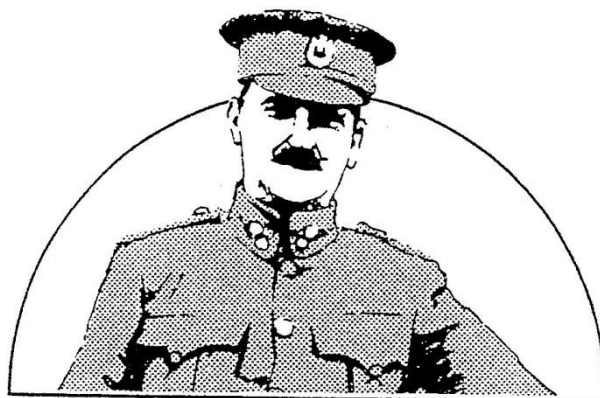


Colonel 18



• THE • COLONEL

NUMBER 18 AUTUMN 1989

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THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

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



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RENEWALS TIME IS HERE

No news is good news, you might think, noticing that there is no news section in this issue. Not entirely true: it's time to renew membership subscriptions, using the form tucked in these pages somewhere. Remember the membership fee has gone up to a princely £4, as agreed at the last AGM.

At least one member seems to be under the mistaken impression that the increase was entirely to fund the new Colonel hardback format. Far from it: it cost the same to produce as the original, which you may have noticed has been reinstated. However, the quality of reproduction left something to be desired, so mass production of this tome has been returned to the tender loving care of Alan Garner, who at least cared enough about it to do the job properly. And I'm sure we'd all rather the Broad Gauge Society, whose photocopier is used, should have the profits than a commercial and, frankly, careless commercial bureau.

There are a couple of snippets of modelling news that surfaced at Scaleforum a couple of weeks back. Iain Young's 4mm and 7mm kits for the K&ESR Hawthorn Leslie 2-4-0Ts have been delayed due to the etchers unreasonably taking holidays and the likes. Iain is confident they should be ready some time this month. He had a partially assembled test etch at the show, and it looks like being a cracker of kit, well thought out and easy to assemble, with quality lost-wax fittings. Can't wait to get my hands on one...

Our very own Chris Holden, Mr Taurem himself, revealed that he is starting work on preparation for his next offering, which will be for little Sankey, the Manning Wardle 0-4-0ST of the Edge Hill line. It may be a while coming, so you can start putting your pennies aside in readiness. Knowing Chris, you won't need all that many.

SH

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Dispatches

CAMBER TRAM IDENTIFIED

"I read with interest the article on the Rye & Camber Tramway in Colonel No.15. Each time I cycle into Rye, I follow the course of the line. I was hoping to write a detailed history of the railway, but today I had the pleasure of meeting Mr K. Clark of Rye who is hoping to publish the complete history of the line next year, so I'll leave it to him.

"However, the main reason I write is concerning the "tram coach" you sketched at Pett Level. According to Leslie Oppits in his *Tramways Remembered, South & South-East England*, he states:

"A number of Hastings trams were removed to Pett Level after closure of the system and used as holiday homes, but when World War II came, many were removed or destroyed when invasion became a threat. One tram body does remain quite close to the road between Pett Level and Winchelsea Beach which is still used as a holiday home, but this was an ex-London tram.

"For a time in the last War it was requisitioned by the army and used as a machine-gun nest. According to some locals, it was once used by actress Ellen Terry as a place to occasionally relax in the summer months.

"I had a look at it this morning, and it is definitely a London-style tram with its curved ends. It is still in use and furnished, although I have never seen anyone there. Pity it isn't the Rother Iron Works coach, but it seems it was definitely scrapped around 1948. No doubt all the details of the Rye & Camber will be in what I'm sure will be an excellent book when it comes out."

L.A.Cooksey, Camber

MISTAKEN IDENTITY?

"Regarding the *Selsey kits* letter in Colonel 17, what evidence is there for suggesting that the ex-Lambourn coaches were fitted with bogies from the Falcon cars? This is not apparent from the few photos of the Lambourn coaches on the tramway, and Kidner's booklet *Carriage Stock of the Minor Standard Gauge Railways* makes no mention of this being done.

"Has someone confused the two sets of coaches?"

Hugh Smith, London

PULL-OUT WC&PR PHOTOS

"With regard to your editorial on records of photographs, a book has recently been published titled *Around the Gordano Valley*. This is the valley, between Portishead and Clevedon, along which the WC&PR passed. The book is published by Alan Sutton, Brunswick Road, Gloucester.

"WC&PR photos are: Manning Wardle on train at Weston-in-Gordano c1920; Portishead station from buffers; Portishead station, close up of building; Manning Wardle on train near Walton Park 1930s; and Walton Park station.

"The book is such a poor bind that the photos can be easily detached for anyone who wants to photocopy them.

