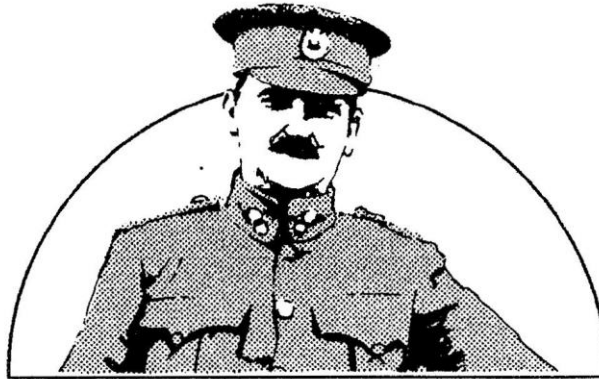


COLONEL 21



• THE COLONEL •

NUMBER 21 SUMMER 1990

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THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

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



THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ENTHUSIAST OF THE RAILWAYS OF HOLMAN F. STEPHENS

EDITORIAL

“The Colonel” comes of age

Twenty-one today! Not 21 years perhaps, but the 21st issue is something worth celebrating. Since the first issue way back in 1985 the Society has grown substantially and this journal has grown with it, in content and quality if not in dimensions. It saw a number of changes in appearance and format in the early years, but has remained constant in style since Stephen Hannington took over as editor in 1987.

Now that Stephen has passed the editorial reins to me, I have had to think seriously about whether to make changes or to leave things as they were. As you can see, I decided to make some changes! In fact, the changes are in appearance rather than content and are largely driven by technology. I have an IBM compatible computer linked to an ink-jet printer, and a fairly basic desk-top publishing software package (Timeworks DTP for those interested) so it seemed reasonable to exploit the capabilities of these to produce as “professional” a result as possible. Whether I have succeeded in this I leave for you, the readers, to judge. I am sure you will soon let me know if you don't like it!

I would like to continue with Stephen's general headings, in particular with articles of the “I was there” type with first-hand accounts of people's experience of the Colonel's lines, and with coverage of the preservation scene. I also will continue to cover modelling aspects, as a majority of members are, judging by the information on their application forms, at least occasional modellers. We have now got permission from the editors of the “Railway Magazine” and the “Tenterden Terrier” to reprint extracts from those journals, and the first fruit of this arrangement is a very interesting article from the “Terrier” entitled “Colonel Stephens - The Twilight Years” which starts in this issue.

Finally, working on this issue has shown me just how much work Stephen must have done to keep “The Colonel” going over the past years, and I am sure all Society members will wish to join me in thanking him for all the effort he has put in for our benefit.

LD

CHAIRMAN and EDITOR of “THE COLONEL”:

Leslie Darbyshire, 74 Red Rose, Binfield, Bracknell, Berks.RG12 5LD. Tel: (0344) 420791

TREASURER: Nigel Bird, Bryn Hir, Llanio Road, Llwyn-y-Groes, Tregaron, Dyfed SY25 6PY

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PUBLICITY OFFICER: Stephen Hannington, 3 Tivoli Road, West Norwood, London SE27 0ED

NEWS AND VIEWS

Double Triumph for Tenterden

A double dose of congratulations are due to the Tenterden Railway Company Ltd., operators of the preserved Kent & East Sussex Railway. Firstly, they won the award given by the Association of Railway Preservation Societies for an "outstanding contribution to railway preservation"; then their extension to Northiam was opened to passenger traffic, taking the line once again back into the "East Sussex" of its title. An account of the proceedings is given later in this issue, which in fact has a strong K&ESR bias and for which no apologies are given!

Shropshire & Montgomeryshire book "in the pipeline"

Vic Mitchell of Middleton Press informs me that he is working on a S&M book to his usual format, and would be pleased to hear from any members who have unpublished photographs of the line.

K&ESR's Eastbourne connection

Eastbourne Buses Ltd. is running a Sunday bus service from Eastbourne (of course) to the Kent & East Sussex and Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railways. Send SAE for a Timetable to the Company at Birch Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 6TD.

Anyone for a Northiam trip?

Mark Toynbee, Director of Commercial Operations and Marketing for the Tenterden Railway Company has offered to arrange a special train for members later this year or next Spring, when three 4 or 6 wheeled coaches should be in service to give the authentic flavour to the journey. Nothing has been arranged as yet so I don't have a date or cost, but I would like an idea of the likely level of interest; please let me know.

A cry for help!

There is not much material "in the pipeline" waiting for publication, and I don't think I should write everything myself (nor do I want to!) so I must ask you all for your help.

Articles are of course always very welcome - don't worry if you can't spell and your writing looks like it was done by a demented spider, as long as I can read it, I can use it. If writing an article overawes you, then just send me any snippets of news or information on the prototype (current or historical), modelling or publishing scene and I will follow up the leads.

