

THE COLONEL

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

Editorial: THE COLONEL NEEDS YOU

Firstly, apologies for the late arrival of this issue of *The Colonel*, even if this is in character with the Great Man's own railways. So if it is too late to wish you all a Merry Christmas, then may I at least hope you have a happy New Year.

The main reason for the delay is that I am now a student teacher, which is taking up a lot more of my time than my previous occupation as freelance journalist.

As a result, I have reluctantly decided not to stand for re-election as editor at the next AGM. I would therefore urge anyone who has an interest in taking over command of this highly-regarded and invaluable newsletter to come forward as soon as they have recovered from the seasonal festivities. *The Colonel*, in the spirit of the famous Kitchener recruiting poster, really does need YOU.

Meanwhile, we have another bumper, fact-packed issue, which seems to have developed a marked bias towards the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway. Given that the big news of the moment - and the most significant Colonel-related event for

decades - is that the S&MR's old Abbey terminus building is to be refurbished as a visitor centre and museum of the line (see page 9), that's perhaps not surprising.

Allied to this is the timely emergence of a significant collection of original historical material dating from the re-opening of the line, in the form of the Ward-Green papers. We get a first glimpse of their content from membership secretary David Powell on page 19, and there will be plenty more to come.

There is also news of the acquisition by one of our members of a major collection of early photographs - many previously unpublished - of the S&MR's predecessor, the PS&NWR, on page 7.

All this suggests that perhaps a new history of the railway's early days is waiting to be written. *The Colonel's* new editor, whoever that lucky person might be, will have a lot to look forward to. *SH*

Staff Officers

www.colonelstephenssociety.org.uk

CHAIRMAN

Derek Smith

30 Upper Road, Meole Brace,
Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY3 9SQ
Tel: 01743 249088

EDITOR & SECRETARY

Stephen Hannington

131 Borstal Street, Rochester,
Kent ME1 3JU
Tel: 01634 830370
Email: steveh@tivoli.demon.co.uk

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

David Powell

Gateways, Bledlow Road, Saunderton,
Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 9NG
Tel: 01844 343377
Email: DJPowellLtd@compuserve.com

TREASURER

Nigel Bird

Bryn Hir, Llanio Road, Llwyn-y-Groes,
Tregaron, Dyfed SY25 6PY
Tel: 01974 821281
Email: nigelbird.books@virgin.net

ARCHIVIST

Stuart Marshall

53 Peasland Road, Saffron Walden,
Essex CB11 3ED. Tel: 01799 500528
Email: chrisstu@ntlworld.com

PUBLICITY OFFICER

Position vacant

Society News

Tenterden venue and

Next year's AGM is scheduled for Saturday April 24 2004 at the Vine Inn in Tenterden, Kent. It will be largely a reprise of the 2001 event, featuring a free journey for members in a reserved vintage coach on the nearby Kent & East Sussex Railway: *if* we can get the railway company to answer their phone!

This time round we will have a guest speaker: Mark Yonge, who has a long association with the K&ESR and ongoing attempts to rebuild the 'missing link' between Bodiam and Robertsbridge to restore the connection with the Hastings main line. He will give an account of the history of railway preservation in the Rother Valley and an insight into the current situation.

All the current society officers are willing to stand for re-election, with the exception of *Colonel* editor Stephen Hannington, who is standing down because of work commitments. So we are looking for a replacement for this vital role (*see below*). Volunteers for other posts are, of course, also invited. A contested post would be a welcome novelty.

If you are planning to come along, please let event organiser Stephen know so that we can plan for the catering arrangements – free coffee or tea and sandwiches will be provided – and rail travel. ●

New editor sought for *The Colonel*

The Colonel needs a new editor. The current incumbent will be standing down after the next issue, due out at the end of March 2004. The issue after that – the first one for which the new editor will be responsible – is scheduled for publication at the end of the following June.

This is one of the most important posts in the society, since *The Colonel* is the main vehicle for our activities of sharing information and keeping in touch across the country and around the world. The committee urges anyone with an interest and the necessary enthusiasm to come forward.

The Colonel is currently put together using a desktop publishing programme called Microsoft Publisher 2000, a society copy of which can be made available to whoever takes over. It needs a PC with a processor running at 75MHz or higher, Windows 95 or later operating system, and 46Mbyte of program memory.

There is a fair amount of feature material to hand, so you wouldn't have to start from scratch. A template – a ready-made 'blank' that can be filled in with new material for each issue – is also available if required. The current editor is willing to provide all this and to offer advice (within reason) to whoever takes over.

How long it would take to put together an issue is hard to say. It depends on proficiency with desktop publishing and, ultimately, how much time you're prepared to put into it. Your present editor expects to spend at least a couple of weekends on the job, but then he is a trained journalist.

If you fancy the challenge of taking over the blue pencil, contact the editor: his details are at the foot of page 2. Volunteers will have to stand for election at the next AGM in April 2004. ●

News

New EKR books 'definitive'

Stephen Garrett and Maurice Lawson-Finch's long-awaited, two-volume history of the East Kent Light Railways was well worth the wait. It must surely rank as the definitive account of the line's labyrinthine affairs, telling a tale of mind-boggling complexity of a railway snarled up in the often highly suspect wheeler-dealing that surrounded the founding of Kent's coal mining industry.

This story takes up almost all of Volume One, which covers the history of the railway and associated coal mines, up to 1948. Volume Two continues the history

through Nationalisation to the closure of the last colliery and the dawn of preservation, plus a description of the railway and details of its locos and rolling stock.

All of this is accomplished in a total of nearly 500 pages, including copious photos from the earliest days of the mines to the diesel-hauled end, maps of various still-born extensions and everything else any enthusiast could possibly desire.