Jack Burrell, Bristol

Notice Board#####

FOR SALE Two 4mm scale Cambrian Models PO wagon kits for "Lilleshall", as used on the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire, now out of production. £3.25 each (plus p&p) from Ian Hammond.
(see below for address)

MELVERLEY BRIDGE DETAILS PLEASE

Ian Hammond would like to get his hands on plans, or at least a rough guide to the size, of the overbridge at Melverley, famous for having seven arches of which only one was used for track.
9Malvern Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 2HH.

"POTTS" WAGON LIVERIES AND SNAILBEACH HELP WANTED

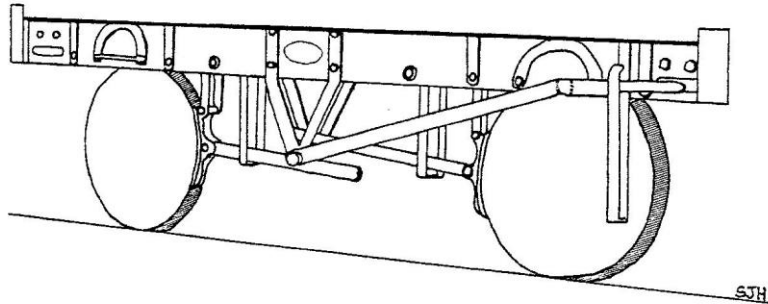
Details of the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway wagon liveries are still requested by Harold Livesey. He would also like to know of any book about the Snailbeach District Railways.
43 Eaton Park Road, Palmers Green, London N13 4EL

COLONEL FILMS WANTED

Harry Carr wants to know if any members have a spare copy of the 8mm Colonel Stephens films mentioned in early issues of The Colonel, as he would like to obtain one.
27 Norfolk Avenue, Morecambe, Lancs. LA3 1JG

QUICK SKETCH

This drawing of the brake gear of the 10ton Hurst Nelson wagons supplied to the K&ESR was prepared in response to a member's query and is reproduced here in case anyone else might be interested. It is based on an HMRS photograph published in the *Tenterden Terrier*. Some details, particularly of the brake lever guard, were foggy on the photo and have been guessed at, but most are substantially correct. Brakes were fitted on one side of the wagons only.



Brake gear details of K&ESR 10T Hurst Nelson wagons
Fitted to one side only Drawn from HMRS photo

#####From the Archives

TOWARDS A COLONEL COLLECTION

Richard Barton outlines a few ideas for pulling together all known sources of information on the Great Man's works

AT THE AGM IN APRIL there was considerable discussion on the future activities of the Society, particularly in view of the diverse interests and wide geographical spread of membership. I volunteered to assess the practicalities of recording information and making it accessible to members.

Much useful information has already been published in The Colonel, but this does need to be expanded and updated. I suggest an index for each Colonel Stephens railway, listing all published information, including magazine articles and any additional information available.

Since many members have specialised knowledge, perhaps the original "stewards" for each individual railway would be the most effective way of collating information. Do any members wish to volunteer for their favourite line?

I also suggest an index by source of supply of Colonel Stephens photographs, including commercial collections, libraries and private individuals. The committee has already rejected, on grounds of cost, the idea that the Society should own its own photographic collection.

The record could, however, consist of photocopies, purely for identification purposes. Four prints to an A4 sheet could be a relatively inexpensive solution, particularly if any members have access to photocopying at reduced rates. This record would help members who are looking for specific information, especially where prints are from fairly expensive sources and have to be ordered unseen.

Would members be willing to record their own collections in this way? Where their collections are large, copies of those prints which are less easy to obtain would at least be a starting point. I would welcome any suggestions or information via the editor. Hopefully we can establish records in an effective way, avoid duplication of effort in research, and ensure that when any members need information, they will know exactly who in the Society to contact.

I have already begun to collate information from catalogued collections of photographs, and give details of the Mowatt Collection in so far as it concerns the Society. This is an extensive collection of about 2500 photographs taken by the late Charles Mowatt, which are now in the care of Brunel University Library, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH (tel: 0895 74000).

They and the Mowatt documents can be consulted by appointment with the reference section of the library. Contact Mr Dorling on extension 2787. Prints from the original Mowatt negatives cost £1 per postcard print and can be obtained from: Mr W. R. Burton, 3 Fairway, Clifton, York. YO3 6RA.

The following is a summary of prints of Colonel Stephens interest, although I have not yet seen them: Festiniog, 14 prints; Welsh Highland 9; WC&PR 5; Burry Port 1; East Kent 7; and North Devon 5. Most were taken between 1925 and 1934#

Book Reviews#####

RAILWAYS OF ARCADIA

by John Scott Morgan. Published by P.E. Waters & Associates, 105 Highland Road, Bromley, BR1 4AA. 168 pages. A4 hardback. Price £21.95. ISBN 0 948904 50 X.