Queries on matters relating to the Colonel's lines are also very welcome and will go into "Query Corner". I will try to find the answers, or throw the question open to members.

When in Tenterden, be sure to visit the
TENTERDEN & DISTRICT MUSEUM
Station Road, Tenterden, Kent Tel: (05806) 4310
containing the

COLONEL STEPHENS RAILWAY COLLECTION

One of the Museum's galleries is organised by the Archive & Museum Section of the Tenterden Railway Company Ltd. On display is part of the collection of relics and ephemera relating to the railways of H.F. Stephens including a re-creation of his office at 23 Salford Terrace, Tonbridge.

A photographic display tells the story of his involvement with these railways.

Admission: 50p adults, 25p pensioners and children (T.R.Co. Members free)

Open: April to October inclusive, 2 to 5 pm each day (11 am to 5 pm in August only)

1990 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Stephen Hannington reports on the Society's 3rd Annual General Meeting held at Keen House on 21st April

Despite the fact that the time of this year's AGM was omitted from the notice that appeared in the last "Colonel", there was a record turnout of 15 people. Guest of honour was Bill Willans, whose memoirs of the S&MR have delighted us all in recent issues.

As usual, a fair sample of models was brought along, including the test etch for a 7mm version of Chris Holden's WC&PR Drewry railcar of which he has plans to have ten made to see how well they sell.

Ray Arnold had a selection of his 3mm scale models from his Kinnerley layout described in the last issue, including his latest model of Ilfracombe goods "Thisbe". He also had his fascinating models of the Rattler/rail lorry combination, of which he has promised to do a write-up for a future "Colonel".

Dave Sutton of S&D Models brought his usual collection of excellent castings, including an assembled example of his 7mm scale Manning Wardle Old Class I 0-6-0ST. This was up to Dave's usual high standards and will be available in "Morous" and "Ringing Rock" versions.

Martin Brent, MRC Chairman and CSS member, brought along a selection of his 4mm scale Stephens loco. models, including an EKR Radial Tank which dwarfed his "Gazelle".

Formal affairs kicked off with Chairman Leslie Darbyshire's report (*see below, page 6 - Ed.*) in which he said interest is continuing to grow in the Great Man's works, evidenced by the many books on his railways published over the last year. "But the man himself remains an enigma", he pointed out, suggesting that there is a need for a biography.

In response, Stephen Hannington suggested that it may be possible to reprint a series of biographical articles on the Colonel by Philip Shaw which appeared in the Tenterden Railway Company's journal, the "Tenterden Terrier", some time ago. The prospect of reprinting other historical articles from the "Terrier" was also considered to be a good idea, and permission will be sought from the TRC. We already have been given permission to reprint from the "Railway Magazine".

Ivor Gotheridge pointed out that J.A. Iggulden, third in command under William Austin on the Colonel's staff, was rumoured to be the Colonel's illegitimate son, and wondered if it might be possible to trace any living relatives or to track down details of the Colonel in the Royal Engineers' records.

Treasurer Nigel Bird's written report (*see below, page 7 - Ed.*) showed that the finances of the Society continue to be healthy, with reserves growing slowly. The Chairman said that, while these reserves may not be enough to do anything useful with such as publishing, they provide a valuable security to underpin the stability of the society. Nigel suggested that no increase in subscription was necessary, and this was agreed to by the meeting.

There was some discussion on the matter of changing the Society's financial year to coincide with the AGM, on the grounds that any change in subscription could be put into immediate effect. However, since no strong case was made, the matter was dropped.

Membership Secretary Chris Holden told the meeting that membership had risen from 130 to 150 over the past year, though some subscriptions were still outstanding and may not come

in at all. Applications for membership continue in a modest but steady manner.

Retiring Editor Stephen Hannington had little to add to the statements made on the editorial page of the last couple of issues of the "Colonel", but stated that he will continue to provide illustrations for future issues. Formal votes of thanks for their work went to Leslie, Stephen and Chris in turn.

In the ensuing elections, Nigel Bird and Chris Holden were confirmed in their posts. The meeting agreed that it was in order for the Chairman to hold another post, and Leslie Darbyshire was therefore proposed, seconded and duly elected Editor of the "Colonel" uncontested. He will also retain the post of Chairman for another two years under constitutional rules.

Hugh Smith had resigned as Publicity Officer, so the post was contested by Stephen Hannington (proposed by D.Sutton) and John Scott-Morgan (proposed by L.Darbyshire). In the subsequent vote, Stephen was elected Publicity Officer and John retained his position of Committee Member without portfolio.

