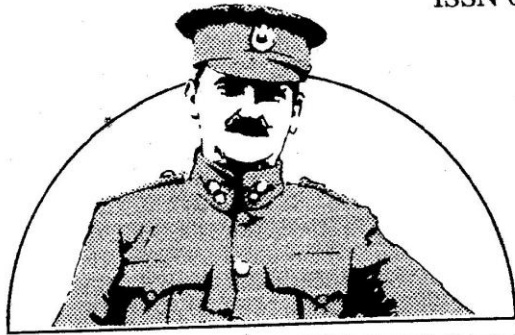


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• THE COLONEL •

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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

Time for a Change!

As I mentioned last time, I am standing down as Editor, so this will be my last issue. After six years and 24 "Colonels" I feel like a rest! I have enjoyed producing the magazine; it has put me in contact with a lot of interesting people and has given me a lot of useful information about the Colonel and his lines.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all who have contributed to making our journal such a success. Without you there would be no "Colonel".

Dick Ganderton has very kindly volunteered to take over as Editor, so subject to ratification at the A.G.M. (a formality as I very much doubt that there will be a flood

of other volunteers to compete with him!) he will be producing the next issue. I have not got all that much material to hand over, so I hope that all members will support Dick with articles, letters, information and comments in the same way as they have myself.

His address is:
"Graskop"
Dewlands Road
Verwood
Dorset BH31 6PN

I will close by wishing Dick every success in his new post. Over and Out!

Leslie Darbyshire

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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

Ashover Land Purchased

Just before Christmas, it was reported in the National press that a lady, Mrs Eunice Packham of Sheffield, had bought a 30-acre site at Ashover Butts with a view to restoring it to its condition in around 1930. This of course was the terminus of the Ashover Light Railway, and Mrs Packham plans to re-create a section of this as well as the Rainbow's End Cafe.

We wish her well in this ambitious project, but wonder whether she realises just how much work (and money) will be involved. We await the next stage with the greatest interest!

East Kent Progress

Since the opening of the EKR to the public in June 1995, many improvements have been made, notably the building of a small signal box at Shepherdswell station.

In July there was an open week-end at which members of the public were able to try their hand at driving, while at the end of October in celebration of Halloween a ghost train was run, with staff in ghoulish costume and detonators in Golgotha tunnel (Golgotha means "Place of the Skull"!)

Over the Christmas period, Christmas specials and other seasonal activities attracted nearly 2000 visitors, contributing to a total of 6000 people in the first six months of operation.

At present trains are on Sundays only, commencing at 11.00 am, but this will be extended in April to the whole week-end. Many special events are planned for Easter - for details ring 01304 821007 or 01304 832042.

W. Midlands Group Meeting

As noted in the last issue, a local group of the Society has been set up in the West Midlands. An inaugural meeting has been organised for Friday 19th April, at the Royal Oak pub in Dudley Port, at 7.30 for an 8.00 pm start. The Royal Oak is directly opposite the exit from Dudley Port station, served by stopping trains between Wolverhampton and Birmingham. Trains leave the station late in the evening in both directions, so there is no problem with public transport. By road, it is not too far from the M5 and M6 motorways.

The evening is primarily a social occasion, with the addition of some slides of the Colonel's railways. All members are welcome, so please do come if you can.

Further details, and directions for anyone coming from afar, from Ned Williams, 23 Westland Road, Wolverhampton WV3 9NZ or phone 01902 773376.

Warley Exhibition

We have again been invited to attend the Warley Exhibition which will be held at the NEC Birmingham on 5th and 6th October. We had hoped to have a substantial area dedicated to the Colonel, but due to space and cost limitations we will unfortunately have only one layout there, Les Spratt's "South Foreland" (which has a strong EKR/KESR flavour) plus a small stand.

Because of the presence of the layout, the stand will be limited to the display panels and will not have a show case of models. It is hoped that the stand will be adjacent to the layout, so this will make manning easier.

NEWS AND VIEWS (CONT.)

News from Tenterden

The K&ESR opened for 1996 on March 3rd, when their "Derby Lightweight" Class 108 DMU entered service. During March the line will open on Sundays only, increasing to week-ends and Bank Holidays from April to October, plus Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in June and September and every day in July and August. For a free timetable, phone 01580 765155.

The Class 108 will run on Sundays in March and Saturdays in April and October. The Victorian train (now with five restored four and five-wheeled coaches) will be running every Sunday from April to October, plus Saturdays from May to September, plus Wednesdays in June, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in July and every day in August.

