



Mid-Hants News Issues 1 to 13

September 1972 to April 1976

Reprinted on the occasion of the
50th Anniversary of the
Watercress Line Heritage Railway Trust

Keeping members informed is the purpose of this newsletter. Later on, when our membership is expanded and when there is more to report on, we aim to produce a proper newspaper with photographs, articles and letters. However, at this stage when all our effort is being put into saving the line, it seems sensible to conserve our resources and produce a short snappy bulletin rather than a newspaper - that can come later when the line is ours.

WITHDRAWAL OF SERVICES

The series of enquiries into the future of the railway began in 1968 when BR announced their intention to close the line. Eight months ago the Minister finally gave his consent to BR closing the line - subject to the provision of certain specified replacement bus services. The local authorities, who'd put up a strenuous fight to save the line, saw a further opportunity to prevent the railway's closure. They objected to the granting of road service licences to the bus company. Clearly if they could prevent the bus service from operating then BR would be compelled to continue running the trains. Being a grant aided service it was hoped that the grant would be made available for a further whole year if BR could be made to continue running the service into the beginning of 1973. As if to forestall this plan BR acted with unusual speed and arranged the Winchester enquiry in record time. It took place at the start of August and the Inspector is now preparing his report. The local authorities expect the result any time and are not very hopeful - it seems a foregone conclusion that the Inspector will overrule the objection and grant the bus licences. The County Council are considering providing BR with a grant themselves but as the cost will be very high it seems most unlikely that this idea will bear any fruit. It therefore looks as if the last BR train will run towards the end of this year.

STEPS TOWARDS ACQUISITION

At the moment the work we are doing is mostly behind the scenes. Firstly arranging finance so that when the line does close we'll be in a position to step in without delay. And secondly telling other enthusiasts about our plans so that there will be an organisation of enthusiasts ready to share the pleasure (and hard work!) of operating a preserved railway.

PURCHASE

BR. will give us three months after the line closes before they take up the tracks. After that period they will levy a charge of 10% of the track value per year (about £6 000 for ten miles) for the track to remain in situ until we purchase. So it is essential for us to be ready to buy the line before the three months are up otherwise we will start incurring totally unnecessary costs. Right now we're doing a lot of ground work to ensure that we have sufficient resources when the time comes to buy.

MEMBERS

As well as a number of small classified adverts we're taking a ½ page advert in Railway Magazine for October telling enthusiasts about the mid-Hants preservation. As an experiment we're also putting a ½ page advert in an American Railway magazine to see if it elicits a response from American enthusiasts. And at the end of September we will be announcing our preservation plans to the press and inviting support. (Please leave contacting the local press to us as we want to make one large splash at our press conference rather than having a number of small disjointed stories appearing at different times.)

MOTIVE POWER

Apart from those originally involved in the preservation we've had a lot of enquiries from other locomotive owners. Nothing is finalised but we will tell you which locos we're having as soon as the agreements have been drawn up. Needless to say those locos most likely to end up on the Mid-Hants will be Southern ones.

ALTON/ALRESFORD BASE.

As a result of being told by ER that it should be possible for us to lease part of Alresford station we made plans for it to be our base. However, we've now been told that it's no longer policy to let the building while part of it is still in use as a booking office. Therefore until the line closes another office in the Alton/Alresford area is essential. If anybody does know of cheap office accommodation (and it must be cheap since at this stage we want to reserve every penny for acquiring the line rather than wasting it in rent) could they let us know. Failing that the use of somebody's house as a mailing address, where letters resulting from our local membership campaign could be sent, would be most useful. If anybody living in the area between Farnham and Alresford would like to help in this way it would greatly assist in building up local support. Please do contact us if you know of any low cost office accommodation or if you could help by receiving letters for the railway.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

We planned to print a six inch long facsimile victorian railway ticket as our membership card. However we've run into a supply problem with genuine paste board ticket card (not the modern shiny stuff) and we're still searching. Sorry for the delay - if anybody knows where we can lay our hands on the real thing then do let us know. P.S. John Dickinson, BR suppliers, can't help. We hope that this report has proved to be interesting. If there is anything else you want to know, or to say, or if you think you may be able to help with the local address, and this is becoming rather urgent, please do contact us.

Finally it goes without saying that if you feel like giving further help it would be greatly appreciated. The more resources available the more likely it becomes that we'll be able to go beyond Alresford. It really is a case of a stitch in time saves nine.

Because of mortgage arrangements an extra pound really does enable us to save up to eight or nine times its value of Hid-Hants line. If you could also persuade other interested people to join us that too would be a great help.

Contact address: Membership Secretary,
 10 Mountpark Road,
 Ealing, London, W.5.

NEW MEMBERS APPLICATION FORM

To: the Mid-Hants Railway Ltd. 10 Mountpark Road, Ealing,
 London, W.5.

I enclose a cheque/P.O./Cash for £ to help save the Mid-Hants line. I understand that all contributions, however small, will help towards preserving the line and that one of £2 or more makes me a member of the preservation association. I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Name.....:.....Address.....

.....

Date.....

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MID-HANTS NEWS

Issue No. 2.

CLOSURE: 5th FEBRUARY

British Rail have moved quickly after hearing the secretary of state for the Environment report that the alternative bus service is adequate. They have announced that the last train will run on Sunday 4th February.

107 Years of Service

So 107 years after the line was opened services are to be withdrawn — leaving the way open for steam preservation. The line has provided an invaluable link for the local community both westwards to Winchester and Southampton and eastwards to Aldershot and London. As articles in this news letter show, the line would be sorely missed if it were to be closed. School children throng the trains twice a day. On Saturdays the line is busy with shoppers and each morning there are hordes of commuters waiting for trains both to London and Winchester.

Public Support

Anyone who lives close to the line must be aware of the intense desire of the local community to keep the line going. Mr. Camplin, editor of the Alton Herald, writes in this newsletter of the terrific interest the campaign to keep the line going has generated. From our end we've had scores of letters from local people wishing the society luck and offering all the help they can give. The omens are good.

The Challenge

Our job now starts in earnest. British Rail have given us until the end of May to put the money down for the section between Alton and Alresford. If we don't make the date we'll have to start paying heavy charges to keep the track in place. And as well as raising the money there are other things to do. They are more fun, but just as important. A full stable of locomotives must be arranged. All the ancillaries for steam operation must be organised — water supplies, inspection pits, coaling facilities. Sidings and possibly a further passing loop at Ropley will have to be reinstated. And all the time we must liaise with British Rail and the Railway Inspectorate to make sure that our plans meet with their approval.

The Committees

How is all the work to be done? To enable members to participate to the full it's been decided to form five committees. It may sound like bureaucracy gone mad but in fact with each one looking after a separate aspect of preservation it should work well, it's similar to the Severn Valley scheme, and it will provide the maximum opportunity for those that want to help to do so.

Continued on back page column 3

The Mid-Hants and America.

Through the help of an American member the Mid-Hants has forged links with American railfans, as enthusiasts are known on the other side of the Atlantic. The National Railroad Historical Society has a vast number of members, a number which puts the Mid-Hants to shame and is divided into chapters. They have a monthly magazine — Spike and Tie which disseminates information about past and present US railway practice. Murray Schantzzen, c/o Carlton Associates 202 Cambel St Geneva (yes Geneva!) Illinois 60134, is a member of the Blackhawk chapter and if anybody wants to get in touch with him about US railroad operation he and his fellow 'Chapters' would be pleased to hear from you.

New Railway Sensation— read all about it

W.D. Camplin is editor of the "Alton Herald". Alton's local paper. His paper has covered the whole Mid-Hants closure story throughout and his job brings him into close touch with local public opinion on a variety of subjects. For these reasons he was invited to contribute an article to the newsletter.

We in the newspaper business are frequently accused of 'sensationalism' preferring to print bad news rather than good news, but for the great majority of us, I assure you, this is not the case. Certainly with responsible local papers, it is our constant aim to be factual and objective and to preserve as fair a balance as possible in the relative importance given to various items. Certainly, too, as individuals living and working in the area, we much prefer having to report what is good news for the local community, rather than having to impart bad tidings. We are also sometimes accused of 'cynicism', but in my personal view it would be fairer to accept that the attitude of the experienced newspaperman is really one of realistic appraisal, resulting from observation of the very wide spectrum of human affairs with which our work associates us.

Having written thousands of words and seen

scores of column inches filled with relevant materials, from correspondents and others, since the celebrated Dr Beeching first began to raise his 'axe' over our district's own special friendly little railway, it has therefore unfailingly been a source of great pride and pleasure to report, record and provide an outlet for, the huge body of opinion opposing the closure.

After attending the early sittings of the Transport User's Consultative Committee and hearing the splendid case made out by so many different people — from County Council representatives to the forthright countrywoman's account of her regular rail journeyings with a faithful pram to bring home the bargains from shopping ventures — it was a bitter disappointment to have to report the rejection of these appeals. And thereafter, although the above-mentioned realism stepped in with a secret personal acknowledgement that the official outcome was now inevitable, it was still, nevertheless, a continuing source of pride and pleasure to record the never-say-die determination throughout the whole cross-section of community life: County, city, urban, rural district and parish councils, Chambers of Trade and of Commerce, Women's Insti-

tutes, ratepayers' associations, individual old age pensioners, students, parents, housewives, teachers, employers — the list is enormous — to fight, fight, fight and fight again.

But when the Secretary of State's final dictum was pronounced and the ultimate official decision had had to be reported, nothing gave more pleasure than to proclaim, first the rumours and then the reality of, the formation of the Society and the very real prospect of the line being still kept alive.

For the fact is (and the Herald's columns have proved it repeatedly in their contents) that the railway's life is in itself a part of the life of this part of the country; it is something that has always been there for all of us; something far older than the oldest resident (giving a service since 1865); and an accepted and vital institution in the affairs of the communities of Alresford, Ropley, Medstead, Four Marks and Alton. Sensationalism it might be, in a literal sense, but few happenings will afford my own newspaper more pleasure and satisfaction than to print large headlines above a report of the first 'Society-run' journey along the relieved permanent way — with its inherent promise of continuing the important emphasis on that adjective 'permanent'.



ALRESFORD STATION

THREE VIEWS FROM THE FOOTPLATE

Three enginemen give their personal recollections of driving over the Mid-Hants. An experience that we hope members themselves will be able to enjoy in the years to come.

The Special Steam Excursion.
George Porter.
Driver Waterloo (ex Nine Elms)

The sad news of the closure of the Alton to Winchester railway line prompts me to remember the occasions I worked steam hauled trains over the 'Alps', as we drivers used to call a run over the heavily graded Mid-Hants line. The most memorable was when working Merchant Navy 35028, 'Clan Line' on a special train run by the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society.

The train was to commemorate the closure of the Somerset and Dorset Railway and we were to run from Waterloo to Christchurch, being relieved there by a Bournemouth crew who would work on the S&D. My fireman for the day was Les Golding of Nine Elms and we were accompanied by Inspector Jupp of the same depot. The load was 10 coaches, some 335 tons, quite enough for the Alps!

After a fairly ordinary run from Waterloo we stopped at Alton to take water with the formidably graded line up to Medstead ahead of us. But 35028 was more than equal to the task. Competently assisted by Les Golding speed from the dead start at Alton rose to the Mid-forties with a minimum near the summit of Josph. The engine got 'stuck in' right from the start with sparks coming out of the chimney at a rare size, putting the lineside woodland at considerable peril!

Clan Line went up the bank like a donkey chasing a carrot, to use a well known enginemen's phrase. The performance of 35028 was so good that an apprehensive Inspector Jupp urged me to ease the regulator for fear that we would run by Medstead home signal — at a point where one was usually struggling!

After Medstead it was better skelter down the other side, pausing only at Alresford to change the tablet, thence to Winchester Junction and on to the main line to Bournemouth. I have since worked over the Alps with an Electro-Diesel and 4TC. What a colourless comparison.

In conclusion of this trip down memory lane may I say very good luck to the Mid-Hants and its members in their efforts to keep the trains running. If ever there was a line that ought not to shut it's the Mid-Hants.

George Porter's engine, 35028, is the only preserved Merchant Navy — the most modern and powerful class built by the Southern Railway. We've had talks with the Merchant Navy preservation society and it seems possible that Clan Line will have plenty of chances to repeat her terrific performance.

Who knows? George Porter may come and give us a hand now and then.

Memories of the Mid-Hants.
Keith Dawe.

During the electrification of the main Waterloo-Bournemouth line many trains were diverted over the Alton branch when engineers had occupation of the road north of Winchester Junction. It was then that I, and others, were able to work the steam hauled Mail, Newspaper and other trains over this line, usually with a West Country of 73 standard.

Although I've fired over the Alton line on only a few occasions it never failed to impress and enthral me. Possibly the first great impression is, when leaving the mainline at Winchester Junction one is immediately aware of the rural aspect of the line. Gone is the rush and roar of the main line and in its place there is a slower, more leisurely pace. This is partly because nobody worries about rushing but also because the line does not lend itself to sustained high speed, for when the Mid-Hants has to climb it does so in the shortest practical space. So much so that the unprepared fireman can rapidly find that his boiler has an acute lack of steam — I know, it happened to me on my first trip on the line.

However as much as the line goes up hill sharply in a number of places, it also comes down again. It is on these down gradients that a turn of speed can be produced — or steam shut off in order that the boiler may be replenished.

My opinion of the Mid-Hants is that it provides within its length all the ingredients of a lively and exciting preservation scheme. For the line is constantly changing its profile, and although its therefore not a particularly easy line to drive or fire a steam engine over it should provide much variety.

There are many lines, which, in time become a matter of routine as far as the footplate is concerned; You know what is going to happen and you have prepared your engine to meet the circumstances. I have never found this with the Alton branch — the line varies so much that no two trips can be the same either for the engine crew or the passengers. There is always something to occupy the mind, whether it is pounding up the gradient, running down hill or exchanging tablets.

Despite its gradients the line is a typical L&SWR branch, and is sadly one of the last of its type. The Meon valley, Ringwood, Swanage and Andover branches are all now memories, but the Alton line is still very much with us and surely it must sum up the character of a typical L&SWR rural line.

The Mid-Hants not only makes a viable preservation prospect, but also has a good potential as far as revenue earning passenger traffic is concerned as it provides a much needed commuter link to the main line at Alton.

Freight Work.

Brian Aysley
Train driver Waterloo.

I started work at Guildford loco depot as an engine cleaner in 1956 and spent my first year getting absolutely filthy in the process of cleaning Guildford's fine collection of Museum pieces. They all seemed to have been built to last forever and included G6 Adam's tanks, E1's, 700's, Cs, Drummond M7s and T9s, D's and from the year 1880 Adams Jumbos 395 class. Most of the branch work was done with these vintage engines, although the G6 tanks slumbered for most of the year and were only lit up for the extra work each Christmas.

There were about five or

six Guildford steam engines at work each day between Woking and Winchester on the Mid-Hants. I was firing on and off from 1957 until 1964 when I went to nine elms as a driver. Here's a typical 'Alps' duty.

We'd book on at 03-45 and prepare the engine which we'd take light to Woking, tender first. I can say, without fear of contradiction that in the winter, standing and looking over that open tender at the line ahead made the crew the coldest things alive at that time of morning. At Woking we attached various vans of fish and parcels, which had arrived there during the night. After leaving at 0520 we ran to Ash Vale and then to Aldershot where the fish vans were detached. The remainder were taken on to Farnham where we set back in to the up yard and swapped trains with the crew who had worked the 0500 goods from Woking, and which we took on to Alton.

At Alton we sorted the train and remade it with wagons for Medstead and Ropley, or Farringdon, Treloars siding to Alton brewery, depending on the day. Three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday we went up the Mid-Hants and on the other two we did Farringdon on the Meon Valley and the two sidings. All three lines used to diverge at Butts junction but there was no connection from the 'Alps' road to the Meon Valley as this latter was worked only as a siding all the way from Alton. An interesting feature of the two parallel lines from Butts to Alton was that the Meon Valley track was laid on iron sleepers and the Mid-Hants on concrete.

The Medstead traffic consisted of coal for the local merchant and Fisons fertiliser for the agent who

occupied the goods shed there. Coal was the only traffic for Ropley. Working over this road was heavy going. If we had ten or twelve loaded wagons with an old Drummond 700 on the front the driver would drop the lever into full gear and sparks would roar out of the chimney, like a house on fire. But we'd usually make it, if only at fifteen miles an hour.

The staff for the section from Alton to Medstead had a key on it which unlocked the ground frame at 'Butts'. It could be returned at Alton which saved going all the way to Medstead to get back — which came in handy if someone got stuck on the bank. They could run back to Alton to clear the road and have another go after regaining steam.

The staff from Medstead to Alresford also unlocked the siding at Ropley and once inside the siding putting the staff in the ground frame would enable the signalman at one end or other to release a staff and let another train through the section.

After finishing on the Mid-Hants we'd get relief at Alton at about 10-15am and travel passenger back to Guildford. The loco however, despite its veteran years, would go on working until 10 or 11 at night. It would be taken on to Froyle deep freeze siding on the London side of Alton and then to Bentley and to Farnham and back to Bordon with the goods.

Spending a couple of hours in the goods yards along the Mid-Hants gave one a chance to see how busy the station platforms were. And subsequent trips to the line have confirmed how well used the trains are. With the combination of preserved steam, recapturing trips like the one described, and a week-day passenger service the railway will be much appreciated. Its certainly still needed.

END OF THE LINE?

The Reverend David Fry lives and works in Alton. In this article he shows how the community would suffer if the line were to close for good.

It is easy to be very sentimental over the closing of a railway line, and Alton has had more than its fair share of closures. At one time with lines to Basingstoke, Winchester, Fareham and London, Alton station must have been a busy transport centre; but now with the closures or imminent closure Alton could be left with just one rail link.

Is this just a sad decline in the need for trains? Or is it the result of a deliberate policy? Or does it result from bad management? I believe that it is probably a combination of all three, and the decision to close the Mid-Hants, if it comes about, would be regretted in years to come — as is the lack of an efficient means of public transport to

another growing centre for this area, Basingstoke, this area, Basingstoke, already regretted. Every day there are many school children who travel into Alton — they will need to be provided with Schoolbuses and there are too many of these already. There are people who work in Alton who will be forced to use bus services and with all the best will in the world no bus, express or otherwise, provides a satisfactory alternative. There are visitors to hospitals in Winchester or Southampton — what a prospect by bus. There are those who wish to travel to the South West from Alton or from stations down the line to London, on holiday. Imagine a family of four with



35028 on a Mid-Hants special

We would like to thank Mr. E. C. Griffith, author of "Basingstoke Light Railway" for the loan of his photographs.

cases and buckets and spades starting their holiday with a bus journey of twenty miles. These are but a few who will be facing inconvenience, taking to the road by car, or changing their jobs nearer home or with better travelling facilities, or just staying at home. And why? Because of a narrow minded and short sighted railway policy. Where next? The link with London?

Railway preservation groups all over the country have shown that, given the right approach, a railway can pay, and can service a very real need. I hope that under our preservation society the Mid-Hants Railway will continue to serve Alton and all Stations to Alresford. It's a pity that it is not possible to continue the full length of the line.

The Work Ahead

Charles Lewis lives close to the line at Four Marks and has been a member of the preservation association from its inception. He works in an advertising agency and has had experience of operating preserved trains in Hampshire, at Liss and earlier at Droxford.

The section from Alresford east to Alton is without doubt the best to save. Apart from continuing to provide a much needed rail link to London via Alton there are also sound operating reasons for restricting the preservation to this section.

The Alresford-Alton section is virtually free of problems. The ones that exist are small and certainly smaller than those that most other preserved railways have had to face. The line passes, for example, through Forestry Commission land in Chawton Park between Alton and Medstead and this might result in higher than expected insurance premiums, although the forest itself adds to the scenic attraction of the line. There's also the track in Medstead itself. It's not in the best of conditions and, at the moment it's subject to a 40mph limit. But since it's in the station area and at the top of the summit it won't present an operating problem for the time being. These minor points, together with the fact that Butts bridge in Alton may eventually be widened, are the only clouds that I can see on the horizon and they are only small ones. There are many advantages. The Alton-Alresford section has few bridges, no level crossings and the land is dry, water can cause a lot of problems. The line will also benefit from the fresh signal cable laid along the route only a few months ago. Despite apparently being in store since the last war it seems to be in good shape. Apart from the Medstead track the rest is in fairly good condition. In fact British Rail have had several nights of possession only recently between midnight and 6.30am when resleepering has taken place.

The line is quite able to take a railbus service now but for full steam services a number of facilities will have to be restored. The list seems fairly long but its all interesting work which enthusiasts should find a lot of fun. Together with some outside help, it should be carried out without too much difficulty.

For a start there are sidings to be put in. Although the main line is in good condition there is a need for storage sidings and a passing loop. At the Alton end, the Butts Junction Spur, 600 yards long, and the spare Meon Valley track bed would provide adequate facilities. Incidentally the Butts ground frame was transferred to the preservation site at Liss in 1970 and it ought to be possible to retrieve it. Ropley would be the ideal place for a depot and I would suggest that work be concentrated first on the Ropley-Alresford section and then gradually East. The main jobs would be reinstating a loop in the up platform and laying track in the yard.

Where's the extra track to come from? The nearer the better since its expensive to

transport. There is still quite a lot of redundant track close to the line in Hampshire. Three sources which I know well spring to mind. The Meon Valley line south of Droxford, the former M.O.D. depot at Froyle and the remains of the Army line at Liss.

At the very southern section of the military line at Liss there is some track not lifted with the rest. It belongs to a Midlands car delivery firm and there is also a perfectly good water tank which is essential for steam operation. The tank includes the usual accessories and would be an ideal acquisition. However the points at the terminus at Liss were fairly light but would be well worth having for siding use.

The Meon valley track stretches from Droxford to Mistingford. At the moment it's leased by the Sadler Railcar Company who use it to test rail vehicles on. At Mistingford, which is 3 miles south of Droxford the old L&SWR sidings still exist and contain some good quality point work. Some of the track there is iron sleepered, no doubt original. The line at Mistingford is rarely used and it might readily be relinquished. The yard there also includes a L&SWR crane and loading guage.

As far as stock is concerned vacuum braked coaches are essential and are going to be in short supply as they are being fast withdrawn. The first loco hauled coaches to be considered ought to be a set of non-gangwayed passenger stock from the Kings Cross suburban service. Spares would be readily available from the Eastern Region even though there are less than 100 coaches of this type left.

Another good acquisition would be a decent Southern brake van. Works trains on a single line mean push-pull and therefore such a brake van pays for itself. Even in winter track work is more acceptable when one has a brake van with a stove to be transferred in, rather than an open wagon. It's surprising the number of people who'll turn up to help if they know there will be a warm brake van.

Open wagons would also be useful. They are now as rare as gold dust on BR but 50, including box wagons, are coming up for sale in Hampshire.

The shopping list is quite a long one. Sidings and all the ancillary equipment that steam engines require are the most essential together with passenger carrying steam stock. But the job shouldn't be too difficult. As well as a lot of willing enthusiasts there will be a lot of helpful and pleased local residents. In the area of the line the decision to close was greeted with shock and the news that the society is out to save the railway was received with a good deal of relief.

Memories of a Country Railway- and an Epic Battle

by F. Clifton Sherriff

President of Alresford Chamber of Commerce

The history of the Mid-Hants Railway is probably fairly well known to students of railway development in the south of England. Suffice it, therefore, merely to record that in 1861 a Company styling itself the Alton, Alresford and Winchester Railway Company secured powers to extend the then existing Alton branch some 17 miles over the downs and along the Ichen Valley to join up with the Waterloo-Southampton main line two miles north of the present Winchester City station.

Changing its name to the Mid-Hants Railway, the Company opened its route for passenger traffic on 2nd October, 1865. It was worked from the start by the L&S.W.R., who moved their existing Alton terminal station to a new site a few dozen yards to the south in order to provide for through working. Incidentally, some 38 years later, when the Meon Valley line and the Alton-Basingstoke Light Railway were both opened within a year or two of each other, the Mid-Hants achieved what is believed to be the unique distinction of having at Butts Junction, a mile west of Alton, the diverging point of three single-track railways, embodying some very interesting pointwork.

Although basically a "local" railway, the Mid-Hants has always carried through traffic, either scheduled or emergency. Up to the beginning of the second World War there was a regular daily through service in each direction between Southampton and the Kent Coast via this route — a journey which to-day would involve six or seven changes! During World War II the line was extensively used for troop movements, and the stop at Four Marks (then a passing loop) to change tablets was a driver's nightmare in case he should get a "dead-centre" and have to reverse his ten-coach train over the trap points!

More recently, during the engineering works associated with the electrification of the main line, the Mid-Hants was substantially used for the diversion of Southampton/Bournemouth/Weymouth trains, and the little stations were rocked by the thunderous passage of the Bournemouth Belle and other main line expresses. Banking engines were often employed to help the heavier trains "over the Alps." Until the final (and inexplicable) ban on through working a year or so ago, late night newspaper trains regularly came this way during engineers' possessions of the main line.

During the writer's thirty years or so in the area, both as a commuter and an observer, passenger services prior to dieselization were worked principally by the famous M-7 class Drummond 0-4-4T engines on push-and-pull trains, though he remembers an occasional earlier Adams 0-2 class 0-4-4T. The daily freight was usually in the hands of a 700 class 0-6-0, and provision was made at Ropley to use the tablet to lock the train into the siding

to allow passenger services to pass.

Originally, of course, all four intermediate stations had passing loops, signal boxes, extensive freight facilities, and a stationmaster and staff of up to half-a-dozen men. Four Marks survived as a passing point until a few years ago, since when Alresford alone has provided this facility.

The Mid-Hants has often been called the "watercress line" because of its one-time enormous traffic in this commodity from Alresford Station. This is, of course, one of the most famous and extensive cress growing areas in Britain and its produce goes to almost every part of the country — alas now principally by road. During the height of the season it was not uncommon to attach two fully loaded covered wagons to one of the early down trains for consignment to Eastleigh yard for marshalling on to trains for the Midland and North. With push-and-pull trains this involved some complicated shunting at Alresford — the passing up passenger train having to withdraw the wagons from the siding and shunt them on to the back of the down train! Some will remember the unique type of shunting signal attached to the post underneath the up starter; when the sidings were taken up, it is understood that this was removed to a museum.

The Battle for Survival Classified as a "prey" route on the original railway map, the Mid-Hants survived the early years of the Beeching butchery, and when an up-to-date time-interval diesel service was introduced it was generally believed that it was safe and would eventually be electrified (as, of course, it should have been in the first place) to provide a secondary service to Southampton as well as an invaluable diversionary route for emergency use. Provision for electrifying the line was made at the Winchester Junction sub-station right from the first by the installation of the necessary switchgear.

In 1968, however, the blow fell and triggered off what became the longest, bitterest and most hard-fought battle for the retention of a line in the whole of railway history, a battle which none of those involved will quickly forget. Under the able leadership of John Taylor (Deputy Clerk to the Winchester R.D.C.), with help and support from Members of Parliament for the area, from John Ariotti, himself a railway enthusiast and a resident of Alresford, from other well-known journalists, from local radio and television, from John Spencer Gilks, of the Rural District Councils Association, and countless others, all the stops were pulled out.

Thousands of hours, thousands of pounds, and tons of paper were expended over a period of four or five years in a case which should never have been brought in the first place; but it was apparent from the beginning that undue "pressures" were being brought to bear from

somewhere in the upper hierarchy at Waterloo — from someone who, as a local railwayman put it, "had it in for this little line." One had the feeling, too, that political pressures were also being exerted to get the line closed at all costs. This is the kind of thing which combined with the unholy alliance of prosecutor, jury and judge in the persons respectively of B.R., the "Department" and the Minister leaves the unfortunate defendants with little chance of success in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. Supposedly the "prisoner's friend," the Transport Users Consultative Committee have had their wings so savagely clipped that they are empowered to consider no other evidence than that of immediate personal hardship, which is not one tenth part of all the complex considerations involved in a rail closure. Thus we find that perhaps one of the strongest "recommendations" for mercy" ever put forward by a T.U.C. were cynically ignored by a jury determined to find the defendant guilty!

Two public enquiries by the T.U.C.C., and adjournment debates in the House, many Parliamentary Questions, a marathon hearing before the Traffic Commissioners of the application by a reluctant bus operator forced again by pressures from "up top" to offer a pitiful travesty of a "replacement" service, an appeal against the decision arrived at by the Commissioners against all the weight of evidence (an appeal doomed to failure because it had to go before the same Minister who had already consented to "kill" the line) — all this, and more, contributed to this epic battle.

And, of course, the case was bedevilled from the start by more than usually fanciful figures adduced by B.R. of the alleged loss on 17 miles of single track railway with one passing loop. Transport consultants of the highest standing all confirmed that B.R.'s figures were "impossible" — and, indeed, they did actually reduce one of the more outrageous expenditure figures by no less than 40 per cent. when challenged. One wonders how many other of the figures were 40 per cent out. The iniquitous Cooper formula and its predecessors, while unfortunately agreed by Parliament as a yardstick for judging the viability of railways, is no more infallible than any other calculating machine. Just like the finest computer in the world, if false information is fed into it, then false answers come out. And right from the beginning, false information was fed by B.R. into the "machine" and false answers were fed to the Department, who relied far too heavily on the unsupported evidence and figures of B.R. and made no effort to institute independent checks even when the information was challenged by the objectors.

Income from passenger traffic was estimated (all B.R.'s income figures were "estimated") on the basis of the most haphazard censuses,

continued page 4

continued from page 3

which made no attempt to determine the origin and destination of journeys but merely counted heads — and that none too accurately — at the stations on the line. Never, so far as we could tell, was any effort made to check the actual takings at the booking-offices or by the travelling conductors. No credit was given in respect of the huge parcels of watercress traffic in the original figures, nor for commercial advertising services over the Mid-Hants route, though it is not unlikely that the signalmen's overtime so involved was debited to the line.

Ten years of neglect — "minimum maintenance" as they call it — resulted in a heavy build-up of arrears of work, the estimated cost of which was quite happily added to the formula. No account was taken of the immense potential of a line serving one of the most rapidly developing areas of the country — not even when passenger movements (and income) were increasing in the region of 100 per cent. Future estimates for maintenance and requests failed to take into account the fact that some of the work had been completed already! The usual staggering operational costs blithely camouflaged the fact that the services were being operated extremely inefficiently — three-car trains when two would do; separate conductors instead of guard/conductor operation; inordinate "dead" time at Southampton; week-day services on Sundays; general lack of management.