Under Any Other Business, David Kevan suggested that there should be a better liaison between the Society and the Association of Railway Librarians, an informal association of people with access to specialist railway information sources. David, a member of ARL, was unable to act on behalf of the Society because of existing commitments, so Stephen Hannington volunteered to take the job on. (The ARL had an AGM on May 2nd, but Stephen was unable to attend)

A proposal was put and agreed that, in the interest of better communications, the home phone numbers of Society Officers should be published regularly in the "Colonel", and this was agreed by those Officers present.

(not done in this issue to allow time for those Officers not present to agree or otherwise - Ed.)

It was also proposed that lists of members with specific areas of interest in the Colonel's activities should also be published, along with addresses and telephone numbers, so that like-minded people could get in touch with one another. The meeting felt, however, that perhaps not everyone would agree to their personal details being published. One possible way round this would be to have a central contact to whom queries could be addressed and who could pass on such details in confidence. Chris Holden, as holder of details of all members, agreed to undertake this role.

A parallel strategy was adopted, whereby this year's renewal forms will be extended for members to enter updated details of their specific interests and activities, and to grant (or not grant) permission for such details to be published in the "Colonel".

Along similar lines, Stephen Hannington agreed to attempt to revive the company stewards idea to provide common contacts for specific companies. There had been volunteers, following Richard Barton's recent "Colonel" article, for two lines so far. Stephen agreed to contact all those who originally volunteered to act as stewards to see if they wished to continue and to improve the organisation of the scheme.

Not for the first time, the matter of a Society badge was aired and various possibilities - subject to our limited budget - were discussed. Dave Sutton agreed to look into costings for a possible cast badge. Provisional estimates suggested a price of around £1.50 each.

Finally, the prospect of a Colonel Stephens section at the forthcoming Watford model railway exhibition in October has been postponed due to mysterious "local politics".

(but the Bracknell exhibition on October 27th/28th will have a strong Light Railway presence - Ed.)

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Another year has passed, and the interest in the works of Colonel Stephens has again been maintained and indeed been increased. Several notable books have been published which have served to enlarge our knowledge of his activities, but the man himself still remains something of an enigma. The articles in our own "Colonel" have, I hope, contributed a little towards our understanding of Stephens as a person.

The Society has continued to grow in line with this interest, and I think that this shows that the decision of the Society to continue as a correspondence society linked by "The Colonel" was the correct one.

I have myself publicised the Society at many exhibitions around the country, and also at a number of lectures that I have given to various organisations. Although the number of new members obtained per function is probably quite small, in total over the year they add up to a reasonable amount; if nothing else, this sort of activity keeps the Society in the public eye.

Steamlines

If we had been in the steam business 80 years ago, the Colonel would have been a good customer. He paid £775 for "Hesperus" second-hand. You could have our 10mm scale "Austerity" saddle tank for example: "Osmotor" drive, radio controlled, gas fired, power enough to pull forty wagons on level track and with all the panache of the prototype, for only £705, brand new and ex-stock!

STEAMLINES

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Maesbury Road
Oswestry, Salop SY10 8HA

I did, as mentioned in my report last year, have an invitation to attend the HMRS 40th Anniversary Exhibition in Norwich. Unfortunately the event was not as well attended as I had hoped, there not being a great number of visitors apart from HMRS members themselves, so we did not get as much publicity as I would have liked. However there was a lot of interest from those who did attend, and a few new members should result.

As was mentioned in a recent "Colonel" editorial, our Editor Stephen Hamington wishes to relinquish his post and not stand for re-election this year. Hugh Smith has made the same decision in respect of his position of Publicity Officer, so we have a couple of Committee vacancies to fill this time. I hope we will have plenty of volunteers!

Finally I must thank everyone for their continued support to the Society over the past successful year, and look forward with confidence to another successful one ahead.

Leslie Darbyshire, Chairman

MP

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TREASURER'S REPORT 1989/90

The statement below of the Society's funds follows last year's format and I am pleased to say shows a stable position with some £300 cash reserves, an increase of £84 on last year's end of year balance.

May I record my thanks, on behalf of the Society, to Alan Garner for his continued economical printing of "The Colonel", and to

the Committee who rarely claim expenses for postage/stationery; this all helps to keep the Society "in the black".

I would suggest that we can afford to keep the subscription level at £4 for the coming year, but I would urge all members to help us recruit new members to ensure the Society's continued growth and stability.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT TO 30.3.90

Balance Brought Forward	£308.02
Subscriptions Received	£418.00
	£726.02
Less	
Stationery & Postage	£ 78.38
Printing & Mailing of "The Colonel"	£240.31
Room Hire	£ 24.00
	£342.69
Balance as Bank Statement of 30.3.90	£383.33
Unpresented cheque (printing & mailing)	£ 82.57
Net Cash Funds	£300.76

Certified N.C.Bird, Treasurer

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Brass Castings for Coaches (4mm)

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Vacuum Cylinders 2 for £1.20

Round torpedo vents 23 for £1.60

P & P £1.00 per 7mm kit, 50p per 4mm order

COLONEL STEPHENS - THE TWILIGHT YEARS

Philip Shaw's account of the declining years of Colonel Stephens is reprinted from "The Tenterden Terrier" by kind permission of the author and editor.

