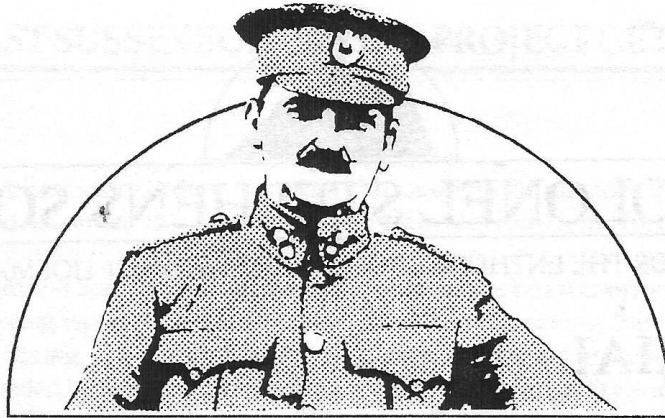


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THE COLONEL

Number 52 Spring 1998

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THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

The Society for the Enthusiast
of the Light & Narrow Gauge Railways of
Holman F. Stephens



THE COLONEL STEPHENS SOCIETY

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

EDITORIAL

What a great weekend! This must be the best AGM I have ever attended. With 29 members on the specially laid on coach this type of event has proved its worth at attracting members for what is usually the duller event in any Society's calendar.

Now there is the inevitable problem of where to hold next year's AGM and what special events can be laid on!

A special thank you must be said to those who organised all the various events that made up the entire weekend, in particular our Membership Secretary, Nigel Bird.

One couple, however, rather went over the top. Starting off with the idea of a weekend they decided that if they were going to travel all the way from the Lakes, they might as well make a real do of it. Not content with the K&ESR they discovered Eurostar and ended up in Paris! At least they made it back for the AGM on the Saturday!

No 'For The Light Railway Modeller' or drawings in this issue, instead plenty of pictures of the AGM weekend.

Dick Ganderton

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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.

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KENT & EAST SUSSEX BODIAM 2000 PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY

Work on the Kent & East Sussex Railway's Bodiam 2000 Project started earlier this month with clearance of the 3½ miles of overgrown trackbed between Northiam and Bodiam, in readiness for the main engineering work, scheduled to take place later in the Spring. The initial reclamation work has been funded by English Partnerships - the Government's Regeneration Agency - with an investment of £150,000.

Project Engineer, Peter Barber, explained that whilst the trackbed was out of use, brambles and scrub had taken over. "It was impossible to walk along the old line, let alone get machines and equipment there" said. "We are very grateful to English Partnerships for funding this vital initial work, as this has enabled us to make a good start on the project."

English Partnerships' Senior Development Manager for the South East, Richard Durrant, visited the worksite on Tuesday 21st April to see progress for himself. "This is a tremen-

dous opportunity to restore and extend steam train services from Northiam to Bodiam, and revive an important part of our heritage. I expect it to be an enormous success and I look forward to seeing this derelict plot of land reclaimed and put back into excellent use for the local community and visitors to the area."

Clearance of the vegetation has enabled engineers to see exactly what condition the trackbed is in. As expected, most of the culverts and drains are blocked or collapsed and their replacement will be one of the first tasks tackled when civil engineering work commences.

The project to extend services to Bodiam is expected to cost a total of £1.95m and includes the restoration of the quaint, rural station at Bodiam. The station has barely changed since it was built at the-tum-of-the-Century and will form an important part of the package to provide 'park and ride' facilities from Tenterden and Northiam to the National Trust's famous castle in the village.

Steam trains are scheduled to return to this part of the beautiful Rother Valley in April 2000, but first over four decades of neglect must be rectified - regular passenger services last ran to Bodiam in 1953.

To raise its share of the funding, the K&ESR will revive a method used by Victorian railway promoters to finance the building of their lines with an issue of Bearer Bonds later this Spring. This will enable the general public to invest in this exciting project - the largest undertaken by the K&ESR since passenger services recommenced in 1974.

Anyone interested in the bond issue should contact Tenterden Town Station on (01580)765155.

Bodiam 2000 Project Manager, Peter Barber (left), Richard Durrant (in cab) and K&ESR Fund-raising Director, Norman Brice inspecting progress. *Photo Robert Berry*



News

Short Story Competition

Alan Cliff (No 128) sent in this slightly unusual news item, which some members might find an interesting diversion.

Trains Glorious Trains is the title of this year's UK Action Magazine Short Story Competition. It is open to all comers. Entries are limited to 2,500 words and must reach the organisers by September 26th 1998. For further information, a copy of the rules, and an entry form, send an SAE please to: **UK Action 1998 Short Story Competition, 176 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8ET.** The judge is Alan Cliff.

Kent & East Sussex Ry.
Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Ry.
Weston, Clevedon & Fortishead Ry.
Selsey (West Sussex) Ry.
North Devon & Cornwall Junction Ry.
East Kent Ry.
Gower Ry.
Eye & Camber Ty.
Wotton Point Ry.
Ashover Light Ry.
Snaillbeach District Ry.
Festiniog Ry.
Welsh Highland Ry.

Salford Terrace,

Tonbridge, Kent.

30th March, 195

Telegrams: STEPHENS, TONBRIDGE STATION.
Telephone: 143, TONBRIDGE.

Our Reference. Your Reference.

A.90188.I

H. E. STEPHENS, M.I.C.E.

A. R. Bell, Esq.,
The Locomotive Railway-Carriage & Wagon
Review,
3, Amen Corner,
London. E.C.4.

Dear Mr. Bell,

"Ford" Rail-Cars.

I thought you would like to see the enclosed photograph, showing how we make up our "Ford" trains, they are quite capable of doing the work, on ordinary gradients.

