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# THE COLONEL

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**Number 66**

**Spring 2002**

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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: back to reality

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Looking over this issue, it strikes me that rather more of it is given over the contemporary scene than to the usual historical material. Perhaps this is appropriate, what with the AGM looming, threatening to drag us - if only relatively briefly - into the here-and-now and away from our cosy ponderings over the glory days when The Colonel was in his office and all was right with the world.

The attempt to unravel the labyrinthine affairs surrounding the various efforts to revive the Bodiam-Robertsbridge section of the K&ESR, related on page 14, serves as an interesting example. In it, we find that no less than four organisations - three of them so closely related as to be almost indistinguishable - are involved.

And the conclusion suggests itself that all is not as comradely as we might like to think it ought to be in the world of railway preservation. After all, such enterprises are mostly undertaken by amateurs, a word derived from the latin for 'to love'. They do what they do, therefore, for the love of it. Yet, in some instances, there seems to be precious little love

lost between rival groups squabbling, as it were, over the remains of a long-closed railway.

This is doubly pertinent when we consider the fact that our AGM this year will take place alongside the recently re-opened Welsh Highland Railway, itself the subject of just such unseemly squabbles between rival organisations a few years back. This, arguably, resulted only in the delayed resurrection of the railway. The WHR's website, incidentally, at [www.bangor.ac.uk/ml/whr](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/ml/whr) lists the bewildering number of claimants to the WHR's mortal remains at one time or another.

One can only hope that a similar fate does not befall the laudable attempts, by all those that love it, to bring the Bodiam-Robertsbridge line back into being. Those of us not involved in the machinations would be forced to step back in bewilderment at such larks, instead of stepping forward and lending a helping hand. Which is a shame. *SH*

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## Society News

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# The stage is set for AGM 2002 in Wales

Wauanfawr awaits us on Saturday 27 April for the society's 15th AGM, which will take place at the Snowdonia Parc Hotel alongside the new Welsh Highland Railway station.

Treasurer Nigel Bird has worked like a trooper to ensure that a grand day out is in prospect for all. Apart from the thrills of the AGM itself, the highlight of the day will be a society-funded ride on the renovated WHR to Caernarfon and back. There will also be a raffle for footplate passes on this train.

Those wanting to stay on till Sunday can visit the Portmadog end of the line at Gellert's Farm. Unfortunately, WHR original loco *Russell* will not be in steam, unless a White Knight can ride to our rescue.

"If any member is prepared to cover the necessary costs on behalf of the Society, say £100, then I am sure I can sort it out even at

the eleventh hour," writes Nigel in his preview of proceedings on page 9 of this issue.

All of the present committee members are willing to stand for re-election this year. Chairman Derek Smith, having started his fourth three-year term last year, is not up for re-election until 2004.

Should anybody wish to challenge the rest of the current crop, the deadline for nominations to any of the other committee posts, which should be sent to Derek at the address opposite, is 13 April. ●

➤ *The full itinerary for the AGM weekend, plus the agenda, are on page 9.*

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## E-mail gets a 'yes' vote

About a third of the UK population now have home computers connected to the Internet. So it seems appropriate that our society is about to take another step into the so-called Information Age.

Membership secretary David Powell has revealed the results of the email poll included in last year's subscription renewal forms. These invited members to express their views on whether or not to reveal their email addresses in the next issue of the contact list.

"Of the 35% who responded, 46 specifically said yes and 26 said no," David reports. "Therefore we will include email addresses, where provided, when we next issue the contact list." ●

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## Tickets for Fawley Hill visit available

Membership secretary David Powell advises that, as a result of some cancellations, he now has tickets for all those who asked to join our visit to Sir William McAlpine's Fawley Hill Museum, near Henley, on 26 May this year.

So now you need to send an SAE and a cheque for £3.00 per visitor, made out to the Colonel Stephens Society, to David - his address is at the foot of the opposite page - and he will send you your entrance passes and directions to the museum.

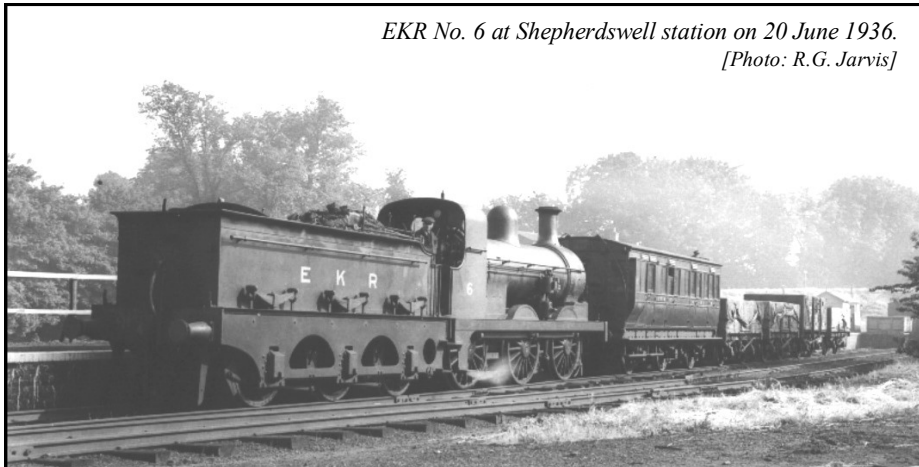
Alternatively, you can collect passes from David at the AGM on 27 April. All tickets must be claimed by 1 May. ●

## News

# Heritage plan for 'EKR-land'

*EKR No. 6 at Shepherdswell station on 20 June 1936.*

*[Photo: R.G. Jarvis]*



Fans of the Great Man's East Kent Light Railways should be intrigued to hear that it might soon be possible to explore the former Kent coal-field, which the railway served, via a heritage trail and avail yourselves of an archive of photos, documents

and oral history of the region's coal mining industry.

This enticing prospect was reported by the *Kent Messenger* local newspaper on 15 March 2002, relating plans by Dover council to set up such a project. The council recommended that £12,000 be put aside for funding the proposal over the next two years.

One result will be the creation of a so-called Miners Way Trail around the area of the four former pits, the last of which closed in August 1989.

If this comes to pass, it should not only be good news for EKR fans, but also for the East Kent Light Railway Society, which operates two miles of the former EKR and is still reeling from a very poor financial year last year, thanks to Foot & Mouth keeping passengers away.

