

• THE • COLONEL

NUMBER 9

JUNE 1987

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THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ENTHUSIAST OF THE LIGHT & NARROW GAUGE RAILWAYS OF HOLMAN F. STEPHENS



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the new-look Colonel, "typeset" using an Amstrad word processor - Fleet Street does not have a monopoly on new publishing technology! I have tried to bring some sort of consistency to the layout of this newsletter, with the twin hopes of making it look and read better.

Enthusiasm carried me away so much that this issue has arrived earlier than usual. This enthusiasm was not based solely on the chance to play at being editor. It was also fired by the excellent articles passed on to me from our previous editor, Jon Clarke, which I felt should be published as soon as possible.

Section headings are at the top of each page, most of which I hope will appear regularly. NEWS is perhaps a misnomer in a quarterly journal, but includes items of special interest which might otherwise be lost to us. I rely on you all to send me a regular supply of "leads", so I can don my ace reporter's hat and chase them up.

I WAS THERE...is a forum for the personal memories of Stephens railways that many of you have. Several articles are in the files already, but I am always ready for more.

THE REAL THING is a catch-all title covering prototype notes such as history, original research and so on.

TRACK TALK is a regular series from Derek Smith on permanent way matters, providing some interesting background info.

TRADE NOTES is intended to lift the lid on the men in the modelling trade, and what they are up to that is of interest to us. This may turn out to be a rather *occasional* feature.

MATTERS ARISING is mainly derived from letters from you in response to information or opinions presented in this journal.

MODELLING speaks for itself, and is wide open for contributions. Most of us have a modelling interest, according to the membership questionnaires, but we have published very little on the subject so far. Individual projects, such as buildings, locomotives and rolling stock, or complete layouts, are all fair game, so why not drop me a line? If you don't, you're in danger of being subjected to endless articles on my own efforts...

That's enough from me - I hope you enjoy this issue, and that we can continue with such good quality stuff in the future. This newsletter is the principal activity of our Society, but is only as good as we all make it. Hope to hear from you soon.

Stephen Hannington, Editor

News

DRAWINGS FOR STEPHENS LINES COULD GO INTO PRINT

OAKWOOD PRESS is interested in publishing a book of plans of locomotives, rolling stock and buildings from the Colonel Stephens railways, drawn by Society members Les Darbyshire and Richard Jones.

Les' drawings, published in the Model Railway News (now called Your Model Railway) in the late sixties, are already well known. Richard's work has recently been published in the Model Railway Constructor. A list of their drawings, and others in the model press, can be seen on page 12 of this issue.

The exact format of the proposed book has yet to be decided. Richard favours 7mm scale reproductions for their superior detail. Your editor has argued that 4mm scale, being more popular, would be more useful.

Society members have a chance to scoop the book. Both Les and Richard are prepared to supply copies of their drawings, for the cost of photocopies and postage.

Meanwhile, work continues. Les is revising his drawing of the K&ESR's Pickering steam railcar, and Richard is beavering away at a plan of the Midland crane wagon used by the K&ESR, and of the second Ford railcar set.

Signal box for Northiam

WADHURST signal box, from the London-Hastings line, has been bought by the Tenterden Railway Company (TRC) for installation at Northiam station on the preserved Kent & East Sussex Railway.

TRC members dismantled the 94 year old box and put it into storage, pending the reopening of K&ESR metals between Wittersham Road and Northiam. Scheduled for 1990, the reopening has been costed at £250 000, including £6000 to rebuild the signal box.

"The structure is in remarkably good condition for its age," said Neil Rose, who coordinated the purchase and dismantling of the box. "Only a small quantity of timber needs replacing."

Northiam station, the passing point for the original Rother Valley Railway section of the K&ESR, will also have its second platform reinstated. Access will be provided by a footbridge salvaged from Robertsbridge, also on the Hastings line, and former junction with the K&ESR.

Gazelle trailer saved

THE BODY of the S&M's Wolseley Siddeley railcar (Colonel No.3) has been rescued by Mike Wright of Bicton Heath, near Shrewsbury. Since 1939 it has stood in the undergrowth at Kinnerley, the junction for the Criggion branch, where it had served as a lineside hut.

The body, complete except for one end, was dismantled by Mike and friends last October, and is already partially reconstructed and restored at its new, permanent home. As a railcar, it was the Colonel's first experiment with such vehicles, before becoming Gazelle's trailer. The full story will be in the next issue.

News#####

END OF THE LINE FOR CONSTRUCTOR

THE JUNE issue of the Model Railway Constructor, due out on May 27, is the last of its 54 year run. Falling circulation and increased production costs prompted the decision to close the magazine, according to editor Chris Leigh.