I FOUND this book oddly disappointing at first, but I've gradually warmed to it. Perhaps the let-down feeling is inevitable after such a long wait, but it can be tracked down to some definite features of the book. First its good points. The 274 pictures are reproduced with admirable clarity on good quality paper in first class binding. Coverage is well balanced across all the Great Man's railways, including the miniscule Weston Point Light Railway. Les Darbyshire's series of drawings and notes on the buildings and structures of the K&ESR are a particular treasure. The inclusion of track diagrams of stations and, in the ALR's case, industrial installations, is also a nice touch.

A few of the maps of the individual lines are excellent, but the standard varies a great deal. Those credited to Edwin Lambert are superb, showing in detail local features such as farm tracks and woodland, and giving a very good impression of the railways' location in their landscapes: particularly appropriate for such rural railways.

Other maps are little more than schematics, though I understand that John and Paul had some difficulties with the map-maker during the book's trouble-prone gestation. But it is the words that let this book down most. I had expected something like an improved version of John's *Pictorial Survey*. But though the pictures are undoubtedly better, the words are not. There is little more than a couple of paragraphs giving only the most basic information to introduce each line.

One might excuse that in what is essentially a photo album, but equally one might justifiably expect more of the captions, which left me feeling unsatisfied. They could have said so much more, and relied less on the "Note the interesting this, that or the other" formula that is too often repeated, without saying why the feature is worthy of note. Middleton Press's "Branchline" series have set the pace for this sort of format, and "Arcadia" seems lacking in comparison.

Paul's foreword states the intention of letting the pictures speak for themselves, but I feel more could have been done to lend them articulacy. However, I rather liked the foreword itself, particularly Paul revealing that his first impression of the Colonel was as "some sort of spiv", and some canny insight into what made the Great Man what he was. The personal chronology and project list is an interesting inclusion as well.

I know, probably better than most, the problems that went into the making of this book. It seems something of a minor miracle that it appeared at all and, despite its failings, it is undoubtedly a valuable addition to any Stephens Library: ideal for a couple of hour's pleasant immersion in a world gone beyond, and a useful basic research tool. But it should have been so much more: one gets the impression that compromises have been made, and this is a shame#

SJH

Book Reviews

WESTON CLEVEDON & PORTISHEAD RLWY
by Christopher Redwood. Published by Sequoia Publishing, in
association with Avon Anglia, Annesley House, 21 Southside,
Weston Super Mare, Avon BS23 2QU. 183 pages, hardback. Price
£10.95. ISBN 0 905466 42 X.

This book had been available for some time, but has never been reviewed in these pages and the last few copies are being offered at a knock-down price to Society members. It comes highly recommended, since it is hard to imagine what more a WC&P buff would want than what is contained in its pages. Apart from more photos, perhaps: 31 are included here. There are even scale plans of Hesperus, a Lancaster coach and the large Drewry railcar for modellers, as well as track layouts of the major stations including, in the case of Weston and Clevedon, two versions to show the original and later development of the sites.

Every detail of the line's complex history is covered, and the mind boggles at the amount of research that must have gone into this book. The author spoke to quite a few of the railway's former employees as well as scouring company archives, so the formalities are nicely interspersed with the human touch. A collection of anecdotes is included in the first chapter. Their flavour is given by this example:

An impatient passenger alighted at one of the halts and asked the driver if he could travel any faster. "Yes, sir," came the reply, "but I'm not allowed to leave the engine!"

We also hear about how all the original company's records may have perished in a bonfire, thereby scuppering an attempt in the 1950s to relay the line as a narrow gauge railway, which otherwise had all the hallmarks of success. Whoever lit that bonfire, considering the railway paraphernalia that fuelled it to be junk, should be classed with the "Person From Porlock" for their part in spoiling things for the rest of us...

As well as a detailed history in four chapters, the book also gives a chapter each to a description of the line, locomotives, carriage and wagon stock, timetables and train workings, and accidents. The minutiae conveyed even extend to the dimensions of the cattle grids (10ft long with faces of 4.5" and 6") and concrete block sleepers, as well as the exact shade and source of the paint originally used on the first six coaches. There is some fair detail of the industrial concerns served by the railway, including the siding to Weech's Joinery, where ladders were made.

Such attention to detail does occasionally make the book somewhat heavy going, and the style has a curiously old-fashioned, scholarly tone to it. I puzzled for a while on the bracketted insertion (*vide infra*) before I realised it simply meant (see below), for example. But such things also add to the idiosyncratic charm of the book, well matched to that of the railway itself.