EKLRS chairman Dave Harris told *The Colonel* recently: "We had a good Easter, then it all went downhill." ●

## Nigel Bird Books

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## Book Preview

### Hart starts K&ESR history

Brian Hart, author of highly-regarded histories of such Colonel railways as the Sheppey Light and the Hawkhurst branch, has begun work on a new history of the Kent & East Sussex Railway for Wild Swan Publications, the publisher of his previous works.

"I know exactly what I want to achieve with this book," said Brian, "which is to attempt to find that elusive spirit of the line which I tantalisingly glimpsed many years ago as a boy."

He added: "I shall no doubt upset many people, but without question, the

book will end with closure in 1961."

Brian's hallmark is the depth of his story-telling, which not only includes thoroughgoing engineering and commercial details, but also a substantial analysis of the vital social and demographic contexts of the railways.

Those of us who, like Brian, have fallen under the spell of the K&ESR, will await his latest work with eager anticipation. However, he thinks it may be up to three years before the book is on sale. ●

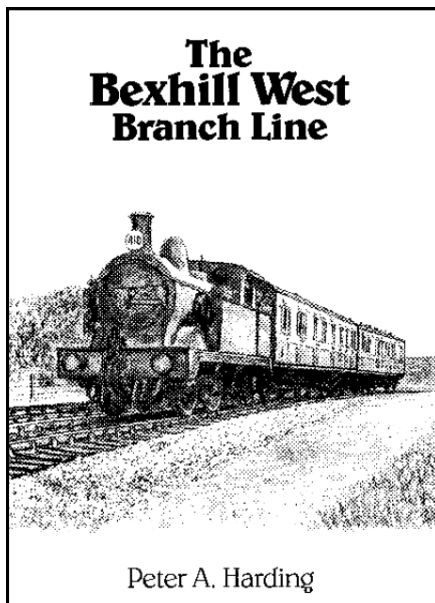
## Book Review

The double-track Bexhill West branch ran for 4½ miles from Crowhurst on the SE&CR's Hastings line and was opened in 1902 to provide a more direct route to London for the developing resort town of Bexhill. The Colonel connection is that the Great Man – then plain Mr Holman F. Stephens – was present at the opening ceremony.

Another link is that one of the Bexhill branch's engineers was Arthur John Barry, who had been named as the engineer for the then Rother Valley Railway's proposed extension from Robertsbridge, three stops up the line from Crowhurst, to Pevensey.

The RVR, of course, was engineered by Stephens, and this may explain his presence at the Bexhill bun-fight in 1902, when the Pevensey extension was no doubt still thought of as a going concern.

CSS member Peter Harding does his usual thorough job detailing the history of the Bexhill branch, which closed after an undistinguished career in 1964. You get 32 glossy, A5 pages containing no less than 56 photos from the line's beginning to its very end, plus maps and station track plans. The booklet costs £3.00 plus 40p postage from Peter at Mossriel, Bagshot Road, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2SG. ●



# Dispatches

*Letters to the editor*



*The “blue inspection car” referred to by Arthur Rimmer below stands in the bay siding at a deserted Kinnerley station on the S&MR in one of Jim Jarvis’ photos - no date, unfortunately. The original is in colour, revealing the former royal saloon to be a pale, bleached-out blue.*

## Mysterious Mr Rimmer revealed

Brent’s *Browsings* in *Colonel 65* makes a mention of a “Mr Rimmer” visiting the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway in 1939. This would be my late good friend Arthur Rimmer, whose railway notes I have on loan by courtesy of his son Philip. Let me transcribe them for mutual benefit:

“S&M 29.5.39. Outside: *Gazelle* and Carriage Number 1, Ford railcar, blue inspection car (*the former royal coach. Ed.*), and remains of tramcar LCC. In shed: *Hesperus*; 0-6-0 8182 LNWR and 8236; 0-6-0 8108 NW, now painted No. 2. Newly painted tender lettered S&MR; Caledonian wagons and about ten coaches, 6-wheeled and bogie.”

For the visit 13.6.45: “*Hesperus* cut up in 1939. Three 0-6-0s as above plus GW Dean 2442 and further Dean with W.D.

number 70196. Two x J69(?) nos. 84 and 91. 0-6-0ST *Ashford* W.D. 1872, built by Avonside in 1920 and bought from George Cohens. 0-6-0 No. 28204 LMS lined. Dean Goods 2433 (93), 2425 (96), 2442 (97), 2415 (98), 2528 (99), 2536 (170) and 2511 (175) plus 169, 196 and 197.”

Arthur visited Criggion quarry in August 1945 and saw *Sentinel* 7036. He also noted: “GWR to repair Melverley viaduct and want to take over line altogether”.

*John Keylock, Childswickham, Worcs.*

➤ *See also the latest Brent’s Browsings on the back page. Ed.*

## Selsey from the Lucky Country

The article *From Chichester to Selsey Bill* in *Colonel 65* was published in 1916, speaking from memory. I have the original, and it was entitled *The Selsey Tramways*. It includes a photo by W.P. Marsh & Son of Chichester - a local photographer at the time.

The photograph is entitled "Train on Bank through Pagham Harbour" and is of *Sidlesham* hauling a mixed train of a covered wagon, one or two vans and two Falcon (though one could be the Hurst Nelson) bogie coaches. I say "from memory" because the original magazine has long gone, but the article was retained. The *Selsey Tramway* popped up regularly in the *Railway Magazine* either in article form or just a selection of pictures. I believe I have them all.

On a different note, regarding the Agenoria model of the locomotive *Selsey*, readers may be interested to learn that were it not for a September 2001 visit on my part to the Gauge O Guild convention (coming over from Australia) and talking to Pete Stamper, not all versions would have been available. The missing version would have been the short tank with cab wings.

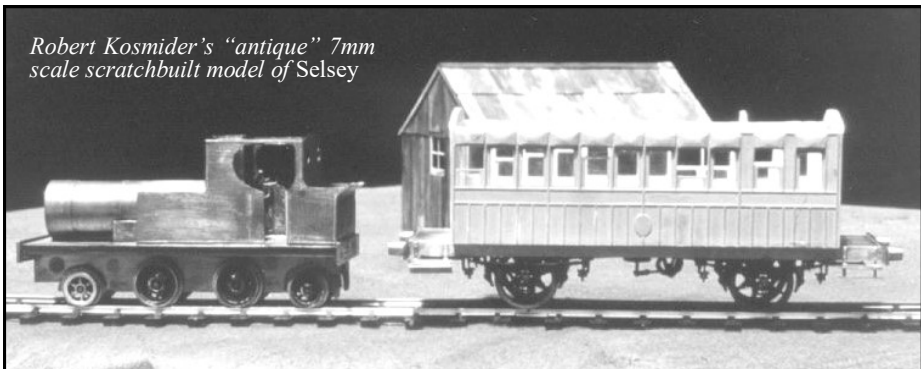
Pete told me he had not seen any photographs of that version when I queried it, but having studied and collected articles about the tramway since my teens, I assured him

that they did exist. I intended to send him copies when I got back home and he asked me to be quick, as the artwork was with the etchers.

