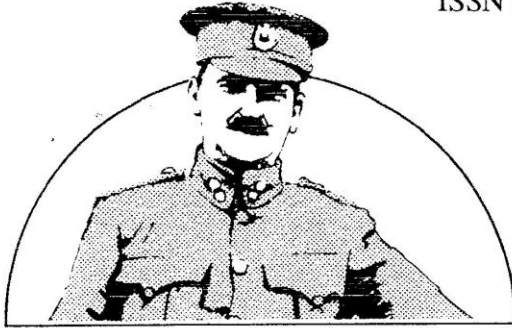


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• THE COLONEL •

NUMBER 36 SPRING 1994

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THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

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



THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

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

EDITORIAL

Publicity Success!

The new Society publicity display was out for the first time in Brighton last month, and it was most successful. Four new members were recruited on the spot, and several others have joined since. Many thanks to those who came along to help and to those who brought models along.

Our next outing is to IMREX in London. This time it is not a "manned" stand.

This issue has turned out to be a bumper S&M one! I have some material in hand (and the second instalment of two of this issue's articles to come) but I am getting a bit low and somewhat lacking in choice, so would welcome some more contributions from you. Yes, YOU!

COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

Notice is hereby given that the 7th Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place at 2.30 pm on Saturday 23rd April 1994, at Keen House, Calshot Street, London N 1.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Actions from the last A.G.M.
3. Chairman's Report
4. Treasurer's/Membership Secretary's Report
5. Election of officers: (a) Treasurer (b) Membership Secretary (c) Editor (d) Publicity Officer (e) Committeeman
6. Subscription for 1994/5
7. Society badge
8. Light Railway Act Centenary Exhibition
9. Any other business

Derek Smith, Chairman

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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

Transport Trust Visits

More items have been added to the Transport Trust's 1994 fixture list published in the last issue. Additions are as follows.

May 7th: Trust A.G.M. at the Sir Henry Royce Memorial Foundation, Paulerspury, Northants, followed in the afternoon by a visit to the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway.

July 1st: An evening visit to the Mersey Road Tunnel to celebrate its 60th anni-

versary, followed by a midnight walk through the 1886 Mersey Railway tunnel!

July 2nd: A walk along part of the trackbed of the Glyn Valley Tramway, including a visit to the Chwarel Wynne slate mine and possibly a visit to the Moel Fferna Tramway with its wooden rails.

All Society members are invited to participate in these visits. For further information ring John Butler on 0372-272072.

News from Tenterden

The K&ESR re-opened on 6th March after a two months closure to allow for track re-laying. (See article in the last issue)

For the 1994 season, a good variety of locomotives will be available, including the Norwegian Mogul and the USA tank which will both be back in service. Also running on some days will be the Hastings line DEMU. (*Ugh!* - Ed.) The Victorian train, used for our Society trip, will be strengthened by the newly restored SECR family saloon, and there should be an extra SR Maunsell coach by the summer.

Special events will take place on certain week-ends during the year as follows.

1st-4th April: Family Fun Week-end

25th-26th June (also 17th-18th Sept.): Thomas the Tank Engine Week-ends

16th-17th July: Delivering the Goods. Extra freight trains running

15th-16th October: A Century on Rails. A special service with at least four locos in action and a wide variety of stock running

5th November: Diesel Day (*On Guy Fawkes Day? That's tempting fate!* - Ed.)

6th November: 1950s & 60s day, with both steam and diesel in operation.

News from Shepherdswell

Down on the East Kent, things are happening! On 5th December the Railway Inspectorate carried out an inspection and braking tests. These being satisfactory, he gave approval for a limited passenger-carrying operation as far as the first level crossing. The trains involved were Santa Specials, and were the first scheduled public passenger trains (other than specials) over the line since 31st October 1948!

Coming events are:

26-27 March (also 21-22 May): Book Sale at Shepherdswell Station, 11 am to 5 pm.

4th June: Wine & Quizdom evening in Shepherdswell Village Hall at 7.30 pm. Tickets £3.50 (incl wine & food) from: Margaret Sapsed, 5 Bankside Flats, Canterbury CT1 1SB (cheques to East Kent Light Railway Society)

COALS TO KINNERLEY

Jon Clarke looks into the history of the LNWR "Collier" 0-6-0 engines used on the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway

Origins

Construction of this class commenced in 1873 and continued until 1892, during which time a total of 500 were built. One of the class was erected at Crewe Works, under the direction of F W Webb, and was in steam in just 25 1/2 hours! The weight of the engine was 32 tons, and it was fitted with a standard LNWR 1800 gallon tender. The driving wheel diameter was originally 4' 3", but thicker tyres were later fitted to make them slightly greater at 4' 5 1/2". Wheel centres were of cast iron with H-section spokes. The locos were lightly built but had good traction (16,350 lbs), using 17" x 24" cylinders and having a boiler pressure of 150 lbs from a total heating surface of 1074.5 square feet.

