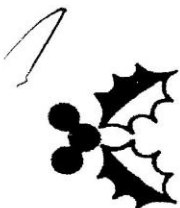


• THE COLONEL •

NUMBER 35 CHRISTMAS 1993

Editorial.....	2
News and Views.....	3
Letters to the Editor.....	4
H.M.S.T. Peckett 2-4-2T Selsey.....	5
I Was There - A Special 30 Years Ago.....	10
A S&MR Passenger Van in 4mm Scale.....	12
Down Among the Sleepers.....	15
Chairman's Corner.....	16



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

Another year is ending, a successful one for the Society I like to think. The Treasurer says that subscriptions have come in well, and there is a regular supply of new members to swell the ranks. Last year, because of the problems we had in the membership department, we stretched the Society rules somewhat and did not take defaulters off the books until after the Spring issue. This year there are no problems, so if you are one of the few who haven't yet paid, please do so immediately as otherwise this will be your last "Colonel". You have been warned!

I hope you are all happy with the "mix" of articles in "The Colonel". It's difficult to please everybody all the time, but we try. There are more good things in the pipeline: Ron Mann has done some drawings

of Selsey Tramway buildings which will be published soon, with track plans; Jon Clarke has written about the S&M "Colliers" and, on the same line, Bernard Holland has been researching the wagons used at Criggion; Martin Brent continues his "Railway Observer" browsings; and there are some more modelling articles as well. I have also several reprints of early articles on Stephens lines which can go in when space permits. However, I still need more material so that I can maintain the balance; even short pieces of half a page are useful for filling gaps, and current news is always useful, so keep the stuff coming in!

May I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a good New Year.

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Personal views expressed in articles and letters in this journal are those of the contributor, and not necessarily those of the Society or the Editor.

NEWS AND VIEWS

The Transport Trust

Bryan Heatley, Chairman of the Transport Trust, has sent me a list of visits for 1994 to which Society Members are invited.

Feb 27th: HMS Warrior and RN Museum, Portsmouth

Apr 8th: RAF Museum Reserve Collection & Workshop at Cardington, Beds.

Jun 11th: East Somerset Railway

July 20th: MOD Railways at Kineton, Warwicks. (This is it part of the Edge Hill Light Railway site)

Aug 21st: Vintage Transport Day at Old Warden, Beds.

Sep 4th: The Michael Banfield Collection of vintage road vehicles, in Kent.

Oct 9th: National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, including workshops etc.

At a date not yet set it is hoped to arrange an escorted Glyn Valley Tramway walk.

Anyone interested in attending any of the visits, please contact John Butler on 0372-272072 for more details.

Photographers and Coach Restoration

The re-creation of a typical aspect of the K&ESR's light railway roots has been made possible by a team of railway photographers, led by Geoff Silcock.

In recent months, the team has externally refurbished an ex SE&CR "birdcage" brake coach to permit the accurate re-creation of a K&ESR mixed train of the early 1950s. The coach, stored at Tenterden since acquisition from Longmoor in 1969, has been painted Southern Region green on one side, and British Railways red on the other. This is an interesting trick your Editor once used in modelling to give the illusion of twice the amount of stock as actually existed - but the ruse

Society Stand at Exhibitions

The Society has been invited to put on a display at two model railway exhibitions next year. The first is in Brighton on February 18th, 19th and 20th. The second is IMREX in London on 4th to 8th April incl. Both are free as long as we don't trade, and both have a large attendance, so it is a good way of advertising ourselves. We hope to obtain a suitable display stand for photographs, maps and descriptive material and will have a supply of hand-outs and application forms.

Although we won't be selling anything, we do need to have someone in attendance all the time who can keep an eye on things and answer questions from the public, so we need VOLUNTEERS. We can't pay any expenses, but of course you will get a chance to see the exhibition! If we have two people each day manning the stand in shifts of an hour or so there will be plenty of time to look round.

only works properly if you can turn the stock round, which of course they can't do on the K&ESR!

Three wagons plus an ex-Southern Railway Guards Van are also being repainted to complete the train, which will be hauled by "Terrier" 32650 to provide the most authentic light railway re-creation yet attempted on the line. The train will form the centre piece of a celebration on 2nd January 1994 to mark the 40th anniversary of the line's closure.

NEWS AND VIEWS

continues on Page 7.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lambourn Valley Coaches

Ron Mann asks about the reinforcement on the bottom edge of the sides of the ex-LVR coaches and what information I have. I believe the reinforcement to have been about 4 in wide and the full length of the body, based entirely on the study of photographs as noted below.