But I was saved the bother as Pete, having obviously believed the Australian with the strange English accent, contacted Les Darbyshire and, when we subsequently talked, advised me he had got the photos from him. I was saved the bother of secretly using our company scanner.

I started building my own model of *Selsey* in 1971, right down to making my own wheels, but one thing or another meant I never got past the general chassis and superstructure stage. Then in 1993 I ordered plates from Peter Thatcher and was unhappy I had to wait 6 months. No further progress has been made on my now-antique *Selsey*, and I look forward to receiving the kit from Pete Stamper so that I can fulfill my childhood dream.

I enclose a picture of my now very old - older than my two daughters - and incomplete *Selsey* (*below*), and also for interest's sake a picture of my version of *Selsey* engine shed, with new roof (*above*). Both models are in 7mm scale, by the way. The shed received first prize in a modeling competition that was held as part of the 2000 annual



Robert Kosmider's "antique" 7mm scale scratchbuilt model of Selsey

# Dispatches

*Letters to the editor*



convention of the British Railway Modelers Association of Australia. The shed is fully detailed inside.

*Robert Kosmider,  
Modbury Heights, Australia*

## More on the Selsey article

Re the query at the end of the Selsey article in the last *Colonel*: according to the bibliography in the book *The Selsey Tram* by David Bathurst, the article was in Vol 39 of the *Railway Magazine* (July-December 1916) and was by one V.L.Whitechurch. He also wrote an article on the line shortly after it opened, published in Volume 2 (January-June 1898). So the "40 years ago" bit is slightly out, but the loco details are accurate for 1916.

*Les Darbyshire, Bracknell, Berkshire.*

I would suggest that the article was originally written in 1914, but was updated prior to its publication in *The Railway Magazine*. According to the company's AGM, a "double service of trams", as it called its two-train service, operated in September 1912 and again in July and August the following year. Traffic was reported as being heavy up to the outbreak of the war, but fell off sharply with its commencement. There was no mention of a two-tram service in 1914, and one train would suffice in the future.

The 0-4-2T locomotive referred to as being "in process of reconstruction" is *Hesperus*, bought in July 1912 from the East Cornwall Mineral Railway. Was this locomotive just receiving the radial truck and 2'0" diameter trailing wheels from the original *Chichester*, or was it being rebuilt into its top-heavy looking form? This is often quoted as happening in 1921, although photographic evidence confirms this was most definitely carried out prior to 1917.

*Laurie Cooksey, Camber, East Sussex*



# AGM 2002

*Treasurer Nigel Bird presents the full itinerary for this year's AGM*

**A**GM 2002 will be held at the Snowdonia Parc Hotel, Waunfawr, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 4AQ, next to the Welsh Highland Railway, on Saturday 27 April.

The meeting will start at 12.00 mid-day, with tea/coffee and sandwiches after the meeting. We are then booked on the 15.05 train from Waunfawr to Caernarfon and return, due back at Waunfawr 16.30.

**Important note:** we have been given a footplate pass to raffle at the AGM for a return trip. This will be split into two prizes, an up and a down, to give two members the chance to have a ride, hopefully on a Garratt loco.

However, under no circumstances will anyone be allowed on the footplate who has consumed any alcohol. This is a very rigid rule, so if you want a chance of having a footplate ride, no alcohol until you get back. No exceptions will be made.

## SUNDAY 28 APRIL

We will meet at the Snowdonia Parc Hotel car park for a 10.30am prompt departure by cars down to Porthmadog. Our guide to the closed route will be David Allan, who is actively involved in the heritage side of both ends of the Welsh Highland Railway. He will act as guide and answer any questions we may pose.

Sadly, the Welsh Highland Portmadoc end will not be operating. They did offer to fire up *Russell* for us, but needed a guarantee of at least 20 members travelling and paying their own fares. I couldn't give them this guarantee and had to decline their kind offer. If any member is prepared to cover the necessary costs on behalf of the Society, say £100, then I am sure I can sort it out even at the eleventh hour!

We should also be able to have a bite of lunch at his point. Afterwards, those interested can pop up to the Festiniog Railway for a brief look around, and maybe, if I can arrange it, we will be allowed to look round Boston Lodge works. The day should end about 4.00 to 4.30, but members can do as

little or as much as they want on the Sunday.

I look forward to your support on the Sunday, as this hopefully will be a most informative and enjoyable day.

■

*If you have any enquiries, ring Nigel on 01974 821281 or you can email him at: [nigelbird.books@virgin.net](mailto:nigelbird.books@virgin.net)*

## AGM 2002

- 1) Apologies for Absence
- 2) Actions from last AGM
- 3) Committee reports:
  - Chairman
  - Treasurer
  - Membership secretary
  - Editor
  - Publicity
- 4) Election of Officers
- 5) Donations to Related Organisations
- 6) Any Other Business

# WHERE YOUR MONEY HAS GONE

**Stephen Hannington gives details of the worthy causes that received donations totalling £500 from the Colonel Stephens Society last year**

As you will no doubt know, last year's AGM voted £500 in donations to Colonel Stephens-related heritage projects. The previous year, we allocated £200 to similar causes. This year's cheques went out shortly after Christmas, the biggest of which was for £200 to the Welsh Highland Railway Heritage Group (WHRHG) towards the restoration of Waunfawr station on the now-being-restored Welsh Highland Railway.

The WHRHG is dedicated to researching and recording artefacts from the old Welsh Highland Railway, which was the Colonel's refurbishment and extension of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway (NWNGR).

The latter opened in 1877 from Dinas, on the LNWR's route from Caernarfon, to Rhyd-Ddu via Waunfawr.

