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flyer



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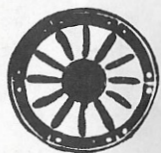




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westerham flyer

JOURNAL OF THE WESTERHAM VALLEY RAILWAY ASSOCIATION

VOL. 1. NO. 2.

MAY 1963.

EDITORIAL

We are feeling very pleased with ourselves. This is not to say that we are about to sit back with complacency, but it does give us the spur to become 'delighted'. There are several reasons for this. Firstly this is the second of our 'reports'. Secondly it is larger, and has photographs and advertisements. The advertisements themselves are a measure of our circulation, because those who insert them expect the 'Flyer' to be read by more than a select few.

The other reasons for this gratifying feeling are the success of the meetings announced in the first issue. Of these you may read when this panegyric of self laudation is finished and you can get on with the real objective - to know what is going on.

In brief, spring is here, and the reinvigorating sap is rising in the apparently dead wood of the W.V.R. Soon will come the blossom and then - the fruit. The fertilizer is your subscription of course, of which more presently.

We thank the many 'gardeners' who have tended the dead wood in many arduous ways. F.C.B.

THE SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

The Vice-Chairman, Mr. Beacon, opening the meeting, explained that the Chairman, Mr. Gray's, had found it necessary to resign. He referred to Mr. Gray's work, and asked the meeting to pass a vote of thanks to Mr. Gray. This was agreed unanimously.

Mr. Beacon said the meeting was called to present the proposed rules and constitution for members' discussion and approval.

In the absence of the Treasurer the Honorary Secretary read the audited accounts up to the last A.G.M. The acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Mr. F. Hardy, seconded by Mr. P.I. Lighton, and agreed unanimously.

Front cover: Mr. Ray Edwards, who has purchased S.E.C.R. coach No. 5,35545 for use on the Line, as announced in the last issue, inspects his acquisition in a Sussex goods yard.

Photo: K.G. Carr

Mr. Beacon then read the draft of the new rules, and invited comment from members on any points. Following discussion and redrafting of several portions it was proposed by Mr. D.H. Kitton, and seconded by Mr. J. Livermore, that the draft rules, subject to the revisions just agreed, be adopted as the constitution and rules of the Association. This was agreed unanimously.

In his report, Mr. Beacon outlined the progress made since the A.G.M. Several conferences had been held with British Railways and other authorities. The present position was that British Railways, who had valued the Line at £53,000, had agreed to sell it to the Association for £30,000, provided that the Ministry of Transport would consent to us running a commuter train service, thus relieving British Railways of their need to subsidise the extra buses to Sevenoaks. We had reached provisional agreement with B.R. on the terms of sale, and an application was going before the Ministry of Transport to obtain their sanction.

We were investigating ways of raising the £40,000 which we should need to buy the Line and equipment, and hoped that most could be obtained initially by a low interest loan, with the members repaying this over a short period by progressive investment. We anticipated that membership would soon reach 2,000, and at that rate £40,000 would only be £20 investment per member, or £5 a year for 4 years. It was important to remember that it was an investment, not a loan or gift, and would earn a dividend. Even though some might not be able to afford £5 a year others could surely find more, and maintain the average. We planned soon to start a loco and carriage fund, items thus obtained being vested in the Association as distinct from the Company which would be set up.

Mr. Beacon concluded by thanking members of the committees for all the hard work they had put in, and expressed gratitude to all members who had given their practical support so far at weekends.

COMMENT

At long last we have a realistic subscription rate. The new rules, which came into force from April 6, and are enclosed with this issue, lay down different rates of payment for different categories of member. Up to now of course most of us have paid only the initial 2/6, which was the previous rate. This is now superseded, and in future the new charges apply. This means that everyone, whenever they paid their initial subscription, is now liable for payment at the new rate. As the financial year ends at the end of September we are only asking you for half the full year subscription for the period until then. After October 1 the first full year under the new rules will start, and we shall pay the full rate from then on.

To assist you in renewing your membership we enclose a subscription form, and should appreciate if you would send it back, with your half year subscription, to the Hon. Secretary. His address is on the front of the 'Flyer'. In return you will receive a membership card.

Mr. Beacon mentioned the possibility of repaying a loan by progressive investment by members. This is a sound idea, and will ensure the Line really will belong to us, a point many feel strongly about. So be sure to let Mr. Bryan know, if you have not already done so, how much you will be able to invest when the time comes.