B.R. have often contrived the closure of routes they dislike by deliberate "running-down" of services and facilities. In the case of the Mid-Hants they used a more subtle strategy. They "smothered" the route by negative publicity; they tried to hoodwink the travelling public into believing it did not exist. For example, the main departure board at Waterloo showed the service as terminating at Ichen Abbas — conjuring up the intriguing picture of a country terminus in the middle of nowhere! Recently introduced taped platform announcements at Aldershot called the services as far as Alton with never a mention of connections through to Winchester and Southampton. Similar taped announcements at Winchester called the services as far as Ash Vale (of all places!) with, again, never a mention of the same trains proceeding on to Woking, Surbiton and Waterloo. Passengers not in the know must, it seemed, be discouraged at all costs from gaining any impression that there was an alternative through route, at no greater distance, between London and the Hampshire/Dorset coast.

And so the last public enquiry has announced its verdict. British Rail's final train will climb out of Alton this February. 107 years of service will come to an end. Silence will descend on the cuttings and embankments of the Mid-Hants. But later a new sound should appear. The sound of steam. Phoenix like a new line will rise from the ashes of the old. And once again, let's hope, we shall be stirred by the sight and the sound of steam engines storming up the formidable gradients 'over the alps'!

THIRTY YEARS OF SIGNALLING

by Roy Anderson

Walter Norris has been signalman at Alresford for more than 30 years.

If there is anybody who deserves the title Mr Mid-Hants it's Walt Norris. He's spent 31 years on the line, from 1941 to be exact, most of it at Alresford signal box. He's seen other staff come and go and from his box he's watched the line change from busy cross country route to the state it now finds itself in.

In the war years the station had a staff of eight and a flourishing goods yard. The war made quite a difference to train operations. Apart from trains running right through the night to Southampton via the Mid-Hants, which meant that the signal box was continuously manned, a lot of extra traffic was generated at Alresford. Canadian and United States divisions were based at Northington Grange, a fine old house built after the style of Inigo Jones two miles from the station, and special trains were laid on at weekends to take the American servicemen to the bright lights of London. Walt Norris has many memories, not all of them pleasant, of the return trip from London which arrived back late on Sunday night, after the servicemen had drowned their wartime sorrows with the spirits of London. The train originated from Eastleigh and ran through onto the Mid-Hants picking up men at Ichen Abbas and Alresford. After a halt at Aldershot it ran non stop to London. The American occupation of Alresford is recorded on a tablet attached to a house in Broad Street, the house served as HQ of the 47th Infantry Regiment, 9th Division, U.S. Army.

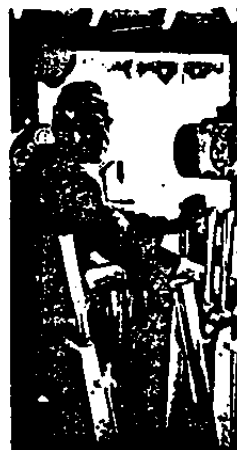
Another memory Walt has of war time is the potato special from East Anglia which pulled into Alresford just before D-Day. A squad of local men unloaded the potatoes, all twenty wagons and took them to a field a few hundred yards from the station. And there they stayed. Forgotten by those who arranged their storage in Alresford but well remembered by the locals who lived for more than a year with the smell of decomposing potatoes. Eventually they were dug into the ground.

The post war years brought gradual decline. The station staff diminished. Goods services were withdrawn. Walt says that the freight services were so popular that the week before the yard's closure was announced an embargo had to be put on any more freight coming in — the yard was so full of traffic. After the yard was shut down the loop at Medstead was taken out and Ropley, Medstead and Ichen Abbas became unstaffed.

Just after the yard was closed and all the track and signal equipment taken out Walt noticed a sudden

increase in the number of children coming to Alresford. Their journeys seemed particularly pointless as they arrived on the down train, spent two minutes looking the station up and down and returned on the next up train. It didn't take him long to find out that an I-Spy book had listed the shunt-ahead signal, allowing freight trains to run past the up starter and into the siding beyond without the tablet, as the only one to be seen in the country. The signal itself, a small replica of the starter signal but lower on the gantry, was certainly unique but it had been taken out when the yard closed and before the I-Spy book was published. The children were incorrectly spotting the ordinary starter signal. Walt wrote a letter to the chief I-Spy, who had the eccentric address of the Wigwam, London W.C.2., to say that the signal didn't exist any more. He got no reply. He did notice however that the pilgrimage came to an abrupt end a year after it had started, when the new edition of the I-Spy book came out.

Presiding over the station from his signal box Walt had watched several generations of travellers use the line. There aren't quite as many as there used to be but in the afternoon, when the schools finish the platforms can still be thick with passengers. Being the only railway man on the station now (the booking office is only opened for a couple of hours each day) he is often asked about the future of the line — the most popular question is what can be done to keep the line going. He has an answer for them now. He tells them about our preservation society and he reports that everybody says that they are 100 per cent behind us.



Walter Norris at work

Walt was offered a job at Bentley Station, three miles east of Alton, but because of his poor health he'll probably retire. He lives close to the line at Alresford and says that he'll have to buy a strong padlock to keep him out of the signalbox when weekend steam is in full swing.

THE COMMITTEES

Choose the group you are most interested in, and know most about, and drop a line to Alresford Station giving the group letter and a rough indication of the knowledge you have of the subject. Enthusiasm alone is an excellent reason for joining! If you want to give a phone number please do.

A. Permanent Way Group

Including signalling, the main responsibility will be to arrange for the installation of sidings and possibly a passing loop. One of the most important groups.

B. Locomotive Group

Negotiating with loco owners and acquiring and maintaining our own engines. Also to arrange water, coaling and maintenance facilities.

C. Buildings Group

Deciding on and arranging modifications to existing buildings and also arranging cover for locomotives. If you are a do-it-yourselfer or can get building supplies at reduced cost it will be particularly helpful.

D. Rolling Stock Group

Concerned with the location, acquisition and operation of coaches, PW wagons and specialist vehicles.

E. Weekday Railbus Group

Arranging acquisition and operation of the weekday railbus. This is a specialist group which would welcome members with electrical and mechanical engineering expertise.

The first meetings will be arranged, probably at Alresford station, soon after the newsletter goes out.

LOCOMOTIVES

Martin Waring has been looking after the locomotive side — he'll be handing over to the locomotive committee after this newsletter goes out. He's one of the founder members of the Society and has had a lifelong interest in railways.

The most popular question from members is — What locomotives are we going to have?

Our first consideration has been to get engines that are going to be reliable. Although the weekday service will be railbus operated, the weekends will be the domain of steam. And breakdowns on a single line can be rather disruptive.

The second consideration is that the engines, if possible, should be Southern ones — engines that might have worked on the Mid-Hants in the past. Talks with members have indicated a considerable preference for Southern locos. A substantial number of Southern Engines have been, or are in the process of being, preserved. We've been in touch with most of the groups owning these engines.

The Mid-Hants is fortunate. Unlike some other preserved lines we will be able to accept whatever engine presents itself, providing we want it. The line has no gauge or weight restrictions — unless a 300 ton automatic stoker Garrett turns up! Additionally the line is particularly appealing to locomotive groups since the ten mile length, free from serious curvature, will allow engines to stretch their legs.

The engines whose owners we've been talking to, and this ranges from a brief correspondence to detailed negotiations, include 35028, 34016, 31817, 30841, 30506 and a terrier tank. We've also considered several industrial engines.

The final agreements are still the subject of discussions but they will probably be along the lines of a notional rent which each engine pays per year which

will be offset by the number of miles in revenue service that it operates. If it does more than a target number then the loco will earn a lot more than it costs rent. If it does less then it may still have to pay some rent. That is the broad principle and it seems fair to both railway and owner.

The Railway itself also expects to buy several small engines and we are discussing this with the National Coal Board and another organisation.

Article continued from page 1

The individual committees are listed above. Please choose the ones that most interest you, and you know something about, and drop us a line. If you have only enthusiasm to offer, bring that to the committee — it's a valuable commodity.

Up to now each of the five aspects have been looked after by one person. He will brief the committee and join it as a member. Each committee will be headed by a member with some experience of the subject and at regular intervals heads of committees, and anyone else who wants to come along, will meet to discuss progress. These meetings will co-ordinate the activities of the committees. For example the Motive Power Group will liaise with the Permanent Way group to ensure that adequate track is available for loco storage.

We aim for a weekday railcar service as soon as possible and for steam on a test basis at the end of 1973 and in full operation by 1974. Existing Membership includes a full year of steam operation. The chances of meeting these deadlines are pretty good. The terrific enthusiasm that so many members have demonstrated coupled with the experience of others is a good basis on which to build a railway. Mid-Hants here we come.



M7 at Medstead one for the Mid-Hants?

Sir John Betjeman the poet Laureate writes.
Bravo — I wish you every success and look forward to travelling on the Mid-Hants one day. Much joy and success to you and your colleagues.

MID-HANTS NEWS

Issue Number 3

A MESSAGE FROM JOHN TAYLOR.

I am pleased to have this opportunity of telling members of the Preservation Association of the stage we have reached in our efforts to get trains running again on the Winchester to Alton Railway Line. As many of you will know, there is a lot to be done before it is legally possible to reinstate services, quite apart from raising the necessary cash.

Winchester and Alton Railway Limited and your associated Preservation Association (which will shortly be a guarantee company to be known as the Mid-Hants Preservation Society Limited) propose to do two things. One, restore "end-to-end" daily diesel passenger services and two, to provide steam services as a tourist and recreational facility.

Before any line can be disposed of by British Rail, it is necessary to obtain a decision from the local County Council (incidentally, County Councils are also charged with a duty to secure proper co-ordination of public passenger transport under the Local Government Act, 1972). Once the County Council has made its decision British Rail will dispose of the railway in a way which will enable it to be used for the purpose proposed by the Local Planning Authority.

You will know that we prepared a detailed Feasibility Study and at the last meeting of the County Finance Committee a decision on the possible purchase of the line by the County Council and its lease to us was deferred. The matter is being considered again at the County Finance Committee on 10th July. We have spent a lot of time in revising the Feasibility Study, in bringing the figures up-to-date and in attempting to project our income and expenditure over the next five years (if we can get going on this worthwhile project) and all this information, in one document, has now been submitted to the County Council.

I am very conscious of the tremendous work which is being done by the volunteer groups and it is my intention, as soon as I have cleared many necessary administrative details out of the way, to meet the Heads of each of the groups concerned. It is my wish to ensure that we all work closely together to achieve our common aim.

A lot of money will be needed but the support to date has been very encouraging and the public interest, far from decreasing, is more evident every week. Therefore, if we can get the County Council's decision (we hope they will purchase and lease to us) then we can press ahead with the application for the Light Railways Order and the current negotiations with British Rail. In order to save time, I am already in touch with the Department of the Environment and will shortly be having a meeting with the officers whose job it is to deal with applications for Light Railways Orders.

With the worsening of bus services in the area, with the increased problem of getting bus drivers, the increase in traffic congestion and the growth of population, I am convinced (and I am certain that you share this view) that it would be a tragedy if this railway were not restored to full use at the earliest opportunity.

I hope in the next newsletter that it will be possible to give you good news of the County's decision with a further detailed statement of progress.

JOHN TAYLOR.

A MESSAGE FROM SIMON NEAVE.

Members will have heard, from the circular letter sent out at the beginning of May and from the local press, if they live in the area of the line, of the expansion of our objectives and organization.

For some time the possibility of operating all the railway from Alton to Winchester Junction (Kingsworthy) had been under active consideration. When John Taylor, the Local Government Official who lead the fight to prevent B.R. closing the line, came along with a group of people interested in saving the whole line and with a favourable assessment of the likelihood of success, it was decided to amalgamate and aim for the full 17 miles. A new Company to which the Preservation Association is linked was formed to buy and operate the entire line and with a name that reflected this objective - Winchester & Alton Railway Limited.

As well as aiming for a greater length of line we will be more concerned with the running of a public passenger service although, obviously, steam trains will still play an important part. Further, there will also be a change in financing. Instead of a commercial loan it is intended to raise the money by a share issue. The total sum required depends upon whether or not Hampshire County Council will buy the land on which the railway runs and lease it to the Company. If the Council do buy the land, it will substantially reduce the amount of capital required.

A number of studies have been prepared over the last 12 months, including technical feasibility reports and these have been lodged with the County Council to enable the Council members to come to a decision as to whether to help with the purchase. The decision is expected to be made in early July and if the Council decide not to buy the land, then the Company can either raise the capital for the entire purchase and Bankers report favourably on this possibility, or else the Company will revert to the Alton Alresford proposal.

SIMON NEAVE.

BUILDINGS GROUP REPORT.

The Buildings Group met for the first time at Alresford Station on 25th February, to consider the implementation of the brief drawn up by the Directors of the Company, which was to consider and prepare plans for:-

- 1) the modification and improvement of the Alresford station buildings to suit the needs of the Mid-Hants Railway
- 2) the construction of an operating base and tourist centre at Ropley.

The members present were asked to state a preference for either the Alresford or Ropley projects and the majority chose Alresford, which seemed to present the greatest opportunities for do-it-yourself activities. Unfortunately the ambitions of this group have had to be thwarted since we are unable to carry out modification work while the buildings remain British Rail property. All that has been done to date is some first aid work to the roofs, ably carried out by Keith Spreadbury, to stem the worst leaks and keep the rainwater out of our tea. If anyone knows of a source of good sound slates of suitable size we shall be pleased to hear from him as the whole roof is in urgent need of an overhaul.

The Ropley group, originally comprising three members, has found more to do. A preliminary survey of the site has been carried out, drawings have been obtained, requirements discussed and preliminary costings made. As a result of all this an overall layout plan for the site and a selection of possible layouts for the engine shed have been evolved. The final solution will probably be a single industrialised building incorporating an engine shed accommodating 4 to 6 large locomotives, a workshop bay and a museum bay together with sales area and lavatories, sited in the old goods yard at the eastern end of the down platform. Members accommodation and catering facilities will be provided in the existing station buildings. The proposals will shortly be presented to the various groups concerned for discussion before submission to the Board for their consideration.

I have to acknowledge valuable help and advice received from Brian Saunders, C. R. Webb and Keith Spreadbury in preparing these proposals.

One problem we have yet to resolve is the siting of the carriage shed which we are unable to accommodate satisfactorily at Ropley and alternative sites are being investigated.

A job which must be tackled as soon as we have been officially granted access to the whole of the line is a complete survey of the existing stock of buildings to determine what repairs are necessary, what use the buildings can be put to in the future and how they can be adapted

to suit their new roles. Any constructive suggestions for the future of vandal-prone Medstead Station will be welcome.

There is a great deal of work to be done by the Buildings Group and I hope that all members can soon play an active part in the revival of our line.

DAVID VIDLER.

CARRIAGE AND WAGON NOTES.

One aspect of railway operation that is normally overlooked by the vast majority of people travelling on trains and especially steam trains, is the working of the Carriage & Wagon Department.

It is anticipated that a large number of people, lured by the attraction of steam, will visit the Mid-Hants line on Summer weekends. A centre of attraction will be our collection of steam locomotives, but surely an even greater attraction will be the unique experience in this part of England of being able to travel 10 miles in a steam train. (There will be no regular steam service west of Alresford). It is likely that at most times these trains will include six coaches. Providing and maintaining these is only one of the many tasks of the important 'Carriage & Wagon Group' which has now been formed.

In addition to supplying sufficient coaches for the steam service, the Group has the job of providing sufficient wagons and vans for the essential works trains and also possibly supplying extra coaches to act as station buffets at the more important places on the line.

In due course, a few items of historical interest may be purchased which will provide an added attraction to visitors.

One of the Groups' first tasks will be to purchase goods vehicles for the works train. Apart from open wagons, a mess van (for the conveyance of the permanent way staff and their equipment) and a brake van will have to be bought. The Group will then be on the lookout for suitable vehicles for the weekend service. Every vehicle bought will have to be repainted and overhauled prior to entering service and covered accommodation will be provided as soon as possible so that this maintenance can be carried out throughout the year.

The mention of repainting leads to the subject of livery. At the moment it has been provisionally decided that coaches will be carrying the crimson lake livery as used on B.R. standard coaches built between 1951 and 1957. The bulk of the vehicles used at weekends will be B.R. standard vehicles built during that period.

Anyone reading this newsletter who feels that they would be interested in this important work can join the group by writing to me at Alresford Station.

CHARLES LEWIS.

A Group has also been formed to acquire, maintain and operate the diesel units for the weekday services. These units will be ex-B.R. two-coach diesel mechanical sets and anyone interested should contact us as soon as possible.

C.L.

LOCO GROUP - NOTES AND NEWS.

These past three months have seen feverish activities emanating from the heirarchy of the loco group.

Suggestions were put forward at the last loco meetings that we should take a trip down to Barry Island, site of Woodham Bros' loco scrap yards, the intention being to seek possible purchase of an engine of suitable nature for our line. Five of our members made the trip and discovered that what is remaining there after other preservationists and the cutter's torch have taken their toll, would be beyond our present capabilities for restoration, due mainly to the complete lack of all fittings, valve gear, con-rods, etc., not to mention their advanced state of decay owing to salt spray and sea air erosion from the nearby Bristol Channel.

I wrote several letters to the National Coal Board, enquiring about purchasing one or more of their redundant steam fleet. The result of which I received an offer to tender for three "J 94s", Hunslet 0-6-0 Austerity Saddle Tanks from Nantgarw coking plant in South Wales. Again, another journey over the border to examine these three. One we considered well worth buying, being of apparently sound fettle, only requiring its wheels to be skimmed. I have made an offer for this loco and am presently awaiting a "yea" or "nay".

The S.15. Society have proved very friendly, several letters having been exchanged. They have said that a strong possibility exists that 30506 will end up on our line. A dozen or more of their members have walked from Alton to Alresford to view the track and strengthen their resolve to patronise our line. I understand our only competition is the Swanage Preservation Scheme.

The owners of "Clan Line" 35028 have been contacted and a reply is still awaited. The Mid-Hants should prove an ideal base for her saunterings forth on "Steam on B.R." excursions as well as creating a special attraction between Alton and Alresford.

A member suggested that we should try to obtain some form of steam motive power from the German Railways (Deutsche Bundesbahn). A letter was composed at great length and despatched, eventually a reply being received. Although there are difficulties with such things as the continental broader loading gauges and non-compatible breaking system, we await further results.

The Bagnall (2842) Preservation Company have shown interest in us since we have started to publicise our aims and I have given them the go-ahead to bring their loco to the Mid-Hants provisionally, some time during July. The engine concerned is an 0-4-0 Bagnall of 1946, built to their standard saddle tank design, originating from Littlebrook and latterly Croydon "A" Power Station.

Owing to no final decision as yet being made, I am unable to say too much but I have had an interview with a Manager of a large commercial concern, who until recently ran a small fleet of industrial steam locomotives. The result of this is that we may be presented with a saddle tank on free permanent loan for a very reasonable fee. I look forward to being able to tell you more of this matter in the near future.

Any helpful suggestions are always welcome - to me at the station, please.

DICK AUDSLEY.

TRACK NOTES.

Wanted all able bodied men (and women) for sleeper changing, stone shovelling, weeding and rail and point installation. Can guarantee back ache, bruises and blisters; anyone that is made enough to be interested, please apply to Bill Moore, C/o Alresford Station.

Seriously though, I've got the job of setting up the Permanent Way group and over the next few months its going to be the most important (and hardest worked) group of all. The legacy that B.R. has left us with is no sidings and only one loop, this means that we have to put in a Loco yard at Ropley and a siding at Alresford to take engines that arrive by road before we can operate any type of service.

Now an appeal on behalf of the Permanent Way group. Can you send any unwanted trading stamps, such as Green Shield, Co-op, etc. and all types of cigarette savings coupons?

Monies raised by this method will be used to buy tools such as rail jacks and ballast forks, which means that your membership subscriptions can be used to buy points and tracks for sidings and help towards purchasing the lines.

Lastly, an answer to a question I have been asked on a number of occasions; why is the track called the Permanent Way?

This goes back to the early days of railways, when a Contractor built a railway he constructed a rough tramway for the movement of spoil and building materials and this was called the 'temporary way'. As the building of the line progressed and the permanent track was put in, it was called the 'permanent way' and the name has stuck ever since.

. BILL MOORE.

SIGNAL AND TELEGRAPH REPORT.

Since the inception of the Mid-Hants Preservation Society, a number of Groups have been formed ready for the re-opening. One of these Groups has been the Signal and Telegraph Group, which has the duty of re-instating signalling equipment along the line and many duties have to be performed before the line is fully signalled.

Starting at the Alresford to Alton section, as this will most probably be the first section to re-open, all the signals at Alresford urgently need repainting. Mechanically, the signalling equipment at Alresford is in sound condition but Alresford Signal Box has had all the Block instruments removed and now needs rewiring. The old "up" siding is proposed to be reinstated in the future and will have to be connected to the lever frame in the Alresford Signal Box.

Moving to Ropley, the plans are now in hand to build the Loco Depot on the site of the old Goods Yard. Provisions will be made for a ground frame, which will operate the reinstated passing loop, and yard points, complete with full signalling. At present, the only signals left at Ropley are the "up" and "down" Distant Signal posts serving as marker lights for the "up" and "down" trains. These posts can be refitted and used

as "Fixed Distant".

At Butts Junction there will most probably be a Halt of Eight Car length, complete with a Passing Loop and possible carriage siding, which will be worked by a Ground Frame and be fully signalled, although during weekday operations, all Signal Boxes may well be "switched out".

At Alton, the Northern Terminus of the line, the signalling will be as present with a run round Loop and siding on the Alresford side of the Station. This system too will be operated by a Ground Frame.

Weekday operation of the line will employ a "one engine-in-steam" principle but at weekends the line will have all Signal Boxes in operation.

In closing I would like to hear from any members interested in the Signal and Telegraph Group with or without previous Signalling experience to contact me at the Station.

PETER DEAN.

RUSTON HORNSBY 48HP DIESEL SHUNTER.

A small group of members have combined to finance the purchase of a Ruston Hornsby 48HP Diesel Shunting locomotive, offered to the Mid-Hants for the bargain price of £70, to which will have to be added £7 VAT and about £35 delivery by road from Derby - a total of only £112! This loco, which was built in 1954, is quoted as being 'in good working order' but to make absolutely sure that it is worth buying a thorough inspection of its condition will be made before the purchase is completed.

Other important claims on the Society funds made it difficult for the Society to buy the engine, so to avoid losing the opportunity, the members concerned have contributed a few pounds each, to buy it instead.

The locomotive is, by ordinary railway standards, fairly diminutive, but it will be adequate for light shunting duties, carrying inspection parties or drawing works trains, etc.

Even if 'in good condition' it may need some work done, and it may quite well look better after being painted and lined.

At the time of writing, no approaches have been made to B.R. for the necessary permission to use the engine on the track but this will be done in due course, when the insurance which is absolutely vital, has been obtained, so that proof can be shown to B.R. of its existence.

While this permission is being sought, it is hoped that the locomotive will be stored at some suitable spot at Alresford Station, so that the work mentioned previously can be carried out more easily.

Though the funds necessary have now been promised, if other members would like to be told of other, future opportunities with a view to taking a share or shares, perhaps they would like to write to me at 6 Cherryway, Alton, so that a list can be started.

LE WHEELER.

SIMON NEAVE.

The name "Simon Neave" is probably familiar to many members. His name has appeared at the bottom of a large number of letters sent out by the Organization and he is a familiar figure to those members who come along to the station regularly on Sunday afternoons.

As well as signing letters and appearing on Sundays, Simon Neave has done a great deal of behind the scenes work for the railway and now that the Organization has been enlarged with the Winchester and Alton Group, we felt that now would be an appropriate time to record our thanks.

As one of the original four people who started the Preservation Company, Simon Neave has been responsible for a big share of the work for the entire 14 months since the preservation was first planned. He has personally written more than 5,000 letters on behalf of the railway, drafted single handed an 80 page report on the feasibility of re-opening the railway and contributed to a second 40 page study for the Hampshire County Council. He has also had a large number of meetings with British Rail and other Organizations and as if that was not enough he has done a great deal of travelling gathering information about other railways and locomotives.

All this work has been fitted into his spare time and it has helped to bring the preservation much closer to fruition. After 14 months of doing his work for the Mid-Hants alongside his normal job, he is now hoping that the enlarged Organization will give him a chance to catch up on his normal work.

MARTIN WARING.

FINALLY.

I hope you have found this Newsletter of interest and further Newsletters are planned every quarter to keep you up to date with developments and progress.

We are growing fast but to minimise expenses, we are trying to arrange for a 'by hand' delivery service of Newsletters to members living near to the line. Anyone able to help with this scheme should please contact me at Alresford Station. Incidentally, we could save quite a sum by way of postages and release money for more important (and interesting) projects.

Subject to space availability, we will try and print members' letters in the next issue.

All letters to the Station please and kindly mark the outside of your envelope "Newsletter" as this will help our administrative arrangements.

COLIN FULLER.

Produced and Published by Mid-Hants Railway Limited,
Alresford Station, Alresford, Hampshire.

MID-HANTS NEWS

Issue Number 4

FIRST THINGS FIRST.

To start with, this is the first Newsletter produced since the new preservation organisation, Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd., has been fully incorporated. The MERPS acts as the official supporting body to the parent Company, Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., whose Chairman is Mr. John Taylor. The board of the MERPS contains four Directors who are also on the W. & A.R. board. They are: Mr. Colin Fuller (Chairman, MERPS), Mr. David Vidler (Liaison Officer), Mr. F. Clifton Sherriff (Secretary to both Companies) and Mr. Charles Lewis (Press & Public Relations). The other two Directors are Mrs. Carol Fuller (catering) and Mr. Le Wheeler (membership Secretary).

A large number of subscriptions become due for renewal on January 1st, and if this includes you, a renewal form is enclosed. We are grateful for your support and hope that you will realise that as 1974 will be our most important year, you will complete the form and return it to us as soon as possible.

Since our last newsletter, members of our volunteer work force have been hard at work. Apart from the arrival of the two locomotives and the track relaying at Alresford (described in the Loco Group Notes), the water tower which formerly stood at the Southern end of the Longmoor Military Railway at Liss has been acquired. Demolition was completed - with the help of hired cranes - by September. It is likely that this will be re-erected at Ropley in due course, but in the meantime it is being stored, in sections.

A fair amount of redundant semaphore signalling equipment has been obtained, some of which was bought from British Rail at Fareham and moved to Alresford on July 29th. Restoration of this equipment is now taking place.

We are negotiating to buy the old station clock at Winchfield to replace one of the clocks removed by B. R. from Alresford and Ropley.

Gardening enthusiasts would be well advised to have a look at Alresford Station next year, if only to see the blaze of colour. A lot of work has been carried out on the flower beds recently, so we must thank those members who have given up their time to ensure that these beds are restored to their former glory.

One of the next major tasks is to acquire Boiler Certificates for the locomotives, and in connection with this it is likely that new boiler tubes will be required for at least one loco (see our Works Train Appeal overleaf). If you wish to be included on future works parties, drop a line to Le Wheeler at 6 Cherryway, Alton, but please remember to say whether you are interested in Locomotives, Carriage & Wagon, Signalling, Permanent Way or Buildings.

A MESSAGE FROM JOHN TAYLOR.

Nine months have now elapsed since B. R. closed the Winchester & Alton Railway.

Generally speaking, no matter how much feeling is aroused by a rail closure, as the months go by it appears to diminish. It is of course difficult to maintain fervour indefinitely. However, one of the most significant things that strike me in connection with our railway is the fact that far from diminishing, the opposition to its continued closure grows every day and letters and offers of support are increasing.

This is far from unexpected, the railway was an invaluable link across central Hampshire. Those of us who have been closely concerned with the fight to retain the railway know the hardship its continued closure causes.

Since our last Newsletter we have been very busy getting the loose ends tied up so that we can go public at the earliest opportunity. The progress towards getting a Contract with B. R. had not been as speedy as we had hoped but our Valuer has had detailed discussions with the Estates Valuer of B. R. and has been pressing for a Contract so that we can prepare the Share prospectus.

Up until the 6th November, we were faced with the "chicken and egg" situation. B. R. would not make an application for a Light Railways Order until a Contract was signed. The Light Railways Order is of course vital in connection with the Company's proposals to re-open the line.

Another crucial matter is the question of retaining the track in position. The Hampshire County Council offered to meet the interest charges on the value of the track to keep it in position for one year from May 1973. Difficulties arose on the sum to be paid to B. R. which differed from the original figures mentioned by a substantial sum. We were kept fully informed and on Tuesday, 6th November, representatives of the Company met senior B. R. Officials and Chief Officers of the County Council at The Castle, Winchester in an attempt to overcome the impasse and to iron out any problems which might hold up the signing of a Contract.

I cannot at this stage be specific but I can say that substantial progress was made and I hope in the near future, to be able to tell you that we have agreed Contract terms and that the Light Railways Order is being applied for. This of course, would be a major forward step and I sincerely hope, would mark the beginning of speedy progress towards the attainment of our goal.

Our detailed feasibility study has been lodged with the Department of the Environment (including the Railways Inspectorate division) and we have had a useful meeting at the Department to resolve a number of procedural matters.

We have been very fortunate in getting further expert advice from a leading signalling engineer, the Chief Registrar of one of the 'Big Five' Banks and eminent Accountants.

JOHN TAYLOR.

LOCO GROUP NOTES AND NEWS.

As the end of the year grows nearer - the religious (and commercial) festivities of Christmas are now only so many "shopping days" away - I can only imagine what a marvellous present ownership of the line would be. However we must wait a little longer and wish our negotiators good luck in their mammoth task.

The month of July saw just what we can all do when we try, at short notice. Sixty feet of track had to be laid to accommodate our first locomotive, a Bagnall 0-4-0 saddle tank No. 2842, built in 1946, which came from Croydon 'A' Power Station. The track was laid in the bed of the old cattle dock line behind the signal box on the Up side at Alresford. Despite the low-loader arriving mid-week (July 24th), numerous members turned out to assist with the unloading. This resulted in a fair amount of publicity in the local press, not to mention a sudden increase in new members.

