

# COLONEL 13



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NUMBER 13 SUMMER 1988

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**THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY**

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



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

## EDITORIAL

It is with some embarrassment that I must apologise for the late arrival of this, the first Colonel to be produced under my newly elected editorship (see page 8). I feel slightly (but only slightly) justified in that the delay was due to other Society commitments: the attendance of me, my train set and a Society stand at the Mid Suffolk Model Railway Circle's show at Newmarket. Preparing for this event took up all the time that otherwise I would have committed to putting this journal together. I hope I have not caused too much distress or gnashing of teeth.

Gnashing of teeth for other reasons has been reported to me by treasurer Nigel Bird, who wrote of "a couple of members" who said they "will not renew if the emphasis (over-emphasis?) on modelling continues" in The Colonel.

This set me reaching for my calculator to find that, on a page for page basis, some 22% of the Colonels produced under my charge was devoted to modelling topics, including news items. A far greater proportion of the membership declared an active interest in modelling the Colonel's railways on their application forms, and the presence of my own and other Stephens-inspired models at the above show added considerably to visitor interest in the Great Man and our fan club.

In the light of this, and of the constitution now formally adopted by the Society (clause 3 in particular), it seems to me that if I am guilty of anything, it is *underemphasis* on modelling. And I might add that this is due mostly to members being more willing to send me historical items than to write up their modelling projects - hence no modelling section at all in this issue.

That's my view. How do YOU feel? Is 22% an "over-emphasis" on modelling?

PS: I now have a new address (see below)

SH

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##### News

### ALL THE COLONEL'S MEN ELECTED

At the Society's first Annual General Meeting in April, a constitution was adopted and a committee of six members was elected. Treasurer Nigel Bird, membership secretary Chris Holden and editor Stephen Hannington retained their posts; and to them were added Les Darbyshire as chairman, Hugh Smith as publicity officer, and John Scott Morgan without portfolio.

Turnout was sparse, with a mere thirteen members in attendance. An increase in membership to 114 was reported by Chris, and a balance statement of Society funds of £320.80 was given by wire by Nigel Bird, who was unable to attend. Full details of the Meeting's decisions are given on pages 8 and 9.

### Indefinite holdup for "Arcadia"

John Scott Morgan's long-awaited "Railways of Arcadia" book on the Great Man's railways is now on ice. Publisher John Walters admitted he is "totally unable to forecast when it will be published." Finance for the book was delayed by Sun Alliance taking four months to provide insurance cover for the funding. By then, Walters had missed marketing deadlines and had not made the all-important promotional listing. He has now refunded all advance orders because he "didn't want to make uncommercial decisions because of people waiting for copies." The book was originally due out last Christmas.

John and Les Darbyshire, who has provided drawings and photographs for the tome, are now reconsidering their position, including the possibility of finding an alternative publisher.

### EKRA rents Shepherdswell

The East Kent Railway Association, dedicated to preserving the remaining Shepherdswell to Tilmanstone section, has secured a two year lease from BR on the exEKR Shepherdswell station site. It has also been granted planning permission to erect a replica station building. It now needs to raise money for the building.

The Association plans use the station as a base to establish itself and to build up membership. Ultimately, it wants to buy the site and track to Tilmanstone - aims with which BR is sympathetic. EKRA contact for volunteers, donations or membership is Peter Trollope on 0304 362932.

### Suffolk show raises £200

The Continental and British Finescale Exhibition, held by the Mid Suffolk Model Railway Circle and the SNCF Society at Newmarket on 18 June, raised roughly £200 in aid of the West Suffolk Scanner Appeal and the St Felix Home and School Association.

In attendance were Les Darbyshire's Maidstone Road and Stephen Hannington's Rye Town representations of the K&ESR in EM gauge; and member Ian Hammond's Potts End depiction of the S&MR in P4. A Society stand helped raise a little money for the Society from back number, photo and second-hand sales, as well as shifting a few membership application forms. If anyone else would like a Society presence at an exhibition, contact the editor.