Ford Railcar Kit

As his contribution towards celebrating the Centenary of the Light Railways Act, member Roger Crombleholme, proprietor of "Brumtrams" card kits, has brought out a kit for the Ford railcar sets that ran on the K&ESR, S&MR and Selsey Tramway. The kit, to 7 mm scale, is printed in full colour and is complete with seats inside. It makes into a static model, but no doubt could be motorised on a new chassis. Roger has done a fair bit of research, but inevitably there are some items of conjecture in dimensions and seating arrangement. However, the thing looks right, which is what matters!

The kit retails for a modest £3.00 and can be obtained at exhibitions or direct from Brumtrams at 23 Darris Road, Selly Park, Birmingham B29 7QY. No doubt Roger will be bringing a supply along to the Dudley Port meeting as well as to Warley.

A new feature of the 1996 service is a mixed train every Sunday from May to September. This will re-create the type of train so typical of the Colonel's railways and should be very popular, particularly with photographers.

It will be interesting to see how many passengers choose the DMU in preference to a steam train on days where there is a choice; it will certainly give a good view along the line.

The "Dine on the Line" services will be increased this season with two Pullman cars in service on the Wealden Pullman trains. The trains are very popular so advanced booking is essential. A free leaflet with full details can be obtained by ringing the number given above.

Newmarket Exhibition

The Society will be well represented at the Newmarket Model Railway Exhibition, to be held on 8th June at St Felix Middle School, Newmarket. The exhibition will have a strong Light Railway bias in celebration of the Centenary of the Light Railways Act of 1896. Layouts will include Steve Hannington's Rye Town, Stuart Marshall's Faggotter's Green, Ian Hammond's Potts End, Barry Norman's Lydham Heath, my own Maidstone Road and probably Dave Brewer's Snailbeach, as well as some French light railways and other good things - in all about twenty layouts and a selection of traders

We would like to have the Society display stand in attendance, but need a volunteer to take and man it.

Profits will go to the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

A DAY OUT IN KENT

J F J Gant takes a trip on the East Kent

I first became interested in Light Railways as a schoolboy when in a book I saw a picture of a train leaving Corrington for Coryton in Essex, on the Corringham Light Railway, a line I was able to travel on later.

Near to my school was John L Smith's (Lens of Sutton) old shop and I made enquiries from him as to what Light Railways I could visit. He informed me that I had missed the East Kent Railway but that I could still visit the Kent & East Sussex Railway, which I duly did with my adult return ticket to Wittersham Road cut diagonally in half to indicate a child's half fare. By booking to Wittersham Road from London, it enabled me to travel outwards via Headcorn and to return via Robertsbridge.

This day out was one I will always remember; apart from the atmosphere of the K&ESR, I also had my very first footplate ride, shunting in Tenterden yard on an O1, little realising that I was later to become a fireman on the main line at Nine Elms. This day was the start of many other visits to the Kent & East Sussex, before its tragic closure to passengers in the 1950s.

However, on reading in "The Colonel" that the East Kent Railway had re-opened, albeit with only a fragment of what it once was. I knew I must at last make that long-awaited visit. So last October on a lovely sunny Sunday morning my wife and I set off for Shepherdswell, passing en-route Rolvenden where the locomotives were steaming up in preparation for their day's operation.

Arriving at Shepherdswell I felt I was stepping back in time, yet with the feeling of how it would be if Colonel Stephens was around today, he would have purchased Heritage Diesel Units. The staff/volunteers were so friendly and helpful. We travelled along the line past lovely countryside through the Golgotha tunnel with its brickwork made for double track but with only single track laid on one side and a solid slab of chalk on the other! Beyond the tunnel is Eythorne station being rebuilt to its original style but further back from the road to comply with modern regulations. Here the track goes on to a little way short of Tilmanstone, the next stage the EKR hope to re-open. The course of the original main line to Eastry and Wingham is completely overgrown. I was surprised to see several local people leave the train here, having had a "Sunday morning ride on the train".

After a picnic at Shepherdswell my wife and I made a second return journey to Eythorne before looking around the small museum, situated next to the South-East Trains main line, with its many interesting exhibits.

On the return journey home we called in at Tenterden with all the crowds of people there, which is marvellous to see for the future fortunes of the K&ESR. We left Tenterden feeling what an enjoyable and relaxing day we had at the EKR.

I would urge any members of the Colonel Stephens Society who either live or may be visiting the South East in 1996 to make a visit to the East Kent Railway.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

What can I say about the Colonel that has not been said before? We all know what a remarkable man he was. After all, how else would Stephens have accomplished so much with so few resources?

The term "shoestring" has been used many times to describe his lines. Never one to waste money, make-do-and-mend and only replace if all else failed were his guiding mottoes. Only a man like Stephens could possibly have run his lines the way he did. He was much more than a railway engineer, promoter and manager; from his office at Salford Terrace he looked after the empire he had built up, no two lines alike. No other railway kingdom like it existed before - and none ever will again. The staff who worked for the Colonel were to a great extent their own bosses, working on their own but pulling together to make the job work.