This is far more than the story of a railway: it is, of necessity, the tale of an entire regional industry, and the plot is far from straightforward. But no self-respecting EKLR or Colonel fan should be without this terrific *magnum opus*. It will never be bettered. *SH*

News in Brief

◆ The Welsh Highland Railway Ltd (Porthmadog) has agreed a long-term loan with the Imperial War Museum of its Baldwin 4-6-0T *Tiger*, which will be restored as WHR No. 590. It will be on display at the railway's Gelert's Farm site in Porthmadog while work is carried out. An appeal to raise funds for the restoration has been launched. Contact David Allan, Welsh Highland Railway Ltd, 132 Eastham Village Road, Eastham, Wirral CH62 0AE. Work has also begun on *Russell*, now that £3500 has been raised, including £400 from us.

◆ **Rother Valley Railway** (*East Sussex*) Ltd, which aims to mastermind the rebuilding of the 3½-mile missing link of the K&ESR between Bodiam and Robertsbridge, has advertised for a new chief executive. Among other things, the successful applicant will need to "draw up business plans, budgets and long-term strategy".

◆ The **East Kent Railway** has built a new Stephens-style waiting shelter at its northern terminus of Eythorne. It has a timber frame and corrugated iron cladding. The 2004 operating season will start on April 9 for four days, then every Sunday from 2 May.

Both volumes are published by Oakwood Press as numbers 127A (Volume One) and 127B (Volume Two) for £14.95 each. Oakwood Press, PO Box 13, Usk, Monmouthshire NP15 1YS. Website: www.oakwood-press@dial.pipex.com.

CSS Treasurer and bookseller Nigel Bird brings news of another new Colonel-related book just in: Mitchell & Smith's *Branch Lines to Clevedon and Portishead*, including the WC&PR and the Bristol Harbour Lines. Published by Middleton Press, it has 96 pages including maps and illustrations. He can supply copies at £14.95 plus £2 for postage in the UK.

Nigel reports: "Quite a lot of WC&PR pics. Not sure if any are newly published, but I suspect maybe, as this publisher usually turns up a few gems."

He also has stocks of the new EKR books at £14.95 plus UK postage of £1.50 per volume, or £2.50 for both together. For contact details, see the **Bird's Books** ad on page 9. ●

Merry Xmas from The Potts!



Member Jon Clarke, in the spirit of the season, kindly supplied this remarkable photo from a collection of pictures of the derelict Potteries, Shrewsbury & North Wales Junction Railway, forerunner of the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway, that he has acquired. It shows the overgrown track at an underbridge between the station and the quarry at Criggion, with 'A Merry Xmas From The Criggion Branch' written on it. It was taken by G.M. Perkins in 1904 and sent on 20 December 1911 to another Mr Perkins, possibly a relative, who was a pharmacist at Henley in Arden. For more details of Jon's collection, turn to page 7. ●

THE ROTHER VALLEY RAILWAY

Robertsbridge station, East Sussex TN32 5DG

REBUILDING THE K&ESR FROM ROBERTSBRIDGE TO BODIAM

Visitor centre open Sundays and Bank Holidays 9.30 to 17.00 (or dusk if earlier)

For membership, telephone: 01580 881833, go to www.rvrsa.co.uk
or write to: RVRSA, 375 New Hythe Lane, Larkfield, Kent ME20 6RY

Dispatches

Letters to the editor

Mystery PS&NWJR wagon



In your last issue, someone is claiming that the PS&NW wagon left behind at Kinnerley was rebuilt and used by the S&MR. I took the above photo of what I assumed was it at Kinnerley in 1933, obviously not rebuilt. This might clear the matter up...

R. W. Kidner, Bow Street, Ceredigion

LC&DR coaches on the EKR

Interested to see the LCDR carriages article in *Colonel 72*. As predicted in my preface to the EKR History (*see page 4*), it was inevitable that new information would come to light as soon as the book was published. Strictly speaking, I suppose the information was always there but we weren't aware of it, or of the SECR Society either, to my shame.

I wouldn't argue with Robin's identification of EKR Nos. 7-9, which seems fairly conclusive. One of the carriages sold as body only could be the carriage that ended up on Staple platform. Staff recall it arriving at Shepherdswell as a body, but could-

n't throw any light on how it was transported to Staple. The only fly in the ointment is that this body didn't arrive at Staple until 1926.

It seems the East Kent had a convenient black hole into which it could pop odds and ends until they were needed, as with the Terrier boiler that nobody can seem to recall being at Shepherdswell.

I have heard from Laurie Cooksey that the LCDR first class carriage No.14 later 2410 went to the Selsey Tramway, not the East Kent. I don't know if any of the others shown as "Sold to Colonel Ste-

Continued on page 8 ➔

Potts photo collection

I have recently purchased a collection of about 40 photographs, some unpublished and some later printed by the L&GRP or in Eric Tonks' book, of the derelict Potts (PS&NWR) railway - the forerunner to the Shropshire and Montgomeryshire Railway - taken in 1902/3 by F.E. Fox-Davies and G. Perkins. I was wondering if any CSS members knew anything about these photographers, and did anyone else have other photographs by them?

The photos are of:

