westerham flyer

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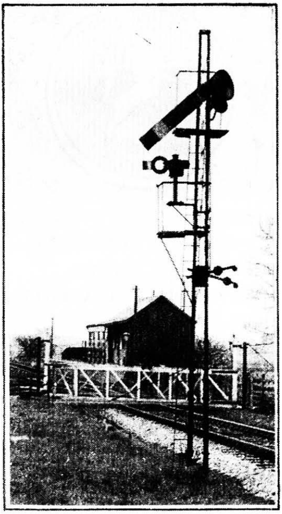

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JOURNAL OF THE WESTERHAM VALLEY RAILWAY ASSOCIATION

VOL. 1. NO. 3. AUGUST 1963.

EDITORIAL

Optimism is a necessary virtue in a scheme such as ours, but it must be tempered with patience. Developments in the past months have often been behind the scenes, and this has caused some to become restless, unaware of all the intricacies of the situation. Those who seek to compare our progress with that of apparently similar undertakings should remember that our enterprise, by its very nature, sets unique problems. Our proposed service of diesel railcars increases the amount of red tape very considerably, for permission to run a railway, as opposed to a parade of locos, cannot be granted lightly. We believe this service will benefit the Westerham Valley. Mr. Curran's article in this issue brings home to us the hazards of winter commuting, and we feel sure all will welcome the return to a reliable form of transport. But let all remember that it will be the weekend steam service, run by volunteer enthusiast labour, which will reap the harvest to enable our scheme to stay 'on the rails'.

Progress until recently has been slow. But now Westerham station begins to assume an air of prosperity and confidence with the repainting of the exterior, carried out with great devotion by Mr. Colyer and his helpers. And in recent weeks has come the most important development in our history to date, as announced in this issue - the formation of a company. You will doubtless waste no time in seeking further details from Mr. Bryan regarding YOUR part in this.

To succeed we need your utmost support in the months ahead. Some would seem to have misunderstood, or forgotten, our announcement in the last issue about the increased subscription rate. The new rule applies to EVERYONE, i.e. from April 6, when the rules came into force, a HALF YEAR subscription was due. This takes you to the end of September, when we start our first full financial year under the new rules, and on October 1 a FULL YEAR subscription is due. There is no way round this, despite rumours that you could save a half year subscription by not paying until after July 1! So please send in your half year subscription to Mr. Bryan if you have not yet done so. Incidentally if these subscription renewals confuse you perhaps you would prefer to become a life member and solve your problems that way! D.H.K.

Since we obtained possession of Brasted station we have installed a telephone link between there and Westerham which, as the tempo of work increases will prove a great asset. People ask when we are going to restore Brasted station, which at present looks decidedly the 'poor relation' of our two stations, despite much recent tidying up. It is really a question of first things first, and when we have finished Westerham, and not before, we shall be able to tackle Brasted.

The official film of the Line, the first instalment of which was shown at the meeting at Bromley and at the SGM, is growing fast. Mr. Tozer, the committee man responsible, has spent some time (and considerable money) filming the various activities of working parties, and is now busy editing the result in readiness for the AGM. Earlier this year we visited several clubs, showing this and other films, and giving a short talk on the past, present, and future of the Line. If your school, club, or college would care to contact us we shall be glad to arrange to visit you.

A visit to Dunton Green a few weeks ago would have revealed several of our members busily measuring the platforms and buildings. They were taking notes for a model of the Line which is being constructed. It will be built in sections, starting at the main line end, and will be displayed first at Westerham, and then, when the Line reopens, in the proposed museum at Brasted, as well as at exhibitions. If you are interested in helping, either in building the layout or in donating equipment, please let us know.

We shall be taking a stand again this year at the Model Rail and Road Hobby Show at the Central Hall, Westminster, from September 24-29. We hope to have numerous items for sale and on display, and look forward to meeting you there.

CAN YOU HELP US?

Thanks first to those who have helped, some by generous gifts, from a model of an 'RI' in SECR livery to pots of paint, others by coming down regularly and working on the Line.