Loyalty to the firm was an important ingredient for working on a Stephens line.

He expected the best from his staff - and got it. A visit to one of his lines was something of a revelation. In the late 1930s I was privileged to visit the S & M and the Snailbeach; although this was after the Colonel's death, things had carried on much as before. The same easy-going atmosphere was still present with friendly staff always ready to help. These visits remain treasured memories of a way of life now gone for ever.

It is now almost 65 years since the Colonel's passing, and not many staff who knew him are still with us, but his works and memory are still kept alive by our Society, as well as by the K&ESR and other lines under preservation. I recently gave a little talk to a local ladies' club about the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire, and was quite amazed at the questions asked at the end. Everyone present seemed to have some knowledge of the Colonel and his railways.

COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

Notice is hereby given that the 9th Annual General Meeting of the Colonel Stephens Society will take place at 2.30 pm on Saturday 26th April 1996 at Keen House, Calshot Street, London N1

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 1996/7
7. Publicity and exhibition matters
8. Any Other Business

Derek Smith, Chairman

WANDERING "WALTON PARK"

Ron Mann looks at a loco which worked on four of the Colonel's lines

When studying the lists of locomotives that ran on the Colonel's railways, a name that frequently appears is that of "Walton Park".

Built for the Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Railway by Hudswell Clarke of Leeds, it was one of their standard 0-6-0 saddle-tank locomotives with outside cylinders, Works Number 823, and was delivered in June 1908. On the WC & PR it was loco No.4 and was named "Walton Park" after a station on the line.

It served at Clevedon until March 1912, when it was transferred to the Plymouth, Devonport and South Western Junction Railway. However, its stay in Devon was very short and in 1913 it was transferred again, this time to work on the Shropshire and Montgomeryshire Railway. Three years later, in 1916, it arrived on the East Kent Railway where it became their Loco No.2 and served until 1943 when it was sold to T W Ward of Sheffield. Subsequently it re-appeared at Purfleet, Essex, and was later reported to have been seen at Hastings Gas Works. It was finally scrapped in 1957.

Its initial livery was stated to have been Midland Red, and certainly by 1939 it was a darkish green with yellow and black lining, as seen in a colour photograph in "Backtrack" Volume 8, No.1. I cannot find any details of the colours carried in the intervening years.

Unlike the Selsey locos previously described in these pages, "Walton Park" appears to have survived 35 years on the Colonel's railways without any alterations.

Editor's note: From dated photographs, the nameplates were removed some time between May 1935 and September 1938, and during the same period the front buffer sockets were changed from a tapered to a parallel pattern, the smokebox was replaced and the chimney rebuilt. The rear buffers may also have been changed, but the photos are not clear enough to prove that.

As to the painting scheme, the green livery appeared also between the above dates; prior to that the loco was an unrelieved dark colour all over, probably black but it might have been well-weathered maroon!

Has anyone a photo of the loco on the S&M or PD&SWJ, or on the WC&PR apart from the view in Peter Strange's book?

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The East Kent Railway, V Mitchell & K Smith, Middleton Press