- Bridge over Tanat river between Llanymynech and Llanyblodwell (1903, *F.E. Fox-Davies*)
- Llanymynech station looking north on Potts (*L&GRP, 1903*) showing loco shed and wooden water tank. This is a full view of the picture in Tonks, page 25
- Llanymynech looking south with Cambrian cattle wagon (*Fox-Davies, and L&GRP 3903*)
- Llanymynech looking on Potts showing station building and wooden building beyond with a three-plank wagon by platform
- Close up of Llanymynech loco shed (*Fox-Davies, November 1902*)
- West end of loco shed at Llanymynech (*Fox-Davies, November 1902*)
- Potts water tower at Llanymynech (1902)
- Distant signal at a distance looking east near Llanymynech (*Fox-Davies, November 1902*)
- Closer view of distant signal looking east near Llanymynech (*Fox-Davies, November 1902*)
- Bridge over brook between Kinnerley and Melverley (*Fox-Davies, 1903*)
- Old wagon at Kinnerley: the one that survived until 1935 (*Fox-Davies, November 1902*)
- Kinnerley station showing haystack under bridge (*Fox-Davies, 1902*). This is a full view of the picture in Tonks page 27
- Kinnerley looking west from under the bridge (*Fox-Davies, November 1902*)
- Old signal box at Kinnerley (*Fox-Davies, November 1902*). I've seen this somewhere, possibly Perkins' history of the line.
- Underbridge between Criggion and the quarry, with 'Merry Xmas From The Criggion Branch' written on photo (*G.M. Perkins, 1904, and sent 20 December 1911 to a Mr Perkins, Pharmacist in Henley in Arden*)
- Shrawardine station looking east showing crossing keepers cottage (*Fox-Davies, 29 June 1903*)
- Kinnerley station building with four children sitting on hand cart (*circa 1893*)
- Close up of Kinnerley's wooden water tower (*Fox-Davies, November 1902*)
- The multi-arched road bridge at Melverley with a Miss Fox-Davies sitting on a stile (*Fox-Davies, summer 1904*)
- Remains (three posts) of Melverley viaduct over the River Severn (*Fox-Davies, November 1902*)
- Potts signal between Melverley and Crewe Green with J. or T.R.P. (Perkins?) holding up the balance weight (*Fox-Davies, 5 August 1904*)
- Llandrinio Road station from south showing fowl-house built over the track (*Fox-Davies, 1904*)
- Close up of crossing gate at Llandrinio Road station (*Fox-Davies, 1904*)
- Road by with cart at Criggion Quarries, showing rails (*Fox-Davies, 1904*)
- Nesscliffe Station and crossing keeper's cottage looking west (*Fox-Davies, 29/6/1903 and L&GRP*). This is a full view of the picture in Tonks, page 29
- Shrawardine crossing keeper's cottage looking west (*Fox-Davies, 29 June 1903*)
- Ford station building, looking east (*Fox-Davies, 29 June 1903*)
- Shrawardine distant signal on top of cutting

continued on next page →

Dispatches

Letters to the editor

Potts photo collection

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east of the viaduct, taken from below (*Fox-Davies, 29 June 1903*)

• Richard Reeves with the trolley by brick bridge east of Shrawardine viaduct (*G. M. Perkins, 29 June 1903 & L&GRP*). This is a full view of the picture in Tonks page 25 but credited in Tonks to Fox-Davies

• Site of Potts Red Hill station showing point levers frame (*June 1903*)

• Rails on bridge over lane close to junction of Abbey Foregate branch (*G. M. Perkins, 29 June 1903*)

• Brick bridge over Rea at Abbey Foregate branch (*G.M. Perkins, 9 June 1903*)

• Ford and Crossgates station, south platform (*repro from early S&M days*)

• Llanymynech station looking south, showing both stations (*Fox-Davies, circa 1911- and posted in 1915*)

• WD936 and WD937 at Melverley (*A. Chambers, 22 May 1955, on a tour visit*)

• "Severn", as in S&M Middleton Press book,

photo 6: *L&GRP 240*

• "Pyramus", the original 0-6-2T: *L&GRP 12705*

• Ex-GER brake 2nd on Kinnerley yard: *L&GRP 2276 (1936)*

A few of the photos seem familiar, but no more than four more than those noted above. I don't have the Kidderminster photos yet, so there may be some in that collection. I also have some WD era pics *not* published.

The only Fox-Davies I can find on the Internet are an "A.C.", who is a heraldic historian, and a "Sarah". One postcard of Llanymynech is credited on back as "Photo. by F.E. Fox-Davies, Llanymynech", so he may have been from there.

Jon Clarke, Chester

LCDR coaches on the EKR

→ *continued from previous page*

phens, KESR 1921" also went to the Selsey.

It certainly leaves the LCDR identity of East Kent No.7 unresolved. I cannot really offer anything more than wild speculation: rejected on delivery; damaged en route and therefore never delivered; used as accommodation for workers on the Richborough extension and never seen by regular staff; or stolen by gypsies for firewood (it happened to stocks of sleepers at Richborough). Frankly, none of these would really help.

As to liveries, No.7 was reported as grey at an early stage, weathered teak perhaps, then dull red. No reports were made on No.8, while No.9 was later painted grey: the same stock of grey paint as used on wagons seems likely. Dull red was the main livery reported by visitors, with later use of grey and various shades of green. No green was reported for Nos. 7-9.

Stephen Garrett, London

£120,000 MAKEOVER FOR ABBEY STATION

The old S&MR station building at Shrewsbury has been saved from the bulldozer. Now, as Stephen Hannington reports, the hard work begins...

Saved! The former Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway station building at Abbey Foregate in Shrewsbury has been saved from demolition. It will, if all goes well, become a "high class visitor and railway interpretation centre", according to local councillor Mansel Williams.

The news is a welcome conclusion to a ten-month campaign to rescue the building, which came under threat of demolition in February. This sparked off a strong lobbying campaign in which our society played a significant role (*see Colonel 72*).

On 15 December 2003, Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council decided that £60,000 of grant aid should be made available to the Shrewsbury Railway Heritage Trust (SRHT) "to progress the repair, modification and use of the Old Abbey Railway Station building". The money is to be made available on a 'pound-for-pound' basis, with the council matching any funds raised by the Trust, starting with £10,000 'up front' from

the council.

This, you might remember, is the sum originally quoted for the demolition of the building. The Trust will lease the station building from the council under an arrangement yet to be finalised: the recommendation is that this should be for a period of 25 years. The council will remain responsible for structural maintenance, while the interior is the responsibility of the Trust.

The SRHT, of which Williams is also a member, was formally launched in September and aims to make the Abbey station its headquarters. It also plans to establish a museum dedicated to local railways in redundant buildings at the main line station.

The total cost of renovating and converting the Abbey station building is now estimated at £120,000, of which the SRHT will have to raise half. The Colonel Stephens Society pledged £250 at the last AGM, contingent on the SRHT being successful in its bid to take over the building. We will now honour that pledge.

