

THE COLONEL

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

Editorial: Where did the summer go?

Don't the seasons go zipping by? Last issue it was spring, and now it's already autumn. And last year we had no autumn at all. I'm not speaking meteorologically, of course, but of the frequency of *The Colonel*. Hopefully, missing issues will be a thing of the past now. Hopefully, too, you will enjoy this fourth incarnation of our newsletter, resulting from my second incarnation as its editor.

As well as the continuation of Laurie Cooksey's marathon account of how not to buy a railway locomotive, this issue also includes a fairly substantial report of recent events on the Rother Valley Railway, the preservation group intent on reconnecting the Kent & East Sussex to the main line at Robertsbridge.

I believe coverage of the preservation scene to be a vital role for *The Colonel*. It is proof that the Great Man's railways are still alive and

kicking. And the dedicated bands of volunteers that are making it happen, as well as deserving support for their efforts, are evidence of the affection for these lines that gave birth to the Colonel Stephens Society in the first place.

There are now three organisations dedicated to keeping these railways running: the Tenterden Railway Company, the Rother Valley Railway, and the East Kent Light Railway Society. I hope to develop and strengthen ties with all of these so that we can track the present as well as explore the past of these last vestiges of the Colonel's empire.

But what of the Festiniog and the Welsh Highland? Are these well enough covered elsewhere, or should we include them too? All contributions to the debate will be gratefully accepted.
SH

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Subscription renewals time

Yes, it's that time of year again, when membership renewal falls due. A form is slotted into this issue for the purpose. The good news is that, once again, the society is defying inflation by keeping the fee the same as in previous years:

£5 for UK members;

£6 for overseas; and

£8 for members at the same address getting one copy of *The Colonel*.

The bad news, as reported in the last issue, is that membership levels have slumped of late. Although we gained 23 new members, another 33 failed to renew their subscriptions: that's 16% of the membership.

Let's hope that this time round we can reverse that trend and continue the previous modest but steady rise in membership. We certainly can't afford to lose another 16%.

Why not try recruiting a friend? And remember, Les Darbyshire has a good range of publicity materials, including posters and handouts, that could be put to good effect wherever railway enthusiasts gather.

One glance at the index to *The Colonel* in the last issue shows how much the society has to offer. So remember: The Colonel needs YOU.

■

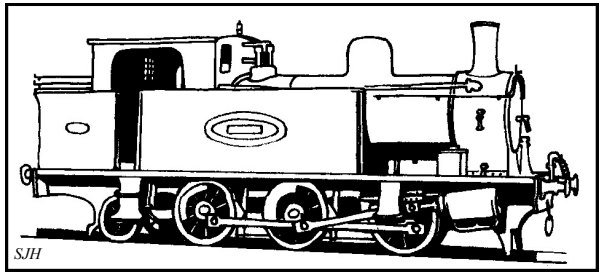
Classic coaches take on new K&ESR identity



Former Metropolitan District Railway coach No. 100 has been refurbished and relettered K&ESR to mark the 25th anniversary of the line's re-opening. Earlier this year, a former GER 6-wheel brake was finished in what the Tenterden Railway Company calls "K&ESR brown with straw lettering". Both form part of the railway's Victorian Train, which will run at weekends until October 31. Special goods and mixed trains, hauled by a Terrier and a Manning Wardle, will also run as part of the celebrations on the weekend of 23/24 October.

News

S&MR and K&ESR loco and



S&MR Hawthorn Leslie 0-6-2Ts *Pyramus* and *Thisbe* (pictured) in 7mm scale kit form are due on the market soon. Produced by our old chum Iain Young, trading as Sanpareil ICS, they will be of etched brass construction with cast fittings, and will cost £165 plus £10 p&p.