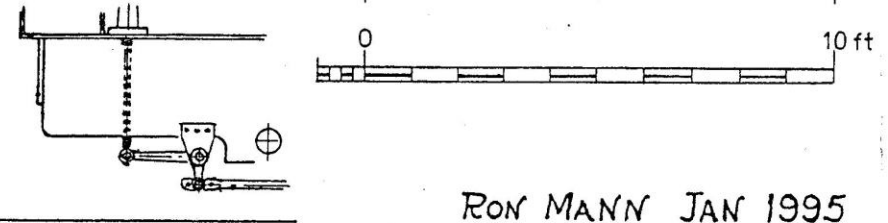
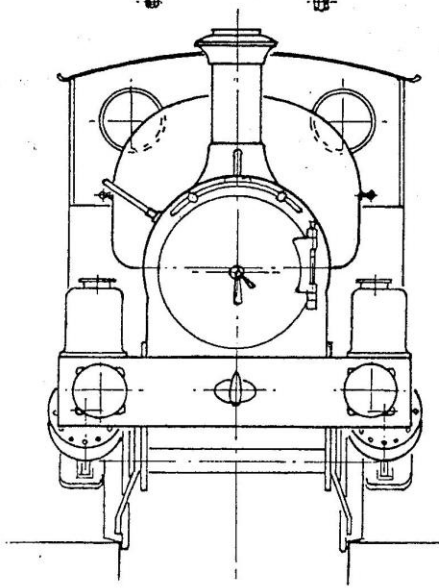
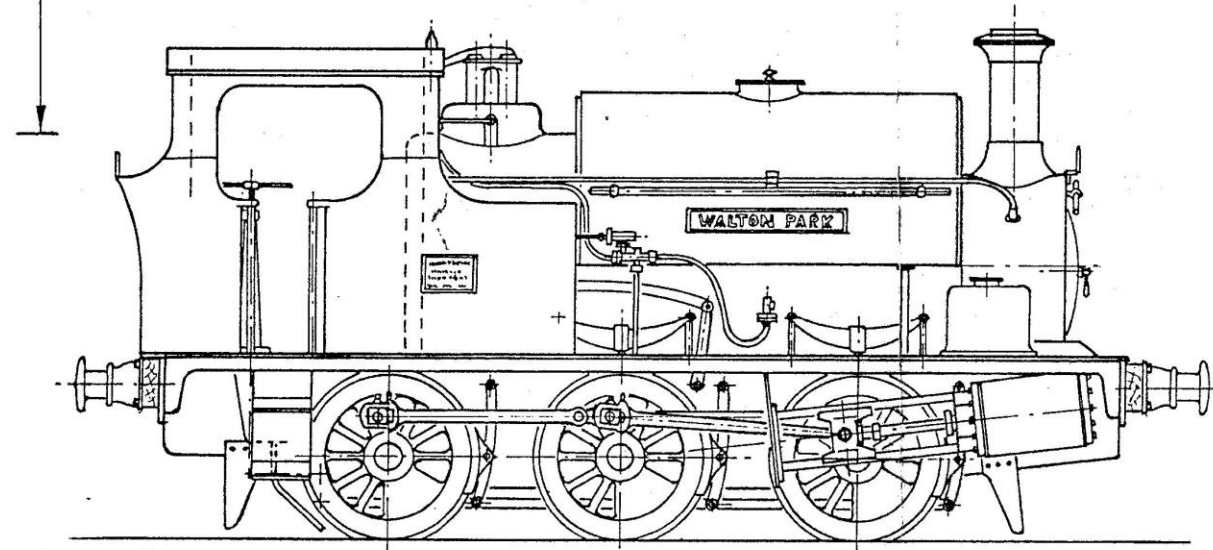
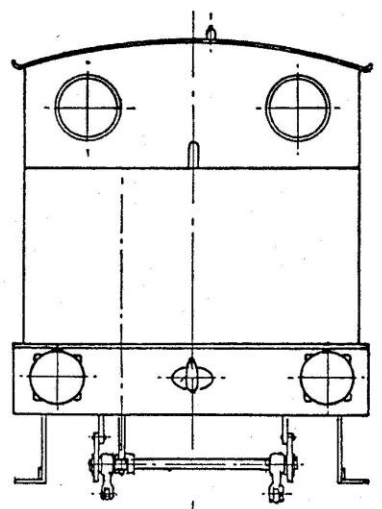
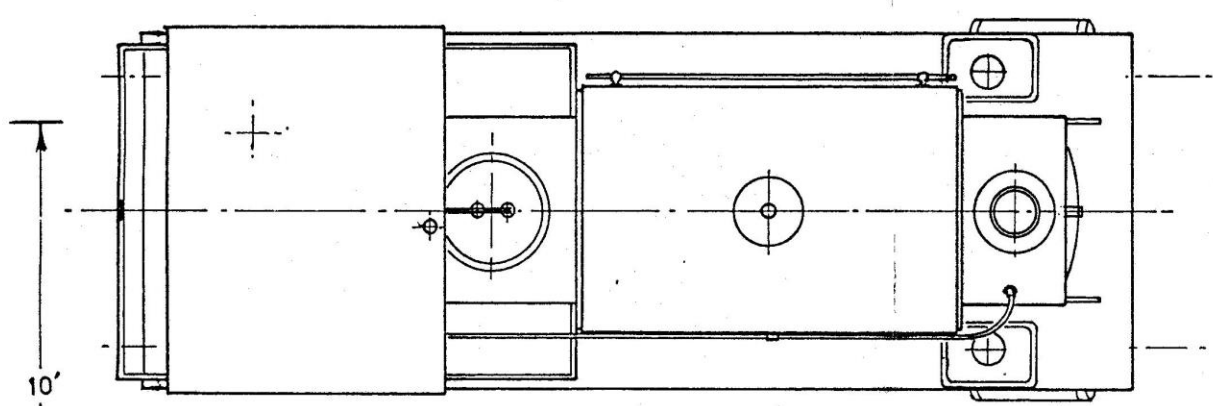
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The Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway, Peter Strange, Twelveheads Press

Railways of Arcadia, John Scott-Morgan, Paul Waters & Associates

The Colonel Stephens Railways, John Scott-Morgan, David & Charles

The Colonel Stephens Railways in Kent, Peter Harding, Author



RON MANN JAN 1995

'WALTON PARK'
HUDSWELL CLARKE
Works N° 823 Built 1908

THE LIGHT RAILWAYS ACT OF 1896

Stephen Hannington investigates the background to and content of the Act

This is the centenary year of the Light Railways Act of 1896. It occurred to me that though I know the name and date inside out, I never knew why the Act was passed or what it contained. It therefore seemed fitting to try and answer these questions on its 100th anniversary.