News#####

#### CUT-PRICE TRAVEL ON THE K&ESR

Scoop of the season for OSS members is a 30% discount on tickets for the preserved Kent & East Sussex. All that is required is for members to show their Society membership cards at the booking office. This facility was promised to Andrew Emery many moons ago, but was delayed due to lack of cards. You've read about it: now travel on it!

#### Progress towards Northiam...

Work on the Tenterden Railway Company's extension to Northiam is pending a decision on a grant application to the English Tourist Board. A decision is expected by mid-July. The company has raised £135,000 towards the work from a Bearer Bonds issue, though £40,000 worth remain to be sold. Planning permission has been granted to rebuild Northiam's second platform and extend both to take five coaches, and also to provide toilet facilities and parking space.

"We don't want to have to cut back on existing commitments to pay for the extension," said Mark Toynbee, commercial operations and marketing manager at TRC. "It must be self-financing."

If you have a few bob to spare, ring 05806 5700 during office hours to buy Bearer Bonds.

#### Shrewsbury yard crane saved

Member Derek Smith, after years of trying, has finally managed to buy the crane from the yard of the former S&M Abbey station at Shrewsbury for a mere £60. It is one of the few surviving relics of the old Potts. Now he has to dismantle it and transport it to a new site. Mike Wright, saviour of Gazelle's trailer, has been alerted and is on hand to help. More news when it comes in.

Derek also has modern colour photos available of what is left of the S&M, including the station agent's bungalow at Ford. He can supply 4x6in prints for 50p each, including post and packing. More details from him at 30 Upper Road, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury SY3 9JQ.

#### Finch's K&ESR book reprints

As promised in the last Colonel, photocopied reprints of "The Rother Valley Railway: later the Kent & East Sussex Railway" by M. Lawson Finch are now available from the editor for £3 each, including postage. Like Tonks' Edge Hill account, this 80-page volume is a delight, illuminated by the author's love of the subject. Also, unlike more recent accounts, it was written at a time (1949) when the line's classic days were within the author's own experience. This lends some of its sentiments a certain poignancy, for example: "If the line now nationalised is ever doubled (a rumour in circulation at the time) it will be interesting to see the service thus facilitated."

Included are such wonderful insights as a local paper report of the RVR's opening day in 1900. A must and a treasure!

**Letters#####**

**Defunct organisations**

"I would like to add some comments concerning the item in the Spring 1988 issue of The Colonel entitled "Romney and K&ESR Societies merge". The Kent & East Sussex Railway Association (K&ESRA) was the original club encompassing the membership of the group of people who supported the reopening of the Kent & East Sussex Railway. I was treasurer of the Association at the time, and also a trustee of the Rother Valley Railway Trust, an organisation which held certain funds on behalf of the members, with the intention of utilising these funds to purchase the railway.

"In May 1971, a general meeting of the members of the K&ESRA was called and a resolution was approved to wind up the Association and transfer the assets and liabilities to a new limited company, the Tenterden Railway Company Ltd, which would acquire and operate the K&ESR. Former life members of the Association were offered ten years subscription to the TRC as a gesture of good will, without further payment.

"At about the same time, written authority was obtained from each contributor to the Rother Valley Railway Trust to either transfer his or her money to the TRC or to receive a refund in full.

"When all these matters were concluded, both of these organisations were formally wound up under my supervision."

*Philip Shaw, Tenterden*

**EKR loco model for sale**

"Some years ago I made a model of the East Kent Railway terminus at Wingham (Canterbury Road) together with some items of rolling stock. All but one of these is now in the care of the K&ESR museum at Tenterden.

"I am now offering the engine for sale. The model is of EKR number 4, the Kerr Stuart 0-6-0T. It is to 4mm scale EM gauge and is complete and painted in EKR colours. If any members are interested, I would gladly supply details.

"The model will not for the time being be advertised on the open market as I would like to give those interested in the Colonel's railways first refusal."

*Peter Towsett, 21 Farriers Way, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5BY*

**Rother Valley's knuckles rapped**

"Whilst looking through the Railway Committee files at Lewes Public Records Office, I came across the following concerning the Rother Valley Railway, and thought it might be of interest (the Victorian art of long sentences!):

*"The County Surveyor reported that the RVLR allowed trucks to stand across the road on the level crossing, near Robertsbridge station, for the purpose of unloading or loading milk churns and, letters from Mr Mannington on the subject also having been read, the Clerk was instructed to request the company to discontinue the practice and was authorised, in default of*

##### Letters

their so doing, to take proceedings against them and to retain a solicitor in the matter if found necessary."