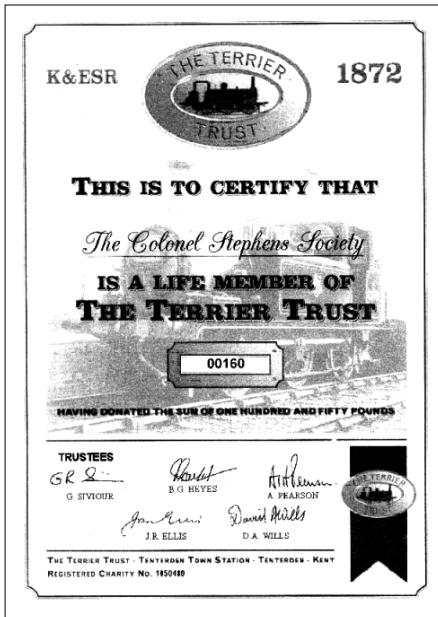
The station building at Waunfawr dated from NWNGR days. Its remains have been dismantled and will be incorporated into a new, extended building in the original style at the rebuilt station, where the foundations for it have already been laid.

John Keylock, secretary of the WHRHG said that it will cost about £50,000 to build the structure, although this cost could be halved if enough volunteers could be found to help with the work. But it's early days yet.

"It's in the talking stage," said John. "It's going to cost a lot of money. In the long term, we'll be looking for grant aid in one form or another." But he added that "it's got to happen. The only reason it hasn't happened is that there's not enough money."

The second highest sum we have so far donated is a total of £150 towards the return to running order of former K&ESR Terrier number 3 *Bodiam*. The work is in the hands of the Terrier Trust, a group independent of the financially embarrassed Tenterden Railway Company, with the sole aim of looking after the Terriers on the restored ten miles of the former K&ESR. Full details of the Trust follow on page 12.

The £100 we donated this year, added to the £50 we gave last year, entitles us to life membership of the Trust (*left*). As a result, we get a seat on the first train to be hauled by *Bodiam* when it's back on the tracks, as well as footplate access. Repairing *Bodiam* has been a long haul, but it's hoped that it's refurbished frames will at last return to Rolvenden works, where its new boiler awaits, this month (April) after four years at Ian Riley Engineering in Bury.



*Waunfawr station site in the mid-1990s*



“Our little Terrier rather got pushed to the back of the queue,” said Trust secretary Gerald Siviour. “It’s only basically an assembly job once the chassis’s back.”

We’d also originally hoped to add another £100 to the £50 we gave towards the East Kent Light Railway Society’s 0-4-0ST *Spitfire*. But the independently-owned loco has now been sold, following a bad financial year for the railway, blamed mainly on the Foot & Mouth scare. Indeed, the EKLRS offered to return last year’s money, but our committee said they could keep it and add it to the £100 we gave them this year towards the extension of the platform at Eythorne station.

This work will allow three-coach trains to use the station, which is currently as the Colonel built it, being limited to a mere two Mk 1 coaches. The society has already undertaken considerable work at Eythorne, which is the northern terminus of the two-mile remnant of the former colliery railway, including the installation of an ex-SE&CR signal box from Selling station, near Faversham.

Finally, we gave £100 towards The Baldwin Project’s restoration of one of the last surviving ex-WD Baldwin 4-6-0Ts, examples of which ran on the Colonel’s Ashover, Snailbeach District and Welsh Highland railways. This one, former WD Light Railway number 778, has recently been repatriated

from India and will cost £100,000 to put back into working order.

The loco is based at the Leighton Buzzard Railway (LBR) in Bedfordshire, from where it will eventually be loaned to other narrow-gauge railways: potentially the WHR itself. The aim “at worst”, the Project people say, is to have 778 up and running in time for its 70th birthday in 2007.

For our money, we now have a certificate signed by Sir William McAlpine, president of the Project, a limited edition colour print of 778 at Page’s Park station on the LBR, and a year’s membership of the LBR itself, including free travel. If anyone wants to avail themselves of the latter facility, contact me and we’ll get it organised. The A3-sized print will be raffled at the AGM. ■

[www.bangor.ac.uk/ml/whr](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/ml/whr)  
[www.eastkentrailway.com](http://www.eastkentrailway.com)  
[www.baldwinproject.org.uk](http://www.baldwinproject.org.uk)

# SAVING THE TERRIERS

**Gerald Siviour, secretary of The Terrier Trust, to which we have made donations over the last two years, explains its aims and history**

The Terrier Trust had its origin in the situation of the three Brighton Terriers on the K&ESR in the mid-1990s, none of which was in working order. One, former Rother Valley Railway number 3 *Bodiam* (BR 32670) had lain derelict and boilerless for several years.

A second, former SR number 2678 *Knowle*, was a kit of parts lying around the site at Rolvenden; and the third, number 10 *Sutton* (BR 32650) had been withdrawn from service due mainly to the condition of its cylinders.

Terriers have been associated with the railway since its earliest days, for *Bodiam* had joined the locomotive fleet in 1901. Photographs of trains taken right up to closure in 1961 invariably featured either a veteran 0-6-0 tender engine working at the Headcorn end, or a Terrier at the Robertsbridge end of the line.

Many TRC members felt that the railway was not being true to its roots and was losing out commercially by neglecting its Terriers. So, on the initiative of Tim Stanger, a meeting was held at the Vine Inn, Tenterden on 16 September 1995 to discuss the situation.

This resulted in the formation of the Terrier Trust, whose general objective was to safeguard the interest of Terriers on the K&ESR and, in particular, to restore the oldest and longest serving: the former *Bodiam*. We now have over 150 members.

Although *Bodiam* returned to Rolvenden in 1964, following closure of the Hayling Island branch, and saw considerable use in the 1970s and early 1980s, it belonged not to the railway but to Ron and Vic Wheele of Brighton. They wanted to sell, raising the prospect that the K&ESR would have to repair the engine to make up for past neglect and then see it depart for another home.

A price of £40,000 was eventually agreed, and raising this became the first objective. Between them, the trust and the TRC raised £20,000 during 1996 and the engine passed into joint ownership at a ceremony in the Colonel Stephens Museum on 7 November of that year.

The balance was paid by July 1997 to establish full ownership. The trust raised its share through donations and subscriptions by members and various fund-raising activities such as an annual Pullman dinner, model railway exhibitions and the organisation of excursions.

It was agreed that the restoration of *Bodiam* would be by the TRC financing construction of a new boiler by Israel Newton of Leeds, while the trust would raise money to overhaul the chassis. The new boiler was built as one of a pair, the other being for the Isle of Wight Railway, who also bought *Bodiam*'s old boiler.