Colonel Stephens died at the Lord Warden hotel, Dover, on Friday 23rd October 1931, in his 63rd year. A tragic figure in his declining years, Stephens had suffered a debilitating illness which paralysed the right side of his body and deprived him of the power of speech. The Lord Warden, a grand, Mid-Victorian establishment situated adjacent to the Marine Station and catering mainly for boat train traffic, had been his principal residence throughout the 1920s and he travelled each day by train to Tonbridge, from which it was but a stone's throw to his offices at Salford Terrace.

Stephens was well known to the train crews, as he would frequently tip the driver half a crown, particularly if he had to pass directly by the engine cab for the station exit. Certainly, he would have had no lack of opportunity for implementing these little gestures of generosity. According to Bradshaw, an early morning journey from Dover to Tonbridge in 1926 would have involved catching the 7.01 a.m. train from the Marine Station, changing at Ashford with a wait of 41 minutes, arriving at 9.15 a.m.

Ernie Rogers, now living in retirement at Dover, was employed at the Lord Warden between 1927 and 1934, initially as a page boy and latterly as hall porter; he remembers Stephens quite clearly as the occupant of room 11 on the first floor and one of only two permanent residents at the hotel: "The Colonel was a distinctive figure, punctilious in dress and usually attired in dark clothes, including an overcoat or Burberry, and he always carried an umbrella. He was quiet and courteous with the staff, but mingled little with the other guests

and usually dined alone, returning to the hotel lounge afterwards for whisky, which he drank in large quantities without any noticeable effect, and a cigar."

Stephens may have first become acquainted with the Lord Warden at the time of the construction of the East Kent Railway at Shepherdswell nearby, but it was not until some years later that he took up permanent residence there. In the early years of the century he had rented rooms at a house in Station Road, Robertsbridge, and also lived part of the time at Ashby House, Priory Road, Tonbridge, premises which he owned and kept going even when he was at the Lord Warden, presided over by his housekeeper, Miss Flo. Standen. The move to Dover may have taken place in 1923 (surviving correspondence shows him to have been there in 1926) possibly for the reason that he could be close at hand to his Territorial Army activities, the Cinque Ports (Fortress) Company, Royal Engineers, of which he was Commanding Officer and which he regarded as his only hobby. Stephens' military activities had been spasmodic; he spent a certain amount of time at Pier Road, Gillingham, as a recruiting officer between 1914 and 1916, but when the War office told him to devote all of his time to Army matters or resign, he did the latter! A staff dinner for the Salford Terrace employees was held at the Criterion Restaurant on 4th February 1916 to commemorate his return to railway work.

Stephens was transferred to the Territorial Force reserve in 1921 and appointed Commanding Officer to the Sussex (Fortress) company, Royal Engineers, at Seaford in 1922. This unit

was disbanded in 1923 and transferred to Dover as the Cinque Ports (Fortress) Company.

Former R.S.M. Jacomb, permanent staff instructor throughout this period, was interviewed by the writer in 1976. He recalled Stephens as an independent old-style officer and a gentleman; a very eccentric figure who sometimes refused to go on parade and at Seaford watched the activities through field glasses from his hotel bedroom. He was generous with his men, frequently buying them drinks and on one occasion a boat, so that they could row around Dover harbour. On another occasion, he decided to form a string, pipe and brass band and bought all the instruments personally. Being somewhat erratic by nature, Stephens' arrival would often be preceded by a telegram at the last minute, asking to be picked up at the station, and it had been known for him to cancel weekend camp at a moment's notice and pay personally for all the provisions wasted.

The heyday of Stephens' light railway empire was immediately after the Great War and by the end of the 1920s the creative days were over. The last two lines that he engineered were the North Devon & Cornwall Junction

Light Railway and the Ashover, both of which were opened in 1925. Several others were planned at around this time but not built, including the Newport & Four Ashes, Worcester & Broom, Southern Heights and various extensions to the East Kent. Apart from this, it was merely a case of administering the existing railways including the tiresome Festiniog and its truculent Traffic Manager, Robert Evans, with whom there was a voluminous exchange of correspondence (but more one way) between 1925 and 1930. Indeed, it is perusal of the Festiniog archives, which have miraculously survived virtually intact, that one can pin-point almost exactly the onset of Stephens' illness. The Great Man always insisted on signing all letters emanating from the office personally, but after 24th January 1930 this became at first spasmodic and then stopped altogether. Nevertheless, all correspondence continued to go out under his name, although written by his clerks, right up until the end. Inevitably, the style of the writing changed and by the early Spring of 1930 the urgency and the humour of the prose, so characteristic of the man, had gone forever.