"I assume that the RVLR complied, though there were also protests from a number of residents concerning several SER level crossings in the area."

*Richard Barton, Gloucestershire*

Diesel freight at Hawkhurst

"One or two histories of the Hawkhurst branch refer to the fact that the freight trains were diesel hauled in the mid-to-late 1950s, but then reverted to steam haulage.

"The Paddock Wood shunter is referred to as working the freights, but no indication is given as whether it was an O4 or O8 class (I find the modern terms of reference so much easier since they completely describe the locomotive involved). Possibly one or two of your readers might be able to help me on the matter? Also, does anyone know of any photographs of the diesels involved?"

*S.W.Branchett, 21 Jubilee Drive, Bredon, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire GL20 7QJ*

Darbyshire makes history

"I was very interested in Hugh Smith's article on the PRO (Colonel 12), and can add a little more information as far as the K&ESR is concerned. There are several other files with content of value to students of that line, in particular some in the Ministry of Transport series MT6. Of these, MT6 2254/1 and MT6 2398/2 are of special interest and well worth looking up, and there are many more besides.

"Another file is to be found in RAIL 1057/2711, and in this one I had the shock of my life by finding that it contained some of my own drawings! They were rather poor copies, and not a complete set, so maybe I should send them a new set!"

*Les Darbyshire, Bracknell*

Bibliographies and PO wagons

"I fully imagine that I am wasting my time, but here goes. Today (7 May) I received three items in the post as follows:

- 1) 'Back Track' volume 2, number 2: six page article on the S&M by G.F.Bannister.
- 2) 'British Railway Journal' number 20: 13-page article on the EKR by R.Carpenter.
- 3) A letter from Peco saying that nearly all the sides and ends for the lamented Wonderful Wagons can still be purchased for 55p a set for one wagon. Among these is RW 54A "coal, 7-plank Anderson & Co, brown". This is a weathered type printing and, as mentioned in Colonel 12, this wagon shows up in a K&ESR photograph and might be of interest to someone."

*M.Lawson Finch, East Sussex*

#####The Real Thing

**MYSTERY, MAGIC AND THE WC&PR**  
Doug Ware reveals all about the milk trailer

FOR many years, one mystery of the WC&PR has been the "Milk Train", which, in spite of being well documented, is still somewhat shadowy. Christopher Redwood's book gives the date and dimensions of the trailer which formed the "milk" part of the train up to 1925 (page 123) and includes a photo of this trailer and the small railcar together as the milk train on page 116. One other picture is in Maggs' booklet (middle page) and shows this trailer with the Muir Hill "garden shed".

The mystery of it is that:

A) Redwood states that it had hinged doors, yet I have seen three photos - Redwood, Maggs and one other (more of that in a moment) - in which there is no sign of any doors.

B) It is obviously an inside framed wagon, but nowhere is there any indication of the form of this underframing.

Unfortunately, I have no answer to (A) and would suggest that the doors were removed in service, but (B) can now be made clear. We come to the third photo and the magic!

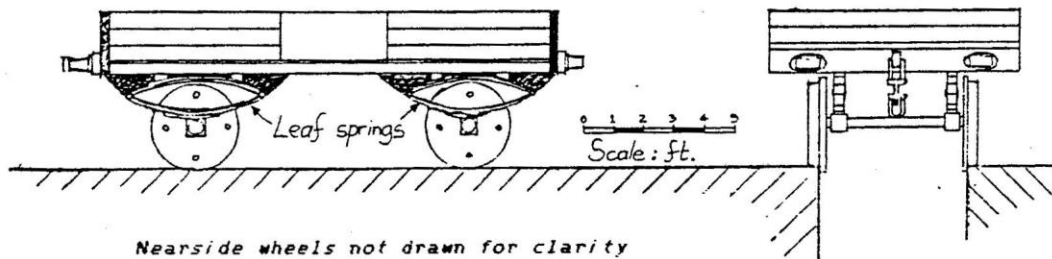
Some years ago I met Maurice Deane, a man known in the late Thirties onward for his 4mm models of the Wantage Tramway and the Rye & Camber. He moved to Weston Super Mare just prior to the Second World War and took photos of the WC&PR.