The trustees decided to seek a Heritage Lottery Fund grant and in order to have the necessary survey done as quickly as possible, the chassis was sent to Ian Riley's locomotive works at Bury, Lancashire in August 1997. He estimated the cost of overhaul and re-assembly to be £104,000 and on this basis an application for HLF money was submitted. Unfortunately, it was rejected on the grounds that several Terriers were working elsewhere, so our engine was not therefore unique.

This does not seem to have prevented the HLF from making *two* grants to the same ex-GWR 2-8-0T, a type that also has duplicates in preservation, and illustrates how haphazard the allocation of grants has been.

Despite this setback, the trustees decided to go ahead with most of the chassis overhaul at Bury before it returned to Rolvenden for completion. Much of the work has now been done, although not as quickly as we had hoped. This probably because Ian Riley, like most contractors, has a vast amount of work in hand, with a workshop full of engines undergoing overhaul, some with main line deadlines to meet.

Nevertheless, we are doing all we can to ensure that our chassis comes back as soon as possible to be united with its new boiler and return to service in the blue livery of the Rother Valley Railway that it carried when it first came to Rolvenden a century ago. In the

meantime, readers might like to look out for the Hornby OO gauge model of the engine.

In order to help the TRC through its financial crisis in early 2000, the trust, with the aid of a very generous donation by a member, purchased from them the new boiler for *Bodiam*. The trust now therefore owns a 71% stake in the engine and the TRC 29%.

Throughout the late 1990s, work continued at Rolvenden on the rebuilding of *Knowle*, then owned by Rik Edmondson. This re-entered service in June 1999 in the SR black livery it carried when on loan to the K&ESR from the 1930s onward. Thus our railway was once again graced by a working Terrier.

The high regard of the TRC membership for Stroudley's little masterpieces was shown when in October 2000 *Knowle* was put up for sale. Although Rik expressed the wish that it would stay on the K&ESR and offered it at a preferential rate, we still had to raise £80,000 in a very short time to buy it.

The Terrier Trust therefore led an appeal to all its own members and those of the TRC and the Locomotive Trust. The response was quite overwhelming. Donations of smaller sums and up to thousands of pounds came flooding in, and by late November 2000 £73,000 had been donated or pledged. The trust therefore paid £40,000 on 27 November 2000 and became outright owners of the engine.

Although the increase in passenger numbers since the railway was extended to Bodiam has reduced the amount of work for small engines, they still have the capacity to generate income in a way that no Austerity ever could.

For example, on 15 February 2001, *Knowle* and a mixed train were chartered by a group of photographers who paid £500 each to the TRC and the Terrier Trust, and a second such charter is scheduled for this summer. *Knowle* has recently been repainted in BR lined black to provide a contrast to the original blue of *Bodiam*.

Meanwhile, in the station yard at Ten-terden sits Number 10 *Sutton*, now looking distinctly in need of some tender loving care. It is intended that it will receive a cosmetic repaint this year.



*Bodiam at Rolvenden in late K&ESR days*

Originally purchased from BR in 1964, it was intended for display on a plinth in the centre in the newly created London Borough of Sutton, but it is widely felt now that this is no longer an appropriate way of preserving a historic relic. The trust therefore feels it has a duty to investigate the possibility of guaranteeing its long-term future at Ten-terden so that money can be spent on restoring it to the working fleet.

Matters need not stop there, for, neglected and out of place among rows of Canadian engines in a cramped shed near Montreal, is former LB&SCR number 654 *Waddon*, still in its A1 condition, as *Bodiam* was until 1943. Surely it could be found a more appropriate home? ■

# UNRAVELLING THE ROTHER VALLEY

*In response to reader requests, Gardner Crawley, chairman of the new Rother Valley Heritage Trust, attempts to shed light on the numerous organisations associated with attempts to revive the Bodiam to Robertsbridge link that was part of the Rother Valley Railway section of the Kent & East Sussex Railway. Stephen*

The Rother Valley Railway Heritage Trust (RVRHT) is a newly formed registered charity, Number 1088452, that was set up to preserve the heritage of the Rother Valley Railway (RVR) for the education and enjoyment of, and benefit to, current and future generations of the people of East Sussex. This will include the restoration of historic buildings and structures, provision of educational facilities and making access available to the general public.

The RVRHT will raise the funds and act as a facilitator in providing property and financial resources to enable other bodies to carry out the restoration. The ability of the charity to raise funds by taking advantage of the Gift Aid scheme will bring funding to the project that has not been possible before.

The trust's principal activities in the near future will be to get the railway on a sound financial footing and to pursue further land and property purchases related to the railway. The trust has purchased a controlling interest in the Rother Valley Railway (East Sussex) Ltd (*see below*).

There are three trustees: myself, Dick Arblaster and Peter Davis. I am one of the founders of the K&ESR preservation society and a chartered civil engineer, Dick is a resident of Robertsbridge and retired transport entrepreneur and Peter is a past chairman of the Tenterden Railway Company Ltd (TRC) with a keen interest in the heritage of the railway.

All are long-time supporters of the aim to restore the railway from Robertsbridge to Bodiam, there to link up with the TRC (*The current proprietor of the ten-mile operational section of the former K&ESR between*

*Tenterden and Bodiam. Ed.*).

**Rother Valley Railway (East Sussex) Ltd (RVR(ES))** was incorporated in 1991 and is responsible for the development and management of the railway from Robertsbridge to Bodiam. For liability and legal reasons, it will be responsible for the Rother Valley Railway passenger-carrying train service, although volunteers will be provided by the Supporters Association (*see below*). The board includes members of both the Heritage Trust and the Supporters Association. The company is controlled by the RVRHT.