To be continued.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WC&PR Nameplates

I read Hugh Smith's review of "WC&PR-a Pictorial Record" in "The Colonel" No.20 after visiting the Clevedon model railway exhibition where the WC&PR was well represented. These two events caused me to re-study the book and I have come up with a possible solution to an apparent contradiction of details about the nameplates of the 2-4-0T loco "Clevedon".

I believe that the reports mentioned in the book of the nameplates going for salvage during the 1914-18 war could well be correct, because if one studies photos of the loco, in pre-1914 views the nameplate scales about 3ft 6in by 7in whereas in those taken after 1926 the plate is

only 2ft by 4in. I suggest that replacement nameplates were cast and fitted some time after the war and it is one of these plates which is preserved.

Any comments from members knowledgeable on the WC&PR? And could anyone get the dimensions of the nameplate now with the Bristol Railway Circle to confirm my estimated dimensions?

Ron Mann, Newbury

Editor's Comment:

The pre-1914 nameplates were transferred from the Furness 2-2-2T of the same name, and were of brass. The later ones appear to be cast iron. It is an early brass one that is preserved.

NORTHIAM MAKES A COMEBACK

Stephen Hannington takes a trip on the newly-opened Northiam extension of the Kent & East Sussex Railway

Northiam station on the Kent & East Sussex was officially re-opened to fare-paying traffic by the Duke of Gloucester on June 4th. He arrived by helicopter on a brilliant summer's day to be received by a trainload of special guests. Unofficial onlookers included the lads of Huxford's coal yard, in what was once the goods yard.

After concluding his speech with "good luck to all who steam in her", the Duke joined the crew of Terrier No.10 "Sutton" on the footplate. The train was then driven through a white ribbon stretched across the newly-laid track between the two newly-built platforms, to loud applause.

Northiam was bright as a new pin, with red, white and blue bunting stretched between freshly-painted platform lamp-posts. There was a new toilet block in the exact style of, and almost the same size as, the original station building. Even the pair of staff bungalows at the southern edge of the site looked more presentable than they must have done for decades.

The special train was hauled by "Sutton" and "P" class No.1556, ex "Pride of Sussex" from Hodson's Mill at Robertsbridge (and one of the "P" class hired by the K&ESR from the Southern in the thirties - Ed.) Two Maunsells - the standard and comfort of which puts modern stock to shame - Pullman "Barbara" and a Mk.1 comprised the train. Passengers included Lord Deedes, president of the Tenterden Railway Company, several mayors and a gaggle of journalists from the railway press.

Regular services for the more regular type of passenger had resumed three weeks earlier, on Saturday 19th May. That weekend, three trains were running the length of the line, a journey

that takes about half an hour. I travelled on the following Sunday for my first glimpse of the new destination.

It was exciting to enter the station, recognising the occasion as an historic triumph, but not much fun to actually be there as a student of history. All history bar the station building and the staff bungalows had been bulldozed aside when the station was rebuilt.

I hunted around trying desperately to find something that might interest fellow Stephenites, but there was nothing. The best place to be was the cosy little waiting room, which survives fundamentally unaltered, and from which the new works were out of sight. Only the crowds seemed incongruous there. I quote a little rhyme, scribbled on a piece of cardboard and propped alongside the stove:

"In 1954
This line was closed
It didn't pay
No more trains to run this way.
But now in 1990
With a work force strong and mighty
It's full steam ahead
Beware of the train
Northiam station lives again."

One feels a little mean to criticise the efforts of the volunteers that Lord Deedes, at the official opening, rightly described as "tenacious". They gave their time in a labour of love to make the line, if not the K&ESR, live again. This is admirable. But in doing so they destroyed, of necessity I admit, the railway I fell in love with twenty years ago. That made the opening at Northiam station, for me, an anti-climax.

In such a light, we enthusiasts may breathe a

sigh of relief to learn that Bodiam, the one remaining station to be reclaimed, will be treated more kindly. Though still at an early stage, the plans are to keep Bodiam as intact as possible and preserve it as a museum station, down to the original Rother Valley Railway track in the yard and original style point levers and signals.

That, coupled with the recent, extremely successful running of period trains with not a Mk.1 in sight, bodes well for the future. Granted that the undiscerning general public are the bread and butter of the revived railway, it seems only appropriate that at last the unique historical character of the line will be recognised.