A trawl of the archives of *The Engineer* magazine uncovered contemporary comments and reports around the time of the Act's passing, which provide most of the original content of this article. Extra material came from the books listed as references.

Curiously enough, the very first *Engineer* reference I came across, dated 5 June 1896, concerned the perennial question of what a light railway actually is. It is an editorial on a parliamentary debate of the Light Railways Bill the night before, and includes the remarks:

"It is earnestly to be desired that the government should give way...and define the meaning of the words 'light railway'."

It goes on to say: "If parliament is unable to define its own meaning, how is it possible for any judge, commissioner or lawyer to do it?"

The editorial is particularly scathing, describing the proposed legislation as "in many ways the worst drawn Bill ever laid before the House of Commons".

As evidence of the confusion that seems to have surrounded attempts to pin down the term at the time, *The Engineer* later states: "We happen to know that many persons always confound narrow gauge

and lightness, holding that a line that is laid to the normal width must be 'heavy', while any line narrower must be 'light'."

Let us leave this debate and its outcome for now, and consider why this "worst drawn Bill ever" came to be in the House in the first place. There had been attempts before, notably in 1868 and 1870, to reduce the rules and regulations imposed on railway provision by the Board of Trade in an 1840 Act of Parliament.

The Engineer, in December 1895, put the problem in a nutshell: "It is clear...that if the existing Board of Trade rules as to stations, platforms, level crossings, signals, ballasting, brake, guards and so on are enforced, the light railway can have no commercial existence."

The groundswell of interest in light railways at this time stems from what one contemporary landowner referred to as "the disastrous state of agriculture". Cheap imports of wheat had knocked the bottom out of arable farming and the development of refrigeration during the 1880s did the same for dairy and meat farming. In 1893, wheat prices were at their lowest for 100 years.

"For most sections of the British moneyed class, falling prices were more than offset by the rise in production. But it was not so for the farmers and landlords. In agriculture, the so-called 'Great Depression' was real."

That same year, William Gladstone appointed a Royal Commission to look into the matter, which mentioned railway haulage rates as a contributor to the farmers'

plight. A light railways conference in London in 1895 was attended by, amongst others, the British Dairy Farmers Association and the Agricultural Banks Association.

So the main aim of the 1896 Act was to encourage the building of railways into rural areas where a conventional railway would never have been economically viable. This was to be accomplished by relaxing Board of Trade rules governing safety and standards of construction, and by making provisions for public money to be available to finance construction.

By these means it was hoped to revitalise rural communities by providing cheap secondary transport facilities, mostly through independent companies, though existing main line operators could also take advantage of the Act.

I have been unable to trace the precise origins of the Bill that became the 1896 Light Railways Act, but it seems to have been drawn up by a Liberal government under Lord Rosebery, Gladstone's successor. *The Engineer* of 5 December 1895 refers to "Mr Bryce's Bill, brought in last session, compiled by a majority of the Light Railways Committee".

A parliamentary committee had been set up to study the provision of secondary rural transport using light railways. It examined the way foreign countries - notably the French and the Belgians - built and operated such lines. The Board of Trade had also organised a light railways conference in 1894, which also fed its deliberations into the drawing up of the Light Railways Bill.

A change of government in 1895 - the General Election that saw the end of Keir Hardy's short stint as the first Labour MP - meant that the Bill continued under a Conservative administration headed by

Disraeli's successor the Marquess of Salisbury. The new government nonetheless seems to have been as keen on the Bill as its predecessor. In February 1896, the new president of the Board of Trade C.T.Ritchie met a deputation from the Light Railways Association, including Sir Arthur Rollitt MP and the Duke of Sutherland, who argued for the "great necessity" for light railways in the Highlands.

Referring to the Light Railways Bill then going through parliament, Ritchie replied that he was convinced that light railways could be of "great value to the agricultural community" and that "he trusted that in this work, the government would be doing something...towards meeting the agricultural depression, which unhappily existed." *The Engineer* reported.

As we have seen, the Great and the Good struggled to define exactly what type of railway they were legislating for. The debate centred around such things as axle loadings and speed restrictions, as well as how such lines should be paid for.

A meeting of the Surveyors' Institution debated the Bill on 20 March 1896. Not all were enthusiastic. For instance, a Mr A.E.Christy argued that light railways would "cause a glut of produce at the centres of population" and "depreciate the value of those districts adjacent to towns" because of better transport to "remoter districts".