"Branch Line to Selsey" plates 12 and 30 show the reinforcement on two different coaches, a Third and a Composite and plates 62 and 72 show no reinforcement, again on a Third and a Composite; the latter photos were taken in 1911 and the others in the late 1920s or 1930s. A photo on page 149 of Railway Reflections (le Marquis) dated 1933 shows the composite with reinforcement.

In addition I have three unpublished views. One shows no reinforcing, but the bottom of the side looks rather the worse for wear; I would date this one to c1917. The others are late in the coaches' life and show the composite, and a short part of the end of one unknown coach; both show the reinforcement.

Errors in Published Work

Like Jon Clarke I find errors in books particularly frustrating, especially when they get repeated in later publications.

In the event that the Society decides to appoint a Steward for each of the Colonel's lines, I would be willing to be responsible for the Selsey Tramway.

Still on errors, I was rummaging through a pile of old Railway magazines at the Brunel Exhibition and came across one with a reader's letter saying that an earlier article by Hamilton Ellis implied that Gladstone (alias Northiam) was

One other question - when were the boards with "Selsey Tramways" and "Class" added? I would guess ca 1912.

Regarding commercial activities, looking at a copy of Cox's report on the Selsey line I note that the weekly wage bill was £22/17/1, that is £1188 per year which covered 11 full-time and 1 part-time staff.

The amount for "Part salaries of Tonbridge staff" was £209, which looks a very high proportion of the total wage bill. Just what services did the Tonbridge office staff provide?

Thanks to Ron Mann for the drawing of the Hudswell Clarke "Chichester". I look forward to the article on building the kit - I've got plans to do this too, eventually! Unfortunately, I don't think "Walton Park" would be any easier as it was a substantially bigger locomotive with larger wheels but a shorter wheel-base.

David Churchill, Solihull

blown to bits during filming of Oh! Mr Porter on the Basingstoke & Alton line whereas he, the writer, had seen it on the K&ESR in good condition. In fact it was an old SECR loco that was destroyed on that line in an earlier film. The Wreckers, so errors can originate from the pens of the most esteemed writers of the past.

Ron Mann, Kingsclere

Gladstone did blow up at the end of the film, but presumably by mock-ups and trick photography! - Ed.

H.M.S.T. "SELSEY"

Ron Mann and Les Darbyshire get together to describe and illustrate the Selsey line's most elegant locomotive

The locomotive "Selsey" was unique among the seven locomotives on the HMST in that it was purpose-built and purchased new, unlike the other third-or fourth-hand ex-contractors' machines. It was built by Peckett & Co. of Bristol in 1897, Works No.681, and was a 2-4-2T. It was intended to be the prototype of a new class of light railway locomotive, but no others were made so it remained a class of only one loco.

Although a new design, Peckett's drawings list shows that it utilised a great number of standard components, and also some components that were adapted from standard ones. This economy in design was also apparent in such features as the pony trucks, both leading and trailing ones being absolutely identical with small splashers over the wheels. Although having a simple history compared with the other Selsey locos, as we shall see it still managed to pose a few problems for the researcher: nothing on a Stephens line is ever that easy!

"Selsey" arrived shortly after the line opened and worked all its life on the line between Chichester and Selsey. It finally expired just six months before closure of the line in 1935. In the early years it was the pride of the line, being painted in the "standard" Colonel Stephens group livery of dark blue with vermillion lining. The vermillion buffer beams were edged in black and lined in white, the chimney cap, dome and smokebox door hinges were brightly polished, and the name "SELSEY." (with full stop!) was painted on the tank sides. It must have presented a very pretty sight.

The main drawing shows the locomotive in original condition. Published photographs depicting this state are rather hard to find, but one is on p 255 of the "Railway Magazine" for April 1935, and another is on p 38 of the second edition of E C Griffith's book on the line. (The photo on p 40 of the third edition, and the one on plate 37 of Bathurst's "The Selsey Tram", are incorrectly captioned and show a later state). Originally there were elegant curved side plates above the bunker, side tanks extending well forward of the dome and "wings" to the smokebox front plate extending the full width of the footplate in the manner of a Stroudley "Terrier". On the right-hand footplate ahead of the tank was a sandbox feeding the leading driving wheel, while on the left side the sandbox was in the cab and fed the trailing driver - a rather unusual arrangement.