One of the original "Big Three" model railway magazines, MRC has also suffered from competition with the recent boom in journals for the hobby. Chris, who has edited MRC for the last 5 years, will continue to edit Steam Days and Locomotives Illustrated, sister titles from Ian Allen to the now defunct MRC.

Faced with the last issue, Chris has piled in the best of his remaining articles into the June MRC. Good news for us is that it will include a bumper section on the K&ESR, with articles from members Steve Hannington and Richard Jones. Chris denied that these articles had hastened the book's downfall!

Richard's contributions are drawings of the early GER brake thirds, Nos. 9 & 10, and of two ex LSWR coaches: two comp brake third No. 6; and 6-wheel composites Nos. 2 & 4. Steve's article describes the construction of a 4mm version of ex North London Railway passenger brake van No. 15.

For the quarterly magazine Steam Days, Chris would be interested in original articles on the dying days of light railways in the 1948-68 era, especially previously unpublished photographs.

"If someone has insight into some of those lines in their twilight years, I would like to hear from them," he said.

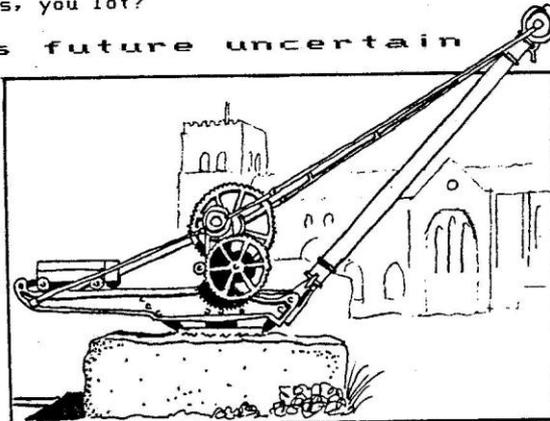
Chris' support and encouragement was invaluable in the early days of our Society, and we wish him all the best for the future. Now how about returning the favour by helping him out with a few articles and photographs, you lot?

Yard crane's future uncertain

ATTEMPTS to secure the future of the ex-SMR yard crane at the site of the old Abbey Foregate station, Shrewsbury, have so far drawn a blank.

Member Derek Smith has been trying for nearly three years to find it a safe home, without success.

He lays part of the blame on the attitude of BR's estates dept. in Derby.



"They seem to see it as a way to obtain money as scrap," he said. Since the site is in danger of redevelopment, members are urged to give Derek as much support as possible in his bid to save this unique piece of history.

#####Source Notes

EDGE HILL UPDATE

Monty Freeman, having noticed the information gap mentioned in the last issue, puts the record straight on this odd little line

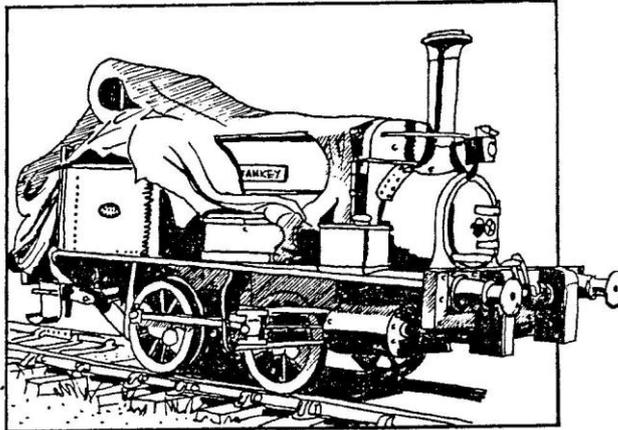
- 1) THE STRATFORD ON AVON & MIDLAND JUNCTION RAILWAY
by Arthur Jordan (OPC 1982) SBN 860931315, pages 44, 45, 108.
*Information on the close connections (both geographical and commercial) between the Edge Hill Light Railway and SMJR. "Rare" photos and locomotive information.
- 2) THE STRATFORD ON AVON & MIDLAND JUNCTION RAILWAY
by J.M.Dunn (Oakwood Press, Book 10 - 1977 revision)
*Short EHLR history, locomotive notes.
- 3) LOCOMOTIVES ILLUSTRATED magazine No.48 (Ian Allan - July 1986)
*Terrier special, two photos of locomotives 1 & 2, page 18.
Also includes photos of other Stephens Terriers.
- 4) REAL PHOTOGRAPHS COMPANY, list 615 (Ian Allan)
*Six photos available.
- 5) THE EDGE HILL LIGHT RAILWAY
by E.S.Tonks (published by author, 1948)
*Have yet been unable to find a copy of this book.