"Trains running along roadsides would be dangerous to life and limb," he said, no doubt referring to French and Belgian practice of that period, "and would injuriously affect the property near which they would pass." He added: "They would spoil the sporting and diminish the demand for horses".

An interesting contribution to the debate came in a letter to *The Engineer* in June

that year, from William Lawford, M Inst CE, who described a light railway he had "made" in Buckinghamshire around 1870, eight miles long and linking junctions with the GWR and LNWR. It was standard gauge, he said, with longitudinal sleepers and minimal earthworks. He proposed a 6ton axle load limit.

This may have been the Wotton Tramway, later the Brill branch of the Metropolitan Railway, opened in 1871 from Quainton Road LNWR. It was 6.5miles long and built without Act of Parliament on the Duke of Buckinghamshire's private land.

In the event, the Light Railways Act was given the Royal Assent on 14 August 1896 and came into effect from 1 January 1897. It never did contain a watertight definition of a light railway. Three Light Railway Commissioners were appointed to, effectively, make up the rules as they went along. They had the 1868 Regulation of Railways Act to guide them, which specified an 8ton axle limit and a 25mph speed restriction, though the commissioners more often opted for a heavier axle load.

The key provisions of the 1896 Act were that they made an Act of Parliament unnecessary for a light railway, and that the Treasury could pay for up to half the cost of construction.

The Commissioners had the power to grant a Light Railway Order authorising a railway, which had to be confirmed by the Board of Trade. The Kent & East Sussex was the first line to proceed on this basis, though it had previously obtained a conventional Act of Parliament.

The first application for an Order by an existing railway company, according to the *Railway News* at the time, was from the LSWR for the Basingstoke & Alton light railway, reported in *The Engineer* on 31 December 1896.

"If the provisional order is granted by the Commissioners," *The Engineer* stated, "the company will have the same power as had formerly to be obtained by Act of Parliament". The Order was, in fact, not confirmed until December 1897.

The Sheppey Light Railway Order, confirmed on 3 April 1899, specified a 25mph speed limit - downrated from the promoters' preferred 35mph - and a 14ton axle limit on 60lb/yard rails. The Commissioners also specified that lineside fencing must be provided.

The first Light Railway Commissioners to be appointed, in October 1896, were the Earl of Jersey, Colonel G.F.O. Boughey RE and Gerald FitzGerald. Their secretary was Bret Ince. The previous March, Arthur Pain CE, who had been engineer to the Southwold Railway in 1875, had argued that there was a need for "strong" commissioners, in that legal, engineering, "traffic" and financial expertise would be needed to guide promoters who would not otherwise have access to "skilled professional assistance".

The Engineer makes intriguing mention of one of the first applications for a Light Railway Order in its issue of 9 October 1896. This relates to a line from the GWR's Torre station in Devon to St Marychurch, roughly 2 miles away on Babbacombe Bay.

This, the magazine says, will be "an excellent test of the value of the Act", and refers to the "relief of agricultural districts for which it was perhaps primarily intended". It goes on to conclude: "It is here, then, and in districts like these, that light railways may most readily prove their use and justify the Act that has made them possible."

Ominously, the St Marychurch line was never built.

And the Colonel's own Hundred of Manhood and Selsey Tramway, though it opened in August 1897, was built without recourse to the Commissioners, under the Railway Construction and Facilities Act of 1864. The Camber Tram, predating the 1896 Act, was also built on private land without any official sanction.

The provisions of the Act easing or removing the normal requirements on operating equipment such as signals, or facilities such as platforms or passenger accommodation, were intended to reduce the cost of construction. Some indication of the extent of this reduction is revealed by the cost of building the Sheppey Light, at £7,740/mile, compared to the LSWR's Meon Valley line to main line standards at £15,560/mile. The Selsey Tram, without the benefits of the 1896 Act, cost £2,700/mile. *[Since the Sheppey was a single track across flat country with minimal facilities, but the Meon Valley ran across very hilly terrain with two tunnels, numerous bridges and a sizeable viaduct all built for double track (though only single track was laid) and with extensive double-track stations, the comparison makes the Sheppey look very expensive to me! Do we know why? - Ed.]*

The success of the 1896 Light Railways Act is in some doubt. At the Surveyors' Institute meeting, Arthur Pain prophesied "a large extension of light railways all over the country". Some 22 years later, only 550 true light railway miles had been constructed, of which only 220 were either owned or operated by independent railway companies. Of the £1million Treasury aid available, only £203,000 had been taken up.

The majority of the 900 miles of railway built under the Act by 1918 were either urban street tramways or more-or-less conventional branch lines built by main line railway companies on the cheap. This

was not the sort of railway building that the 1896 Act had intended to encourage. Relatively few of the independent concerns became a financial success, with some becoming bankrupt almost as soon as they were built: witness our own beloved Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway. The financial provisions of the Act, intended to provide a safety net against commercial failure, and to ease the financing of construction (the two are not unrelated), rarely seem to have worked in practice.