The first withdrawals started in about 1903, and the number in service at grouping on 1st January 1923 was 227. The number in service at nationalisation was just 46, and of these 42 were allocated BR numbers 58320-61, though not all survived to carry them. Of the four un-allocated, three were on the S&M. The last survivor was withdrawn in 1953.

The Pre-War Period on the S&M

The first Collier to be obtained by the S&M, number 8108, was purchased from the LMS in March 1930. 8108 was built in 1874 as LNWR No.2167, Crewe Works No.1869. In 1922, 8108 had been fitted with a new boiler, and in the three years leading up to purchase it had covered 11,069, 28,212 and 25,349 miles respectively. During this time it received a major overhaul in 1929 and boiler repairs in January 1930. The engine was an immediate success on the S&M, as had been earlier 0-6-0 tender locomotives. Its light

weight particularly suited the lightly laid track.

At a meeting of the S&M Directors on 6th November 1930, Ramsey, the S&M Chairman, was authorised to ascertain the cost of purchasing two second-hand engines to replace the "Ilfracombe Goods", and to provide for the increased stone traffic for the construction of the Liverpool to Manchester Arterial road (now more commonly called the East Lancs road), for which BQC at Criggion were a major supplier.

Following the success of 8108, it was decided to view locomotives of the same class. For once the S&M acted quickly, and by 8th January 1931 two ex-LNWR Coal class engines had been inspected with a view to purchase and offers made to the LMS of £420 for one and £390 for the other. The LMS rejected both offers, so the Directors resolved to inspect others of the same class. This resulted in the purchase from the LMS of 8182 on 25th March 1931 (not June as often incorrectly reported) at a cost of £380. 8182 was originally LNWR No.155, Crewe Works No.2333, built 1878. It was fitted with a new boiler in 1918, and in the three years prior to purchase it covered 13,745, 16,119 and 15,525 miles respectively. It received a major overhaul in 1929 and boiler repairs in October 1930. 8182 joined 8108 as the main source of motive power on the line. In view of the progress with re-sleeping the Criggion branch (at 50 sleepers per week!), on Sunday 28th June 1931 the S&M Engineer carried out an experimental journey along the branch with either 8108 or 8182 with a view to using them on the branch. No undue deflection of the bridges was experienced.

the bridge over the River Severn at Melverley being the main concern, and it was decided to use these heavier engines in future over the branch, starting from 13th July, working between Criggion and Shrewsbury.

Stone traffic reached a peak this year, totalling 145,472 tons. 8108 and 8182 were kept very busy with this stone traffic, and also with mixed and passenger trains. Therefore after due consideration the Directors on 9th July 1931 gave authority to purchase another Coal class engine, though it was another 11 months before one was finally acquired. On 29th April 1932, it was reported to the Directors that arrangements were being made to inspect one or two Coal class engines with a view to purchasing one as had been authorised in the previous July. On 21st June (not August as reported in some articles) these inspections resulted in No.8236 being bought from the LMS for £375. 8236 was LNWR No.2422. Crewe Works No.2459, built 1881. It was re-boilered in 1925, and in the three years before purchase it had run 11,712, 8,794 and 9,817 miles respectively, far fewer than the other two engines. This was possibly due to the time it had spent at Crewe under repair.

In February 1928 it had received heavy repairs, followed in March by light repairs to the tender. It was back at Crewe in January 1929 for more repairs, and in August the tender required heavy repairs. It covered only 6697 miles before more boiler repairs were needed in March 1930, and the problematic tender had to have more heavy repairs, this time in December 1931. All the attention to the tender proved of value 15 years later, though within a month of its arrival 8236 was in for repairs again, for a new tube plate.

8108 was re-tubed during October 1932 at a cost of £98/19/7d. Also in October,

authority was given to re-tube 8182 but this still had not been carried out by March 1933 when it was reported that the tubes of 8236 were in need of greater attention, so 8236 was re-tubed instead!

During 1934, the fall in stone traffic (only 34,511 tons for the year) was reflected in the coal consumption of the "Colliers", down to just 8 tons a week from a high of 20 tons a week in February 1932. In 1935, after 2 years service with the S&M, 8236 had a new firebox fitted, having done 59,571 miles since arrival in July 1932, an average of 20,000 miles a year. With declining stone traffic, the S&M made efforts to raise income from other means. The most notable were special excursions along the line. These took place at most Bank Holiday week-ends, and Bank Holiday Monday, 5th August 1935 was no exception with morning and afternoon excursions. With no freight traffic, the "Colliers" were free to run the excursions and the afternoon trip saw two of them in steam. 8236 was used to head the Shrewsbury to Llanymynech stage, which consisted of two ex-Midland Railway bogie coaches and the ex-LSWR Royal coach. 8108 was used for the branch excursion to Criggion, departing from the bay platform at Kinnerley pulling the ex-Midland 4-wheeled passenger brake plus two ex-NSR 4-wheeled coaches. It was a rare occasion for the S&M to see two engines in steam.

