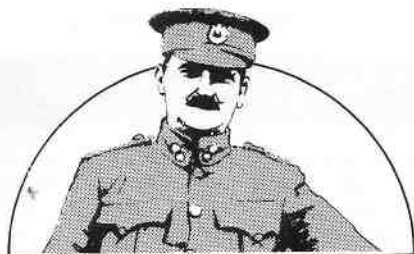


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The **COLONEL**

Number 114 **Spring 2014**



THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY
*for enthusiasts of the standard and narrow gauge light railways of
Colonel Holman F. Stephens*

THE COLONEL'S STORES

Subscriptions *The Colonel* is distributed to members of the Colonel Stephens Society only. Membership of the Society costs £10 annually in the UK. Joint membership for two people, one *Colonel*, same address, is £12. Overseas membership is £15. Applications to our Membership Secretary (address on p.31).

An Index to *The Colonel* issues 1-113 is available on our website (see below).

Discussion Group Enrol for the Colonel Stephens e-Discussion Group by opening a Yahoo account with a user name and password. After logging on to the Yahoo Groups.com link (*not* .co.uk), log on with same details if asked, search for ColonelHFStephens and follow the prompts to register.

The following items are available from our Sales Officer, Kerry Baylis,
10 Cedar Court, Farrand Road, Hedon, East Riding of Yorkshire, HU12 8XL
01482 897645 Email: kerry@thetrackside.karoo.co.uk

Back numbers of *The Colonel* from 2 to the latest issue are all in stock. Price to members for up to 20 issues is £1.60 per issue, including UK postage. Orders above 20 at cost after contacting the Secretary. Excess postage for overseas orders will be charged at cost. Issue 1 was a single sheet. It can be supplied on request free of charge with any other order, or separately on receipt of an A5-size stamped addressed envelope.

DVDs containing 39 rare **Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway photographs**, mostly of locomotives, from the WD Detachment photograph album, provided by Mike Christensen, author of *The SMLR under Military Control*. Book and DVD were reviewed in *Colonel 104*. This superb DVD is available at the bargain price of £3 including p&p.

Drawings 47 drawings of a variety of locomotives, rolling stock and infrastructure of the railways of Colonel Stephens are now available. Drawn by the Society's chairman, these famous scale drawings may be ordered by post. They are printed on A3 paper. They cost just 70p each for 1-5 drawings. They will be dispatched rolled in a cardboard tube. Post & packing cost £3.20 for up to 20 drawings. Over that please contact the Secretary. A list of the drawings appears on our website (together with images) and in *Colonel 104* p11.

Car Stickers Proclaim your membership of the Society by displaying one of our elegant car stickers. £2.10p each including p&p. Visit our website to see a colour image of the sticker.

Badges Chic Colonel Stephens Society badges are just £4.80 including postage. Visit our website to see a colour image of the badge.

The Colonel's Guide, over 80 pages of sources of books, magazine articles, models, videos and films of the Colonel's railways, available at £3.30, including p&p.

Biography of Colonel Stephens *Colonel Stephens - a Celebration*: we have a limited supply of this excellent booklet at £4.15 each, including UK p&p.

Website: Visit our constantly updated website
www.colonelstephenssociety.co.uk

Editorial: *Fingers Crossed*

Thirty years ago next April, Andrew Emery produced Newsletter No.1 of the Colonel Stephens Society, following a positive response to an appeal to 'interested persons' in the modelling press. Andrew was the first secretary of the Society. No subscriptions were charged at first; members were asked to send in six SAEs to cover the postage (and provide the envelopes). This was also to ensure that the new kid on the block could not be accused of poaching members from existing societies.

From such modest beginnings, the present flourishing society sprang. The single sheet newsletter became the rather grandly described 'journal' of the Society under the title *The Colonel*, retained to this day, 112 issues later. However, much else has changed. *The Colonel*, previously usually 16 or 20 pages with poorly reproduced

illustrations, now commonly has 32 pages; the illustrations have gradually improved (thanks to our printers), including a cover photograph and a colour centre spread. Subscriptions are now charged, membership hovers around the 400 mark, intensive and enjoyable Members' Weekends have enveloped the AGMs, a range of merchandise has been introduced, including Christmas cards and a substantial donations programme helps to fund Colonel-related projects.

But (you knew there was a 'but' coming, didn't you?), all this activity depends on a few volunteers. Those of us who are standing down from their positions at the AGM in May have their fingers crossed that sufficient volunteers will put themselves forward for election in order to take over and ensure the continuation of the Society.

Ross Shimmon

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Front cover: Wingham Canterbury Road, East Kent Railway c1937, note the octagonal hut in the background. (Harold E Vickers, Michael Bishop Collection, courtesy Welsh Highland Heritage Group).

HANDS UP PLEASE!

We shall need some volunteers to help this year's Members' Weekend run smoothly.

If you can help members find their way at the various venues, make sure the seating, etc., is set out at the AGM, and generally oil the wheels (not literally!) please let the editor know by

12th April.

FINDING STEPHENS IN SUFFOLK

DAVID POWELL *has been exploring. He reports on a visit to a Stephens look-a-like light railway in East Anglia*

Enthusiasts of Holman Stephens can still visit sites of many of his achievements at places such as Tenterden. But to what extent do today's heritage railways with their Mark 1 coaches and busy tourist-focused timetables actually reflect the experience of a Stephens railway operation? We have photographs of the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire, the Selsey Tramways and the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead, but what would it have been like to have travelled on one of these light railways? I think I may have found the answer during a recent holiday in East Anglia.

Mid-Suffolk Light Railway

Some 28 miles south of Norwich on the A140, are two huge masts, one of which is the Mendlesham TV mast. Look out for the discreet 'MLSR' brown sign pointing to a side road heading east and follow a well sign-posted route for about a mile to the middle of nowhere and here is Brockford Station, the headquarters of the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway. Hopefully, you will have checked the www.mslr.org.uk website to turn up on one of the Sundays when steam services are running.

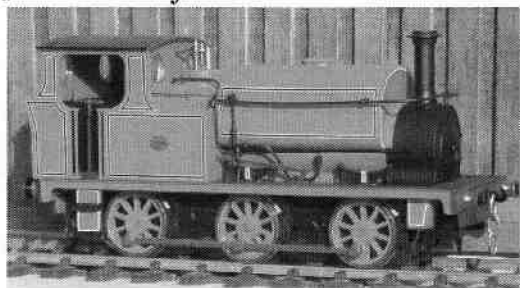
Quirky Rural Byway

'Services' is perhaps an exaggeration. What you will enjoy is rattling up and down some 600 yards of a quirky (their description!) rural byway in a genuine 4-wheel coach body, either the 2-compartment Brake 3rd No 12 (originally a GER Brake 3rd) or the 5-compartment No 13, (Ex GER



No 287). Steam motive power is currently provided by Hudswell-Clarke 0-6-0ST 'Wissington', on hire from the M&GN Society, typical of locomotives supplied to the 'Middy' and operating between 1904 and 1928, and therefore a genuine Stephens period-piece. This industrial engine was the last working steam locomotive in East Anglia when she was retired in 1975. [*Ixion models produce a superb 7mm ready-to-run version of this class of loco, see below - Ed*].

Hidden from View



Hidden from normal view in the Brockford 'works' are the parts of another small 0-6-0 Hudswell-Clarke locomotive, works number 1604, and a sister of a Stephens-owned contemporary, EKR No 2. When this will reappear in steam is anyone's guess?

The typical small society hurdles of cash and skills are the main barriers to progress.

Timber-framed station building

The Stephens experience is further reinforced by the timber-framed corrugated-iron clad station building, rescued from Mendlesham – the previous station westwards. The 120ft platform is actually on the site of the former Brockford & Wetheringsett station's cattle dock. In addition to booking office and shop, the site hosts a small museum, a café, and a grounded real-ale bar coach. There is not one of the more typical heritage railway landmarks of a tarpaulin-draped BR Mark 1 to be seen anywhere. There is, however, a growing collection of nicely restored typical goods wagons.

Minimum space layout?

Facilities at Brockford comprise a short run-round loop, a couple of sidings alongside and a kick-back leading to the loco preparation area, with a very Stephens-ish water tower. As a concept, Brockford and its stock would make an excellent basis for an achievable 7mm minimum space layout.

Running Line



The running line currently ends in a minimalist platform and

siding, in a wood. The objective is to continue eastwards along the original trackbed as funds and materials permit.

Light Railways Act

Like many of the Colonel's contemporary lines, the Middy was a product of the 1896 Light Railways Act. Construction began at Haughley, north of Stowmarket,



in 1902 and the 19 miles to Laxfield opened in 1904 with a short goods only spur from Kenton to the outskirts of Debenham.