Iain also plans to offer three types of K&ESR Pickering bogie coach, the brake 3rd, brake composite and all-3rd, in the same scale for £85 each by the end of the year. They will also be etched brass with lost-wax castings, such as bogie axleboxes. He says that 4mm versions will be produced later by Dave Hammersley of Roxey

Mouldings.

Next on Iain's wish-list are the PD&SWJR's 0-6-2Ts *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* and *Earl St Leven* ("I desperately want to do those," he said) or the K&ESR's *Hecate*.

Sanspareil, as previously reported, also makes the 7mm versions of the K&ESR's Hawthorn Leslie 2-4-0Ts for £145 plus £10, as well as a range of other, non-light railway subjects such as LNWR 0-6-0 and 0-8-0 tanks, Southern express classes and the Caledonian Railway's Cardean class.

Sanspareil's address is Unit 4, How Mill, Carlisle CA4 9JU. Phone number is 01228 670167.

Southern's Selsey survey

The latest issue of *The Tenterden Terrier*, the house journal of the Tenterden Railway Company, includes the first part of an edited version of the Southern Railway's 1934 report on the Selsey Tramway, originally drawn up by its traffic manager Edwin Cox.

Compiled for the *Terrier* by Stephen Garrett, it includes a historical summary, with the conclusion that "it does appear that the Tramway Company is operating without any status whatsoever".

There follows a topographical description of the line and a review of its equipment. Once again, Cox pulls no punches, remarking: "The company's rolling stock appears to have little value beyond scrap..."

The same issue (*Number 79, Summer 1999*) also carries an article by Tom Burnham about proposals in 1843 for the SER to build a line from Headcorn to Hastings via Tenterden, Wittersham and Winchelsea.



Dry-print transfers for

Member Eric Challoner has unearthed a source of dry-print transfers for the BQC wagons that ran on the S&MR from Criggion quarries.

Featuring full 'Granophast' lettering, they are available in 4mm and 7mm scales from Dragon Models, whose address is 9 Kingsley Close, Sully, Vale of Glamorgan CF64 5UW.

The *Railway Modeller* of May 1999 quotes prices as £3.20 in 4mm scale and £6.10 in 7mm. Dragon's catalogue is available free in return

S&MR Coal Engines in *Railway Bylines*

The September 1999 issue of *Railway Bylines* includes a seven-page article on the ex-LNWR Coal Engines of the S&MR. Penned by former CSS member Martin Smith, it includes much previously unpublished information.

According to membership secretary Nigel Bird, it is well illustrated with photos by Casserley, Crompton and Low, "including a couple I've never seen published before."

Nigel can supply copies of the magazine for £4, including post and package. See his ad on page 15 for details. ■

Dispatches

Meole Brace found

Re Les Darbyshire's notes on the Shrewsbury AGM and his comments on Meole Brace station in particular: I suspect Les had only got as far as the bridge that carried what was the old Shrewsbury inner bypass, and is still very busy with traffic.

Meole Brace station was under the next road overbridge, about half a mile to the west. This carries Stanley Road, which is relatively peaceful.

After the AGM I made my own pilgrimage to the site. The platform mound/base of the station building is still there, albeit partly fenced off.

David Powell, Princes Risborough Warley National Model Railway Exhibition. The Colonel Stephens

Events

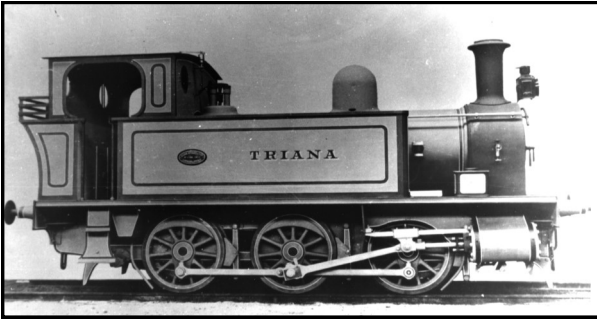
Society stand will be there. NEC Birmingham, 9 and 10 October.