Coal was presumably carried in the bunker at the rear, but exactly how it got either into or out of the bunker is most unclear. Above the bunker was an inclined cover (shown dotted on the side view) extending the full bunker width. It can be clearly seen on plate 22 of "Branch Line to Selsey". There is no sign either of hinges or of a catch to hold it out of the way when coaling up, so it must have been an inconvenience to say the least, and anyway what was it for? The means of getting coal out of the bunker are equally obscure, as the Peckett works photo, which is very sharp and shows the interior of the rear part of the cab very clearly, shows no sign whatsoever of a hole for the coal to emerge from! There must be an explanation; I can't believe coal was kept on the floor or in the fireman's pockets!

A number of changes took place over the engine's life that altered its appearance somewhat. These are detailed below as an aid to dating photographs or modelling.

1. The first change was very shortly after, delivery, when the curved plates above the bunker were removed and the cab roof shortened to suit. A single coal rail was added around the bunker, but the sloping cover was retained. Probably at the same time the smokebox wing plate was removed, as was the right-hand sandbox.

This is the condition depicted by the incorrectly-captioned photo on p 40 of "Griffith", 3rd Edition.

2. A little later, but before 1905, the side tanks were re-positioned rearwards as shown on the upper drawing. Some references state that the tanks were shortened, but this is clearly not the case: the line of rivets marking the position of the back of the tanks shows that they have been moved bodily backwards, intruding into the previously very spacious cab. Quite why this alteration was made is not clear, as it must have upset the loco's trim more than a little. No wonder the crews said it caused the loco to slip badly especially with a heavy load on wet rails so they had to sand the rails by hand to get a grip! The removal of the sandbox couldn't have helped.

Several published photos show this state, e.g.

- "The Selsey Tram" plates 4 & 38
- "Branch Line to Selsey" plate 2
- "Railways of Arcadia" plate 22
- "Colonel Stephens Railways" p 32

3. In 1908 the locomotive required a new firebox, a difficult task for a line with minimal facilities for heavy lifting. The problem was solved by stripping the boiler of all fittings, then jacking it up clear of the frames. The frames and wheels were

run clear, and replaced by a LB&SCR boiler wagon on to which the boiler was lowered for its journey back to Peckett & Co. in Bristol. This procedure was reversed for re-assembly. Three small detail alterations took place at the same time. The injector overflow pipes ran out over the edge of the footplate; a handrail was fitted along the top of the tanks; and the rear part of the cabside opening was blanked in. It is not clear whether at this time the original left-hand-side sandbox was still present, but there was certainly one now on the right side, in the cab. By 1911, the loco was numbered "No.2" on the front buffer beam and maybe on the rear one also. (No.1 was presumably "Chichester" the first).

The best photo of this state is the wrongly-captioned plate 37 of "The Selsey Tram", others being in "Branch Line to Selsey" plate 20, 21 and 70

4. The next changes were relatively minor, and took place at some time between 1911 and 1915. A post/handrail was fitted from the cabside to the roof just ahead of the doorway and safety chains were fitted to both front and rear buffer beams. This seems a very odd addition - safety chains went out of use on the main lines by late Victorian times, so why should anyone go to the expense of adding them to "Selsey"? It could perhaps have been related to the arrival of the Lambourn Valley coaches in 1910, though since the original Falcon and Hurst Nelson coaches had safety chains one would have thought that "Selsey" would have had them from new. To add to the mystery, none of the other locos had them!

Photographs of this condition are, for example, "Branch Line to Selsey" plates 5, 22 and 26.

5. The fifth and final change took place at some time between 1915 and 1927. Sandboxes were mounted on both footplates

ahead of the tanks, and the smokebox front plate reverted to a full winged one. The smokebox wrapper (previously prominently riveted) was now flush, and the lamp bracket over the smokebox door removed. The sloping "lid" to the bunker seems to have gone at this stage. Two last details - cast nameplates were fitted, and the loco was now numbered "No.1" on the bufferbeam as "Chichester" had long since departed.

In this final state "Selsey" ran until it was withdrawn with leaking tubes in 1934. By closure in January 1935 the paint was sufficiently worn for the original painted name to have revealed itself on the tank side, under and alongside the cast name. "Morous" was similarly "decorated" at this time. The livery (if you could call it that) was described in the 1935 Railway Magazine article as light grey, but whether this was the actual paint colour or the result of weathering of an earlier livery colour I do not know - the sea air must have played havoc with the paintwork.

