&MR, but I see it was the one used on the Stratford-on-Avon & Midland Junction railway, where Morous had previously worked. Perhaps members can elaborate on this.

With the passing of time, the black wore off, exposing the underlying colours. What a challenge that offers modelmakers to display their skill in the art of weathering.

* **The rest of the locos** – Dark blue, which age turned to a dull black.

COACHES

* **The four original bogie coaches** – crimson lake.

* **Ex-Lambourn Valley coaches** – varnished wood with black underframes.

* **Ex-LCDR 4-wheel coaches** – Not stated. Perhaps still the original varnished teak.

* **Ex-SR 6-wheel coaches** – SR green, with

only the word 'Southern' painted out and replaced by 'West Sussex'.

GOODS WAGONS

Originally red oxide with white lettering. By 1917 this had changed to grey with white lettering. In the article in *The Colonel* no. 53, which related a journey along the line in 1917, the goods stock was described as being "light grey with white lettering".

No painting was carried out during the last ten years that the line functioned. This gave rise to the better known livery of grime with patches of corrosion, rust and rotting wood. ■

References:

* *The Selsey Tramway*, by E. Griffith.

* *Standard Gauge Light Railways*, by R. W. Kidner.

* *Carriage Stock of Minor Standard Gauge Railways*, by R. W. Kidner.

* *British Railway Liveries*, by R. Crumblehome, D Stuckley and C. F. D. Whetmath.

* *The Lambourn Branch*, by K. Robertson and R. Simmonds.

* *Model Railway News*, July/September/November 1970: articles by Les Darbyshire