On the following two pages are ground plans of the site as it is now, and as it is intended to develop it as a visitors' centre. They were drawn up by local architect Mary de Saulles with the aid of the father of one of our members, Phil Scoggins, who is also a member of the local Civic Society that has promised up to £3000 towards the restoration. An artist's impression, also by Phil's dad, has been produced to show what the restored building will look like. This will be included in the next Colonel. ■

Nigel Bird Books

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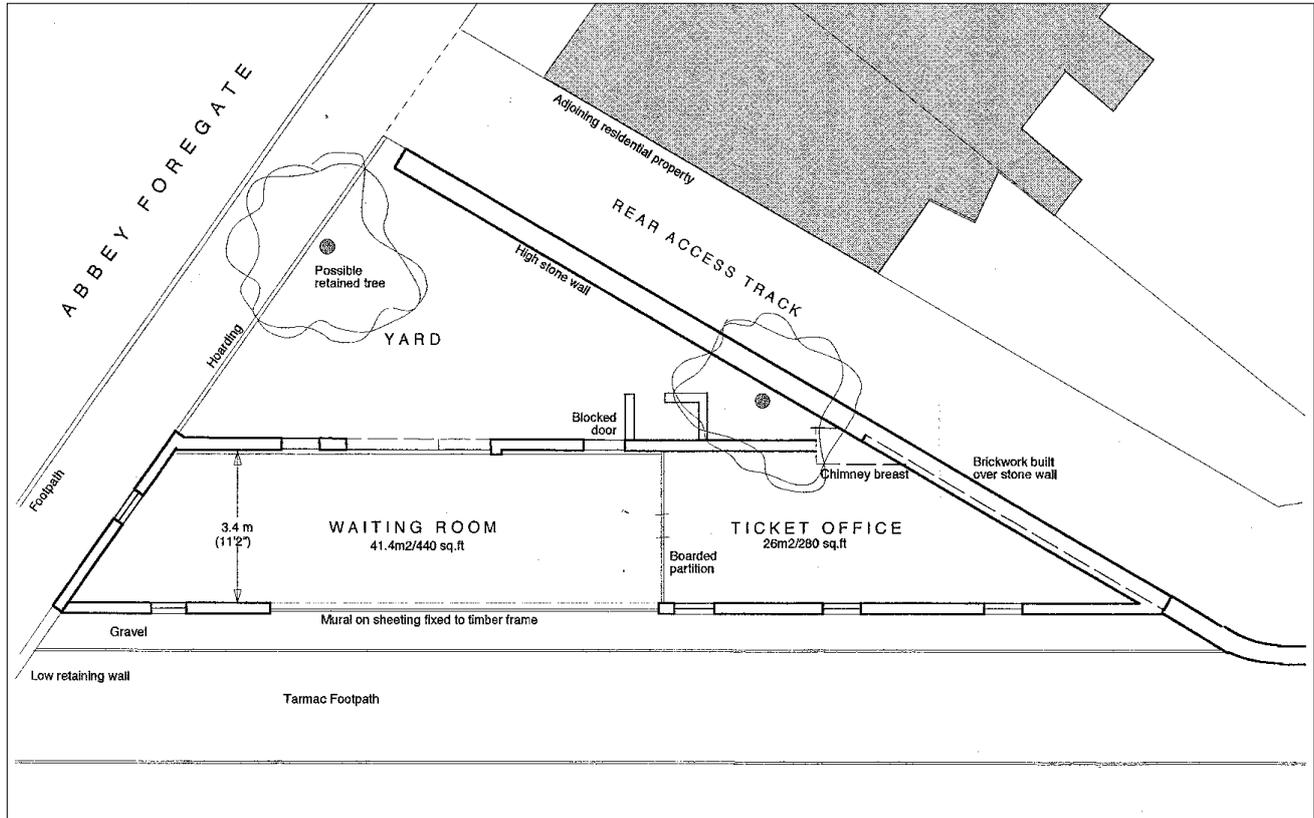
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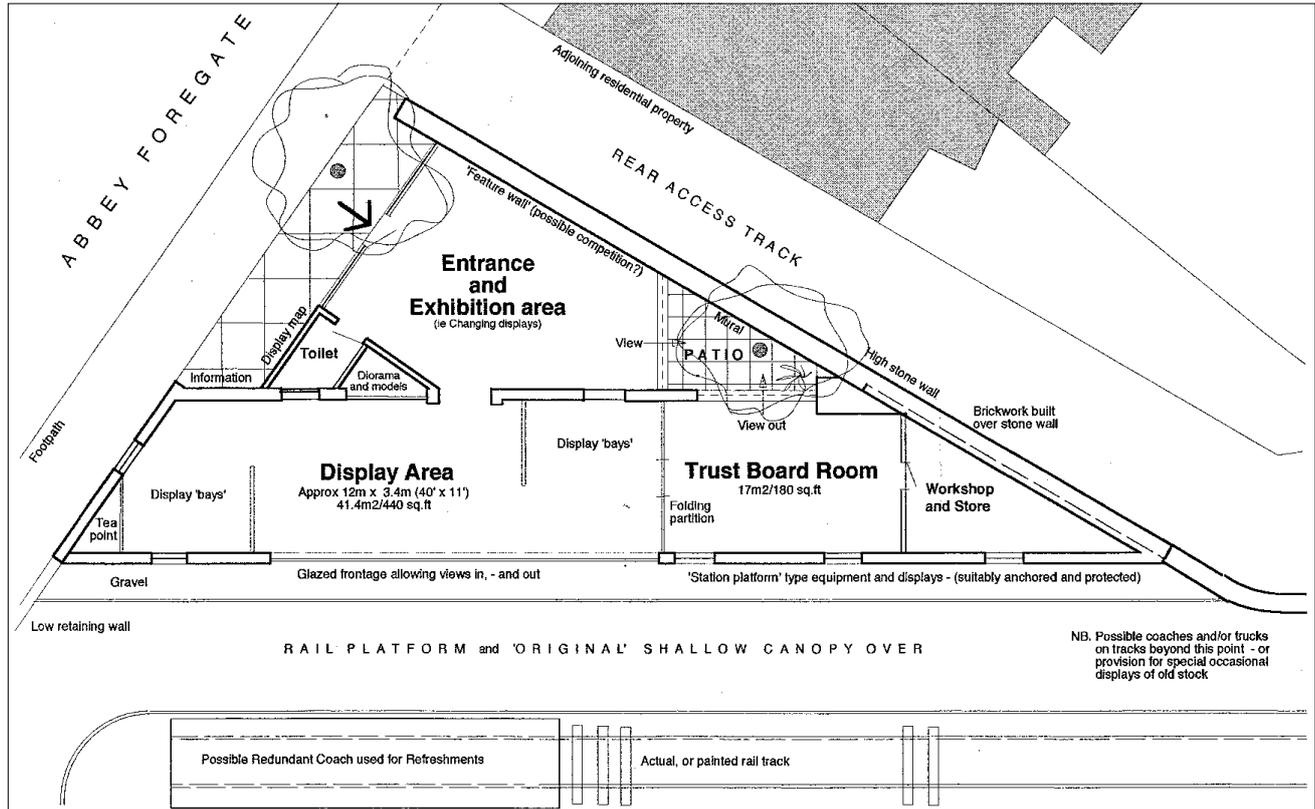
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BEFORE: This is how things stand at the moment, showing how the building is built across a corner of the site, with oddly tapering rooms. The central Waiting Room is believed to have been open-fronted as originally built, then enclosed by weatherboarding at a later date. A footpath giving access to the platform ran in front of the building under an awning. Windows have been bricked up.