Author's notes

MUCH of the Edge Hill line today has been obliterated by a large army depot, C.A.D. Kineton, with its own extensive railway system. Viewing is prevented by the camp's tight security. However, the incline up Edge Hill towards the village of Ratley can still be seen - Ref. Ordnance Survey map, 1:50 000 series, Sheet 151. A short length of the SMJ is still in use by the MoD from Fenny Compton Junction (GWR Paddington - Birmingham) to the former EHLR exchange sidings at Burton Dasset, now crossed by an overbridge of the A41 road.

Editor's note: Thanks to Hugh Smith for the telling us that Tonks was his own publisher. Got a copy of the book, Hugh?

The Edge Hill Light Railway, promoted in 1920 to carry iron stone from mines at Edge Hill in Oxfordshire, closed five years later when the ore ran out. For 21 years, its locos and stock were left to rot until the whole line was finally dismantled in 1946 #
EHLR's Manning Wardle "Sankey")



Modelling#####

I TRIED TO BE DIFFERENT

Harry Carr remembers his races with kit manufacturers

I WAS introduced to locomotive model building in 1953 by a good friend of mine who had an interest in the local model shop. I'd made model boats and aircraft since a very early age, and thought railway engines were a bit beyond me. There were no kits on the market then, except the rather advanced Sayer-Chaplin and Jamieson offerings.

A chap had bought one of the Jamieson kits from the model shop, and returned it the next day, saying it was beyond him, could somebody make it for him? We decided to make it, an LMS 4F, between us, my job being to build the bodywork. When we opened the box, we found there was more solder than model. The poor chap had obviously made it his first attempt at soldering after watching a plumber at work. However, after melting all the excess solder off and being left with a completely tinned set of parts, I found the going easier than expected, and a reasonably decent model was turned out. At least we got paid!

Fired with enthusiasm, I decided to make a model of an LBSC Terrier in OO scale. The class was one of my favourites, and not too complicated. Feeling very pleased with my work, I showed it off to my friends, only to be told that K's had just brought out a kit for one. Now, to a scratchbuilder, nothing is more disheartening than to build a model, taking months or years to complete, and have somebody immediately bring out a kit for it. Critics always say "that's made from a so-and-so's kit, isn't it?" You could strangle 'em!

My next foray was building a 4mm model of the West Sussex Railway's Manning Wardle "Sidlesham", using American wheels altered to suit. It has taken Impetus 32 years to catch up with that one! Then came the Southwold Railway's 2-4-0 "Blyth". I seem to remember someone turning out a kit. My Welsh Highland Baldwin 4-6-0T wasn't caught up with until last year, though in the early sixties I had no N gauge motors available. Ever try fitting an OO motor into a narrow gauge tank?

The Union Pacific 4-12-2 with which I followed this was not a loco you would often find on any Colonel Stephens lines - I suppose Hecate was enough of a headache. I discovered the enjoyment of O gauge in the late fifties. I made a Caledonian 4-6-2T for a start, but didn't make another in that gauge until the early seventies, when I made my return to my old favourite, the Manning Wardle: this time the K class 0-6-0T. Damme, I've just seen the Slater's kit advertised!

Buying a 50p motor at an exhibition induced me to knock out an OO model of the S&M 0-4-2T "Gazelle", mainly for amusement and a bit of a challenge, though it's still minus coupling rods. No kit yet. At present I'm slowly building a 7mm model of the EKR's unrebuilt Ilfracombe Goods, and had just got started when Jidenco announced they were bringing out a kit! However, this is 4mm, and the rebuilt one. Research for this particular loco proved a headache, as most photos of it are when it was laid derelict. Maybe this will deter the kit producers. I hope so!

I was there...

LAST DAYS OF THE WC&PR

Joe Burrow remembers the dying embers of a line he first encountered fifty seven years ago.

I FIRST heard of the WC&P on an evening charabanc trip about 1929, when my mother pointed out one of its halts to me. I thought little of it, and did not come across it again until August 1935. On a day trip to Clevedon, whilst waiting for the train home, I saw a mixed train hauled by a Terrier come across the wide level crossing into Clevedon station.

There was no time to go and look at it, as my train was about to start for Yatton. I do not think it was a recognised connection, or that the authorities considered that anyone would want to travel from Walton Park to Winscombe, Clevedon All Saints to Congresbury, or Portishead to Puxton & Worle.

The line was mentioned once or twice in the local press during the 1930s. They featured Cadbury Road as the world's smallest station (no proof); and about 1937 there was a longer article in which the Manning Wardle mainly featured.