Christopher Redwood has done the WC&PR great justice in this work, which is highly and unreservedly recommended. He sets an example which I hope others might follow in documenting other of the Great Man's railways. If you want a true insight into light railways, you could do no better than this book#

SJH

On the Spot#####

HESPERUS REGAINS THE RAILS

In the second part of his memoirs as an apprentice fitter at Kinnerley shed on the S&MR, Bill Willans recalls his part in repairing Ilfracombe Goods locos using "handraulic" tools

WHEN I JOINED the railway in January 1928, Ilfracombe Goods loco No.3 *Hesperus* was situated on a siding to the east of the Criggion Branch and she was still there when I left in 1929. Her boiler had been jacked up clear of the frames and my first major job was to assist in sliding the boiler along two lengths of railway metal from the frames to a flat wagon. The boiler went to Ruston Hornsby for a new firebox and smokebox, as well as sundry other repairs.

Shortly after I started, Charlie Owen (shed foreman) went sick and Mr Austen, who was supervising the boiler job, transferred me from machine cleaning to join the gang, which consisted of Arthur Fardoe and the entire permanent way department! I am sorry to say that the names have faded except Mr Wye, the "Ganger".

During the summer, the boiler returned and the above process was carried out in reverse. During most of my time, the boiler remained on the frames, and was lowered in position early in 1929.

One of my first jobs on *Hesperus* was to disconnect the eccentric rods and valve gear, followed by the lagging plate from below the cylinders. The latter necessitated removing the operating rods of the cylinder drain cocks and the cocks themselves. In doing so, one of the cocks broke off! I fully expected some adverse comments, but Charlie took it in a very matter-of-fact manner: "We shall have to drill it out."

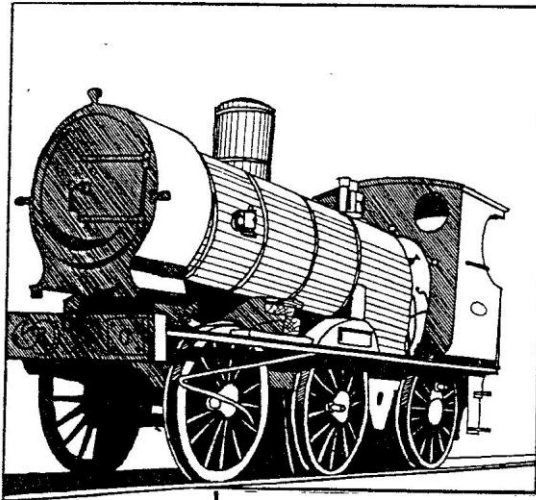
On the left hand side some of the bolts securing the cylinders to the frames had worked loose. These were countersunk head bolts with no means of holding them if they turned during attempts to remove the nuts. Consequently, the nuts had to be split with a hammer and chisel. This was a long and painful operation: every few strokes I missed the head of the chisel and hit my thumb. I received very little sympathy: "Chalk an eye on the hammer so it can see where to go" was the usual sort of comment.

GREEDY TWIST DRILLS

With the offending bolts at last removed, the holes had to be reamed out. This was attempted, but the only reamer was long past its first youth. Charlie forged a beautiful looking drill - at least it looked so to my inexperienced eye - but it succeeded in opening out the first hole to a shape that certainly was not circular!

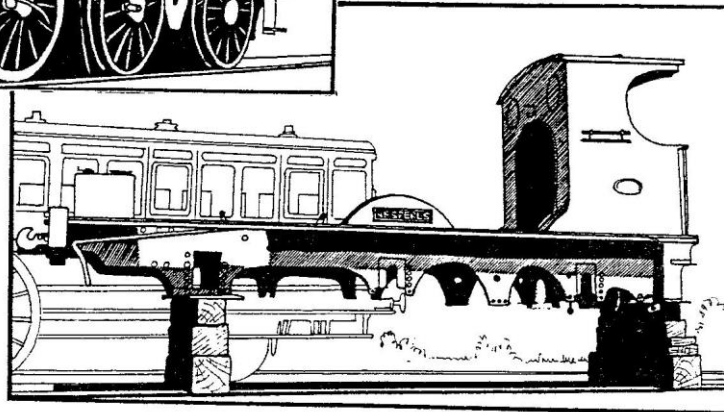
The problem was finally solved by driving a hardwood plug into each hole, which enabled a twist drill to be used without it biting deeply into the metal and probably breaking off. As Charlie Owen put it: "These twist drills are so bloody greedy". I must mention that this was all done with a hand ratchet. There were no electric or pneumatic drills at Kinnerley in those days.

On the Spot



These pictures of "Hesperus" during rebuilding are derived from a couple of Bill's photos taken in 1928. On the left, the boiler has returned from Ruston & Hornsby and is on its way back in. Bill says: "It might seem that a rat has been nibbling at the smokebox frontplate below the door. These are my efforts at cutting away the plate to fit over the cylinder covers!"