The veiled hints included in our last newsletter about a further locomotive turned into fact during August when we learnt that the Slough Trading Estates were prepared to give us one of their two saddle tanks on free permanent loan, provided we complied with certain conditions. This generous offer was accepted, two of the conditions being that the locomotive is kept in working order and retains its existing livery. The move from Slough took place on August 17th and 18th, arriving at Alresford at 17.40 on the latter day, but not before both locomotive and low-loader had become 'grounded' on the rough ground near the loco shed at Slough. The locomotive, 'Slough Estates Ltd. No. 3' built by Hudswell Clarke in Leeds in 1924 - works number 1544 - now resides next to the Bagnall at Alresford, the siding having been extended by a further sixty feet to accommodate both. Thanks must be expressed to the Deputy Generation Manager of Slough Trading Estates, Mr. King, for his patient co-operation, and also to Mr. K. J. Cole (member 294) who first suggested that we should try and acquire one of these fine locos.

It has been suggested that we should reconsider our decision to avoid the Barry Island graveyard for locomotives. The big 'if' here is whether we can raise sufficient funds, not only to buy the locomotive (£3000 - £5000 plus V.A.T.), transport it here (£400 - £500) and restore it to working order (£6000 approximately), but also to spare sufficient members to this task which could take four years to complete. Having a locomotive restored by Contractors can cost up to £15,000. An appeal would appear to be the only answer but at the moment it is a question of priorities. We are, however, not discounting the possibility of tendering for an 'Austerity' 0-6-0 saddle tank from the N.C.B., but this would also involve us in the task of finding approximately £1,000 to convert it to passenger use and repaint it in the 'Mid-Hants' livery.

The Deutsche Bundesbahn have offered us an example of two classes of German motive power, namely a Class 064 at 12,000 D.M. and a Class 086 at 13,500 D.M., (£1 = 5.9 D.M.) It must be pointed out that these will require a major overhaul as only surplus steam locos can be sold; the servicing of which has proved uneconomical. The cost of overhauling such a loco in Germany before shipment would be between 40,000 and 70,000 D.M.

Any volunteers for taking one of the above points further should contact me at Alresford Station, for further details.

The loco group is not only concerned with the operation of steam locos but also in the operation of diesel locos (not to be confused with the diesel multiple units for the weekday service). We are at present involved in looking for a suitable diesel shunter and hope to give you positive news in the next newsletter.

Finally a plea (another one! - Ed.) Wanted desperately, a filing cabinet about three drawers high. Name your price! Offers to me at Alresford Station.

DICK AUDSLEY.

WORKS TRAIN APPEAL.

As you will realise, one of the first jobs to be organised by the M.H.R.P.S. when we have gained possession of all or part of the line, will be the running of works trains at weekends. These trains will carry groups of members to various parts of the line where work will commence on restoring the line to its former condition. This work will include a vast amount of clearing of small bushes and weeds which have sprung up along the line recently, all of which will need taking to a central point where they will be burnt. The stations themselves will be restored and many of the materials will be transported by rail.

We are therefore launching this appeal so that suitable vehicles for this works train can be purchased when they become available and moved to this line. It is estimated that about three bogie bolsters, plus a few smaller wagons will be needed together with a brake van. The money raised from this appeal will also go towards the provision of spare boiler tubes for the locomotives hauling the works trains.

To help us form this train as soon as possible please send your donations to:- 'Works Train Appeal', M.H.R.P.S., 6 Cherryway, Alton, Hampshire. Remember, it is your line that we want to restore to its former glory in 1974. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to 'Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd.'

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MEMBERSHIP.

Membership figures continue to grow steadily, there being now a total of over 1,200 members. Some interest has in recent weeks become apparent as a result of press releases appearing in the Railway Magazines, but we need many more full members to join us, so that we have a strong communal voice.

If you have any friends, relatives or even casual acquaintances who show any interest in railways, why not encourage them to join too? Please note that all members are now being enrolled as full members, with a subscription of £2-20 per year. In addition, we have introduced some new membership grades, namely 'Junior' at £1 p.a., 'Family' at £5 p.a. and 'Life' at £25. Of these, 'Junior' means up to the age of 16, and these members are restricted to certain types of work on the railway which are not thought to be too heavy for young people. 'Family' covers both parents and any number of children living at the same address. All the subscription amounts mentioned are, of course, minimum ones - we shall only be too grateful to receive more if it can be spared!

Plenty of enrolment forms are available, if needed, but are not essential providing all relevant details of the new member are sent, including if possible a telephone number and whether he (or she) is able to offer actual physical help with the dozens of jobs which will need to be done once we get the railway going again.

LE WHEELER.

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A REMINDER.....

..... to all those who promised contributions towards the cost of moving 'Slough Estates No. 3' from Slough to Alresford on August 18 and have not paid yet! In case you are wondering, the movement of this locomotive cost £213 and although this amount was very kindly loaned to us by one of the M.H.R.P.S. Directors, we still need about £100 to repay this debt. Please send your donation to Le Wheeler at 6 Cherryway, Alton.

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TANKS FOR THE MEMORY!

Earlier this year, the 6,000 gallon water tank at Liss, which was part of the loco water supply for the Longmoor Military Railway, was purchased. It was decided to dismantle this Tank, and store it until it can be re-erected on the Mid-Hants line.

The first mistake we made was to try and take the Tank to pieces panel by panel (it lived about 20 ft. up in the air on angle iron legs). This proved to be impossible as the bottom rows of bolts were inaccessible, so we hired a mobile crane and tried to lift the thing bodily off of its legs. This didn't work either, as the crane was not big enough.

Meanwhile, a chap who had helped to erect the Tank in 1928 introduced himself and later sat in the Pub opposite - laughing at our efforts!

The next move was to hire a larger crane and this time we were successful and lifted the Tank bodily off of its legs and down on to the ground.

Dismantling the panels was now easy - only 32 9/16" B.S.W. bolts on each of 32 panels! However, a lot of people helped and several sunny Sunday afternoons saw it stripped. I was able to borrow cutting gear and a van from where I work to dismantle the legs and a sympathetic lorry owner was encouraged to take the various bits to where it is stored.

I have in my garage a 9/16" B.S.W. die and a box containing 1,024 bolts - now if anyone has got nothing to do.....!

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking everyone who helped, including the well known young lady who provided amusing entertainment on one of those sunny afternoons by falling in the river!

PETER PARKS.

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NEWSLETTERS IN 1974.

From now onwards, newsletters will appear at regular three-monthly intervals, being published in February, May, August and November. Members are invited to send in contributions in the form of reminiscences, 'Letters to the Editor' or anything you feel other members would like to read about. The 'copy' date for the February issue (No. 5) is January 1st but the sooner your contribution is sent, the better chance it has of being included. All contributions should be sent to me, Charles Lewis, at 12 Winston Rise, Four Marks, Alton, GU34 5HN.

If, for any reason, you have not received one of our letters, have had a post code added to your address, or are moving, please let Le Wheeler know (address above).

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THANKS.....

..... to Alton Round Table (October 16th) and Hampshire Narrow Gauge Railway Society (October 24th) for allowing us to talk to their members about our progress to date,

..... to Radio Solent for broadcasting a 25-minute programme on our attempts to save the line (October 14th and 16th).

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BUY A BOOK FOR CHRISTMAS.

We are now able to purchase all David & Charles and Ian Allan books direct, so why not treat yourself to a book for Christmas and help the railway at the same time. Here are a few suggestions:-----

The London & South Western Railway. Volume 2: Growth and Consolidation.

This is the second of three volumes and covers the period from the 1860s to the turn of the century. Of especial interest to members will be the section devoted to The Mid-Hants Railway which described its early progress. Station layouts of Alton Station in 1861 and 1905 are included and the whole book of over 350 pages makes fascinating reading with special reference being made to the London area, Portsmouth, Southampton, Bournemouth and Plymouth. Highly recommended.

Written by R. A. Williams, price £5-25p. Publishers: David & Charles.
Also available: The London & South Western Railway:
Vol. 1, The Formative Years, £2-75p.

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For lovers of old timetables, David & Charles have reprinted:

Bradshaws April 1910 Railway Guide. £4-20 (bound), £2-25 (paper covered),

and Bradshaws July 1938 Railway Guide £6-30 (bound), £3-15 (paper covered).

All David & Charles and Ian Allan books can be ordered from the Sales Department, Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd., 17 Mayfair Avenue, Whitton, Twickenham, Middlesex. Cheques/postal orders made payable to 'Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd.' Please add 5p. in the £ for postage.

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SITUATIONS VACANT!

ARCHIVIST, required to keep a record of everything and anything produced by the M.H.R.P.S. in the attempt to restore passenger services to the 'Watercress line'. The person we are looking for must have a methodical mind and space to spare in his/her home at present! This work will entail also the keeping of records with regard to the storage of old photographs, newspaper cuttings, etc., which will be used in connection with publicity material produced by the Company in future.

Please apply in writing to:- The Editor, 'Mid-Hants News', Alresford Station, Alresford, SO24 9JG.

CARRIAGE & WAGON DEPT. HEAD. This position has become vacant because I have proved that you cannot be Head of Publicity and Head of Carriage & Wagon at the same time!

Applicants must have a thorough knowledge of the present coaching stock of British Rail together with a desire to see all coaches likely to be running on this line in the future carrying their new livery as soon as possible. Some knowledge of coach or wagon restoration would be advantageous, and the capacity to organise a group desirable.

Please apply in writing to:- Carriage & Wagon Dept.,
M.H.R.P.S.,
Alresford Station, Alresford, SO24 9JG.

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Produced and published by Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd., Alresford Station, Alresford, Hants.

SALES!

SALES!

SALES!

The following items, subject to availability, are obtainable by post:-

Lapel badge with view of an engine and wording "Mid Hants Railway". 05p.

Plastic Car Sticker. Red on white ground showing "Alresford" Town Crest with letters "MHRPS" and full name and address of the Society. 12p.

Members' own lapel badge showing the Society's emblem with the wording "Mid Hants". Not to be confused with the cheaper lapel badge. (Please quote membership number when ordering this item as this badge is only available to members). 35p.

Mid Hants Railway ties. Green with "Alresford" Town Crest in red with letters "M.H.R.P.S." Please quote membership number. 1-20p.

Copies of B. C. Griffith's book on the Basingstoke and Alton Light Railway. Plenty of interesting photographs. 0-75p.

Ball Point pens with wording "Mid Hants Railway" 04p.

Pencils (with built in rubber) with wording "Mid Hants Railway Preservation Society". Very colourful. 04p.

Various photographs of the Engine(s) now at Alresford Station including photographs of the arrival of our Ex-Slough Estates Engine. (By road) - Pot Luck. 10p.

The Society's own Christmas Cards with line drawing of an H.7. Engine arriving under the Sun Lane Bridge at Alresford. Complete with envelope and considered excellent value.

each 06p.
per 10 50p.

Replica L.S.W.R. Engineman's Cap Badge (Also available for G.W.R. L.B.S.C.R. S.R. L.N.E.R. L.M.S. S.E.C.R.) 35p

We can supply almost any Locomotive Emblem lapel badge. Flying Scotsman to a Barclay Pug 0-4-OT. State your requirements. 21p.

Leather Key fobs with Emblems G.W.R. London Transport. B.R. L.M.S. L.N.E.R. Southern. Flying Scotsman. Clun Castle. Fenchurch. 31p.

We can supply any books published by Messrs. David & Charles or Messrs. Ian Allan.

Please send details of book(s) required and remittance payable to the Society - we will arrange delivery to you.

We also have a rapidly expanding range of other items on sale at the Station on Sundays and which are not practical to sell by post. Why not call in and inspect our range. Light refreshments readily available.

Please send your orders to:

M.H.R.P.S. Ltd., 17 Mayfair Avenue, Whitton, Twickenham, Middlesex and please add 5p. as a contribution towards postage and packing.

MID-HANTS NEWS

Issue Number 5

February, 1974.

Editor: Charles Lewis,
12 Winston Rise,
Four Marks,
Nr. Alton,
GU34 5HW

IT'S NOW OR NEVER!

As things stand at the moment, it is quite possible that the whole future of the 'Watercress Line' may have been decided by the time you receive our next Newsletter in three months' time. All members will have received details of our initial fund-raising scheme, prior to the share issue and from the response so far it seems that the Preservation Society will have a fair-sized shareholding in the Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd.

Every member will be sent a copy of the prospectus when it is published. Extra copies are being produced for the general public, so any member who requires more than one copy can apply for these at Alresford Station. Needless to say, the time is fast approaching when your support can guarantee the future provision of rail services over the Winchester Jct. - Alton line. I trust we can count on your backing at a time when the Government are supporting British Rail more than ever before, and the County Council Planning Committee have come down firmly on the side of those who wish rail services over the Mid-Hants line to restart as soon as possible.

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SINCE WE LAST SPOKE...

...we have held our first firework display at Alresford Station - on November 3rd. About 200 members and friends found the visit worthwhile, especially Mrs. Cornforth of 1 Station Approach, Alresford, who won first prize in the raffle. This proved to be a large decorated cake in the form of a steam engine - plus the coaches (but minus the coal!!) Thanks are due to Mrs. Hilda Perry for preparing the cake, John Perry for organising the display and everyone else who 'helped behind the scenes'.

In the Locomotive Group notes you will read of good progress made recently, whilst at the same time we have received several offers of additional steam engines for the line.

The Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society has recently become a member of the Transport Trust, a registered charity which aims to promote permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of transport items of historical or technical interest. The Trust's patron is the Duke of Edinburgh.

We have also joined the Alresford & District Community Association and the Alresford Chamber of Trade to further our aim of becoming 'part of the town'.

The subject of livery for our coaching stock has now been settled. It will be green with red lining. Our previous suggestion of crimson lake did not seem popular with members, hence the change.

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WHO? - WHERE? - WHEN?

Many members will no doubt be interested in the timetables for the Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd. diesel services. A fair amount of research has already been done with regard to the most suitable times to run trains but you, our members, can help as well. After all, it will be your local line.

If you have any special reason for getting to a certain place at a certain time, drop us a line at Alresford Station and we'll make sure that as many people as possible get a train service to suit them.

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A 'MID - HANTS' EVENING

If any member has transparencies or photos of the line, they are welcome to show them at a meeting of the Meon Valley Locomotive Society on Tuesday, March 12th at 8 p.m. This is being held at the 'Mafeking Hero', Free Street, Bishops Waltham, and all M.H.R.P.S. members are invited. It is hoped that as many members as possible will attend. If you are bringing transparencies along for example, please let us know by writing to us at Alresford Station so that we can make the necessary arrangements with M.V.L.S. Secretary, John King, who has been kind enough to make this an 'open' evening.

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A WORTHY CAUSE

One of the most interesting ex-London & South Western Railway locomotives to be preserved in recent years is one which used to visit Winchester frequently. It is the Urie-designed S15 locomotive 30506. It will shortly be on the move from Barry Island, where it has stood for several years but where to? The Mid-Hants line is one of many being considered by the Society concerned at present. If you would like to have a say in the future plans for this locomotive, why not join the Urie S15 Preservation Group by contacting:

R.C. Hardingham, Secretary, 115 Casterton Road, Stamford, Lincs.

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FROM COLIN FULLER - M.H.R.P.S. CHAIRMAN.

My notes are really a list of "thank you's".

First, thanks to all our members, who wrote to the Hampshire County Council as to the Planning Notice and a special thanks to those members, who took the further trouble to send us copies of their letters to the Council; they certainly made interesting reading. It is understood that the Council received over 500 letters in all and most were in favour of re-opening the railway.

Next, thanks to all those who responded to the Works Train Appeal. The Appeal, which we will shortly be closing, has raised over £170 to date, so if you want to subscribe to the Appeal, donations please as soon as possible to Le Wheeler, 6 Cherryway, Alton. The money will be used to put the 0-4-0 Dagnall engine in steam for hauling the works trains. We have ordered a replacement bearing, as was necessary and we are now awaiting new boiler tubes, whereupon the necessary final work can be done and the engine should soon be "steamable", if no unforeseen problems arise.

The third "thank you" is to all those who have subscribed to the Share Appeal. To date a sum in excess of £500 has been received by our Bankers. I cannot over emphasize the need to raise funds as soon as we can, as the money paid by the Hampshire County Council to British Railways to leave the lines in place only covers the period up to May 5th, 1974.

We must be ready to support the Winchester & Alton Railway Limited Share Offer as soon as it is officially announced and we will write to you as to the Share Offer again as soon as we ourselves receive final details from our Parent Company. Several members have indicated that

they would like to send further moneys to the Donation Appeal each month and in case you would also like to make a further donation in the future, another form is enclosed.

The final "thank you" is to all those members, who purchased items as set out in the last Newsletter. All these items are still available from me and if anyone would like a further Sales List, please write to me at 17 Mayfair Avenue, Whitton, Twickenham, Middlesex. (S.A.E. please - foolscap size for preference). In particular, the Society's tie (£1-20p.) and badge (35p.) (plus 5p. postage) have proved very popular and very favourable comments have been received. If you have not ordered your tie and/or badge, why not do so now?

To conclude, we are now formulating our plans for the Summer and I can assure you that if an engine is not "moving" at Alresford soon it will not be for want of our trying.

COLIN FULLER.

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OUR HONORARY SOLICITOR WRITES.....

Two jobs which are vital, if the Railway is to be re-opened will involve many hours of labour, which will inevitably go unseen by many of those involved on other tasks.

These are the investigation of the Title to the land on which the line lies and the drafting of a Prospectus for issue to the Public. When one investigates a Title in normal circumstances, such as the purchase of a house, it is the duty of the seller to show a constant chain of ownership for fifteen years, so that one will examine a number of Conveyances all of the same property from one owner to the next. The railway land will be different, but in some ways more involved. There will be no difficulty in establishing that the British Railways Board and its predecessors the British Transport Commission, the Southern Railway and the London and South Western Railway have all owned the land for more than fifteen years. When any land is acquired for a Railway, or for that matter a Motorway, comparatively small portions are bought from a multitude of different owners, because what in fact is being bought is a very narrow ribbon of land. The distance from Winchester Junction to Alton is some seventeen miles, which although big enough for a small Company is nevertheless a short stretch in general Railway terms. However, even over this length it was necessary to acquire parcels of land from about 100 different landowners, so that it will be necessary to examine copies of some hundred different Conveyances to the original Railway Company and in particular to ensure that the sum of the land as shown by the plans of each of these Conveyances constitute the whole of the line and there are no odd nooks and crannies missing.

A Prospectus is essentially a sales brochure, the purpose of which is to induce those who read it to invest money in the Company issuing it. Before the contents of a Prospectus and the responsibility of those issuing it was strictly controlled by law, many Prospectuses were issued, the claims made in which were so exaggerated as to bear little or no resemblance to the truth and many innocent people lost a lot of money. To-day however the Companies Acts contain very complicated matters as to what must be stated in a Prospectus and provide that if any false statement is made as a result of which any subscriber loses money, then the Directors as well as the Company will be responsible for making good that loss. Accordingly those who draft such a document bear a grave responsibility and to get it right involves many hours of drafting by one person and more hours examining the draft word by word by a small Committee, who while abiding by the intricacies of the Act must not lose sight of the fact that it is essentially a sales brochure.

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LOCO GROUP NOTES AND NEWS.

The Group goes from strength to strength! We have now formed a six-strong committee to provide an easily assembled discussion group on Motive Power matters. At present this group comprises Ian Crowder and Ian Cripps, David Vidler (Liaison Officer), Ken C'Dell and Julian Twyman (Footplate Instructors) - and me, Dick Audsley.

The most important news on the locomotive front came during December when negotiations were completed for the first 'main-line' steam locomotive to be moved to the Mid-Hants line. This locomotive will be moved by road and will arrive at Alresford very shortly.

The locomotive, an N class 2-6-0 tender engine No. 31874, was built by the Southern Railway and completed in September 1925. The parts were made at the Woolwich Arsenal with the exception of the boiler, which was built by the North British Locomotive Co., Glasgow. This was one of 50 similar locomotives which had parts manufactured at Woolwich to ease the unemployment situation caused by the partial closing down of the works there in 1919 after the end of the First World War. The locomotives were then assembled at the Southern Railway works at Ashford, Kent.

No. 31874, which together with its tender weighs over 101 tons, was originally allocated to working on the South Western Division, mainly in the Exeter area. In September 1933 it was transferred to Hither Green in South-East London, and worked on both passenger and freight services between London and Kent for 28 years. Many lines in Kent were electrified in 1961 and as a result, 31874 was transferred in February of that year, to Exmouth Junction in Devon. This meant a return to the Exeter area, where for three years the locomotive regularly worked to such places as Padstow, Ilfracombe, Bude and Tavistock. It is interesting to note that none of these places are served by rail today!

It was finally withdrawn in April, 1964, shortly after having received an overhaul, and promptly condemned to the South Wales scrapyard of Woodham Bros. at Barry Island. Most locomotives sent to this particular scrapyard, however, escaped being broken up and earlier this year, 31874 was bought by Mr. John Bunch of Yateley, near Camberley, Surrey. All fittings which had previously been removed from the locomotive prior to purchase have now been secured by its new owner. It is intended that 31874 will be restored to the lined black British Railways livery of the late 1950's. Work will commence on the locomotive as soon as it arrives at Alresford, where it will be named 'Aznar Line' after the shipping company who are kindly sponsoring the move from Wales.

Another locomotive could well be making the move from Barry Island to Alresford before long. This is a class C freight locomotive No. 48624, which, like 31874, was assembled at the Southern Railway works in Ashford, Kent. It was constructed during the Second World War but spent most of its working life at the London end of the London Midland Region. Being a 2-8-0 locomotive with comparatively small driving wheels (4ft 8½ins.), 48624 would seem to be an ideal locomotive to cope with the gradients on this line. Restoration to working order will be costly, but many people have already helped financially, and anyone else wishing to help should contact one of our members, George A. Gibbins, at 10 The Drive, Swaythling Road, West End, Southampton SO3 3AN.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who responded to my request for filing cabinets, with particular thanks to Mr. Williams from Harpenden for supplying some engineers filing cabinets.

In the next newsletter I hope to be able to tell you that preparations are well advanced for running the first works trains. It is likely that the Bagnall tank loco. will be used but to tell you the story behind this decision, I hand over to the 'two Ians'.....

BRINGING BACK THE BAGNALL

by the 'Two Ians'

During October, 1973, it began to look as if one of the two locos at Alresford (Hudswell Clarke 0-6-OST from Slough Trading Estate and Bagnall 0-4-OST from Croydon Power Station) would be required for works trains in the foreseeable future. With this in mind, we closely inspected both locos and undertook a little research into their recent history to ascertain which engine was the best proposition for this work. Bearing in mind that the Hudswell Clarke has only recently been retired from active, if infrequent, service and arrived at Alresford with a just-current boiler certificate while the Bagnall has not steamed for at least six years there seemed at first sight little doubt as to which loco to go for.

Our decision was made for us however, with the fatal words on the Hudswell Clarke's boiler certificate which as good as said that major repairs would be required - ultimately including a new firebox - before a new certificate could be issued and a 'phone call to the insurers confirmed this. Such repairs will be carried out but are beyond our present means, so the Bagnall it was to be.

A close examination of the Bagnall showed that one of the front axle bearings had at some time been allowed to run hot and has extruded itself partly out of the axlebox. Also, the loco's previous boiler certificate indicated that the tubes might possibly require replacement, though the barrel and firebox appeared to be basically sound.

The Bagnall is owned by a group of fellows known to one and all as 'The Bagnall Boys' and agreement was quickly reached with them for the Mid-Hants to undertake the necessary work. We arranged for a full-scale boiler inspection by National Vulcan and investigated the possibility of obtaining a pair of new axle bearings. W.G. Bagnall Ltd.'s successor, G.E.C., unfortunately no longer carry spares such as bearings and have destroyed the remaining patterns - but a non-ferrous foundry at Alton - Stansby's - agreed to make the necessary pattern and cast two new phosphor-bronze bearings. An initial boiler inspection was carried out early in November, which confirmed our worst fear - that the boiler needs a complete re-tube; and our greatest hope - that the boiler is, indeed, basically sound (subject to another inspection when the tubes are out).

The first tasks on the locomotive were to prepare it for removal of the bearings and prepare to remove the tubes. The brake gear and sanders were dismantled, ashpan and firebars removed, blast pipe removed, connecting and coupling rods taken off and regulator and inspection covers removed. To give us room to work, the Hudswell Clarke had to be moved a few yards along the siding and the day we chose to do this work was freezing - everything had a good thick coating of frost. We were just preparing to push the engine along using brute force and crowbars, when the driver of an articulated lorry parked overnight in the station yard asked for our assistance in bump-starting his tractor: we readily agreed in exchange for him pulling the loco back!

The 'Bagnall Boys' had managed to borrow two ten-ton hydraulic jacks and using a hefty RSJ as a lifting beam we prepared to commence the 'big lift'. (By the way, thanks to the Surrey & Hants Canal Society for loaning us the RSJ). Leaving the front axle standing on the rails, the loco was raised a little at a time, front and rear and alternately, using sleepers and pandrel plates as packing. We were then able to knock the securing pins out of the axlebox, raise the box to the top of the hornblock and remove the bearings. At least, that was the theory - it worked on one bearing but it looks as if we shall have to drill out one of the securing pins which has proved to be particularly obstinate on the other. The bearing which was removed was then taken to Stansby's at Alton so that they could make a wooden pattern and cast the new bearings. The castings have now been delivered and they must now be machined (any offers?) and scraped in to fit the axle journals.

While waiting for the bearings, we have been progressing with the

other major task - removing the boiler tubes. Several have been taken out so far the hard way - by closing the tube ends in and using cold chisels and a heavy club hammer (Ouch! My thumb!) and then using a drift and a small sledge hammer at the firebox tubeplate to drive them the few inches before they can be pulled out by hand. Now that there is sufficient space at the bottom of the boiler barrel, we can remove the remaining tubes using oxy-acetelene, by cutting each tube in half, and drawing the two pieces inside the boiler. The pieces can then be passed out through a manhole located underneath the boiler barrel, and this method will greatly speed the operation.

Finally the inside of the boiler must be thoroughly cleaned ready for the next inspection by National Vulcan, before putting in the new tubes - all 115 of them!

We hope to be able to tell you in the next newsletter that re-tubing has been successfully completed, the hydraulic test was passed and that the bearings have been machined ready for replacement. So don't miss the next exciting instalment in 'Bringing Back the Bagnall', or come to see how we are getting along. Don't worry - we'll soon find something for you to do!

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MEMBERSHIP

Response to the distribution of membership renewal forms in the last 'Mid-Hants News' has been very good, most members whose renewals were due having sent their subscriptions promptly. This has provided us with a much needed influx of money, some of which has already been spent as described elsewhere in this issue. A few members have not yet renewed and it is hoped that these people will renew shortly.

Acknowledgments have been sent to everyone who has renewed but in future I would be very grateful if those who require acknowledgments could send a stamped addressed envelope, with their subscription.

The time when the organisation of working parties will begin in earnest is getting near. Whilst many of our members have indicated their particular sphere of interest, it is clear that in a lot of cases more specific details would be of great help in arranging these parties. Apart from the band of 'regulars' who turn up every Sunday at Alresford, many of our members may not be aware of the tremendous range of skills which can be useful in running and maintaining a railway.

For this reason, we are asking all members who want to help, to fill in the enclosed card, even if they have already indicated their willingness to help. This will ensure that all those who want to lend us a hand will have their name 'on record'.

LE WHEELER

Membership Secretary.

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INTRODUCING OUR ARCHIVIST.

As a result of the advertisement in the last 'Mid-Hants News' we have appointed Mr. John Adams of Alresford as our Archivist. Mr. Adams is well known in the local area as Secretary and Treasurer of the Alresford Historical and Literary Society. He would like to hear from anyone who has old press cuttings, photographs, tickets or relics of the Mid-Hants line which could be of interest. Also, if any member has kept records of which locomotives ran over the line, and when, we would like to hear from them as well.

A certain amount of publicity material will be prepared during 1974 based on these archives. Items supplied will be kept in excellent condition and returned to their owners at any time, if requested. It is possible that a small museum may be set up in the near future in Broad Street, Alresford, meanwhile all material is being kept by Mr. Adams at 'Montello', Jacklyn Lane, Alresford.

SITUATIONS VACANT

ASSISTANT MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY to assist Le Wheeler in the always expanding job of dealing with new and renewed memberships. Applicants should apply direct to Le Wheeler at 6 Cherryway, Alton.

SALES ASSISTANT needed to help run our stand at Alresford Station on Sundays. Must have his/her own transport. Apply to Colin Fuller, 17 Mayfair Avenue, Whitton, Twickenham, Middlesex.

CARRIAGE & WAGON DEPT. HEAD required to organise this important group. Applicants should have a sound knowledge of British Rail coaching stock and a desire to see our rolling stock looking in first-class condition as soon as possible. Apply to the M.H.R.P.S. at Alresford Station.

We look forward to hearing from interested members with regard to the above positions, meanwhile we thank all those who replied to the vacancies published in the last issue.

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BOOK REVIEW

As we hope members will all support our efforts to raise the necessary capital to save the 'Watercress' line, we have chosen as our selected book this time one of the cheapest - and best - available.

At 90p (95p inc. post), the Association of Railway Preservation Societies' Yearbook, 'Steam 74' is a must. Over 170 pages list all preserved locomotives and rolling stock in the United Kingdom. This includes preserved diesel and petrol locomotives. Progress reports and details of all preservation schemes, and operating railways, are included together with many, many photos. This book acts as a useful guide when visiting other Societies, and also acts as an 'eye-opener' to those who thought private railways, and steam engines, were going out of fashion. Orders should be sent to the Sales Department, M.H.R.P.S., 17 Mayfair Avenue, Whitton, Twickenham, Middlesex.

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ELSEWHERE.....

.....we have heard that the Open Day at the British Rail Eastleigh Works will be Sunday, 5th May, this year.

.....plans are being finalised for celebrating 150 years of railway history. 27th September, 1825, saw the first train running from Shildon to Stockton via Darlington hauled by George Stephenson's world famous 'Locomotion'. The 'season of activities' in the North-East will commence towards the end of June and go on until the end of September. As September 27th, 1975 falls on a Saturday perhaps we ought to have our own celebration on the Mid-Hants line. It just so happens that locomotive 31874, arriving at Alresford shortly, will be exactly 50 years old at the same time. Any suggestions?