Towards the end of 1937, helped by having had a new tube plate fitted at Crewe in August 1936 (having done 87,378 miles since October 1930), 8182 was doing the bulk of the work on the line. Meanwhile, on 2nd October, both 8108 and 8182 were seen "at rest" in the locomotive shed at Kinnerley. In fact, 8108 had begun an 18 month period of heavy repairs in the workshops by an S&M fitter. With 8108 under repair all through 1938, 8236 had to do all the work, and in October it was sent to Crewe for urgent boiler repairs.

The long winded repair to 8108 came to an end in April 1939 (not May as often recorded) when it was seen back in service on April 30th. It returned as S&MR No.2, not as 8108. It was painted in Southern style, olive green with a black border with white line between, and with a large "2" on the cab sides in yellow. The tender had a small "2" in green or black on the buffer beam, and "S & M" in yellow on the tender sides. Coupling rods and buffer beams were red. The rebuild had included re-tubing and a new smokebox door. This had come from Crewe Works, where the wheels had been sent for re-turning.

In September 1939, World War Two commenced, but in keeping with the slow rustic air of the S&M, the "phoney war" period was greatly extended, by nearly two years. During this period, 8182 went twice to Crewe for repairs, first in November 1940 for boiler repairs and then in March 1941 for heavy repairs. On its return, 8236 was despatched to Crewe for heavy repairs.

Then, on 1st June 1941, the line came under new management

To be continued in the next issue.

A SORT OF REALISM

Peter Jones captures the essence of a Stephens railway with his outdoor live-steam line

I want to take you into a slightly different world of modelling Colonel Stephens' railways; somewhere where the gap between the model and the real thing is at its smallest.

Picture, if you will, a simple track, welded up out of old steel bar, to 3 1/2" gauge. There isn't a lot of money to spend and the ballasting is mostly old ashes. It wanders through a garden, going from nowhere to nowhere, but with a station at each end. It is rudimentary but it sits under an ever-changing sky and season. Only one station building is complete at the time of writing, for this is something in the nature of an experiment: a kind of reconnaissance in force.

The station is called Minster Road and gives some hint of the Col. Stephens flavour to the whole enterprise. But, best of all, the main motive power is live steam fired by coal. Number One on the Company Stock List is an elderly 0-4-0T based on "Tich". It is a little weary now and has ceased its previous duties of hauling me

along a club track. The black paint is worn and faded but the brassware still polishes up to a brave shine.

The loco has been prepared in a steaming bay. The horrible electric blower has been taken off now that there is 25 psi on the clock. In the afternoon sunshine, there is a slight shimmering above the boiler as we go through the routine - but very pleasant routine - jobs. The tanks are filled with water. The engine hasn't been used for a couple of weeks and there is an oily rusty scum floating on top; we must be prepared for a bit of priming. Slowly, the fire is built up, changing from wood chips to coal. Now that most of the Welsh pits have closed, good steam coal is hard to come by. We have to live with anthracite these days; its not perfect, but is better than the duff that is sold these days as alleged steam coal.

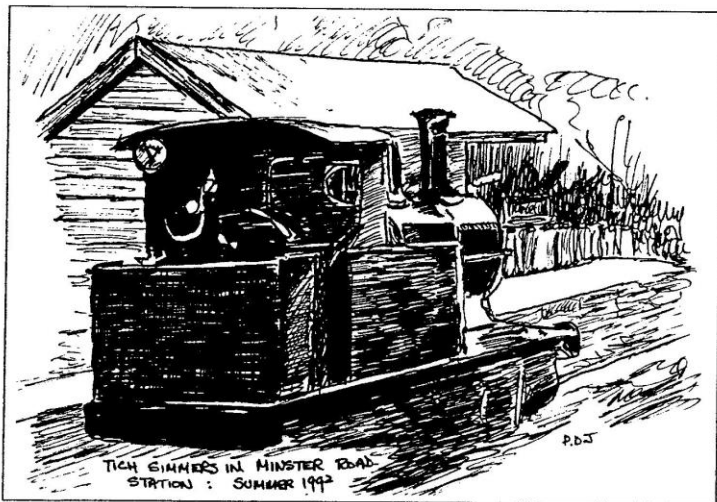
The oil can goes round. There is plenty of wear in the components but oil will extend the working life a bit further; oil is cheaper than cylinders! The glass is tap-

