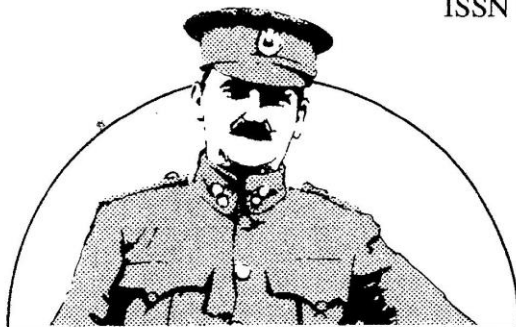


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• THE COLONEL •

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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

Subscription Renewals

It's hard to believe, but subscription time has come round again. I'm sure time is accelerating! The cost of the subscription is still a mere £5.00 (£6.00 overseas), which represents terrific value these days - there can't be many Societies with a sub. that low.

A renewal form is enclosed, so please send it in to Nigel Bird as soon as possible to keep our expenses down.

"Jarvis" Photographs

Our offer of these wonderful photos has proved a resounding success, with 33 members ordering almost 1000 prints. All have now been despatched and should have reached you by the time you read this; if they haven't, contact me urgently. All the printing was done by Jim Jarvis himself, a marathon task if ever there was one. Thank you, Jim, on behalf of all of us.

Next Year's AGM - Advanced Notice

Derek Smith tells me he has already booked the room for the 1995 AGM, so I may as well pass the date on. It will be on Saturday, 22nd April 1995 at the usual venue, the Model Railway Club HQ in Calshot Street, London N1.

That gives you plenty of notice, so we will expect a record turn-out next 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

Rye and Camber History to be Published

Member Laurie Cooksey has written a new book on the Rye and Camber Tramway, to be published by Plateway Press towards the end of this year in time for the line's centenary in 1995. It will be the definitive history of the line, some 100,000 words long, and will be in hardback form.

If any members have any rare or unpublished photos of the line, or any personal reminiscences, Laurie asks that they contact him (0797-224761). There may still be time to make last-minute additions.

4mm "Hecate" Kit Coming Shortly

John Elliot, who trades as Chilton Iron Works, is bringing out a kit for the K&ESR 0-8-0T "Hecate". The body will be etched in 0.015" brass and the chassis in 0.020" nickel silver. Fittings will mostly be lost wax castings in brass.

John says the end of September date in some magazine advertisements is a bit optimistic, but he will have a trial etch version at "Scaleforum" in Leatherhead on 24th and 25th September.

Another Model Railway Weekend

Member Richard Jones is organising another of his Model Railway Weekends at Burton Manor College, Wirral, Cheshire. This one will be from 20th -22nd January 1995, and will include instruction on kit building, baseboard construction and

The cost of the week-end, including accommodation and all meals, will be £92.50. A non-residential rate is available for locals.

For further details, contact the College on 051-336-5172

Information Sought on the Colonel's West Country Lines

Mr Chris Osment, of the South Western Circle, is researching the Torrington-Halwill Junction and the Bere Alston-Callington branches, both of course Colonel Stephens lines.

For the former, he is looking for drawings (or, failing that, dimensions) for the buildings and structures. Does anyone know of any published plans, or has anyone done any measuring up?

For the latter, he is also looking for plans

of buildings and structures (including the Calstock wagon hoist), but he has also a special interest in the signalling of the line and would like to know who supplied the equipment.

He has written an article about the signalling of the Callington line, which I hope to be able to publish some time in the future.

If anyone can help in his research, please contact the Editor; I would like to publish any relevant information in the Colonel.

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH AND THE KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY

Gordon Webb describes the railway as seen in the writings of a Sussex novelist

Sheila Kaye-Smith lived in a converted oast house just three miles south of Northiam station. She was the literary hit of the nineteen twenties and in a career spanning the years 1908 to 1956 wrote thirty-two novels, many short stories, non-fiction books and countless articles. It all came to an end when she fell to her death down the twisting spiral staircase in her home, leaving the unfinished draft of another novel on her desk.

Most of her fictional output was concerned with country life along the Kent/Sussex border; just the area, in fact, traversed by the K&ESR. Only eight of her novels omit any mention of a railway at all, and of these at least two deal with a period before the railways were built.

I shall be in great trouble if I suggest that most women's interest in railways is limited to the anxiety of changing trains, or wondering whether they are on the right train at all - unless of course they are married to a railway enthusiast. Occasionally, however, there appears that rarity, a woman who not only loves railways but, seeing them with a keen and perceptive eye, has the ability to weave their details and working practices into the stuff of her stories.