Yours faithfully.

H. E. Stephens

Letter Presented to Museum

This letter, written by Col. Stephens to *The Locomotive Railway-Carriage & Wagon Review*, was presented to The Colonel Stephens Museum at Tenterden by Society Member Sir William McAlpine.

Welsh Highland Heritage

I have just received a copy of Volume 1 Issue 2 March 98 of this interesting 8-page newsletter aimed at keeping everyone informed of what's happening up in the 'top-left-hand' corner of Wales.

Full of interesting articles and information about the Welsh Highland - one of the Colonel's narrow gauge lines - you can get your own subscription copies for £7.50 per year - renewable on 1st January - to John Keylock, Secretary, Welsh Highland Heritage Group, Weathervane Cottage, Childswickham, Broadway, Worcs. WR12 7HL. Tel: (01386) 852428. Cheques payable to WHHG.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Derek Smith

The result of the Public Enquiry into the Ffestiniog Railway's application for a Railway Works Order for the Welsh Highland Railway should be known by the middle of this year. The Inspector now has about three months to complete his report and make his recommendations to the Department of Transport and the Minister.

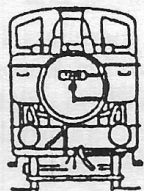
It seems the Ffestiniog Railway and the Welsh Highland Railway Ltd (formerly the 1964 Company) had reached a formal agreement of common purpose and future co-operation at an early stage of the Enquiry, but one remaining objection is that the Ffestiniog Railway wants to use Compulsory Purchase Powers to get their hands on what the 1964 Company has already built.

The main objectors now are the National Parks Authority and the National Trust, who see the rebuilt railway as destroying one of the loveliest part of

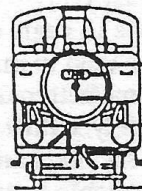
Wales. Who knows what the outcome of the enquiry will be?

One thing stands out from the Public Enquiry of 1922 into the setting up of the Welsh Highland Railway in the first place and completion of the various missing sections of the route - it took just one day! But under new provisions of the Transport and Works Act, applying for authority to construct or re-open a railway is much more expensive and complex than it used to be under the old Light Railways Act. It makes one wonder if any of the old lines would have ever been built if the new Act had been in place then.

Maybe it will not be too long before we see the Garratts in action on the new Welsh Highland Railway. I think the Colonel would be very pleased to know one of his lines had come to life after such a long time laying dormant. He might even send Bill Austen up to have a look!



Nigel Bird
Railway Bookdealer
Brynhir, Llwyn-y-Groes
Tregaron, Dyfed SY25 6PY
Tel/fax: (01974) 821281



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MINUTES OF 11TH AGM

Minutes of The Colonel Stephens Society's 11th AGM, held on 25th April 1998 on K&ESR between Tenterden and Northiam. The Chairman and 28 members attended this unique event, held on board K&ESR saloon coach PETROS travelling between Tenterden Town and Northiam stations.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from five members - Frank Briggs, Doug Ware, Mike Higgins, Christopher Redwood and Les Spratt.

2. Actions from the last AGM

- a) The AGM was being held on the K&ESR.
- b) The Editor was still having difficulty with articles for The Colonel.

3. Chairman's Report

Once again I am pleased to report another successful year for our Society. Our membership is holding up very well, much better than many other Society's. This AGM is something special, the first time we have ever held our meeting at a Stephens Line, and a vintage coach to travel in, too. This has all been organised by Nigel Bird, our Treasurer/Membership Secretary. We say a big thank you to him for all his efforts, also for looking after our funds so well that we are able to have this super day out.

During the last year, our Society has been well represented at Model Railway Shows, special mention for Dave Sutton, for his Colonel Stephens Society stand at Brighton and Dave Powell who managed to put together a Colonel presence at the 'show within a show' at Railex 1997, Aylesbury. We appreciate the efforts of all those who helped and gave their time to keep the Society's stand going.

A mention must be made of the weekend at Llanymynech, so ably described in Les Darbyshire's excellent report in our journal. It was good to meet so many members, some were able to visit the ex S&M yard crane at its new home. But by this time, it was late in the day and the light was failing. A special mention for our Editor, who has put together a good journal during the past year.

This year we celebrate 13 years of our Society and as one of the founding members, I am pleased we have managed to make the deeds of the Colonel known to a wider section of ordinary folk, he seems better known now than in his lifetime. I am certain 1998 will be a good year for our Society, with it very much on the up. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve for the past six years and I am prepared to continue if that is your wish.

Thank you all very much.

Derek Smith, Chairman.

4. Treasurer's Report

I am delighted to report an increase of £649.87 in the Society's bank balance, now standing at almost £3,000. Quite an achievement for a small specialist society. We have this year undertaken to pay the AGM costs in full, which hopefully, those attending will benefit from, as will the K&ESR and The Colonel Stephens Museum.

I see no reason to increase subscriptions (again) from their present level of £5 UK, £6 overseas.

MINUTES OF 11TH AGM

Only 17 badges remain and another production run is unlikely - so buy today, £2.50 each!
Thanks to all Committee members and helpers for keeping costs to a minimum.
Nigel Bird, Treasurer.

5. Membership Secretary's Report

Once again I am delighted to report an increase in paid-up members to 218, (up five from last year). This is an all-time high and continues to reflect the growing interest in the Colonel's Railways.

Special thanks are due to many of our modelling members who continue to promote the Society (and encourage new members) whilst they are at Model Railway Exhibitions.

A slightly disturbing trend is the non-renewal by recent members, who take out a subscription for one year and then don't renew, why? Obviously they don't feel sufficiently enthusiastic to renew, perhaps a lack of social and other events? Our Journals must remain interesting to help retain members.