It took the exceptional talents of a man like the Colonel to make the concept work with any degree of success.

Some insight into why the light railway boom never really took place is perhaps given by a remark in *The Engineer* of 5 December 1895, which referred to some areas of the country in which the motor car would be "an impossibility" owing to the hilly nature of the terrain. Yet in 1918, the country was flooded with cheap army-surplus motor lorries, which many demobbed and unemployed ex-servicemen used to set themselves up as general carriers, often in direct competition to the very kind of railways the 1896 Act intended to encourage. What in 1895 had been deemed impossible had become a reality.

It was the beginning of the end for rural railways.

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Light Railways: Their Rise and Decline, by W.J.K.Davies, published by Ian Allen, 1964.

THE MISSING LINKS

Gordon Webb describes his award-winning N-Gauge Sussex Border Railway

This little line was born out of a love of the Weald country surrounding the border of Kent and East Sussex. I also wanted to reproduce something of the spirit of the writings of the late Sheila Kaye-Smith, about whose books I wrote in issue No.38 (Autumn 1994) of THE COLONEL.

In particular her novel "Ember Lane" describes a journey by one of her characters on what might have been the line which was proposed to connect Northiam on the K&ESR with Rye on the Southern Railway. Stephen Garrett's "The Kent and East Sussex Railway" (Oakwood Press 1972 revised 1987) also mentions this line. This was one of my missing links and formed the basis of the layout. It was to be built by a private company under the Light Railways Act of 1896, the K&ESR having decided not to build it themselves.

I was in some further difficulty; being a canal enthusiast I wanted to include a canal, but originally could find no justification for it. There was a short ship canal at Shoreham in West Sussex, but this was in the wrong place and too big. Then there was the Royal Military Canal which still runs from Cliff End, near Winchelsea, through Rye to Hythe; this was built more for defence against a possible Napoleonic invasion than for transport.

Then I discovered the Weald of Kent Canal. It was to have connected the River Medway in Kent with the River Rother, there coming out in the general area of my proposed railway. The canal was never built, being overtaken by the railway age, but I was determined to supply this second missing link.

After these preliminary considerations had been settled, I drew out the plan full size on plain white wallpaper, including not only the trackwork but all other features as well. I wanted to use PECO fine-scale track and points, but as the latter were a long time coming most of the scenic work, including all of the canal with its lock, boat-yard, wharf, tunnel mouth, roads and two bridges were all completed before any track was laid, together with some hand-painted scenery. Thus the Sussex Border Railway was conceived just like a real railway - the scenery and other pre-railway features were there first.

Originally there was only a 6-foot scenic section, with a three-track fiddle yard lurking behind the scenery where Bibleham Halt and its adjacent tunnel now stand. This was wretchedly inconvenient and was eventually abolished, the line being extended by adding two new end sections as shown on the plan. The turntables are only 11 3/4 inches in diameter and have three tracks on each. This diameter might be thought too restrictive, but in N-Gauge where short trains are used as appropriate for a Light Railway, it is quite satisfactory.

These extensions have revolutionised operations, the former terminus-to-fiddle-yard being converted into through operations for some trains in each direction, while a motor train and a steam coach can still provide the original service.

There is no denying that there are far more trains and train movements than there ought to be on any typical Light Railway, but there, I tell myself, the

Colonel missed a trick in not building the branch for the K&ESR, the missing link having proved unexpectedly popular and thus profitable. *[I use the same argument to justify the service on "Maidstone Road" - Ed.]*

I was keen to include working semaphore signals; perhaps there is nothing quite like signals to give that true railway atmosphere. There are two scratch-built signals, one an old disc-and-crossbar and the other one of those diamond-shaped revolving signals from the Shropshire and Montgomeryshire Light Railway. The latter were operated by any intending passenger who would turn the signal to face the oncoming train. At rest, or when turned, the signals show the appropriate lamps in the form of red and green jewels. The other signals are from Ratio kits, and all are operated by push-pull rods made from bicycle spokes.

The points are also operated by bicycle spokes and since they are "Electrofrog" there did not seem to be any need for section switches. The turntable tracks are electrified by leads with crocodile clips soldered on and clipped to each track as required. These sort of simple expedients tend to be prevalent on the Sussex Border Railway as I am not fond of electrical work!

All the buildings are scratch-built and are interior fitted where appropriate. There is a little signal box copied from the one in the yard at Robertsbridge, which was used to control the entry and exit of K&ESR trains to and from the bay platform there. It is complete with levers, bells, instruments, chair, stove, desk with train book and coat rack. Of course, nobody can see all this and I am not sure what the fittings in the real box were, but it gave me a lot of pleasure to do. It has a removable roof and each time it is taken off I am reminded that I have not yet

modelled the signalman's jacket hanging up!