.....two steam excursions are planned for the South Western Division of the Southern Region this year - on April 27th and September 14th.

--O--

SOME USEFUL NAMES AND ADDRESSES.

Many members have asked how they can contact Directors and other Officials during the week. All enquiries should be addressed to one of the following as appropriate:

Membership enquiries:	Le Wheeler, 6 Cherryway, Alton. Alton 04998.
Sales and Catering:	Colin Fuller, 17 Mayfair Avenue, Whitton, Twickenham, Middlesex.
Liaison Officer: (Enquiries for all Society Groups)	David Vidler, 61 Silverwood Drive, Laverstock, Salisbury Wilts. - 7 - Salisbury 5995.

Press & Public
Relations:

Charles Lewis, 12 Winston Rise, Four Marks,
Alton, GU34 5HW.
Medstead 3618

Archivist:

John Adams, 'Montello', Jacklyns Lane,
Alresford, SO24 9LG.
Alresford 2594.

Secretary:

F. Clifton Sherriff, Myrtle Farm, Ropley,
Alresford, SO24 0EE.
Ropley 3333.

--O--

THANKS...

...to the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society, South of England Branch, (November 16th), the Meon Valley Locomotive Society (December 11th), and the University of Southampton Transport Society (January 17th), for allowing me to talk to their members about our progress to date.

...to BBC Radio Solent for broadcasting an interview concerning loco. 31874 (December 24th).

C.V.L.

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FINALLY it is worth repeating the aims of the M.H.R.P.S. and of our parent Company, Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd.

First, to operate a daily diesel passenger service along the whole Mid-Hants line.

Second, to operate steam passenger services at weekends and at Bank Holidays, for tourist and recreational purposes, between Alton and Alresford.

With your help we will achieve these objectives as soon as possible

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ENDS

Produced and published by Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd.,
Alresford Station, Alresford, Hants.

MID-HANTS NEWS

Issue Number 6



May, 1974.

Editor: Charles Lewis,
12 Winston Rise,
Four Marks,
Nr. Alton,
Hampshire.
GU34 5HW.

IT'S ALL HAPPENING AT THE CASTLE.

For the benefit of those living outside Hampshire, 'The Castle' is the headquarters of the Hampshire County Council at Winchester and within those headquarters the subject of the Mid-Hants Railway has been raised more and more frequently in the last few weeks.

As many members now know, the Policy and Resources Committee of the County Council has recommended that British Rail be asked to sell the 'Watercress Line', land and buildings to the County Council. The track, of course, is still 'in situ' following the decision of the previous County Council to pay British Rail a year's 'rent' of £13,650. It was pleasing to hear that a further recommendation has been made to continue paying this 'rent' after 5th May, when the old agreement expires - so as to enable negotiations for purchase to continue.

However, there is still much for Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., Directors to discuss with senior Officers at The Castle, but we are confident of a successful outcome. This action by the Council has delayed the public share issue but it does mean that the capital sum required from this issue is likely to be less than originally anticipated, therefore increasing the chances of our being successful still further.

Good news has also been received from the Department of the Environment who have now formally approved our plans for both the diesel and steam services, subject to the statutory inspection of the whole line prior to re-opening.

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WHO'S WHO - IN WINCHESTER & ALTON RAILWAY LIMITED

Many people will have seen the names of one or more Directors of the parent company in newsletters or in the local press but several members have asked for a complete list to be published. The fourteen members on the W. & A. R. board at present are:-

J.T. Taylor, F.C.I.S., A.M.B.I.M. (Chairman)	Local Government Officer.
Simon A.F. Davies (Deputy Chairman)	Solicitor.
F. Clifton Sherriff (Secretary)	
John Arlott, O.B.E.	Author and Broadcaster.
F.H.S. Casey,	Assistant Manager - Stockbroking.
R.C.U. Corbett, B.A.	
Colin Fuller,	Solicitor.
J. Spencer Gilks, M.Sc., Assoc.Inst.T., A.Inst.T.A., Dip.T.S., F.C.I.S., D.M.A., M.I.L.G.A., Local Government/	

/Officer, Author,
Extension Lecturer in Transport Studies
London University.

H. Grenside, Company Managing Director,
Precision Engineer.

Charles Lewis, Advertising Executive.

Simon Neave, B.A., Broadcaster.

A.H.G. Preece, F.R.I.C.S., F.R.V.A.

Miss Joan Quennell, M.B.E., J.P., M.P.

Member of Parliament - Petersfield
Constituency.

Company Director.

David Vidler, A.R.I.C.S.

T.C.B. Williams, F.C.I.S.

Director of several overseas Railway
Companies.

The latest addition to the board, during March, was a well-known local figure in the person of Mr. R.C. Uvedale Corbett, of Ovington House, near Alresford. Mr. Corbett's absorbing interest has been the collection and restoration of mechanical antiquities, among which he has owned a number of steam engines of various kinds. He is also president of the Hampshire Narrow Gauge Railway Society and a member of Lloyds.

Elected deputy Chairman of the Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., at a recent meeting of the board, Mr. Simon A.F. Davies, whose home is at Surbiton, is guiding the Company's progress during the absence through illness of its Chairman, Mr. John Taylor. We are happy to report that Mr. Taylor is making a good recovery and looks forward to playing an active part in the running of the company once more.

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PRESERVATION SOCIETY BOARD NEWS

There has also been an addition to the Board of the Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd., Mr. John Bunch of Yateley, near Camberley, who was appointed to the Board at the meeting on 13th April, 1974. He is well-known to many members as being the owner of locomotive 31874 at Alresford, and also the owner of West Country Class locomotive 'Bodmin', number 34016, currently being restored at Quanton Road, near Aylesbury.

--O--

ARRIVALS AND A FORTHCOMING ATTRACTION

Saturday, March 16th, saw the arrival of our first 'main-line' steam locomotive in the form of N Class 2-6-0, 31874. Thanks are due to John Bunch, who owns it and the shipping company 'Aznar Line' who sponsored the move by road from South Wales. The transport company responsible for the move, Robert Wynn of Newport, must be congratulated on doing a fine job of work. Restoration of the locomotive to working order has started and progress reports will be published in future issues of 'Mid-Hants News'. When restoration has been completed the locomotive will be in lined black B.R. livery with the 'lion and wheel' emblem, plus the name 'Aznar Line'. Aznar are currently expanding their operations in the South following the launching of the 450-berth Monte Toledo which will go into service between Southampton and Santander, Spain, in May.

The most recent arrival was on April 16th, when an oil tank wagon, number 95, was delivered at Alresford from South Western Tar Distilleries. Built by Hurst Nelson at Motherwell in 1939, this wagon was in 'main-line' service until 1968, since when it has been used internally at the Company's premises at Totton, near Southampton.

The wagon was presented on free permanent loan to the South Hampshire Association of Railway Modellers who in turn have presented the vehicle to us. The wagon will be kept in its current livery of silver and red. We thank the Association for this kind gesture and also Mr. David Hornsby who arranged for the crane to be made available to assist with loading and unloading.

We hope one of the next arrivals at Alresford will be the S15 class locomotive, 30506. This 4-6-0 tender engine is owned by the Urie S15 Preservation Group whose members recently held a ballot to determine which line would become its permanent home. Votes were received for twelve different sites but the M.H.R.P.S. received 50.5% of those cast, 1,238. Second in the poll came the Swanage Railway (832 votes), third came the Main Line Steam Trust, Loughborough (165 votes). Negotiations are now in being between the Urie Group and the M.H.R.P.S. for the movement of 30506 to the Mid-Hants line and its subsequent restoration and operation. We hope to be able to publish a history of this locomotive in the next issue but many readers will know that 30506 was a very frequent visitor to Hampshire throughout its working life, being permanently employed on working freight, and sometimes passenger services, between the London area and the South Coast. Thanks are due to all those members of the Urie group who supported our scheme.

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48518 - AND ALL THAT

Still on steam locomotives, the last newsletter mentioned that a Stanier Class 8 freight locomotive (48624) had been earmarked at Barry for the Mid-Hants Line. On 23rd February, a second professional examination of this locomotive was carried out. This resulted in an alternative, similar, locomotive which is in better mechanical condition being reserved for the line.

The selected locomotive, 48518, was built at Doncaster in 1944 and has no connection with the Southern Region whatsoever, having spent most of its working life being based at Willesden, London. The 2-8-0 wheel arrangement is ideally suited to working passenger services up Medstead bank. In common with other locomotives at Barry many fittings were removed long ago but the money raised so far has bought replacements which are being stored elsewhere at present. The purchase price of 48518 is £4,000 + V.A.T. Add to that the cost of transport from South Wales, plus the cost of restoration, and you get some idea of the task, which increases even more if the purchase is not made before July when the initial cost rises from £4,000 to £6,000!

The M.H.R.P.S. board realise the value of this locomotive and ask anyone interested in helping financially to contact George A. Gibbins at 19 The Drive, Swaythling Road, West End, Southampton SO3 3AN or David Vidler at 61 Silverwood Drive, Laverstock, Salisbury, Wiltshire. George and David are both normally at Alresford Station on Sundays and will be glad to give you more information about the project.

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TRESPASSERS BEWARE

Although permission has been granted by British Rail for M.H.R.P.S. members to gain access to the track, under supervision, to carry out certain tasks, many local people are seen regularly walking on the line. It must be pointed out to these people that they are trespassing and more often than not their walking disturbs the ballast which means more work for us before the line is re-opened. So unless you have permission - please keep off!

Much has been said recently about restoring the various stations on the Mid-Hants Line. However, in the case of Medstead and Four Marks, some local members want to demolish the existing buildings whilst others favour full restoration of those that still stand. The reasons behind this are explained by our Liaison Director, David Vidler.

MEDSTEAD AND FOUR MARKS STATION.

The official railway survey drawing of Medstead and Four Marks Station, dated October 1910, shows a typical small country station with the main station buildings, goods shed and signal box on the up platform, a waiting room on the down platform and the Agent's house and a cottage detached from the station proper. The trackwork includes a passing loop and goods yard with sidings serving a loading dock, complete with 3 ton crane and extending across the station yard to enter industrial premises adjoining the Agent's house.

If the Edwardian Surveyor, who prepared this drawing, were to return to Medstead and Four Marks today, what would he find?

The Agent's house, much modernised, still stands occupied by a railwayman and likely to remain so. The cottage has been swept away and recently replaced by a coal yard served by road only. The down-side waiting room and signal box have been demolished, reputedly to forestall the activities of vandals, leaving only the shattered brickwork of the locking room as evidence of their existence. The goods shed and station offices still stand on the up platform, much chalked upon and left to the ravages of the weather with every door and window broken open and weatherboarding stripped from the walls. The goods sidings, and passing loop have been removed leaving only a single running line, strewn with rubbish, lying between platforms fighting a losing battle against the encroaching weeds.

Such is the depressing spectacle of Medstead and Four Marks Station today but what of the future?

There is a school of thought which says that the best thing we can do with the Station is to bull-doze the remaining platform buildings and leave nothing to interest the vandals. But is this the best that we can do? Is Four Marks such a desperate place that bricks and mortar cannot be left unattended in safety? Do the people of Four Marks want to board their trains from bare platforms set in a rubbish dump or can we arouse their latent civic pride to ensure that these buildings are restored and put to some constructive use, without fear of our efforts being wasted by the destructive instincts of Four Marks' lunatic fringe?

We should welcome any observations or suggestions you may have to help in formulating our policy for the future of this Station and our historians would be interested in any information on the traffic handled at Medstead and Four Marks in the past, particularly in the original use of the rail-connected industrial premises adjoining the Station.

DAVID VIDLER.

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BUILDINGS GROUP REPORT.

Since the last report, there has been a most exciting response to our aspirations of returning the dormant Mid-Hants line back to work. Until recently, repair work has been limited but on March 3rd we obtained a beautiful double-faced clock from Winchfield Station which will be reinstated at Alresford. This was removed with enthusiastic help and plenty of good humour, as we emerged from the task resembling six grubby Honeysuckle flour graders. However, we must thank Paul Phelps for arranging transport and also Francis Casey for making the purchase possible.

A great deal of work has also been carried out on the roof at Alresford Station. The timbers on this roof seem to be in good condition and the splendid news of our extended lease at Alresford will enable us to push forward with more adventurous projects, such as:-

1. Reinstating Station toilets, which are of paramount importance.
2. Repainting properties to their original colours of green and yellow.

3. Repairing all rainwater ware and guttering.
4. Rewiring of Station and out-buildings.

Anyone capable of helping in any of these tasks is welcome to join the group. By the way, if anyone knows where we can obtain two extension ladders, we would like to hear from them too. These are a must before we can start painting. We also need roofing slates size 24" x 12" or 11" x 22" to carry out repairs to the goods shed which we now use.

This is only a start as the amount of work in the future will be considerable. Modifications to various properties elsewhere on the line will be commenced in due course and any suggestions will be welcomed. The work has only just begun!

KEITH SPREADBURY

--O--

AN APPEAL WITH A DIFFERENCE

Yet another appeal, I'm afraid folks, but this time, would you believe we are not asking for money? This time the Locomotive Department fitters want tools and other equipment. What do we want?

Well, have a look in the potting shed. That rusty old chisel might be just what we are looking for. Then have a look in the garage. What about that hammer with the broken handle - we could fit a new handle - and where did you put that bench you threw out of the garage when you bought that longer car last year? Perhaps you own an engineering works (we always live in hope - Ed.) and wouldn't mind having a look in the corners of your machine shop to see if there is anything you don't really need. It might be just the thing we are looking for.

To give you some idea of our requirements, here is a selection of items we need urgently - a strong steel bench, a couple of bench vices, B.S.W. spanners, a heavy duty electric drill, plus drills, taps, dies and reamers 3/8" diameter upwards. Other useful items would be a bench grinder, a restorable lathe, dare I say oxy-acetylene cutting and welding gear or even a 1/2" drive socket set.

This is far from a complete list because fitters are a breed that NEVER have enough tools! If you have anything you think might be useful however small it might be - such as a 1/2" Whit. spanner - or however large - 200 ton gantry crane - ask for me most Sundays at Alresford or ring Bordon 2932 and I will be pleased to accommodate you.

PETER PARKS

--O--

ANY MORE FARES PLEASE?

Surrey to Alresford in vintage transport.

Some members living in Surrey may find it difficult getting to Alresford on Sundays with the comparative lack of buses from Alton, or may find it expensive using their own transport with petrol costs soaring.

On Sunday June 2nd, a vintage coach is being made available to bring members from Surrey to Alresford - providing there is sufficient demand. The approximate times of departure from various points are:-

Wallington Station.....	08.30
Sutton Station.....	08.45
Tolworth (Toby Jug).....	09.00
Esher (A3 near station).....	09.15
Guildford.....	approx. 09.45

Other stops will be made according to demand.

The return journey will leave Alresford at 17.30, thereby giving

members taking advantage of this service plenty of time to do some work as well!

Any member wishing to use this service is asked to contact member Henry Frampton-Jones at 41 Harrow Road, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey, telephone 01-642 9634, or let the duty Director at Alresford Station know, any Sunday. Failing that, you could ring David Vidler on Salisbury 5995. In any case people wishing to travel this way should advise their wish to do so by May 19th, at the very latest. No fares will be charged but a donation towards expenses would help.

Members living in the Bournemouth and Southampton areas wishing to make use of a similar service from that direction which could be planned later should write to the Society at Alresford Station or contact David Vidler ('phone as above).

--O--

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

As part of an 'Alresford Week' there will be a 'Mid-Hants Evening' at the Community Centre on Wednesday August 28th. Full details will be given in a future newsletter but if anyone has any interesting slides, films, black and white photographs or relics relating to the Mid-Hants line which they could exhibit, we would like to hear from you now. Letters please to the Station at Alresford or to the duty Director there on Sundays.

Whilst on the subject of relics generally, don't forget that our Archivist, John Adams, of 'Montello', Jacklyn's Lane, Alresford SO24 9LG (Alresford 2594) is looking out for anything relating to the Mid-Hants line which could be of interest. A large amount of records relating to the line over many years have already been located and will form a useful basis for our proposed museum.

--C--

AFTER THE £10 PENSION THE £1 MEMBERSHIP

With the continual rise in the cost of living, the Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd., have decided to reduce the annual subscription for Old Age Pensioners to £1 with immediate effect. The support given by many Senior Citizens has been much appreciated and to those concerned we would add that special reduced fares are planned when the diesel services are restored.

--O--

BOOK REVIEW

'Steam 74', the book recommended in our last newsletter has proved very popular with members - so much so that we have sold out twice - but copies are still available at 90p. plus 11½p. postage. To those who have not yet bought a copy, this book lists in over 170 pages every preservation scheme and privately operated railway in the U.K., nearly all of which are illustrated. It is crammed with information and makes an ideal guide when visiting other parts of the country. - 'Steam 74' published by the Association of Railway Preservation Societies: - 90p.

Recommended this month is an even cheaper book but one which makes interesting reading to those who like re-discovering railways which have already closed. 'Discovering Lost Railways' by F. G. Cockman, describes 23 such lines in its 88 pages which includes 16 pages of interesting photographs. A brief history of each line is included, together with a map, and a description of remaining relics. Details are also to be found of other nearby places worth a visit, plus the suitability of each line for walking. Routes described include Guildford - Horsham, Sidmouth Jet. - Sidmouth/Exmouth and Eridge - Polegate. 'Discovering Lost Railways',

published by Shire Publications Ltd., - 40p. plus 8p. postage
if ordering from the Sales Dept., M.H.R.P.S., 17 Mayfair Avenue,
Whitton, Twickenham, Middlesex.

C.W.L.

--O--

PAPER! PAPER!

To help raise funds for the 'Watercress Line', Dick Audsley, head of the Locomotive Department, is collecting newspapers and asks members visiting Alresford Station to bring with them any old papers. Even if you can only give us one or two, every little helps and the money raised will go towards purchasing valuable equipment for the line.

--O--

WELCOME....

.....to Keith Spreadbury who has been appointed as head of the Buildings Group. Keith has already started on the long job of restoring the station buildings at Alresford, so if you are interested in that kind of work, why not come and join in?

.....back, to Charles Dean and John Graham after their unfortunate accidents.

--O--

M.H.R.P.S. FUND RAISING DRAW.

The Society's first draw will take place at Alresford Station at 3.00 p.m. on Sunday, 25th August, 1974.

The prizes, which are all cash, are large enough to be really worth winning - the first prize being £50 and the second £25. There are also a number of other smaller cash prizes to be won.

Enclosed with this issue of 'Mid-Hants News' is one book of ten 5p. tickets. We hope that it should be easy for every member to sell at least one of these books, without much effort. Extra books can be obtained from Le Wheeler at 6 Cherryway, Alton, Hants., by just sending a stamped, addressed envelope and a slip of paper stating how many books are wanted. It would help if the word 'Draw' is written on the top left hand corner of your letter. When the tickets are sold, the counterfoils and money (and any unsold tickets) should be sent to Le Wheeler at the address above, to arrive not later than Saturday, 17th August, 1974. It is absolutely essential that the counterfoils, etc., arrive by the 17th, as any received after that date may not qualify to take part in the draw. Please make all remittances payable to 'M.H.R.P.S. Ltd.' Please make sure that the purchaser's names and addresses are on the counterfoils and also your own membership number, as there is a £5 prize for the seller of the £50 winning ticket.

This is an excellent way for every member to help raise funds for the Society, so please rally round and sell as many tickets as you possibly can. The prizes offered are good ones, and the cause even better.

--O--

NEXT STOP - SPRINGVALE

A new name will soon be found on the railway map of Hampshire - thanks to Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd. Times of trains calling at this new Station, between Itchen Abbas and the junction with the main line, will by necessity be geared to connections being made with British Rail trains. We would still like to know the views of people living in that area, however, with regard to the times people wish to travel.

Our 'Who? Where? When?' section in 'Mid-Hants News' Number 5

has produced clear evidence that there is a need for a service to Alton on Sunday evenings, giving an arrival at Waterloo by 21.00 - 21.30. In addition, a service on weekdays giving an arrival at Alton before 08.00 will serve a dual purpose, serving the needs of those who start work at that hour and also providing a connection into a commuter service to London. If anyone else has a particular need to be at a certain place at a certain time, drop us a line at Alresford Station and we will see what can be done.

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THANKS....

.... to the Rotary Club of Alton (March 7th), the Moon Valley Locomotive Society (March 12th), the Southern Counties Railway Society (March 16th) and the Aldershot & North Hants Young Conservatives (April 2nd) for allowing me to talk to their members about progress to date.

.... to all local papers, plus BBC Radio Solent and Southern Television, who gave excellent coverage to the arrival of locomotive 31874, on March 16th.

C.W.L.

--O--

The Financial position of the Society remains encouraging, especially with the continued influx of new members. The Works Train Appeal, which is now closed, raised just over £200. The Share Donation Appeal, which is still very much current, has now topped the £1,600 mark and we hope £2,000 will be reached soon. The sales of souvenirs are increasing and if you have not yet visited our 'shop' which is located in the Parcels Room at the Station, you are welcome to do so and to inspect our increasing range of goods. A word of thanks to the ladies, who work so hard in the 'shop'. We do appreciate their efforts on the Society's behalf.

You will have read earlier in this Newsletter, the article by Keith Spreadbury and now that we have greatly extended our letting at Alresford Station to include the whole of the main Station building, the Goods Shed and some of the other out-buildings, we have virtually unlimited tasks available for volunteer workers and if you are interested in helping, Keith Spreadbury will be only too pleased to hear from you.

Colin Fuller.

--O--

STOP PRESS
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Since commencing production of this Newsletter we have heard that the County Council have ratified the recommendations of the Policy and Resources Committee referred to earlier. Let us hope the day trains run again is now not so far away and doubtless our Parent Company can now finalise the details of the pending Share Issue and we will notify you as to the final arrangements as soon as we can.

--O--

OUR NEXT ISSUE

'Mid-Hants News' number 7 is planned for publication on 1st August although we may bring out an 'extra' for you if there is important news in the meantime. In any case, we would like to hear from you, our members. What do you think of the Newsletter? What do you think about our progress to date? If you would like to have an article or letter considered for publication send it to me, Charles Lewis at the address on Page 1.

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Produced and published by Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd., Alresford Station, Alresford, Hants.

MID-HANTS NEWS

Issue Number 7



August, 1974.

Editor:

Charles Lewis,
12 Winston Rise,
Four Marks,
Alton, GU34 5HW.

GOING PUBLIC THIS AUTUMN?

Providing negotiations with British Rail are sufficiently advanced, it is the intention of Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., to go public this Autumn. The board is using every effort to expedite matters to achieve this end.

The Directors appreciate the anxiety of the many members of the public who wish to subscribe but no stone will be left unturned to obtain this contract so as to enable this share issue to take place.

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AT ALRESFORD

A start was made during May on the long job of restoring Alresford Station. This followed a generous gesture by Berger Paints who donated several gallons of the right coloured paint. Many visitors to the station have remarked on the improvement to be seen in all directions. The signal box has been receiving its first paint for about twenty years and a start has been made on repainting signal posts, railings, notices and internal and external walls.

The internal telephone system now functions thanks to Chris Hall and friends - you can't dial Australia yet but a start has been made with a direct line to the Goods Shed! A Post Office telephone will have been installed within the next few weeks allowing members to call and be called.

The Buildings Group has been kept occupied and has completed the re-instatement of the public toilets on the up platform, whilst the S. & T. members have been refurbishing the signalling equipment and giving everything an overhaul.

Notes on the recent progress of the Locomotive Group appear later in this Newsletter but pride of place is being taken by the N Class 31874. As a result of a lot of hard work, progress with restoration has been rapid and it is likely that the 'hydraulic' boiler test will be taking place at about the time you read these notes. A mention ought to be made here of Ron Hack, one of our stalwart members who has spent countless hours working on this locomotive.

Thanks to Steve Tull (and Southern Gas) the station has just been converted to natural gas following the repairs carried out during June to several leaks in the station area. Finally, the flower beds are still being looked after but if any members feel that they have 'green fingers' we'll soon find you a job to do.

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IN THE TOWN

.....we hear that this year's Alresford Show is on Saturday, 7th September, in Titchborne Park. This is well worth a visit and when you go, look out for our stand.

Before that, Alresford Community Week is taking place from

August 24th to 31st. The high point of the week as far as we are concerned is on Wednesday 28th August, at 7.30 p.m. when "Our Watercress Line" is the subject of a talk being given in the Phair Hall of the Community Centre. It is hoped to have one or two of our archives on display and we hope members living in the area will come along.

Amongst other events that week will be an illustrated talk on "Old Pubs of Alresford" on Tuesday 27th August, at 7.30 p.m. in the Phair Hall. No doubt this will raise some interest - and a thirst!

Conducted tours of Alresford's Natural History will be starting from the Community Centre on 28th, 29th and 30th August, at 10.30 a.m.

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PAPER APPEAL SUCCESS

The appeal for old newspapers and magazines has been an instant success. Dick Audsley reports that over £50 was raised from the first collection of 3 tons 12 cwt. and that more paper is being collected all the time. Useful equipment is being bought with the proceeds but the appeal is now a permanent one, so please try and bring some old papers when you next pay us a visit. (We'll let you keep the 'Mid-Hants News' though!)

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THE 'MID-HANTS' SPONSORED WALK

Sunday 22nd September.

One of the most pleasant ways of raising money for the Society is going to take place soon. The first sponsored walk takes place on 22nd September and members and their friends will be able to take a pleasant walk through the countryside near Alresford which will raise valuable money for the Society. A walk which starts and finishes at Alresford is planned and is 10 miles in length. However, it is felt that as the route is so attractive, many will want to try the reverse direction as well thereby completing 20 miles and raising twice as much money!

All those interested should contact John Turner at 11 Ettrick Court, Cross Street, Farnborough, Hampshire (tel: Farnborough 41594). We also require volunteers to act as marshalls along the route.

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INTRODUCING THE AVINGTON BRANCH.

I must confess that until earlier this year, I didn't know a branch line had existed from the Didcot, Newbury & Southampton line at Winchester to Avington Park although, like many other people, I suppose, I was familiar with the beehive-topped embankment near the Victoria Hospital just east of Winchester on the B 3404.

As Editor of the Newsletter for the Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group, I asked Charles Lewis to write an article on the Mid Hants line for our April edition and he accompanied this with a rough map of what I was to show in the area. "Abandoned line to Avington" labelled a slightly curved line branching off the D, N & S, and after enquiring I found this was shown in a report published by Winchester on the M3. None of my maps had the line or any evidence of it. Luckily, working at the Ordnance Survey I have access to a lot of material not generally available to the public and I was fortunate to dig up some field plots of the early 30s at 6" scale which marked most of the course of the line as "Tk of old Rly". Any missing bits were fairly easy to sketch in.

In T.B. Sands' Oakwood Press book on the Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway a paragraph deals with this branch line. He states (referring to the 1914-18 war) "As the war proceeded, three large camps grew up at Avington Park, Winnall Down, and Kora Hill in the angle formed by the D, N & S and the Alton branch of the L.C.W.R. north-east of Winchester. In 1918 the War Office decided to provide

provide rail access to the camps by building a line to connect with the D.N. & S. just north of Winchester tunnel. The junction was put in on 20th October, 1918 and from there the railway ran eastwards through a valley now blocked by the embankment carrying the Winchester bypass road, reaching eventually a point about 3 miles distant in Avington Park. It was worked by an engine stationed specially for the duty at Bar End shed, and remained in use until the camps were closed in November, 1920.

The "about three miles distant in Avington Park" is the part I haven't yet figured out ... perhaps someone nearer at hand or with access to better information could work this out. On the 6" field plot the line is easily traced to what is now Pits Farm, but this is only $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles. A further $\frac{1}{2}$ mile would still not take it right into Avington Park although what would seem to be a contemporary track certainly leads in the right direction. There is a well-defined N-S embankment at this point but this is pre-1900s.

That's all the historical data I can offer, poached from others' investigations. Geographically I can explain perhaps a little more from map evidence and from visits.

The junction with the D, N. & S. is a little north of the tunnel in Winchester, which is now in the middle of a housing estate, (SU 490298). A slight curve to the eastern fence just north of a footbridge is the only remaining sign of this. A childrens' play area lies on the course of the line in this large estate which has obliterated the first $\frac{1}{4}$ mile or so of the single-track branch. It seems to have been in a slight cutting along this portion which was later used as a track before the builders arrived. This track continues on the east side of the A34 after passing under it, and goes in a slightly north of east direction for $\frac{1}{4}$ mile before gradually curving southwards to pass west of Winnall Down Farm. Another curve eastwards takes it parallel to the B3404, with the siding to Victoria Hospital coming off at the southernmost extreme (approx. SU 507296). It is impossible to tell from the map exactly the course of this curve or most of the siding, but it would appear from the angle of the existing embankment that the engine would have to reverse towards the hospital if it was running engine-first from Winchester. After the line crossed a minor road, a farm now on part of it, a slight but very clear embankment can be seen taking the line parallel with this road in a NE direction.

Beside Larkwhistle Farm (SU 515302) is possibly the best remains on the line. A large embankment lies beside the road and curves behind the farm. The embankment is higher than the road, but not high enough to go over it, so it's anyone's guess what happened at this point! Part of the embankment behind the farm has been cut down flat and the chalky coloured soil shows its progress a little further. From this point no earth-works were necessary and only a few bushes show where it was. At Larkwhistle Farm the line turned to a SE direction and then a sharp bend took it to NE once more. Generally the whole line follows the contours round.

At the $2\frac{1}{2}$ mile mark is now Pits Farm (SU 523298). Originally there had been a chalk pit here (now hidden in a small wood). The camp was just to the west of the pit where some of the farm outhouses now stand. The line skirted the southern tip of the pit. A continuation from here to Avington Park would have taken a slightly north of NE direction and then curved round to N and NW, depending on how far it went.

It's quite amazing exactly how much of this small temporary branch line has remained to the present day although the M3 will take another chunk out of it and probably some time in the future Winchester will expand further.

I wonder how many other lines like this are waiting for someone to explore them?

ANGELA EDEN.

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MEMBERSHIP NEWS

This issue brings new membership cards for many members - all those who have renewed their subscriptions and whose numbers are lower than 924, will find one enclosed. Members with numbers above this figure have already been issued with the new type of card, as will all future members.