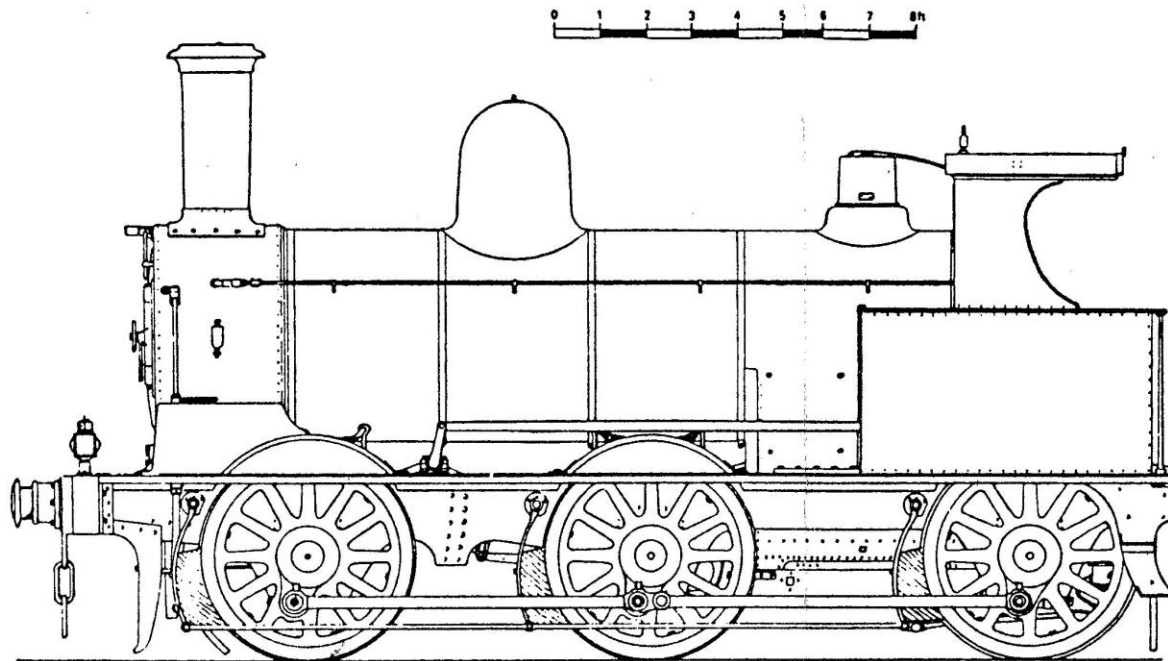
ped to make sure that is reading true. At 50 psi we turn the blower down and keep nudging away at that fire. It's a while since the tubes were swept and the bottom ones may be a bit clogged up. At any event, we don't need to build the fire too high this time. This is only a light engine run up and down the line.

The safety valve blows off at 90 psi. On this little tank, an injector would be unreliable, so we quieten the boiler with a few strokes of the hand-pump. All seems in order. With a short up and down line, we may have to use the hand-pump from time to time because the axle-driven pump doesn't really get much of a chance to stretch its legs. With the by-pass valve closed, we put the engine into part forward gear (in full gear the thing would be off like a startled rabbit!). The regulator is nudged slightly open and there is a hissing and spluttering from the cylinders. The engine does not enjoy the luxury of cylinder drain cocks and, as we expected, several spouts of hot water erupt from the chimney and deposit gunge on the plate-

work. But it soon settles down and the loco trundles slowly along the line for a few yards, warming the cylinders.

With everything in order, we give a last check round. The platemwork is wiped down with the inevitable oily rag and the water in the side tanks is topped up. The engine is opened up again and starts to roll off down the line: iron wheel rumbling on steel rail. The tops of the rails are a bit rusty and there are a few weeds growing up. The track is not of the best and the little 0-4-0 tank engine "boxes" slightly from the thrusting of the pistons. But this has nothing to do with smooth efficiency. The journey is repeated in all weathers and conditions. No two trips are ever the same. The spirit of Colonel Stephens is hopefully being captured in raw elements under a real sky. There is nothing here that will win prizes; nothing that claims to be authoritative on detail. No, all I offer is one person's view on where part of the original spirit of H.F.S. can be briefly bottled; something which I commend to your consideration.