Rother Valley Railway model railway exhibition, Robertsbridge village hall, Sunday 17 October (*see page 11 for more information*).

Editor Stephen Hannington's EM gauge K&ESR layout *Rye Town* will be appearing in exhibitions at:

Uckfield: Civic Centre, Bell Farm Lane. 16 & 17 October.

Canterbury: The Kingsmead Leisure Centre. 22 & 23 January 2000.



THE TRIANA FIASCO

Part 2

The board of directors of the Selsey Tramway found themselves in a pickle when attempting to buy the above locomotive in 1912. Laurie Cooksey's continuing account chronicles the affair's descent into the realms of farce.

At long last, it looked as though the order would go ahead as planned, but this was not to be the case! At 9.05 a.m. on June 5, Colonel Stephens sent the following telegram from Tunbridge Wells to the tramway's secretary Henry Phillips at Selsey: 'Kerr, Stuart say loaded 25 tons - cannot accept responsibility above 20tons.'

He sent a second telegram to Kerr, Stuart which read: "Selsey engine my limit weight 20tons loaded. Refuse to accept responsibility engine 25tons."

Later that day, Stephens confirmed in writing to Kerr, Stuart: "In reference to the specification you have been good enough to send me, I beg to inform you I have agreed to the purchase of an engine not exceeding 20 tons in weight loaded, or at the outside 21 tons. I am unable, therefore, to authorise an engine weighing 25tons 5cwt passing over the company's line.

"There are several modifications of the specification which will be required. You had better arrange for one of your draughtsmen to see me."

Stephens also wrote to Phillips: "It is a pity the specification was not

submitted to me before the engine was ordered," and added: "The *Selsey* [Peckett 2-4-2T] weighs 21tons 10cwt on 8 wheels."

Frank Sanden Street, who had made the original approach to Kerr, Stuart on the tramway's behalf, contacted Phillips on June 6, advising: "Mr Stephens, when in London the other day, agreed with me to order the *Triana* engine, but he now seems to have changed his mind.

"I have written to Mr Stephens today and hope that he will agree that the engine should be supplied as, when loaded with sufficient coal and water to run between Selsey and Chichester, it will weigh only 23tons. I will let you know what is decided."

Also on June 6, Kerr, Stuart wrote to Sanden Street: "We enclose a letter received from Mr Stephens today. Your locomotive, which will be forwarded on the 15th prox, was bought from stock and cannot now be modified unless at an enhanced cost and extended date delivery.

"We regret that we cannot send a draughtsman to Tonbridge. When

acknowledging on the 4th the confirmation of the verbal contract, we did not object to the insertion of Mr Stephens' name because we assumed that he was aware of the particulars of the locomotive ordered and the terms which had been discussed.

"As, however, he seems to have his own peculiar views we regret to have to refuse to accept him as a party to the contract in any form whatever."

On 7th June, Sanden Street tried to smooth things over, writing to Kerr, Stuart: "I have just received a telegram from Mr Stephens on which he says that he approves of the engine if the weight loaded with sufficient coal and water to drive the engine 16 miles does not exceed 23 tons, but he says he wishes to see you and that you have not acknowledged his letter.

"I think that it would be advisable if you would write Mr Stephens that you duly received his letter and have not answered before as you have been in communication with me, and that as regards sending a draughtsman to Tonbridge, you have no draughtsman in London to send down and you will be much obliged if he will call on you when next in London.

"You will see that I am anxious to avoid friction, if possible, but at the same time to have the engine supplied for the Selsey Tramway Co, as they are certainly in need of it to enable them to handle their summer traffic."

Also that day, Messrs F. Street & Co. Ltd. found it necessary to advise Kerr, Stuart: "You will please note that we have no responsibility in this matter as we did not pass you any order whatsoever, but simply introduced the customers.