Below is an earlier view, reminding modellers, perhaps, of an early stage in construction. The coach in the background is No.1. "This picture shows how weak were the frames of the Ilfracombes," says Bill.



Work continued intermittently on No.3 throughout my time. An ex-LNWR fitter, Albert Dodd, joined us towards the end of 1928 and took the job over. I managed to attach myself to him and we cut away the front plate of the smokebox to fit over the cylinder cover bolts. To use a Naval expression, this was all done "handraulic": hacksaw, ratchet drill and hammer and chisel. The job was periodically interrupted by other pressing matters, such as the shed running out of dried sand! By the time I left, the boiler was back in the frames.

Two major breakdowns linger in my memory. In each case one of the Ilfracombes was the engine affected and, if my memory serves me well, it was No.6 *Thisbe*. Perhaps someone will be able to correct me if I am wrong. *Thisbe* was the hardest worked engine

On the Spot#####

at that time. On one occasion one of the big-end straps fractured and released the connecting rod. The piston rode punched a beautifully clean hole in the cylinder cover.

I cannot remember how we acquired a new cover, but probably the old one was sent to Boston Lodge where a new one was cast and machined. I have no recollection of one being machined in our shop. Also, I cannot remember if the piston sustained any damage, but I do recall the piston rod being set up in the lathe to check if it had become distorted. During this job, Tom Gatford was transferred from Snailbeach to assist. He was furious, and let it be known to all and sundry.

DISASTER TWO

The second disaster occurred between Criggion and Kinnerley. On the left hand side of the driving axle, the side rod crankpin broke off abruptly. The engine got back to the shed under its own steam and remained there for some time. The removal of the stump remaining in the wheel presented something of a problem and was tackled in the usual Kinnerley manner: with inevitable ratchet brace we set out to drill a row of holes across the crankpin stump, approximately five inches deep. Work on *Hesperus* came to a halt and Albert Dodd and I took turns on the ratchet. The stump was ultimately driven out and a new pin was turned up on the lathe by Charlie Owen.

We did not even possess a blow lamp, let alone oxyacetylene equipment, so with much ingenuity a grate was improvised in way of the hole for the pin. A fire was built up and for what seemed to be many hours I blew it with hand bellows! The first effort was disastrous. The pin, having been driven in for about three inches, stuck. It took several days and much heating to finally get it home. The flow of language must have assisted in raising the temperature.

TUBES FOR THE TERRIER

Tubes, burst and leaking, seemed to require constant attention. At one time, for the retubing of one of the Terriers, a tuber named Ned Higginson was borrowed from Shrewsbury shed. Apparently Colonel Stephens had a standing arrangement with the LMS about this. Ned worked very swiftly and sometimes I assisted him at the smokebox end. On one occasion a tube was tight and I was instructed to file it down. I did this three times, and finally the tube went home.

Ned's comments were as follows: "You've made a bloody fine job of this tube: you've put a bloody sight more on than you've taken off!"

Upon reflection, I realised that I had filed the smokebox end and not the firebox end! However, the tube was in and I decided it would be wiser not to enlighten anyone. When the job was finished I seemed to have acquired several LMS sponge cloths, and Kinnerley had acquired some very superior tube expanders...#

In the next issue of The Colonel, Bill will introduce us to more of the "Potts" characters, including the Great Man himself.

#####Modelling

RURAL BACKWATER IN A SHOWCASE

Peter Tomsett describes why and how he set about producing a diorama of the end of the EKR's attempt to reach Canterbury

SOME YEARS AGO I decided to give up 2mm scale modelling in favour of 4mm. The reason for this was the lack of suitable 2mm locomotives plus eyesight that did not respond to such minute detail. Space and time were not in abundance when I made this decision to change, so I cast my eyes around to find a prototype location that would be small enough to be modelled accurately within these limitations: freelance modelling has never held much interest for me.

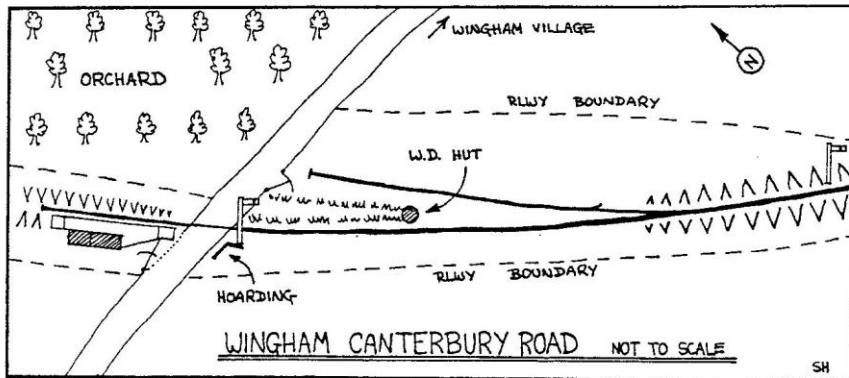
As I was not over-enthusiastic about narrow gauge modelling - anyway 009 is not much larger than 2mm - I decided that one of the small independent light railways might provide a suitable location. Having been interested in the Colonel Stephens lines for many years, my conclusion was perhaps not surprising.