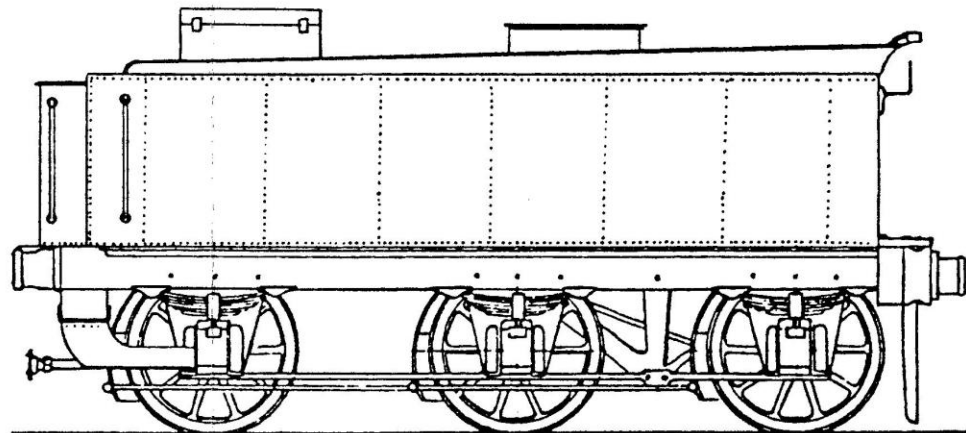




SHROPSHIRE & MONTGOMERYSHIRE
RAILWAY

0-6-0 COAL ENGINE

ex- LONDON & NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY



WAGONS FROM CRIGGION

Bernard Holland has been analysing a record of stone traffic from Criggion Quarry in the 1920s

Between 13th November 1922 and 10th April 1923, 203 wagons of stone from Criggion, Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway, were received at Weston & Ingestre Station, North Staffordshire Railway. It is assumed that the turnpike road from Stone to Lichfield (now the A51) was being metalled, as stone was received also from Penmaenmawr and Bardon Hill as well as barrels of tar, mainly from Tipton.

Of the wagons from Criggion, 26 were railway company owned, namely Great Western 6; Midland 5; Great Eastern 3; Great Central, Furness, Lancashire & Yorkshire and North British 2 each; Taff Vale, North Eastern, Hull & Barnsley and Great Northern 1 each. The rest were all private owner wagons but their identity is, unfortunately, not entirely clear as they are entered in the "Wagons Received and Despatched" book by initials only and there appears to be some inconsistency in so far as which initials were used!

They can be broken down into roughly three groups:

1. wagons entered as "C"
2. wagons entered as "G"
3. wagons entered as "BH"

Within Groups 1 and 2 there are several variants.

17 wagons arrived and were entered as "C". However, of these only three (nos. 316, 347 and 370) are entered on the departure page as "C". Ten depart as "G", one as "BHG", one as "DHG" and two (10 and 299) are not entered at all as departing although a number 10 later returns as "G"!

93 wagons arrived and were entered as "G", ten as "GM" and two as "GMQ". All but three left with one or other of these initials, one leaving as "GMC" and two as "BH".

Variations within the "BH" group are wider. 33 wagons arrived as "BH", five as "BHG", five as "BHQ", four as "BGQ", three as "BG" and one as "BGG". Departures outside this group were two as "G" (277 and 362), one as "GM" and the solitary "BGG" as "G".

It may be of significance that the number of variations within all groups lessens as time goes on.

Eric Tonks lists the owners of the Criggion quarries at this time as Granham's Moor Quarries Co. Ltd. (from 1913) and Ceiriog Granite Co. Ltd. (from about 1925). On the other hand, Roger Carpenter ("The Criggion Branch" p.38) gives the Breidden Quarry Co. as the successor to the "Granomac" but I wonder if he is assuming that the initials B.Q.C. stand for this company rather than for British Quarrying Company which was formed on 4th February 1929 and included Ceiriog Granite Co., J Arnold & Sons, Clee Hill Dhu Stone Co., Clee Hill Granite Co., Thos. Lant and Field & McKay Ltd.

A photograph of a Granham's Moor wagon is to be seen on p.17 of "The Criggion Branch" and the wagon carries the words "BREIDDEN HILL GRANITE QUARRIES" on its topmost plank. Wagons prominently lettered "GRANOMAC" carried the identical identification, but in much smaller lettering.

The numbers of the wagons in the "BH" group fall between 103 and 109, and between 237 and 406; the wagon in the photo appears to be no.400.

It is tempting to assume that wagons entered as "C" were Ceiriog Granite Co. but I feel this would be wrong in view of only three of them being despatched as "C". I am rather inclined to believe that this may have been an error on the part of the number taker, the "G" at the beginning of "GRANOMAC" being easily mis-read as "C". These wagons were all early arrivals, the last entry being 18th December. If Ceiriog Granite had taken over and were using wagons lettered in their style one would expect them to become more common as time went by, not to stop suddenly. Numbers in this group include 10 and 19, but mainly fall between 102 and 114, and 279 and 403, which are the same series as the "BH" wagons.