However, the original ambition of a line through to Westerfield on the outskirts of Ipswich and another branch to Needham Market were never completed and the original Middy ended up with the rails stopping in the middle of a field. Effectively bankrupt from the very beginning, the line struggled on for almost 50 years and became a part of Suffolk legends. Independent until 1924, it was then absorbed into the LNER. The Middy may not have been in the Stephens Empire, but its story and its character not only mimicked many of his lines but continues to do so, through the efforts of today's Mid Suffolk Light Railway Co team, led by its Chairman Roger Gregory.

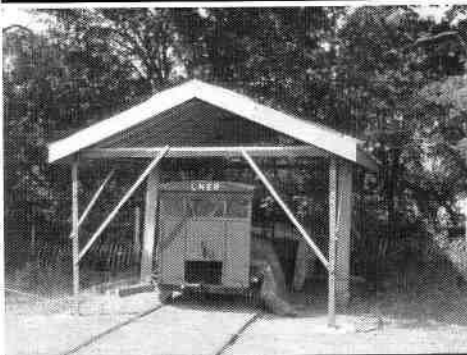
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Postscript

While enjoying our rural railway afternoon, I happened to meet and talk to **Roger Gregory** about the practicality of hosting a Colonel Stephens Society AGM at Brockford. Apparently, the Vintage Carriages Trust (another itinerant AGM society) had held a recent AGM at the railway to which had been added a visit (via vintage buses) to the Ipswich Transport Museum. Food for thought for a future AGM venue? Possibly in a year or two, when the 'main' line may have crossed another field or two, although whether the in-works EKR sister loco will be ready may be a bit too optimistic? ●

All the photographs accompanying this article are by David Powell



PLANS TO REOPEN THE SHEPPEY LIGHT ...

... as a footpath

John Tress reports that he is applying to Kent County Council (KCC) to get the Sheppey Light Railway route from Power Station Road to Scrapsgate Road put onto the Designated Footpaths map. Most of the route has been used by local people as a footpath since the railway closed in 1950. Along this part of the route are a pair of crossing gates that should be saved for future railway historians. Both the Society and the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum have agreed to support John's efforts. Apparently there is a two-year waiting list for such applications. If the application is successful, it might be possible to put up some interpretation boards similar to those erected by the WC&PR Group along the line of that railway. ●

Picture Quiz Answer

◀ This was the picture in the quiz in the last issue (with the 'LNER' blanked out).

Sadly, none of our members got it right. Albyn Austen thought it was on Colin Shutt's line in Yorkshire, but no-one else came close. The answer is, of course, the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway! ●

SHUTT'S SHUNTINGS

Colin Shutt has definitely been shunting this time. Some buffer stops arrived by lorry at his East Wressle & Brind LR. They were unloaded and then shunted into position using bits of sleeper to protest the Ruston's buffer beam. ●



FROM KENSINGTON TO THE WC&PR

RICHARD BARTON tells the story of a Sharp Stewart locomotive

In 1903 the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway acquired from George Cohen and Sons a second-hand Sharp Stewart 2-4-0T, referred to as *Portishead* in this article, though it is not certain if it carried this name during its short stay on the line.

Fascinating Career

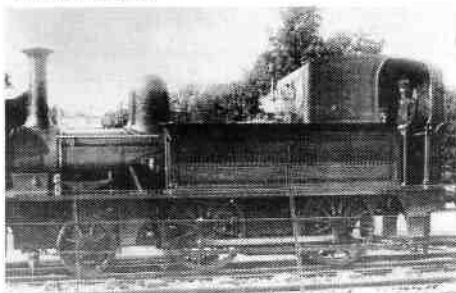
Portishead had a fascinating career, as detailed in Donald Bradley's *Locomotives of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Vol. 1 (1969, RCTS)*. In 1872 the LBSCR purchased Sharp Stewart Works No. 2242, which had originally been ordered for the Tunis and Goletta Railway. Painted in emerald green and running as No. 53, it worked the Kensington shuttle trains. In 1875 and was repainted in Stroudley passenger livery and as No. 270 "Bishopstone" it was employed on harbour improvements at Newhaven (Photo 1).



Hayling Island branch

It was renamed *Fratton* in 1878 and sent to the Hayling Island Branch, where it stayed until September 1890, having been successively Nos. 357 and 497. *Fratton* was sold for scrap to Cohens for £164, despite a very modest mileage of only 207,964. No photograph of *Fratton* has ever come to light, but the illustration on page 17 of

Peter Strange's *The Weston, Clevedon and Portishead railway: a Pictorial Record* (Twelveheads Press, 1989), shows how it might have appeared whilst at Hayling Island (Photo 2).



Stroudley Modification?

Comparison with the photograph of *Bishopstone* shows the addition of rather ugly sides to the cab. This was probably a Stroudley modification, as the LB&SCR had already modified a Kitson 0-4-2T *Bognor* in a similar way. The cut away cab was in-filled and cab front received two large spectacles of unusual shape, straight sided but with curved top and bottom. Other changes, such as the repairs to the side tank, indicated by the additional riveting, were probably made after 1890. The absence of the typical Sharp Stewart safety valve bonnet may only have been temporary, as it can be seen in place in a rather blurred photograph taken at Weston-super-Mare. This also shows clearly the shape of the front spectacles. (Photo 3).

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Peter Strange has dated both WC&PR photographs as c1905.

Portishead was very similar in design and dimensions to *Hesperus*, the most noticeable differences being the side tanks, which were mounted further back towards

cannot confirm where and neither are they with the successor company to George Cohens, GCS Steels. Does anyone have any further information? ●

All photographs are from the Peter Strange Collection, courtesy of the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum in Tenterden.



the cab and also the boiler fittings. The two locomotives never appeared together on the WC&PR, as *Portishead* was withdrawn or scrapped in 1906, but not before it had been involved in that railway's worst fatal accident at Worle in 1903.

It is not known how much the WC&PR paid for "Fratton" but, hopefully, it was less than £164!

Where was "Fratton" between its sale to Cohens in 1890 and its arrival on the WC&PR in 1903?

The National Archives list the George Cohen archives for 1855-1947 (reference NRA22595) as being held privately but they

The Colonel Bought his Own Papers

Member Jonathan Hammonds recalls that his father, who worked for WH Smith in Shrewsbury and Mid-Wales from about 1920 to 1940 was adamant that Colonel Stephens used to call in Smith's in Castle Street, Shrewsbury for daily papers and various bits of stationery when he was visiting this part of his empire.

Thanks to David Powell for passing on this interesting snippet. We wonder which papers he bought? He couldn't have had much need for new stationery; he often used hotel notepaper and, on at least one occasion, a Town Clerk's headed notepaper and envelope! -Ed.

EAST KENT PRESERVATION: THE EARLY YEARS

With our visit to Shepherdswell in May in mind, we asked DAVE HARRIS to tell us about the struggle to get the East Kent heritage line up and running

It was a very wet 29th November evening in 1985 that a meeting was convened in the Biggin Hall, Dover to form a preservation society to save and restore the remaining part of the EKR. Fifty eight people attended.

Doctor Robert Kinghorn¹ was due to speak to the meeting but was unable to attend. However, Ivor Gotheridge², the other speaker, did attend and spoke very enthusiastically about how we could get the railway going again. Doctor Alfred Minter was asked by Dr Kinghorn to chair the meeting. Alfred spoke about setting up a committee and forming a membership. An initial committee was set up, including a Treasurer. Attendees at the meeting queued up and paid the Treasurer their first year's subscription.

Meeting in old goods office



British Rail ignored all proposals through 1986, until September. On 30th of that month a meeting with BR took place in the old goods office in the BR yard at Shepherdswell. The meeting was led by Mr

Godfrey Croughton, a BR senior officer and preserved line enthusiast. The meeting was very satisfactory. BR promised to give us serious consideration.

Charitable status

A walk along the line was organised, and a newsletter produced. Meetings for the members also took place. A constitution was drafted and adapted to form a constitution for the charitable status which was achieved for the Society. A group of members bought an ex-NCB diesel 0-6-0, and stored it off site.

Platform ticket

Another meeting took place in the old goods office on 12th August 1987. Various BR officials were present, some local (Canterbury/Dover) and others from Waterloo. At this meeting we were offered a lease (three years) on the EKR Station site. Mr Croughton, who was a leading collector of old railway tickets, gave all the committee members a newly printed Edmondson card EKR Shepherdswell platform ticket (pictured below). This was a token of celebration on his part.