1. We need - paint brushes, scythes, billhooks, sickles, rakes, old sump oil, large notice boards, a blackboard and easel, spanners of all shapes and sizes, and tea chests.

2. Enclosed with the 'Flyer' is a copy of our new handbill. We are relying on you to display this for us. Members have suggested that library notice boards might be suitable places for these, also the small ad. boards outside many newsagents shops. Other sites might be your local model shop, the club notice board, or your front gate. This is a practical way everyone can help us with little or no cost.

3. We have now produced a new car sticker, size 2¼" x 11". If you send us a stamped addressed envelope we will send one by return. No motorist member should be without one, and if you want some brochures to give to people who will certainly stop and look please tell us and we will include some.

4. A member living some way from the Line has written to us, asking if any member could help by giving him a lift to Westerham at weekends. There must be many, students especially, who, because of the fares and the difficulty of transport, cannot get to Westerham to play their part. Will all living some way off who come to Westerham by car and have spare seats please write to us. If all who are in a similar plight to our friend will also write in we will try to put you in touch, although this must of course depend on who volunteers, and from where. It will cost no more to carry a full load, and will help those who could not afford to come otherwise.

MY MEMORIES OF MAUNSELL

by Mrs. J.C. Locke

My first introduction to railways was on joining the staff of the Chief Mechanical Engineers Department of the Southern Railway at Waterloo station in the mid-twenties. For five years I worked personally for Richard Edward Lloyd Maunsell, the well-known Chief Mechanical Engineer, who was at that time engaged, among other things, on the construction of the 'Arthurs', 'Nelsons', and 'Schools' locomotives, also the coaching stock for the Brighton electrification scheme.

These were very busy and harassing days for the Chief, and his case was always full of papers to be perused on the train. Even so the slightest hint of bad riding on any coach in which he travelled to and from his home at Ashford, Kent, was immediately the subject of complaint to the Carriage and Wagon technical staff. Investigation had to be carried out both in the running shed and in actual service to ascertain the cause of trouble, and immediate steps taken to put the matter right. This procedure was also adopted in cases of complaint from other Departments or the travelling public.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Association, the first since the adoption of the new rules, will be held in the Womens Institute Hall, Market Field, Westerham, at 3pm on Saturday November 2nd. All nominations for the officers and committee must be received by the Secretary on or before September 30.

After the business of the meeting light refreshments will be available, and the meeting will end with a showing of films of South Eastern interest, including the latest edition of Mr. Tozer's film of the restoration of the Line.

COMPANY FORMED

AT A MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON AUGUST 13, 1963, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY AGREED TO FORM AN INDEPENDENT COMPANY, LIMITED BY GUARANTEE, TO BE KNOWN AS THE 'WESTERHAM VALLEY LIGHT RAILWAY COMPANY LIMITED. MR. A.A. RICHARDSON, A MEMBER WHO IS ACTING AS SOLICITOR TO THE COMMITTEE, IS HANDLING THE LEGAL FORMALITIES.

POTENTIAL GUARANTORS ARE ASKED TO COMMUNICATE IMMEDIATELY WITH THE HONORARY SECRETARY OF THE ASSOCIATION, MR. BRYAN.

NOTES AND NEWS

Many of you will have heard of the 'Railmobile' tests which took place recently on the Line. The 'Railmobile', a railway truck powered by a car mounted on it, is intended for use on lines closed to normal traffic. Mr. C.J. Prescott, who lives in Bromley, thought the WVR would be a convenient spot to try out his invention, and obtained permission from British Railways to do so. Although he is a member of our Association the 'Railmobile' is in no way connected with us, in case you are wondering if this is the 'railcar' service we keep talking about! Nevertheless Mr. Prescott is grateful to all our members who have by maintaining the Line helped to make the trials possible, and we in turn should like to wish him well with the future of his project.