Such a one was Sheila Kaye-Smith. Take her non-fiction **WEALD OF KENT AND SUSSEX** (Robert Hale 1953, reprinted 1966) in which she invites the reader to accompany her about the Weald; not, as might be expected, by car, bicycle or on foot, but by those odd little single-track

railways (as she puts it) crossing the rural areas between the main lines. Unusual in a non-railway book, the fact that it should have been written by a woman must make it unique. She writes:

I can remember being rebuked as a school-girl for saying that I enjoyed travelling by train because I could see so much of the country from the window. Some of the finest scenery in Britain is offered to the traveller by rail. Once the wayside station is left behind - a wayside station has charms that no wayside garage possesses - you are alone in the fields or the mountains. You have, besides, the pleasures of a changing angle of vision, of gazing down on roofs or into farmyards or up into...the shadowing...trees; while the close foreground is often gay with flowers.

Yes, it seems that Sheila Kaye-Smith was from an early age a member of that happy band - a true lover of railways. And not without humour:

...a Kent and East Sussex Railway takes a lot of nationalising; "and I assure you", said the stationmaster cum porter cum signalman at our nearest station, "they get no co-operation from us."

Writing from pre-war experience she goes on:

Now the line is threatened with extinction...its closing would be a loss for it is the only means we have of exploring one of the loveliest and one of the most perfectly rural valleys in England...at one time the

economically-minded could travel by it from Dover to Hastings for fivepence less than the cost of the direct route via Rye and Ashford, the only drawback being that the trip took four hours instead of one and a half.

There follows a description of a day out that she sometimes enjoyed as a girl, when she and her family would take the train from Hastings to Rye, walk to Scot's Float Sluice (then called Star Lock) and cruise up the navigable River Rother to Newenden. Catching the train from Northiam to Robertsbridge and thence back to Hastings rounded off the day out. Since she was born in 1887 these trips would have been in Rother Valley Railway days; girls under twenty-one did not go out unchaperoned in those days!

Next she takes the reader on an imaginary journey from Robertsbridge to Headcorn by rail:

I do not propose that we should make our excursion down the valley behind this film star (the Hawthorne Leslie "Northiam")...Will Hay borrowed for his film "Oh, Mr Porter", nor will we commit ourselves to the Bumper...made up of two motor-buses fixed back to back and living most shatteringly up to its name. The two friends of my youth, "Juno" and "Rolvenden", are scrap now, so a small saddle tank engine with the initials KESR still ghostly beneath the palimpsest of British Railways, shall convey our single coach with a tail of four or five wagons out of Robertsbridge.

Sheila Kaye-Smith must have meant a "Terrier" side tank engine. There follow fourteen pages of description covering the area traversed by the line which, allowing for some minor changes, might even now serve as a guide to the traveller, at least from Bodiam to Tenterden. Her comment on the Working Timetable is summed up as:

No train ever goes through Tenterden, and as the delay there amounts to an hour or more...the stations further up the line can be reached more expeditiously by almost any other means of transport.

It does not seem all that long ago that the normal mode of travel for most people was by train. Given Sheila Kaye-Smith's love of railways, and the K&ESR in particular, it was inevitable that her fictional characters should travel by train. Five novels and a short story mention journeys on the Rother Valley Railway or the K&ESR, while two more novels include descriptions of journeys on the latter but using fictitious names for stations and places.

SPELL LAND (published in 1910) contains a curious inconsistency. Having placed her characters in Battle, she writes:

He had been to Robertsbridge, and along the light railway to Benenden...and mastering the vagaries of the light railway timetable arrived in Battle, a couple of hours earlier than expected.

Now in some of her other novels the authoress is apt to play tricks with place-names, and I conclude that in this instance she did not literally mean a station called Benenden, but that knowing the line so well, she must have meant "a station for Benenden". Still, some errors do crop up, and in **THE CHALLENGE TO SIRIUS** (1917) appears the following:

In the year 1885 Maggie opened a green-grocer's shop in Rye, and two years later a dairy in Hastings. The Rother Valley Railway provided hitherto un-dreamed of means of transport...

In 1887? Perhaps the actual history of the line was not the authoress's strong point! In **GREEN APPLE HARVEST** (1920) one of the characters travels from Headcorn to Bodiam in:

The little train - a string of ancient South Eastern coaches hooked to a toy engine - heaved itself out of the station...

Apart from the fact that she must have meant that the coaches were Great Eastern ones, I must admit that this particular piece does sound a bit like something out of Tank Engine Thomas! In **THE VILLAGE DOCTOR** (1929) the new doctor arrives at Northiam station:

One mile from the village and up hill all the way.