Wagons in the "G" group also fall into these two number series, but also have a series 1 to 33. Between the groups there are only six wagons with coincident numbers, and these include no.12 which arrived as "GMQ" but departed as "BH".

Most B.H.Q. wagons seem to have carried the word "GRANOPHAST" as a Trade Mark, but at least one photograph exists with "GRANOMAC" instead. Wagons lettered with "GRANOMAC" as the main word and seemingly pre-dating B.Q.C. exist in at least three photographs, one of which is clear enough for the words "BREIDEN HILL GRANITE QUARRIES" in small letters to be legible. This is wagon no.13, four plank with side door, and is reproduced in "British Railway Journal" No.22, p.119, although not legible there.

I would venture to suggest - somewhat tentatively - that wagons in group "G" were lettered "GRANOMAC" while those in group "BH" were lettered "BREIDEN

HILL GRANITE QUARRIES" with the confusion caused by the former also carrying the latter wording! In the absence of more, or dated, photographic evidence this cannot be more than a suggestion. As to the "C" group, the "G" in "GRANOMAC" could easily be mis-read, as explained, and growing familiarity with the wagons would lead to the realisation of the error.

The first three days' arrivals were each of two wagons and for the first five days railway company wagons predominated - of 16 wagons, three arrive as "C" and two as "HBG Co" (one leaving as "BHG" and the other as "HC Co"!) - but from then on private owner wagons are the norm with railway company wagons making only occasional appearance. The number of wagons received per day tended to increase in February with 7 being a quite regular number, 11 on one occasion and on 27th February a special train delivered 15 wagons at 9.30 p.m. This was made up of eight "G", four "BH" and one each of GWR, GNR and L&Y. One cannot deduce from these figures the make-up of trains from Criggion to Kinnerley but they may be a useful guide to would-be modellers.

It would be useful if anyone could explain the difference between "GRANOMAC" and "GRANOPHAST". As far as I can tell, Criggion quarry did not possess facilities for producing tarred roadstone. Was it just that B.Q.C. changed the name?

To end with a cliff-hanger. Wagon "G" 187 is entered as having arrived from CHIRK on 4th January 1923. What could this signify? Or is it just a number taker's mis-reading of Criggion?

Should anyone be interested in having fuller details of the wagons concerned, I should be happy to supply them.

(More information welcome on Criggion operators and wagons - Ed.)

MODELLER'S DREAM COME TRUE

Ray Arnold gets the whole Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway into his loft!

There must be very few modellers who can have the pleasure of running the WHOLE of one railway company's system. Restrictions of space, time and pocket usually preclude most people's hopes of even approaching it. However, having built a complete branch line (Llanymynech to Llanfyllin) of 4 stations and a halt to correct length and width (apart from the distance between stations being "modellers licence") I thought it could not become much better. My conversion to the Shropshire and Montgomeryshire Railway (thank Heaven that mouthful can be shortened to S&MR) has finally fulfilled my armchair dream and as its terminus is at Llanymynech I can still indulge my previous love of the Cambrian.

Having disposed of the Cambrian layouts, the sight of 14 feet square of empty space sent me to the drawing board to see how much of the 18 miles of the S&MR I could manage to squeeze in. This was to include stations as they were in the 1920-23 period, modelled correctly as to scale. It took months of research, sheets of graph paper and phone calls galore. However, I have now achieved the first objective and have run a train from SHREWSBURY ABBEY to LLANYMYNECH JUNCTION with a feeder from the CRIGGION branch coming in at KINNERLEY JUNCTION. Scenic work is still at a bare minimum, though the three main stations are fully modelled; it's the bits in between I must work on.

The site for the layout is a loft converted for the purpose by flooring with 1" chipboard and with the walls and roof lined and insulated to prevent too many problems of temperature change. Baseboards are about 3' high, and the 14' square

space gives a run of near enough a scale mile around the outer sides in my chosen 3mm to the foot scale. The track is to 12mm gauge as I had far too much stock to convert to fine scale, and is laid with 3mm Society track and scratch-built pointwork for Shrewsbury to Kinnerley but old GEM track from there on to Llanymynech. The layout as it now stands represents many hours of pouring over pictures and maps, and discussions with members of the 3mm Society and the Colonel Stephens Society, whose Chairman fortunately lives in Shrewsbury!

In working out the plan I found I needed to avoid squeezing past the parts of the layout not going round the walls, so devised a system of "cab control" whereby the six controllers feed through a bank of switches so that any operator can run their train anywhere on the layout provided the operators of other sections set the route and signals correctly. Any one of the other operators may send a train into your area where you become route setter for the other driver. The diagram overleaf shows the arrangement. Strict operation of a sequence at each station is adhered to and a card is provided detailing the route, type of train and how to handle it (shunting etc.) before it moves on.