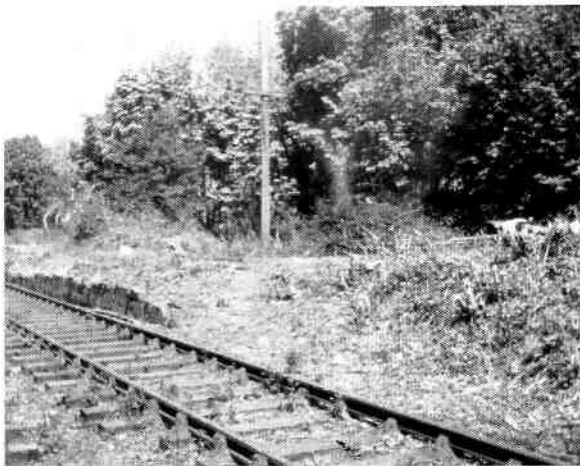


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Planning permission granted

The next significant thing was the Dover District Council Planning Application meeting which took place on site on 29th March 1988. We were pleasantly surprised to see Mr Croughton there. He spoke strongly in our favour. The Parish Council opposed it. However, planning permission was granted on 31st March 1988.

On 9th September 1988 there was a meeting with the BR Property Board to finalise the lease. This was received on 29th



site being fenced with BR regulation fencing. This required money to be raised in a short time. It had taken three and half years of frustrating work to get to this point! •

[¹The late Robert Kinghorn set up the original Colonel Stephens Society web-site. ²Ivor Gotheridge was also an early member of CSS, regularly attending our AGMs at Keen House. The author of this piece, Dave Harris is EKR Trust membership No.1 and is the editor of East Kent Railway News – Ed.]

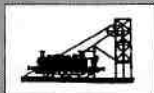
All photographs in this article were provided by Dave Harris.

September 1988. Two working committees were set up: a finance committee and an operations committee (operations meaning site work). The bridge over Wigmore Lane was damaged by a skip lorry and removed by BR.

Jungle clearance

The AGM took place on 27th January 1989. From this point on it was all go. We had achieved permission to go on site and work. 'Jungle clearance' started on Easter Saturday, 25th March 1989. Many members were present and attacked vegetation with all manner of implements. BR insisted on the

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LAST GLIMPSES OF THE WC&PR

Selwyn Pearce-Higgins, a notable enthusiast for small railways, left his manuscript notes to the NRM Archive. He was able to visit the Weston Clevedon & Portishead Railway on two occasions during WW2, giving us glimpses of the end. These are some of his notes, edited and summarised

by BRIAN JANES

18th May 1940

The service was worked by Terrier No.4, still in quite good condition externally, and two Pullmans [*the American style bogie coaches - BJ*] (2 & 4). On the 3.30 to Portishead there were 3 wagons at the back. [*On the*] journey back the train ran surprisingly to time.

Three years to go. WCPR Terrier No.4 with 'American' coach No.2 at Clevedon, October 1937. RG Jarvis. Copyright: Midland Railway Trust.



Before each trip the engine took water at Clevedon from the tank by the shed; there were two tanks, one at each end of the platform, but these were apparently not in use.

There was not a great crowd at the obsequies; the two carriages were well filled [*a group from the Bristol Railway Circle led by C R Clinker were present - BJ*], and quite a number of people came to the [*Clevedon*] station to see the arrival of the last train from Weston. No 4 with Gatwick on the footplate [*sic. Tom Gatford was driving, H. Woodland was fireman and H Ford was guard - BJ*], uncoupled, ran round and put the carriages away as if they would be needed again to-

morrow, and in the same way No 4 was herself put on the ash pit (though I am not sure that there is any pit about it) and the fire was thrown out, just as it had been many times before.

[The Weston Gazette of 25th May in a cutting kept by Pearce-Higgins (who does not seem to have travelled that day) recorded this final journey in the following lyrical terms,

'And what a lovely ride it was through the fields heavily carpeted with buttercups and bordered with hedges so full of May blossom that they looked as though there had been a heavy snow storm! O peaceful Somerset, where the cattle graze in lush meadows and the lambs kick up their heels and scamper away with fright as the little train glides along the light rails. War seemed very far away during that half-hour ride' -BJ]

The station, shed and yard presented the appearance which for the last few years and had always associated with a visit [*to*] the light railway, many of the wagons originally bought from mainline companies were still in the usual position in the yard. On the spur which curved towards the GW sidings the same the same old Carriage [*presumably No 7, now running as MET 337 on LT - BJ*] with several wagons still lying derelict, and considerably more dilapidated than they were on my last visits [*probably in 1938 - BJ*]. This curve did not make a connection with the track on the GW.

In a small shed by the side of the main

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loco and carriage shed were a number of new concrete posts, which were evidently intended for mile posts, but had not been used.

[Pearce-Higgins wandered round the yard at Clevedon recording that the ex-LSWR coaches (Nos.15-17) were in a fixed set and 'painted a rather pleasant dark chocolate brown'. The ex-Metropolitan coaches were assembled in twin sets (Nos. 8+13, 10+9 and 11+12) and had 'Ends painted red Oxide - the sides being polished wood-work'. All these coaches had steam heating fitted. 'Pullman' No.1 was also present in the shed and ex-TVR No.18 was in the yard. Locomotives Nos.1, 5 and Weston were in the carriage shed as was the Muir Hill tractor. Loco No.2 was in the loco shed, and the large railmotor in its shed; the small railmotor and its trailer were noted as absent - BJJ]

3rd February 1943

WEH [WE Hayward - BJJ] told me that the line was being dismantled, but work had been suspended, before dismantling had reached Ebdon Lane. [The order to dismantle had been finally made on 21 July 1942. The GWR started the dismantling work on 3rd September and it was largely completed by early June 1943. The Wick to Ebdon Lane section was not removed till later. See <http://www.hfstephens-museum.org.uk/other-railways/a-close-run-thing> - BJJ]

Worle Town. Track taken up, stacks of sleepers in the yard. Station buildings still standing.

Line dismantled as far as the rhyné bridge a short distance before Ebdon Lane station. The bridge was being cut with oxy-acetylene, but could still be crossed on foot. The rails being cut into short lengths of approx. 20 inches, lying in piles by the side of the track. The sleepers were lifted and taken away by road; the lorry being driven along the ballast to the places where the demolition gang were working.

The workmen were breaking off for lunch as I arrived. From a short conversation it seems that the dismantling was stopped owing to a hitch in the contract arrange-

ments. A new scheme had been arranged, and work had recently started again - the sleepers being sold to a local firm.

I did not discover what was happening to the rails. From appearances it would seem that the Terrier has not been down the line recently. [The GWR had effectively banned movement on the line on safety grounds - BJJ]

Ebdon Lane station - a trolley with oxy-acetylene cylinder

Wick St Lawrence. Sta. bdgs. still standing, but dilapidated. The track in the Yeo siding branch was completely overgrown, the old wooden staging with the tank still standing, although the tank rusted through. The bridge over the river still in good condition.

Walked on to Clevedon. Track in passable condition except for the sleepers, most of which were in need of replacement. The last ½ mile to Clevedon had evidently been repaired in fairly recent years; it was slightly more convincing than the rest of the track. Rails were flat bottom throughout, and the track was very lightly laid - perhaps the lightest of all the Colonel Stephens standard gauge lines.

Clevedon Station. Sheds were still complete - the old shed looking more insecure than ever without the rolling stock [removed by the GWR in 1940 - BJJ] to create an illusion of greater solidarity. The concrete mile posts still lying in the shed. Name board of COLE HOUSE LANE also discovered (& annexed) [this survives in the NRM, York with a copy on display in the Colonel Stephens railway museum - BJJ].

A general limit of 8 mph at all the crossings between Ebdon Lane and Clevedon. The stations were not more than small wooden shelters for 2 or 3 people at the most,

[Pearce Higgins seems to have terminated his visit here, presumably travelling on via the GWR Clevedon branch - BJJ] •

Coming to Members' Weekend in May?

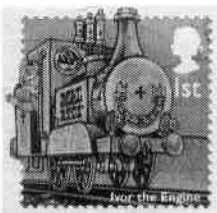
Don't forget to fill in and return, to arrive by 12th April, the booking form enclosed with this issue, together with your payment.

TRAVELS IN THE LAND OF THE RED DRAGON

A personal account of visits to the Welsh Highland Railway
by STEVE BENNION

The top left hand corner of Wales has

always held a fascination for me. I blame Oliver Postgate! For it was he that introduced me, as a young child, to small railways in that part of the world, namely The Merioneth and Llantysilly Rail Traction Company Limited and its redoubtable engine *Ivor*.



Campbell's Platform

My first visit to North Wales was in the seventies on a school week away. My abiding memory was meeting John Noakes (of Blue Peter fame) in the station buffet at Portmadoc (as it was spelt then before resuming its Welsh spelling of Porthmadog). After meeting a hero of mine we had a ride on the Ffestiniog Railway as far as Campbell's Platform. At the time I had not yet heard of the Welsh Highland Railway and I suspect there were few people who ever thought it would be restored to the glory it is today.