Accurate, as I well remember after toiling up weighed down by a heavy rucksack on a hot summer's afternoon.

Although they live in the Bodiam/Sandhurst area, the characters in **SHEPHERDS IN SACKCLOTH** (1930) are said to have travelled to Brighton via Hawkhurst, Tonbridge and Lewes, an unnecessarily roundabout way, one would have thought. Surely a shorter and quicker way than by using the Hawkhurst branch and the Bluebell line would have been simply to have walked across the river to Bodiam station and thence via Robertsbridge, Hastings and the coast line west to Brighton. Later in the book, a character says:

I take the Rother Valley train from Northiam on a Thursday.

Note that he does not actually say "the Rother Valley Railway". Perhaps there were still older inhabitants along the valley, including Sheila Kaye Smith, who, remembering the building of the railway, still clung to the original title.

NINEVEH, a short story in a collection published in 1938, includes just a single paragraph but nevertheless a nostalgic one:

Leaving the main line at Robertsbridge, they embarked on the rural innocencies of the Rother Valley Railway. A little single line ran them through endless hop-gardens, past farms with crumpled red roofs and white-capped oast houses, over a dim spread of marshes where the distances were blue and the foreground golden, till at last they came to Wittersham Road station - a lonely little platform on the edge of the marsh.

I cannot date the story exactly, but in it motor cars were in use for commuting to "the junction" for a train to London, so I assume that it was in the early thirties, which makes the Rother Valley reference wrong.

The last two novels we will look at include the K&ESR under other names. **EMBER LANE** (1940) need not detain us long as the relevant excerpt has already appeared in Stephen Garrett's "The Kent and East Sussex Railway" (Oakwood Press 1972, revised edition 1987). We must note however, that the "Sussex Border Railway" uses the same fictitious station names as does the "Kentish Border Railway" in **THE LARDNERS AND THE LAURELWOODS** (1948). The prelude to this latter novel includes what I consider to be Sheila Kaye-Smith's best description of the line, or at least the southern half of it, both in its early days and (probably) immediately post-war:

Such a railway, thought Martin, should not be allowed to exist in the present stage of our civilisation. He had been sitting for an hour on a hard, springless seat, but he had not travelled more than twenty miles; and it was impossible to read because there was no light in the carriage. There had been no light in the old days, he remembered; the railway had no tunnels and it had not been thought necessary to provide lamps to dispel merely natural darkness. But surely things might have moved a bit

since then. From what he could see of it, this carriage had been in use unchanged for thirty or forty years. He might even have travelled in it on some earlier occasion...they might have all crowded in here...laughing, chattering, pushing, scuffing, taking up the whole compartment with their parcels and hand luggage. It was a strange thought that in those days the high spot of their journey had been the change from the comfortable, conventional, punctual South Eastern railway to the little wooden train with its ridiculous hump-backed engine that jolted and shunted them across the marsh from Flattenden into the Weald. The holiday seemed...really to begin when the guard came swinging along the footboard and in at the carriage door to take their tickets. "Five and two halves to Rushmonden"...

Another high spot had been the first glimpse of Idolsfold. It was visible from the train, he remembered, shortly after Potcommon. You could see it on the ridge above Shirley Moor. At the junction only a handful of people had sprinkled themselves into the solitary coach that the engine was just about to pull away. There had been three halts since then...Bess Hovenden, however, had arrived early, for she knew the train was capable of arriving early too - should there be no goods to

shunt at Bibleham, Potcommon or Drungewick Road. The distant hoot of a train broke into the silence. There it was at last - at the level crossing by Castweasel. A series of clanks and rumbles brought the train into the station. Then came the engine's long sigh, and the banging of carriage doors...

Readers may care to carry out a little mild detective work to find the real names, and to determine which engine and rolling stock are referred to above.

Sheila Kaye-Smith in many of her other novels refers to, or describes journeys on, the branch lines of Kent and Sussex, but the only other Colonel Stephens line that figures in them is the Hundred of Manhood and Selsey Tramway in **JOANNA GODDEN MARRIED** (1928), and as the "Selsey Bill Railway" in **ISLE OF THORNS** (1913). But she returned again and again for inspiration to her local line, the K&ESR. And I, for one, am glad that she did.

This article first appeared in "The Tenterden Terrier", the journal of the Tenterden Railway Co Ltd, in 1989, and I am grateful to the Editor for permission to reprint it here.

I BUY and SELL all types of PRINTED RAILWAY MATERIAL,
BOOKS, MAGAZINES, TIME-TABLES, OFFICIAL GUIDES ETC.