The new cards are of a heavy material which we expect to stand up to several years of use. They will be renewed by means of a self-adhesive printed label which will be sent on receipt of the annual subscription, and which can be fixed to the back of the card to update it for a further year. No other form of receipt will be sent unless it is specifically requested, as it has been found essential to reduce the effect of "writers cramp". With the recent increase in the cost of postal services, a stamped, addressed envelope would be much appreciated and would also alleviate the affliction mentioned earlier!

Please take care of the cards, (several members have told me that they are unable to find them) and get to know your membership number, as if you visit the railway, you may be asked for it by one of the Society's Officers. Better still, have your card with you on such occasions, so that it can be shown if necessary.

Now, a bit of a bleat about changed addresses. A number of cases have occurred in the last few months of renewal slips being received which carry a name I know but where the address is quite different. This means a letter to this person, asking if he is the Mr. XXX who lived at XXX? which adds to the paperwork involved in keeping the Society's records straight. It would be very much appreciated if any member who moves would drop a line to 6 Cherryway, Alton, Hampshire with both the old and the new addresses clearly listed, ensuring that the member still gets the 'Mid-Hants News' without delay.

Finally, the appeal for help in running the membership side of the Society resulted in offers from several kind members but despite much deep thought, no reliable way that the job might be separated could be found. However, many thanks to those helpful people who offered their assistance, and also to Mrs. Paulette Spreadbury, who, although living in Southampton, offered to take dictation and type any letters involved in membership matters.

LE WHEELER
Membership Secretary.

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'THE ARCHIVES'

The Archives are contained at the moment in a number of boxes and suitcases in my shed. It is impossible, of course, for members to examine the material at present, but when we have the space to exhibit I am sure you will find much of great interest.

The Board will decide where our museum is to be permanently located and presumably they have a site in mind in or near Alresford Station. However, there are suggestions that the Alresford Engine House in Broad Street, at present being vacated by the Water Board be used as an Alresford Museum and a section of this set aside for the Mid-Hants would, in my opinion, be of great value in preserving the links between the citizens of Alresford and District and their railway. These are already very strong and the Engine House, is, after all, only a few hundred yards from the Station. (Incidentally, the course of the old private Rodney railway runs just behind it). The Engine House is controlled by the Town Trustees and as I happen to be one of them, I find that I am helping to make a decision on something I proposed in a private capacity about six years ago!

To get back to what we have. By far the largest 'haul' was uncovered when the Goods Shed at Alresford Station was opened a few weeks ago. Much was in bad condition due to damp and dirt but I am cleaning it up as fast as I can and it is well worthwhile. The bulk of the documents date from the late forties and fifties and include train books, consignment notes and a large number of complaints regarding non-arrival of freight, mainly watercress, and the action taken. There are also other items such as despatch notes for brood mares in the early thirties, a Rate Book (L.S.W.R.) dated 1893 with subsequent amendments, counter books, parcels books and some staff memoranda concerning allowance of uniforms during the post second world war years when clothing rationing was still in force.

I would like to thank Mr. Small, Mr. Dye, Mr. P. Adams, Mr. West and others for all their information and help. Almost everything received so far concerns work and operations at Alresford. I should like to receive material concerning the other three stations. In general we have NO photographs of the line, although a few are in prospect, and only a small number of tickets which I used and fortunately kept.

Can any other members help with further information? JOHN ADAMS.

48518 - A PROGRESS REPORT

Members will have seen in the previous 'Mid-Hants News' that our effort to preserve Stanier 2-8-0 locomotive 48518 is now well under way. The Treasurer for this fund, George Gibbins took time off from counting donations recently to say that £1,500 had now been raised - which means that a further £6,500 is needed. The basic purchase price has risen from £4,000 to £6,000 since the last newsletter!

Remember, this is your one chance to help preserve a locomotive for the line as it is expected that the other locomotives to arrive will either be owned by individuals (as is 31874) or other engine-owning societies (such as the Urie S15 Preservation Group with 30506).

It has been decided that the locomotive will be named 'Alresford' after restoration and that the livery will remain black. A donation of £50 entitles that person to a 'vote' in the future operation of 48518 plus a certificate. Donations of £5 upwards will also qualify for a certificate but all donations however small will be welcomed by George A. Gibbins at 19 The Drive, Swaythling Road, West End, Southampton, SO3 3AN. Cheques/postal orders should be made payable to the '48518 Group'.

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30506 - AND THE 'MOVE A MILE' SCHEME

Final negotiations are now taking place between the Urie S15 Preservation Group and the M.H.R.P.S. for the restoration and operation of this locomotive. Meanwhile, efforts have been made by the Urie Group to raise the £1,500 needed to pay for the move by road from Barry to Alresford by means of a 'Move a Mile' scheme. On the basis that every mile of this journey will cost over £6, the passage at the moment has been guaranteed as far as a lay-by near Newport, in Gwent!

To raise the balance, a sponsored cycle ride has been arranged for the August Bank Holiday weekend - from Barry to Alresford, a total of 214 miles. This event has been nicknamed 'Cycle a Mile to Move a Mile' and the route taken will follow as near as possible that to be taken by the locomotive. About twenty members of the Urie Group will cycle in relays and their Hon. Secretary (Roger Hardingham) is due to ride the last lap to Alresford Station, arriving at 4 p.m. on August, 26th. As the cost of this move is likely to be finally reached by this ride, it is hoped that many Mid-Hants members will welcome Roger when he arrives - no buckets of water, please!

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ON THE BUSES

The inaugural vintage coach run was a success when it ran from Wallington, Surrey to Alresford on Sunday 2nd June. Several members took advantage of this facility and the next run is booked for Sunday 4th August. Although this is short notice, you can book a seat on this coach by contacting Henry Frampton-Jones at 41 Harrow Road, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey (tel: 01-642 9634). The approximate times of departure are as before:- Wallington Station 08.30, Sutton Station 08.45, Tolworth (Toby Jug) 09.00, Esher (A3 near B.R. Station) 09.15, Guildford 09.45. Other stops will be made as required.

The return journey leaves Alresford at 17.30 and as previously, a donation towards expenses would help. It is likely that additional runs over the same route will be made later and it is probable that a similar service could run from Bournemouth via Southampton - interested members please note.

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CARRIAGE AND WAGON NOTES

The aim of this department will be, initially, to purchase coaches and wagons from British Rail and other sources. Following that, all stock will be restored to first-class condition.

Although the department has not generally been busy lately, all members interested in this type of work are invited to attend a meeting at Alresford Station on Sunday September 8th at 3 p.m. Basically, anyone with a knowledge of coach building and repairs, general painting, carpentry, sign writing or general engineering will be welcome.

Already, the tank wagon at Alresford is being restored and with several more items of rolling stock likely to arrive in the Autumn, this meeting is being called to get a committee formed with the intention of setting up regular working parties. Thanks must go here to Tom Taylor who has covered many miles already locating suitable items of rolling stock for the line.

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LOCOMOTIVE GROUP COMMITTEE NOTES

At a meeting of this committee recently, it was decided that future working parties on the two tank locomotives would be organised by Peter Parks, David Knight and Ron Neal, one at least of whom would be present when any work was being done. A roster will be finalised shortly. Also, a system of recording each job done will be started in an attempt to ensure that nothing is missed - and nothing duplicated. It was noted that the tool appeal had been successful and that all the tools received were being sorted and listed (see next item).

Dick Audsley and Julian Twyman have made progress with the compilation of the Society rule book. Many aspects of future operation were discussed and it was agreed that the meeting had been constructive. The date of the next meeting was set for 2nd September but your scribe has just noticed with some trepidation that this is his wedding anniversary so that date may be altered to 9th September, or perhaps our friendly Solicitor could defend him in the divorce Courts!

P.P.

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THE TOOL APPEAL.

P.P. writes:

The tool appeal has been very successful and we now have a fairly comprehensive range of tools to use. I would like to point out that we have received several $\frac{1}{4}$ B.S.W. spanners but nobody has given us a gantry crane - which is thought to be due to the current economic climate!! Seriously though, I would like to extend our thanks to everyone who has helped; it is all useful. I would add that we will ultimately have to equip a team of fitters so we still want anything in the way of tools that can be donated. We still particularly need a steel bench and a heavy duty electric drill.

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Many members in the S.W. London and Surrey areas will be interested to know that the 'Talking of Trains' evening classes are being held again this Autumn. Also of interest is the fact that the Lecturer, J. Spencer Gilks, is a Director of Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd.

'TALKING OF TRAINS'

As traffic congestion increases in cities and in holiday areas at weekends in terms of vehicles and cost, so the freedom of the train and the right of way it possesses into city centres and resorts grows in importance. This theme and the nostalgia of branch lines and steam trains long ago make up an evening class to be run for 24 weeks on weekdays at 19.15 from 2nd October at the Adult Education Centre, Surbiton Hill Road, Surbiton, Surrey. The sponsors are the WEA and the lecturer J. Spencer Gilks MSc., ACIT., DipTS. The course will be fully illustrated with colour slides, films and tape recordings.

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SUMMER DRAW

The Society's first major raffle looks as if it will be a great success - all the legally permitted tickets have been printed and have been distributed to the Society's members. Indeed, requests for yet more books are received almost daily but we are regretfully unable to issue any more without breaking the laws which control these affairs.

A large number of counterfoils and the appropriate funds have already been received and more arrive every day but there are still a lot to come. Remember, the draw takes place on Monday, 26th August, at 3 p.m. at our HQ at Alresford (NOT as in the last Newsletter, which

in error said Sunday 25th). It is obvious that if your counterfoils etc., arrive too late, your tickets will not be able to take part in the draw, so don't delay, send them TODAY!

A few members have returned the books sent to them, as they do not wish to take part in gambling of any kind and we would like these people to know that we respect completely their feelings on the matter. We will do our best to see that no tickets for future raffles are sent to them and a careful note of their names has been made to this end. It is clear that some members have really 'gone to town' in selling the tickets and we would like to say how much their efforts are appreciated as are those of all members who have assisted in this way. The result of the draw will be notified to the lucky winners by post, as quickly as possible after it takes place and a full list of winners published in the next issue of 'Mid-Hants News'.

To finish, we invite you to let us have your suggestions as to the best interval between these fun-raising raffles - 6 months - 8 months - a year? What do you suggest?

LE WHEELER.
Promoter.

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THE LATEST ARRIVAL.

June 9th saw the arrival of a Wickham engineers trolley, TP57P, at Alresford, thanks to Steve Ryder who arranged the road transport from Worcester. Although in a semi-derelict condition on arrival, the trolley will soon be restored to working order following much hard work by members who are overhauling the 1323 c.c. JAP V-twin engine and refurbishing the bodywork.

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MEDSTEAD AND FOUR MARKS STATION - THE FUTURE

The article in 'Mid-Hants News' number 6 on this station brought forth a sizeable reaction, mostly from people living some distance from the place in question. However, nearly all wanted the station buildings restored to their original condition as far as possible and this we will endeavour to do when we gain possession of the line.

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L.T.C. ROLT

'Tom' Rolt died in May. Known to railway people the world over as an author of railway histories, his book on Brunel is one of the finest technical histories ever written. His oft quoted chapter on runaway locomotives in 'Red for Danger' provides just the right amount of humour to temper a serious subject. It is not generally realised amongst railway enthusiasts that, besides railways, he became involved in many other aspects of what is now generally known as industrial archaeology. In fact, he could be described as the true father of it.

Among his railway activities, he is most well known for founding the Talylyn Railway Preservation Society. He then became that railway's General Manager for two years. He was also a vice-President of the Newcomen Society and founded the Inland Waterways Association in 1945.

A great enthusiast for vintage sports cars of the 'right' type, he joined the Vintage Sports Car Club as long ago as 1935. A venerable 12/50 Alvis was almost his sole transport since then. One could go on and on; in fact it is difficult to attribute so many achievements to one man. However, his activities in the vintage car world are being rewarded. It was he who first suggested to the Bugatti Owners Club the potential of that now famous hill climb at Prescott. The B.O.C. is launching an appeal for a memorial to him to take the form of an amenity at Prescott. Donations to:- Tom Rolt Memorial Fund, J.F. Willis, Esq., Barclays Bank Ltd., 153 Sloane Street, London, S.W.1.

P.P.

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CONGRATULATIONS....

..... to Bill Moore who recently became a Councillor on the Rushmoor District Council at Aldershot. Unfortunately, Bill will be unable to continue as Head of the Permanent Way Department due to his Council work but we wish him well in his new role and thank him for the hard work put in for the Society.

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THANKS...

..... to the Border Forum at Rowledge for allowing me to talk to their members on 2nd May and thanks also to the many groups and Societies who have invited me to talk to them over the next two months.
..... to those who have supplied me with notes and articles for this issue. I always welcome articles from members on subjects which will be of interest to others but have to apologise to some for not being able to fit all the contributions in. However, keep writing, there's plenty of space in issue number 8!

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SOME USEFUL NAMES AND ADDRESSES

It is six months since we published a list, so with new members joining all the time, it seems an opportune moment to bring this up to date.

Membership enquiries:- Le Wheeler, 6 Cherryway, Alton, Hampshire.
(Alton 84998).
Liaison Officer:- David Vidler, 61 Silverwood Drive,
Laverstock, Salisbury, Wiltshire.
(Salisbury 5995).
Press enquiries:- Charles Lewis, 12 Winston Rise, Four Marks,
Alton, GU34 5HW (Medstead 3618).
Archivist:- John Adams, 'Montello', Jacklyn's Lane,
Alresford, SO24 9LG. (Alresford 2594).
Secretary:- F. Clifton Sherriff, Myrtle Farm, Ropley,
Alresford. SO24 044.
(Ropley 3333).
48518 Group:- George A. Gibbins, 19 The Drive, Swaythling
Road, West End, Southampton, SO3 3AN.
(West End 7463).
Vintage bus service:- Henry Frampton-Jones, 41 Harrow Road,
Carshalton Beeches, Surrey. (01-642
9634).
Sponsored walk:- John Turner, 11 Ettrick Court, Cross Street,
Farnborough, Hampshire (Farnborough 41594).
---O---

CHECK LIST OF DATES.

Saturday August 24th. Alresford Community Association Gala.
Monday August 26th. (Bank Holiday). Summer Draw at Alresford Station
(3 p.m.)
End of Cycle ride from Barry - Urie S15 Group
(4 p.m.)
Wednesday August 28th. 'Our Watercress Line' talk. Phair Hall,
Community Centre, Alresford (7.30 p.m.)
Saturday September 7th. Alresford Show, Titchborne Park.
Sunday September 8th. Carriage & Wagon Group Meeting, Alresford
Station (3 p.m.)
Sunday September 22nd. Sponsored Walk, Alresford Station.
Saturday November 2nd. Second Annual Firework Display.

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THE NEXT ISSUE..

This will probably announce the exact date of the Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd. share issue and give details of our plans to re-instate diesel and steam passenger services to the "Watercress" line. We will send this issue to you as soon as possible after the date has been decided upon.

---O---

Produced and published by Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd.,
Alresford Station, Alresford, Hants. - 3 -

MID-HANTS NEWS



Issue Number 8

Editor: Charles Lewis,
12 Winston Rise,
Four Marks,
Alton, GU 34 5HW.

November, 1974.

WATCH THE POST !

Every member who has received this Newsletter through the post will, it is hoped, shortly be receiving another communication - the prospectus for the Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., share issue.

It is planned that this issue will commence as soon as possible.

To support this, an intensive publicity campaign will be mounted including advertising, in both national and local papers, posters and a door to door distribution of explanatory leaflets to all houses near the line. If you want us to send an extra prospectus to a friend or relative, let us know now.

It goes without saying that this is your one chance to save the Mid-Hants Railway and we trust that you will all give us your full support at a time when we need it most. Included in the assets will be all the land associated with this line thereby giving you - our most loyal supporters - more underlying security for your money.

Support us now and in return we will fulfil our aims of providing a daily diesel passenger service along the whole Mid-Hants line and tourist steam services over part of the line at weekends.

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FROM THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY CHAIRMAN

----- ~ Colin Fuller -----

We have almost reached the turning point in the history of our Society and the project to re-open the Mid-Hants Railway. The forthcoming share issue has been set to raise a very formidable sum indeed. However, taking into account the support the project has received both locally and nationally, we are very hopeful that the necessary funds will be forthcoming.

We are all aware of the present economic difficulties, but this is a time for positive, forward thinking. Can we afford to see another busy local line close for ever at a time when private transportation costs continually increase and the local bus company experience difficulties in maintaining their services? So far, we have received a total of £1,760.27p. in respect of our associated Donation Appeal for funds which the Society will use to buy shares in Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd. For the benefit of new members, the details of the Donation Appeal are as follows. The minimum subscription to our parent company is likely to be £10 and it was felt that some people might not wish to commit themselves to this amount but would still like to help financially. Accordingly, any such person can send his or her donation by remittance made payable to "M.H.R.P.S. Ltd." direct to our Bankers, Barclays Bank Ltd., East Street, Alresford, Hampshire, using the enclosed form.

We will acknowledge the donation and also issue a Certificate of Support after the Share Issue has succeeded. The Certificate will have no financial value, other than as a collectors item. In the highly unlikely event of failure, all monies will be refunded in full.

It is now for the public and the Society's members to say how much further the project is to proceed by their support of the Share Issue and Donation Appeal. The Boards of both the Society and the parent company are confident we will succeed and the Directors will take all necessary steps to restore train services at the earliest possible moment.

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CUR OWN 1975 CALENDAR

The 1975 Watercress Line Calendar is a must for all those who support our project and spend 65p. or more on Christmas presents! Now, be honest, that includes all of you, so next time you visit Alresford Station, why not call in at our Shop on the Up Platform and buy one ... or two?

The thirteen black and white photos show various 'Mid-Hants' views taken since 1965 and show such locomotives as 'Evening Star' and 'Clan Line' on one hand and the last regular service B.R. diesel on the other. By the way, we must apologise to those who ordered early and had to wait but deliveries were delayed by an apparent shortage of spiral binders.

'The 1975 Watercress Line Calendar', price 65p. - or 75p. by post from the Society at Alresford Station.

---O---

NEWS FROM THE BOARDS.

At the August Board Meeting of Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., an additional director was appointed in the person of Mr. Hugh Davies of Godalming, Surrey. Mr. Davies has had over twenty years experience of railway preservation and has recently returned from the continent where he was actively engaged with successful preservation schemes in Austria and West Germany. He is also Chairman of the Railway Enthusiasts Club at Farnborough, an organisation which may well provide a great deal of additional volunteer support to the Mid-Hants line.

In addition, Mr. David Vidler, one of the original directors of the Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society, has been appointed Deputy Chairman of that Company.

---O---

THE 'WICKHAM' TROLLEY

Visitors to Alresford lately may well have noticed a group of members hard at work in the Goods Shed busily restoring the Wickham 17/A engineers trolley, the arrival of which was recorded in the last Newsletter.

Our trolley, TP57P, was delivered new to the Inverness depot of the L.M.S. on May 10th, 1934. At that time it was fitted with a twin cylinder 1323 c.c. engine and a folding canopy. Not many trolleys were built with this feature and it may have been confined to those delivered to the L.M.S. TP57P has since been rebuilt with a conventional roof.

Trolleys of this type were built as an alternative to American designs used by the British Railways, notably for the L.N.E.R., for their recently mechanised maintenance gangs. At the time 1100 c.c. J.A.P. engines were in use but the 1323 c.c. engine with thrust bearings in the rear of the crank case to take the thrust of the friction drive were designed and used in the early 1930's. About 300 of the 17/A version were supplied to the L.N.E.R. and smaller numbers to the other railways. In addition, hundreds were sent overseas to the British owned railways in South America, where many are still in use.

The trolley at Alresford is owned by Peter Moore, who purchased it in poor condition for £40. D. Wickham & Co., very kindly donated plans, photographs and other information, including the company crest, and sold us new roofing material in order that members of the Locomotive and Carriage & Wagon Departments might restore it as soon as possible. Timber for the new bodywork was purchased on behalf of the Preservation Society by John Graham and taken to Alresford on the 214 bus. The wood frequently included 8 ft. planks and large sheets of chipboard. At that time John was still on crutches following his accident earlier in the year and his getting on and off the bus naturally led to some entertaining scenes for other passengers and some funny looks from drivers!

As a result of this work, the trolley, which has been named

'Engineer', may well be the first vehicle to run under its own power on the Mid-Hants line when such movements become possible.

In the meantime, work is being completed, though with the ending of British Summer Time we were grateful to Dave Evans for getting the lights working again.

MARTIN COLLIER

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THE 'OTHER' ALRESFORD RAILWAY

It is not widely known outside Alresford that another railway was once to be found near the town. The Rodney private railway was built by the Rodney family between 1840 and 1850 at a cost of £70,000 and took two years to complete. It is thought to have run for approximately 1½ miles round Alresford Pond, but no authentic records remain. However, a diary now in the possession of Dr. P. Lyndon Skeggs, late of Cardew House, Alresford, refers to the railway and the copy below, is as far as possible, an exact replica of the original with punctuation, paragraphs, ect.

Rail.

1st. ½ miles round the 2. ch. cutting.

2nd. Tunnel 21 yd 75 yards Long Gap (?) under the trees by side of Turnpike Road about 50 Navvys employed (and) 2½ years to make Brick Tunnel about 7ft High 6 wide Name of Engin Formidable Made by J. Warner & Co., London the largest Engin took the 2 outside rails (smaller ?) coal.

Outside and Middle Rail

To Get the Level with bottom of Tunnel on the lower side of Meadow Strong Piers about 8ft long was drove down and all the chalk out and put Between the piles to make a firm foundation all along by the large Elm trees also a copper furnace used for getting hot water. About ten carriages and trucks would hold 4 persons each would go round should think from twenty to 25 miles an hour one day had an accident 1 lot ran off the line down into the water meadow but luckily (?) enough to go down by one of the large elm trees so that pulleys could be used to get it up Sometimes the Engineer used to come down if obliged to be repaired in London it had to be sent by Mr. Vines 6 & 8 horse wagon with 2 Large Horn Lanthorns hung on by Hooks, and driven by a man commonly called Old Jimney Collyer and George Wiltshire two very old servants. It would Take eight of them to put it into the wagon and about 3 days journey so far as the Railway after was finished "Ready in good going and safe order all the people in town was up then to have a look and any young ladies which was here in the forties which many could be mentioned was invited by the owner R. D. Rodney Esq.. to take a few journeys round.

Thanks are due here to Dr. P. Lyndon Skeggs for allowing our Archivist, John Adams, to obtain information from the diary. We hope to include a further extract in the next issue. The name of the engine 'Formidable' was also the name of one of Lord Rodney's flagships in the 18th century, and the copper furnace mentioned earlier was still in position when this copy of the diary was obtained in 1969. If any members can throw some more light on the history on this line, please let us know as we may be able to incorporate any such information in future issues of 'Mid-Hants News'.

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TO THE REQUISITION OF THE MID-HANTS

by B. A. Moss.

The last movement of traffic has passed steadily by and the shrill of a whistle has long since gone. The signals now obsolete: once the sentinels of the Permanent Way, stand silent. Those cuttings and embankments, lie in their graves as the station platforms lose their identities with an aisle of overbridges, left marooned. So for the present, the line meanders pleasantly while detached and abandoned.

We thank Mr. Moss, from Thornhill, Southampton for the above piece. Now what about a poem for the next Newsletter? There must be someone who can supply one, preferably about the Mid-Hants line.

---Q---

About 350 people attended our Second Annual Firework Night at Alresford Station and were well pleased with the result which turned out to be really excellent display organised by John Perry. First prize in the raffle, a cake in the shape of a steam locomotive, was won by Mrs. Budden of 7 Scotts Close, Kings Somborne.

---O---

THE SUMMER DRAW.

August 26th - Bank Holiday Monday - saw the successful conclusion of the Society's first major draw. Mr. John Taylor (Chairman of the W & A R), came along to take the winning ticket counterfoils from the drum, before a crowd of members and visitors. The £50 prizewinner was from Alresford, and this gave the event a truly local flavour! Other prizewinners came from a wide area of Southern England, ranging from a lady in Devon, by way of a gentleman in Hertfordshire, to a number of winners from nearer home. One lady who won one of the £1 prizes had bought her ticket only ten minutes before!

Over nine thousand counterfoils were returned and went into the drum on the big day and I am pleased to be able to report that the Society's bank account benefitted by over £300 even after deducting the prize money and other expenses.

The £50 ticket turned out to have been sold by Lorraine Hack, Daughter of one of our Alresford 'regulars' Ron Hack along with a large number of others, so Lorraine received the £5 offered to the seller of the winning ticket. Well done, Lorraine.

I would like to thank all members who persuaded, cajoled or otherwise got their friends and relatives to buy tickets, and in particular those who managed to sell more than one book of the tickets. In addition, I would thank all those who include a stamped addressed envelope with their request for more tickets - it really helps a great deal!

A full list of the winners, including their names and addresses, is given below. The date of the next draw has not yet been decided but when it is, we hope you will all support it in the way you did this one!

Draw Winners.

First (£50) Master S. Stratton, 41 Ashburton Road, Alresford.
Second (£25) Miss H. J. Bewley, 2 The Glade, Crapstone, Yelverton,
Devon.

Third (£15) Mr. A. C. Simmons, 8 Matthews Way, East Oakley, Basingstoke.
Consolation prizes of £1 to:-

Mr. M. P. Roberts, 31 Pound Gate, Alton.
Mr. A. A. Ballard, 11 Bankside, Wadhurst, Sussex.
Mr. E. Oughton, 18 Winston Rise, Four Marks, Alton.
Mrs. E. Gorringer, Park Lane Cottage, Botley Road, Bishops Waltham.
Mr. R. T. Dear, 7 Bitterne Crescent, Southampton.
Mrs. E. M. Jones, The Cedars, Liphook Road, Whitehill, Bordon.
Sarah Key, 98 Woodbrook Road, London, SE2 OPA.
Mr. Rafe Shaw, 7 Tannery Close, Royston, Hertfordshire.
Mrs. K. Birks, 27 Sun Hill Crescent, Alresford.
Mrs. V. Gilbert, 10 Langrish Road, Southampton.

---O---

GETTING TO ALRESFORD ON SUNDAYS

For the benefit of those without their own transport, who may find it difficult to get to Alresford Station on Sundays, we give below times of those buses which do run on Alder Valley service 214 (route 14 until Sept., 29th) at present. Please note times on weekdays are different:-

Aldershot Bus Station	10.15	then	20.15
Alton Station (B.R.)	10.58	every	20.58
Alresford 'Swan Hotel'	11.27	2 hours	21.27
Winchester Bus Station	11.58	until	21.58
Winchester Bus Station	12.10	then	22.10
Aldershot 'Swan Hotel'	12.41	every	22.41
Alton Station (B.R.)	13.08	2 hours	23.08
Aldershot Bus Station	13.51	until	23.51

For those who do not know the area, the nearest bus stop to Winchester B.R. Station is in Andover Road, approximately 300 yards away. Bus timings there are roughly 2 minutes before/after those for the Bus Station. The Swan Hotel at Alresford is a similar distance from our station. These times were correct at the time of going to press.

---O---

AN IDEA WORTH CONSIDERING?

Some preserved railways have an additional attraction in the form of a model railway. The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch have an old three rail 'O' gauge layout and the Talylyn has a tiny coin operated 009 narrow gauge layout. There may well be others. My idea is that we could enlarge on this theme and make money from it. We could build an exact scale model of the Mid-Hants 'Watercress' line or more accurately a scale model of every station linked by a short stretch of straight line. If this were built in the scale of 4mm to the foot (scale 00) it could be housed in the side of a carriage or engine shed, in the Alresford Goods Shed, or in a condemned coach where all the seats had been removed.

In 4mm there are enough kits available to model any loco, or coach, that is likely to come to the line. For example, a Wills 'King Arthur' could be chopped up and an S15 made out of the bits, likewise a K's G.W. saddle tank would make a passable 'Slough Estates No. 3'. (Just don't tell the Great Western Society that! - Ed.) Also a Wills 'N' Mogul or a Wrenn EF are available in most good model shops. The model railway would want about £100 - £150 to get it operational but this sum would soon be recouped from admission charges and possibly a sales stand dealing solely in new and second-hand model railway equipment.

There must be a large number of model enthusiasts in the Society, so how about getting together and forming a discussion group. I would be prepared to attend the first meetings but could not take it further than that owing to my other commitments with the Mid-Hants. Would anyone interested in this let me know and we will make a date for a meeting at Alresford. Ring Gordon 2932 most evenings.

PETER PARKS.

---O---

OUR LATEST ACQUISITION

Early morning motorists using the A31 to Alresford on Sunday October 20th would have seen our latest acquisition arriving - not by rail but by road. ALL 908 is a 1931 30-cwt. Ford B platform lorry originally destined for the Museum of British Transport at Clapham, London. Now that this Museum is closed and the exhibits split up, a permanent home has had to be found. The Ford was once owned by the London & North Eastern Railway and still carries the livery of that Company including the fleet number, FE 4123.

It is hoped that this vehicle will become a familiar sight in the Alresford area just as it was in the pre-war days when working in the Marylebone area of London. A few years ago it 'starred' in the film 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie' and the lorry may well be required by film producers in future due to its being in working order.

....AND ANOTHER OLD ACQUISITION!

Amongst the piles of papers being received as a result of our appeal recently, was a 'Woman's Weekly' dated 1942. Interesting to note that one of the advertisements asked people to save paper. Commendable foresight on the part of the editor ... or was it something to do with the war?

THE FIRST MID-HAUNTS SPONSORED WALK -
September 22nd.

Despite a disappointing turnout of active members, the 26 who did take part had an enjoyable and invigorating day, albeit a tiring one. The route took the walkers over 10 miles of rolling Hampshire downland and stayed mainly on bridlepaths and (muddy) tracks. Thanks are due to the local farmers who co-operated to the full and to the Marshalls - M. Buck, C. Churcher, Dave and Thelma Evans, and Steve Ryder.

All walkers completed the 10 miles and two did 20 - Alan Prior and your honourable scribe! Special mention must be made of Peter Strong who raised £10 by completing the course.

We are still awaiting some sponsor moneys but at the moment it appears that over £100 will be collected. Once again thanks to all concerned.

JOHN TURNER.