Nigel Bird, Membership Secretary.

6. Election of Officers

All the Officers and Committeemen present were prepared to stand for re-election. It was proposed that they be re-elected *en-bloc*, and this was carried *Nem Con*.

The Chairman reported that he had had no communication whatever from the Publicity Officer and it was proposed by D. Sutton, seconded by N. Bird, that L Darbyshire be elected to serve as Publicity Officer. Carried *Nem Con*.

S. Hannington was proposed by D. Sutton and seconded by L. Darbyshire as Committeeman. Carried *Nem Con*.

7. Suscriptions

A proposal to keep subscriptions at the present level of £5 *per annum* (£6 overseas) with a new grade of Joint Membership, for partners at the same address, and receiving just one copy of *The Colonel*, at a rate of £8 *per annum*. Proposed by D. Sutton, seconded by L. Hetford and carried *Nem Con*.

8. Any Other Business

- a). Publicity: C. Holden proposed that the Publicity Officer be given a budget at the Committee's discretion for promotional activities at exhibitions, e.g. posters. Seconded by S. Hannington and carried *Nem Con*.
- b). S. Hannington offered to explore the possibilities of a Web site for the Society.
- c). A book on Colonel Stephens was discussed and the Committee is to correspond with C. Redwood to indicate interest in principle and report via *The Colonel*.
- d). L. Spratt reported that a Light railway Exhibition was again being looked at for 2000.
- e). A FAQ and an index of Colonel related articles and pictures was discussed. An Index to *The Colonel* is to be produced annually for distribution with Membership Cards.
- f). The Chairman and Membership Secretary are to investigate suitable venues around Shrewsbury/Bishops Castle for the 1999 AGM.

The Meeting closed at Wittisham Road Station on the return journey.

A WEEKEND WITH THE COLONEL

Les Darbyshire describes the Society's recent weekend visit to Kent for the 1998 AGM.

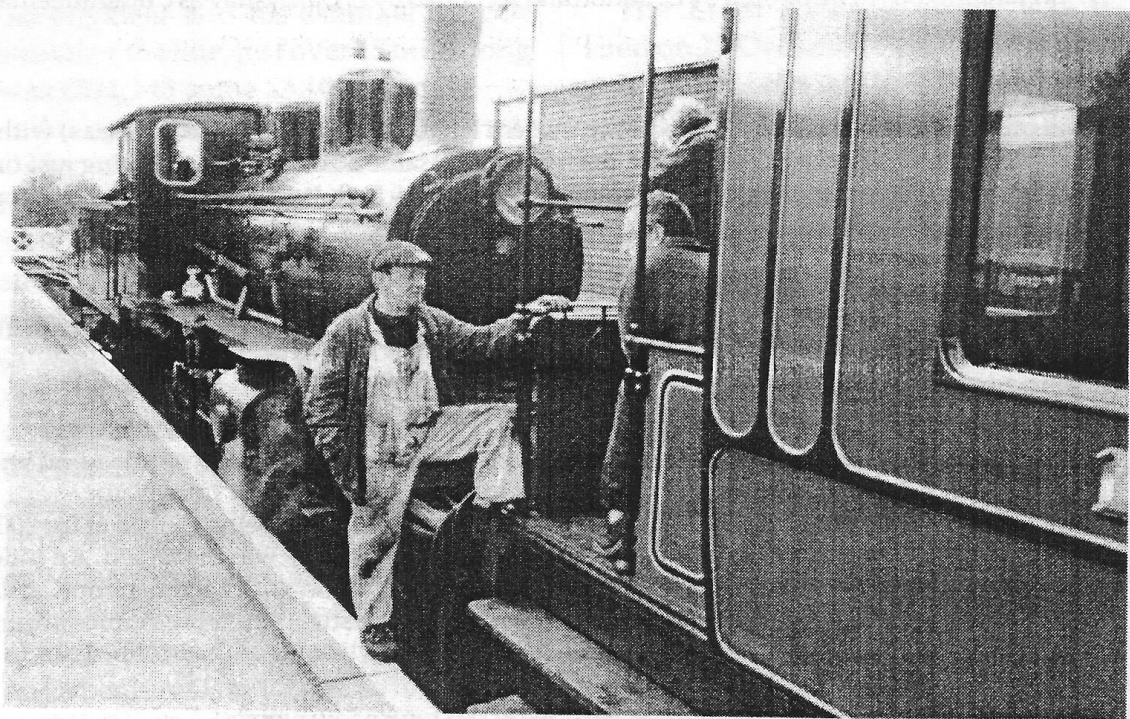
It was thirteen years ago that the Colonel Stephens Society was formed and ten years since our first AGM. The past ten AGMs were held in London and except for the first one were poorly attended. To remedy this, it was decided to hold the eleventh AGM at Tenterden and to combine it with a visit to the Kent and East Sussex Railway. In fact we went one better than that and held the AGM actually on the Kent and East Sussex Railway!

The weather forecast for Saturday 25th April was none too good, and when the Chairman and I set off from Berkshire it was raining a little. As we progressed along the M25 through Surrey and into Kent it got worse, and by the time we arrived at Tenterden it was raining hard. A few more members arrived and we all sheltered on the platform to

await the opening of the Colonel Stephens Museum at 11 o'clock. Before that time, Philip Shaw, the K&ESR's Archivist and Editor of *The Tenterden Terrier*, appeared and invited us across to the Museum where the Curator John Miller was waiting for us.