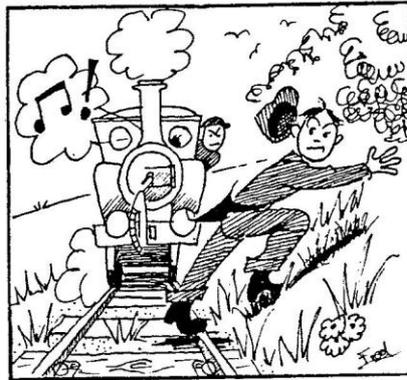
Forgotten at the outbreak of war, the line was brought to my attention by a notice in the Bristol Evening Post of Friday, 17 May 1940, to the effect that unless there was some late development, the WC&P would close the following day. It was impossible to visit the line for the last day, as the invasion of Holland and Belgium had meant far less leisure time.

The Evening Post also mentioned the closure on the following Monday, and the possibility of opening again after the war "under different management": a case of anything Colonel Stephens can do, I can do better.

In the Railway Observer (RCTS) of Spring 1941, there were some notes on a proposal to reopen the line after the war, and to build a street tramway from the inconveniently situated Weston terminus to the Front. All this was a little inopportune, since Weston had dispensed with its trams four years earlier.

A year later I visited the terminus in Ashcombe Road, Weston. The track was still in position throughout, and I walked some of the more picturesque parts, like the Swiss Valley at Clevedon. Oh, that the whistle of a Terrier would send me rushing up the embankment!

In late 1942, a letter from my mother told the sad news that lifting had begun. As it followed ground level in a lot of places, the line soon started to disappear. During a visit to Portishead while on leave from the Forces in 1944, I found the line hard to trace#



Oh, for the whistle of a Terrier!

#####Trade Notes

THE GARDEN SHED RAILBUS

In the first of a series of articles on the men in the modelling trade and what they are up to, Steve Hannington talks to Chris Holden of Taurgem

WHEN adverts inviting orders for an etched, 4mm scale kit of a Model T railbus by Taurgem Models first appeared in the model railway press some months back, they caused something of a stir. This was the first direct appeal to light railway modellers from the trade.

"Nobody caters for light railway stuff at all," said Chris Holden, proprietor of Taurgem. "The market seems to be wide open for it."

Taurgem is a newcomer to the railway modelling trade. Chris started up the middle of last year, prompted by his wife, Jennifer, and "a lust after Model T railcars".

He had been toying with the idea of going into etched brass kit production for a long time, but it was Jennifer who provided the push that finally got him going. The name Taurgem was also her idea, and is astrological in origin: Chris is a Taurus, and Jennifer is a Gemini.

His first batch of 50 kits of the famous railbus, as used on the K&ESR and the Selsey tramway, has sold out. The final 10 were supplied, appropriately enough, to the Colonel Stephens shop at Tenterden Station on the preserved K&ESR. Chris is planning a further batch of 25, which will probably have been sold via an ad in the Railway Modeller by the time you read this.

When inviting enquiries for the first batch, Chris asked prospective customers to tell him what kits they would like to see made. The most popular request was for the Pickering bogie coaches used on the K&ESR. Chris is considering this as his next offering.

Another favourite is the Drury railcar of the WC&P. But he is having problems finding out information on the underframe gear.

"I can't even work out how the brake gear works," he confessed. Can anyone help?

One of the reasons for choosing the Model T was that information was fairly readily available. It is a relatively simple prototype, too, that could be made from a small, cheap etch. Drawings from the light railway guru, Les Darbyshire, and photos in books provided the starting point.

Chris' local museum, in Herne Bay, conveniently has a Model T of the same era, which provided much extra information: "I went grovelling over that with a measuring stick," he said.

"The secret is knowing where to find the information. If you want something out of the ordinary, you've got to go ferreting for it."

The reason behind the recent explosion in etched kit production is the simplicity of the production method. No expensive moulding tools are required. A good quality artwork is all that's needed to start with. But there can be pitfalls - Chris forgot to draw the window in the Model T's back door, and didn't find out till the first trial etch.

Trade Notes

He used Kempex as his etcher, the company that does Roxey Moulding's work, because they were capable of the quality Chris sought, and quoted "a good price".

A member of the Herne Bay model railway club, Chris is a practising modeller, and was well aware of the pitfalls of some etched kits on the market.

"I wanted something that would go together like the old fashioned cardboard kits," he said.

A fellow club member, described as "a whitemetal fanatic: a great glue man", was chosen as a guinea pig to put together the first kit, and helped Chris compile the instructions, which "deserve a medal", according to the Model Railway Journal.

David Hammersley of Roxey Mouldings was one of the first to put the kit together, and in doing so attracted a lot of interest at the recent Brighton show.

"It's a very good first attempt," he said. "But it requires a fair amount of hard work. It doesn't just fall together as you shake the box.