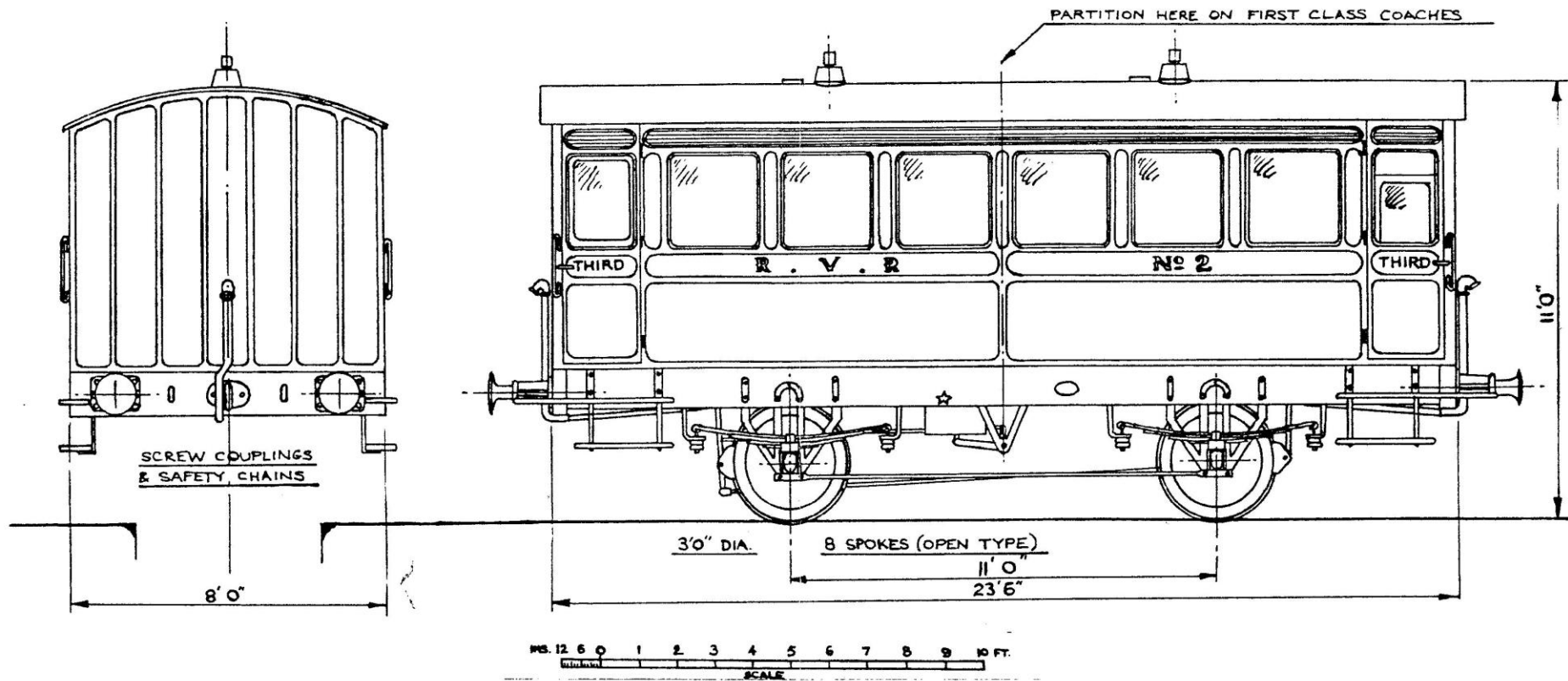
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Rother Valley Railway 4-Wheel Coaches

For the opening of the Rother Valley Railway in 1900, H F Stephens obtained a complete set of brand new stock - two locomotives, six coaches, two brake vans and ten open wagons. The rolling stock all came from the Scottish firm of Hurst, Nelson & Co. of Motherwell.

The coaches, shown in this issue's drawing, were four-wheelers of rather pleasing design. Numbers 1 to 4 were third class vehicles, seating 32 in seats arranged transversely each side of a central gangway. Numbers 5 and 6 were first class,

with seating for 28 along the sides. The thirds were completely open inside, but the firsts had a central partition with a glazed door dividing them into "smoking" and "no smoking" areas.

The coaches were carried on open-spoked wheels of 3 ft. diameter, and were vacuum braked. All six were finished in varnished teak, lettered as shown on the drawing in gold in a rather ornate lettering style. The lettering was shaded to the right and below in, I would guess from the tone on photographs, blue.