"We may tell you for your guidance that our Mr F. Street is in communication with Mr Stephens and will, we have no doubt, advise you immediately he has been able to get a

satisfactory answer from him."

The following day, Kerr, Stuart wrote to "Messrs Hundred of Manhood & Selsey Tramways Co., Selsey" confirming their letter of 6th: "We have sold you a Stock Locomotive and we do not think that the engine with sufficient coal and water for 16 miles will weigh more than 23 tons approximately, but these engines, as we have already explained to you, vary slightly according to the thickness of

"Mr Stephens must really not write to us in the dictatorial manner adopted

the plates, which may be full to the dimensions or light to the dimensions and it would be advisable to make a slight margin for allowance either way. If it proves that the margin is on the heavy side it can, of course, be counteracted by carrying less coal and water.

"If Mr Stephens cares to call upon us here, we shall be pleased to see him and subject to a satisfactory explanation of the communications which we have already received from him, to give him every attention, but Mr Stephens must really not write to us in the dictatorial manner adopted by him, because we object to it, and as we have already pointed out, we cannot allow him, after his disagreeable attitude towards us, to become a party to a contract completed before we were aware of his existence."

Phillips immediately contacted Sanden Street and forwarded a copy of Kerr, Stuart's letter to Stephens. Needless to say, Stephens responded quickly, writing to Phillips in Selsey on 10th June: "I have not changed my mind. Kerr, Stuart's specification states

the engine loaded will weigh 25tons 5cwt. If it weighs 25tons 5cwt it cannot run on our line. I told Mr Street 23 tons loaded was the maximum. I doubt if this is wise: the bridge [*over the Chichester Canal near Hunston*] will require strengthening for this.

"The whole thing has been rushed through in such a way that the question has not had time to be properly considered. It is for the directors to say whether I am to be responsible for the construction of this engine or not; if it is not constructed under my supervision and my inspection, I cannot be responsible for it.

"This is the most peculiar business I have been engaged in during my

"It is a peculiar notion for contractors to have a free hand to send any material they like to work over a railway for which the engineer is responsible.

"As to Messrs Kerr, Stuart's statement that I have my own peculiar views - I am of the opinion that this is actionable in view of the possibility of it doing me damage with the directors and I am consulting my solicitor as to the issue of a writ for damages. I am not aware of any peculiar views. The strange part of the business is:

a) Messrs. Kerr, Stuart are providing a copper firebox for the same price as a steel one;

(b) They say the engine is ex-Stock, yet they want six weeks to deliver it;

(c) They evidently desire to avoid inspection.

"In any case, the boiler must be inspected by the National Boiler

Insurance Co. I may say this is the most peculiar business I have been engaged in during my 20 years experience and is not likely to lead to a businesslike conclusion. Perhaps you will take the instructions of the directors.

"The thickness of the firebox tubeplate is 7/16" and 11/16" apparently; we always use 7/8" for our 12" Engines. 7/16" will naturally not last long, as it is only half the thickness of our standard!"

Sanden Street wrote to Phillips again on 11th June: "I have spoken to Kerr, Stuart on the phone, and it appears that they have had no communication whatever with Mr Stephens and are upset in the way he has written them.

"It is most unfortunate that this misunderstanding should have arisen between Mr Stephens and Kerr, Stuart and I really do not know what to advise for the best, but I think we should let Kerr, Stuart go on with the engine, and in the meantime I will try and see Mr Stephens and smooth matters over.

"As regards coupling up the engine to our rolling stock, should this be standard couplings or should any instructions be given to the makers?"

Stephens wrote to Kerr, Stuart the same day: "Adverting to your letter of the 8th inst. to our secretary, Mr. Phillips, copy of which has been sent to me. Please send copy of my letter you refer to Mr Phillips, underlining the sentences you complain of. I have asked him to bring the matter before a full Board."

Kerr, Stuart duly sent the necessary correspondence to Selsey immediately adding: "but again we would point out that Mr Stephens' right to dictate to us is confined to an assumption on his part. We trust Mr Stephens will not favour us with further communications."