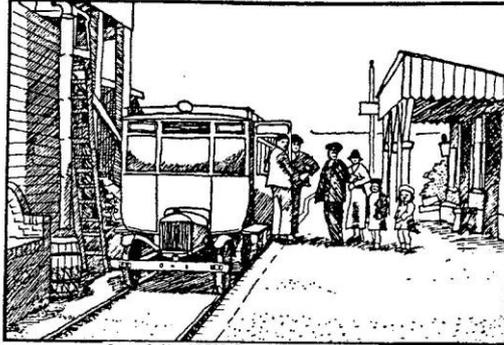
"The mudguards are a swine to put together, for instance, but you can't get away from that. And don't forget - I'm a professional kit designer, and I'm bound to be extra critical."

The body is etched in stout 15thou brass, because of the fine window bars, and is in one piece. David found it easier to separate the body into its component sides and ends, but praised the "neat" resin castings for the radiator and bonnet.

The kit also features a rocking front axle, to help keep the thing on the track; 38:1 gears made to order by Brian Rogers of Gear Service (the maker of Ultrascale wheels); and 10.5mm disc coach wheels from Ken Pelham of Maygib. Chris can also supply a suitable motor by Tenshodo, not entirely dissimilar to those sold under the Anchoridge brand name. He is also prepared to supply component parts of the kit as separate items.

"All the trade people I've had words with have been extremely helpful," Chris said. "I was nervous to start with, but I didn't get the rebuff I expected."

A domestic appliance service engineer by trade, he has an ambition to be a professional model maker, inspired by the local, but now defunct, factory of Reidpath. But he admits that it is not really a viable proposition. "I'm not a cottage industry - it's more of a garden shed industry. But if there's anything I can do, I'm here for the asking."#



One of the K&ESR Fords at Rolvenden

Taurgem is at: 12 Oakdale Road, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 6AH.

The Real Thing#####

THE HOUSE THAT MANCKTELOW BUILT

Peter Harding reports on the Kentish builders responsible for some of the distinctive structures of the Colonel's railways.

WHILST in his early twenties, Stephens took up his first appointment in 1891 as resident engineer to the Cranbrook & Paddockwood Railway, working with the consultant engineer Edward Seaton. During the construction of this line, Stephens began his associations with the builders Mancktelow Bros. of Horsmonden who, although not involved with permanent way or earthworks, were responsible for the station buildings, which included a very impressive three storey station master's house at each station.

Two of these houses, at Goudhurst and Cranbrook, joined the station buildings on the platform. The latter were single storey, corrugated iron constructions built on wooden frames, and featured rather decorative barge boards. Some eagle eyed readers of my booklet "The Hawkhurst Branch Line" might spot that on page 13, a view of Goudhurst station shows straight barge boards. This, I would think, was probably a replacement of the original, which could well have rotted.

When Stephens took up his next appointment, in 1895, as engineer to the 3ft gauge Rye & Camber tramway, Mancktelow Bros. were awarded the contract to not only build the station buildings, but also to lay the permanent way using local labour. Again, the two original buildings, although slightly smaller, were also of corrugated iron and featured the same type of decorative barge boards.

In 1897, Stephens' next project was the Hundred of Manhood & Selsey Tramway, and once more, Mancktelow Bros. were the contractors. On this occasion, the station buildings, although very similar to the two previous lines, had slightly steeper roofs and straight barge boards.

After the Selsey line was completed, Stephens and the brothers seem to have parted company. Although Stephens' later activities are quite well known, Mancktelow Bros. seem to have dropped out of any further railway work.

Not a great deal is known about them, other than that they were builders/farmers (not an unusual combination at that time) at Horsmonden. They were responsible for several impressive buildings in the area, including the local primary school at Marden, which has a plaque built into the outside wall giving the erection date and builder. In his later years, Mr Mancktelow, who must have been the surviving brother, lived at and farmed Remingtons Farm at Horsmonden.

Although corrugated iron became synonymous with Stephens, his later lines did vary. It is interesting to note that the three lines already mentioned all featured awnings integral with the roof, unlike the K&ESR, Sheppey Light, and PD&SWJR, where the awnings extended from the roofs. After the Rye & Camber tramway, the decorative barge boards were never to be seen again on any of Stephens' later lines, although three original examples still surprisingly survive at the time of writing. Horsmonden station is now a garage and is owned by, would you believe, a Mr Barge!

#####The Real Thing

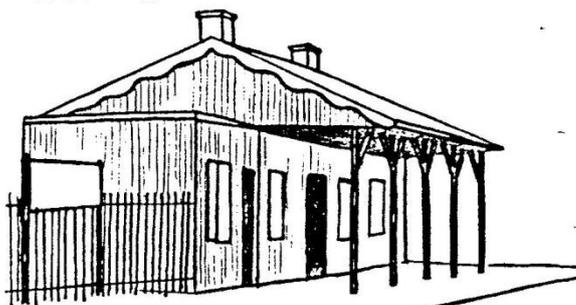
Cranbrook station was, until a few years ago, a pottery; and Golf Links station at Rye has been used as a store.