Drawing and notes by L Darbyshire

After about four years on the line, the coaches were despatched to R Y Pickering & Co. of Wishaw, who rebuilt them in pairs on bogie underframes, becoming third brake No.1, compo brake No.4 and all-third No.6. By good fortune, photos of all six at Pickering's prior to conversion have survived, and show that by 1904 the lettering had changed to "ROTHER VALLEY RLY" in block letters in the same position as the earlier "R.V.R.". The photos also show that Nos.1 and 2 had lost their brakes!

The all-third was no doubt an easy job, requiring the splicing together of two of the thirds, losing one set of doors in the process to end up with a door at each end and one in the middle. The others required more surgery to provide brake compartments. As the resulting three coaches only possessed one first class section between them, one of the firsts must have been down-graded though whether its seating was changed from longitudinal to transverse to match the others I do not know.

THE COLONEL'S CROSSING LOOPS

A Timetable Study by Chris Jackson

Walking back to Euston after the Society's AGM last year, the Editor and Chairman were musing about the lack of articles in the "Colonel" about operation of the various lines in the Colonel's empire. So what, I wondered, could be done to rectify that?

I have always found something very satisfying about the crossing of two trains at a loop on a single-track line. As a volunteer guard on the Bala Lake Railway, I find that ensuring a succession of right-time meetings with a second train set at the line's intermediate loops adds extra spice to the regular up-and-down routine. The Colonel's standard-gauge lines are epitomised by a single mixed train picking its way through the undergrowth, and though there were several crossing loops on the various lines, photos showing two trains passing are comparatively rare. So I thought I would try to assess just how often the loops were used to pass trains.

These observations are drawn from the public timetables reproduced in various publications - most notably the Middleton Press albums. These do not show goods trains, so I have only been able to surmise the various loco and railcar diagrams by reading "between the lines". Where unsure, I have worked on the assumption that the Colonel would try to run the published services using the minimum number of locos and diagrams.

1. Shropshire and Montgomeryshire

The Potts' lengthy main line was split into three sections, of which that from the headquarters at Kinnerley to Ford & Crossgates was equipped with electric tokens. Train staffs with tickets were used for Kinnerley-Llanymynech, Kinnerley-

Criggon and Ford-Shrewsbury. In later years, trains were crossed at Meole Brace, presumably using the exchange siding. Does anyone know if separate staffs were introduced for the new sections?

The first S&M timetable, dated October 1910, required just a single loco diagram and was still basically the same in October 1914 as far as the main line was concerned - one train set shuttling back and forth five times each day. The opening of the Criggon branch in 1912 required a second loco, which seems to have ventured out on to the main line on Saturdays. This "second" train ran from Kinnerley to Llanymynech, then to Shrewsbury and back to Kinnerley in time to work the 4.44 to Criggon. This brought the first Crossing at Ford, the 2.30 from Shrewsbury and 2.26 (SO) from Llanymynech meeting there from 3.00 to 3.06.

In July 1919, the Saturday service required the second train to leave Llanymynech at 1.45, meeting the 2.00 from Shrewsbury at Ford at 2.35. Two trains also crossed on Wednesdays, as the branch train ran to Llanymynech in mid-afternoon to work a through service to Criggon; this was passed by the 3.00 train from Shrewsbury to Llanymynech at 4.20 at Kinnerley, whilst running round for the necessary reversal.

Advent of the railcars brought a complete re-structuring of the timetable, although it is not always easy to distinguish railcars from loco-hauled trains. I am also sure that some goods-only trips would have appeared in the diagrams, but not the timetables, at this time. The September 1925 timetable shows railcar round trips leaving Shrewsbury for Llanymynech

at 9.45, 1.30 and 3.00, followed by a short working to Ford & Crossgates at 4.20, finishing at Shrewsbury at 5.30. The "mixed" diagram begins with the 7.30 from Kinnerley and the 8.10 Llanymynech-Shrewsbury, which arrived in Shrewsbury before the railcar departed. A goods train probably left Shrewsbury around 11.15, crossing the railcar at Ford about 12.00 and getting to Kinnerley in time to work the 1.00 back to Shrewsbury. This was timetabled to wait at Ford from 1.30 to 2.00 to cross the afternoon railcar, reaching Shrewsbury at 2.45. The return working to Llanymynech also crossed at Ford at 3.40, before running the evening service after the railcar had finished!

On Saturdays, the main line could be worked as a single diagram, probably by a loco rather than a railcar. As with the pre-railcar timetables, there was only one timetabled crossing at Ford, between the 1.30 from Shrewsbury and the 12.40 (SO) through train from Criggion to Shrewsbury, which met at around 2.00.