Also on 11th June, Phillips wrote to



Weight problems: one of Stephens' main concerns over Triana was that her weight would require this drawbridge over the Chichester canal, near Hunston, to be strengthened.

Photo:

Sanden Street advising: "I have shown Mr Clayton and Mr Garland the letters I have received from Kerr, Stuart & Co. and Mr Stephens, and they state the engine must, of course, be to specification agreed by Mr Stephens and yourself, as passed at our last meeting.

"That it is to be to specification agreed is distinctly pointed out in my letter to Kerr, Stuart, and the two directors I have seen think Kerr, Stuart's attention should be drawn to this, as it will not do to accept an engine not suitable for our purposes. Will you please see them again respecting this. I have not written them since accordingly."

■

TO BE CONTINUED

EARLY DIESEL RETURNS TO THE FESTINIOG

Hugh Smith sent in this account, compiled by the Greenwich & District Narrow Gauge Society, of a well-travelled locomotive that spent part of its long life on the Colonel's West Highland and Festiniog railways.

Built by Kerr, Stuart & Co of Stoke-on-Trent, locomotive number 4415 was the prototype of a range of diesel locomotives produced by the company before its collapse in the early 1930s.

It was sent to the Welsh Highland Railway for trials in 1928 and was transferred to the Festiniog Railway in March 1929, returning to its makers in August. The locomotive appears to have been successful, but neither the WHR nor the FR had the funds to buy it.

Number 4415 worked on the East Lancashire Road contract at Kirkby, near Liverpool, before being regauged to 3' 0" and sent to the Castleberg & Victoria Bridge Tramway in County Tyrone, Ireland in December 1929.

It stayed in Ireland for six months, but as its McLaren Benz engine developed only 60hp, it was underpowered for regular work on the tramway.

By March 1934, the locomotive was in Mauritius, where it worked on the Union Vale sugar estate of Mon Tresor & Mon Desert Ltd until 1971, latterly as a standby to the regular locomotives.

After the estate's rail system was abandoned, the locomotive was not scrapped, but was displayed on a plinth, on the orders of Jean Pierre Pilot, the sugar mill's engineer.

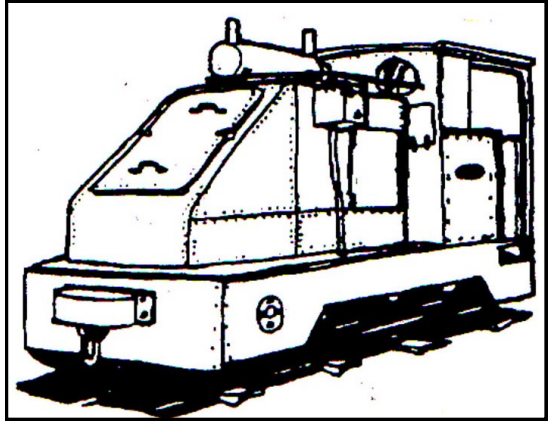
In September 1996, members of the Greenwich and District Narrow Gauge Society (GDNGS) met Olivier Jaubert, a French narrow gauge railway enthusiast whose work took him to sugar estates in Africa and Mauritius.

He agreed to make enquiries that led to confirmation of the locomotive's existence and an approach to Mon Tresor & Mon Desert regarding possible repatriation to the UK. To cut a long story short, 4415 was eventually presented jointly to the GDNGS and the Festiniog Railway.

On Monday 27 August 1997, 4415 was lifted from her plinth and loaded into an open container with those parts that would have projected above the side, such as the top half of the cab and the large, cab-mounted radiator, removed and stored at one end.

Someone who had given some thought to shipping the loco over the high seas had tack-welded it to the

Number 4415 has returned from Mauritius to her former home on the Festiniog, where she will be restored as close as possible



track on which it stood. Unfortunately, this was not enough to stop the loco moving. The tack welds gave way and the loco rolled along the track, crushing the cab and radiator parts.