THE WINTER OF OUR DISCONTENT

by M. Curran

I live in Westerham, and started commuting on the Branch Line in 1945. In those days the journey was a pleasure compared to the present irksome means available. The guard-cum-ticket collector was a friendly talkative type who knew everyone who travelled, and many who didn't. One moment you would hear him discussing Mr. Whatsisnames' roses, and the next he would be giving sincere advice to an elderly spinster on the best way to ensure her tom cat stayed in at nights. The general atmosphere was friendly, and all who travelled had the same object in view - they looked forward to the return journey!

As everyone knows, our routine was disrupted by someone who closed the Line by his ernest endeavours. And so I found myself enjoying, at first, the new routine, of bus to Sevenoaks, and train to London. But it soon came home to me that, through changing my method of travel, I had to leave home twenty minutes earlier than I used to and was arriving back some fifteen minutes later. Equally important, I found I was paying for the privilege of the prolonged use of public transport to the tune of 10/- per week extra. (This has now increased to astronomical heights and very soon it will be necessary to give up eating to keep pace).

The performance of the buses left much to be desired, sometimes leaving early without warning or, leaving late, which meant missing ones' usual connections. A group of us decided to avoid this, and took turns in running our cars part of the way to London and catching our trains further up the line. This reduced the cost, though adding much wear and tear on us and our cars, but the day of reckoning soon came, on Boxing Day to be precise. Winter had set in, with great suddenness and severity, and so it continued for several months. We found that Westerham Hill was often frozen over, and the roads in Biggin Hill were like skating rinks. Conditions were very dangerous indeed, and on several occasions the Hill was impassible due to snow drifts. So we had recourse once again to the cursed bus to Sevenoaks, with all the little inconveniences it entailed. Paying through the nose for the privilege of nearly freezing to death on the bus, which inevitably arrived late or left early on the up trip, and then, on the return journey, having to stand in the bus 'shelter' for what at times seemed an eternity for the bus to appear to take us home. Having got home it took ages before one could thaw out, and it seemed no time at all before one was undergoing the deep-freeze treatment all over again.

Our offices were immediately under the roof of Waterloo station, and locomotives on incoming West of England and coastal trains which 'blew off', protesting loudly at the end of their journey, also came in for a share of complaint. It often fell to my lot to dash along to the Locomotive Running Superintendent to register the C.M.E's disapproval.

Failure of engines was a very serious matter, and monthly returns were ernestly discussed with a member of the technical staff, usually James Clayton. The locomotive shed foremen concerned received stern letters asking why such failures had occurred, with observations and explanations demanded in no uncertain terms. Woe betide anyone who could not offer a logical explanation.

In his private office Mr. Maunsell had a work-bench, complete with a range of tools, in order to examine and test any fractured metals which were sent in to him.

Life was often hectic, and I would be very lucky to leave work on time. Often outside matters prevented the Chief from attending to office work, and he would bustle in late in the afternoon, ring all his bells, and finally get down to work. This meant a bulging notebook of letters to be typed for his signature before I could leave, and for the technical staff one mad rush! Draft memos., etc., written by him in the train would give me a sheaf of very hard to read notes which had to be impeccably set out for perusal.

Mr. Maunsell was responsible for several pupils from home and overseas who spent approximately three years going through the various workshops and departments, and their itineraries had to be prepared and followed through.

On St. Patrick's Day shamrock was always in evidence as the Chief was Irish. At times he could be impatient, especially on the telephone, but I always found him very kindly and considerate, and now look back with some nostalgia on those hectic and happy days of thirty years ago.

One last word. Please dear reader, when referring to this great Mechanical Engineer of the past, honour him by using the correct pronounciation of his name, i.e., the first syllable is as M-A-N.

And that is commuting - 1963 version. I and many others closely resembled the red-nosed reindeer, long after Christmas had gone by. Those who eventually went blue in the face were mistaken for hardened drinkers by the uninitiated!

Some may feel content with the present set up, but I will welcome a return to the 'bad old days'. I feel sure you will agree. So let us bond together and get the Line open once more, so that we can return to a civilised form of transport. And let's not waste too much time about it - I do not relish a fatal dose of pneumonia at this stage of the proceedings!