The Museum is housed in a building that is of considerable interest itself. It is a 'Romney Hut', of semi-circular cross-section constructed in corrugated iron, and was built at the start of the Second World War as a food-stuffs buffer store. Five such buildings were sited at Tenterden and were originally rail connected. The Museum occupies half of one of the huts, the other half containing a forge that necessitated the building of a fireproof wall to separate the two parts.

Philip outlined to us the content and layout of the Museum, and let us loose inside.



K&ESR Driver and Society Member, Chris Mitchell with *Norwegian* on the 1620 departure from Tenterden.

A WEEKEND WITH THE COLONEL

The first exhibits concerned Colonel Stephens the man - his ancestry and his life history. Some rare photographs of him as a child were displayed, together with many artefacts connected with his life. Progressing on from this, we came to a series of displays in chronological order, each dealing with one of his railways. The amount of material on each was truly remarkable, with plans, photographs, models, posters, tickets and many other items on display. One area of the Museum had been laid out as a replica of the Colonel's office in Tonbridge and was so complete with furniture, pictures, paperwork and general bric-a-brac (all original material) that we would not have been surprised to see the great man himself sitting there!

The Museum was very much like Dr Who's *Tardis* in that it seemed to be much larger inside than outside, and this effect was confirmed when we came to the last room which housed the one and only *Gazelle*. Despite our knowing that it was somewhere in there, it still came as a surprise to round a corner and find it sitting there, large-as-life - or perhaps

small-as-life would be a better phrase!

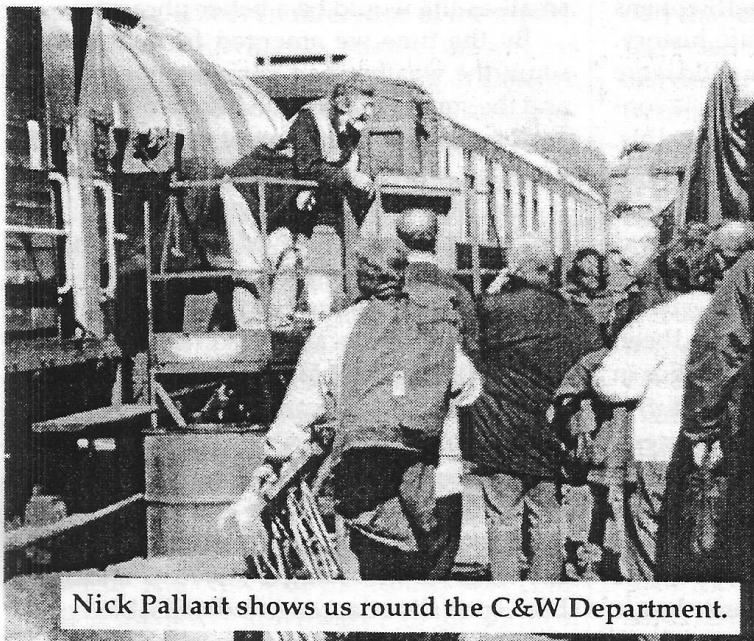
By the time we emerged from the Museum the weather had completely changed and the sun was shining. After a welcome tea and biscuit in the refreshment room, we joined our train, which was waiting in the platform. It was an ordinary service train, but two coaches had been reserved for us. In one of them the seats had been arranged for the AGM, while the other held our buffet lunch. Our locomotive was a Southern Railway "USA" 0-6-0T built for use at Southampton Docks, painted black and lettered in SR wartime style. The coaches were all in Southern olive green livery and included a superbly restored Maunsell vehicle and some British Railways Mk.1s. Our AGM coach was one of the latter, it was named *PETROS* and had been specially adapted to carry disabled passengers by having easy wheelchair access.

The AGM itself is reported elsewhere in this issue. Suffice it to say that 29 members attended it, some four times the attendance at the last one. However, a slightly sour note was created by the fact that Nigel had re-



The 11th AGM of the Society was held in K&ESR saloon coach *PETROS*.

A WEEKEND WITH THE COLONEL



Nick Pallant shows us round the C&W Department.

ceived bookings from 40 members. The Society had paid for the train fare and lunch for the missing people at a cost of around £120 so 24 of your £5 subscriptions were wasted. The meeting occupied the whole trip from Tenterden to Northiam and a little of the return journey, but on completion of the formal business we repaired to the second coach where our buffet lunch was waiting for us - and what a lunch! The K&ESR catering staff had really done us proud. When the train arrived back at Tenterden we were allowed to stay in it to complete our meal at leisure, to the envy of other passengers waiting on the platform. Because of the twin activities of business and eating, we did not have much time to admire the scenery on this trip but this was to be remedied later in the day.

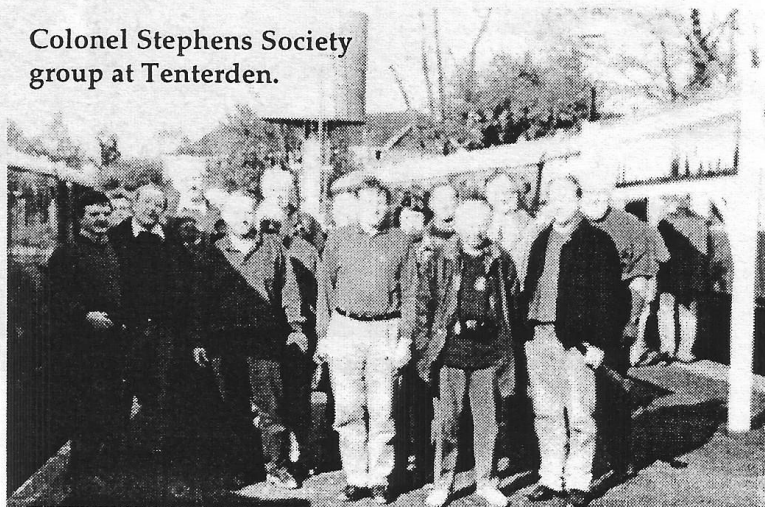
Our next event was a visit to the carriage shed across the line where Nick Pallant showed us