More embarrassingly, the container doors were also noticeably damaged! 4415 arrived in the Festiniog Railway's Minfordd yard on 26 October 1997.

The wheelsets are in reasonably good condition, as is the massively constructed chassis, but much of the superstructure is probably beyond redemption and will have to be replaced. The engine will also have to be replaced.

Removal of one of the crankcase doors revealed rusty surfaces, a lack of any oil and a length of sugarcane stalk acting as a dipstick!

With the assistance of Brian Gent, a McLaren M4 Mk 2 engine has been acquired as a replacement. Since the engine currently fitted is not the

original, but a 1945 replacement, this is not an irreplaceable loss, although it is a nuisance and expense we could do without.

We propose to restore 4415 to her Festiniog condition as far as possible, and various fund-raising schemes are being evaluated. The locomotive will not be dismantled until funds and workshop space at Boston Lodge are available.

If you would like to help with fundraising, have appropriate skills to offer, or simply want to know more, please write to:

GDNGS (4415 Group), c/o Rosa Cottage, 29 Glendale Road, Erith, Kent DA8 1BP. ■

PS: Hugh Smith would like to know if anyone has any unpublished photos of 4415, especially shots of her on the WHR or FR, on the East Lancs. road contract or the Castlederg tramway. If so, please write to him at: 31B Carnarvon Road,

RESTORING THE ROTHER VALLEY'S MISSING RAIL LINK

Julia Hastings, events and projects director of the Rother Valley Railway (East Sussex) Ltd and CSS member, describes progress in the bid to reconnect the K&ESR to the main line at Robertsbridge, where the money comes from, and appeals for volunteers to help out

I joined the Colonel Stephens Society not only because I am a rail enthusiast, but also because I am a director and dedicated member of the Rother Valley Railway (East Sussex) Ltd. This organisation was formed in 1991 to restore what is commonly called the 'Missing Link': the part of the original RVR that ran from the main line junction at Robertsbridge to Bodiam

The RVR is a separate company from the Tenterden Railway Company (TRC) that runs the preserved K&ESR line from Tenterden. As readers will no doubt know, the TRC has now reached Bodiam and hopes to be running trains to there from Tenterden by April next year.

I joined the RVR about two and a half years ago when I moved to Robertsbridge and it has now become my life's work to see the Missing Link restored.

I was amazed that, although some track had been relaid from the former station yard site at Robertsbridge, and a building was being used for various projects, no-one was doing much in the way of fund-raising on a regular basis

to get the Missing Link up and running.

I have since become a director of the RVR and now spend all my time raising funds. To date, we now have a good buffet on site that sells snacks, hot and cold drinks, RVR badges and keyrings, and railway books and magazines.

We have also opened a small museum, showing the RVR as it once was, including some information about the Colonel, as well as various railway items of historic interest.

For children of all ages there is a 'money in the slot' N-gauge layout to play with. The charge is 10p and all the money collected will go into RVR funding. There is also a small charge to enter the museum.

I also began to hold boot fairs in the Robertsbridge station car park for the last few months of 1998: this year I had more, and the profits from the rents charged for the pitches go directly into funding for the RVR.

After having a small article published in the *New Civil Engineer* magazine last August, explaining about four RVR bridges that need to be redesigned and replaced along the old

trackbed to Northbridge Street, I was contacted by various civil engineers interested in helping with this project.

We now have two civil engineers working for us for no fees. One of them has redesigned the first bridge. The other is working on the environmental issues of the bridges.

We have recently been visited by the Railway Specialist Team of the

“The next stage of the plan is to lay track from Northbridge Street across various fields and the A21

Territorial Army, who are more than willing to rebuild Bridge Number 1 for us, providing we can supply materials and equipment, so I am now looking for sponsorship in the region of £50,000. A toilet block is also badly needed on site, so I am also looking for sponsorship for that project of around £6,000.