One of our members busily engaged in restoration work at our headquarters at Westerham Station.

THE L.C. & D.R. 'T' CLASS 0-6-0 TANKS

by R.A. Gillam

My first acquaintance with these engines was at Stewarts Lane early in 1948. They were built in the adjoining Longhedge Works in the years 1879-1893. Nos.1602 and 1604 had been taken out of service in 1939, but were reinstated in 1940. 1604 was at work on the East Kent Railway in 1945 for a while and by 1948 they were both at Stewarts Lane on various internal duties. 1602 was used most and on occasion would venture as far as Battersea Yard. I had the pleasure of firing this engine to its regular driver, a gentleman who had a habit of jumping off to collect any sizeable lumps of coal he spotted on the track and handing them up to me. This private economy campaign was always enacted when we stopped outside the chief's office window, and would be met with an approving nod from within.

1604 was at that time the regular coal road loco, and this was the most humble job at the depot for engine and crew. This engine was always in the charge of an old Brighton driver, Ted Dishman. The firemen were usually put on this job for their very first experience of firing as the task was the not very exacting one of keeping up enough pressure to push the wagons up to the hopper. These engines were very robust and could still push along with pressures of 40 lbs. on the clock. On one occasion we had thrown the fire out of 1604 before putting her away in the shed when we met a 'West Country' coming out, which called for a quick bit of juggling as pressure reserve was getting low, but we managed to put her away before she went off the boil completely.

These two locos were moved to Reading and shortly after were withdrawn from that depot in 1951 and 1950. The third member of the trio, 500S, originally withdrawn as 1607 in 1036, became 500S after a visit to Eastleigh Works in 1938, after which it took up residence in the Meldon Quarry near Okehampton as a service shunter. In this faraway location 500S remained until 1949, when her boiler was condemned and she was replaced by G6 No.272, by then renumbered D.S.3152.

Early in 1950 500S suddenly turned up at Horley in the sidings to the south of the station, where with other veterans she was cut up during the second week of January of that year.

On the smokebox door of 1604 two brackets for carrying a small headboard were still affixed. Can any reader suggest why this engine was so fitted?

(Reproduced by courtesy of Norbury Model Railway Club)

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YOUR LETTERS

(The letter by Mr. Holmes in our last issue prompted many to write, we have room only for a selection of replies.)

Dear Sir,

First I would like to congratulate you and your committee on the splendid appearance and format of the magazine's second issue.

Secondly, I would like to endorse the general tone of Mr. Holmes' letter therein.

When the company is formed its object should be to provide a fast and comfortable service with modern equipment. To employ steam traction would be a retrograde step. While I think that Mr. Holmes' suggestion of electric traction a little grandiose bearing in mind the economics of a lightly used line I appreciate his sentiments.

Therefore I heartily approve of the Association's efforts to find a suitable diesel rail unit. I trust this venture may meet with the success it deserves.

Guildford. R. FOSTER.

Dear Sir,

The purchase of the ex GWR railcars will provide an efficient and reliable service without large capital outlay. This service will not pay however, so to make good the loss the steam service of pregrouping locos and rolling stock will provide a 'working museum' to attract railway enthusiasts, tourists, and trippers. Volunteers will operate this service, and while 'having a jolly time playing trains' will give the line its bread and butter.

Mr. Holmes has no regard for the steam locomotive, which has proved an attraction to people of all ages for the past 150 years, and will continue to do so as long as they are in use. It is this point the Association hope to exploit to make the line a paying proposition.

Orpington. R.D.G. RANSON.

Dear Sir,

The Association does not plan to buy 'worn out stock from British Railways', as stated by Mr. Holmes. British Railways are drastically reducing their amount of rolling stock. Coaches, vans, and wagons, with years of life left in them, are in store awaiting disposal. Some are fresh from overhaul! The rights and wrongs of this are not for us to discuss, but we have friends on the railways who are anxious to see that at least some of this valuable equipment finds a good home. Members can be sure that any items which cross the border at Dunton Green will be in good condition.