Narrow-minded friend

I was introduced to the Welsh Highland by my friend Ian who in his own words is extremely 'narrow minded'. Ian's passion for this line was infectious and over a couple of subsequent visits he pointed out the route of the line, which at the time consisted of overgrown cuttings and embankments. We walked several sections, including the curves before Rhyd Ddu station and the tunnels of the Aberglaslyn Pass.

First section

Then came 1997, the year that the first section of the line opened from Caernarfon to Dinas. A short run along the old LNWR

track bed; but the beast had been woken and it felt great to finally run on and feel part of the restoration of this magnificent line through the stunning scenery of Snowdonia, for I had duly signed on as a member of the society.

Longer and longer

As you are probably aware the line from Caernarfon to Porthmadog was opened in sections and over subsequent years the trips on the railway got longer and longer. From Dinas the next section opened in 2000 to Waunfawr with the station conveniently set right outside the Snowdonia Parc brew-pub where the refreshment within was duly sampled. After all the effort to get the line there it would have been rude not to!

Almost halfway

In 2003 the next section opened to Rhyd Ddu, almost half way. The beauty of the phased opening was that each time I visited there was a new length of line to travel over. Each section has its own charm and beauty and the trip just got better and better. I was now joined by my eldest son Thomas who was keen to see for himself what all the fuss was about. I was able to bore him with stories of my previous trips which he listened to with due sufferance, but not without a few 'you told me that last time Dad' comments.

Rock Cuttings

The full length of line would not open for several years after reaching Rydd Ddu, as one of the benefits of restoring the line was to reduce traffic in the National Park and if the line had opened as far as Beddgelert there was the distinct possibility that the traffic would increase as tourists drove to join the train there. This only succeeded in heightening the anticipation of the whole run from Caernarfon to Porthmadog.

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However I had to content myself with visits on foot to various sections like the rock cuttings above Beddgelert and the street section through Porthmadog.

Aberglaslyn

As it turned out in 2009 the line was opened further, through the Aberglaslyn Pass to a temporary terminus at Hafod y Llyn a tantalising few miles out of Porthmadog. At last trains through Aberglaslyn where I had walked all those years before.

First through train

Then on 30th October 2010 the first train ran over the whole length of the restored



Welsh Highland Railway. Although I was not one of the privileged few to ride that train, Thomas and I were able to chase the train along the length of the line and photograph it as we went. This particularly pleased Ian who was on the first train and obviously was not able to get the pictures himself.

What keeps us coming back?

Subsequently Thomas (and my youngest son Hew) have visited the railway many times and we often treat ourselves to riding in the Pullman observation carriages always over the full length from Caernarfon to Porthmadog. So what is it about this particular line that keeps me coming back? Well for me it is the different types of scenery that is passed through on the twenty-five miles of

the journey. Starting from Caernarfon almost under the imposing walls of Edward I's castle you run along the old mainline track bed with its attendant cycle path to Dinas station. This section has the feeling of being somewhat out of scale as the bridges were built for standard gauge trains.

Lush pastures

Once you leave Dinas, heading for Waunfawr, the line passes through lush pastures of the lowland Welsh farms and draws alongside the Afon Gwyrfaï river as it rushes its way towards the sea snaking along its banks before reaching Waunfawr station.

Llyn Cwellyn

After Waunfawr the line begins to enter the mountains. The vistas soon open to reveal views to the right over the lake Llyn Cwellyn to the mountains beyond and to the left distant views of Snowdon. On clear days (yes they do have them in Wales occasionally) you can just make out the station on Snowdon's summit and the trains on the rack railway puffing determinedly to the top. The line makes some spectacular turns before

entering Rhyd Ddu station which are excellent for photographing the engine.

The summit

After Rhyd Ddu station you soon reach the summit of the line and start to make your way down hill through the pine and broad-leaf trees of Beddgelert Forest towards Beddgelert station where you will often pass a train heading for Caernarfon.

Aberglaslyn Pass

After Beddgelert there comes many peoples' highlight, the Aberglaslyn Pass, where the line passes over the Afon Glaslyn river and follows its course on a ledge through several tunnels as the river drops away in a foam of white water rapids. Spectacular in whatever season you visit.

Flat crossing

Once through the pass you head across the flat land towards Porthmadog. A mile or so after crossing the wide river Glaslyn at Pont Croesor (where you might be lucky to see ospreys) you encounter the unusual flat crossing over the main Cambrian Coast line before entering the back streets of Porthmadog on a tramline laid specifically for the purpose before stopping short of the Britannia Bridge at one end of the high street to allow the traffic to clear before proceeding across the bridge and into the terminus station, which at the time of writing is undergoing significant restructuring as it is also the start of the Ffestiniog Railway that makes its way up to Blaenau Ffestiniog. There is just time to refresh yourself in Spooner's Bar at the station which serves excellent food and a fine selection of real ales (I highly recommend the Purple Moose Brewery beers brewed in Porthmadog) be-

fore the return journey to Caernarfon.

A Magnificent railway

I hope you have enjoyed this short personal account of my experiences over the years on the Welsh Highland Railway which is, as I am sure those who have travelled its length will agree, a magnificent railway. If you would like to find out more about this remarkable line I would recommend the three volume Past & Present series by John Stretton, which is full of excellent pictures of how the line originally looked, how it looked after falling into disuse and the restoration. •

The Welsh Highland Railway, Vol. 1: A Phoenix Rising, Vol 2: Halfway to Paradise, Vol 3: Ain't No Stopping Us Now! (Past and Present Companions), by John Stretton, Past & Present Publishing.

Below: NGG16 class Garratt No.138 heading first train over the whole length of the line.





1



2



3



5



6



4

PICTURES FROM THE TOP LEFT HAND CORNER OF WALES

1 & 2 Nantmor Tunnel before and after reconstruction.
 3 & 4 Bridge over the Glaslyn before and after
 5 & 6 Tunnel at Aberglaslyn before and after
 7 NGG 16 class Garratt No.87 at Waunfawr

All photographs by Steve Bennion



7

RUSSELL to return to Steam

Following 10 years out of action, the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway has announced that *Russell* (Hunslet 2-6-2T, works number 901 of 1906) will be returning to active service for the 2014 season. The overhaul at Alan Keef's works in Ross - on - Wye is rapidly drawing to a close and a delivery date has been agreed which will see *Russell* return to its home in Porthmadog in North Wales this spring.

Private Reveal

Following a private reveal in front of supporters and invited guests *Russell* will be launched back into public traffic over the May bank holiday weekend. *Russell* will then be used most weekends throughout the year including the 'Tea on the Train Sundays' during July and August, which will give people the chance to sample the delights of the original WHR buffet car (built by the Ashbury Railway Carriage & Iron Co. for the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways in 1893), hauled by an original WHR locomotive.

Gala in May

The 'Russell Returns Gala' will run from 3rd -5th May, featuring the most intensive train service to date on the WHHR, with passenger trains hauled by *Russell* and the mighty LYd2 Polish diesel, ably assisted by *Gertrude* (Andrew Barclay No. 1578 of 1918) hauling a loose-coupled freight train.

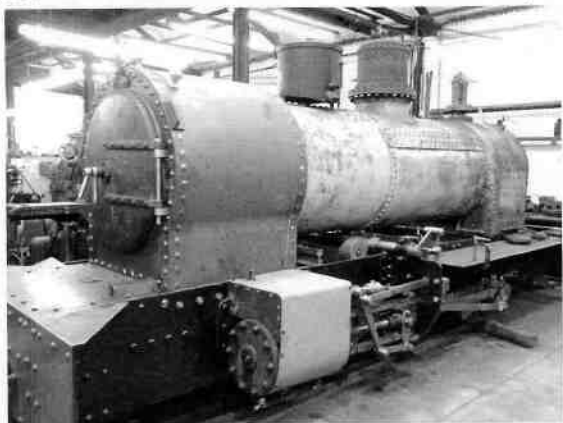
First public train

Tickets to the first *Russell*-hauled public passenger train (10.15am Saturday 3rd May) will be available on a first-come, first-served basis, this train will only be available to holders of a special Golden ticket (well Brass actually). This strictly limited edition souvenir ticket will entitle the holder to travel on all three days of the gala and also includes entry to the Sunday evening event as well as free tea or coffee served from the

original WHR buffet car for the duration of the gala.

And there's more

2014 is proving to be an exciting time for the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway; not only will *Russell* be returning, but progress with fund raising for the overhaul of Ex-War Department Baldwin, number 794 (44699 of 1917) has reached a point that will enable work to recommence on this loco as soon as *Russell* leaves Alan Keef's, with a view to having it back in steam in time to celebrate the loco's 100th birthday



in 2017. Meanwhile, a new boiler for *Gelert* (Bagnall 0-4-2 side tank number 3050 built in 1953) is now under construction at Israel Newton's; with plans in place for a speedy return to service. ●

The photo above shows Russell under restoration at Alan Keef's works in January 2014, courtesy of Liz Owen.