Comment from Tenterden

In view of the mildly critical tone of Stephen's article, we invited the Tenterden Railway Company to comment, and received the following response from Philip Shaw, Editor of "The Tenterden Terrier":

I think that Stephen may not be aware of how little we actually inherited of the original equipment. Apart from the station, the two bungalows and part of the platform retaining wall, there really was nothing at all. True, the gents urinal has been destroyed, but this was most insanitary and unsuitable for use by the large numbers of people we now expect to be using the station. *(Having used the facilities in days gone by, I can vouch for the truth of this! - Ed.)* The print shop on the platform is very much in the Stephens tradition, although not authentic.

Most of the weeds and general "jungle" which Stephen may recall from his earlier visits do

John Miller, keeper of the archives of the TRC, has special responsibility for the Bodiam project. In the Winter 1989 issue of the "Tenterden Terrier", the TRC's journal, he has written an interesting article on what this involves. Hopefully, we may be able to reproduce this in "The Colonel". In it he concludes:

"Perhaps one day in the not too distant future a "Terrier" engine with two 1930s (or older) carriages will pull into Bodiam station and its passengers will really understand what preservation is all about. They may even realise the railway is of some historical importance."

About time too, I'd say.

not date from the Stephens era but crept up in the post 1961 period. The new platform canopy lights do not fit the period and were installed due to the non-availability of suitable alternatives. They will be replaced as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

With regard to Bodiam, it is certainly a possibility that this section of line will be treated as a "branch" and that passengers will be required to change at Northiam for an authentic run in a two coach train with vintage stock. We have not formulated precise plans for this, but there is a strong feeling that the traditions of the original line should be preserved on this section.

2540	K. & E. S. R.	K. & E. S. R.	052
	THIRD CLASS	THIRD CLASS	
	DAY RETURN	DAY RETURN	
	Northiam to TENTERDEN TOWN	Tenterden Town to NORTHIAM	
	Not transferable. Issued subject to conditions. Valid day	Not transferable. Issued subject to conditions. Valid day of issue	

I WAS THERE

Chairman Leslie Darbyshire recalls a visit to the K&ESR 35 years ago, and asks "Was this the last passenger train to High Halden Road?"

My love affair with the Kent and East Sussex Railway (my wife would probably call it an obsession) began long, long ago. My first glimpse of the line was forty years ago when, as a young lad of thirteen living in Wimbledon, I went with a friend on a train-spotting trip to London Bridge station. "But the K&ESR never went to London Bridge", I hear you say. Quite true, but read on and all will be revealed!

In those far-off days, a trip by 13-year-olds to any part of London, even the seedier parts where loco sheds were generally to be found, was thought of as a perfectly safe activity and not one that would give parents apoplexy. However, venturing further afield without prior sanction was frowned upon. When we spied a poster advertising an excursion to Dover for nine shillings return (45p), and which being under fourteen would only cost us four and sixpence, there was a battle between temptation and fear of retribution! Of course, temptation won (it usually does) and we found ourselves on the next train to Dover. This was hauled by a "King Arthur" and if my memory serves me right stopped at Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and then "all stations". One of these stations was Headcorn, and there, over in a bay behind the up platform, was an "O1" with a single bogie coach. That was my first, and I regret to say only, sight of the K&ESR as an operating passenger line.

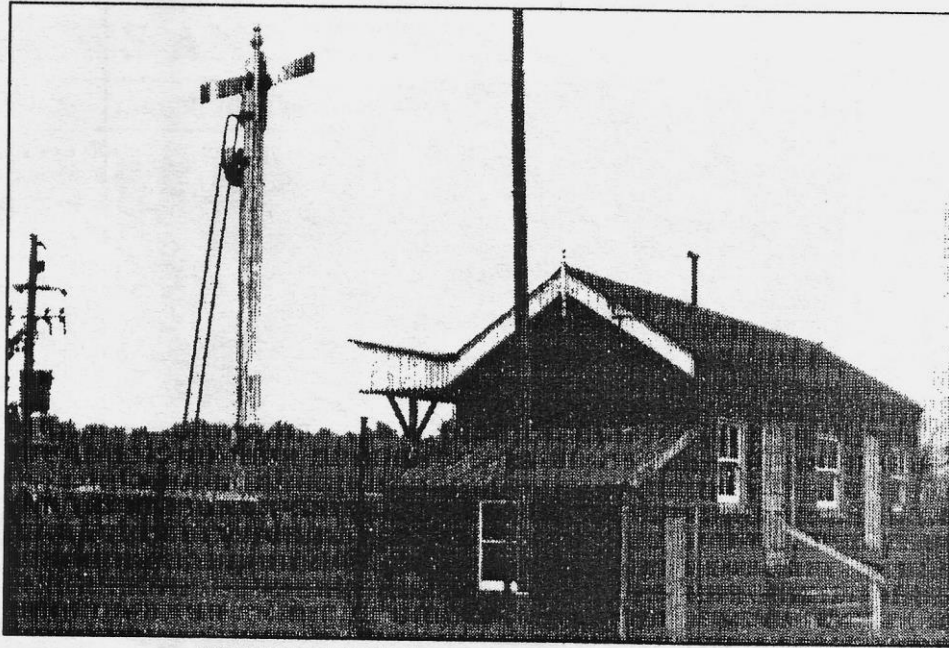
It was not until 1954 that I ventured that way again, this time on a motor-bike in the company of my father. We were riding along the A262 when we happened upon a lovely little wooden station, seemingly miles from anywhere. On its platform was a curious signal with two arms on opposite sides of the post, the like of which I had never seen before. There were two sidings but no passing loop, and a single line stretched away across the fields in both directions.