In August 1928, the Criggion service had become Thursdays and Saturdays only, and the railcar appeared to be taking more of the main line work. This diagram started with the 8.00 from Kinnerley to Shrewsbury, followed by trips to Llanymynech at 8.55, 1.45, 5.00 and 7.55 and an empty run back from Llanymynech to Kinnerley. The late Bill Willans' article in "Colonel" 20 provides valuable information on the running of the "mixed/goods" steam loco diagram. This made a daily foray to Criggion and back before leaving Kinnerley at 7.30 for Llanymynech. The 8.12 mixed from Llanymynech to Shrewsbury crossed the railcar at Ford at 9.20, and reached the Abbey at 9.55. Although the timetable shows no return working, Bill's article said that the goods made its way back to Kinnerley to indulge in general shunting until 5.00 pm. Suitable "crossing slots" could have seen the goods

leaving Shrewsbury around 11.20 to meet the railcar at Ford at 12.00, or after the 1.45 down railcar had cleared the section at 2.15, getting to Kinnerley before the 3.52 from Llanymynech left again at 4.07.

On Saturdays, the railcar could work the 7.00 trip to Criggion before its 8.00 to Shrewsbury, whilst the steam loco would work the additional 1.40 Kinnerley-Shrewsbury and 3.17 Shrewsbury-Criggion trains, finishing at Kinnerley at 5.02. As well as the regular 9.20 and 12.00? crossings, Saturdays had trains passing at Ford at 2.15 and at Kinnerley at 4.07.

In November 1930, the pattern was very similar but with one essential change. The "No.2" diagram now left Llanymynech at 8.07, meeting the 9.00 from Shrewsbury not at Ford & Crossgates but at Meole Brace at 9.15. This allowed the 10.30 return from Shrewsbury to get back to Kinnerley at 11.35, meeting the 11.17 from Llanymynech there rather than at Ford. Apart from un-advertised goods trains, the only crossing remaining at Ford was at 2.15 on Saturdays between the 1.45 from Shrewsbury and the 1.48 from Kinnerley. As previously, this latter returned as the 3.17 to Criggion, and crossed the "No.1" set again at Kinnerley at 4.07. By now, the only other branch passenger service during the week was the early morning Saturday trip by the "No.1" set at 7.00 from Kinnerley to form the 7.30 from Criggion to Shrewsbury.

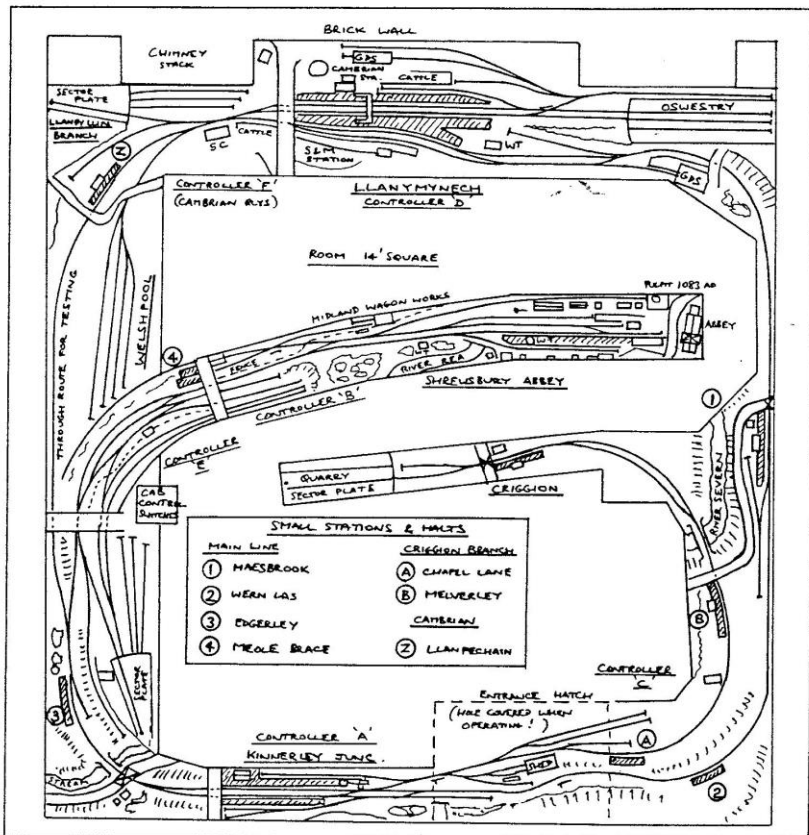
The last published passenger timetable, dated April 1932, kept the pattern established 18 months earlier. The two morning trains continued to cross at Meole Brace at 9.15, although the return workings met at Kinnerley 15 minutes later at 11.50. The Saturday extra still crossed at Ford at 2.20 and the long-established 4.07 meeting at Kinnerley survived until the end. One slight variation came on Wednesday afternoons, when the 3.52 Llanymynech

to Shrewsbury was re-timed to 4.42. The return workings were 5.30 (WX) and 6.20 (WO), the final run to Kinnerley being 7.00 (WX) or 7.50 (WO). Criggon retained its two Saturday trains at 7.00 from Kinnerley and 3.17 from Shrewsbury.