More information about *Russell* and the Gala may be found at: www.whr.co.uk
Our Chairman, Les Darbyshire, has sent the following message to Michael Chapman of the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway: It will be wonderful to see Russell in service again. We in the Colonel Stephens Society are pleased and proud to have been able to give some financial support to your efforts - a total of £1400 over the years. ●

MODELLING NOTES

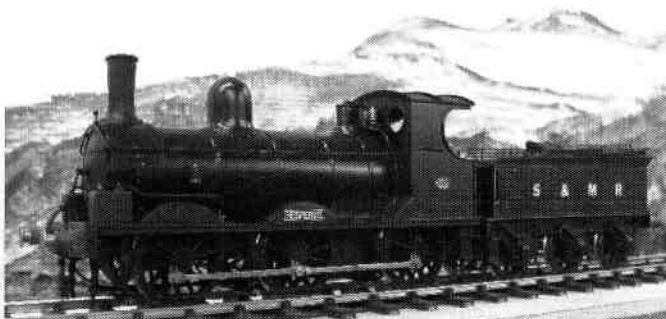
The Colonel at Warley: Ned Williams reports

Once again the Colonel Stephens Society was represented at the Warley Model Railway Club's annual "national exhibition" at the NEC, Birmingham. Our six-foot stall was right next door to the Scalefour layout "Rolvenden", which is a very inspiring example of a layout based on a Colonel Stephens line, built by member Robin Gay, and featured in *Colonel 108*. Not far away was the 0 Gauge layout, "Selsey Town", so the Colonel was indeed well-represented. Our stall used part of the Gauge 1 model of Chalder Halt that I have used before at the NEC - I promise to produce something new for 2014. We also devoted space on the stall to selling books on behalf of a donor who was prepared to share the takings equally with the Society. As a result of this we were able to raise £90 for the CSS. (Something of a record for our activities at the NEC.)

We recruited one lapsed member, but generally did not deal with many enquiries about the Colonel, his railways, or the society.

Let's hope the two layouts did a better job of making the visitors more curious about all these things. Many visitors seem simply overwhelmed by the size of the show, and don't often articulate their particular interests. Quite a few seem to walk about in a trance! Usually I am assisted by **Ron Stirrup** and **Dave Greensil**, but this year we learned that Ron had died earlier in the year, and Dave was ill at the last minute. A couple of friends gave me assistance, and I am still trying to persuade them to join the CSS! I am sure the Colonel is better known than ever before, and although the preserved lines help sustain his memory and his "image", I feel the world in which his railways really existed is becoming more remote. ●

Picture below shows a lovely model of S&MR No.2 Hesperus built by Barrie Kelsall from a Laurie Griffin Kit.



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SOCIETY AGM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 27th Annual General Meeting of the Colonel Stephens Society will be held at **10.30 am on Saturday 10th May, 2014** at Crabble Corn Mill, Lower Road, River, DOVER, Kent CT17 0UY.

Please assemble at Shepherdswell EKR station, CT15 7PD. The Colonel Stephens Café will be open for the sale of tea and coffee. A classic bus will operate a shuttle service between Shepherdswell EKR station and Crabble Corn Mill.

AGENDA

1. Welcome from the Chairman and Introductions
2. Apologies for absence
3. Report of the last AGM (see *Colonel 111, pp20-23*).
4. Matters arising
5. Officers' reports
 - Chairman
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Membership Secretary
 - Archivist
 - Editor & Publicity Officer
 - Web Manager
6. Election of Officers for 2014/15 (see separate notice, in the next column)
7. Subscriptions for 2014/15
8. Date and venue for next AGM
9. Any other business.

Motions:

Requests for items to be considered at the meeting should reach our Secretary, Kerry Baylis, whose address is on page 31, no later than **12th April**.

Election of Officers

Nominations are invited for all the posts listed on the agenda, (except the Web Manager, which is not an elected position). The Chairman, Les Darbyshire and the Treasurer, Nigel Bird, are willing to stand for a further term of one year. The Secretary, Kerry Baylis, is willing to carry on with responsibility for the Society's Sales, which is not an elected position, but wishes to stand down as Secretary. The Membership Secretary, David Powell, wishes to stand down as does the Archivist, Stuart Marshall. The Editor & Publicity Officer wishes to stand down as Editor, but is willing, if there are no other candidates, to continue as Publicity Officer and, if necessary, to combine it with the position of Archivist.

So, we definitely need nominations for the following posts:

- ◆ Secretary
- ◆ Membership Secretary
- ◆ Editor
- ◆ Publicity Officer
- ◆ Archivist (may be combined with Publicity Officer)

Nominations should be sent to the Secretary (address on p.31) by **12th April**. Members may put their own name forward.

Any Other Business

To help speed up business, as the timetable for the day is unavoidably tight, members wishing to raise items under AOB are asked to advise our Secretary, Kerry Baylis (address on p.31) by **12th April**, an outline of the point they wish to have discussed. This will enable the committee to prepare answers for the meeting. This does not, of course, preclude members asking questions from the floor without notice.

Name Badges

To make it easier to match faces with names, especially as we don't meet very often, please bring a personal name badge if you have one. We will also bring some blank ones for you to fill in, just in case. ●

Members' Weekend 2014

The Itinerary

Friday 9th May

2pm Assemble at Robertsbridge Junction Station TN32 5DG, to view the astonishing progress made since our last visit in 2011 and take part in a walk on the newly-laid track from the new platform to the end of the current line at Northbridge Street. Please wear stout shoes! Tea and biscuits will be available. Please book your place on the enclosed form so that we can verify numbers. Evening is free.

Saturday 10th May

From 9am Assemble at Shepherdswell EKR station, CT15 7PD. The Colonel's Café will open for the sale of tea and coffee. A classic bus will operate a shuttle service to Crabble Corn Mill at River for our AGM (see Agenda opposite) and lunch.

10.30 Annual General Meeting

12.30 Buffet Lunch at the Corn Mill. The price is £13 per head. Please send payment (cheque or postal order) with your completed booking form, enclosed with this issue.

From 1.45 Shuttle bus back to Shepherdswell EKR station

2.30 Train journey From Shepherdswell to Eythorne and Wigmore Lane and return to Shepherdswell, fare is £5 per head, please send your payment with the enclosed form.

3.30 Classic bus tour of some of the former route of the East Kent Light Railway with Colin Smith and Dave Harris, returning to Shepherdswell at about 5.30.

Payment will be by donation on the day; suggested minimum of £4 per head. Please book your place on the enclosed form. All times on Saturday are approximate. Evening is free.

Sunday 11th May

From 10am Assemble outside the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum, Tenterden, TN30 6HE. Tours will be provided of the Museum, the Carriage & Wagon Works and the station site. The Restaurant will be open

during the morning for the sale of tea and coffee, etc.

1.15pm Return train journey to Bodiam, with Ploughman's lunch on board. We have requested the recently out-shopped ex-SECR Birdcage carriage for our return journey from Bodiam, scheduled to arrive back at Tenterden at **3.10pm**. The discounted fare is £14.40 per head (current K&ESR members travel free, no other concessions available). Lunch is £6.70 per head. Please pay for rail fare and meal (cheque or postal order) with your completed booking form enclosed with this issue.

Don't forget to complete the enclosed form with your bookings for each event on the weekend, including dietary requirements for the Ploughman's lunch on the train on Sunday. The form needs to be returned to: Ross Shimmon, 7 Nobel Court, FAVERSHAM, Kent ME13 7SD by 12th APRIL.

The rest of the day is free.

More Information

Robertsbridge is on the Charing Cross to Hastings line served by Southeastern trains.

Shepherdswell is on the Faversham to Dover line, also served by Southeastern. From London you can reach Faversham from Victoria or St.Pancras.

Tenterden is not, of course, on the national rail network. The nearest station is Headcorn, buses run from there and from Ashford to Tenterden. Southeastern trains: www.southeasternrailway.co.uk
Buses: travelinesoutheast.org.uk

Food and accommodation

Mark Yonge tells us that the Ostrich pub, right opposite Robertsbridge station provides good food: www.ostrichhotel.co.uk

Continued on the next page ►

► *continued from previous page*

Another strong possibility is of course Salehurst Halt, a short car ride from Robertsbridge: www.salehursthalt.co.uk There are several other pubs and restaurants in Robertsbridge village.

Car Parking

There is a limited amount of parking at the RVR at **Robertsbridge**. There is also parking attached to the mainline station, but it is charged for. Alternatives appear to be a council-run car park next to the village hall in Station Road (village end) or the Ostrich pub, if you are eating there!

There is very limited parking at the Corn Mill at River, hence the shuttle bus from **Shepherdswell**. There is ample parking available at the EKR station at Shepherdswell.