A point of even greater concern is, as you can appreciate, the problem of obtaining the initial loan. Despite approaches to numerous people nobody has yet come forward. The matter becomes daily more urgent, as despite the lengthy negotiations the time must be drawing near when the money will be needed. Perhaps you are in a position to help us here, either personally or with a contact who might be interested in advancing the whole or part of the sum required. If so please don't delay, but contact our Secretary now. This is our major hurdle, and we must clear it.

TECHNICAL NOTES

by Alan Snowdon.

We now have permission to do maintenance and tidying work along the Line. Working parties go out every weekend and at Bank Holidays. So far we have been concentrating on work which, though important, needs little expense.

Ditch clearing started at Westerham, and is now well beyond Brasted, first removing the undergrowth to find the ditches! Good drainage is vital to the maintenance of good track, and there is much neglect to be made up, so all you strong healthy chaps who sent in volunteer forms - this is your CALL TO ACTION! You need: old clothes, lunch, protection from rain, and a will to work. If possible bring: wellingtons, a spade, or tools for clearing undergrowth.

Another important job, especially at this time of year, is oiling fish-plates, to permit the rails to expand in the warmer weather. Without lubrication the force of expansion will buckle the track, and much slewing with crowbars would be needed to straighten it again before running could start.

British Railways have agreed to rent Brasted station to us on the same terms as Westerham. We plan to use this as a base for working parties - it is more central.

In recent weeks a hand trolley has appeared on the track. This belongs to one of our members, and he is kindly lending it for use by working parties.

Now a word of warning - the permission to be on the Line applies only to working parties, or latecomers joining parties. Otherwise you are technically a trespasser. Under no circumstances may members enter or leave DUNTON GREEN S.R. station by walking along the branch line. Please do not get us a bad name.

We look forward to seeing you as often as possible during the summer, any Saturday, Sunday, or Bank Holiday from 10 a.m. at Westerham. We need your active support NOW.

CAN YOU HELP US?

1. Missing so far from the volunteer forms are BLACKSMITHS and SIGN-WRITERS.
2. Everything asked for in the last issue duly appeared (many thanks), except CROWBARS and PICKAXES.
3. Volunteers are needed to ferry workers to and from the 'front'. For this vans or cars would be welcome.
4. DRAIN RODS for clearing drains along the Line.

Please reply for all the above to:-

A.M. Snowdon, 15, Woodside Ave., Chislehurst, Kent.

5. The Publicity Committee are anxious to build up a collection of photographs of the Railway for use in displays at the Station and at exhibitions. Loan of negatives for enlarging would be especially useful. Views of the Line prior to closure, particularly pre-nationalisation, are required, and also work in progress since our take-over. Please send any photos to:

Publicity Committee, 161, Ravensbourne Avenue, Shortlands, Kent.

STEAM NOTES

by Sid Beacon.

On March 15 Percy Cope and I visited Ashford Works to inspect '01' Class 31065, and a careful examination showed that, as far as could be seen, the engine is in sound condition. She was built as Stirling 'O' Class in 1896, and rebuilt as '01' Class in 1908 with an 'H' Class boiler and a Wainwright cab. The engine received a major overhaul in 1960, and has done very little work since. British Railways price of £1,000 includes a general service and delivery to us in full working order. She is being reserved for us pending the purchase of the Line.

On the same day, in company with Mr. Stephens of the Wainwright 'C' Class Preservation Society, we also inspected 'C' Class 31592. This engine was in steam, still fitted with a snowplough, on shunting duties. It is in very good condition, and we hope to provide a home for it at Westerham, and that, by arrangement with the Wainwright Society, 31592 can take a turn on our weekend services.

DIESEL NOTES

by R.W. Kennaway.

For the operation of the regular weekday service, it is proposed to acquire three diesel railcars. Two should normally be available for traffic, allowing for one being out of service for repairs or overhaul.

Western Region have offered us five railcars, from which a choice of three can be made. These railcars were inspected by members of the Technical Committee earlier this year, at Worcester Motive Power Depot, and found to be in a reasonable state. They form part of a batch of single units which were built for the G.W.R. in 1940, and are numbered W20W, W23W, W24W, W26W, W32W.

The power equipment of each unit consists of two A.E.C. 105 H.P. engines, which drive the inner axles of each bogie through fluid flywheels, 5-speed gearboxes and cardan shafts. A cab is provided at each end, and accommodation for 48 passengers is in the form of an open saloon with pairs of seats, back to back, arranged on either side of a central gangway.

The guards compartment contains the coach heating boiler as well as a considerable space for luggage. This boiler is known to be a somewhat capricious piece of apparatus, and it may be necessary to dispense with it in favour of a more modern and reliable form of heating.