round. Having seen the excellent finish on the stock in service we were not surprised to find a well-equipped workshop in which two carriages were being attended to. One of these was the SE&CR Family Saloon which was being re-panelled on one side, removing the steel sheeting put on by the Army while the coach was at Longmoor and replacing it with plywood secured (to my surprise I must say) with Evostik. Also in the shed but not being actively worked on at present was another coach from Longmoor, of LSWR origin. It had been stripped down to its framing and showed clearly the tremendous amount of work

necessary to restore an elderly vehicle. Outside there were more vehicles in various stages of restoration, including a tank wagon which was being worked on enthusiastically by some younger members of the Carriage and Wagon Department.

The final event of the day was another trip on the train, this time the renowned Victorian Train. The Society had a ride on this train during our last visit to Tenterden in 1991, but it had changed a little since then. It now comprised four coaches rather than three,

Colonel Stephens Society group at Tenterden.



A WEEKEND WITH THE COLONEL

these being the LNWR 6-wheel inspection saloon (now painted in LMS crimson lake livery), the GER 6-wheeler, the District Railway 4-wheeler (now shown to be probably two-thirds of a Metropolitan Railway 8-wheeler!) and finally a new vehicle, an SE&CR 4-wheeler rescued from a bungalow at Ashford - see *Colonel* No. 42. Our locomotive for the last trip was the Manning Wardle *Charwelton* but it was away in France this time. Instead we had the Norwegian 2-6-0 tender loco, an excellent choice as, although it was (comparatively) modern, being built in 1919, with its long stovepipe chimney it had the 'feel' of a much older engine and rather resembled a modernised 'Ilfracombe Goods'. *Norwegian* was very powerful and made easy work of hauling our train to Northiam and back. This time we did have the time to see the wonderful unspoilt scenery of the Rother Valley, which can only be seen from the train - there are no roads paralleling the line. So

ended the day and the weekend for many of our members, but several of us had much more to come on the Sunday. We drove down to Shepherdswell on a bright and sunny morning for a visit to the East Kent Railway, another of the Colonel's lines, of course. I last went there about ten years ago when it was a sorry sight, but this time it was very different. The platform had been restored and on it was a building that was a good replica of the original EKR one. Two steam locos were in evidence, neither in steam, but in the platform was a two-car DMU whose batteries were being charged and which later went off down the line with a quite well-filled train.

When the rest of our party arrived we were introduced to Clive Wallace, who was to show us round. He showed us their collection of locos and rolling stock, much of it of considerable interest. Various small diesel shunters were to be seen, some from Kent collieries. There was a BR 'Shocvan', a rather

SECR 4-wheeler No. 2947 at Tenterden Town station in Victorian train.

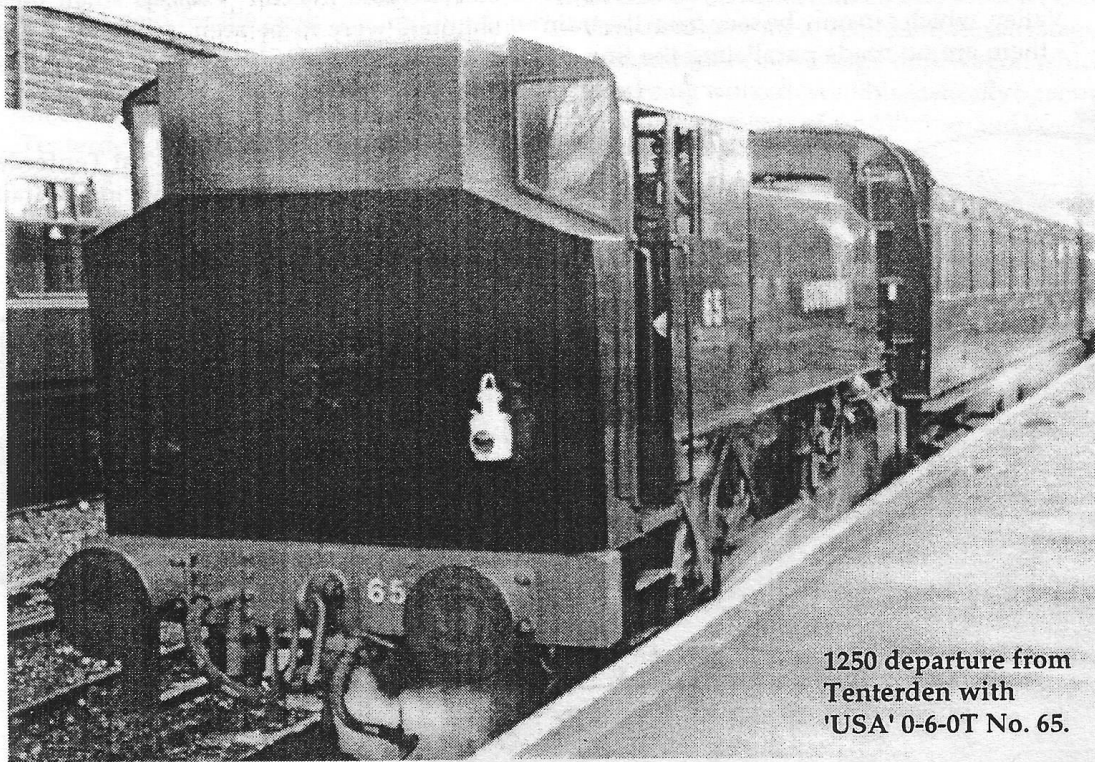


A WEEKEND WITH THE COLONEL

rare beast, and even rarer, one of the experimental Leyland coaches. Some of the wagons had been obtained from Ministry of Defence establishments and these included some vintage LSWR wagons and others that we could not identify - possibly contractor-built, rather than from a main-line company. Following our walkabout we boarded the DMU for a trip along the line which was close on two miles each way. The line leaves Shepherdswell, crosses the road by a level crossing and then goes through a deep chalk cutting before entering Golgotha Tunnel. This interesting piece of engineering, which I had previously walked through but never before ridden through, was intended for double track, but the excavation was never completed. The crown of the tunnel was complete, but lower down only half the width of the chalk had been dug away leaving a very