There is ample free parking at **Tenterden** station.

Accommodation

Most members seem to be thinking of staying in the Dover, Ashford or Canterbury areas. Premier Inns seem to be popular. There has been some discussion on our Yahoo Group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ColonelHFStephens/>

HOMEWORK:

If you want to mug up on the lines we are visiting, here are a few suggestions.

The Colonel Stephens Railways in Kent by Peter A Harding, published by Peter, 1993.

The Colonel Stephens Railway Museum website is a good starting point:

www.hfstephens-museum.org.uk/

Our own website also has lots of information: www.colonelstephenssociety.co.uk

Rother Valley Railway

Website: www.rvr.org.uk

Includes great coverage of the recent developments.

East Kent Railway

Website: www.eastkentrailway.co.uk/

There are several excellent articles on the EKR by Brian Janes on the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum website: www.hfstephens-museum.org.uk/east-kent-light-railway/

The definitive book on the EKR is:

The East Kent Light Railway by M Lawson Finch and SR Garrett, 2 volumes, Oakwood Press, 2003.

The East Kent Light Railway by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith, Middleton Press, 1989, in typical Middleton style provides useful photographs and route information.

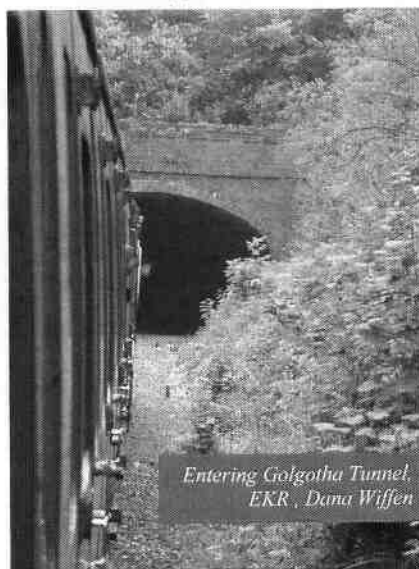
For a quick refresher, there is *Memories of the East Kent Light Railway*, compiled by Peter A Harding from notes and photographs by David Kevan, published by Peter, 1997.

Kent & East Sussex Railway

Website: www.kesr.org.uk

The best overall book is *The Kent & East Sussex Railway* by Stephen Garrett, Oakwood Press, 1999. *The Kent & East Sussex Railway* by Brian Hart, Wild Swan (nd), is beautifully produced and strong on company history and the local context, with many photos, though lacks comprehensive information on rolling stock and operation.

An Illustrated History of the Kent & East Sussex Railway, OPC, 2007, includes some atmospheric photographs, but don't place too much trust in the captions. The Middleton Press has published *Branch Line to Tenterden* by Mitchell and Smith in 1985 in their inimitable style ●



TEST LES & BRIAN

Q *The Colonel moved various items of stock, especially locos from railway to railway. How was this done? By rail or road?*

Ian Hammond

A I think that the loco transfers were generally (all?) made under their own steam. Rolling stock I would think must have gone by goods train - though what the main line companies

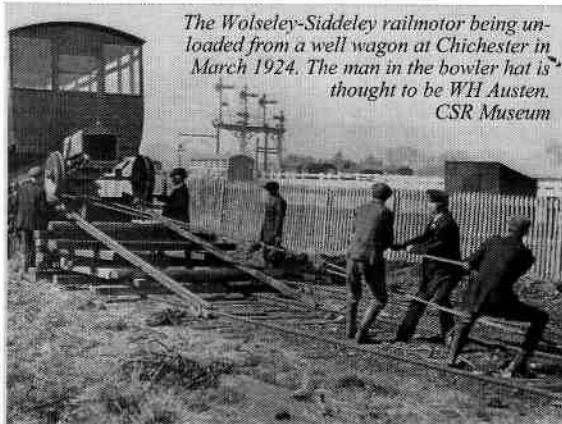
thought of the condition of the stock I can only guess! The railcars would have had to travel on well wagons as they could not be coupled in a goods train - and were not suitable for

towing anyway. The well-known picture of the Wolseley-Siddeley being unloaded at Chichester shoes how it was done.

Les Darbyshire

Simple question, many answers. Road movement of any distance was of course impractical for all but the lightest items till

about WW2. Narrow gauge stuff would of course all go on railway wagons. It is pretty certain that all other items (except Railmotors, inspection trolleys etc.) travelled on their own wheels by rail after inspection by the mainline railways (this was normal practice). Refusal of items happened, for instance some S&MR items otherwise going away for scrap. Other poor condition items might have gone on low loaders but this was expensive and I only know of one case (the



*The Wolseley-Siddeley railmotor being unloaded from a well wagon at Chichester in March 1924. The man in the bowler hat is thought to be WH Austen.
CSR Museum*

SMR construction Hunslet going to Manning Wardle's for overhaul). Engines might have gone under their own steam and we know for instance that for the *Oh Mr Porter!* filming the K&ESR's little 2-4-0T went light engine to Basingstoke and back. We also know that *Walton Park*, a new-ish loco in good condition travelled from Shrewsbury to Shep-

herdswell by goods train accompanied by a member of the SMR's staff (see <http://www.hfstephens-museum.org.uk/locomotives/locomotives-of-the-ekr>). The motion would have been dismantled for this (again normal practice). **Brian Jones**

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PRESS DIGEST *Our regular round up of the railway press*

“**F**estiniog buys Peco Track” might have been the tabloid-style headline to the story featured in *Steam Railway* and other magazines that the FR had taken delivery of plastic sleepers from Ohio, USA, for use on its winter relaying projects. Apparently they are so realistic that they had to be marked to distinguish them from timber sleepers alongside. They have handgrips to facilitate handling, have been tested with axle loads up to 39 tons and are said to have a life span of 300 years! Elsewhere in the same issue (424, Jan/Feb 2014) there are photos of the massive reconstruction at Porthmadog to reconfigure the station to accommodate both **FR** and **WHR** trains at the same time. Meanwhile, *Festiniog Railway Heritage Group Journal 116, Winter 2013/14* has a lovely colour picture of **FR** *Taliesin* and the ‘Colonel Stephens set’ passing Coed y Bleddiau station during last October’s Vintage Weekend. Inside, Fred Howes records the removal of FR bullhead and double head rail as part of the improvement works, while noting that old Penrhyn Quarry Railway bull head rail is being re-used. There are some good photos of the works in progress in *Narrow Gauge World 91* (Jan/Feb 2014, with a lovely shot of *Merddin Emrys* on a charter slate train on the Cob. Inside there are some glorious shots taken during the FR gala and various charters. *Heritage Railway 183, November/December 2013* has a nice colour picture of **FR** Double Fairlie *Merddin Emrys* at the head of the chartered slate train on the Dduallt spiral. Nice! In the same issue is news of the sale by auction of a gas platform lamp from **Cranbrook** station on the Hawkhurst branch. It realised £1550.

Metropolitan carriage 353 which, as we have noted before, once ran on the **WC&PR**, and was beautifully restored at Boston Lodge was pictured in *Heritage Railway* (same issue), running on the streets of London rather than below them, in the Lord Mayor’s Show procession. *HR* also reports work starting on the new carriage shed at **Rolvenden**.

Pity that, unlike *The Colonel 113*, they couldn’t find a suitable photo of the site.

Ian Dack, taking a break from his self-imposed and very welcome task of providing material for the column opposite, alerted us to a nice Stephens-style 4mm scale (EM) layout in *Model Rail* (No.193, March 2014). Given the name *Lower Finesse* by its builder, CSS member Richard Ward, it exudes the atmosphere of many of Stephens’s lines, employing Terriers and early Isle of Wight engines. Speaking of Terriers, the Christmas issue of *Model Railway Journal* features *Tucking Mill*, a 2mm layout whose motive power includes a Terrier and a Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0T. The station buildings look very familiar.

We’re never quite sure whether the superlative models described in *Narrow Gauge & Industrial Railway Modelling Review* inspire us to do better, or drive us to despair in the knowledge that no matter how hard we try we will never reach the standards of, for example, Trevor Hughes. He describes in the latest issue (97) how he scratch built a 7mm model of the Snailbeach Railway’s Kerr Stuart 4-6-0T No.2. Magnificent!