The only other stations in the south east which, as far as I know, had similar barge boards, were at Canterbury South, Bridge and Bishopsbourne, on the Elham Valley Railway; and also at the Dyke station on the Devils Dyke branch in Sussex. All these were non Stephens stations, of course.

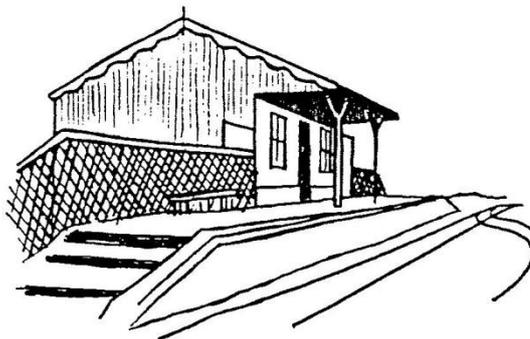
In conclusion, as a young boy I lived at Goudhurst in the early 1950s, where we took our local station for granted.

How well I remember the smell of the well worn wooden floorboards as you entered the corrugated building. If only one could turn back the clock and have a proper look round, barge boards and all...#

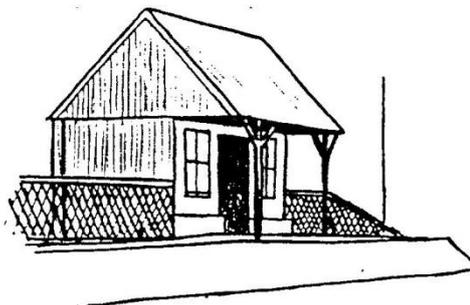
Peter thanks Mr Ben Larkin of Horswonden for his help with information about the Mancktelow Bros.



HAWKHURST
(Cranbrook & Paddock Wood Railway)



GOLF LINKS
(Rye & Camber Tramway)



CHALDER
(Selsey Tramway)

From the archives#####

MODELLERS DRAWINGS LIST

DRAWINGS are one of the essential starting points for any model. The following is a list of drawings published either in modelling magazines, or available from source. Thanks to Ian Hammond for compiling the original list, and to draughtsmen Les Darbyshire and Richard Jones for agreeing to make copies of their work available to members. Contact addresses are at the end of the list. Send enough money to cover photocopying and postage.

Sources of supply of the original articles are secondhand magazine dealers, and the original publishers. The latter will supply photocopies of older articles, or back numbers of more recent issues. Chris Leigh keeps back numbers for the past 12 months, for example, but will provide photocopies free in small quantities (for an sae). Railway Modeller charges 20p a sheet, and Your Model Railway (ex Model Railway News) wants a staggering £1.50 a sheet!

For space reasons, this list does not include track plans available from Oxford Publishing in books. Hopefully, we can add these, and any others you know of, in a later issue #

EKR

4-4-2T No.5 Radial Tank.....MRN June 71 *
0-6-0T No.4 (SR 948).....RM Sept 66
0-6-0 No.3 Unrebuilt Ilfracombe Goods.....MRN Sept 69*

S&MR

0-6-0 Hesperus (Ilfracombe goods).....MRN Oct 69*
0-6-0ST Morous.....MRN Sept 70*
0-4-2WT Gazelle.....MRN Feb 71*
0-4-2ST Severn.....MRN July 69*
4 wheel trailer coaches, Criggion Branch....MRN March 71*
Melverley station.....RM Aug 72
4 wheel Royal Coach No.1A.....MRC Sept 86e

WC&PR

2-4-0T Hesperus.....MRN Dec 70*
"American" coach.....MRN April 70*

Sheppey Light

Leysdown station.....RM Dec 86
Steam Railmotor.....OPC

K&ESR

Locos
2-4-0T No.1 Tenterden (as in 1933).....MRN Jan 69*
2-4-0T No.2 Northiam (as built).....MRN Dec 68*
0-6-0T No.3 Bodiam (1920).....*
" " " (1935 rebuild).....*
0-8-0T No.4 Hecate.....MRN Dec 69*

#####From the archives

0-6-OST No.4 (ex LSWR 0330).....MRN June 70*
0-6-OST No.8 Hesperus.....MRN Feb 70*
0-6-0s Nos. 7 & 9 see S&M Hesperus

Brake vans

4-wheel brake van No.15 (ex NLR).....MRN Jan 71*
4-wheel passenger brake van, RVR.....MRN March 69*