odd shaped bore! Beyond the tunnel the line traversed some pleasant countryside before arriving at the present terminus at Eythorne. It is intended to go on to the site of Tilmanstone Colliery eventually. During the journey we were buttonholed by a young man who showed us a book on the East Kent that he had just written and published. It is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Having returned to Shepherdswell and made our thanks, we made a very hurried departure and a breakneck journey back to Tenterden where we expected to have a special treat on the 3.10 pm train. When we arrived we found that the train concerned was to be the 4.20 pm so we need not have hurried! The special treat was to be a foot-plate trip courtesy of member Chris Mitchell, a K&ESR driver. The locomotive was the *Norwegian* 2-6-0 on the Victorian train again.



1250 departure from
Tenterden with
'USA' 0-6-0T No. 65.

A WEEKEND WITH THE COLONEL

There were four of us left by this time, plus the young author mentioned above, and only one extra was allowed on the footplate at a time, so we split the journey between us. I had the bit from Tenterden to Wittersham Road, and with the engine running tender first I collected quite a bit of coal dust in my hair! The loco had a lot of power in reserve for its light-weight train and was not worked hard. It ran quite

smoothly and most of the track was in good condition, though there were a few hollow spots in need of lifting and packing. The view of the countryside from the engine was even better than from the coach. All too soon I had to leave the footplate and return to the cushions, though in fact I forewent that luxury



Shepherdswell Station,
East Kent Railway

and travelled on the end platform of the LNWR saloon.

So ended an excellent weekend, which all that attended enjoyed immensely. Our thanks to Nigel Bird for organising it and to the staff of the K&ESR and the EKR for looking after us so well.



Clive Wallace
shows our party
round the East
Kent Railway
site at
Shepherdswell.

THE RAILWAY THAT NEVER WAS

Arthur R. Nichols tells the tale of the Southern Heights Light Railway - one of the Colonel's projects that so nearly made it, but didn't quite!

The Colonel is often viewed as the promoter engineer and manager of lame ducks and lost causes although some of his lines achieved limited success of a kind, for a time. In 1925 he was one of the promoters and was the engineer of a line that might have been the pinnacle of his achievement.

The rural area between Orpington in Kent and Sanderstead in Surrey was considered ripe for residential development and a line, to be called The Southern Heights Light Railway, was promoted to serve it, linking the Southern Railway Lines at those places. The Colonel was the engineer and his estimate for constructing the line, just over 15 miles long, was £511,148 some £3,100 per mile.

An application for a Light Railway Order was made and the SR General Manager, Sir Herbert Walker, seeing possible advantages for his railway, persuaded his Board in 1926 to agree to work the line when complete and to guarantee interest on its Debentures at a rate not exceeding 5% on £300,000, on condition that there were two representatives of the SR on the Light Railway Company Board. A week later he secured approval for his suggestion that the SR pay the estimated £140,000 for the electrification of the line, recompense to be made in shares. The guarantee of interest on Debentures was increased to £330,000.

The Southern Railway was certainly

interested but the Light Railway Company seemed to have had difficulty in getting started or perhaps in raising capital since nothing was done for some eight months. Then in February 1928 the SR made a formal agreement with the Light Railway Company confirming the previous proposals regarding interest on Debentures, installing the electrical equipment, and having three directors on the Board. It also agreed to work and maintain the line for 75% of the gross receipts. In the event of wishing to buy out the railway, the Board agreed to support any application made by the SR.

The Light Railway Order was issued on 29 December 1928 authorising a capital of £400,000 in £10 shares with approval to raise a further maximum of £100,000; up to £330,000 could be raised by loans. It contained a clause that would allow the SR to lease the line on completion.

Leaving Orpington south of the station, the line was to have stations or halts serving (though not necessarily close to) Green Street Green for Farnborough, Downe & Kenton, Cudham & Biggin Hill, Westerham Hill, Tatsfield, Chelsham for Warlingham, Hamsey Green, Mitchley Wood and joining the SR again near Sanderstead station. In the schedule of the Order was the typical Holman comment: "There shall be no obligation on the Company to provide

LIGHT RAILWAYS ACT, 1896.

ORPINGTON, CUDHAM, AND TATSFIELD LIGHT RAILWAY ORDER, 1902.

ORDER

MADE BY THE

LIGHT RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS,

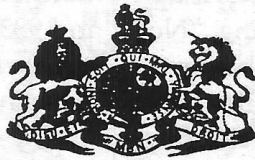
AND MODIFIED AND CONFIRMED BY THE

BOARD OF TRADE,

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LIGHT RAILWAY IN THE COUNTIES OF KENT AND SURREY
FROM ORPINGTON TO TATSFIELD.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



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[Cd. 1196.] Price 3d.