The end came in 1936 when it was cut up on site, and thus ended the career of what was probably the most elegant locomotive to run on a Colonel Stephens railway. It would make a lovely model, though I have only ever heard of one attempt and that was by an Australian!

The drawings have been updated and corrected from those that appeared long ago in "Model Railway News. This has been possible firstly because an original Peckett G.A. drawing surfaced following publication of the original article (this always happens!) and secondly because member Rupert Harper has very kindly provided much additional information from his own researches, and has lent a magnificent copy of the Peckett official works photo. This latter photo was used by Peckett for their brochure though, to add yet another mystery to end our story, for some reason they re-touched the back of the cab so that it was unlike any of the states of the real loco!

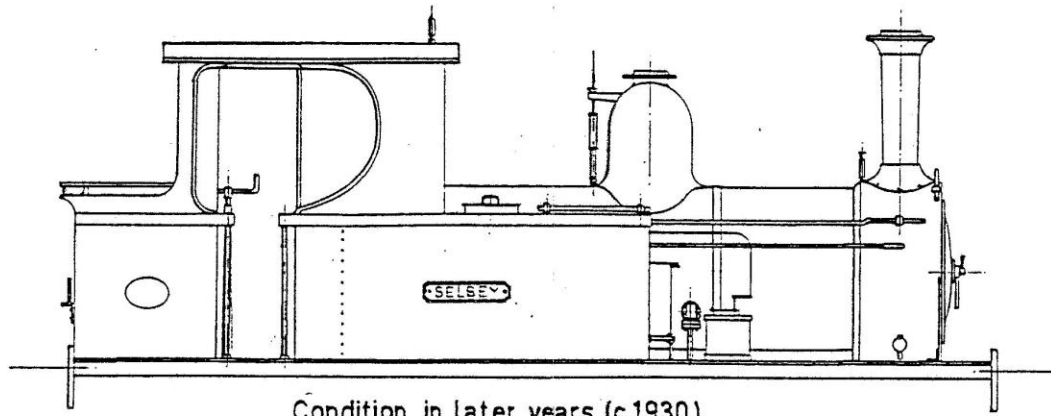
NEWS AND VIEWS Continued from Page 3

East Kent Progress

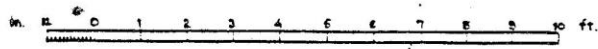
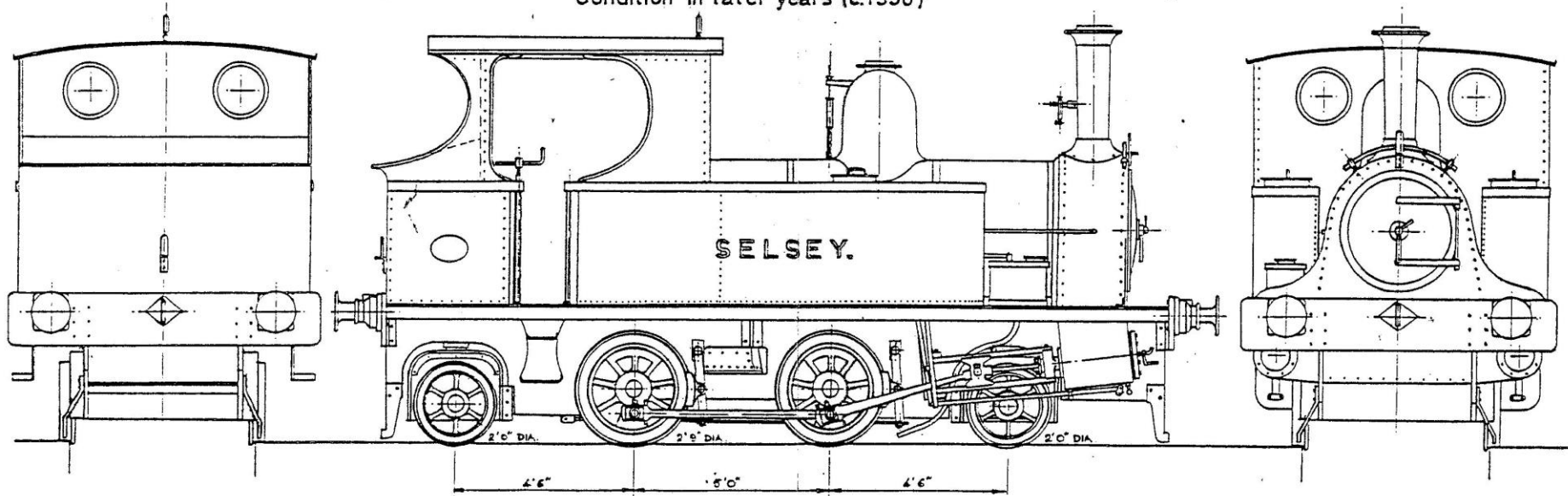
Although as reported in the last issue of "The Colonel", the East Kent Railway has received its Light Railway Order, this does not mean that public passenger carrying can commence immediately. First, the Railway Inspectorate has to be satisfied that all aspects of the proposed operation (both the hardware and the procedures) are in accordance with its rules so that its approval can be given. There is still some work to do to get to this stage but, all being well, this approval will be sought in the new year so that the line can be opened (with due ceremony) to the public in the Spring. We hope to be able to give more details in the next issue.