Railcars

Pickering steam railcar No.6 (to be revised).....MRN June 69*
Ford petrol set (second).....MRN June 69*
Shefflex set.....*

Stations

Rolvenden main building.....MRN April 69*
" " loco shed.....MRN May 69*
" " various huts.....MRN June 69*
" " track plan.....MRN April 69*
also RM May 63
Tenterden building.....MRN August 69*
" " track plan.....MRN Aug 69
High Halden Road buildings.....Colonel No.5#

Coaches

Originals

4-wheel RVR 3rd.....MRN Feb 69*
Bogie opens (Hurst Nelson conversions)

Nos. 4 & 6..MRC April 87@
Pickering bogies Nos. 17, 18 & 19.....MRN Jan 70*

Ex LSWR

4-wheel 3cpt brake 3rd Nos. 1 & 19.....MRN Dec 69*
Bogie brake 3rd No.2.....MRC March 71
Bogie brake compo No.3.....MRC April 71
Bogie brake 3rd Nos. 4 & 5.....MRC Sept 70
Corridor brake 3rd.....MRC Jan 74
6-wheel composites Nos. 2 & 4.....MRC June 87@
4-wheel 2cpt brake 3rd No. 6.....MRC June 87@
4-wheel Royal coach (1848) No. 10.....MRC Sept 86@

Ex GER

4-wheel 3cpt brake 3rd No.10.....MRC June 87@
4-wheel 5cpt compo No.13.....@
4-wheel 2cpt brake 3rd No. 9.....MRC June 87@
4-wheel 2cpt brake 3rd No. 20.....@)
4-wheel 3cpt brake 3rd No. 21.....@ > 1906 set
4-wheel 4cpt compo No.22.....@)

CONTACTS:

* Les Darbyshire, 74 Red Rose, Binfield, Bracknell, Berkshire, RD12 5LD.

@ Richard Jones, 1 Bingham's Road, Crossways, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 8BH.

Stephen Hannington, 110A Brixton Hill, London, SW2 1AH.

Track Talk#####

JIM CROW AND THE RAIL DOGS

Derek Smith describes the fundamentals of track laying

I shall be discussing aspects of light railway engineering, with the emphasis on track, and explaining some of the problems and solutions involved in building and running a railway.

What is a light railway? Although this term has not been exactly defined, it is generally understood to mean that certain economies of construction and working could be made, such as in signalling and crossings. But there is more to it than that.

The Light Railway Act of 1896 came into being to make railway building and running much cheaper than before, allowing otherwise uneconomic routes to be laid, such as those serving remote rural communities.

The first line to be sanctioned under the Act was the Basingstoke and Alton, 12.5miles long, and built for a total cost of £67 000, or £5360 per mile. Compare this with the £56 000 per mile for the GWR main line from London to Bristol, and we can see what big savings were possible under the Act.

Most of the lines sanctioned were short: some were only a few miles long. One such was the Hundred of Manhood and Selsey Tramway. This was built so cheaply - it cost only £20 000 - that the proposers did not even bother to apply for a Light Railway Order.

The most important part of a railway is the track on which the trains will run. It must be safe, in good condition, and regularly inspected and maintained. Almost all light railways initially used flat bottomed rail, spiked direct to standard size transverse sleepers set in a ballast bed. The weight of the rail was usually about 45lb per yard for straight track, and 56lb per yard for curves. Sometimes heavier rail of up to 75lb would be used in difficult sections.

Rail lengths were around 25ft, so they were easy to handle with a small crane, or by hand with 10 men using lifting devices called "rail dogs" that grip the head of the rail. Rails are joined by fishplates and fish bolts and nuts with washers. Bolts are fitted from the inside of the track, with the washers and nuts on the outside, tightened with fish spanners.

Cutting and drilling rails on site always presented some problems. Up to 30 years ago, it was carried out using methods dating back to the beginning of railways.

To cut a rail, two items of equipment were required: hammer and set. The set is a chisel type tool, about seven inches long and two wide, made of hardened steel with a cutting edge at one end. A wire handle 18 inches long was attached. The hammer weighs about 3lb.

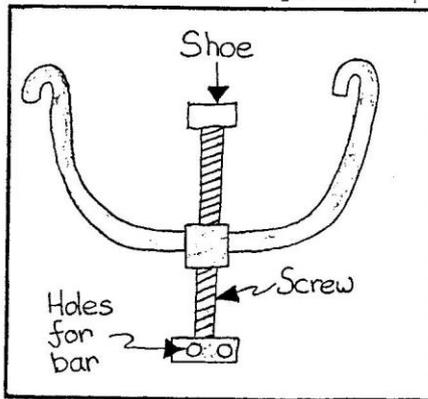
Now to the method. After the rail to be cut had been carefully measured and marked on the crown, head, web and bottom, the set was placed on the mark and hit with the hammer, making an indent on the rail. This was carried out right round the rail.