Being a native of Kent, I chose to model one of the Colonel's lines within that county, and after further consideration, the East Kent Railway was selected. The choice of station was still open, however.

About this time I acquired from British Railways a set of track description plans of the EKR. These were very useful as they showed the exact layout at every station, including the length of all loops, sidings and so on as they were in 1942. From this information I was able to determine how much room each station would require.

About this time also, my interest in railway modelling changed direction, and consideration was given to presenting the model as a diorama. Given these circumstances, together with the limitations of time for modelling, Wingham Canterbury Road seemed an ideal choice.

Surprisingly, there were quite a few photographs available of this rural backwater. Of course, as is always the way, more have turned up long after the model was completed. With these and the



Modeling#####

track plans, I set out what could be portrayed in a showcase four feet long and one foot deep without presenting a cramped look.

Some compromise was obviously necessary, even allowing for such a small prototype. However, I was able to incorporate the station building, what is now the A257 road crossing the site of the station, the loading platform and the circular goods shed in the yard. The single siding was also modelled, but not its connection to the running line, as this was beyond the length available.

Once the composition of the model was decided, a start was made on construction. There was nothing unusual about any of the techniques employed here, except perhaps the form of track construction. The prototype track in the 1930s, the period of the model, was flat-bottomed rail spiked to wooden sleepers with a small steel baseplate between the rail and the sleeper.

To represent this form of construction, EM Gauge Society 9ft wooden sleepers were used, the two prepunched holes being countersunk to take the Society's 2.5mm diameter rivets. With these in place flush with the top of the sleeper, the flat-bottom rail was tinned on the underside and soldered into position. Care was taken not to get solder anywhere else on the rail. The track was then "cut" into scale 30ft lengths and etched fishplates were glued in place.

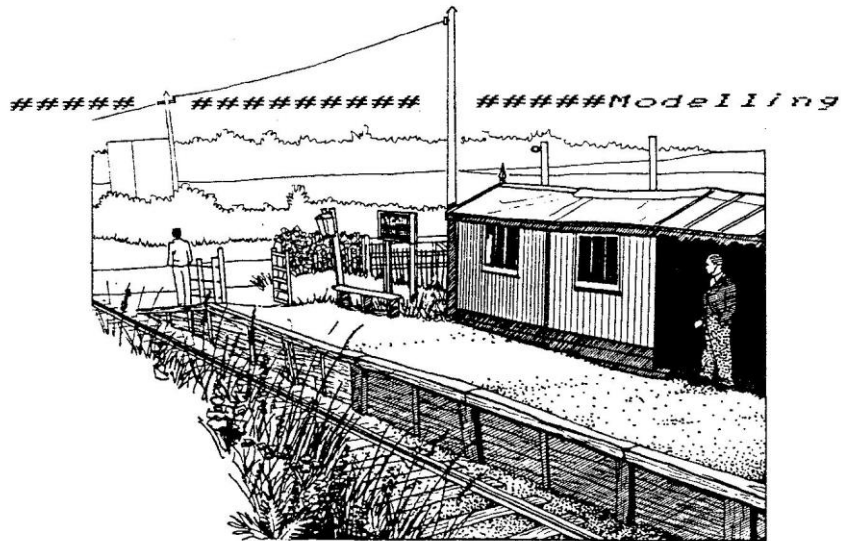
Light railway track seems to present a declaration of intent as it proceeds from one place to the next, never being quite sure of the alignment it should adopt. This is difficult to achieve in model form without it looking crude and poorly made. I'm sure I did not obtain the result I was looking for in this respect, nor for that matter in texture and colour once the track was laid. If I were doing a similar model again, I would be more careful in this direction. As it was, the track was glued into place and ballasted with fine silver sand. Once set, the whole was painted grey to represent ash and general dirt.

Scenery was next, and in this I include all the buildings. The former was made in the usual way with polystyrene block covered with plaster bandage and coated with various scenic dressings depending on the final texture required.

The next project was the buildings. Only two were required: the station building and the goods shed. The first was constructed, after a careful study of photographs and the production of a scale drawing, using plastic card. When complete, it was painted buff, brown and white, which seemed to be more or less correct after studying black and white photographs.

The circular goods shed presented quite a challenge as no dimensions were readily available. However, an article in the *Tenterden Terrier* about holiday accommodation on the S&MR revealed that these ex-World War One army huts were 15ft in diameter. Armed with this, sketches were made until the intended building looked right.