Prior to this, several events are planned. Santa will be visiting Shepherdswell on 18th and 19th December bearing gifts for the children (plus wine and mince pies for the adults). For details ring 0304-852705/822850 or 0227-453081. On 22nd & 23rd January there will be book sale, again at Shepherdswell, commencing at 11 am.

The EKR sales stand will be attending four Model railway shows in the new year: Margate on 16th January, Ashford on 12th March, Dartford on 19th & 20th March and Whitstable on 23rd April.



Condition in later years (c.1930)



Scale 1:32

SELSEY TRAMWAYS

2-4-2 "SELSEY"

Peckett & Sons, 1897

I WAS THERE

Martin Brent, in nostalgic mood, recalls a never-to-be-repeated "Special" over two of the Colonel Stephens lines more than 30 years ago!

True it was only a few years ago, 1961 to be precise, but Sunday 11th June of that year was of some significance. It was the day that the last British Railways train ran on two of the Colonel's lines - the Hawkhurst branch and the remaining stump of the Kent & East Sussex Railway from Robertsbridge to Tenterden.

On the previous Saturday the Hawkhurst branch had seen a typical 1960s farcwell with strengthened trains full of camera-happy enthusiasts and a chaotic last train - wreaths, detonators, Last Post, Auld Lang Syne - the lot.

On the Sunday, the Locomotive Club of Great Britain arranged an enthusiasts' special, the "South Eastern Limited", which was, in effect, a wake for the two lines. The route was Victoria - Bexley Heath - Maidstone West - Hawkhurst - Tonbridge - Tenterden - Otford - Beckenham Junction - Charing Cross. Such was the demand for seats on this train that it had to be strengthened from seven to nine coaches and so it was that at 9.30 am, having paid my thirty shillings (£1.50 in modern money) I presented myself at Victoria on a bright but showery day, full of eager anticipation.

Because of a shortage of Hastings line restriction stock the train was a mixture of corridor and non-corridor stock. The train comprised two S100 non-corridor coaches, BSK 3687, CK 5601, Buffet Car 7874, Ck 5598, BSK 3690, CK 5592 and BSK 3680. Motive power was provided by Bricklayers Arms in the shape of "L1" 31786 and "D1" 31749. Promptly at 9.52

am we left Victoria and 2 hours 22 minutes later we rounded the curve into Paddock Wood to see "O1" 31065 and "C" 31592 gleaming in the sun and suitably adorned with a wreath.

After a change of engines we set off some 3 minutes late, running parallel with the main line before curving away onto the branch proper. Passing Churn Lane sidings, largely grass covered, we made stops at Horsmonden, Goudhurst and Cranbrook before coming to a halt just outside Hawkhurst where 31065 ran into the yard enabling 31592 to release itself from the short headshunt and run round the train. Whilst this was going on we explored the station surrounds, pushing our way through the long, damp grass. The locals, together with a multitude of enthusiasts, were thronging the station and a good crowd saw us off on our non-stop return to Paddock Wood and back along the main line to Tonbridge.

I had been lucky enough to secure a corner seat in one of the non-corridor coaches next to the engines and on this journey I sat listening to the locomotives and watching the Weald of Kent roll by. What, I wondered, had every-day travel been like on the branch? A lot more peaceful, I decided, idly watching an "enthusiast" removing luggage rack supports to add to his collection of relics. *[What ever did they do with things like that? - Ed.]*

At Tonbridge, something went wrong. I don't know exactly what, but I do remember standing on the wet platform watching

our train doing nothing. Eventually the "O1" and the "C" departed, and on the other end coupled our old friend "D1" 31749 and "H" Class 31308. Leaving some 30 minutes late we flew to Robertsbridge. Never have I travelled so fast on the Hastings line. Sitting at the rear of the train one could see the locomotives pounding away; I didn't know that an "H" could run so fast! Arrival at Robertsbridge was 23 minutes late and to make up 7 minutes on a run of that length was really something!