Other things that have been achieved free of charge are a cold water connection laid on by the local water company. The trench for the pipes was dug by Tarmac free of charge, and £1000-worth of fencing was also supplied free by a local company.

Many of the village shop owners paid for adverts in the programme for our model railway exhibition on March 20/21. We will be holding another one-day model railway exhibition in the local village hall on Sunday 17 October and need more volunteers to help with this, as well as more layouts.

At the moment, the construction of a platform is under way, and volunteers are busy working on that every weekend. The immediate plan for the

RVR is to get the four bridges replaced and track relaid along the half a mile of the old trackbed.

Once this is done, we will be able to run a passenger service using one of our diesel locomotives and either a brake van, which I am still trying to get hold of, or a passenger coach.

When this has been achieved, the old RVR line will run from Robertsbridge BR station to Northbridge Street, right next to the former Hodson's Mill, now renamed Scats. The next stage of the plan is to lay track from Northbridge Street across various fields and the A21 to Bodiam.

Everything so far has been achieved by just a small band of ten volunteers, who have worked most weekends and some in weekdays during time off from their regular jobs.

Perhaps there are members of the Colonel Stephens Society who are not already members of the RVR who would like to join us and help in whatever way they can to get this part of the RVR up and running. I really enjoy resurrecting the RVR and look forward to the day when the line is restored once more.



***If you are interested in doing your bit, you can contact Julia at:
Rother Valley Railway, 4 Coronation Cottages, Robertsbridge,
East Sussex TN32 5PE
or phone 01580 881711.***

SNAILBEACH JUNCTION FROM THE ARCHIVES

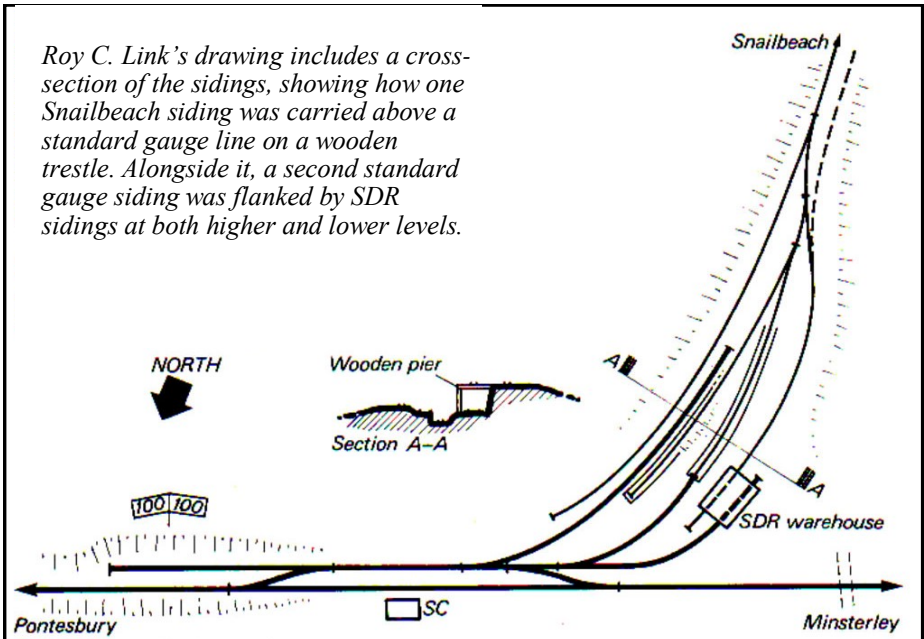
This article, by R. T. Lucas, originally appeared in the September 1980 issue of Railway Modeller and is reproduced here with their kind permission

One interesting feature of the Cruckmerle Junction-Minsterley line was to be found a short distance after Pontesbury station. This was a group of exchange sidings for the Snailbeach District Railways. Snailbeach Junction was where this company transferred its goods to wagons on the London & North Western and Great Western Joint Railway's line.