#####Track Talk

The next piece of equipment used was the rail bender, also known as a "jim crow". This is a large, heavy clamp with a screw in the centre, at the end of which is a round shoe. The clamp was fitted over the head of the rail, and the screw tightened up, with the shoe bearing on the indent mark. A team of four men was used for this operation.

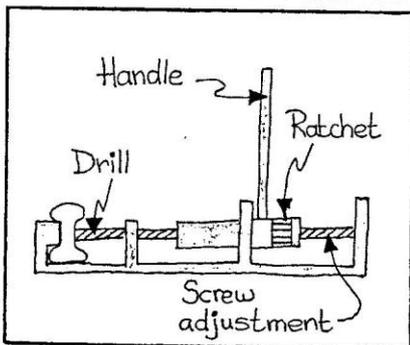
A long handle bar was fitted through holes at the end of the screw, and the four men pulled on it. After a little time, a loud bang occurred, and the rail was broken cleanly on the mark.

To drill holes, a clamp and frame holding a ratchet hand drill was used. One man would work the ratchet from side to side, putting on pressure as required, and water to help the drill to cut. This was a long, drawn out operation, taking anything up to an hour to drill a single hole.



JIM CROW

After 1952, mechanical tools for cutting and drilling began to appear. One of the best was called the John Bull. This was a small, lightweight two cylinder, two stroke petrol/oil engine. This engine fitted into two frames - one to saw and one to drill - and was easy to set up and use. The author has used this equipment many times #



Drilling frame and drill

Derek Smith used to work at the BR Hookagate rail welding depot, on the site of the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway. In the next issue, his topics will include points and level crossings.

Editor's note: Rather nice 4mm scale versions of the jim crow are included in the Cooper Craft 2007 platelayer's tools kit. This also includes rail jack, track gauge, rail saw, ballast rake and shovel and fish spanner. Two of each are provided in the kit, which costs about a quid and is available, as they say, from all good model shops.

#####Matters Arising

Manning Wardle kit delayed

David Sutton of S&D Models says the 7mm scale kit of the Manning Wardle Old Class I, mentioned in the last issue, is not now expected to be available until July. The delay is mainly due to development of gears and gearbox for the kit.

On the subject of S&D's other offerings, there is a 7mm scale version of the Dick, Kerr petrol electric locomotive that ran on the Ashover Railway from 1928, named Amos. See "The shape of kits to come", below.

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A glossier Colonel...?

Hugh Smith writes: "No, I don't want a glossy magazine. Keep The Colonel as it is, supplementary to - rather than in direct competition with - the Tenterden Terrier."

And Monty Freeman: "I think a subscription charge of around £5 for an improved printing of The Colonel is certainly acceptable, since the average charge of many railway societies is £8 - 10 anyway."

That makes the score 15-all so far. Any more thoughts?

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Fabulous Sidlesham

Les Darbyshire says of the Impetus 4mm kit for the Selsey Tramway's Sidlesham: "Superb, but not for the inexperienced modeller. The motor (a Japanese N gauge one) fits like a glove upright in the firebox, so doesn't show at all. It runs a treat and looks fabulous. I have splashed out on another one to make into Morous.

"The proprietor of Impetus (society member Robin Arkinstall) has said he might be tempted to make a kit of the K&ESR Pickering railcar if I do him some drawings. The old ones are seriously in error, unfortunately. When I get time...!"

The etched brass kit costs £35.90, less motor and wheels, from: Impetus, PO Box 17, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 8AX. Nameplates for Sidlesham and Morous cost 80p a pair. Add 70p for postage.

*

NOT the 009 Society contact

The membership secretary of the 009 Society is Peter Bayly, 3 Botrill Street, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV11 5JA, and not Hugh Smith, who was accidentally awarded the job in a recent Colonel.

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The shape of kits to come

●David Hammersley of Roxey Mouldings is planning "a loco very appropriate to Colonel Stephens". What can he mean?

●Chris Holden of Taurgem has started research for a model of the large Drewry railcar of the WC&PR (see page 8).

●S&D Models will offer: a 7mm Ford railbus, to rival the 4mm version from Taurgem; and "Dennis", the Bagnall 0-6-0T from the Snailbeach line. And for the Festiniog, perhaps a double Fairlie.

NEXT ISSUE

THE REAL THING: The North Devon & Cornwall Junction Light Railway, by Michael Messenger.

I WAS THERE...: Harry Carr takes a trip on the K&ESR in 1952.

TRUE ADVENTURE: How Mike Wright saved Gazelle's trailer.