Waiting at Robertsbridge on the K&ESR "main line" was Terrier, No.32662 and in the bay 32670 - old K&ESR No.3 "Bodiam". The "D1" and "H" reversed the train onto the K&ESR, propelling up to 32662. The rear Brake Second and Corridor Composite were detached and 32670 buffered up to the rear of the train. At 3.44 we set off on the journey I had often dreamed of - a day return journey to Tenterden.

Slowly the train built up to about 20 mph and this steady progress was maintained past Hodson's Mill, Salehurst and Junction Road to Bodiam, our first stop. Further stops were made at Northiam and Wittersham Road. At the former, I and a few others decided to photograph the train from an adjoining field. Speed was of the essence as we just beat the herd of inquisitive bullocks back to the fence, photographs safely taken, and regained our train!

After this period of time, I cannot remember whether we took water at Rolvenden on the outward or return journey. I can remember a sense of disappointment at the desolation of Rolvenden and can also recall photographing a photographer who was on top of the water tower photographing me (and the train). It was shortly after leaving Rolvenden that we hit a more serious problem.

Our progress up the bank to Tenterden was measured, after Cranbrook Road Crossing, by the number of puffs per minute which were decreasing rapidly. Eventually we stalled, or to put it more politely, came to rest on the bank a couple of hundred yards from Tenterden Town. The train crews, Driver Kennard and Fireman Blair on 32670 and Passed Fireman Edwards and Fireman Roberts on 32662 spent five minutes raising steam and eventually we ground our way up to the station.

A band of us made a bee-line to the Headcorn end to photograph the undergrowth and explore the yard. In the meantime the locomotives ran round the train ready for our departure some 55 minutes late. At 5.50 pm to the sound of much whistling and cheers, the last BR train left Tenterden - or did it? There were still wagons in the yard which weren't there a few weeks later. Does anyone know exactly when and how they were taken away; was it a ghost train that came to collect them?

Repeating the stops at Rolvenden, Wittersham Road, Northiam and Bodiam we wended our way back to Robertsbridge, halting outside the station for more shunting to restore the two coaches to the train. Then back on to the main line and a late running slot back to London. Arrival at Charing Cross was nearly 90 minutes late and Sunday connections and buses being what they were, arrival in my home village just north of Reading was nearly midnight.

What a day - I had achieved an ambition. I was determined to walk the line but would I ever again ride from Robertsbridge to Tenterden by train? Perhaps the Preservation Society leaflet handed out on the train would provide an answer!

A S&MR PASSENGER BRAKE VAN IN 4MM SCALE

Ian Hammond raids his "kits and bits" box

I once knew a fellow modeller who in his modelling den had at least a dozen plastic crates full of kits and bits for his modelling project. Every available kit to suit his desired prototype was present in quantity.

HANDS UP ALL SIMILAR COLONEL TYPES.....!

Well, there's this chest of drawers that contains these kits and bits of suitable Stephens prototypes that has built up over the past years. In the midst of these was a set of Trevor Charlton etched sides and ends for a Midland Diagram D529 25 ft 4-Wheel Full Brake. The plan had been to build a model of the S&M passenger brakes Nos.1 and 2. However, every time I came across these bits I looked, thought and put them back. The main problem seemed to be:

- a) sticking them together as they were zinc, soldering being difficult
- b) all the other missing details

In a mad moment the idea came:

KITMINGLING!

That is, using bits from the Ratio Midland suburban kits (No 711/4) and other bits from various suppliers. You will need the following:

1. Trevor Charlton etched sides & ends ref.181
2. Ratio underframe, solebars, ends, lamp tops, roof
3. Westward MR coach sprung buffers ref.CM47

4. Puffers Brass Fret No.CG103 for coach door handles (loop type) and door ventilators

5. D&S GN van W-irons ref.DS250-W12

6. D&S GE coach axleboxes/springs ref.DS100-AS4

METHOD

Take the Ratio ends (1 plain, 1 stepped) and file them to fit the Zinc sides. On the sides one piece of detail that has been missed is the dog-box louvres at one end. This is easily rectified by using a square burr in a mini-drill. The burr will easily produce the correct shape. (Diag.1)

Remove the moulded plastic hand-rails on the stepped end, to be replaced with brass wire. Stick the two ends to one of the sides ensuring that the louvres correspond with the plain end. Depending on the period being modelled the plain end will need two small windows cutting in it. (Diag.2) As my model is in the early period I have omitted these windows, though when they were put in is uncertain. A good photo showing them is on p 39 of Turner's book on the S&M (but beware - Nos.1 & 2 are different in this respect!)