The line was of course the Kent and East Sussex, and the station High Halden Road, which indeed was a couple of miles from the village of High Halden and was actually in the hamlet with the delightful name of Arcadia. The line had closed some six months earlier but the station, although a little overgrown, was intact and looking as if a train was expected at any moment. I immediately thought that it would make a wonderful modelling subject (I was already a modeller but tiring of main-line subjects) so we took a few photos and I made some sketches with a view to the future. We went on our journey, but I couldn't get the sight of that station out of my mind. I was well and truly hooked!

A few weeks later, I was taking photographs on Clapham Junction station when I met another chap engaged on similar activities and in conversation mentioned my visit to High Halden Road. To my surprise, not only was he also very interested in the K&ESR as a modelling subject but (and this made me green with envy) he had travelled on the last train the previous January. Tony Cowell and I became firm friends and went on many trips together, but none to compare with the one I am about to describe.

It was during the Christmas holiday that we realised that it was a year since the closure of the K&ESR and decided to make an pilgrimage, not to Canterbury but to Tenterden. Because of work we couldn't make the exact anniversary but had to make do with the nearest Saturday which was a couple of days early. So it was that on 1st January 1955 we set off on our trip.

In those days there were very cheap fares available in the early morning if your journey was less than fifty miles and you arrived at



HIGH HALDEN ROAD STATION IN SEPTEMBER 1954

(L. Darbyshire)

your destination before 8 am. This of course meant a very early start and after a walk of about a mile to Wimbledon station we caught one of the all-night Kingston Roundabout services to Waterloo. A quick trot over to Waterloo East and another all-night service took us to London Bridge. From there we booked our Workman's Return tickets to Headcorn at the princely price of three shillings and ninepence (under 19p for a 90 mile round trip - those were the days!), and climbed aboard the legendary 3.40am parcels and newspaper train which carried passengers almost as an afterthought. We were almost alone on the train as it moved out into the night.

The journey was uneventful (I can't remember much about it but I think we had to change at Tonbridge) and eventually we arrived at our destination at something like 6 o'clock. It was of course still very dark, and a thick mist hung over the fields behind the station. It was also

bitterly cold! Although there was a Headcorn-Tenterden bus service run by Maidstone and District, there was nothing at that time of the morning so we set off to walk. Once the train had gone on its way the station went back to sleep and looked deserted as we crossed the foot-bridge to the up platform and through the gate to the K&ESR bay. The main-line signal box was manned, so we cautiously made our way past the back of it and on to the K&ESR metals stretching off into the darkness. The line turned to the right away from the main line and there, on the left on a short length of track, stood a pump trolley.

Now Tenterden is a good few miles from Headcorn and we both preferred wheels to walking, especially in what seemed like the middle of the night, so we decided to "borrow" the trolley. I had better gloss over the methods we used to remove it from its parking place to which it was secured by a large



THE LAST PASSENGER TRAIN TO HIGH HALDEN ROAD!
1ST JANUARY 1955

(L. Darbyshire)

padlock and chain. Sufficient to say that it took us a very long time to release it, and we couldn't make too much noise as we were not very far from the signal box; luckily the mist tended to deaden any sounds. Anyway, we eventually released it and lifted it onto the K&ESR "main line". Piling our belongings on board, we set off down the line. By this time it was just beginning to get light but we were quickly away round the bend and out of sight of the station. We were on the first "passenger train" to use the line since it closed a year before!