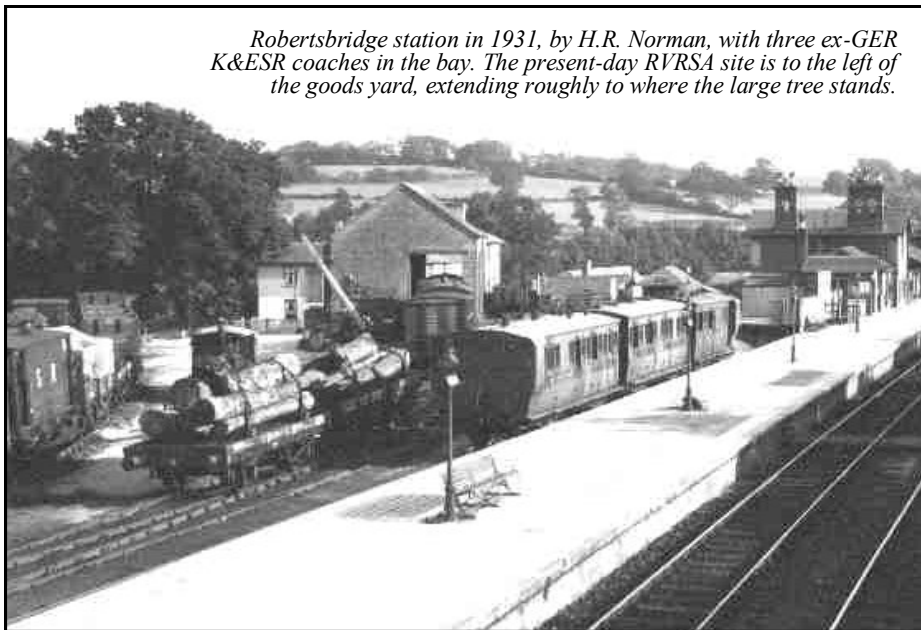
The **Rother Valley Railway Supporters Association (RVRSA)** is a trust formed in 1996 to give individuals an opportunity of becoming members and to get involved and assist the RVR(ES) in the restoration and development of the railway.

In February 2001, RVR(ES) granted the association a licence, under the terms of which the RVRSA is now responsible for the management and development of the Robertsbridge site (*The former goods yard. Ed.*) and its opening to the general public, including the establishment of a passenger carrying service as quickly as possible.

*(Editor's note: the trustees of the RVRSA are Helen Brett, David Felton, Ian Sharp, David Wells and Mark Yonge. Brett and Yonge are also directors of RVR (ES) Ltd.)*

If you are interested in helping, there are two ways for you to get involved. The first is in a practical way as a member of the RVRSA. Adult membership costs £12 per year, or £6 for juniors and family members, and the membership year runs from 1 April to 31 March.

*Robertsbridge station in 1931, by H.R. Norman, with three ex-GER K&ESR coaches in the bay. The present-day RVRSA site is to the left of the goods yard, extending roughly to where the large tree stands.*



Members are able to work as volunteers on the railway and while so doing have insurance cover. They receive a quarterly members' magazine called *The Phoenix*. For further details of membership, please contact membership secretary Peter Coombs on 01622 717491.

The second way to get involved is in a purely financial way by making a Gift Aid donation to the RVRHT. This enables the railway to benefit substantially by reclaiming some of the Income Tax that you pay.

Such donations may be single amounts of whatever value, and no longer have to be committed for a minimum of four years. For example, if you are a standard rate UK taxpayer and you make a cash donation of £100, RVRHT receives £128.21, including the tax refund of £28.21.

If you are a higher rate UK taxpayer, you can help even more by adding on the higher rate tax you can claim against your tax liability. For example, if you make a cash donation of £130, the net cost to you is still only £100 and the RVRHT receives no less than £166.67, including a tax refund of £36.67.

Donations of materials and assets are also greatly appreciated and can themselves be eligible for tax relief for the donor. For further details, please contact me at Penny Cottage, Yelsted, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 7UT. ■

#### STEPHEN HANNINGTON ADDS:

Quite why there is a need for three separate organisations to revive the former K&ESR route between Bodiam and Robertsbridge may not be immediately apparent. But hold on to your hats: there's a fourth!

This one, called **Robertsbridge 20/20 Ltd**, is an offshoot of the TRC. Set up in September 1999, as the TRC's then company secretary Cathy Roberts told *The Colonel* in December 2000 [*Colonel 61*], its aim was "to do a study into the feasibility, or not, of us ever being able to get back to Robertsbridge". She concluded: "It's pretty much not doing anything. It's about as quiet as it can get".

From the TRC's 30th AGM reports, chairman Norman Brice on 4 July 2001 made the following statements: "Robertsbridge 20/20 Limited has not yet traded, but will be used to explore the possi-

bilities of completing the acquisition and restoration of the railway to Robertsbridge.”

He subsequently added: “This is very much a long term and essentially precautionary development related to discussions with the Rother Valley Railway about a link to Robertsbridge.

“I really must stress these are very early days with no money or manpower implications. But whilst we cannot do anything for many years, we need at the same time to ensure that nothing happens, such as a housing estate on the site, which might inhibit this expansion in 20 years’ time.”

As to which “Rother Valley Railway” Mr Brice was referring to, one can only assume that he meant RVR(ES) Ltd, which already owns an undisclosed portion of the 2½-mile trackbed between Bodiam and Robertsbridge. And which also aims to keep hypothetical housing estates at bay.

Even curiously is that RVR(ES) was itself originally a spin-off from the TRC. I quote from Issue 1 of the RVR(ES)’s newsletter *Rother Valley Railway News*, of 16 October 1992:

“The company [RVR(ES)] was formed at the instigation of TRC and all our directors are members of TRC. Regular meetings between the two boards ensure close cooperation.”

Why was the RVR(ES) needed? Again I quote, this time from the TRC’s own house journal, *The Tenterden Terrier*, Number 51 of Spring 1990. It is a response from the editor Phillip Shaw to a letter advocating the resurrection of the Robertsbridge link:

“The company [TRC] gave an undertaking to the relevant authorities at the time of the granting of the Light Railway Order not to proceed with the section from Bodiam to Robertsbridge for ever, and it was only on this understanding that the application for the Tenterden to Bodiam section was granted.”

Hence the need for a separate company to make Robertsbridge its goal: RVR(ES). Its self-stated aim was “to oversee the planning and reconstruction of the work” and to raise the necessary funds, then estimated at £2.5million, via a share issue, which has yet to materialise. More recent estimates suggest that £5m will be needed.

The RVRSA was originally set up to organise further fund-raising and publicity for the RVR(ES). It also allows the involve-

ment of general enthusiasts, who cannot ‘join’ a limited company such as the RVR (ES), as Gardner Crawley explains.

The latter’s primary task is to acquire the trackbed. Exactly how much it already owns - believed to be about a mile or so - is being kept secret so as not to prejudice ongoing negotiations. Its major physical obstacle, apart from landowners reluctant to sell, is the A21 bypass near Robertsbridge, which has been built across the former K&ESR route. This remains an unresolved problem.

The RVRSA has now formally taken on the responsibility to develop the Robertsbridge station site, with the long-standing aim of running brake van rides and establishing a visitors’ centre [*Colonel 59*].