In the last issue of *The Colonel* we reproduced a **K&ESR** postcard showing an ex-BR AC Cars railbus at the short-lived Dixter Halt on the shuttle service that ran from there to Bodiam before the through line was reopened. Well, you can reproduce that service easily now thanks to the introduction of a 4mm model by Heljan. It received an excellent review in *Model Rail 192*, February 2014. Tower Models in their adverts in several magazines announce that the 7mm version should be available in September 2014. You may recall that we agreed to contribute from our small grants fund to the Control Centre at Bere Ferrers. It consists of a replica 1950s cattle wagon which house a booking office, signal cabin and station agent’s office, all in traditional Colonel Stephens style. A photo of the project appears on the front page of *Just a Few Lines 43* from the Tamar Belle Heritage Group. ●

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

Prompted by the imminent visit to **Shepherdswell**, we ferreted through *British Railways past and present No.20 Kent and East Sussex*. It's immediately apparent that, published in 1994, it really should be entitled *Past and Past!* Page 84 shows the mainline station at Shepherdswell with a coal train from Tilmanstone colliery coming off the EKR, headed by O1 31258 tender first. Taken from the footbridge in May 1960, there's a nice view of the tender, complete with a set of fire irons on the coal. Pictured immediately below in July 1992 is Class 47 47811 on a Liverpool Lime Street - Dover Western Docks service. In the meantime, colour light signals have appeared along with a Network South East (remember that?) digital clock and the goods shed has disappeared. On the opposite page is another O1, 31065 this time in the platform at Shepherdswell (EKR) with a train of coal empties in May 1960, while a class 08 D3044 approaches the main line with coal wagons from Tilmanstone. The contrasting picture from almost the same position shows in 1992, the replica wooden station building under construction with the experimental Leyland bogie carriage, now departed to the Gwendraeth Railway Society, with a couple of fruit vans and diesel shunter 08108. *Just a Few Lines 43*, the newsletter of the Tamar Belle Heritage Group, contains as usual a variety of fascinating items. The first to catch our eye was news of items recently auctioned, including a nameplate from *Lord*

St. Levan, one of the Hawthorn Leslie locomotives of the **Plymouth Devonport & South Western Junction Railway**. It fetched £8,000, while the works plate went for £2,200. At a specialist ticket auction a **PD&SWJR** 3rd class ticket, originally costing 2s 1d, from Calstock to Plymouth Mutley sold for £440. Even more extraordinary was the sale of a colour slide on eBay showing a class 22 diesel on a freight train between Gunnislake and Calstock - over £200 was realised! In the same issue of *JAFI* Bruce Hunt tells us that he has an ambition of building a model of Bere Alston station, the junction for the branch. To this end he and a friend measured up the buildings and took 'hundreds of photographs'. A nice selection of photos and drawings of the station appear in this issue. Bruce says that when the drawings are complete they will be available for the cost of printing. Elsewhere in the same issue is a photo taken in 2010 from an overbridge between **Bere Ferrers** and Bere Alston showing wood, concrete and steel sleepers. *Welsh Highland Heritage* 58 December 2012) has an article with colour photos of Kerr Stuart KS4415, the 'oldest British-built diesel still in existence' as trialled on the **Welsh Highland** in 1924. Apparently it was returned to the makers in 1924, which caused the Colonel to remark "I thought we had been given it". In the same issue is an analysis of passenger services on the **WHR** in October 1934 by Richard Maund. ●

TRANSFERS for PO Wagons:

Photographed around the Colonel's railways !

Arnell, Bognor Coal, Bottrill, BW & Co., Chichester Coal
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* and don't forget our custom work (see our other advert for contact details !!)

RVR Timetable Stuffed up a Chimney!

BRIAN JANES takes us for another peep behind the scenes at the *Colonel Stephens Railway Museum*

Winter closure is the time for essential refurbishing. We are redecorating the rather tired Victorian room and with a little re-organisation this should continue to be a key introduction to the life and times of Colonel Stephens. Other planned presentational improvements are also in hand. Small, but expensive, jobs such as re-covering the SR dining car chairs for the video viewing area continue to absorb time and cash. You can see the results when you come on the Sunday of the AGM weekend.

Stephen Garrett papers

Progress on sorting the archive has continued through the winter and the Stephen Garrett papers are now fully integrated in the

alongside the equally lovely Adams radial tank that was to become East Kent Light No 5 and now languishes on the Bluebell. Arriving on the Snailbeach District Railways via E.C. Cornforth, Dealer, of Stoke-on-Trent in 1922, it worked continuously until worn out in 1946 and was scrapped on site by T.W. Ward Ltd in 1950. We hope the new owner appreciates it as much as our visitors might have done.

Magnificent gift

We have nevertheless been very fortunate with donated items. One generous donor has gifted a WC&P enamel trespass sign and a WC&P cast iron wagon/carrriage plate, an Ashover Light Railway 'Beware of Trains' cast iron notice and an S&MR



archive. Last time I wrote these notes I commented that items of paperwork trickle in and it was surprising what is still out there. No sooner said than it was proved in spades; who would bet on an RVR notice of Christmas 1901 services being found stuffed up a house chimney? It will be on display shortly.

Outbid at auction

We continue to be tempted by auction entries but were again outbid. A great shame in particular was missing out on a works plate off the pretty little 'Skylark' class from the Snailbeach District Railways. It was built by Kerr Stuart in 1902 as works number 802, for H. Lovatt & Co, the contractors for the Leek & Manifold Light Railway. During WW1 it served on government sidings adjacent to Ridham Dock, near Sittingbourne,

Annett's Key for Nesscliff & Pentre Station sidings, all of which should be on display by the time you read this. Such generosity adds so much to our interpretation of the complete railway. A magnificent gift!

Mysterious sign

The WC&P is being well served at present as a somewhat mysterious 'The Station' sign from Clevedon has also been donated. It is a sign in the standard Stephens cast iron lettering style on a rather battered piece of board which came from the town centre in Clevedon. It probably originally had a finger pointing above the letters. Enquiries are underway as to precisely what building it was attached. It had a tortuous journey to us. The Gauge 0 Guild were collecting a model railway from the

Oxford area and the board was attached to the door of the shed in which the railway was housed. The owner, who was downsizing to sheltered accommodation, was the retired chief highways engineer for Somerset County Council. He decided to save it when changes were made in the town centre. It was recognised by a Guild member who was also a Board member of the Colonel Stephens Society and following his re-reading an article in this magazine (Number 78) its importance was recognised and found its way safely into our hands. Well done Kerry! Nearly as serendipitous as the RVR notice up the chimney! ●

Pictured below: The flooded cricket pitch alongside the RVR tracks. Mark Yonge



New RVR Bridges Hold

Mark Yonge reports that the new and restored bridges at Robertsbridge have stood up well to the challenge of allowing flood water to drain through these structures on the embankment. The Met Office has stated that January received more rain than had ever been recorded. So, if the Rother Valley bridges were going to be tested, this crucial episode was bound to be watched by all interested parties. "RVR trains, had we chosen to run them, would have been unaffected by flood water", even though the cricket field was waterlogged. Work during this winter period has mainly been concentrated at Rolvenden where the new carriage shed site is under construction. In spite of wet conditions here, work has proceeded fruitfully and at the time of writing, contractors were about to begin the task of building the carriage shed itself. During February and March it is expected that the connection between the Network Rail bay platform at Robertsbridge and RVR metals will be completed. This will allow for the delivery of ballast and on-track permanent way equipment, both for our use and offered as training opportunities to Network Rail and contractors. ●

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MEET THE COLONEL!

Visit the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum at Tenterden

- See the Colonel in his reconstructed Tonbridge office
- Get up close and personal with the famous 'Gazelle'
 - Study the many artefacts of the Colonel's lines
- Latest exhibits include the Light Railway in War Time, workshops activity and improved Selsey and Rye & Camber displays

*Admission free to Colonel Stephens Society members
Open from 12.30 to 4.30 on days when the K&ESR is running*

HOLMAN HUNT, RAILWAY ENGINEER?

A fellow member of my local model railway 0 gauge group offered me a copy of December's 'Steam Days' which he had finished with. Attracted by a lovely colour photo on the cover of Adams Radial 30583, in good external condition, outside the engine shed at Lyme Regis, I quickly accepted it before it was snaffled by another member. Inside was an article on ex-LSWR classes. There were two more photos of the 4-4-2T, one in BR livery taking water at Axminster, the other as East Kent Railway No.5 at Shepherdswell. The caption reads; "... here we see the blue-painted 4-4-2T at Shepherdswell on 18 July 1936." As Brian Janes noted, no EKR engines were ever painted blue (*Rolvenden* had been on loan).

But it gets worse; "The EKR was a light railway that was part of the Colonel Stephens empire of such lines until his death in 1931, when *Holman Hunt* took over the reins." (Our emphasis). We know,

of course, that WH Austen, second in command at Salford Terrace, succeeded Stephens in 1931. Holman Hunt, on the other hand, was a founder member of the Pre-Raphaelite group of artists. One of his most famous paintings was *Light of the World*. Hunt died in 1910, so he wouldn't have been in a position to take over from HFS, even if he had had the skills or inclination. FG Stephens, our man's father, was also a Pre-Raphaelite, becoming Art Editor of the magazine *The Athenaeum*. Hunt was young Holly's godfather; both godson and godfather sharing the first name Holman.