Maurice was kind enough to loan his precious photos to me and I had them copied. One of them was the milk trailer on its own at the side of Clevedon sheds. I showed this to my colleague, a photographer, saying it was a pity that the underframe of this vehicle was so hidden in shadows.

He said that he might be able to do something about it, and disappeared into his darkroom muttering incantations like "copy neg, bleach, reprint, overexposure" and, for all I know, a "hocus pocus ABRACADABRA" thrown in for good measure.

However, the result of all this revealed, albeit a little hazy, the underframe of the trailer. This obviously had double cart springs with the end of each spring supported on blocks, described by a Society member as "a real blacksmith's job!"

From this information and the dimensions given, I have produced the accompanying drawing. Obviously, I cannot guarantee its accuracy after 50-odd years, but it looks right#





*Society News*#####

YOUR CONSTITUTION IN FULL

This is the final version of the Society constitution as amended by the April Annual General Meeting

- 1) The name of the Society shall be the Colonel Stephens Society.
- 2) The Society's object is to research and publish information on and promote interest in the railways formerly managed and run by Lt. Colonel Holman F. Stephens and William H. Austen.
- 3) The Society shall take an interest in the modelling and conservation of any aspect of the lines engineered or managed by the Colonel and his successors, and shall encourage the preservation of any surviving relics.
- 4) The committee shall consist of six members, including: chairman, treasurer, membership secretary, editor of the Society journal, and publicity officer. The treasurer shall keep records of all the Society's financial transactions and make them available for audit at the end of each Society financial year, which shall run from 1 September to 31 August.
- 5) The committee may co-opt up to two extra members if a need arises for specialist help with any matter or Society project.
- 6) All official posts other than chairman shall be subject to elections every year in rotation. The chairman shall be subject to election every three years.
- 7) Any change in subscription fee shall be decided by vote at a general meeting.
- 8) An AGM will take place every April at a venue announced in the Society's journal not less than one month before the meeting is due to take place. All nominations for officers must be submitted at least two full weeks before the meeting.
- 9) Any person who fails to pay the subscription by March 31 following the September in which it is due will be deemed to be no longer a member, and cannot hold or stand for any Society office.
- 10) If, in the opinion of the committee or ten members, a member has behaved in a manner detrimental to the Society or its aims, the chairman will be asked to write a letter to the member concerned demanding explanation in writing within 14 days. If, in the opinion of the full committee, the explanation is unsatisfactory, the member will be asked to resign, and will not be allowed to participate in any Society activity at any time subsequently.



##### *Society News*

12) The Society may be dissolved by a two thirds majority of members voting at a general meeting called for the purpose after giving all members three months written notice. On dissolution, the assets of the Society shall be donated to a society or societies of kindred interests chosen at the special meeting.

13) This constitution may only be changed by a majority of members voting at a general meeting. Notice of the meeting and proposed changes shall be given at least one month in advance.

14) The committee or ten members can request a general meeting at any time and for any purpose, providing they give at least one month's notice.

15) Voting on any issue to be decided at a general meeting can be carried out by postal vote tendered to the chairman at least seven days before the meeting.

THE election of committee members was as follows:

*Chairman:* Les Darbyshire.

*Treasurer:* Nigel Bird.

*Membership Secretary:* Chris Holden.

*Editor:* Stephen Hannington.

*Publicity Officer:* Hugh Smith.

*Without portfolio:* John Scott Morgan.

THE meeting proposed a formal vote of thanks to the previous Society officers for their work in running the Society to date, which was carried unanimously.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

"I would like to thank all Society members for extending to me the honour of election as Chairman of the Society. I hope that their confidence in me will be justified.

"My first task will be to gather the Committee together to agree a "plan of campaign" to spread the Society gospel more widely so as to increase our membership, as I am sure there is a large number of potential members out there just waiting to be recruited. With our low subscription, we should be able to attract people who are already in other societies without breaking the bank, so we will not be competing with them.