The Snailbeach District Railways company owned one of Shropshire's

narrow gauge railways, having a gauge of 2' 4⁵/₈". It ran from these sidings to Snailbeach station about three miles distant. From here there was a spur serving Snailbeach lead mines, and a two-road locomotive shed, which still stands. There were other branches, the most notable being that to Eastridge quarry.

The sidings at Snailbeach Junction were installed in the mid 1870s and dealt with lead ore at first. This was supplemented later by granite traffic



from Eastridge quarry, but this had ceased by the First World War.

The company eventually passed into the hands of Colonel H. F. Stephens, who smartened the line up somewhat. Eventually Shropshire County Council ran the railway from 1947 onwards. A farm tractor was used in preference to the company's locomotives, the boilers of which had reached a very run-down state.

The line was used to transport roadstone from Callow quarry. During the 1950s and 60s, what remained of the SDR was removed. The line never carried passengers.

At Snailbeach Junction, goods transfer facilities included a wooden pier on which the narrow gauge ran over the standard gauge. The SDR siding next to this ran into a cutting, built rather like a wide inspection pit, below the level of the standard gauge. In both cases, gravity was used to assist loading and unloading.

The SDR layout was quite simple, but this was later complicated when a roadstone plant was built just beyond the exchange sidings. The LNWR/

GWR joint sidings stemmed from a passing loop, which was quite short. In later years the junction was very overgrown, especially in the vicinity of the SDR sidings.

One problem associated with modelling junctions is the space required. Snailbeach Junction is particularly awkward as the layout is almost right-angled. Because of this, attention must be paid to length and width. One way of overcoming this would be to base the model on the SDR only, with the standard gauge sidings curving into the backscene. ■

Photos of the transhipment wharves, and other diagrams of Snailbeach installations, can be found in John Scott-Morgan's book Railways of Arcadia, pages 118-120.

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Chairman's Corner

LAST OF THE NARROW LINES

The Ashover Light Railway was the last narrow gauge line built by the Colonel. It was built to 2ft gauge and ran from Clay Cross, just south of Chesterfield, to Ashover, a distance of about seven miles.

It was built by the Clay Cross Company, which had been formed in 1837 after large deposits of coal had been found during excavation of the Clay Cross tunnel, one mile and 24 yards long, for the North Midland Railway.

It was intended from the start that the Ashover Light Railway would be mineral only, and no thought was given to operating a passenger service. However, the Board of Trade had other ideas, and said passengers would have to be carried.

Originally the line was to be standard gauge, but on advice from the Colonel, the Clay Cross management agreed to a 60cm gauge line instead.

The first sod was cut at Fallgate, about 22 September 1922. The line was opened for goods traffic in spring 1924. Official opening day for passengers was Monday 6 April 1925.

The Colonel obtained six ex-War department 4-6-0 pannier tanks built by

Baldwin of Philadelphia, USA. He also got some for the Snailbeach and Welsh Highland railways.

At the same time, coaches for the line were built by the Gloucester Railway Carriage & Wagon company in 1924 and numbered 1 to 4. The second week of operation coincided with the Easter holidays, when over 5000 passengers travelled over the line. What a good start!

Meanwhile, two further locos were purchased from Thomas Ward. Unhappily for the railway, the early enthusiasm for passenger services soon waned. These were withdrawn from Sunday 13 September 1936.

Excursions ran over the line in the years that followed: the last of these ran on Saturday 24 August 1947, organised by the Birmingham Locomotive Club. On Friday 31 March 1950, the Ashover Light Railway closed to all traffic. By May 1951, track lifting was virtually complete.

Derek Smith

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

**Don't forget to renew your membership of the Colonel
Stephens Society!**