When several people are operating, a "Fat Controller" is essential, but when on my own or with one other, "A" controller is the master. From "A" can be operated Kinnerley, Criggion and Meole Brace whilst the second operator at "D" can run Llanymynech and the Cambrian line, plus Shrewsbury Abbey using "B" controller (from the wrong side, but all controls are accessible).

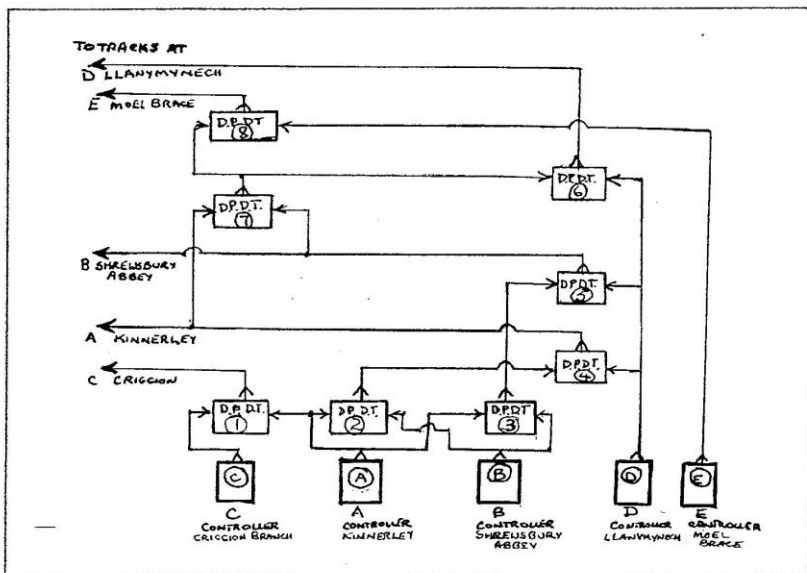
The stock, the majority of which is scratch built, has some vehicles for which I have used Comet LMS suburban sides, i.e. the 5 compartment brake 3rd ex-Midland stock. (See "The Colonel" No.28 - Ed.) I also have the Great Eastern Brake 3rd 4-wheeler, two LSWR 4-wheelers, one NSR 4-wheel brake 3rd, the Midland Brake which outlived them all and of course Queen Victoria's Royal Coach of c1848. Even the Army, when they took over, kept that one as it was so comfortable.

I built the Ford lorry/bus version of the "Rattler", and of course a horse bus body to go with "Gazelle". Other locomotives include "Thisbe", an ex-LSWR "Ilfracombe Goods" 0-6-0 tender engine; the ex-WC&PR "Walton Park", an outside cylinder Wardle 0-6-0 saddle tank; the tiny Manning Wardle 0-6-0ST "Morous"; the old Bury 0-4-2ST "Severn"; and my latest, the LNWR Coal engine No.8108. These are more than ample to run the full 1922/23

timetable plus, as I have dated the layout Thursday 17th August (Shrewsbury Floral Festival day), a couple of excursions and a Market Special. Most trains run "mixed" and to facilitate shunting there was no brake van on the rear, but instead a large disc with the letters "LV" (last vehicle) was hung on the hook of the rear wagon.

Granite chipping trains from the PYX Company quarries at Criggon (later B.Q.C.) with 30 to 40 wagons a day in the early 1920s provide more traffic, as well as beet (in season) for the sugar mill. Milk is sent to Liverpool, Manchester or Birmingham daily. Timber logs from the Breidden hills are hauled regularly via the Meole Brace exchange sidings where an LMS or LNWR locomotive collects or leaves wagons.

To be continued next issue.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lambourn Valley Coaches

In reply to David Churchill's letter in "Colonel" No.35 on the Lambourn Valley coaches, our Editor has let me see the unpublished photo that David mentions, and to give readers an idea of what it shows I would best describe it as decay along the side panels at about floor level. It is very reminiscent of the typical rust attack that can occur along the bottom of modern car doors. So I am left wondering what those side panels were made of, was it solid timber, plywood or perhaps metal? As David explained, repairs were effected

by fixing a strip about 4" high along the length of the coach to cover the damage.

As to the query on when the name boards were fitted to the coach sides, his estimate of 1912 is likely to be as good as anyone's. David mentions studying a copy of Cox's report on the Selsey line. What have I missed? Could it be re-printed in some future "Colonel"? (*Yes, please - Ed.*)

Ron Mann, Kingsclere

Last Days of the WC&PR

The following extracts from contemporary "Railway Observers" may cast a little more light on the subject

May 1940

There is a strong rumour that this interesting line will cease to function as an independent company after Saturday, May 18th, 1940. Whether the G.W.R. will take the line over or whether the services will be suspended, is still a matter for conjecture. Since the outbreak of war the service has been worked by 0-6-0T No.4 and Railcar 5. The small railcar worked for a time but now requires heavy repairs. 0-6-0ST No.5 worked one day this month.