single loco was required, although extra trains were put out for Saturday excursions through the 1930s. I would imagine that Ford & Crossgates ceased to be used as a crossing loop, but that the exchange sidings at Meole Brace could have been so used in the rare event of two trains meeting anywhere other than Kinnerley.

Once the regular passenger service had finished, goods traffic continued but no timetables were published. I believe only a

To be continued



Track Diagram of Ray Arnold's Layout (see Issues 36 & 37)

RYE AND CAMBER RAILWAY

RAILS RECOVERED

Laurie Cooksey helps to retrieve buried treasure!

Last Spring, John Miller (the Hon. Archivist of the Kent & East Sussex Railway) was taking an afternoon walk with friends along the 1938 27-chain deviation embankment of the Rye and Camber Tramway to its new and short-lived Camber Sands station, when he tripped on something in the long grass. An immediate inspection revealed the ends of two rails lying together side by side, with another two close by.

That evening, he excitedly telephoned me with his news, and the following day I had a look for myself and, sure enough, there were four rails just visible in the undergrowth. To think of all the times I had walked along that embankment looking for relics, but had never found anything...!

I quickly contacted the Secretary of the Rye Golf Club who, being a keen naturalist, was worried that we might disturb some rare plants, but after visiting the site with him and assuring him that the ground would be left in the condition that we found it, he readily gave permission for us to remove the rails.

At 18.30 hours on the cold, dull evening of Wednesday, 14th July 1993 (the day after the Tramway's 98th birthday), John Miller, myself and three "volunteers" met at the Golf Club House and walked the quarter of a mile or so across the Links to where the rails had lain undisturbed for the past 54 years.

The Golf Course is a magical, timeless place and it is not difficult to imagine the train, hauled by CAMBER, VICTORIA or the little petrol locomotive, emerging with its two carriages from behind Golf Links Station (still in situ) to run along its low embankment towards us.

Armed with some crowbars and a small garden spade, the rails were more difficult to remove than some expected, but instead of four we found seven, and there was the added bonus of seven fishplates and three dog spikes, but surprisingly no sleepers. The recovered rails were only 15 ft. long, compared with the 24 ft. originals laid between Rye and Golf Links in 1895, but they were far too heavy for us to man-handle and the Green Keeper kindly came to our rescue with the Club's tractor and trailer, and a few days later they were stacked neatly close to the road.

On Saturday, 7th August, with the aid of an un-suspecting Pickfords removal man with his large vehicle, we transported the rails the one and a half miles to my back garden in Camber where they rest to this day. Four of them I have laid out to 3 ft. gauge with my one and only Rye and Camber sleeper laid across the end of them as per the original Camber Sands station circa 1931, and two of the others are destined for display at the proposed Colonel Stephens Museum in Tenterden.

BOOK REVIEW

BRANCH LINES TO TORRINGTON by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith. Published by Middleton Press at £9.95
ISBN 1 873973 37 5

This book, in the familiar Middleton Press format, covers the Barnstaple to Torrington and Torrington to Halwill Junction lines of the Southern Railway. Both lines had an interesting and complex history involving gauge changes. The Barnstaple-Fremington section of the Torrington branch began life as the standard gauge horse-worked Taw Vale Railway and opened in 1848, but was converted to broad gauge and operated first by the Bristol and Exeter and then by the contractor Thomas Brassey, being extended to Bideford in 1855. The LSWR then gained control, added a third rail for the standard gauge and extended to Torrington in 1872.

From Torrington southwards, a 3 ft. gauge mineral line was opened in 1881 as far as Marland where clay pits were worked and brick and pottery works established; the line was built without Act of Parliament so had no official title, but was generally known as the Torrington & Marland.

In 1914, the North Devon & Cornwall Junction Railway obtained a Light Railway Order to construct a standard gauge line from Torrington to Halwill Junction on the LSWR's "Withered Arm" North Cornwall line, using much of the track bed of the Torrington & Marland. Delayed by WW1, work commenced in 1922 with Colonel Stephens as Engineer. By the time of completion in 1925, Grouping had taken place and the line was worked from the outset by the Southern Railway although it remained nominally independent right through until nationalisation in 1948.