Meanwhile, one can only assume that relations between the RVR(ES) and the TRC have soured sufficiently for the latter to set up its own RVR arm, Robertsbridge 20/20, with no capital, manpower or, indeed, any apparent activity. Perhaps someone from the TRC can clarify this for us.

There are obviously wheels-within-wheels here, suggesting rivalries and politics that are probably best not entered into by an impartial organisation such as ourselves. ■

● *Historical footnote: The original Rother Valley Railway, engineered by Holman Stephens, was opened between Robertsbridge and what is now Rolvenden station in 1900. The railway was renamed the Kent & East Sussex Railway in 1904 and extended through to Headcorn in 1905.*



# AN EARLY ADDRESS ON LIGHT RAILWAYS

*Laurie Cooksey tells the tale of a meeting reported in The Sussex Express newspaper of 11 May 1895 attended by the Great Man himself.*

With the necessary land having been acquired from Rye Town Council and the Curteis Estates for the construction of the Rye & Camber Tramway, there was much local interest in the project. Mr J.C. Buckwell C.C. was invited to give an address entitled Light Railways at the Rye & District Trade Association's meeting on Monday 11 March 1895.

However, owing to an attack of flu, he had to miss this and the following meeting, but was eventually able to give his address in May. Among those present was the young Holman Stephens who, two months earlier, had been given the contract to build the Rye & Camber Tramway.

Mr Buckwell began: "The subject of light railways is agitating England considerably just now, and primarily on account of the depression of agriculture, has been brought before Parliament in the form of a Bill.

"There are very few instances of light railways in England at present, and it is difficult to define what a light railway is, except by comparison. The slowest train in England would be considered an express in Bavaria! Many other countries have extensive light railway systems, but no country has such a splendid railway system as England. (*Applause*)

"The vicinal [local] railways of Belgium do a vast amount of good; those of France are light railways of local interest and managed by the prefects of the different departments, whilst the Kleinbahnen, or little railways, of Prussia are managed by either private companies or local authorities.

"All light railways are vastly inferior to what we have in England in the heavy or main lines, which cost from £10,000 to £60,000 a mile. It is impossible for such

costly lines to pay in sparsely populated districts, which must have something lighter or go without."

Buckwell then gave instances of how useful to the districts were the four light railways in England. The nine miles [Southwold Railway] from Halesworth to Southwold carried 87,000 passengers and 9000 tons of merchandise in 1894; the Easingwold (2000 inhabitants) Railway of two miles carried 48,000 passengers and 12,500 tons of goods; the Wantage Tramway of 2½ miles carried 36,000 passengers and earned £1000 from the carriage of goods; and the Wisbech & Upwell Tramway of 8 miles carried 100,000 passengers and earned £15,000 from the carriage of goods.

Buckwell followed up with examples of light railways abroad. He advised that in Belgium, the home of light railways, there were miles upon miles; in Hungary there were 1044 miles in 1880 earning £245 per mile and in 1893, 2333 miles earning £284 per mile. In the latter case, receipts were increasing 30% faster than the mileage.

There was a great object lesson in these figures, he said, as the lines made first were in the places most likely to prove profitable, yet the later lines in less populous districts paid equally well.

Similar instances were given of light railways in France, Prussia and Italy. The dividends in Holland and Belgium were 3%; in Germany the large lines paid well, but the others barely produced working expenses, whilst in France the light railways were a heavy tax upon the state.

In Ireland they could not be made to pay at all. The lines there were not built on economic principles, but there was an indirect gain in the heavy traffic being diverted from the roads to

the railways. Where Irish roads used to cost six shillings (30p) per rod (5½ yards) to repair, they now cost only 1s 5d (7p).

Goods could be carried more cheaply and expeditiously by light railways than by haulage on the main roads, and if farmers could have manure and other stuff brought cheaper along the frontage of their farms without having to cart from stations, there would also be an indirect gain to the road authorities in saving wear and tear.

As to cost and profit, if, like Holland and Belgium, a dividend of only 3% were earned, they could not expect that in England a large amount of capital would be attracted to that investment. However, local authorities could well afford to spend money on the scheme because they could borrow money at that rate of interest or less. County councils could put money into light railways without fear of loss. If localities found one third of the cost, the county councils could well put in the

***“Light railways must be something very inferior to the heavy system”***

other two-thirds if assured of a return of 3%.

Buckwell admitted: “The light railways must be something very inferior to the heavy system. There could not be expensive bridges, gate-keepers’ cottages, elaborate stations, no double lines, and altogether the line would be less commodious.

“The construction would be different: the heavy lines require 85lb rails on 45lb chairs spiked through the sleepers on two feet of broken ballast. For light railways, 45lb rails spiked to sleepers resting on the ground would be sufficient. The trains would be run at from 15 to 25 miles an hour and the comparatively reduced safety could well be put up with in return for the convenience.

“There must be a narrower gauge so that trucks could not be run off the main lines to the light ones, but goods would have to be taken off and re-loaded. The light lines would generally run at the sides of the high roads.”

The reference to the necessity of narrow gauge is an unusual suggestion, bearing in mind the problems that the GWR had in transferring goods from its broad gauge to standard gauge lines prior to its system being rebuilt to standard gauge just over two years earlier.

Buckwell next spoke about the Bill being introduced in Parliament with a view to facilitating the construction of light railways. It was proposed to give control to the county councils, and although some commentators believed that would give temptation to jobbery, Buckwell thought not.

He said that the councils should have the power of granting orders for the promotion of light railways instead of the House of Commons, because local authorities were better acquainted with the demands and conveniences of the neighbourhood. In the case of Sussex, by going to Lewes (the county town) instead of Westminster to obtain authority, House fees and Parliamentary counsels’ heavily marked briefs would be avoided. Altogether, the advantages counterbalanced any disadvantages.

Mr Bryce’s Bill also made important alterations in favour of light railways by doing away with compensation for compulsory purchase of land. The aim was to replace the current system involving jury and barristers, two arbitrators and an umpire with a Board of Trade-appointed single arbitrator. There was just as much chance of justice that way as by the more costly methods, Buckwell said.