June 1940

This line was closed to traffic on May 18th. The last passenger train, hauled by No.4 (formerly S.R. 2653), was given a rousing send-off by the crowd which gathered at Weston-super-Mare station. The closure of the line at such a time as this, when economy in imported fuel is being urged, seems inopportune. This point of view is urged in the Editorial and correspondence columns of "Modern Transport", which suggests that the important contribution of the thirty or more independent railways to our transport system is worthy

of the closer attention and support of the Railway Executive Committee.

August 1940

Although officially closed 18th May, 1940, the "Terrier" No.4 was in steam at Clevedon on 15th July, and was seen leaving Portishead, light, on the 17th. Elsewhere there was no sign of use.

September 1940

G.W.R. engines taken over from the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Light Railway, 0-6-0T's Nos.2 and 4, renumbered G.W. 5 and 6. These are ex-L.B.S.C. "Terrier" tanks No. 643 and S.R. 2653 respectively.

November 1940

The Weston, Clevedon & Portishead locomotive No.2, the first of the two "Terriers", has returned repainted in standard G.W.R. livery. Other than the new coat of paint etc., the substitution of a standard G.W.R. whistle for its original Stroudley one, no alterations have been made. The "Terrier" still carries the name "Portishead" with the monogram above. It has a standard cast iron numberplate No. 5.

Chris Jackson, Orpington

Blowing Up "Gladstone"

Regarding the "blowing up" of the locomotive "Gladstone" at the end of the film "Oh, Mr Porter", there was an article on the making of the film in the "Tenterden Terrier" No.14 of 1977, which gives the following explanation.

"We wanted to buy "Northiam" from the K&ESR because we wanted to blow it up at the end of the film, but although we offered a good price, they would not sell. We solved the problem in the final scene by running the train into the buffers at Basingstoke, cutting the film, backing the engine away and then blowing up a pile of metal. We then added some pieces including the stove pipe chimney, and the effect was quite realistic."

The mention of the late Fireman Blair being one of the crew on the last BR trip over the K&ESR suggests that (probably mainly for health reasons) he was what was usually described as a Restricted Link Man.

At closure in 1954 he was given only one option, St Leonards, which was responsible for the motive power for the Tenterden freight. Two other firemen from Rolvenden were given no less than twenty options, geographically at depots as far apart as Ramsgate and Lyme Regis and in duties involved from Stewarts Lane to Southampton Docks.

Jack Burrell, Bristol

The Youngest Stationmaster?

A local customer of mine brought the enclosed photo to me, of a very distant relative of his.

The youth in the photo is apparently Fred Jones who was stationmaster at one of the Shropshire and Montgomeryshire stations, possibly Abbey Foregate in the 20s. He was reputedly the youngest stationmaster ever on a U.K. station. He was there for twenty-odd years, but is now dead. Can any member shed any light on this, dates etc.?

On the back of the photo is written :

FRED JONES
Station Master S&M Light Railway
Lived in Abbey Foregate, latterly
Longden Green, Shrewsbury.
c1920-1939?
Died c1985

Nigel Bird, Llwyn-y-Groes, Tregaron

(Apologies for the quality, but I thought a poor copy was better than none - Ed.)



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

A "Round Hut" Discovered?

It is well known that the Colonel was always looking at ways to improve finances on his lines. The railcars are of course one example, but another more amazing one was the group of camping huts on the S&M. These corrugated iron round huts (known as "Mushroom Terrace" from their white painted conical roofs) were purchased around 1927, supposedly as Army surplus. Five were sited at Crew Green, two at Shrawardine and one at Criggion, with two more on the East Kent. However, all have now gone and no trace remains.

It was a pleasant surprise to hear from member Eric Challoner that on a visit to the Cobbaton Tank Museum near Barn-

staple he found a very similar hut in good condition. It was attached to a Nissen hut and is probably used as a store. Is it a survivor or a more modern version, and do members know of any more?

The Crew Green huts were looked after by Mr John Turner, the S&M's Traffic Agent who was also the local coal merchant and undertaker - a busy man! His wife ran the cafe at Criggion station - she had worked as cook for Mr Huntley of Huntley & Palmers, so knew all about cakes and biscuits. When the Colonel was due, she would bake vast amounts of jam tarts: they say that he ate most of them before leaving, and it would seem to have been the highlight of his visit!

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