The book contains the usual good selection of photos, but not as many 25" maps as usual as the Ordnance Survey maps for the area south of Torrington are either pre-construction of the ND&CJR or post-closure; you can't blame Middleton Press for that! Early pictures of the ND&CJR are scarce, so most of the illustrations are from the post-nationalisation era, though since the line scarcely changed throughout its life that is not as much of a loss as it might have been. There are some photos of the line under construction, including one with the Colonel himself in view, and several of the pre-existing 3 ft. gauge line. The nicest of the early views of the reconstructed line is probably one of Hatherleigh, with everything clean and sparkling - not a blade of grass out of position!

In summary, it is a good book, up to the usual standards we have come to expect from the publishers, and good value for money. Even if you already have a copy of the similarly-titled "Lines to Torrington" by John Nicholas (Oxford Publishing Co. 1984), buy this one as well - you will find that surprisingly few of the photographs are duplicated.

As a postscript, if, having bought this book, you are fired with enthusiasm for the Torrington & Marland, then I can recommend "North Devon Clay" (Twelveheads Press, 1982) which contains excellent pictures and drawings. I don't know if it is still in print, but even if not I'm sure our Treasurer will try to get you a copy.

LD

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Abbey Foregate Remembered

Reading Ray Arnold's beautifully crafted description of his S&M empire, and Abbey Foregate station in particular, brought back memories of my teen-age years.

My father used to be the "Ever Ready" rep. for Shropshire and kept his Guy van at Abbey Foregate which had become a garage with lock-ups. In the late 50s. on Saturday mornings, I would supplement my pocket money by washing my father's

van and a couple of other regulars in the station yard. I have happy memories of retreating to the ex-Potts station building - which was now the garage office/shop - for a cup of hot tea and a chat. The building was wooden floored and I recall the lovely warm smell of paraffin from the heater.

David Powell, Saunderton

'Grantham' Steam Tram

The Grantham steam tram of the Wantage Tramway is something that has interested me for years, in fact I made an O-Gauge model several years ago, working from the only two photos I know about, in the Science Museum. The Local History Museum in Wantage has a model and a sketch which isn't very accurate.

Recently, I was sent a side elevation drawing showing the tram with a canopy over the roof, but I don't know which book it came from. Also, a couple of months ago I discovered that the tram, which went to Wantage in 1876 (apparently no photos) was transferred in 1903 to the Portsdown and Horndean Tramway, surviving until 1934. The Local History Museum at Portsmouth sent me some information on the tramway but had no information regarding the "Grantham". They did however give me a name and address, Fereday Glenn, the family apparently having been associated with the tramway since the beginning, but I haven't received a reply.

Here we have an historically important vehicle, the first steam tram in Britain, apparently around and in service for 60 years, yet almost nothing is known about it - two photos and a side elevation.

I know it is not strictly Colonel Stephens but perhaps somebody in the society can shed a little light?

Doug Ware, Leyton

Editor's note: George Woodcock in "Minor Railways of England and their Locomotives", quoting D K Clark in "Tramways and their Working" (1876), says the car was originally 30 ft long, on four 2 ft 6in wheels on a 10 ft wheelbase. It had two small vertical boilers 18 in dia and 4 ft 4 in high. While at Wantage it was rebuilt with a single, larger, vertical boiler, and at the same time 2 ft wheels were fitted and the body was shortened to 27 ft 3 in. Rowland Abbott, in "Vertical Boiler Locomotives", confirms the 27 ft 3 in dimension and also gives the width as 6 ft 6 in and the height 11 ft 1 in.

Neither book has an illustration, but one of the Science Museum photos is in the Wild Swan book on the Wantage Tramway. Scaling the photo from the wheelbase, the length comes out at around 27 ft so presumably it is in the rebuilt condition. The height (excluding the very tall chimney) also scales correctly at about 11 ft.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Last year, a chance meeting while visiting Mike Wright's Myddle Wood railway resulted in my being able to purchase four Shropshire and Montgomeryshire labels, apparently found at Ford station just before the War Department took over.

After giving the owner something to put in his wallet, I decided to have the labels photographed by a friend, with the four labels on one photo. I think there are probably many of these labels about so they are not rare collectors' items; on the other hand, they are in very good, clean condition for their age.

I have had small 3.5" x 2.5" prints made of the photo, and I can offer one FREE to any member who sends me a S.A.E. (no S.A.E., no photo!) The prints are in colour, but the black-and-white version below will give an idea of what they are like.

It is not often that you can get something for nothing, but this is one such occasion.

Why not take advantage of it?



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