The model was made using corrugated copper foil for the walls, brass shim for the roof and a circular vent turned out of perspex. The structure was mounted on an internal wooden core made in the shape of a cotton reel. When completed, the model was



Wingham station building and platform

painted to match the station building.

No model is complete without detail, and in a diorama this is extremely important. So gates and fences, cattle guards, station lamps and telephone poles all had to be modelled as accurately as possible, with constant reference to photographs. This may sound obvious, but light railways had an economic style of their own in such matters.

Once the scenic side of the model was more or less complete, I turned my attention to suitable rolling stock. As an exercise in 4mm scale modelling, a model of EKR box van no.17 was constructed from a Ks kit. This, with one or two main line company wagons, formed the total wagon stock up to the time the diorama was disposed of.

On the locomotive side, a model of EKR number 4 was built using a Centre Models white metal kit as a basis, but incorporating a hand-built chassis. The model was painted as it appeared following an overhaul c1936.

Having completed these items of rolling stock, a change in domestic circumstances dictated that the model could no longer be given house room. It was therefore offered to the curators of the Colonel Stephens Museum in Tenterden, where it now resides.

I'm not sure that it is currently on display, but no doubt a request for information on this would reveal the latest information. Engine number 4 is currently undergoing restoration for a place in the museum also.

Although I no longer model the light railway scene, I very much enjoyed making the diorama and have adopted this principle for my current project. In conclusion, I would like to thank the editor of The Colonel for the opportunity to write about my experiences of modelling a small part of the EKR#

Peter's model, unfortunately, is not yet on display at the museum, which is nonetheless well worth a visit. Ed.

Fieldwork#####

NORTHIAM INTO THE NINETIES

Stephen Hannington reports on recent developments allowing trains to go where none have gone for 30 years on the K&ESR

WHEN LAST I saw Northiam station on the K&ESR, it looked like a motorway construction site. There were mechanical excavators and a wide swathe of levelled mud, flanked on either side by long heaps of spoil and roadstone and bordered by concrete-bottomed foundation trenches. This devastation extended through into the old goods yard. Like islands from the past stood the old station building and cottages overlooking the new wasteland.

This was the scene in mid-June. I had spent the day helping the track clearance gang of the Tenterden Railway Company, the K&ESR's new proprietor, hack back the undergrowth on the newly relaid section between the Rother bridge and Northiam station. Suffering from mild sunstroke and hawthorn attack, I had called in at the station to see what progress had been made.

The scene came as something of a shock. I last visited the site a few years ago to research my model of the K&ESR, making notes and getting a feel of the place. In those days, it was pretty much as it had always been: a bucolic, lazy, overgrown place. I recorded in the resulting article (*Colonel 4*) that "it seems likely that the TRC will have to make some changes". As a prophecy, it has fallen a little short of the truth.

The impact of the preservation society on the K&ESR has always been a cause of controversy within the TRC. The debate has often been acrimonious, and I don't want to repeat it here. But recent events at Northiam have thrown into focus the nature of the Colonel's engineering works and how, even under preservation, we may never see their like again.

Neil Rose, a member of our Society and also an assistant editor of the TRC's *Tenterden Terrier* journal, wrote to me recently defending the TRC against an accusation in John Scott Morgan's new book, *Railways of Arcadia*, that railway preservation is "fickle and plastic". Not wishing to enter into that debate, I quote a section of Neil's letter here because it reveals how times have changed in the Rother Valley:

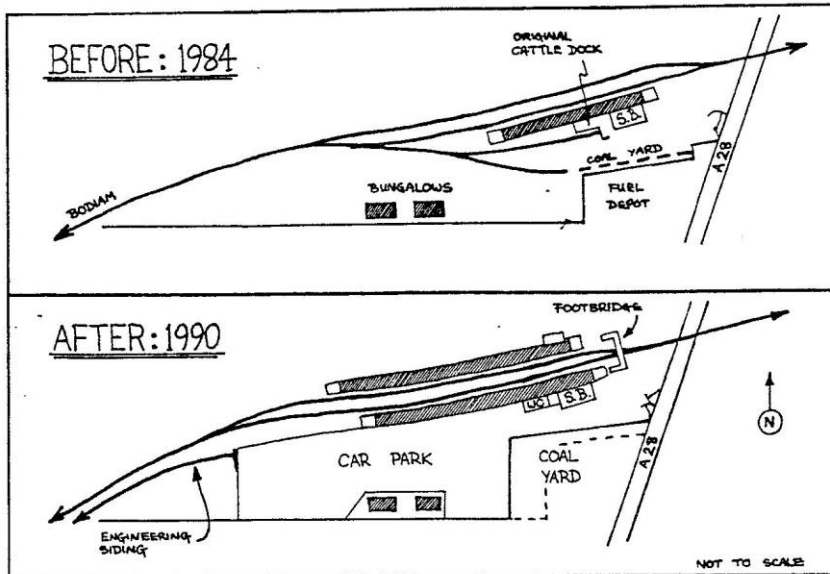
"Department of Transport requirements are increasingly stringent. For example, the rebuilt station layout at Northiam has generated a considerable head of steam in debate, but the choices are very limited. The DoT prescribes the minimum platform length and requires an edge overhang: we could not build a straight, brick-edged platform.