"Through the medium of The Colonel I will keep members in touch with all developments in the Society, and I hope there will be a great many of them!"

*Les Darbyshire*

*The Real Thing 2#####*

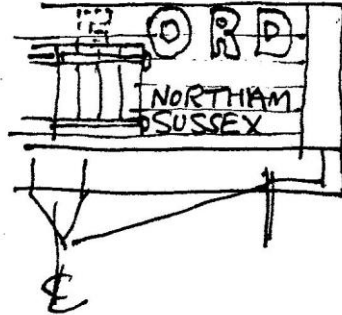
**MORE PO WAGON SPOTTING**

Peter Bowden follows up Les Darbyshire's article in the last issue with some more private owner wagon information

LES Darbyshire's article was especially interesting, and while I obviously cannot match his knowledge of the subject, I do have a few points to add on the K&ESR goods vehicle scene:

1) PO wagon "Butterley" appears (in part) behind a view I have of Terrier No. 3 taken after the 1935 resurrection.

2) In the July 1924 Railway Magazine there is a really tantalising photograph showing Terrier "Bodiam" at Bodiam with - again only in part, of course! - a "home" PO wagon (right). That is all to be seen - I would love to know more details. Note the unusual "cupboard" type doors, more usually found in Scotland.



3) I have a photo taken at Shepherdswell, EKR which includes another Anderson & Co. of Whitstable wagon, though with a different lettering style to the diagram in The Colonel (left). Yes, part only visible as usual. (see M. Lawson Finch's letter on page 6, Ed)



**SHROPSHIRE & MONTGOMERYSHIRE**

Regarding the S&MR article: I have a few references only to this line, but a few pertinent comments may be gleaned. Only one of the exLNWR "Coal" engines was repainted in SR green as No.2 (ex 8108). Then came the War, and the other two were not so done up.

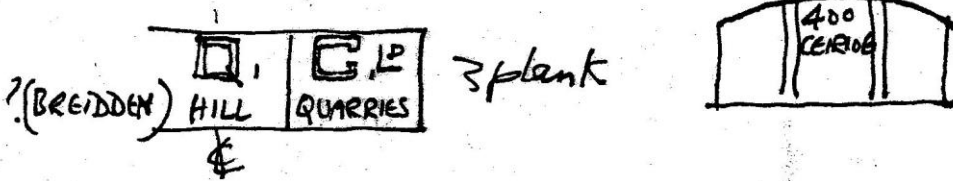
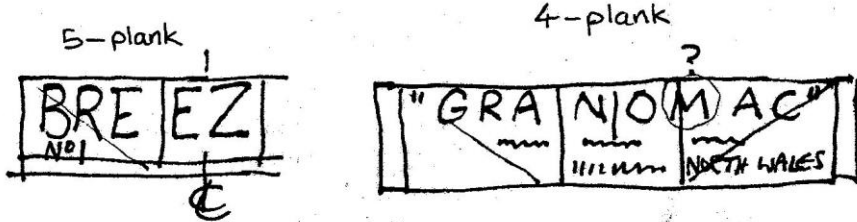
The exMR bogies I think started out in Midland Red (crimson), but were lettered for the S&M - probably done up by the Midland as part of the sale. The ultramarine reference I think originates with a note in Locomotive May 1923, which actually states (confusingly) regarding the passenger service:

"The train, usually three coaches, is painted a bright ultramarine with vermillion ends (coaches as well as brake van) and all lettering and numbering is of cast iron screwed on and painted bright yellow. The train...apparently is old L&NW stock."

It also states that the usual passenger engine was No.7 "Hecate" (the ex-Griff Colliery 0-4-2ST) - "still painted in LB&SC style". Research is surely a baffling activity at times! In 1934 the Royal Saloon was reported with "majority light brown".

#####The Real Thing 2

Glimpses I have of PD wagons on the S&M are:

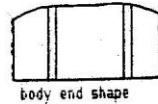
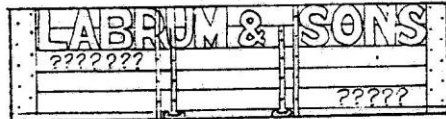


AND FURTHERMORE...  
 Stephen Hannington adds the following...