AFTER: This is the proposed development scheme for the site, including a new entrance from Abbey Foregate and a new foyer area. The original function of this 'yard' area is unclear, although there does appear to have been a crude gents' urinal in typical Stephens style. Our chairman Derek Smith and SRHT director Russell Mulford have both promised S&MR artefacts for display.

THE CUNNINGHAM FILES, PART ONE:

GRANDSTAND VIEW FROM WATERLOO

Roy Cunningham travelled on and photographed several of the Great Man's railways in their twilight years while working for British Railways. In the first part of his memoirs, he recalls trips to the EKR and K&ESR.

On leaving school in 1949 I started work at the Southern Region's Civil Engineer's office at Waterloo. If anyone is familiar with the two posters painted by Helen Madeline McKie for the Southern Railway showing Waterloo Station in its wartime and peacetime guises, they will know the view I had from my office window.

Incidentally, just down the corridor was another office, that of the publicity and public relations manager where, only a couple of years before, a young man called Ian Allan had decided to leave the railway service and set up in business on his own publishing booklets listing names and numbers of railway locomotives. I wonder how he got on?

We had a grandstand view of the arrivals and departures of the Southampton boat trains in the days when world travel was by sea. We could witness highly animated scenes as massive trunks were manhandled on and off the luggage vans that were always attached to the boat trains, with their anxious owners keen to make sure that their luggage was going with them and not being left on the platform.

Union Castle Line (for South Africa) and Cunard (for the States) were at their zenith. None of us realised that in a few years time the jet airliner would revolutionise long-distance travel and take away virtually all these companies' business.

What has this got to do with the Colonel and his railways? Well, working for BR gave me travel privileges, so I was able to start seriously exploring the railway network. My dad's odd comments about the lines, which until a couple of years previously had been administered from the Colonel's office at

Salford Terrace, had encouraged me to buy a copy of the Oakwood Press *Light Railway Handbook No. 1: The Colonel Stephens Railways* (third edition, revised February 1948).

I was too late, unfortunately, to catch the passenger service on the East Kent, but I made several journeys over the Kent & East Sussex. I nearly always travelled out via Headcorn and returned via Robertsbridge, usually spending a few hours exploring Tenterden and district.

Once, I did return via Headcorn and the K&ESR 'mixed' train shunted, passenger coach included, the yards at High Halden Road and Biddenden. The trains normally comprised a single brake-third bogie with Wainwright O1 Class 0-6-0 tender locomotives operating between Headcorn and Rolvenden, with Stroudley A1x Terriers taking over between Tenterden Town and Robertsbridge.

On one occasion I had just arrived at Tenterden Town when the stationman, seeing that I was taking an interest in the proceedings, produced from the booking office an envelope containing the set of six postcards that had been published at the opening of the Rother Valley Railway and gave them to me. I still have them, along with Mr Kidner's useful little book, and in time I also bought the 'combined edition', which, for 13s 6d, had outline details of all the light railways past and present in the British Isles.

I made one visit to the East Kent, probably in 1950, when I watched an O1 bring a train off the Tilmannstone colliery branch onto the 'main line' when the signals at Eythorne and the track towards Wingham were still *in situ*. I returned in 1956 to find that the turnout onto the colliery branch had been plain-lined,



Tenterden Town on 11 June 1961, on one of Roy's later visits to the K&ESR. The occasion is the Locomotive Club of Great Britain's South Eastern Ltd outing, and the loco itself is the former K&ESR stalwart Bodiam, which has survived to this day and is undergoing overhaul.

the signals had disappeared and the line beyond the branch junction had become a deserted trackbed.

The Southern Civils did, in fact, make significant improvements to the running lines right up to the boundary with the NCB at Tilmanstone, with 95lb bullhead rail throughout and a substantial portion of the line re-sleepered with concrete sleepers. The lesser-used sidings at Shepherdsweil, together with the platform road and the engine release road, remained in 60lb flat-bottom.

Late in 1950 I visited the Sheppey Light Railway for the first and, sadly, also the last time. It was on Saturday 2nd December, the last day of operation. This was the first time that I had been to a railway closure, but over the following few years there were many more opportunities to see the last rites per-

formed over many branch lines – and even some main-line routes – up and down the country.

I was on the last train of the Sheppey Light and cannot add anything to the account of that journey in Peter Harding's booklet, except to say that, on arrival at Queensborough, I waited for the Sittingbourne train and saw R1 Class 0-4-4T No. 31705, which had worked the Sheppey Light that day, being coupled ahead of the train engine to work back to its shed.