THE RAILWAY THAT NEVER WAS

shelter or conveniences at any station or stopping place." The line was to be standard gauge, naturally, and was to be single track with passing loops, sidings and goods yards where appropriate. It would have followed the natural contours and been undulating with a ruling gradient of 1 in 50.

Certain influential landowners imposed restrictions on the construction through their lands. Sir Gerald Arthur Maxwell Willshire required part of the line screened by trees and another built in a cutting. St. Joseph's & St. Anne's Orphanage at Orpington required "an unclimbable iron fence at least six feet high" and "a belt of trees at least ten feet deep or a wire fence with iron posts" to protect its land - or its inmates from escape!

In both cases it was provided that no manure, refuse, hides or other noisome or noxious substances were to be carried or to stand on the line, and shunting was restricted to between 6pm and 7am.

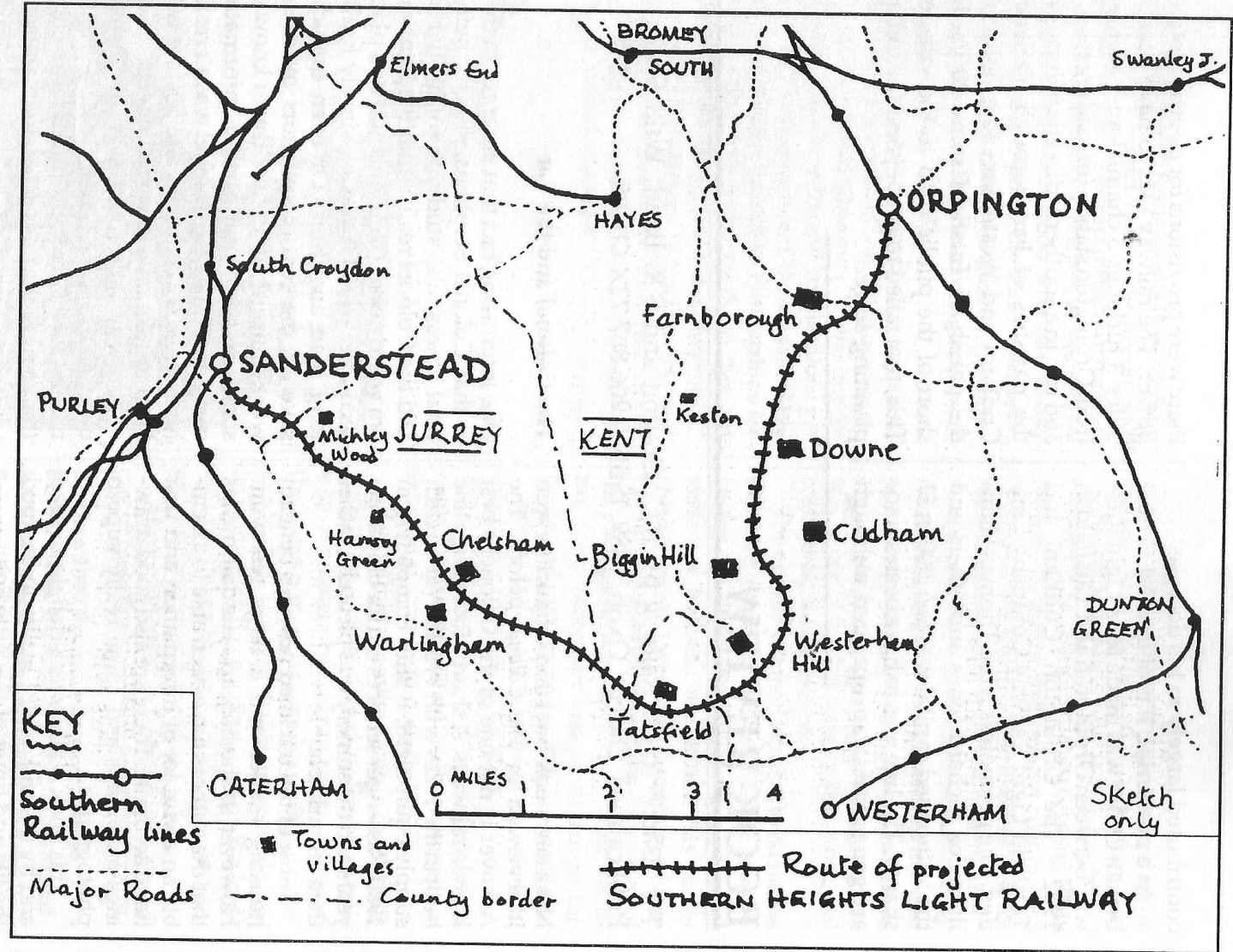
The future was viewed optimistically; the SR even showed the line on its maps in trains. But trouble was brewing. "Not in my back yard" opposition began to arise, quietly but inexorably, first from local Councils. A Ministry of Transport Inquiry was held in the Village Hall at Orpington on 3 & 4 March 1926 where councils, traders and residents alike expressed their views with much heat - shades of *The Titfield Thunderbolt!* This all had its effect and powers to acquire land ceased on 17 March 1931 with nothing

tangible to show. An application to revive the powers, authorise a deviation and abandon part of the line was made on 1 June. The SR still showed interest but was not prepared to support the application. The Southern Heights Light Railway (Revival Amendment and Deviation) Order 1931 was approved soon afterwards with a capital raised to £500,000, this time in £1 shares, with powers to raise it all by loans. The Light Railway Board was reconstituted and asked the SR if it would support it by providing rolling stock, supply goods and passenger services and staff for the stations in return for not asking for payment of interest on its Debenture stock. It was optimistic that it would be able to raise the capital required. The Southern gave formal approval but this must have been done tongue in cheek; it could read the writing on the wall.