Mr. Holmes implies we can buy new rolling stock ('surely we can do better than this'). One new coach would cost about £10,000, and a diesel railcar up to about £30,000. Show us where the cash is hiding and we will buy new with the greatest of pleasure. The cheapest form of electrification, battery traction, would equal the amount we are being asked for the line. Again where is the cash to come from?

Farnborough. R.H. EDWARDS.

Farnborough. R.H. EDWARDS.

CHRISTMAS CARDS.

Following the success of our card last year we are now offering three new designs. Two of these are of railway subjects, and the third a special design for those who have no suitable "enthusiast" friend to send to but who still wish to support us. The subjects are as follows :-

1. "D.1" Class No.31739 shunting on a van train at Sittingbourne.
2. ex-S.E. & C.R. "H" Class No.31518 on a push-pull train at Rowfant.
3. A view of the village green at Westerham, showing the Gen. Woolf statue.

Both the locos are of special interest. No.31739 was one of the engines working the service on the Westerham Branch on the last day of British Railways operation; while No. 31518 is of course one of the "H" Class locos which is to work on the line and is being reserved for us by British Railways.

The cards are 6d. each, complete with envelope, and will be ready at the end of September. They may be obtained from Mr. W. Coxwell, 22, Chestnuts Close, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, Sussex.

Please send your remittance (cheque or postal order made payable to Westerham Valley Railway Association) with your order and include 6d. to cover the cost of postage. Postage free if 12 or more cards are ordered. It is hoped that the cards will be on sale at the Model Rail and Road Hobby Show and at the Annual General Meeting.

BADGES.

A special enamelled badge is being produced for the Association, depicting a white horse on a blue background with the words "Westerham Valley Railway" in silver. They will be available, price 3/-, post free, from the same address as the cards from the end of September, and also at the Annual General Meeting, price 2/6d. We are sure that all members will want one of these.

WESTERHAM VALLEY RAILWAY ASSOCIATION.

As you must have noticed from "The Flyer", the Association is in process of forming a Company Limited by Guarantee to purchase and operate the branch line. A Company of this nature does not have a share capital, nor does it issue Ordinary shares; instead the Members of the Company enter into a form of Guarantee that if, and only if, when the Company is wound up there are insufficient funds to pay all the debts, the Members of the Company are called upon to contribute up to the amount that they have guaranteed.

Working capital for the Company will be raised by means of debentures in respect of which a Prospectus will be issued after incorporation.

Guarantors can be required to make payment towards the debts whilst they are members of the Company and during the year next after they cease to be members.

It is proposed to incorporate the Company with 100 members, who must be over 21 and fully paid up members of the Association. The Association Committee are to be the first members but many others are required.

The amount to be guaranteed by each member is only £1. (Not much, is it? - and you may never have to pay it!)

If you are prepared to pay this sum should occasion arise, please complete the form below immediately and return it to the Hon. Secretary, Mr. F.C. Bryan, Bromley Cottage, Stonehouse Road, Halstead, Sevenoaks, Kent.

P.T.O.

- - - - - - Cut here -

I, (full names) .... Rev./Mr./Mrs./Miss

of (address) ....

....

Occupation ....

being a member of the WESTERHAM VALLEY RAILWAY ASSOCIATION, HEREBY GUARANTEE that in the event of the Company (Limited by Guarantee), at present being formed by the Association, being wound-up and being insolvent, I will pay to the Company or its Liquidator, or other duly authorised person, the sum of ONE POUND (£1.) towards the discharge of the Company's liabilities.

DATED this day of 1963.

(Signed) .... 6d. Stamp ....

Witness: (Signed) ....

Address: ....

Occupation: ....

present being formed by the Association, being wound-up and being insolvent, I will pay to the Company or its Liquidator, or other duly authorised person, the sum of ONE POUND (£1.) towards the discharge of the Company's liabilities.

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