I spent three years in the RAF from 1951 to 1954 and didn't see much of the trains except to get me to and from leave. But I did get to the K&ESR on 2nd January 1954, the last day of passenger services and of all traffic north of Tenterden Town. I arrived at Headcorn by bus from Maidstone, expecting



Before and after: the above view dates from 1950 or '51 and shows Eythorne junction on the EKR, looking north from the station, with an O1-headed train coming off the branch from Tilmanstone colliery. Below, a similar view from 16 September 1956 reveals that the line towards Eastry has been lifted and the signal has gone. This view - minus the pit headgear and more overgrown - can still be seen today from the preserved EKR station platform.



to find the normal service trains operating, but discovered at the last minute that a special working, running in part in the service train paths, was to perform a full round trip.

The six coaches to form this train were imported for the day, as was Ashford-based O1 31064. This worked the train to and from Rolvenden, from where the resident Terriers took the train to Robertsbridge. I suspect that the crew on the O1 were not very happy about tackling the bank from Rolvenden to Tenterden on the return journey unassisted, so one of the Terriers was recoupled to the back of the train to bank it up to Tenterden.

This train was very well loaded and was running quite late by the time it returned to Headcorn, where London-bound passengers found a Schools-hauled parcels train with a passenger coach specially attached being held to await their arrival.

I returned to Waterloo in 1954 and soon found myself working in the Commercial Manager's office chasing parcels and goods traffic that had gone missing in transit or was overdue at its destination. The railways were then handling 'less than wagonload' or 'smalls' goods traffic and part of my job was to get the forwarding details from the originating station for a missing or overdue item.

Given the state of the Southern's internal telephone system at this time, this was often easier said than done. Away from the inner London area, the only link to booking offices, goods offices, station foremen, workshops and so on was by 'omnibus' telephone circuits. These were open lines running from, say, London Bridge to Gravesend, along which every user was connected and everyone could hear everybody else's conversations.

Ringling was by means of codes, but the main obstacle was to find the line free in order to be able to make your call. One day I had to trace forward a consignment sent from Tenterden Town

"You'll never be able to get through," my colleagues advised. "Send a memo."

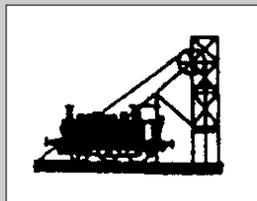
That was a challenge, and I cannot remember exactly how I achieved it, but some helpful operators must have patched me through, possibly at Tonbridge and Hastings, onto the K&ESR 'omnibus'. I remember well the reaction of the voice that answered the phone, saying "Tenterden Goods", when he heard me respond: "Waterloo Commercial".

"How the devil have you managed to get onto this line?" was his startled reply. Perhaps

I got one up on Mr McLeod [*see Colonel 70*], as I suspect that mine was the first call from headquarters to get through on the internal network. This sounds absolutely ridiculous in these days when every schoolboy and girl has a mobile and can talk to the world. ■

● *Part Two of Roy's words and pictures will be in the next issue of The Colonel*

The East Kent Railway



Ride the Colliery Line from
Shepherdswell to Eythorne

www.eastkentrailway.com

Membership secretary: Brian Hancock,
33 Beauxfield, Dover, Kent CT15 7PD

HEYDAY OF THE SELSEY TRAMWAY

Laurie Cooksey, while researching his new book about the Selsey Tramway, discovered the following gem amongst the archives: an

This history has been copied from a copy of the original hand-written manuscript held by the West Sussex Record Office at Chichester. The reference is MP93, pages 89 to 93 of Edward Heron-Allen's 'Selseyana', Volume One. Mr Heron-Allen moved to Selsey in 1906 and thereafter took a great deal of interest in the village. He was chairman of the directors of the Selsey Tramway for many years. This history would have been written in 1911:

A Mr E.B. Ivatts in 1887 proposed a scheme for laying down a railway from Chichester to Selsey. He went well into certain of the parliamentary matters appertaining thereto, obtaining the permission of certain landowners to help the scheme, but ultimately he abandoned it.

Early in 1896 (before the Light Railway Act, 1896) Messrs. Powell & Co. of Lewes inspected the land with a view to opening up a Light Railway. As far as I can ascertain, Mr H.F. Stephens of Tonbridge was originally interested in the scheme with Messrs. H.J. and R.H. Powell of Powell & Co., and I think the idea of the Selsey Tramway was theirs. Mr Stephens was certainly dominant in most of the preliminary matters.

The actual promoters of the H. M. & Selsey Tramways [*Hundred of Manhood & Selsey tramways, the line's original full title*] were these three gentlemen and the Messrs Clayton (James, Newton and Luther). A preliminary meeting was held at the Dolphin Hotel, Chichester on March 11th 1896 when "Mr Stephens formulated his plans for the line".

On 23rd March 1896 a public meeting was held at the Dolphin Hotel⁽¹⁾ which was attended by many influential gentlemen of the neighbourhood. After the statement had

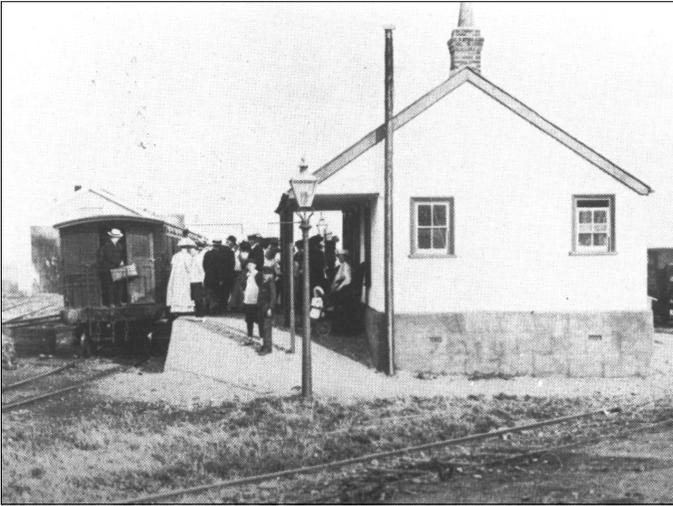
been made by one of the gentlemen present who had interviewed Mr. Ivatts to the effect that Mr. Ivatts had abandoned the scheme, a resolution was passed that a Limited Liability Company be registered to promote the scheme of constructing a steam railway between Chichester and Selsey.