Not to scale

Two of these are illustrated at Tilmanstone pithead on the EKR in 1914 in John Scott Morgan's Pictorial Survey of the Colonel Stephens Railways (page 17). Note that the body is, unusually, 7 1/2-planks high! They are a very light tone, probably light grey, with apparently black ironwork, white shaded black lettering, and brakes on one side only. I wonder if I could get away with running these on my K&ESR layout...



Not to scale

This one is pictured at Rolvenden in 1947 behind the railbus luggage trolley on page 87 of John's book, and again on page 27 behind the dwarf starting signal at the end of Rolvenden platform. Body colour is possibly red-oxide with white, unshaded lettering#

*The Keen Talks*#####

**INDIAN SUMMER AT ASHOVER**

The second part of Ivor Gotheridge's Ashover Light Railway talk given originally at Keen House last October

WHEN the line opened to the public there was tremendous traffic at the start. For two reasons: there was no bus service at all to Ashover; you had to go on the railway and it connected with the LMS at Stretton. The other reason was all the novelty of a narrow gauge railway. They only had the four tram-type coaches from the Gloucester Carriage and Wagon Company at the start, so they had to get goods trucks and put seats in them hurriedly in order to convey all the passengers.

They wanted extra coaches. At the Wembley Exhibition, closed in 1925, there was the Neverstop Railway. Those coaches were surplus and so they bought them for next to nothing. They were crude sort of things. They were open on one side with wire netting on the other side, and the Clay Cross company never took the wire netting off so you had to get off on one side.

You got some good fun on them, plenty of railway noise, plenty of fresh air, sunshine and nice views. So they had the four tram coaches and the eight Wembley cars. They definitely came from Wembley because when they first came it said Neverstop Railway across them - I've got pictures of it. Some people argue about that, but it definitely said Neverstop Railway.

**GOODS TRAFFIC**

The only merchandise was coal being taken up the line. There were coal sidings everywhere: a couple of coal trucks were put in, and a horse and cart brought the coal up to your house. That only lasted about two years, because after that, the motor lorry went to the coal mines and brought it straight to your house.

The only merchandise going down the line was milk. There was a milk train at about 6.30 in the morning. Some people said the milk was put in the passenger coaches and some say it was put in open trucks. But the milk train came down to Stretton. The man from the LMS bought a four wheel platform trolley and the milk churns were put on it and taken down to send away by LMS. That traffic only lasted about two years because after that the motor lorry came to the farm and took the milk churns straight to the dairy processing place.

This was certainly an Indian Summer. It only lasted about two years because there was a bus service put on to Ashover, and of course everybody went on the bus. The coal traffic and the milk traffic soon terminated. The only traffic was limestone from the quarries down to Clay Cross works and to the LMS. Some tar wagons went up to take gas tar to the tarmacadam plants at Ashover.

Within two years the passenger traffic was not worth running. The limestone trains, three or four times a day, were dragging an empty passenger coach up and down the line. So in 1930 the regular passenger service ceased. Bear in mind that the Light Railway Order said the passenger service must be provided, so if

#####The Keen Talks

the passenger service was removed, the Company was afraid all the time that somebody might take legal action against them.

After 1930 - only in the summer - there were Saturday trains, Sunday trains and Bank Holiday traffic. And in the early '30s it was still going pretty well. There were three trains on Sundays and on some Bank Holidays three trains at once! It was still doing fairly well.

Captain John May was the manager of the railway at first. When he went off to the Welsh Highland Railway, G.H. Wilbraham - Harry Wilbraham - one of the Clay Cross staff, was appointed manager of the line. But all the time the fortunes of the line were diminishing. By 1936 the novelty had worn off so much that the number of passengers and the fares taken did not even pay the overtime for the men. You see, Sundays and Bank Holidays you have to pay the train crews double time. So on September 13th 1936, the passenger trains ran for the last time.