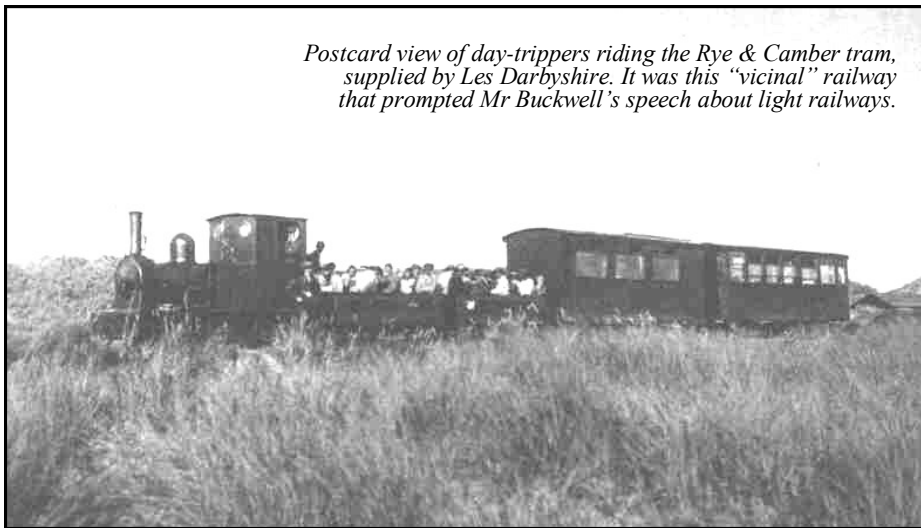
The Bill would also do away with a whole series of enactments. There would be no compulsion for gates at all roads. In America and Australia, the railways ran in the streets of big towns and, just as horses had got used to bicycles, so they had to steam engines.

Another amelioration was that there would be no continuous brakes, no block system and no need for a lot of returns to the Board of Trade. Buckwell hoped that, subject to some amendments, the Bill would get through as an instalment of future benefits to agriculture.

If the Bill were passed, it would still be left to county councils to decide whether a district should have a light railway or not. There were some objections, but it was worthwhile to put up with inconveniences to get the railways, the benefits of which Buckwell then spelt out.

The carriage of goods would probably be

*Postcard view of day-trippers riding the Rye & Camber tram, supplied by Les Darbyshire. It was this "vicinal" railway that prompted Mr Buckwell's speech about light railways.*



between one and two shillings (5 - 10p) per ton instead of the five or six shillings (25 - 30p) it then cost farmers. Further advantages included the connection of villages and large centres, the inducement to establish many industries in villages, and the stopping of migration from villages to large towns.

Furthermore, villages could share the amenities of towns, and there would be great advantage generally to agriculture and land-owners. For all three classes, Buckwell declared, light railways would be a benefit, and he hoped that soon in Sussex they would experiment on some for the benefit of land-owner, tenant and labourer alike. The audience responded with loud applause.

A lively discussion followed, with Buckwell answering each speaker in turn. Mr T.G. Sharpe, who would shortly become a director of the Rye & Camber Tramway, was told how a line would run from Rye to Staplecross, and another from Rye to Robertsbridge. Buckwell also referred to industries that had been established at Robertsbridge since the "railroad" had come to the village.

Holman Stephens himself then made some interesting remarks on construction generally, and the way to get a train up a hill! Regrettably, Stephens' contribution was not

recorded. What fascinating reading it would have made today.

Mr W.T. Smith's arguments against the scheme were fully answered and some further arguments adduced by Buckwell, to whom a hearty vote of thanks was moved by the mayor, Alderman Bellingham. In response, Buckwell referred to the urgent need for some attention to be paid to the agricultural interest, adding that he was glad, therefore, to see something being done in this direction by the Light Railway Bill. ■



## Brent's Browsings

# COALIES & DEAD RAILCARS

*Continuing Martin Brent's bequest gleaned from contemporary newspaper accounts, we conclude Arthur Rimmer's report of 29 May 1939 on the S&MR from the last Colonel, and hear more of a visit to the K&ESR in 1938*

In the sheds were Ilfracombe Goods 0-6-0 No. 3 *Hesperus*, built in 1875 (LSWR No. 0324) and 0-6-0s 8182 and 8236 (ex LNR) still in LMS livery. Number 8108, after a complete overhaul including a smokebox door from Crewe, was now in a new coat of "Kent" green paint and numbered 2. It was lined out in black and white. The tender was in another shed further up the Criggon branch and this was similarly painted and had S&MR in white paint on the sides.

The other two LMS engines were to be overhauled and painted in the same way. In the bay platform at Kinnerley Junction were several bogie and six-wheel coaches, gradually deteriorating, and also the 1848 royal saloon painted royal blue.

In the station were some empty wagons and a brake van, where an engine had left them to return to the sheds. On the Criggon branch were some wagons with C. R. on the sides. Beside the sheds were the remains of an ex-LCC horse tram that had been used for the passenger service on the Criggon branch. There was also a Ford twin railcar that had long since ceased to move.

On 6 August 1939, *Gazelle* and *Hesperus* were standing in the open at Kinnerley, while the three Coal Engines were inside the shed. Number 2 was in use, as was 8236, but 8182 had had its fire bars removed.

### BACK ON THE K&ESR

*Continuing the account of Mr E.L. Jones' reports, referred to originally in Colonel 64, Martin related:*

A visit to Rolvenden on 16 May (1938) revealed the following locomotives: SR Terrier No. 2655, and K&ESR locos Number 1 *Tenterden* 2-4-0T, Number 2 *Northiam* 2-4-0T, Number 8 *Hesperus* 0-6-0ST. Terrier No.

3 *Bodiam* was noted in traffic at Northiam at about 5.00pm that day.

It was noticed that 2655 had not yet been returned to the SR, although it had been stated earlier, in October 1937, that it was on loan only for the hop-picking season that autumn. Errant P Class No. 1556, on loan from the SR prior to Terrier 2655, had been returned and was noted on Dover Marine shed the following day.

*Tenterden* was at the rear of Rolvenden shed in a very poor condition and looked as if it had not been used for some time. The boiler of No. 9 *Juno* was lying just outside the shed, leaving *Hesperus* on the S&MR as the only working Ilfracombe Goods on the Colonel's railways.

On shed on 20 August 1938 were K&ESR numbers 1-4, 8 and – still – Terrier 2655. Numbers 1 and 8 had not been used for some time and were expected to be scrapped. Of the railcars, only a chassis remained of one of the Ford sets, while the Shefflex and the other Ford were intact but in poor condition.

The Pickering railcar No. 6 (formerly numbered 16 in the coaching stock list) was half-stripped. Only the bare woodwork and the rusty boiler remained. None of the railcars seemed capable of further operation.

The track was being relaid with heavier rails and was very grassy. The point was made that the line was in receivership and any attempt to spend drastically would bring creditors – mainly the SR – around the K&ESR's ears! ■