---O---

LOCO GROUP REPORT

Work on the Hudswell Clark locomotive 'Slough Estates No. 3' is proceeding well. Over the August Bank Holiday the smoke box patch was welded in by Phil, to whom we must express our thanks - and our sympathies, for while walking round the engine he contrived to fall down a hole without first removing his foot, which resulted in the best example of a sprained ankle I have ever seen. This must have been very painful and certainly put him on the sick list for a week or two. We hope this does not curb his enthusiasm! Decisions still have to be made about the boiler repairs needed to acquire a boiler certificate but I hope to be able to report progress in this direction in the next Newsletter. We have made a start with painting both this engine and the Bagnall. The latter may be painted red as a static attraction until the expensive boiler repairs have been carried out.

We also wrote the final paragraph of a piece of railway history over the Bank Holiday when we finally moved the last useful bit of the Longmoor Military Railway to Alresford. This was the water crane from Liss and our thanks go to Gordon Urquhart who went to a lot of trouble to provide a rather specially equipped juggernaut which was able to lift the crane over the fence at Liss which B.R. had thoughtfully erected before we had removed all the equipment we had purchased there. Gordon also gave us the steel bench which is now in use alongside the two tank engines.

As I said in the last Newsletter, the tool appeal was very successful but there are one or two things that we still need such as heavy duty electric drill and a bench grinder. Many thanks to the owner of the oxy-acetylene welding gear, the gun and the trolley of which we can use. Unfortunately the gauges are of the old type which are not compatible with the gas pressures in the bottles currently supplied by B.O.C. - so if anyone has any modern gauges, we would be grateful!

Is there a volunteer who would take over organising the restoration and eventual erection of the famous water tank from Liss? This is a nice dry job for the coming winter as the tank is stored in the Goods Shed at Alresford but all thirty-two 4 ft. square panels need cleaning and painting, plus the legs and other associated still work. I can no longer cope with this because of my commitments on the locomotives, so if anyone is interested perhaps they would contact me on Bordon 2932.

PETER PARKS.

---O---

Whilst we are talking about the loco group it might be worth mentioning that we now have enough work to do on the tank locos from Slough and Croydon to allow for a couple of extra helpers. John Girt of the Loco Group would like to hear from you, so why not come along next Sunday and introduce yourself. All you need is a pair of overalls (all we need is a pair of overhauls - Ed.) and, if possible, a paintbrush, scraper and some rags.

Members of the Locomotive Group should by now be receiving their

own Newsletter which details the groups progress and future planning. If you should be on this list, but have not received this particular Newsletter yet, contact John Girt at 64 Grove Way, Esher, Surrey - (01-398 4445).

---O---

TWO INVITATIONS

Members living within easy reach of Worthing or South-West London will be interested to know that they are invited to any of the meetings held by the Bulleid Society at Brunswick House, Vauxhall or by the Sussex branch of that Society at the Sydney Walter Youth Centre, Worthing. Those at Brunswick House are advertised in the railway press, but those at Worthing, which start at 8 p.m. are as follows:-

December 10 'Asian Steam' by Mike Hudson; January 7 Members Slides and Films - visitors are invited to bring theirs; February 11 details to be arranged; March 11 - Mid-Hants Railway evening.

Thanks are due to Ian Wright of the Bulleid Society for this link-up.

Also, members interested in another vintage bus run from the Croydon and Guildford areas to the line are invited to contact Henry Frampton-Jones at 41 Harrow Road, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey - (01-642 9634).

---O---

'MID-HANTS NEWS' IN 1975

If the share issue is a success, as is likely, it is planned to develop this Newsletter further next year. It is realized that some members, particularly many living near the line, read 'Mid-Hants News' to obtain the latest information on the restoration of diesel passenger services, whilst others want to read about the 'preservation' aspects. The intention is to divide each issue into two sections with a selection of photographs in the middle, so that the main news concerning the line is separated from the more detailed notes concerning locomotives and rolling stock for example. With the expansion in mind, an assistant editor is now required, preferably someone with experience of dealing with printers. I look forward to hearing from you.

CHARLES LEWIS.

---O---

WANTED.....

Several people have contacted us with various requirements since Issue No. 7, so let's make this a regular column for those who are looking for anything which will help the Mid-Hants line. All replies to Alresford Station.

CARPENTRY TOOLS, ELECTRIC DRILLS and OXY-ACETYLENE EQUIPMENT for the Carriage & Wagon Department, JULY 1968 'MODEL RAILWAY NEWS' for the Locomotive Department, JAM JARS (Hartleys) for the 48518 Group (those members trying to preserve the locomotive of that number for use on the line), ANY 'MID-HANTS' TICKETS/PHOTOGRAPHS for our Archivist, OLD NEWSPAPERS for the Locomotive Group - well over £100 raised in the last two months - keep it up!

---O---

THANKS....

.... to:- Winchester & District Young Conservatives (August 14), Alresford & District Community Association (August 28), Gosport 41 Club (September 5), Winchester 18 plus Group (October 4), Surrey University Railway Society (October 7), Meon Valley Locomotive Society (October 8) 11th Eastleigh Scouts (October 15) for allowing me to talk about our progress so far. Thanks also to BBC Radio Solent for inviting Mr. Clifton Sherriff and myself to a 'phono-in' on August 27th.

CHARLES LEWIS.

---O---

Produced and published by Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd., Alresford Station, Alresford, Hants.

SALES!

SALES!

SALES!

Society's Own Items.

Society's 'T' Shirt -

Please state size:- Large, Medium or Small -

1-25

Society's Tie

1-20

Plaque of 'N' Class Locomotive at Alresford Station

1-10

Society's 'T' Shirt for children

1-05

Society's 1975 Calendar

65

Members' own Lapel Badge

35

P.V.C. Pennant showing Society's Slough Estates engine

25

Plastic car sticker

12

Society's 12" Ruler

12

Society's Christmas Card, new for 1975, 10 for 60p. or

7p. each

Society's Button Badge

5

Society's Pen

4

Society's Pencil

4

Books.

Selsey Tramway

1-00

History of the L.S.W.R.

1-00

" " " S.E.C.R.

90

" " " L.B.S.C.R.

1-10

Southern Railway Locomotives at Grouping

80

Basingstoke & Alton Light Railway

75

Discovering Lost Railways

40

Discovering Railwayana

30

Magpie Book of Trains (for children)

25

Miscellaneous Items.

Replica Engineman's Cap Badges (choice of L.S.W.R.,
S.R., L.B.S.C.R., S.E.C.R., L.M.S., L.N.E.R.,
G.W.R., - please state requirement).

41

Leather key fobs (Choice of S.R., B.R., - please
state requirement).

36

Locomotive Emblem (lapel fixing) of N Class locomotive
(as at Alresford Station); 8F Class (as hoping to come to
Alresford Station) - please state which required.

24

8F Preservation Society Diary.

18

Tram Project for children.

12

8F Preservation Society Notepad.

8

Please add 10p. in £ towards postage + packing.
Orders over £5 post free.

The above items only relate to articles which can readily be sent by post and our continually increased range of goods are available at our shop at Alresford Station, so if you are in the area, why not call in and inspect the whole range and save postage on any items you require. We have a very extensive range of jig-saw puzzles of a railway nature and also our own mugs and hand colour decorative tiles and lots and lots more.

MID-HANTS NEWS



Issue Number 9

Editor:
Charles Lewis,
12 Winston Rise,
Four Marks,
Hr. Alton,
Hampshire,
GU34 5HW.

April, 1975

PUBLIC SHARE ISSUE COMMENCES ON MAY 15th 1975

Although we have delayed publication of this Newsletter, we are sure that all members will feel that the wait was worth it.

The Public Share Issue to save the Mid-Hants 'Watercress' line will - subject to there being no further snags - commence on Thursday May 15th. This was the exciting news decided upon by the board of Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., when they met at Alresford Station on Saturday March 22nd.

The maximum amount needed to fulfil the aims of operating a daily diesel service over the 17 miles between Winchester Junction and Alton, supported by a steam service on summer weekends and on Bank Holidays, will be little short of £1,000,000. As a result of this, the minimum share application will be for £50s worth of shares, although supporters will be able to subscribe less than that figure through a trust scheme administered by our supporting Company, Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd. A minimum of £10 can be subscribed to this scheme although only full shareholders will receive voting rights at meetings and statutory information concerning company business. Dividends, when declared, will be paid to full shareholders and to those in the trust scheme.

Details will be available in the prospectus which is being published on May 14th. This will be sent automatically to you, our members, on that day. It is encouraging to see the number of requests we are receiving from non-members for prospectuses from all parts of England, Scotland and Wales.

However, it should be emphasised that, after all this time, it is the only opportunity for us to secure the future of this vital link. On May 15th the opening of this share issue will give us our one chance to save the Mid-Hants Railway and so provide the towns and villages between Winchester and Alton with an essential public service, to young and old alike, and a tourist attraction which will improve the future prosperity of this part of Hampshire.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WINCHESTER & ALTON RAILWAY LTD.,

After many frustrations and setbacks over a long period of time, we are at last going 'PUBLIC'.

There is no doubt in my mind (and this view is endorsed by the other Board Members) that the tremendous enthusiasm of the Preservation Society has kept public feeling alive whilst all the formidable and sometimes archaic statutory procedures have been pushed forward. So often, it has seemed that we have taken one step forward and two back, but at long last we are ready 'for the off'.

You do not need to be reminded of the considerable increase in costs which has occurred over the past two years which are reflected in the sum of money we have to raise to keep this unique project alive. I know that it is a lot of cash but with the massive public relations exercise now poised by you we have real hopes of achieving our target.

.....OUR AIM - TO RESTORE THIS VITAL RAIL LINE

..... OUR OBJECTIVE - TO RAISE THE TOTAL SUM NEEDED.....

If we can canvass every shop, pub, household, library and other public place in Hampshire and the adjoining counties to the North, East and West, it can be done. I urge you all, enlist the aid of friends and acquaintances - most folk like a good fight, especially when it is in a good cause.

Our excellent Press & Publicity Officer, Charles Lewis, will I know leave no stone unturned and we, all of us, will back every effort.

It is a long cry to the days when I first organised the public meeting to protest at the proposed closure - it says a lot for our resilience that we are still going forward.

We have objected to the proposed M3 Compulsory Purchase Order, where it is planned to cross our railway. So have other local Authorities, statutory bodies and many individuals. When our two MP's asked, after closure, for assurances that the original proposals to bridge the railway would be kept in being, the then Minister, Mr. John Peyton, said that were the railway to be running there need be no impediment to its continuation.

The best way we can demonstrate our determination to see that this pledge is kept is to raise sufficient money to run the railway.

I am by nature an optimist - remember it took one determined man 10 years to get the Post Office to agree to the publication of Charity Stamps. Over 5 years ago I advocated cheap 'off-peak' travel on rail for pensioners - I was told it would be impossible and not create extra revenue. B.R. in a blaze of publicity are now doing just that! Be determined in your objective and we shall succeed. As I said in the recent BBC-TV programme - IT IS NOW UP TO THE PUBLIC - they can re-open this railway - we are ready to do just that.

GOOD LUCK - I look forward to an overwhelming response to our call for Shares.

JOHN TAYLOR,
CHAIRMAN.

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DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING
30th October, 1974.

In all respects, the Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society has had a successful first year of trading.

When formed in August, 1973, the effort to re-open the "Watercress" line had just started and the task began of harnessing the large amount of support for the line's re-instatement into a concerted effort to give as much backing as possible to the parent Company, Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd.

One of the first tasks involved the re-organisation of the membership so that there was now one class of ordinary membership, with reductions for juniors, old-age pensioners and families. Life membership was also introduced. The ordinary subscription remained at £2-20 throughout the period although this will have to be reviewed during 1975.

After closure of the railway, possession, at Alresford, of the signalling and signalbox, plus one room in the Station building had been granted to the preservationists but very soon it became clear that the expansion of the Society dictated that more space be made available. As a result, a licence was agreed upon with British Rail which now gives the Society possession of the main station buildings, the goods shed and the surrounding area. This includes the siding which has been relaid on the site of a former line. Laying this siding gave many members their first opportunity to help in a practical way and the siding now houses three steam locomotives and one tank wagon. The first locomotive to arrive, from Croydon, is owned by a group of Society members, whilst the second, is on free permanent loan from Clough Estates Ltd. The largest locomotive to

arrive to date, 31874, is owned by a Society director, John Bunch and the tank wagon is on free permanent loan from the South Hampshire Society of Railway Modellers. The Goods Shed now houses a useful Wickham Engineers trolley owned by Society members and a vintage Ford lorry on loan from Mr. John Fielder. On all these items, much time has been spent on restoration to working order. Restoration of the station buildings and equipment progressed well after many years of neglect but permission to clear the track of encroaching weeds and keep the rail joints lubricated was refused by British Rail although permission was granted to clear fallen trees.

The progress described above can be seen today but is the "tip of the iceberg" compared with the important work carried out behind the scenes by the Directors and advisors in connection with their counterparts on the board of Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd. Much investigation has had to be carried out concerning the feasibility of future operations and the Society's Directors have played their part in formulating plans for the forthcoming years. This has involved their attendance at many meetings throughout Southern England.

The Sales Division has been steadily built up from nothing. A fully-stocked shop is now firmly established at Alresford. In addition a postal sales service is offered and the average monthly turnover had risen to £200 by the end of this period.

Publicity on the railway has been consistent and it is estimated that 300 cuttings appeared in the local weekly and daily newspapers during this period. To this can be added frequent notes in the railway press, plus full coverage on BBC-Radio Solent, BBC-TV South and Southern Television. Over 20 speeches were made by the Publicity Officer at a wide range of venues in an effort to boost support. A successful Fireworks Night was organised and was so popular that it will become a regular event. Funds were also boosted by a sponsored walk, a raffle and by the collection of waste paper.

The "Mid-Hants News" has now become a quarterly publication and is especially useful to those members living away from the immediate area who wish to be kept as up-to-date as possible with developments. The first "Watercress" line Calendar was produced and has proved to be a success.

Looking to the future, a Donation Appeal was launched at the end of 1973 to cater for those who wished to contribute to the forthcoming share issue without necessarily buying actual shares. By the end of October, 1974 over £1,750-00 had been raised.

The active membership has been divided into specific groups, under the overall supervision of the Liaison Director, which deal with locomotives, Carriage & Wagon, Signal and Telegraph, Permanent Way and Buildings. Many meetings were held to agree upon work which could be commenced but it is realised that one or two of the groups will not become fully established until the future of the line has been assured. Nevertheless, an enormous amount of work has been carried out to date, by the volunteer work force. An Archivist was appointed and a start made on collecting the vast amount of material concerning the railway's past and present, now available.

All in all, the Directors consider that the progress made during the period to October, 30th, 1974 was most satisfactory and would like to place on record their appreciation of the hard work carried out throughout this time by many members, some of whom have preferred to attend at Alresford rather than earn overtime from their regular jobs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Directors have much pleasure in placing before you their report for the period to October 30th, 1974.

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THE 1975 WATERCRESS LINE CALENDAR

Our first venture into the field of calendars has proved to be successful. From the 1000 copies that were printed, we are now down to the last packet. However, those remaining make an excellent buy even now, with thirteen "Mid-Hants" views that many members will want to keep for longer than just 1975. Thanks must go to those members who sold large quantities, with pride of place going to Mr. Gray from Four Marks who sold 65.

To clear the remainder, we are offering calendars at the reduced price of 39p. (or 50p. by post from Alresford Station).

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THE 'BEEB' COMES TO ALRESFORD... AND HOW!

Alresford Station was well and truly invaded by one of the large BBC Outside Broadcast units on Tuesday 7th January when BBC-1 South programme 'South Today' was televised live from the station between 18.00 and 18.25

The 'invasion' commenced at 09.45 and by mid-afternoon the platforms and main building nearly disappeared from view behind cables, cameras, monitors, lights and more lights! Everything in the programme went to plan except the weather which turned rather nasty just as the programme started and resulted in those present getting drenched.

For the record, Bruce Parker interviewed W. & A.R. Chairman, John Taylor, W. & A.R. Directors John Arlott and Charles Lewis, plus a group of four Mid-Hants 'stalwarts', Morvan Buck (in a Victorian station master's uniform), John Sunch, Ron Hack and Walter Norris. Andrew Harvey spoke to our Archivist, John Adams, plus two guests, Bernard Holden, Superintendent of the Bluebell Railway and Andrew Goltz, Chairman of the Swanage Railway Society.

We must thank the BBC for giving us the opportunity to tell viewers about our progress so far, but thanks are also due to those members who worked really hard to get the station and exhibits looking so good. Finally, we must also mention local singer, Dave Williams who wrote the 'Ballad of the Watercress Line' which had its first airing sung by Dave from the footplate of locomotive 31874 at the end of the programme. For those who missed it, the words are:-

This old Watercress Line's given much to our lives
Meant fun for our children and help for our wives
But for years there's been nothing but nettles and dock
And rarely a chance to turn back the clock

Refrain: And it's come blow the whistle and make clear
the way

All those navvies with barrows and jackets of blue
Their spades chalk-tarnished to bright steely hue
Made cuttings and crossings and slept as they went
And lived for today till their money was spent

Refrain: And it's come blow the whistle and make clear the
way

From Winchester City to Alton's fair town
Climbing to Medstead and easily down
Our sleepers and dog spikes and fishplates and rail
To carry our people, their produce and mail

Refrain: And it's come blow the whistle and make clear the
way

So look while you may on this one stretch of line
And pray that your memory's a good one like mine
We'll all stand together and hope with one will
That the old Mid-Hants can be kept running still

Refrain: And It's come blow the whistle and make clear
the way.

Soon afterwards, another equally good ballad appeared in the "Southern Evening Echo" on January 18th written by Tony Brode, the Literary Editor.

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In the last 'Mid-Hants News' we included some old reminiscences of Alresford's other railway, and since then a couple more facts have come to light from the same source, the first, referring to the owner, R. D. Rodney.

'His delight was on going round about twice to get up a good speed and just entering the tunnel he would put in about 3 Dipters (?) of Best Charcoal so when they came out the other end of the tunnel there were several on fire'.

It would be interesting to know if any members have an idea of what sort of speed could have been achieved. However, life on this railway was not always harmonious as can be seen from this recollection:-

'a Pitch Battle Got up between 2 of the men working on the Railway in the present fair field. on the spot where the Hurdle House now stands they fought with only Trousers on for over two hours Vincent Carpenter of the works watch in Hand to call time. which was carried untill the finish after it was over you could not see the colour of Either they were quite Black and Blue'.

I have used the exact spelling and punctuation from the original source but hope that our members working on the re-opening of the Mid-Hants line will get on rather better than their counterparts on the Rodney Railway over 100 years ago.

---O---

ED FISHER

In the early days of the Mid-Hants story, before the formation of the present Preservation Society, member Ed Fisher, of Medstead, near Alton, offered to produce all printed matter for the railway at the cost of materials only. Ed, a professional printer with a lifetime of experience, had his own presses and until recently produced all our letterheadings, membership cards, enrolment and renewal slips and the headers for the newsletters. Members will have noticed the fine workmanship of these items and appreciated the help that they have given to the image of the Society.

Now, as Ed has decided to retire and dispose of his equipment, the Society has had to find other printers. I would like to offer the Boards sincere appreciation of the prompt and cheerful service that he has given so willingly as his contribution to our effort.

LE WHEELER.

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ORGANISING THE FIREWORK NIGHT -----

Once again, our Firework Display has come and gone and I wonder how many members realise what is involved in putting on a show as this. From the time of purchase in September until Display Day, our spare bedroom looks like Woolwich Arsenal with boxes and tin trunks filled with ground mines and mortars.

For eight weeks, each evening is spent wiring and altering set pieces and rockets, until the sight of fireworks on the kitch table is as common as bread and butter (I should be so lucky with my weight problem). The Woodwork Dept., is Jack Neal and Son Barrie, typical chippies, no problem is insurmountable or too small. The Wiring and Alterations Dept., is Malcolm Mias, David Baker and myself. Comes the day and our thoughts are on the weather; will it rain? (Fingers crossed). Slight rain falls, but not enough to stop our preparations so the wiring up goes ahead and is covered by large plastic bags. Hearing blast off now, looks like more rain. (Fingers still crossed). Mad panic, six giant rocket sticks missing. Thanks to Dave Evans, who was organising the lighting, a saw was produced and sticks cut to the right size. The display starts. Pyrotechnists nightmare, one set piece a dimmer (technical term for not working) but soon put right. All too soon the show is over and crowd drifts home. All that's left is blackened wood frames standing stark near silent locomotives, which earlier reflected all the colours of the rainbow. Many thanks to

Malcolm, Fred and Leslie Nias, David Baker, Dave Knight and Chris Perry who were the firing team.

Next November? Well who knows; perhaps a larger display with steam hauled specials bringing more members to patronise the show. Final comment from my Wife, after the show was over; if she had known all that lot was in our spare bedroom she would have emigrated!

JOHN W. B. PERRY.

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WATERCRESS LINE MODEL RAILWAY CLUB

A group of Mid-Hants RPS members have formed a model railway club. This will be called the Watercress Line M.R.C. in order to build an exhibition layout in 4 mm (OO) scale, which will be put on permanent display at a suitable location, as yet to be determined. Now we get to the begging section, not for money, but for wood. If any members have some spare timber, in a dry sound condition, around the 2" x 1" size, or chip board preferably 5/8" thick, we would be very grateful. Ply or Block board would also be acceptable and this would enable us to start a base board. Model railway equipment would be happily received, although unfortunately at this stage we cannot afford to pay for anything.

The members who met recently at the inaugural meeting have agreed to a subscription of £1 per annum and any others who want to join, or feel that they can help us can contact me by 'phoning or writing to the address below. Collection of wood can also be arranged.

Chris Sibley, Secretary, 54 Harvest Road, Denmead, Portsmouth, Hampshire. Tel: Waterlooville 55067.

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LOCOMOTIVE DEPARTMENT NOTES

Much progress has been made in this department since the last report. The N Class 2-6-0 31874 passed its preliminary boiler test on January 19th, the boiler barrel and tubes being in excellent order. Work on restoration to operational condition is proceeding well and should be completed this Summer. It has been decided that 31874 will now receive a lined green livery, indeed a start had been made on this when the BEC visited the Station for 'South Today'.

The Slough locomotive should be restored to working order by early 1976 but the Bagnall needs much attention, although the chassis has been restored. Work will restart here when a repair shop has been built. Meanwhile, a protective coat of red paint has been applied.

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CARRIAGE & WAGON DEPARTMENT NOTES

A temporary office has now been set up in the Goods Shed at Alresford, where work has been concentrated on the Wickham Engineers trolley.

Very few people who saw the trolley arrive on June 9th could recognise it now. At the moment it resides on the dock inside the shed, about two feet off the ground. When it arrived in its battered state on the back of Steve Ryder's lorry, it rolled easily off onto the dock. Since then a considerable amount of replacement parts and wood necessary for the restoration have added to the weight considerably. When the appropriate time comes, it will be interesting to say the least, to try and move it down to ground level and onto the rails.

Now, with the task of restoring the trolley virtually complete, attention has been given to the tar tank wagon (arrival reported in 'Mid-Hants News' No. 6). The wagon is being restored to its original condition - silver tank, black frames and red solebars - and will be lettered 'Burts, Boulton and Harvey, Totton', the name of the previous owners. One problem to be solved is the removal of some tar and water from inside the tank as there is no bottom discharge.

During January, the Society obtained its first coach, thanks to the generosity of one member. However, this will not be used in passenger traffic, but instead will be required to form part of the

works train which the line's engineers will use in connection with work to be carried out on the track prior to the reinstatement of public services. The coach, DS 70168, formerly Maunsell brake second S3730S, has been stripped of most seating, but will provide essential covered accommodation for the engineers and equipment. The vehicle was located near Bristol Parkway station and is shortly to be moved to a private siding in the London area, prior to its move to the Mid-Hants line when conditions permit.

This Group will be recruiting extra members shortly who want to help with restoring rolling stock, so why not put your name down?

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NO TROUBLE AT THE MILL

On Friday February 7th, the Preservation Society received a very generous gift in the form of a 1922 Muir milling machine, still in working order. The machine has been lying idle for some years in the tool room of ITS Rubber Ltd., at Petersfield. Thanks to the General Manager of ITS, Mr. John Freeman and the Chief Works Manager, Mr. Brian Chapman, the machine was made available and will prove to be an invaluable asset in future as it can make replacement components for our locomotives and rolling stock. It is now in the care of the locomotive department at Alresford.

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(ANOTHER) DATE TO REMEMBER

The Alresford & District Community Association are holding another Community Week this year. As part of this, a Mid-Hants evening is being held in the Community Centre, West Street, on Wednesday May 28th. Make a note in your diary now, and don't forget this will be an ideal time for members to hear the very latest on the share issue.

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SITUATIONS VACANT

The most important job open at present is that of Membership Secretary. Suitable applicants will be proficient at clerical work and be able to organise the flow of new memberships and renewals to the four Assistant Membership Secretaries. Ideally, applicants should have their own transport, live within easy reach of the line, and be on the telephone.

Many people, naturally enough, write to us asking about various aspects of the line. We are looking for an Information Officer who will be willing to reply to these enquiries, so as to relieve the workload on others. Applicants should be reasonably good at typing and this post may well suit someone who feels that they can help our cause best in a clerical way.

Finally, jobs for the girls! Anyone who is interested in joining their husbands or boy friends at Alresford in a day's work - or even half a day - should contact Carol Fuller. There are plenty of jobs available such as catering, helping in the shop, or - dare we say it - gardening.

Anyone interested in these positions should drop us a line at Alresford Station.

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WELCOME TO SEVERAL NEW FACES

We are pleased to announce that three additional Directors have been appointed to the board of the Preservation Society. Two were appointed at the Annual General Meeting. Mr. Norman Atherden is a schoolmaster and professional tutor who is also a member of East Hampshire District Council. Mr. Richard 'Dick' Audsley is a British Rail train driver who needs absolutely no introduction to our regular members and is, of course, also head of the locomotive department. In addition, Mr. J. J. Donovan, a retired senior railway Officer, has been appointed to the Board as a nominee of

the parent company and has already proved to be an extremely useful negotiator with British Rail. Welcome also to the four Assistant Membership Secretaries; Sally Jenkins, Rod Lerew, Tom Mills and Alan Sherwood.

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.... AND FAREWELL TO LE WHEELER

Members present at the A.C.M. also heard that Le Wheeler, our first Membership Secretary and an original Director of the Preservation Society had resigned. A vote of thanks to Le for his hard work over the past 2½ years was passed unanimously. Well done Le, you made a very valuable contribution to our cause.

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ESSENTIAL READING

Two publications which have been much in demand recently. The March issue of 'Hampshire, the County Magazine' carried a three page article on our line written by John Arlott. Also, the 20th February issue of the 'Hampshire Telegraph' included a report on the line, plus a map and several colour photos of the locomotives, signal box, members and Directors. It should be pointed out though, that the colour picture which took up nearly all of the front page, of the Directors, showed the members of the Preservation Society board plus our Archivist, John Adams, and not the Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd. board. The colour picture of the locomotives made this issue an excellent souvenir.

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WELL DONE, THE POST OFFICE

We have not been able to find out whether any of our members work at Alton Post Office, but many thanks to the postman who received a letter meant for us, addressed to the Alton Railway Society, Alton. It was delivered to me at Four Marks the day after it had been posted in Dorset. Well done, the Post Office !

CHARLES LEWIS.

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WANTED - MORE POEMS, PHOTOS AND LETTERS

Like Oliver, the Editor will always ask for more in the form of contributions to 'Mid-Hants News'. We must first thank all those who have submitted notes for this issue, but unfortunately, space is at a premium and we have had to leave out quite a few contributions. Many of these will be considered for future issues but when the share issue is behind us, we are considering bringing out other productions apart from the newsletter - so keep writing ! All contributions are welcome and should be sent to :-

Ian Crowder, 2, The Gables, London Road, Hook, Basingstoke, RG27 9NH.

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THANKS.....

.....to the Fareham & District Society of Model Engineers (November 4), Basingstoke & District Railway Society (November 12), National Housewives Register - Southampton Branch (November 28), Liphook Model Railway Club (November 29), Brooklands Railway Society (January 15), Farnborough Young Conservatives (February 5), Workers Educational Association - Poole Branch (February 22), The SKAL Club - Southampton (March 3) and the Bulleid Locomotive Society - Sussex Group (March 11), for inviting me to talk about our progress to date. Thanks also to The 48518 Group for inviting me to draw their raffle (December 10).

CWL

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MID-HANTS NEWS



Issue Number 10

May, 1975.

Editor: Charles Lewis

12 Winston Rise, Four Marks,
Alton, Hants. GU34 5HW.

OUR BIG DAY HAS ARRIVED.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a copy of the Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., prospectus, and we hope that everyone reading this Newsletter will subscribe as much as they can to the issue. I hardly need add that it is vitally important that you tell all your friends and neighbours and ask them to contribute as well. If you want an extra prospectus, call at Alresford Station between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sundays, or drop us a line at Alresford Station, Alresford, SO24 9JG enclosing a 10p. stamp.

With the help of everyone, we will succeed but to explain the prospectus in more detail I will hand over to the Deputy Chairman of the parent company, Mr. Simon Davies.....

As you will be aware, Winchester & Alton Railway has decided that because of the total volume of money required, it cannot accept application for less than 50 £1 shares.

This being so, the Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd., has produced a scheme, whereby anyone wishing to subscribe for less than 50 shares, may send money to the Society, who will make one block application, to Winchester & Alton Railway and hold the shares it receives on Trust for the subscribers. However, the Society has decided for the same reason as Winchester & Alton Railway that it cannot accept applications for less than £10.

When you get your prospectus, you will find at the end of the document two application forms. One is for use, if you wish to apply for 50 or more shares, and the other for less than 50 shares.

Both forms are easy to complete. You are only required, in the appropriate places, to fill in your name and address, the number of shares you require, the amount of your cheque and finally to add your signature.

If you are applying for 50 or more shares, your cheque must be made out to Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., and the cheque and the form sent to Lloyds Bank Ltd., at their address at Goring-on-Sea, to be found on the form. In the other case, your cheque must be made out to the Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society and sent with the form to the Society at Alresford Station. Do not in either case send any covering letter. If you are applying for less than 50 shares, then you must add a sum of 50p. to cover the Society's administration expenses. If you do not add 50p., the Society will have to treat your application as being for one less share than the amount of your cheque. Finally, please read the prospectus carefully. It contains all the matter which it is necessary you should know.