LOCOMOTIVES AND FAMILY

That is the story of the line up to end of passenger services. Now as regards the engines, they had six Baldwin 4-6-0 tank engines. They were named after the family of General Jackson: Joan, Peggy and Bridget, his three daughters; Hummy (for Humphrey), Guy and Georgie, after Georgina. His eldest son Tommy was killed in the war on his father's birthday. That rather upset General Jackson for the rest of his life. There was an engine called Tommy at Crich. Bridget's engine had a little name plate and it was at Crich too. But Bridget, the youngest daughter, did not see the engine very often, so that name was taken from Crich and put on an Ashover engine, and Bridget's plate was smaller than all the others.

One engine, Georgie, apparently never worked up the line at all. It was only used for spares. Guy was used at the start but soon after that, Guy too was used for spares. Bear in mind they never wanted as many as six engines, but those engines were never to be manufactured again. So they bought more engines than they needed so they could use the spare parts in order to keep them going. It's a good thing they did that.

They tried various internal combustion engines. The company got several of these from the War Disposals Board for the electrical equipment. But one was used at the Ashover line: sometimes for shunting up at the quarries, sometimes for banking heavy stone trains. Some wit at the quarries chalked "Amos" on the front as a joke against Amos Hind, the quarry manager. But Amos didn't seem to object at all so they painted the name over the front and the official name of this engine always was and always will be Amos. That's how it got its rather unusual name#

*In the next issue, Ivor will recount the decline and fall of the Ashover line, and his hopes to rebuild it.*

*I Was There#####*

**CALM BEFORE THE STORM ON THE S&M**

Derek Smith recalls the S & M in the years before the war

ONE of my first memories of the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire was of fishing trips taken with my late father to Melverley, and later to Crew Green on the Criggion branch. This would be in Spring and Summer of 1930. At the time we lived in Lime Street, Coleham, Shrewsbury and would walk to the Abbey station to get the morning train. It was usually mixed, with goods and coaches in the same train. After starting from Abbey station, we would proceed to Shrewsbury West, where the S&M and GWR/LNWR exchange sidings would entail shunting of wagons while the coaches remained on the main S&M line.

The connection between the S&M and the GWR/LNWR lines was at a point near Shrewsbury West station, one mile from the Abbey station, and not at Meole Brace as stated in some books. In those days, the Aberystwyth line was double track to Hanwood, and connections were made into the up and down roads controlled by a signal box on the GWR/LNWR side.

I remember well the S&M exchange siding with full coal wagons waiting to go up to Kinnerley and Llanymynech. There was a timber footbridge on brick pier supports at the Shrewsbury end of the siding. By the mid-Thirties it had got into a poor condition and was known locally as the "Broken Bridge". After the war, the timber section was replaced by a concrete structure, still using the brick piers, and this is still standing and in use today.

Then it was on to Kinnerley and a change of trains to go on the Criggion branch: I seem to remember it was the Gazelle and coach. I know later a normal coach and engine was used, with the coach pushed to Melverley because the river bridge at Crew Green had become unsafe for passenger traffic. The timetable for 3 October 1932 confirms this to be the case.

At Melverley, an outstanding feature was the brick road overbridge with its seven arches. The station was near the road and after alighting from the train, we would walk to the Tontine Inn for refreshment - beer for my father, a bottle of pop for me - before making our way to the river.

I also travelled to Crew Green station around this time. There was an inn nearby which we visited for lunch. Years later, after I had joined British Railways in 1950, I visited the river bridge when it had been painted by Civil Engineers staff in 1952. Crew Green station was much as it had been in 1930.

This part of Shropshire has always been prone to flooding each year, but in the Spring of 1947 the worst flood ever recorded happened, with the water reaching thirty feet above normal level. The whole of the line from Melverley to Crew Green and up to Llandrinio Road was under water. The amazing thing is that the old timber piers in the bridge held up, while other brick buildings and bridges fell due to the pressure of the water. This is a tribute to the engineering skills of the Colonel, who designed it.

Llandrinio Road station, on the Criggion branch, was a brick platform halt type station at the side of the B48 near Lane Farm.

##### I Was There



Excursion train at Criggion in the Thirties, from a picture in Mike Wright's collection. The driver was George Meeston of Llanymynech.

I remember in the early Fifties talking to a local rustic and being told of his trips on the train to Shrewsbury on Saturdays to visit friends and the shops. He was quite proud of the fact that he was one of the few from his village to have visited the outside world!