"The adjacent A28 is a dangerous racetrack and there is no possibility of just cattlegrids: what types of barrier will be installed has yet to be agreed with the local authorities.

"Also, the DoT will not allow tomorrow's passengers to cross between platforms by way of the level crossing or an adjoining foot crossing: hence the need for a footbridge. Out of character, yes, but a practical necessity: at least it comes from Robertsbridge. Elsewhere open road crossings may be reintroduced (with lights) to aid operating efficiency."

Even out on the line, the old methods are deemed to be simply

#####Fieldwork



not up to modern standards. On the section of line where I was working, the embankment was extremely crumbly, with a top layer apparently composed of the original ash ballast. The TRC had the services of an Australian Army civil engineer, Gary Barker to help them plan the relaying of the line to Northiam. He had to assess embankments for their load bearing capability and found them to be composed of "silty sands" with a bearing pressure of 1.5 tons/sq ft: "not a good engineering result", he pronounced.

"Because of the original materials used in the embankment, periodic maintenance, both of the track and drains, will always be required on the K&ESR," he reported. And: "Even though modern practices can be used, it is critical that regular maintenance occurs - the original light construction will always be a limiting factor."

Even the station building "could not have been put in a worse location", he said, because of the difficulty of matching the rail level to the floor level of the building and with that of the road crossing, requiring "summit and sag vertical curves."

So Northiam goods yard is to become a car park, and a toilet is to be built, apparently, on the concrete base that once was its cattle dock. Virtually nothing will remain of its original character. Keeping the K&ESR running has not been a matter of preservation much at all, but of updating to meet modern legal and commercial demands. But at least it *is* still running.

So if you want a taste of how things used to be, go to Bodiam station quickly. It is now unique. And probably doomed#

I Was There#####

HIGH SUMMER ON THE ASHOVER

J.I.C. Boyd recalls a day when he and a few chums set off on foot down the Ashover Light Railway and met a mirage

ONE SUMMER'S DAY many years ago, we set off from Ashover to walk the seven miles along the light railway to Clay Cross. We knew that only one goods train operated each day and that sooner or later we should meet it. The railway passed through a very pleasant part of Derbyshire, and we ambled easily along its grassy course.

It grew extremely hot, there being no wind, and after we had passed Miltown, Hurst Lane and other former passenger halts, we dropped down into the grass to cool off. There was no sign of the train yet, so we decided to rest during the hottest part of the day. Lunch passed in sandwich form and we dozed off, despite the wasps.

It was a distant banging noise which brought me back to earth and I looked up the line towards Clay Cross for some sign of movement. There was none, but high over the trees there arose an enormous pall of smoke, of suitable dimensions for an erupting volcano, but surely not the expected narrow gauge goods?

It hung in great black folds in the still atmosphere, in what today we should almost describe as an Atomic Mushroom. The clanking grew louder and then, lurching through the bushes, A Baldwin appeared, almost hidden boiler high by tall grass.

It belched rudely from the stovepipe smokestack and the infernal din was like that of an immense blacksmith's shop reverberating all around. It was my first sight of a narrow gauge Baldwin at work, and a never-to-be-forgotten one. As it grew closer, we could see its slow and heavy progress.

The noise of crashing ironwork muffled any sound of the volcanic exhaust and the swaying of the loco was so alarming that I thought it could not possibly keep to the rails. We all drew back instinctively. As this battered relic drew alongside, oozing steam from everywhere, leaking glands and rusty fittings appeared through the mist of its steamy shroud, the noise of the side-rods crashed through the ear drums and exhaust engulfed us in a down-pall of sweet-smelling smoke. I just saw a grimy face leering at us from the cab, and a tattered cap.

There followed four grey-streaked and muddy bogie opens, their sides bowed and their ironwork red with rust. Two dipped gracefully in the middle as if their backs were nearly broken. They lurched as excessively as did the engine. The last squealed loudly as it passed and its wheels stopped and picked up again - a hot box and obviously the cause of the driver's discomfort.

As slowly as the vision had appeared, it rounded the bend towards Ashover and was lost to sight, but not to sound. In the heat of the day, this fantastic rake had appeared as a mirage which had now disappeared#

This evocative description was passed to me by Ivor Gotheridge. He did once tell me where it had previously been published, but I have forgotten. He says the driver was Charlie Maycock. Ed.