S.A.F.D.

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THE FIRST 'MID-HANTS' RAIL TOUR

Organised jointly by the M.H.R.P.S.
and the 48518 Group.

For some time, we have been considering the idea of running a rail tour, so on Saturday October 11th, providing everything goes to plan, we will be chartering a train - including buffet car - from Portsmouth to Kidderminster for the Severn Valley Railway.

We'll start from Portsmouth & Southsea, then call at Fareham, Eastleigh, Winchester, and Basingstoke, before running through to Kidderminster. An extra stop will be made at Reading if there is the demand. There will be coaches waiting to take us on the short road trip to Bewdley, where it is likely that a 'Mid-Hants' steam-hauled special will run up the Severn Valley line to Bridgnorth. Plenty of free time will be available so as to allow everyone to view the wide range of steam locomotives and rolling stock on this line and also other attractions in the area. Similar arrangements will be made for the

return trip, which will provide up to 325 miles of travel on B.R., plus 25 miles 'behind steam' and the two coach links, overall.

The all-in return fare will be around £6-75 with a reduction, to £5, for accompanied children under 14. Anyone interested is asked to write to us at Alresford Station, stating at which station they wish to join the tour, with the envelope marked 'Rail Tour'. We'll send you full details when they have been finalised together with a booking form. DO NOT send money now.

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ANOTHER 'FIRST'

Thelma and Dave Evans organised the first Beer and Skittles evening for the Society at the H.H. Inn at Cheriton on Saturday, 12th April. Around 50 members enjoyed the event, which included prizes being awarded for the highest and lowest scores at skittles. The raffle profit of £8 was split equally between the M.H.R.P.S., John Bunch for loco. 31874 and the 48518 Group. Whilst on the subject of Thelma, Dick Audsley and others have pointed out that if any members want a good hot pie for Sunday lunch, then they would be well advised to sample an 'Evans steak and kidney' at the Station.

---O---
OUR NEXT PUBLIC MEETING

In the last 'Mid-Hants News' we gave advance notice of this meeting which is to take place on Wednesday May 28th in the Community Centre, West Street, Alresford. This will commence at 7.30 p.m. and will be open to non-members as well. Apart from hearing about the progress of the share issue, there should be a film show lasting about 40 minutes afterwards, which will include 'The Painter and the Engines'. (A record of the last moments of steam on the Southern Region as seen through the eyes of painter David Shepherd), the famous 'London to Brighton in Four Minutes', and a short silent film showing the steam workings in Southampton Harbour 17 years ago.

---O---
WANTED: POSTAGE STAMPS

So as to boost our fund-raising for the Society, we are now collecting postage stamps. You can either send them to us at Alresford Station or bring them next time you come.

---O---
I'VE GOT A LITTLE LISS

Not a reference to 'The Mikado' but to the Signal and Telegraph Dept., which spent two hectic days at Liss on the weekend of April 12th/13th. The object of the exercise was to remove the complete lever frame from the signalbox there which had recently been made redundant. This equipment will be most useful in future and may well be used eventually at Ropley.

---O---
MIDSTEAD & FOUR MARKS STATION

Another link with the past was severed, when the post box on Midstead & Four Marks Station, was closed for the last time on Sunday April 20th. It is ironic that this should have happened when the share issue was only a few weeks away but it is hoped that this facility can be restored when the station is reopened.

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THE NEXT NEWSLETTER number 11, will be published soon after the result of the share issue is known, and will be nearer the normal length. Contributions should be sent to Ian Crowder at 2 The Gables, London Road, Hook, Basingstoke, RG27 9NH.

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MID-HANTS NEWS



Issue Number 11

12 Winston Rise,
Four Marks,
Alton, Hampshire.
GU34 5HW.

July, 1975.

LOOKING FORWARD

Our much heralded share issue has come and gone. We may not have raised enough to fulfil both of our aims of running diesel and steam services but at least we did receive enough to give us much hope for the future. The sum raised, almost exactly £100,000, was the most raised by any railway company in recent years to start operations. In fact, we are now planning a second share issue which is geared to one aim... success.

Those of you who subscribed £50 or more to the first issue will now have heard from us and it is to be hoped that all of you have agreed to let us keep your valuable contributions until we are able to launch the second issue, later this year. Those of you who subscribed to the Trust Scheme will be receiving a letter shortly asking if you would also leave your money with the Society.

Every member and subscriber will automatically receive the new prospectus. Further details will be published in 'Mid-Hants News' number 12 within the next two months or so.

The second share issue will have a much lower Minimum Subscription than the £625,000 target before, and the primary aim is to be able to run a steam, tourist service over a section of the 'Watercress' line. How much of the line is saved, depends entirely on our supporters. The more money that is raised, the more line we can acquire. With the setting of a lower Minimum Subscription, serious consideration will be given to the lowering of the Minimum Application for shares. Our Donation Fund is being kept open and all money received will be used by the Preservation Society to buy shares in the next issue.

So rather than feeling despondent, I am sure that all members will join the Board in feeling confident about the future. We have decided to go ahead with our rail tour to the Severn Valley Railway in October and our 1976 Calendar is well advanced. Those who have received a membership renewal notice with this Newsletter can rest assured that we will still be in existence for as long as you, our members, want us to be. There is no reason why that should not be for ever - with steam services a distinct possibility in 1976... why not?

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ABOUT THE ISSUE ITSELF

May 15th was the day which represented the culmination of much hard work preparing for the issue. After the final decision had been taken to launch the issue at the Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., board meeting on March 22nd, our long-standing plans were put into operation.

400 small posters were printed with distribution taking place to interested members over the following Easter weekend. Such was the response that 600 more were printed. Soon, posters were to be seen all over Hampshire and at many other places in Southern England.

Door-to-door distribution of leaflets began in mid-April in the Farnham to Winchester area. The first 12,000 copies of the 4-page leaflet soon went, and two reprints of 5,000 copies each were ordered before we had finished. In addition to the door-to-door distribution, leaflets were also available on the sales stand which visited the Eastleigh Works Open Day, organised by British Rail Engineering, on April 20th and at the Bluebell Railway on Sunday, May 11th. Members also distributed leaflets on the part steam-hauled special from London to Chester on April 26th, and on the Southampton-Maiden Newton special (to mark the last day of services on the Bridport branch) on 3rd May.

Our friends in the Southern Electric Group also allowed our leaflets to be inserted with the May issue of their magazine.

We must thank all those members who gave up countless hours distributing leaflets and finding helpful shopkeepers, publicans and petrol station Managers who agreed to display our posters. We anticipate printing further posters for the next issue so if any more members want to display some posters, please let us know - and send us a 5½p. stamp for postage.

The advertising did not go as planned with several union disputes taking place at the wrong time for us. For the record, the prospectus was published as follows:- The Daily Telegraph - May 16th; Southern Evening Echo - May 15th (reduced circulation), May 20th (full circulation); The News - Portsmouth - May 15th; Alton Herald, Bordon Herald, Farnham Herald, Hampshire Chronicle, Haslemere Herald, Romsey Advertiser - May 16th; Alton Gazette - May 21st; Petersfield Post - May 22nd. All these papers carried whole page advertisements except the Southern Evening Echo which carried double page spreads. Smaller advertisements were placed in the Salisbury Journal and in the classified columns of The Times and The Daily Telegraph. The following national newspapers covered our issue editorially:- The Observer, The Guardian, Sunday Times, Daily Mail, Sunday Telegraph, Financial Times. The London 'Evening News' and many regional evening and weekly papers also carried the story.

If any members know of any other cuttings that appeared, please let us know, as we can then keep a complete record. In particular, did anyone keep the cutting from 'The Guardian' on May 15th? Locally, all papers, together with the television and radio stations covered our efforts admirably, with one or two really excelling themselves.

The net result of this coverage was £100,000 with most subscribers living outside Hampshire. Considering the economic climate nationally, this was a useful sum to raise, although the Board of Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd., were disappointed that their target was not reached. But all is, very definitely, NOT lost.

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THE NEXT SHARE ISSUE

We cannot give precise details at this stage except to say that it is being planned to take place in the Autumn. Negotiations are still taking place with British Rail but the W. & A. R. Chairman, Mr. John Taylor is clearly hopeful of a successful outcome. He said recently 'Assuming that we get the response by the potential shareholders to the request for them to leave their money with us pending the second issue, I am confident that the second project will be a big success'. Certainly the initial response to our appeal has been good with money flooding back to us in every post.

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WINCHESTER & ALTON RAILWAY LTD. BOARD NEWS

At the March board meeting, the Directors learned with regret that resignations had been received from Messrs. Grenside, Davis and Neave. With due respect to the others, probably the best known name was that of Simon Neave, the founder of the preservation movement who worked so hard in 1972 and 1973 to get the forerunner of today's Preservation Society off the ground. Simon now works as a television presenter in the North-East. Hugh Davies ended his short stay on the board due to his work taking him back to West Germany. There are now thirteen Directors on the Board of the parent company, as shown in the last Prospectus.

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LOCOMOTIVE DEPT. NEWS

Several members have written to us, querying the presence of various locomotives marked as being 'reserved for the Mid-Hants' in Woodhams scrapyard in South Wales. One of these is the Stanier 2-8-0 number 48518, built at Doncaster in 1944. As some of you are aware, a hard working band of our members in the Southampton area formed themselves into The 48518 Group and for the last year or so have been working hard towards raising enough cash with which to purchase this locomotive and move it by road to Alresford. This Group has visited countless rallies and shows with a sales stand on behalf of the M.H.R.P.S and their group so as to raise funds. This has resulted in just over

half the money required having been raised, or promised, so far.

Another locomotive with a chance of arriving on the 'Watercress' line is the former Southern Region U Class 2-6-0, number 31806, built at Brighton in 1926. This was originally one of the ill-fated 'River' class tank locomotives (named 'River Torridge') until it was converted to a tender locomotive following the Sevenoaks accident of 1927 when a similar locomotive was involved in a fatal crash. The U class then proved to be one of the most reliable on the Southern Region following rebuilding.

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£50 REWARD.

Whilst on the subject of locomotives, £50 reward is being offered by M.H.R.P.S. director John Bunch, the owner of 31874, for the return of the near-side crank from this locomotive. It was taken from the locomotive after it had been purchased from Woodham Bros. at Barry and shortly before the move to Alresford in March 1974. Any information concerning the whereabouts of this vital part would be gratefully received and treated in the strictest confidence.

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THE NEXT PUBLIC MEETING

With the second Public Share Issue in mind, we have organised a public meeting in the Village Hall, Four Marks, Nr. Alton, on Saturday, September 27th at 7.30 p.m. Everyone will have the chance, after hearing the up-to-date news, to ask members of the Board any questions about our efforts to save the line. The Hall is in Lymington Bottom Road about 150 yards south of the main A31 road in the centre of the village. Bus stops on route 214 are close by.

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CARRIAGE & WAGON DEPT. NEWS

The Wickham engineers trolley is now just about in working order and now those who have been restoring this vehicle have turned attention to a suitable trailer for this vehicle. The trailer chassis was located at Droxford, on the former Meon Valley line, and moved to Alresford on June 28th. Elsewhere, the engineers coach, DS 70168, bought for the Society some time ago, should be on the move soon from Bristol to a private siding in the London area prior to its move to Alresford later.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE S. & T. GROUP

The Signal and Telegraph group are now building up a small work force and would like to hear from anyone interested in the following:-

- (a) signalling - either mechanical or electrical
- (b) overhead line work
- (c) telephones - i) maintenance or, ii) installation

A good working knowledge of telephones would be necessary for section (c). If you are interested in helping in any of the above sections, please contact Peter Dean for (a) or (b), or Chris Hall for (c) at Alresford Station any Saturday or Sunday afternoon.

Thanks to the Royal Corps of Transport at Longmoor, the Society was recently able to take delivery of some signalling equipment remaining from the former Longmoor Military Railway. This arrived at Alresford on June 28th.

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FOR SALE.

An American steam whistle. £30 o.n.o.

Apply to John Bunch at Alresford Station.

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THE 'WATERCRESS' LINE MUSICAL EVENING.

Saturday 4th October; Alresford Station 7 p.m.

To mark the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Stockton

& Darlington railway (and also the 50th anniversary - to the week - of the building of loco. 31874), we are holding a musical evening. Provisionally, we have planned to give this evening a Folk/Country air, and as anyone who saw the recent Johnny Cash programme on BBC-2 will tell you, the formula works well.

We are holding a competition open to all those submitting a song or ballad about this line, or the people working on it, with a first prize of £5 worth of record tokens. The winning song or ballad will be included in the programme.

Several local performers are being approached with a view to taking part but do we have any such 'hidden talent' in our midst?

All applications for the competition and enquiries about this evening should be sent to Mrs. Susan Jackson at Stoner Hill Cottages, Froxfield, Petersfield, Hampshire.

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MEMBERSHIP DEPARTMENT

The Society have pleasure in announcing the appointment of Roger Haddock as the new Membership Secretary. This fills a vital position in our ranks and Roger recently took up his duties based at Alresford Station. We apologize to anyone who waited for more than a few days for their acknowledgements of money received but the department is now running smoothly so there should be no delays in future.

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THE SUMMER DRAW

Following the success of the draw last year, we are holding another at Alresford Station at 3.00 p.m. on Sunday August 24th. The first prize is £50, the second £25, and there are several other prizes too!

In an effort to save postage, we are enclosing with this Newsletter one book of ten 5p. tickets in the hope that every member will be able to sell at least ten tickets to his friends and neighbours. Further books of tickets may be obtained from Alresford Station on Sundays or by sending a stamped addressed envelope to Norman Atherden, at 25 The Paddock, Headley, Bordon, Hampshire, GU25 8QE with a note stating how many books are required. When the tickets are sold, the counterfoils, money (and any unsold tickets) should be sent to Norman Atherden at the above address to arrive not later than Friday August 15th. Any counterfoils received after that date may not be included in the draw. Please make all remittances payable to 'M.H.R.P.S.Ltd.'

Please also make sure that the name and address of the purchaser are included on the counterfoils together with your own membership number, as there will be a £5 prize for the seller of the winning ticket. This is an excellent opportunity for every member to help raise funds for the Society. The prizes are good - and what better cause could there be?

NORMAN ATHERDEN.

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RAIL TOURS

On the sheet enclosed you will find details of the first 'Mid-Hants' rail tour, to the Severn Valley Railway on Saturday 11th October. This will be an ideal opportunity for you to see a preserved railway in action and sample a return trip totalling 25 miles 'behind steam', quite apart from an interesting rail journey to and from the West Midlands. We have earmarked nearly 100 seats from the note included in the last Newsletter, so if you want a seat on a tour that is bound to be popular, fill in the enclosed form and send it off today. Remember this tour is not only available to members, so you can tell all your friends about it as well.

Thanks to Mr. M.D.Strode of Cove, Mr. Farnborough, we had intended offering members the chance to travel to the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway on Sunday August 31st. The Southern branch of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers had made provisional arrangements with British Rail for a trip to the North-East from Hampshire but unfortunately, suitable travelling times could not be agreed upon. However, we are informed that there are day-trips being organized by British Rail to and from London (Kings X).

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VISITORS TO ALRESFORD

Anyone present at our H.Q. on Sunday June 22nd will have envied the splendid collection of Bentley cars which arrived by courtesy of the local branch of the Bentley Drivers Club. Thanks are due to Tom Threlfall who encouraged his fellow members to come. We hope that the Drivers Club members enjoyed looking at our locomotives as much as we enjoyed looking at their Bentleys! In addition, Peter Parks arrived in a beautifully turned out 1913 Rolls-Royce.

The preceding week saw the annual British Legion walk to and from Alresford and we once again played hosts supplying copious quantities of 'reviving' tea. We look forward to their visit again in 1976.

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WAGON REPAIRS LTD.

Close scrutiny of the South Western Tar Distilleries tank wagon at Alresford will reveal a series of plates along the sole bar, among them an oval plate bearing the legend 'Genly Repaired by W.R.Ltd., SR 970, 12-1961'.

W.R.Ltd., (Wagon Repairs Ltd.) was formed on April 1st, 1918 as a repairing organization for the following wagon building and hiring organizations:-

Birmingham R.C. & W.Ltd., British Wagon Co.,Ltd.,
S.J.Claye Ltd., (acquired by W.R. in 1936). Gloucester R.C.& W.Co.Ltd.,
Harrison & Camm; Hurst Nelson & Co.,Ltd., (builders of the wagon
a Alresford);

The Metropolitan C. & W. Finance Co.,Ltd., The Midland R.C.&W.Co.,Ltd.
The North Central Wagon Co.Ltd.

From that date many of the wagons in 'private livery' such as Colman's Mustard, South Western Tar Distillers Ltd., and local coal merchants owned their own wagons and the repairing companies, of which Wagon Repairs Ltd., was by far the largest, fixed cast-iron plates to the sole bars indicating that they were the officially appointed repairers.

For a wagon to be 'generally repaired' meant that it had been repaired to a standard which would ensure its safety on the line. All privately owned wagons are 'generally repaired' every seven years, although intermediate repairs are carried out as required. In 1939 there were approximately 125,000 railway-owned wagons and a similar number of privately-owned wagons. Following nationalisation of the railways in 1948, the number of private wagons shrank to about 18,000 although this trend now seems to have stopped. This reduction has resulted in the number of Wagon Repairs workshops being reduced from the original 35 to 10, distributed throughout Great Britain.

NORMAN ATHERDEN.

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A REQUEST FROM THE GALLEY.

Calling all cooks! Thelma Evans of S. & K. PIE fame, wants a few more helpers on Sunday lunchtimes. Anyone who knows how to handle an oven and several grubby members shouting 'Food!' at around 1 o'clock should report to Thelma. Also, any re-usable cutlery would be welcome (spoons with the inscription 'ER' not accepted!)

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AVAILABLE SHORTLY FROM THE SHOP...

... will be the 1976 Watercress Line Calendar. Delivery should be made by the second half of August and the 1976 edition is, as last year, devoted to 13 photographs taken between Winchester and Alton over the last 25 years. The price will be 75p. (85p. by post) and the calendar is worth every penny!

We also hope to bring out a special item which will turn out to be our best-seller at around the same time, and will also hope to have a quantity of the 150th anniversary of railways 'First day cover'.

---O---

USED STAMPS.

Whilst on the subject of stamps, we are now collecting a large amount of used stamps so as to boost Society funds. Ideally, approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ " of single thickness paper should be left round each stamp, although old postcards and envelopes are best left intact. These stamps should be handed in to the shop at Alresford Station.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday August 24th - Visit by Fareham & District Model Engineers to Alresford Station with live narrow-gauge steam. Also raffle draw - 3 p.m.
Saturday September 27th - Public Meeting, Four Marks Village Hall, 7.30 p.m.
Saturday October 4th - Musical evening, Alresford Station. 7 p.m.
Saturday October 11th - Rail tour to Severn Valley Railway.
Saturday October 18th - Model railway exhibition - Alresford Community Centre.
Saturday November 1st - Firework Night, Alresford Station.

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THE PRESERVATION OF BRITAIN'S TRANSPORT HERITAGE.

From time to time we all read news items with such headings as "Famous Aircraft Found in Field", or "Historic Railway Coach Used As Hen Coop".

Such stories usually go on to relate the history of the relic that has come to light and describe the famous race, record or event in which it was involved and perhaps most of us feel a mild sense of shock that such examples of our country's engineering genius and heritage have been so abandoned and neglected.

Often the news item will report that a local group has been formed to restore the abandoned relic to its former glory or that a museum or society has taken it into its care. Then we perhaps breathe a sigh of relief and turn over the page. But the real story is about to be written in other ways and the problems are just beginning.

It is these problems that concern the "Transport Trust", a registered charity set up in 1965 to co-ordinate the preservation of all forms of historical transport throughout the country. The Trust's aims as set out in its constitution are:

to promote and encourage the permanent preservation, for the benefit of the nation of:-

1. Transport items of historical or technical interest.
2. Books, drawings, films, photographs and similar material concerning all forms of transport by rail, road, air and waterways.

Further to arrange displays and rallies of historical transport for the benefit of the public.

Simply stated, the work of the Trust is to provide a "living" museum of all forms of transport. It endeavours to get locomotives to steam again, cars to take to the road again, the old aeroplanes to take to the skies again and the famous ships to unfurl their sails or start their engines again.

The "Transport Trust" is entirely self-supporting and raises and collects funds given under deed of covenant, grants and loans and allocates its funds through its technical advisory committees for preservation and restoration projects. It has an excellent working relationship with industry and its patron, the Duke of Edinburgh, its president, Sir Peter Allen and its vice presidents who include Lord Robens, Chairman of Vickers, Lord Kings Norton, Chairman of Berger's, Lord Montagu and Sir Jan Lewando, are all involved in an active way in the work of the Trust.

Recent examples of the wide ranging activities of the Trust are the exhibition of paintings and engineering drawings held at the Guildhall recently and called "Art in Transport". The exhibition, which was opened by the Lord Mayor of London, brought together over four hundred paintings and drawings of transport subjects ranging from Cuneo's 'Opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway', to Michael Turner's 'Concorde at Fairford'.

The Trust has also established a library and archive in conjunction with the University of Surrey to accommodate and preserve

books, engineering drawings, films, photographs, etc., on transport matters and is willing to assist companies, institutes and individuals who are having difficulty finding space for their own historical material. The Transport Trust library has quite recently taken into its care a magnificent collection of late 19th Century locomotive engineering drawings and a very fine collection of glass negatives.

In the aviation field the Trust is underwriting the cost of restoring to flying condition the DH88 Comet racing aircraft which won what is probably the worlds most famous air race - the England to Australia event of 1934. The Trust is, incidentally, searching for the gold cup which was presented to the winning pilots, C.W.A.Scott and Tom Campbell Black. The Director of the Trust would be delighted to hear from any reader who knows where it might be!

On the administrative side, the Trust Executive is busy day by day dealing with Insurance queries - how much for instance, would it cost to insure the movement of a steam locomotive from York to Birmingham or cover a 1898 Daimler car in the Brighton Run? Enquiries come in from embryo societies asking for guidance on drawing up other objects and articles from established societies requesting technical and financial assistance and from individual members of the Trust with queries ranging from where to obtain a big end for an Austin 8 to a list of transport museums in Japan, (there are six!)

Another particular feature of the Trust's activities is the publication of its quarterly news journal which contains a wide range of articles and photographs of transport preservation activities and the distribution of HISTORICAL TRANSPORT which is an annual publication giving descriptions of transport museums, displays, and minor railways in Great Britain and Ireland with details of opening times and all facilities.

There is no doubt that there is a tremendous and growing public interest in the nostalgia of historical transport. Steam and traction rallies, air shows and motoring gatherings all attract large crowds.

The policy of the Trust is to encourage this 'living' museum to ensure that present and future generations have the opportunity to study and enjoy the evidence of British achievements in air, rail road and water.

If you would like to help in this work you can join the Trust as an individual member, it costs £2 and you will receive its regular news bulletin and other services available only to members.

Write for details to:

The Director,
The Transport Trust,
18 Ramillies Place,
London, W1V 2BA.

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WATERCRESS LINE MODEL RAILWAY CLUB

A model railway exhibition is being organized to take place on Saturday 18th October, 1975, with a view to raising money to enable the Club to build and house a permanent working model of Alresford Station B.B. (before Beeching). This would serve as an added attraction to people visiting the Winchester and Alton Railway and a source of income for the Preservation Society.

The exhibition will be held in the Alresford Community Centre and already a number of first class working layouts have been promised. If results of recent exhibitions in the area are a guide, it is possible that a healthy surplus could arise which could be used to further the aims of the Preservation Society.

A meeting of Club Members is to be called shortly to enable ideas for a Club exhibit to be discussed and planned but if you are not a member and feel you would like to either join or help in any way, please contact Chris Sibley, 54 Harvest Road, Dennead, Portsmouth, or myself, Ralph Brierley, 2 Windermere Gardens, Alresford (3841). Most of all, come along on the 18th and tell your friends, or rather tell the children in your family to tell their friends about it.

Further details of exhibits etc., will be circulated nearer the actual date by news letter, posters, and in local newspapers.

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WASTE PAPER

We finally managed to get rid of our collection of nearly eleven tons of waste paper recently and, in exchange, received a huge roll of trading stamps which will go towards purchasing new tools for use on the line. Some paper was also sold to kennels near Alton who are using

this paper in place of straw. However, we do not want everyone collecting paper as before due to the current uncertainty of the market.

The space previously filled by the paper in the Goods Shed has now been put to good use. Thanks go here to the Hack family for sweeping the shed out after the paper had finally gone.

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WANTED... AN INFORMATION OFFICER.

We are still looking for someone, living reasonably close to the line, who is prepared to answer letters from the public requiring information about the Society. Applications, please to Alresford Station.

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POETS CORNER

The following poem was received from Stephen Payne from North End, Portsmouth, who wrote this after seeing Alresford Station since closure by British Rail:

Railway Revives.

As I walk along the platford at Alresford
I find it hard to imagine
That the line has closed
I thought it would last forever
But now the sun has set
No longer will I hear the clank of levers
Or the whistle of an approaching train.
But perhaps when I visit the line again
The sun will rise as if it had never set
And to hear the whistle of engine
And the merry talk of station staff
Will bring joy to my heart.

---O---

THANKS...

to the Havant & Emsworth Round Table (March 27th), Basingstoke 18 plus Group (April 14th), North Hants Tourist Advisory Panel (April 25th), Southampton Round Table No. 4 (May 6th), Urie S15 Preservation Group (May 10th), Association of Railway Preservation Societies (May 17th), Ropley Women's Institute (June 10th), Petersfield Round Table (June 19th) and the Festiniog Railway Society - Hants. & Sussex branch (June 28th) for allowing me to bring their members up to date with the progress made towards re-opening this line. Thanks are also due to all those who came to hear the latest news of the issue at the Alresford Community Centre on May 28th. It was indeed encouraging to get a 'full house'.

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THE NEXT ISSUE...

.... will be sent to members and should be published in 2/3 months' time. Contributions should be sent to Ian Crowder at 2 The Gables, London Road, Hook, Basingstoke, RG27 9NH.

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DON'T FORGET...

to try and visit the Station Shop any Sunday where our young Sales Team will be pleased to show you their extensive range of souvenirs and railwayana!

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FINALLY

As the lists are now being compiled for the distribution of the next prospectus, why not encourage all your friends to help as well. All names should be sent to The Secretary at Alresford Station. Meanwhile, if your renewal is now due, please send the money to us as soon as possible. The Preservation Society are going to have to pay for the costs of the second issue so we will need every penny. Remember, everyone should be still 'Looking Forward'.

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MID-HANTS NEWS



Issue Number 12

November, 1975.

EDITORIAL.

It is rather pleasant to be able to introduce myself as the new Editor of 'Mid-Hants News' particularly on the occasion of our second share issue. It starts on the 13th November and runs for the statutory forty days (until 22nd December), and our thirteen Directors are confident now of acquiring at least part of the thirteen or so miles from Alton to Alresford. With so many '13s' how can we lose!

While taking over editorship from Charles Lewis, it is reported elsewhere in this issue that Charles is also 'retiring' completely from his role as Publicity Director, from both M.H.R.P.S. and W. & A. Boards, immediately following the current share issue.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all members, to thank Charles for the expert work he has carried out towards our cause during the past three years. As a direct result of his efforts, the Watercress line has probably become more widely known, received more comment and coverage in the media, over a much shorter period than with any other British preservation project. Ranging from the National press and TV, to local papers and talks at gatherings, the case for re-opening the railway has been brought to the attention of millions. Without this effort, which personally involved Charles in up to 30 hours spare-time work each week (unpaid at that), we would I suggest, be nowhere near as close to our goal as we are now. All this, too, in a period of considerable economic uncertainty, which must have adversely affected our efforts. Thank you, Charles.

If anyone feels that promoting the railway during the exciting future ahead is a task for which they have the qualifications, then drop us a line. See the note elsewhere in this issue.

I would like to end my first editorial in a traditional manner for the Mid-Hants: with an appeal. Not for money, though, for news. Without co-operation from many quarters, this Newsletter would not be possible. It's quality and content depends to a very great extent on contributions by members. Any stories, reports, funnies, in poetry or prose, are welcome! You don't have to be an expert at writing, it doesn't even have to be in good English - that's my job. Notes or a 'phone call are fine.

Contributions or letters please, to: Ian Crowder, 2 Rose Cottage, Turgis Green, Nr. Basingstoke, Hampshire RG27 0AG. Telephone: evenings Turgis Green 771; day Basingstoke 3131 Ext. 2172.

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SECOND SHARE ISSUE

The Prospectus for the raising of funds to enable us to run a limited service over the line will be issued shortly. Because of the smaller venture now proposed it will be a relatively simpler document than the original Prospectus. The Company is seeking to raise a minimum of £75,000 but nevertheless we are inviting you the public to subscribe a maximum of £250,000. If we attain the minimum sum, then we shall be able to buy the land from Alresford to Alton and guarantee that the track between Alresford and Ropley will remain in position for at least two years. Ideally however, we should prefer to buy this three miles of line, so that there can be no danger of it being removed. Accordingly, we must all make every effort to raise the largest possible sum. The minimum sum of £75,000 is in every sense of the word a minimum.

When looking at the Application form on the Prospectus you will see that there are two parts, one for those who have left their

subscription to the first issue with the Company and wish to apply for that sum to be used for buying shares; the other part is for new subscribers. You must delete whichever part is inappropriate. If you wish to use whatever sum you have already with the Company and to add a bit more, then do not delete either part but send a cheque payable to Winchester & Alton Railway Limited for the additional sum you want to subscribe. We have got to raise the minimum sum before Christmas, so please do not delay and send in your application as soon as the Prospectus is available.

SIMON DAVIES.

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A Grand Report
of the
GRAND SUMMER DRAW 1975 by Norman Atherden.

Promptly at 15.00 on Sunday 24th August, on the Up Platform of Alresford Station, the Summer Draw took place. Appropriately heralded by a steam whistle from the Down Platform (yes, the train was standing ON the platform - model, of course!) Beverley Evans brightly started to draw the fourteen prizes. Beverley - usually seen adorning the station shop - deservedly received a hearty round of applause following the draw.

Half the winners were members (perhaps the other winners can be persuaded to join?) although only one of the audience received a prize. The success of the draw was such that a Christmas Draw was suggested - not possible, unfortunately, because of the second Share Issue.