The station was serviced by three trains each way during the week and one on Sundays. By the late 1920s, with falling receipts, the service was gradually cut back: first to two a day and then to Saturday only, from September 1928.

During the war years, I made many visits to the S&M on my bike, spending whole days at the weekends looking at the activities of the WD at Kinnerley, Abbey station, Llanymynech and Ford. The Criggion branch was not taken over by the WD, and so remained much as before, with the stone traffic from the quarry the only reason it stayed open.

Going back to the Thirties, I remember an engine hit the stop block and went through the wall onto the roadway at the Abbey station in about 1935. Also, there were excursions run on Bank Holidays to Llanymynech and Criggion. The seats of the coaches were full of dust, and the lads would jump up and down, usually ending up with a thick ear from the grown ups.

On Sunday 23 April 1939, my thirteenth birthday, my late mother and I were on our way towards the cemetery when we saw smoke and steam coming from the direction of Shrewsbury on the S&M line. Into view came the little Gazelle pulling the trailer coach. As it got near, I saw a small plate on the smokebox with the letters B.L.C. (Birmingham Locomotive Club) on it.

I remember well the faces of the men looking out, and thinking how happy they all seemed to be. As I watched the back of the coach disappearing towards Meole Brace station, little did I think that this way of life would be gone for ever in less than six months with the outbreak of the Second World War#



**From the Archives#####**

**MORE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICES**

Hugh Smith lists places where previously unpublished details of the Great Man's enterprises might be found

COUNTY Record Offices should at least have copies of contemporary Ordnance Survey maps which will show track layouts. Only 25in to the mile maps are suitable for this purpose. Some may have other material as well, but not having checked all of them, I can't be sure. If you find anything, please let the rest of us know, via the editor. Each of the Colonel Stephens railways is listed below, followed by the appropriate record office.

- ASHOVER Derbyshire Record Office, County Offices, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3AG (tel: 0629 3411, extn 7347)
- BP&V Carmarthenshire Record Office, County Hall, Carmarthen, Dyfed SA31 1JP (tel: 0267 4251)
- EDGE HILL Warwick County Record Office, Priory Park, Cape Road, Warwick, CV34 4JS (tel: 0926 493431, extn 2508)
- EAST KENT Kent County Archives Office, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XH (tel: 0622 671411)
- FESTINIOG Gwynedd Archives Service, Caernarfon Area Records Office, County Offices, Shirehall Street, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1SH and Dolgellau Area Records Office, Cae Penarlwg, Dolgellau, Gwynedd. (tel: 0286 4121 (Caernarfon) or 0341 422341 (Dolgellau))
- HAWKHURST Maidstone (See EAST KENT)
- HM&ST West Sussex Records Office, John Ede's House, West Sussex Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1RN (tel: 0243 777983)
- K&ESR Maidstone (see EAST KENT) and also East Sussex Records Office, The Maltings, Castle Precincts, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1YT (tel: 0273 475400)
- ND&CJ Devon Record Office, Castle Street, Exeter, Devon EX4 3PQ (tel: 0392 53509)
- PD&SW West Devon Area Record Office, Clare Place, Coxside, Plymouth, Devon PL4 0JW (tel: 0752 264685) or: Cornwall Record Office, County Hall, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3AY (tel: 0872 73698) PRIOR APPOINTMENT ONLY
- RVR See under K&ESR
- RYE&CAMBER Lewes (see under K&ESR)
- SHEPPEY Maidstone (see EAST KENT)
- S&M Shropshire Record Office, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6ND (tel: 0743 222406)
- SNAILBEACH Shrewsbury (see above)
- WC&P Bristol Record Office, The Council House, College Green, Bristol, Avon BS1 5TR (tel: 0272 266031 X442)  
Somerset Record office, Obridge Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7PU (tel: 0823 87600/78805)  
*Could be either or both - anyone know?*
- WHR Caernarfon (see FESTINIOG)
- W.SUSSEX see HM&ST

Addresses and telephone numbers are taken from that most useful book "Record Offices: How to find them" by Jeremy Gibson and Pamela Peskett. ISBN 0 907099 40 8#