Council's [*sic*] opinion was directly afterwards obtained as to the necessity of a provisional order. The opinion was that for laying down a main line no provisional order was required. However, at a meeting held on April 2nd 1896 it was decided to approach the Board of Trade as to whether difficulties were likely to arise if the line was laid without a provisional order. The Board of Trade's reply was to the effect that they would not interfere.

Consequently the company has no Act and, excepting that certain persons who had promised to support Mr Ivatt's scheme transferred their support to the 1896 scheme, the HM&ST Coy. Ltd has no connection with the 1887 scheme.

The company being formed, two managing directors, Messrs H.J. Powell and Newton Clayton, were elected by the directorate. They were vested with the authority to buy the necessary land etc. for the project. [That] the company [had] no compulsory powers for purchase appears to have given these gentlemen a little trouble, the purchasing of the necessary land proving to be a somewhat troublesome and 'long-winded' matter.

Many of the landowners, although having promised their support, recognised the opportunity as one to obtain a fancy price for the land, and further to this, their whims had to be satisfied. The result is [that] we find one or two farm sidings on farm lands and at least one station somewhat isolated. It will also be noticed that in many places the line



In this undated picture of Selsey Town station, the man leaving the rear of the Falcon coach is none other than the author of this history, Mr Heron-Allen. The photo is from the Lens of Sutton collection and is reproduced as photo 73 in the Middleton Press book 'Branchlines to Selsey'.

follows the hedgerow, and I understand that on approaching Selsey, the site for a museum here and a church had to be carefully avoided. This accounts in a large measure for the line's gyrations.

A lot could be said [of] the early days of the company, and I have no doubt that Mr H.F. Stephens of Tonbridge, the company's engineer, could supply you with many anecdotes. It might interest you to know that one of the company's original locomotives, the *Chichester*, a relic of the Forties, was hauled along the turnpike road from Chichester to Ferry on 'her' own wheels – after dusk⁽²⁾. This, of course, was to facilitate the construction from either end.

It was not until May 1897 that the managing directors were able to report that the whole of the required land had been purchased, and so enable construction work to commence. A start was made in May 1897 and the line was opened for traffic on August 27th 1897.

The extension to the track was part of the original idea, but it was not carried out until early in 1898⁽³⁾. No regular service of trams has been run to the Beach station since 1905.

The original capital of the company was £12,000. This was promptly taken up. £7000 debentures were issued in 1899. The original capital of the company was increased to

£16,800 in 1899 (£4,800 increase). Half of this increase was issued in 1900. The other half is still unissued.

Since the line was originally laid, a few alterations at curves etc. have been made, and the track bed has been made substantially better. The expenditure to August 1910 is as follows:

Land, construction etc:	£20,260 17s 5d
Rolling stock:	£3,268 14s 9d
Freehold cottages	
(mortgage £1000):	<u>£1,311 6s 5d</u>
	£24,840 18s 7d

The rolling stock figure includes all wagons, four coaches and two engines. We have during the last two or three years purchased a third engine and three more coaches (total seven). This expenditure was placed against Revenue a/c.

The company possesses three engines, seven passenger coaches and 21 wagons. Length of line: 8 miles⁽⁴⁾. Passengers carried during 12 months: 90,000.

The extension to the Marine Hotel will be undertaken before very long if terms can be arranged with the Land Company⁽⁵⁾.

The principal business considered at a meeting on December 15th 1910 was the electrification of the tramway. This will without doubt again be considered at a later date⁽⁶⁾.

The flood of December 16th affected about 1¼ miles of the company's line. About five furlongs of the affected portion ran actually on the land of Pagham Harbour, and a bank is now in course of construction which will carry the permanent way well above the highest tide mark.

Extensions to Itchenor and the Dell Quay have been considered during the past five years or so, but they have not matured⁽⁷⁾.

The gauge of the tramway is 4' 8½", the same as the main line company systems. There is a junction with the LB&SCR for goods traffic at Chichester and it is possible for trucks to come through to Selsey from the South of England. The rails are light section, averaging about 50lbs per yard. They are flat-bottomed and are spiked to the sleepers⁽⁸⁾.

In one respect at least (not an enviable one) is the Selsey Tramway more like a heavy line than is any other one of the light railways in the country. Passenger duty is

paid by the Selsey Tramway on all passenger fares, about 1d per mile. Light railways by the Act of 1896 are exempted from this duty.

Nothing much [can] be said about the middle period of the company's history. Goods traffic has steadily increased, as has passenger traffic. Meanwhile, Selsey has slowly developed. ■

Laurie Notes:

(1) According to a report in the *Chichester Observer* on Wednesday 25 March 1896, this meeting was held at The Council Chamber, Chichester.

(2) All other written reports suggest that the locomotive was towed to what was to be the site of Chalder station. Photographic evidence confirms that the operation was carried out during daylight hours.

(3) It was not the original intention to terminate the line at Selsey Beach, and the tramway's southern terminus was to be at what became the site of Selsey Bridge station, which would have saved the expense of tunnelling under the road. It was at the company's AGM on 1 July 1897 that the secretary, Walter Lintott, announced: "It has also been found expedient to lengthen the line in order to bring Selsey station nearer the sea."

(4) The length of the line, according to the Southern Railway's report of 1934, was 7 miles 27 chains to Selsey Town station, the line terminating 13 chains further along the erstwhile extension to Selsey Beach at 7 miles 40 chains.

(5) The subject of a new station for Selsey was brought up again at the AGM of the tramways company in November 1914. The syndicate 'Selsey-on-Sea Ltd' wanted

the station built in the middle of their property, and they had agreed to pay for it. The scheme, however, came to naught.

(6) The AGM of 15 December 1910 was not reported by the local press, and I have not found any details of the plan to electrify the tramway. To my knowledge, it was not mentioned again.