With the three-sided box complete, measure up from end to end for the floor. Cut this from the spruce, clean up and measure the length required. I suggest that you use the middle section as the moulding underneath the floor will prove useful. Cut away the length-wise moulding to enable the later fitting of the W-irons.

Stick this floor section to the assembled sides and ends, then fix the remaining side in place. I then put a fillet of epoxy glue around the floor/sides/ends for strength. Next take the Ratio buffer beams and trim the ends level with the width of the vehicle (Ratio's sides are thicker than Trevor's). Cut the solebars from the sprue and remove the truss-rod and foot-board from the moulding. (Diag.3) Cut the solebars to the same length as the floor to fit between the buffer beams. You will now need to turn the solebar upside down so that the moulded foot-board is at the lowest point. Offering this up to the side, mark the foot-board positions. (Diag.4) Cut away the unnecessary plastic and glue under the side.

The ducket being in zinc and separate needs to be fixed to the sides. My method

was to firstly drill a hole in the side to take an 8 BA brass cheese-head bolt. I glued the bolt head to the ducket using epoxy and when set I used car body filler to fill the gap between the side and the ducket, filing it to shape when cured.

Now the roof. Take the Ratio roof moulding and measure the amount required, taking into account the overhang. Remove the moulded rainstrips, replacing them with microstrip. Mark the centre line for the lamp tops. There are three of these, one on the centre line of the ducket and one over each set of double doors. You will need to remove about 1mm from the width of the roof (plastic sides again). On both ends of the roof is a small hand-rail; these will need to be fitted together with the hand-rails at both ends. (See photos for these, but note that there were no hand-rails on the window ends)

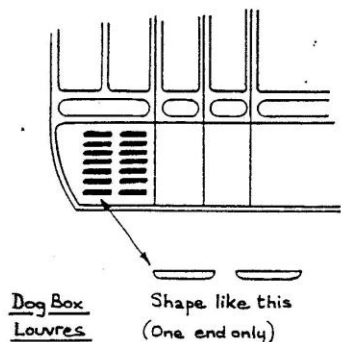


Diagram 1

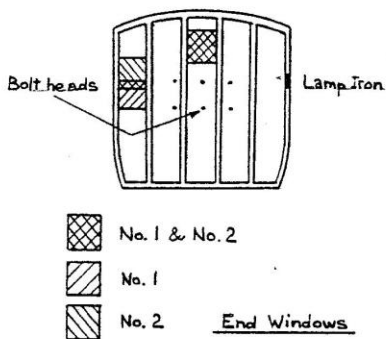


Diagram 2

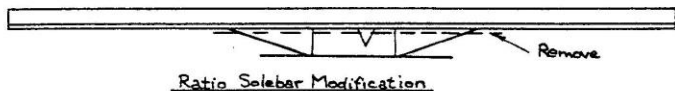


Diagram 3

The sides do not come with door ventilators so fit these from the Puffers fret trimmed as necessary. Also fit the door handles using superglue. The centre-line of the W-irons is the centre-line of the double doors. Fit these in the normal manner with wheels of your choice. Glue the springs/axleboxes into place. The lower foot-boards are constructed from scrap brass strip and 0.7mm brass hangers, 5 of which are required each side, spaced as shown (Diag.5) and glued

in place. Fit the buffers to the buffer-beams; I suggest the heads are fitted after painting. The vacuum pipes are fitted in the centre of both ends just above the buffer-beams and to the left side of the couplings.

Paint according to taste/period, stick on the roof and couple up to the stock standing in the platform to complete your S&M train!

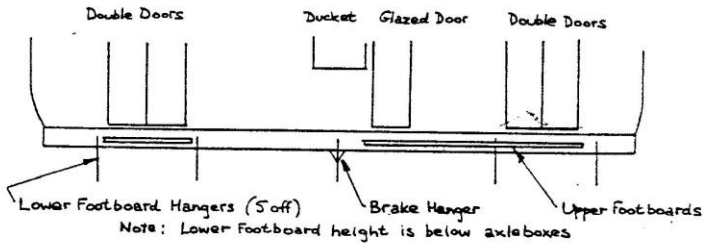


Diagram 4/5

NIGEL BIRD

(Treasurer and Membership Secretary of our Society)

also for a full-time occupation BUYS and SELLS all types of
PRINTED RAILWAY MATERIAL, BOOKS, MAGAZINES,
TIME-TABLES, OFFICIAL GUIDES ETC. ETC.