It was all too late. Opposition rose stronger than ever and the anticipated development failed to materialise. The last straw was The Transport Act (London) 1928 which received Royal Assent in 1933 and showed that buses were a more viable form of transport than trains in such a rural area.

The scheme died unsung without a turf being turned and was soon forgotten. The Colonel must have been disappointed although he did not live to see its demise. He died on 23 October 1931 at the age of 63 after a number of strokes. It has been said that the failure of The Southern Heights Light Railway scheme

THE RAILWAY THAT NEVER WAS



KEY
 Southern Railway lines
 Major Roads

Towns and villages
 County border

Route of projected SOUTHERN HEIGHTS LIGHT RAILWAY

THE RAILWAY THAT NEVER WAS

contributed largely to his decease.

As a postscript, it is of interest to note that an Order was made for a Light Railway between Orpington and Tatsfield in 1902 - The Orpington, Cudham and Tatsfield Light Railway Company Limited. The promoters were Thomas Hamilton Fox Richard Jones and others and the authorised capital was £66,000 in £1 shares. The line was to have been standard gauge and steam operated, although

there were provisions for electric motive power. The railway was to have been 7 miles 3 furlongs 5 chains long, starting from Orpington station (or a siding there) and run in a southerly direction through the parishes of Farnborough, Downe, Cudham and Westerham to a point in the parish of Tatsfield some 20 yards short of the public road to the village. This, too, failed to get beyond the initial planning stage.

BOOK REVIEW

The Ashover Light Railway by R.C. Gratton and S.R. Band, Wild Swan Publications, Didcot, Oxon, 1989. ISBN 0 906 867 72X £18.95.

Not a new book, but I don't think I've seen it reviewed in *The Colonel* before. The Ashover is not one of the Colonel's best known railways. A short 2 foot gauge line built in the 1920s with World War I trench supply equipment, it shut completely in 1950. Passenger services ran for only a few years and the scenery was pleasant, rather than remarkable.

Most of the trackbed now lies beneath housing estates and a large reservoir. However, its short life and late date means that the authors have been able to assemble an awful lot of information and first hand accounts. There are also good drawings and maps and some really superb photographs.

This book really was a delight to read and by the end, I felt I really understood the life and times of this little line.

The Colonel and the Bar

One interesting fact that emerges in the book is that Colonel Stephens, shortly before his final illness, was studying for his bar exams. Did the Colonel realise that the light railway era was drawing to an end and had planned a second career? Or was he simply fulfilling a long held ambition? Or even intending to save on the cost of solicitors by doing the work himself? I doubt we'll ever know unless someone has some further information? It certainly shows the Colonel wasn't resting on his laurels. Even in his late 50s, he was still keen to take on a new challenge.

Anyway, I thoroughly enjoyed this book even if it did cost £20 with postage. I felt it was money well spent and much more enjoyable than a new shirt as a Christmas present!

Albyn Austin

More Books

Les Darbyshire reviews a couple of interesting new books.

***The Hawkhurst Branch Line* by Peter A Harding. 32 pages A5, card covers. Published by the Author. ISBN 0 9523458 3 8**

This book is a revised version of one first published in 1982, and is in the standard format that we have come to expect from Peter. A history of the line is followed by a detailed description of the route, then come sections on Motive Power and Rolling Stock, Hop-Pickers' Specials, Timetables and Tickets, and Closure. The book concludes with a section on the present scene, this having been brought up to date. Indeed, the whole text has been re-written with more detail and some corrections resulting from additional research.

There are many new photographs, including some rare views showing the line under

construction, and these are well reproduced on the high quality paper used. Track layout diagrams for all stations and intermediate sidings add to the usefulness of the book; Cranbrook, on a gentle curve, would make a good subject for a model!

The book is excellent value and a worthy addition to a Light Railway bookshelf. Even those who already possess the first edition should get this one as well!

It is available from the Author at "Mossgiel", Bagshot Road, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2SG at £3.00 including postage (cheques to P.A. Harding), or from Nigel Bird.

***The East Kent Light Railway* by Matthew Beddall. 36 pages A5, card covers. Published by the Author. ISBN 0 9532952 0 6**

This book is subtitled *A history of the line in combination with the Kent coalfield*, and the greater part of the book is devoted to just that. The complexities of the mining companies and their relationship with the railway are covered as well as they reasonably could be in a book of this size - it would take a substantial volume to do this subject real justice! The numerous schemes for expansion are described, along with the painfully slow progress of the parts of these schemes actually built and their equally painful but more rapid decline culminating in the official closure of the last section in 1987.

The remainder of the book comprises sections on the stations with a good description of each; locomotives, with an outline history of each; carriages; and goods stock. These last two sections were terse in the extreme and your reviewer, being particularly interested in the subject, would have liked to see much more material on this topic.

The book is well illustrated with photographs, some new to your reviewer, but unfortunately despite the good quality glossy paper used, some have not reproduced as well as perhaps they might which is a pity as they are of great interest. The centre pages contain two colour pictures that have reproduced well. There is a small error in one of the photo captions. The EKR had two Cheshire Lines Committee coaches transferred from the K&ESR (not one as described in the text) and one of these is to be seen in the photo on page 29, where it is wrongly captioned as an LCDR carriage.

This book is a 'first effort' on the part of the Author and Publisher and he must be congratulated for his initiative in producing it. It represents a most useful addition to the limited material previously published on the East Kent Railway and is good value for money. It is available from Nigel Bird, at £3.50 including postage.

ST. MICHAELS TUNNEL, K&ESR

Laurie A Cooksie took these photographs of St. Michaels Tunnel on 26th March 1996.



The north portal of St. Michaels Tunnel.



The south portal of St. Michaels Tunnel.