(7) The West Sussex Railway Order was eventually approved in 1913, granting powers to take over and operate the existing Selsey Tramway and to build a 7-mile branch from just north of Hunston to East Wittering, and a further branch just under a mile long to West Itchenor. Mainly owing to the First World War, the powers were allowed to lapse.

(8) The tramway was originally laid with 41½lb flat-bottom rail, but within a year of the opening a start was made on re-aligning some of the sharper curves and relaying them with 47½lb rails. Following the flood of December 1910, 56lb rails replaced the originals on the Pagham Harbour embankment and one some of the other curves. When the tramway closed in January 1935, around a third of the original rails and half-round sleepers were still in place. ●

From the Archives

S & MR: THE THOMAS WARD - GREEN PAPERS

David Powell reports on what must rank as one of the most significant Colonel-related historical finds in the lifetime of our society

It all began with an unexpected phone call from John Davies of Oswestry. He was writing a biography of his grandfather, Thomas Ward Green, who was to become the S&MR's first chairman, and he was looking for help in tracing correspondence from Mr Ward Green to a Colonel Stephens.

Mr Davies had some letters from the Colonel, and was willing for these to be copied if it would help in our research. This led to the dispatch of one of our stalwarts, Keith Patrick, to do the deed. As a result, I am now working through the copies made by Keith.

These include some 90 letters sent by the Colonel and a further 30 other documents, including letters from other prominent individuals. Most of these involve the setting up of the S&MR in the period from 1907 to its reopening in 1911. Aficionados of the 'Old Potts' line will be well aware that this period is largely undocumented in the published literature, hence the importance of this find.

Many of the letters are in the Colonel's own hand, which is almost as illegible as your membership secretary's! So a major, and still incomplete, task is to work through the collection to decipher and transcribe these letters. The majority is concerned with raising funds.

In this respect, our Colonel was a master salesman. The story evolves from persuasive suggestions that the local authorities make agreements in committee for clauses to be included in the Light Railway Order to "assist the undertaking financially... binds the Local Authority to nothing".

With these achieved, the next step is intense pressure to convert these 'non-binding' agreements into actual cash! Our canny Colonel even points out that the local authorities

could borrow 3½% or 3¾% Treasury stock to lend on to the railway at 4%, thereby making a handsome profit on the deal.

When it comes to the actual rebuilding of the line, it appears that the work starts at the 'poorer' end at Llanymynech and proceeds towards Shrewsbury, with the 'richer' communities under pressure to come up with additional subscriptions to facilitate the completion of 'their' line. The Colonel doesn't miss a trick when it comes to rebuilding the line: some letters concern the likely sums to be raised by selling the brush-wood recovered from clearing the track-bed!

Another interesting story is the name of the resurrected railway. Originally it was to be called the North Shropshire Light Railway, with so-headed notepaper coming from the 'Engineer's Office, Tonbridge'. Then, in March 1909, *North Shropshire Railway* is crossed out and overprinted as *Shropshire and Montgomeryshire Railway*.

This is just a short taster of some of the stories buried in the Ward Green collection. Meanwhile, the task of deciphering and transcribing continues. When this is complete, my aim is to produce a detailed commentary on what is largely a one-sided conversation requiring some detective work to make sense of the letters. However, it is with a real sense of history that one reads the great man's ideas, possibly for the first time since they were committed to paper nearly 100 years ago. ■



Jackson's Jottings

DAWN OF THE S&MR

Chris Jackson looks at early manoeuvrings in Shropshire to revive the moribund PS&NWJR, as reported in The Railway Gazette

In July 1907 *The Railway Gazette* published a feature article about the derelict Potteries, Shrewsbury & North Wales Junction Railway, with four photos showing various facets of the line [see note below]. Whether this had any impact on subsequent developments is not clear, but less than two years later the magazine was able to report that plans to revive the line were taking shape.

April 23 1909: The Re-opening of the Derelict "Potteries" Railway

"Good progress is announced to have been made with the movement for the re-opening of the derelict Potteries, Shrewsbury & North Wales Junction Railway as a light railway. A committee which was appointed to study the working of light railways in Kent and Sussex has reported favourably on the scheme, and most of the money required has already been promised.

"The powers to reopen the line have also been obtained. An illustrated article giving the history of the line and showing its picturesque state of disrepair appeared in our issue for July 19, 1907."

June 4 1909: The Reopening of the Derelict "Potteries" Railway

"The Earl of Powis presided last week at a public meeting held at Shrewsbury, to further the steps being taken to re-open the old Potteries Railway as the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Light Railway. The line, which is 17 miles in length, links up Shrewsbury with Llanymynech, on the Cambrian Railways, and passes through an agricultural area wholly without railway communication.

"It has been lying derelict for 20 years, the cause of the collapse being the enormous sums spent from time to time on it, amounting in all, according to Lord Powis, to nearly

£2,000,000. It is now proposed to acquire the railway from the old company for £32,000. £20,000 has been guaranteed, and £12,000 remains to be raised in debentures.

"The estimates for capital expenditure are as follows:- reconstruction, £17,480, this being the actual sum for which the contractor is prepared to do the work; £500 for the junction with the main line; rolling stock, tools and equipment £5,770; fees and promotion expenses, £2,250; Light Railway Order and legal expenses, £750; working capital £2,250; financial fees £3,000. The last item could be saved if the money could be raised without going to financiers. An illustrated article on this railway appeared in our issue for July 19, 1907."

●**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Chris has supplied a photocopy of the 1907 article, which includes four contemporary photos of the dereliction. Sadly, these are not of good enough quality to reproduce here. One shows the overbridge at Kinnerley, and another the "station office" at Llanymynech, more or less as they survived into the Colonel's era.*

Of the other two, I quote the captions: "Track suspended in mid-air. The embankment has completely slipped away". Rails are shown several feet off the ground, but the location is not given. "Kinnerley, junction for the Criggion branch, showing ruined signal cabin, signals and water tank". I'm not an S&MR buff, so I wonder if anyone can tell us if these photos have been published anywhere else? ■