There were few people around so early in the morning, but we startled an old lady who was feeding her hens at the bottom of her garden. We wished her "Happy New Year" (it was 1st January, remember!) and went on our way. On level track a pump trolley with a crew of two is

not too difficult to drive, but on gradients it is another matter. The line was fairly flat to start with, but once we had passed Frittenden Road it became decidedly hilly. The K&ESR ruling gradient was 1 in 50, and pumping a trolley up that is hard work; even worse was going downhill, where the "brakes", a wooden shoe pressed against the wheels on one side by treading on a foot pedal, were completely ineffective. At one point on a steeply falling gradient we crossed a road (no gates of course) and had no means of stopping, so we prayed hard and kept going. In fact there was a car coming, fortunately a little way off and travelling fairly slowly, and I shall never forget the driver's look of sheer amazement at the sight of a trolley crossing in front of him. We must have looked quite a sight with the two of us pumping away like mad- it was really the trolley that was pumping us!

We trundled through a deserted Biddenden station and crossed the A274 with rather more caution - it was flat on that stretch so the trolley was more manageable. We passed Biddenden village away on our right and saw a few more people at the next road crossing. Again we bid them "Happy New Year" and left them staring at us open-mouthed.

Eventually we arrived at High Halden Road and stopped to look around, with the trolley on the running line alongside the platform. After a short while a man appeared and asked us where

we had come from. "Now we're for it" we thought, and hesitatingly replied "From Headcorn". "That's alright", he said. "Just put it away in the siding when you've finished with it". That is exactly what we did, thinking that we had better quit while our luck held, and so ended our journey on the "last passenger train to High Halden Road". It was fitting that it should have ended there, in Arcadia.

We walked the rest of the way to Tenterden and on to Rolvenden - but that's another story!

BOOK REVIEWS

LSWR LOCOMOTIVES - THE EARLY ENGINES AND THE BEATTIE CLASSES by D.L.Bradley. Published by Wild Swan. 272 pages, hardback. Price £17.95. ISBN 0 906867 81 9.

This book is included on the strength of its coverage of locomotives with Colonel Stephens connections. The coverage is fairly extensive and amounts to 24 pages covering the "Ilfracombe Goods" and "330 Class" (or "Saddlebacks"). Of the eight "Ilfracombes" built, all but two ended up on the Colonel's lines, while two "Saddlebacks" did likewise with a third on loan for a short spell.

The book is fully up to the standard to be expected from this publisher, being superbly produced and very well illustrated. The two classes in question are covered by photographs taken in LSWR days as well as some in the Colonel's service, and including copies of works drawings. "Ilfracombe Goods" No.394 which went to the East Kent is particularly well covered, with five illustrations including a couple taken at Waterloo of all places.

The text relating to the time spent by the locomotives on the Colonel's lines contains some information new to your reviewer, but conversely some known details are omitted. For example, the repainting of "Hesperus" before

delivery to the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire is mentioned, but not the fact that this painting was in LSWR colours. One feels that more detail could have been included had the publisher made contact with this Society, though perhaps the untimely death of the author (a great loss to railway historians) prevented this.

The contents of the remainder of the book, although not directly relevant to Colonel Stephens, are of exceptional interest to all students of the early railway scene in general and of the LSWR in particular. There are some superb pictures dating from the 1850s and 1860s, and drawings of some of the earliest locomotives on the line.

The book is very good value for money when compared with some other offerings on the market, and is a must for all LSWR and Southern enthusiasts. Colonel Stephens specialists may perhaps find the relevant content too brief to warrant the expense.

LD

QUERY CORNER

m.v. "Lily"

Doug Ware is researching "Lily", Col. Stephens' only essay into ship ownership, for the W.C.&P.R.

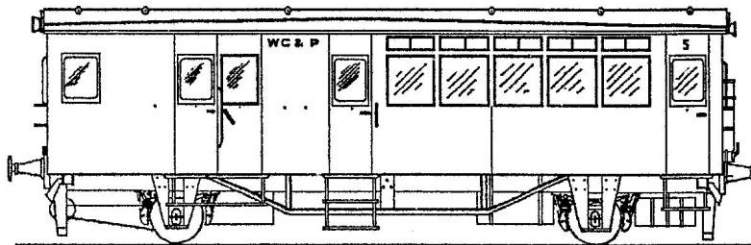
A fairly complete history of the vessel is emerging but as yet the boat itself is a bit "shadowy". Other than its capacity nothing at the moment has been discovered. What is sought, if anyone can help, are pictures, drawings, dimensions, rig or just a description. Any information please to D.A.Ware, c/o the Editor in the first instance.

Out-of pocket expenses be reimbursed.

Col. Stephens' "Round Huts"

Your Editor wishes to make a model of one of the round huts which were to be found at various locations on the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire and East Kent Railways. However, none of the available photos shows the entrance door at all clearly, nor whether there were any windows. Since the S&M huts were used for camping, surely there would be some means of letting daylight in. Has anyone got a clearer photo showing the doorway or windows, if any? Any information please to the Editor.

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