The buildings are from examples in Rye, one or two heavily disguised, and from elsewhere in Sussex. The station building is from Watlington in Oxfordshire; I have always intended to replace this with a "proper" Colonel Stephens type building, but somehow I've got too fond of it. The goods shed is copied from one on the "Cuckoo Line" and is still in existence as a garden shed at Hellingly Station, which is in private hands.

Reference to the plan will show a gypsum mine and wharf, with narrow-gauge tramway. I knew nothing about gypsum other than that it was mined at Mountfield, in East Sussex, so before embarking on the project I rang up the mine office. The man who answered the phone sounded quite taken aback by a complete stranger asking for a lot of technical detail but when I said I was a railway modeller he laughed, became quite affable, and told me all I wanted to know. (Must humour this madman.....) I am ashamed to say that the mine tramway does not work. Perhaps some day it might when I think of a way to make N-gauge horses' legs work!

Most of the places, station names, scenes, road traffic and people are taken from Sheila Kaye-Smith's novels (there are over thirty of them). Still, I haven't been able to restrain myself from buying little packets of things to make up and paint. I mustn't do it any more as it will all get too crowded.

The layout is set in about 1930, at a time when horse-drawn, petrol-driven and steam vehicles could all be seen together on the roads, and petrol, steam, semi-diesel and horse-drawn boats could all be seen on the canals. It is important for any layout, whatever its period, to reflect the manners and customs of the times. One example is depicted at Marlingate where

the local doctor is to be seen coming down the steps of his surgery, raising his hat to one of his lady patients who is pushing a pram. Nowadays he would be going out of the back door to where his car is parked, while wearing hats, let alone raising them at appropriate times, has gone out of fashion. And how many period modellers remember to place the gentleman on the kerb side of the lady when the couple is walking along the pavement? *[You're making me feel old Gordon - I still keep to that custom! - Ed.]* Then, males used to wear headgear according to their station in life. These manners and customs which were taken for granted and practised assiduously in the 1930s have all for the most part disappeared. I do not recall any previous mention of this aspect of railway modelling being written about before.

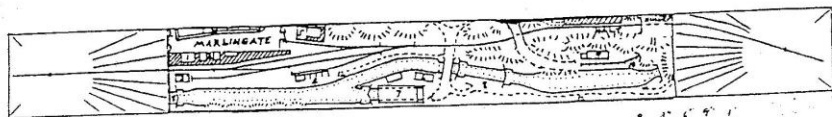
As originally built, the layout was one solid 6-foot length complete with attached sky board. It was meant to be purely a home layout but the time came when it began to be invited to exhibitions. Its size made it very unhandy for carrying in the average saloon car, so one day taking my courage and a saw in both hands I cut through the sky board, baseboard, roads, fences, hedges, canal and track approximately in the middle, just by the canal bridge. The resulting halves, plus the two turntable end pieces, were re-joined with hinges and removable pins. I was surprised to find that when the wiring had been rearranged, it all still worked.

In true Light Railway fashion locomotives have been gathered from a number of

sources. Some are tanks but there is a Sentinel and two tram locomotives. Of the latter, one is ex-Wisbech and Upwell while the other is scratch-built, representing a Wantage Tramway Hughes engine. All are painted blue, which has led to small boys at exhibitions calling them all "Thomas". Except for three four-wheelers, all coaches are balcony-ended, painted chocolate. The foregoing are lettered "SBR" in gold. Freight stock is varied, some painted grey and lettered "SB" and others are visitors from outside companies.

At exhibitions, three stands with spotlights are erected, and these led to making pelmet boards which are plugged into the top. These display the title of the layout and other information. The front fascia is getting perilously close to being filled with exhibitors' plaques. This has led to facetious suggestions that a section should be added, not to improve the layout but to make room for more plaques!

Throughout its life the Sussex Border Railway has lived along one wall of our bedroom, shared by my wife, long ago dubbed "the long-suffering Gladys". She is my most knowledgeable critic and keeps egging me on. Just recently I have completed another little layout which lives on top of our double wardrobe. I am seriously thinking about a four-poster bed - a ready-made piece of furniture to support yet another railway in the Colonel Stephens tradition. But Gladys shows a curious reluctance to endorse this proposal. I wonder why? *[Don't push your luck too far! - Ed.]*



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|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 - CATTLE PEN | 6 - FARGE |
| 2 - STATION | 7 - DRY DOCK |
| 3 - FREIGHT SHED | 8 - CANAL LOCK |
| 4 - COAL YARD | 9 - GYPSUM MINE |
| 5 - PACKING STATION | 10 - MINE TRAMWAY |