The railcars were in a static condition when inspected, as a certain amount of reconditioning work would be necessary to put them into running order again. They would need to be seen under operating conditions before a final decision to purchase them is made. Western Region have quoted a price of £600 each, to which must be added an amount depending on the extent of restoration necessary.

'RESURGAM'. A POEM OF HOPE

Bleak is the valley and lifeless,
The night-wind whistling drear,
Echoes along through the stillness,
For the end of the Line is here.
The friendly lights of the Station,
Have vanished in darkness black,

Cold, ghostly desolation
Broods o'er the deserted track.
The signal lamps are extinguished,
The last late train has run;
Dead is the valley and silent,
The day of the Line is done!

VOTA DO VAX

IN MEMORY OF THE WESTERHAM
RAILWAY AND THOSE WHO FORGOT
WE OPEN THE LINE.

The lamps have been rekindled,
And shrilling through the night
I hear a shriek of welcome -
see a red fire glowing bright.
The throbbing pulse of the engine,
And its billowing, rosy breath,

Have made this lonely cutting
No longer a place of death!
I hear the clack of the signals -
See the cheering lights of the train.
Joy has returned to our valley -
The Line is living again.

(Specially written for the 'Westerham Flyer' by VERA DOVAY.)

'THE CRANE TANK AND THE MILK SIDING' by R.A. Gillam.

To the rear of Stewarts Lane Depot runs the C.W.S. milk siding, a sharply curved spur branching from the carriage sidings. To this line came in the years after the war a most amazing collection of tank engines, which Col. Stephens would surely have envied! 'IRONSIDE' No.3458, the Southampton Docks locomotive, worked on duty here before being transferred to Brighton - for this transfer the engine ran under its own steam, extra coal being piled in the cab, but water was the problem, the crew having to fill up at almost every station with a water crane, which in the suburban area were few and far between. I well remember seeing this engine hustling along the down slow line between Norbury and Thornton Heath en route to Brighton. Another engine employed on the siding was the ex-P.D. & S.W. Railway No.756 'A.S. HARRIS'. This had the dubious honour of being the only Southern engine running without a chimney for a while in 1949.

B.4 tanks were the mainstay in the years 1948-1949, No.88 and 'TROUVILLE' being frequent performers. 1950 brought the S.E. & C.R. 'P' Class 0-6-0 tanks which remained until the advent of diesel power. The standby motive power for this duty was No.1302, the 'crane tank', and normally it stood while out of use at the back of the weighbridge house. One dark night a 'West Country' ran through the weighbridge and hit the 'crane tank', knocking it several yards up the siding, where it collided with a spare crane jib supported on trestles which collapsed. Fortunately 1302, which only weighed just under eighteen tons, was not affected.

Weight was always a problem with her. The crane had been out of use for many years, but could not be removed as its weight was necessary for adhesion. When pushing loaded tank wagons round the milk siding it called for real driving skill to prevent her slipping to a standstill. This performance was always watched by us cleaners from the window of our lobby which looked out alongside this siding. One morning as dawn was breaking a visiting fireman from another depot was puzzled by the strange shape outlined against the pale grey sky. As the moving shape approached he was able bit by bit to establish that it was indeed a locomotive under steam and not a runaway bit of machinery - it was our 'crane tank' stealing away to take up her duty on the early morning milk shunting.

(Reproduced by courtesy of Norbury Model Railway Club.)

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YOUR LETTERS

Dear Sir,

I was most surprised to learn, at the recent meeting in Bromley, that the Association plans to buy worn out rolling stock from British Railways. Surely we can do better than that.

It has many times been stated that the object of the W.V.R.A. is to carry passengers, not to 'preserve puffers for posterity', and have a jolly time playing trains. With this in mind the Technical Committee would have been better employed looking for modern motive power and carriages which would give the public something they deserve.

In these days when there is a universal urge to get up to date it is an anachronism that a railway that stands to serve a real need is planning to use nineteenth century motive power, belching unsightly and unhealthy smoke over the beautiful Darent Valley.

If finances dictate the use of second hand equipment then it is worth more than a passing thought that cars and equipment could have been obtained from the recently closed Grimsby and Immingham Railway. At least there would have been ample scope for modernisation since, unlike steam, electricity is a progressive form of traction. In addition it is efficient in its use of fuel.

I trust my criticism does not seem too harsh, but I feel strongly on this matter. Perhaps other members share my views, I should be interested to know.

Yours faithfully,
FRANCIS HOLMES.

Chislehurst,
Kent.



The
outstanding cigarettes
of the day