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DOWN AMONG THE SLEEPERS

Adrian Kennedy gives us an insight into the work that goes into keeping the K&ESR running smoothly

As mentioned in the last "Colonel", during the week October 25th to 29th a track re-laying exercise was to take place on the Kent & East Sussex. The section of track involved was the 95 lb rail from Newmill Bridge towards Rolvenden up to the 91.25 lb rail transition - a total of 14 lengths.

Preparation work began on Sunday with the setting out of reference posts alongside the section that was being re-laid, the reference point being the keying edge of the chair; one rail was also marked with the new sleeper spacing. The replacement concrete sleepers had been deposited at the track side at an earlier date.

On the Monday the transition fishplates were removed and the section de-keyed including two lengths past the end of the re-lay; it is amazing the number of spiders, earwigs etc. that live in this area! The rails were jacked out and laid aside in one length, still being connected at the Newmill end. The old sleepers were then removed, the track levelled and a string line tied between the reference posts. The concrete sleepers were then positioned using the marked rail for spacing, and string line plus measuring stick for alignment references. The rails were then moved back into position alongside the sleepers ready for lifting in.

One rail was then jacked up on to the edge of the chair and after a while, the fact that it is still connected at one end plus its own weight means it turns and drops itself into the chairs. It is quite a gratifying sight to watch the rail drop itself in, like a snake gradually turning over along its length! There is of course always the odd sleeper to finally adjust to get the rail

down in every chair, but this is where the preparation work pays dividends. The other rail was in place by Wednesday and keyed up. Wooden sleepers were laid at the transitions so as not to cause future rail failure that can occur when dissimilar sleepers are used each side of a rail joint.

On Thursday, new 95/91.25 lb transition fishplates were fitted and shimmed for correct gauge alignment; this exercise was not without its problems, it is hard to credit the variations on a theme of joining two rails together. Whilst this was going on, the track was being jacked and packed by eye level. Lunch time and time for Pete's (one of the P/Way gang regulars) birthday treat, a scantily clad young lady complete with thigh boots and whip who presented him with a cake. The invitation to help with the "jacking and packing" was declined (I'll leave readers to their own connotations) In the afternoon the P/Way train was used to settle the track before being checked with a rail level for final levelling. Ballast was discharged from the hopper wagon and the section will be finally tamped in a couple of weeks.

A "Thank you" to those who turned up to assist the regulars.

Other major work this winter includes new drainage at the small cutting at Newmill plus up-grading to 95 lb rail (if funds permit), and in January a new 1 in 10 point at the level crossing end of Wittersham Road. This will be built in the car park and lifted into position. As always, if you want to lend a hand "we" would be very glad to see you.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Members will recall the wooden jib 3-ton yard crane formerly in the S&M yard at Shrewsbury Abbey station which was moved, just in time, 3 years ago to Mike Wright's Myddle Wood Railway. This small 7 1/4" gauge line runs for just under half a mile. Besides the railway there are many other attractions including the signal box, now in full working order, from Llansantfraid and the coach used by Winston Churchill during the war, together with the body of Gazelle's second trailer, the ex-Wolseley-Siddeley railcar.

I am pleased to report that a new ash jib has been obtained and machined to size by a local boat builder, paid for by myself. After drying under cover, it will be varnished. The crane is to be moved to near the signal box and painted, then the new jib will be fitted in the new year. It will then be almost in working order for the first time since 1948 when the hoist chain was sent to Swindon works and scrapped.

As I understand it, the crane never worked again but I may be wrong on that. At the moment brake parts and handles are missing, but it is hoped that replacements will be found before too long.

Some years ago I was in contact with a former member of the S&M Abbey staff, who was one of the last to use the crane in 1947. He would be pleased to know it will soon be in action again!

When the crane was removed from the Abbey yard it was discovered that it was once a mobile crane that must have run on a track; once again we see the Colonel making good use of what was available. It is hoped that the bottom section of the base can remain open to show the small wheels, giving a picture of what it was like before being encased in concrete to form the base we know so well from photos.

[I wonder if the Tenterden crane is also a mobile one under its concrete base? - Ed.]

THE COLONEL

wishes all its readers

a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!

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