The caption continues; "... the 4-4-2T was ideal for the EKR as it had a light axle loading and was relatively powerful." Brian comments: No 5 was too heavy for most of the EKR and couldn't go beyond Eastry. True she was more powerful than the other small engines and was thus useful as a reserve to pull coal trains when all else failed, which seems to have been her principal role according to the EKR mileage register.

Beware of captions! •

Ross Shimmon



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wants?**

JOHN SNELL

John Bernard Snell has died at the age of 82 years at his home in Dymchurch, adjacent to the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway, one of many that he was involved with during his long career in the history of railway preservation.

Widely known and respected for his sharp intellect, wry humour and the author of many books, he will be greatly missed by all who know and admired him.

Born in Fiji and spending his early days in New Zealand, where he experienced his first love of railways before moving to England, he attended Bryanston School and Oxford University, where he trained as a barrister.

His first experience in railway preservation was when he joined the Talylyn Railway in 1951. John was reputedly its first volunteer and this was the first fledgling line to attempt preservation following the nationalisation of British Railways in 1947. The Ealing comedy film *The Titfield Thunderbolt* was loosely modelled on the line. In LTC. Rolt's history of the line *Railway Adventure*, he refers to John Snell thus; 'John had written to me after leaving Bryanston and wanted to volunteer prior to going up to Oxford. Though fresh from school and quite unskilled, in looks, manners and sheer height, he seemed much older than his age. He was one of our keenest volunteers and proved a valuable addition to what might loosely be called, paid staff'.

Always remaining an interest in preserved railways, John subsequently worked

as Managing Director of the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway from 1972 – 1999. Inheriting a very run-down operation, he was responsible for investing much into its infrastructure, locomotives and rolling stock, turning the railway into the fine attraction that it is today.

Following his retirement from RH&DR,



John spend a short time as a Director of the Kent & East Sussex Railway before joining the Rother Valley Railway at Robertsbridge. The remaining years of his life were spent with the RVR in the role of Director of the company in 2005 and Trustee of the Rother Valley Heritage Trust in 2007. John's wealth of experience during a lifetime spent in the railway industry, has proved invaluable to the Rother Valley

Railway, which gratefully acknowledges his contribution to achieving its aims and objectives. "A wonderful man and a Rother Valley Railway Trustee whose advice and guidance was valued greatly."

Mark Yonge, RVR

THE ROTHER VALLEY RAILWAY

Robertsbridge Station, East Sussex TN32 5DG

REBUILDING THE RVR 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, or go to www.rvt.org.uk

DISPATCHES

Letters and emails to the Editor

We need a biography of HFS

Thank you for another excellent issue of *The Colonel* (113). However are we going to replace you?

Wearing my other hat (as a railway bookseller) can I make a few comments on Brian Janes's article? [*The Colonel's Booked*, p.6] I agree with Brian that, until Wild Swan's Ashover book was published, no really meaty modern style (i.e. format and quality) books had appeared on our man or his lines. Since then, thanks to that publisher and Oakwood Press, many what can be called definitive works have been published.

Wild Swan's books stand head and shoulders above all other publishers in my opinion, although Lightmoor Press are up there and hopefully may in due course publish some Colonel-related titles in addition to their *Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Light Railway Under Military Control 1940-1960* by Mike Christensen.

Oakwood Press books are excellent, and in many cases no other book on the lines/topics they cover has or will be produced. They are brave publishers in many ways, but are somewhat restricted by their traditional, small (A5) format, particularly with photographic reproduction.

I can also add to Brian's comments about possible future books relating to The Colonel's lines. I understand that what will be the definitive work on the Snailbeach is now with a publisher, who has committed to publishing it very soon. This manuscript has been around for many years (and with several publishers) but has yet to see the light of day, maybe this year?

I also understand a revised edition of the Ashover book may happen at some time. Maybe CSS member Chris Redwood might one day revise and reissue his definitive work on the WC&P? Perhaps tied in the real ale pubs near the route?

There are still major gaps, of course, and it is sad that no major biography on the Colonel has been published. A few years

ago the draft for such a book was in circulation amongst the CSS committee for comments, but this seems to have disappeared, a great shame as the author (a one time CSS member) had a willing publisher (half the battle with any book). Is anyone aware of what happened here?

This is maybe a project the CSS should be willing to put money into if an author can be found to do the research, I suspect the bones of the book already exist in the CS Museum archives and on their website.

Members may not be aware, but due to various circumstances, in particular the economic downturn, ebooks, on-line information and general changes in readership patterns, railway book print runs are a fraction of what they were 10 years ago. A typical print run now is well under 2000 and in many cases 1000-1200, as a result of this retail prices have and will continue to increase for new books. Ten years ago print runs of 5,000+ were quite common and some railway titles have sold in excess of 30,000 copies, unheard of in today's declining market.

**Nigel Bird
Tregaron.**



The above photo of the K&ESR Pickering steam railmotor accompanied the article on the Colonel's dealings with RY Pickering & Co in *Colonel 113* (page 10). Unfortunately we left out the credit which should have read: The Shephard Collection, West Sussex Record Office. Copies of the photos in that collection are held in the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum, Tenterden. Brian Janes suggests that the photo was taken in the late 1920s at Rolvenden. No photo of the vehicle in traffic has ever emerged. ●

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MEMBERS' WEEKEND

SEE YOU IN THE SE CORNER

For our Members' Weekend this year we are having a triple header. We start off on the Friday with a visit to **Robertsbridge** to view the tremendous progress made there. On Saturday we shall be based at **Shepherdswell**, starting with our AGM followed by a trip on the EKR and a classic bus tour of some of the former route of the line.

Sunday begins at **Tenterden** with a tour of the CS Museum, the C&W Dept and a tour of the Station site.

We then take the train to Bodiam with a ploughman's lunch on board. We have requested the recently outshopped, ex-SECR Birdcage carriage for the return journey. All in all, it promises to be another great weekend.

Full details appear on pp 21/22. Please make sure you return the enclosed form to the address given by **12th April**

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Deadlines for 2014/15

Copy for *The Colonel* should be submitted to the Editor by the following dates:

115: Summer 2013: 10th May

116: Autumn 2014: 10th August

117: Winter 2014: 10th November

118: Spring 2015: 10th February

These are final dates, but we much prefer earlier receipt if at all possible. •

Jackson's Jottings

“One of the purest coals found in any colliery in England”

Chris Jackson ended his latest trawl through the RAILWAY GAZETTE with a vote of confidence in Mr Burr, the Chairman of the East Kent, at its first general meeting. The meeting continued:

November 29, 1912:

East Kent Light Railways [continued]

The Chairman, in response, said that the reason why coal had been entered at Snowdown earlier than at Tilmanstone was simply the fact that at the latter colliery the coal lay deeper, and there were greater difficulties that had been met and now overcome. Tilmanstone, at all events, was the first to get into the coal measures with both shafts. At any moment now they might strike one of the thick seams at Tilmanstone. He hoped it would not occur within a fortnight, because it would mean a wasted seam unless they found it dipping and drove out to it. The seams which had been passed through at Snowdown would be found again in due course, perhaps half a mile from the shaft, by means of a straight road. Those seams were struck could not be worked because they were too near to top of the coal measures. The first seam in particular was one of the purest coals found in any colliery in England. It contained some 95 per cent. of heat producing elements. They were now only 54 feet from the “Beresford” seam, from which they were expecting very big things. He had always desired that the first coal put on the market should be as would establish the name of Kent coal as being of super excellence, and he had not the slightest doubt that when they began raising that coal, as they certainly would before Christmas, they would have a house and gas coal second to none in the Kingdom.

C) Other light railway news

December 6, 1912:

Derwent Valley Light Railway

Although the new Derwent Valley Light Railway is only partially opened for goods traffic for a distance of seven miles of line served by three stations, no less than 1,026 tons have passed in or out during 19 days' working. The line will probably be opened throughout its entire length of 16 miles, with 11 stations, in the early part of the new year.

December 6, 1912: A Light Railway for Gower Peninsula

Application is to be made to the Light Railway Commissioners for an order to incorporate a company, under the title of the Gower Peninsula Light Railway Company, for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a light railway in the peninsula. It is proposed to commence the line at Killay and extend it to Port Eynon a distance of about 13 miles. The area of the land required is about 120 acres. The starting point of the line will be a junction with the London & North Western Railway at Killay. ●

Notes for contributors

Contributions to The Colonel are very welcome. Please send them to the Editor (address on page 31). They may be in the form of a Word document, an email attachment, a CD or a typescript. Steam age authors may, of course, send them as a manuscript - but please write legibly. Please ensure that photos, either in electronic form or traditional print, are reproducible. Authors are responsible for ensuring that their material is not subject to copyright restrictions ●