Winners were as follows:

Prize	Ticket No.	Name and address
£50	10461	B. Keep, Medstead.
£20	12883	A. Jones, Newport, Gwent.
£10	0577	D. Monger, Milford.
£ 5	13889	T. Penman, Winchester
£ 1	5499	J. Haskett, Hayling Is.
£ 1	13612	R. Springer, Alresford.
£ 1	12843	C. Dickings, Winslow.
£ 1	1866	J. Finnigan, Old Alresford.
£ 1	5087	Mr. Goodman, Worthing.
£ 1	10060	M. Worrall, Towyn.
£ 1	7421	A. Bassett, Staplehurst.
£ 1	11163	G. Gibbs, Alton.
£ 1	1570	R. Dale, Ensworth.
£ 1	3468	I. Read, Lymington.

Concerning the draw, I received nearly a hundred letters of complement, and half-a-dozen critical comments. However, it is worth mentioning the points which these raised: firstly, the differing dates on the tickets and that mentioned in the 'Mid-Hants News'; and secondly the difficulties many people had in obtaining additional supplies of tickets.

On the first count, this was due to a typographical error but the date shown on the ticket was the correct one. As it happened, the difference was fortuitous since it allowed time for ALL the returned tickets to be included in the draw. Concerning ticket supplies, by law the number of tickets which can be printed is limited and we had the maximum number. This meant that after distribution to members there were only about 100 remaining, which were quickly snapped up. Tickets were sold in many far-reaching places - even Canada. This problem of insufficient tickets - 80 people asked for further supplies - should be resolved soon with amended legislation.

The draw showed a profit of some £200 - this would not have been possible but for the task performed by those stalwarts who for three

weeks spent every evening pushing up to six items and the tickets into envelopes and they deserve our sincere thanks. Thank you also to all who purchased tickets, sent in donations and helped to organize the draw. Finally, thanks to our younger members: Beverley Evans who made the draw; Lorraine Hack who delivered tickets in the Alresford area by hand, and Michelle, who folded most of the 6,130 counterfoils by hand!

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Charles Lewis reports on the journey of...

THE LAST TRAIN TO TATABANYA (or the Severn Valley Rail Tour!)

At 8.45 on October 11th, diesel unit 1036 pulled out of Portsmouth and Southsea station at the commencement of a journey over strange tracks to Kidderminster and the Severn Valley. The weather, although cold, was sunny which made for a very pleasant journey. By the time we had left Reading (the train stopped at Eastleigh, Winchester, Basingstoke and Reading) all seats were taken with 232 members and friends aboard. The train was named 'Watercress Belle' and many admiring looks were cast at the handsome headboard made by Dave Evans and friends.

Although keeping to time for most of the journey, there was a signal stop at Clifton (BR having a little joke?) on the outskirts of Birmingham which made us a few minutes late at Kidderminster. Five Midland Red coaches took us the short distance to Bewdley, where ex-LMR 2-10-0 No. 600 'Gordon' was waiting with a nine-coach train in Platform 2. All other passenger trains were cancelled that day on the Severn Valley Railway due to the filming of 'The Seven Per Cent Solution'. Foreign looking posters for the benefit of the film were everywhere. The north end of Bewdley station had been renamed 'Tatabanya' and the south was 'Bratislava'. Many took the opportunity to photograph tank loco 4566 in steam near one of the foreign name-boards.

Our train eventually set off half an hour late and was accompanied with derisive cheers from some members at the sight of the film company's activities further up the line. The scenery along the SVR is delightful and several 'foreign' locomotives, dressed up for the film, provided plenty of additional interest. Arrival at Bridgenorth coincided with the sun going in but it remained dry and passengers had about two hours to look round the station and yards or around the town. A real foreign locomotive, German 2-6-2T No. 064-305 attracted much attention and I for one will return when this fine engine is in steam once again.

Departure was fifteen minutes earlier than planned which was just as well since the filming held up our train on the trip back to Bewdley. As a result, the BR departure from Kidderminster was also late. However, the driver of our train must have been heartened by the news that 'Southampton beat Chelsea 4-1, because although 13 minutes late at Birmingham, we reached Reading 8 minutes early. The train reached Eastleigh even earlier, because to the great amusement of many at the cost of others, Winchester was passed at 80 mph! Taxis were provided for the unfortunate ones from Eastleigh.

The day was a great success and the Preservation Society and the 48518 Group, joint organizers, recorded a good profit. A second tour may run in the spring and if any member has a suggestion for a destination, drop a line to Alresford Station. Finally, thanks must be expressed to Geoff Gardiner and Brent Holloway who helped with much of the work of distributing tickets and allocating seats.

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"WATERCRESS COUNTRY LINE"

It was one of those very wet nights on Thursday 2nd October, which is probably why only sixty people turned out to come to The Community Centre at Alresford for "Watercress Country Line" instead of the two hundred we were hoping for. None the less, it was a most enjoyable evening. But what was "Watercress Country Line" you will ask if you weren't there. (Why weren't you?) It was an evening of country and folk music with drains as the central theme and the purpose was to raise funds for the Mid-Hants Railway Preservation Society.

Our guests were a first class Country and Western Band by the name of "Flintlock" who are well-known in clubs and pubs all over the south;

Dave Williams, the versatile folk singer and ceilidh chairman of BBC Radio Solent fame; "Muffin The Mule", a promising folk group from Addlestone; and Paul Royston, a young singer/songwriter who pedalled all the way from Basingstoke on his bicycle in the pouring rain, and who would certainly have won a medal for bravery if there had been one about. Robin West was our M.C. He gets around quite a bit too, having sung on the BBC and is known as a singer/comic in cabaret throughout Sussex, Surrey and Kent.

"Come fire or hell the Bournemouth Belle" just had to get to town so when the 'rain' was blocked it took the better way around. Through Alresford, Ropley, Medstead, Alton wove the coaches cream "The Watercress" they did confess could take it like a dream."

"So ride with me 'cross the hills and valley,
Soon you'll agree it's the only place to be,
Come be my guest on the old "Watercress"
Where steel and steam make the ideal company."

So runs the first verse and chorus of the song which won "The Watercress Line" song and poem contest. It was written by Ian Fyvie of Addlestone and sung by his group "Muffin the Mule". Tied second came the song "The Little Watercress Loco" by Mr. Alec Strachan of Totton, and "The Watercress Line" by Mrs. F.M. Jobson of Whitchurch.

Highly commended were "Watercress Line" a song by Paul Royston and "Ballad of 'The Watercress' Workers" a poem by Mrs. Bunch of Alresford. Mr. Atherden, one of the Directors of The Mid Hants Railway Preservation Society, presented the prizes.

The winning song "So Ride With Me" sung by "Muffin the Mule" was recorded by BBC Radio Solent and went out on the air no less than four times.

I would like to give special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Ron Hack, Mr. and Mrs. Colin Fuller and Mr. Atherden, who helped in so many ways, and also those lovely ladies who produced the delicious refreshments.

It would be nice to have more music evenings to raise "Steam" for "The Watercress Line" and if there is anyone who would like to write to me with ideas, please do so, - I would love to hear from you.

Mrs. Susan D. W. Jackson,
Stoner Hill Cottage,
Froxfield,
Nr. Petersfield, Hants.

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A FEW IDEAS FOR CHRISTMAS

Always presuming that everyone must have a friend who will be given £10 worth of Mid-Hants shares as a Christmas present, there are several items in our shop at Alresford Station which would make ideal gifts.

First of all there is the 1976 Calendar (75p. or 87p. by post) with 13 large black and white photographs of Mid-Hants trains over the last 25 years. We have tried to include as many different classes of locomotive as possible so this calendar should prove to be a popular gift.

We have now produced our own booklet entitled 'The Mid-Hants 'Watercress' Line' (35p. or 44p. by post) and this includes much of the history of our line from 1861 until the present day. We have already sold hundreds of these booklets in the short time they have been available. Many photos of stations and Mid-Hants trains are included and these should jog quite a few memories.

Finally, our Christmas Card (8p. each) which this year shows a Mid-Hants steam special at Alton, is now on sale.

Our stock at Alresford is expanding fast so make sure you call in to the shop next time you visit us.....

- SHOP NEWS -

The Society is pleased to announce the appointment of Mrs. Winifred Hack as Manageress of the Alresford Station Shop.

The Society is most grateful to Mrs. Hack for the long (unpaid!) hours she puts in at the Shop, which she now keeps open virtually every day. The actual hours she spends at the Station can only be exceeded by her Husband Ron, who is rarely seen away from the N Class locomotive, which he is helping to restore.

"Win" will be pleased to see members and supporters at the shop at weekends or during the week and our range of stock is ever

increasing. We have just negotiated an Agency with Airfix Products and their current range of railway kits will shortly be on sale.

Finally, sincere thanks also to the other Shop helpers, who also put in many long (unpaid!) hours in the Shop at weekends. Thanks to Chris Graham, Beverley, Sue, Morvan Buck and all other helpers.

COLIN FULLER.

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AFTER THE 'BRIEF' HISTORY...

...comes the detailed history, but first I would like to hear from anyone who has information about the line, the people who worked on it, the trains that ran on it and also how the growth of the line caused the growth of the surrounding area. If you can help in any way, please drop me a line at Alresford Station. Thanks are also due to those who have sent photographs of Mid-Hants trains in response to my earlier request. Keep them coming!

CHARLES LEWIS.

---O---

THANKS...

to the Basingstoke Round Table No. 93 (September 29th), Farnham Young Conservatives (October 15th) and the Alresford Young Farmers Club (October 22nd) for allowing me to tell their members about the up-to-date progress on restoring this line.

C.W.L.

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WANTED - A CLERICAL GROUP

It is a long time since your Secretary contributed to the "Mid-Hants News" - not since issue No. 2 to be precise - so perhaps I may be allowed a few lines to dwell briefly upon a facet of our enterprise which gets scant notice.

It was John Milton who wrote: "They also serve who only stand and wait." My paraphrase is much less poetic but more appropriate to my theme: "They also serve who only sit and write."

If this venture of ours should fail - and, let's face it, any commercial enterprise from I.C.I. to the corner shop could fail in this exceptional period - it would not be for want of enthusiasm or effort on the part of those who take their coats off and get stuck into the manual jobs. It would be because too many members avoid like the plague the less congenial chores which are part and parcel of any organization like ours.

Glamour and personal satisfaction there may well be in restoring a steam engine, laying track, painting a signal box - and vital all such work is. But when it comes to getting down to it behind a desk or typewriter, addressing envelopes and sticking on stamps there is a tendency to shy like startled colts.

I wonder how many of you have any idea of what will be involved when we have to record, register, process and service two or three thousand shareholdings in compliance with the requirements of the Companies Act? With our present strength of clerical help the prospect is terrifying.

We have our locomotive group, our permanent way group, our signalling group, our rolling-stock group, our building group. But WHERE IS OUR CLERICAL GROUP? I know we have a small number of stalwarts without whose help behind the scenes we would have foundered long since. All praise to them for tackling the uninspiring, mundane jobs.

The moment has come, however, with the new Prospectus and further capital issue upon us, when a strong, efficient clerical group is absolutely essential to our success. From Directors to tea boy (have we got one?) we need practical help from ALL of you to keep the clerical wheels turning. Is there here, perhaps, a useful outlet for the energies of some of our lady members? Please let us have your names as soon as possible and also say if you have a typewriter. Remember you will be the backbone of our enterprise in the challenging years ahead.

F. CLIFTON SHERIFF.

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TELEVISION AT ALRESFORD (AGAIN!)

Southern Television once again visited Alresford Station, for two days in August, to film scenes for the children's serial 'Hoggs Back', featuring Derek Royale, Wendy Richard and Hugh Lloyd. The Station was renamed 'Little Belling' for the occasion and transmission nationwide was on the 20th and 27th October.

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THE TRAIN STANDING ON THE DOWN PLATFORM...

Live steam visited Alresford on August 24th, when visitors had the opportunity to take a ride behind locomotives in miniature. The Fareham and District Society of Model Engineers laid a short stretch of line along the platform, and operated a fine selection of 3½ in. and 5 in. gauge locomotives. The Society will be making a return visit on Sunday 16th November, so make a note of the date and enjoy the sight and smell of steam once again waiting around the station buildings!

---O---

WELCOME...

...to Geoff Parr who is now Information Officer, answering postal enquiries from the public asking about our progress. This was a task which was previously undertaken by Charles Lewis.

---O---

LOCOMOTIVE NOTES.

First of all, Peter Parks has drawn to our attention that a large number of good quality pipe fittings, suitable for brake vacuum systems and so forth, and two sack trolleys have been given to the Society by Kingdons, the Hardware store in Winchester. Thank you, Kingdons, and thank you Mr. Fayers (an Alton member) for drawing them to our attention.

N Class Progress.

This locomotive has of course drawn a lot of attention from visitors to the station, all of whom seem to comment favourably on the progress of restoration. Much of the sheet metal work is now resplendent in gleaming black paint, while the frames, wheels, motion and everything else are spotlessly clean. It now looks as if it won't be long before the engine is in steam once more.

The boiler has received considerable attention and it is in remarkably good condition considering how long it was standing in the salty atmosphere of Barry docks. An hydraulic test has been carried out privately and this showed minor areas of attention. John Bunch says that the boiler is now ready for the Cornhill Insurance Boiler Inspector and the hydraulic test for his benefit will take place shortly. Meanwhile, the appeal for missing parts (notably return crank and eccentric rod) produced nothing and these major items are now being specially made. Tender repairs have now largely been completed and altogether the state of the engine is very good.

Everyone complained in the latter days of SR steam about the horrible dirty state some of the engines were in. This was obviously a blessing in disguise - there is nothing better than hard, sooty grease and oil for providing resistance against the elements!

HUDSWELL CLARKE AND BAGNALL

Since most of the attention has lately been centred on the 'N', not much heavy work has been carried out on these two locomotives. The Hudswell Clarke now has no tubes, and the retubing is to be supplemented by some of the good old tubing welded to form sound, full length tubes. The Insurance Company has confirmed that this is in order, provided that pressure tests are carried out to the Boiler Inspector's satisfaction. The cylinder bores, steam chests and valve gear have been examined and have been found to be in first class condition, and absolutely no attention is required here. Slough Estates, the previous owner of the engine, certainly took routine maintenance seriously. Re-painting is now progressing well.

Meanwhile, the 'Bagnall Boys' have been busy painting their engine and a brief inspection by the Boiler Inspector indicated that perhaps the heavy boiler repairs originally considered necessary might be avoided.

B-F FINANCE.

The 48513 Group, it is nice to know, only need £900 more to secure the locomotive from Barry scrapyard. Although the fund-raising effort must take second place during the share issue, it seems that if past efforts are anything to go by, it won't be long before the engine is on its way to Alresford!

---O---

PUBLICITY OFFICER

As mentioned in the Editorial, our Publicity Officer, Charles

Lewis is 'retiring', although of course he won't disappear from the Mid-Hants scene altogether. We are now looking for someone to take over the job of keeping the press and public informed of our activities. Although two of Charles's jobs - editing the Mid-Hants News and providing information following public requests - have been already taken over, someone is needed to carry on the 'meat' of the PRO's job. The work will involve regular contact with local press, radio and television, as well as national newspapers and magazines. The person appointed will also have to give talks on our progress to local organizations who have been kind enough to ask the Society to provide a speaker at meetings. Ideally, the person appointed should have some knowledge of the media, have access to a typewriter, be on the 'phone day and evenings and be used to public speaking. If you feel that this position is for you, apply to Alresford Station, or drop a line to the Editor.

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100 YEARS AGO ON THE MID-HANTS

John Adams, Hon. Archivist, spotted this in a recent issue of the Hampshire Chronicle.

"Sunday, September 4th, 1875: Winchester.

The half-yearly general meeting of the Mid Hants Railway Company (Alton Lines) was held on Monday at the Company's offices, in Cannon Street, with Mr. H. Hall, a Director, presiding. The report stated that the traffic for the half-year ending June 30th last amounted to £5,527 but deducting the Government duty and working expenses, together £2,429, there was a balance of £3,098. This return exhibited an increase on the net earnings for the half-year of £202 over the earnings of the corresponding period of the previous year".

If they could make a profit, we can!

---O---

FOR SALE.

Strip mounted relay sets containing Post Office 3000 type relays, in working condition. Will operate on 12v DC, and are suitable for model railways and so forth. Complete with mounting strips and covers.

	No. of Relays	Approx no. of contacts	Price
A	15	19M 13C 2K 7B	£2-00
B	14	42M 14C 28K	2-00
C	10	30M 10C 20K	£1-50
D	8	20M 1C	£1-00

Contacts key: M - make; C - change-over; K - make before break; B - break. Relays sold individually if required. Also, ex-GWR telephone pole insulators, 25p. each. Ideal paper weights. Further details, contact the Shop, Alresford Station.

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POETS CORNER.

They came in 'lots' or one by one,
To rest here at their seaside grave,
grinding to their final clanking, shrieking halt;
Forgotten warriors from another age.

Now in endless ranks of rust, they wait:
Their fate has been to die a lingering death
From paralysis of moving parts.
Their protecting skin of paint has gone,
Weathered by a decade of rain, salt and wind;
Or scorched by Summer sun.
Their vital organs, too, removed,
By 'collectors' - those vandals of the railway world.
Nor a sorry sight confronts the eye:
A decrepit graveyard, filled with rotting grimy heaps.
For some, the final fate will be,

For what skeleton that may still remain,
The burning torch that takes its toll,
With oxygen-acetylene.
Ironical, to be destroyed by fire,
When once by fire they thrived.
Their steel remains will be melted down,
Made into cars or razor blades.

But for others, there lies a happier fate;
Though rusting now, they've been selected,
By a preservation group,
To be restored and resurrected.
And though we must spend time and money,
De-rust and paint, and hunt for spares;
Our toil and effort will be worthwhile,
When they steam again in future years.

KENNETH COLE.

---O---

FINALLY.

If you can help save the 'Watercress Line' - please act now - do not
delay - fill in the Application form for shares now and send it to us at
Alresford Station.

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MID-HANTS NEWS



Issue Number 13

Editor: Ian Crowder,
2 Rose Cottage,
Turgis Green,
Nr. Basingstoke,
Hampshire. RG27 0AG.

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Tel. Turgis Green:
0256 - 84 771.

February, 1976.

EDITORIAL.

The speculation, at last, is over and it must by now be general knowledge that the second share issue has exceeded the required minimum target sum of £75,000, thus signalling the start of the real physical task of re-opening the Watercress Line. In the lead article, John Taylor, Chairman of the Winchester & Alton Railway Company Limited outlines something of what was involved in organising the share issue and what the next stages are. Of course, the share issue now remains open and prospectuses are still available. To those who have already contributed, the Share Certificates will be issued shortly.

The success of the issue marks the culmination of a tremendous amount of backroom work and negotiation on the part of the Boards of both W & A and the MHRPS. They deserve a big round of applause for making the hopes of hundreds of people a reality.

Lots of changes are now going to take place throughout the Mid Hants organisation - and not least of these will be with 'Mid-Hants News'. As outlined elsewhere, this is planned to be the last duplicated issue - Number 14 will be properly printed, complete with illustrations and photographs. This will be the magazine for YOU, hopefully largely by YOU - so all contributions, comments, suggestions, letters, photographs and so forth will be most welcome!

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MESSAGE FROM JOHN TAYLOR - CHAIRMAN,
WINCHESTER & ALTON RAILWAY LTD.

After years of set-backs and frustration, I am indeed pleased that we have passed the minimum Share requirement of £75,000.

This enables us to keep the Share issue open so that applications for Shares can continue to be accepted.

Every extra pound we now receive is a tremendous help in expediting the further aims and objectives of the Company and the Preservation Society. At the very least it will reduce overheads substantially by saving interest on the Permanent Way.

The Response has been magnificent - KEEP IT UP - tell your friends and acquaintances that prospectuses are still available and being issued from Alresford Station.

We still have to complete legal formalities - once this is done, we can really say it is 'Full Steam Ahead'.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the many people who in so many different ways contributed to this success - we have turned a dream into a reality.

Nothing succeeds like success and I look forward with confidence to a successful future for our unique railway.

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LOCOMOTIVE NOTES

'N' Class 31274.

Work on this locomotive is progressing very well - any Sunday will

find dozens of overalled men - and girls - working, painting, scraping, fitting, drinking tea, yarning. There is certainly an air of expectancy since the locomotive is so near to steaming, and that it is now positive that there is a railway for it to run on! The replacement parts required, mentioned in the last Newsletter, are now either complete or approaching completion.

8F Class 48518

The 48518 group are now well on the way towards purchasing the Stanier 8F resting in Barry scrapyard, South Wales. Although, of course, fund raising activities have lately been focussed on the share issue, there is now less than £750 required for purchase. All that's left then is transport to the Mid Hants - the money for this has to be raised, possibly through a sponsor.

An important source of income for the Group is a sales stand which is taken to model railway exhibitions, traction engine rallies and so forth. This is a joint venture between the Group and the MHRPS, which provides valuable publicity for both. The stand is manned by four members of the Group, of whom special mention should be made to Allan Lewis, whose help with transport and in other ways keeps the show on the road.

Allan Lewis and his merry band will represent the 8F Group and the MHRPS at the following events during February and March, so if you are in these areas please pop in to see us:

28th February: Talylllyn RPS Model Railway Exhibition,
King Edward VI School, Southampton.

13th March: Portsmouth Railway Circle Model Railway Exhibition,
Wesley Central Hall, Fratton Road, Portsmouth.

27th March: Great Western Society Model Railway Exhibition,
Crosfield Hall, Romsey.

A second stall will be in operation during 1976 and if any readers can suggest events at which the Societies can be represented, please let Brent Holloway know either at Alresford Station or at 48 Players Crescent, Totton, Southampton SO4 4AZ. Thank you!

Urie S-15 Class 30506

This locomotive will be the next arrival at the Mid Hants - hopefully, transport arrangements will be completed by the time you read these notes. This representative of an important LSWR class will be a most valuable addition to the Mid Hants motive power, running once again over metals it must have traversed many times before. In this feature article, GEOFF STYLES of the Urie S-15 Preservation Group describes the locomotive, traces the development of the class and discusses the Group's efforts in securing the future of 30506.

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REVIVAL OF A FORGOTTEN CLASS

Mention the name of Robert Urie to many British Railway enthusiasts and the chances are you'd be met by a blank stare, or at best a vague recollection that someone of that name had built some locomotives for a major railway. To Southern enthusiasts, though, the name of Urie is associated with the series of heavily constructed six-coupled tender and tank engines turned out of Eastleigh Works between 1914 and 1924. Before 1914, the London and South Western Railway had, for its heaviest trains, relied on the various elegant but largely ineffective 4-6-0s of Dugald Drummond. The Urie engines were a great advance, both in terms of reliability and ease of maintenance. Few people today, however, give Robert Urie his due credit as an innovator, for the concept of the original Urie H15 design was still in use at the time of the construction of the last British Railways steam locomotive in 1960. The characteristic Urie design-features were a large boiler, a superheater, a high running plate, outside Walschaerts valve-gear, and two cylinders only. In addition, a measure of standardisation, especially of boilers, was achieved. This basic form, allied to Churchward's work on steam-circuit design, is seen in all the BR standard locomotives and in much of the work of all four grouped Companies after 1923.

The S15 class was conceived as the last of Urie's three 4-6-0 types

for the South Western, and the first was completed in January, 1920. The class constituted a small-wheeled version of the express passenger N15 class, and was intended for use primarily on freight traffic; Although they made frequent appearances on passenger trains throughout their lives, particularly for the heavy boat trains. They were 'hard sloggers' rather than 'greyhounds' amongst engines, but could achieve 70 m.p.h. when called upon. Twenty locomotives were built in 1920 and 1921 and R.E.L. Maunsell later constructed 25 of a modified type for the Southern Railway.

The Urie engines spent most of their lives at Feltham shed, working freights from the marshalling yard, although members of the class spent time at Exmouth Junction, Nine Elms and Salisbury. During the Second World War, some members of the class wandered further afield, on loan to the Great Western and worked out of Old Oak Common, Southall and even Tyseley. Most of them ran nearly 1½-million miles during service and withdrawals from BR did not start until 1962. The last one, 30512, was also the last Urie engine in service and was laid aside in March 1964. There it was expected their story would end, as the remainder of the class found their way to various scrap dealers.

Two locomotives, though, fetched up at Woodham Bros. Yard, Barry Docks, where they lay in company with over 200 others awaiting cutting up. In 1971 two letters appeared in the Railway Magazine - one from Mr. A. Wild of Bournemouth, the other from H. C. Casserley - pointing out that the engines at Barry included two London and South Western Railway 4-6-0s which were of considerable historic significance - not only were they the last surviving SR pre-grouping 4-6-0 engines, they were also the only surviving locomotives designed by Robert Urie. Both gentlemen felt that something ought to be done and in April 1972, it was. An announcement by Roger Hardingham, of Stamford, Lincolnshire, was published to the effect that if others would join him, he would start an appeal to save a Urie S15. That first appeal produced 32 members of the new Group, and an immediate start was made by having the two engines - 30499 and 30506 - professionally examined. 30506 was found to be in the better condition, the eight years in Barry having had little internal effect and a quotation of £4,000 was obtained from Woodhams as the purchase price of the engine. The initial target was 100 members and £1,000 in the bank at the end of the first year; in fact, after 12 months there were 247 members, and the engine had been bought with the aid of a bank loan. A limited amount of restoration work was possible at Barry, the main priority being to get all exposed surfaces coated with red-lead paint as a protection against the salt-air and all bearing surfaces de-rusted and greased. Enthusiastic bands of members swarmed over the engine once a month and in the first year over 1000 man-hours were recorded. In its first year the Group went from an idea to the owners of a 120-ton steam locomotive.

Our second year was just as active as the first, with painting and greasing still the major tasks and at the end of it we had repaid the bank-loan and begun to think about moving our locomotive to a more permanent home.

One feature of the Group is its democratic structure, for all major decisions are put to a vote of shareholders, and as the location of the engine was as important a decision as any we were likely to have to make, a ballot was held in early 1974, in which the Mid-Hants line were clear winners. Unfortunately, the result of a ballot does not move an engine 265 miles and whilst opening negotiations for a form of agreement for 'residence' at Alresford, we launched a Move-a-Mile fund and stepped up our activities in the sales field. Our first publication, a list of engines at Barry, came out early in 1974 and was an immediate success, with our printer working flat-out to keep up with demand. A second edition of the Barry List came out in 1975, (copies are available at the Alresford Station shop) and rapidly outsold the first. With this success, we set about planning other publications which should see the light of day in 1976. In the meantime, after protracted negotiations, we reached a suitable form of agreement with the Mid-Hants Railway for our home on the line.

The failure of the first Winchester & Alton share issue disappointed us all, for it delayed our move again. The second share issue was for a scheme materially different from the first, so we decided another ballot of members must be held and this took place in

late 1975. The Mid-Hants was again the preferred scheme and with the successful issue in December 1975, we hope that it will not be too long now before 30506 arrives on a line on which she ran frequently in the past.

The next few years promise to be exciting ones for the Group, with full restoration taking place. We have no intention of skimping on this and expect to take about three to four years, including a full retubing of the boiler. Our experts tell us that 30506 is in fine condition and does not need a great deal of work but we would like to feel that when we have finished restoration we will have an engine which will run for the next twenty years without a major problem - perhaps that is hoping for a great deal with a machine that is already 56 years old but the original workmanship was so sound and solid that we believe it to be a possibility. We have not yet decided on a livery for the engine but it will be one that was carried by it in service and will be decided by a full share-holders ballot. Of course, we need as much help as we can get and our 620 members have no aversion to being joined by anyone with an interest in preserving an unique steam engine! Shares are available at £1 each and this gives free membership for a year (including issues of our magazine 'Stovepipe'). Our Treasurer, at 24 Church Road, Fleet, Hampshire will be pleased to hear from you!

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CARRIAGE & WAGON NOTES.

Recent freight arrivals.

During past months, freight rolling stock has been arriving at Alresford, to join the South Western Tar Distillers tank wagon already there.

The first of these was an ex-LMS steel wagon frame, which was carried by the road hauliers returning from taking the Bluebell Railway's 0-6-0T 'Fenchurch' to the Stockton and Darlington 150 year celebrations. This frame was purchased from La Porte Acids Limited, Castleford, Yorkshire by Mr. J. A. Williams. It was built in 1935 but no further details are known. Any information on this or any other rolling stock at Alresford will, of course, be welcomed by the C & W Department.

Three further arrivals were from the former Longmoor Military Railway and were all built before 1935. Despite their wooden frames, two are in excellent condition considering their age. They were originally purchased in connection with the abortive LMR preservation project and since 1972 have been in a scrap yard at Farncombe. The first of this trio, No. 046270, is a drop-side 10-ton wagon built to Railway Clearing House standards and is owned by Mr. C. Le Corney, a regular member of the C & W Dept. It was delivered to Alresford on Christmas Eve. No. 046277 is similar to the latter vehicle, but a large part of the body is missing. The frame is also cracked, following derailment, it is believed, when an LMR freight train ran away due to vandalism. The wagon has been broken up for spare parts. The covered goods wagon, No. 047764, is thought to be of Midland Railway origin. It was used in the filming of 'Young Winston' on the LMR and still sports the initials SAR (South African Railways). The latter two vehicles were transported to Alresford in November and are owned by the MHRPS.

Van and carriage purchases.

Two very recent purchases, yet to arrive at Alresford, are both ex-Southern vehicles: a parcels van and brake coach. The coach is Bullied Brake Secon Open, built in 1947. In latter passenger-carrying days it was numbered W 4211 S, and operated from Exeter. Now identified DS 70319 it has latterly been based at Bristol, used for training purposes.

The PMV parcels van is believed to have been built at Ashford in 1934. Formerly numbered S 2169 S, it is now DS 93, and is fully fitted as a tool and mess van, complete with stove, benches, tool chests, storage space and so forth: ideally suited for its intended role on the Mid Hants. Apart from requiring roof re-felting, it is in excellent order and is at present located at Yeovil Junction.

In the next issue, it should be possible to announce the purchase of further coaching stock.

Manpower required!

With three wagons to restore and the prospect of other rolling stock

in the offing, the C & W group is suffering from a serious shortage of manpower! We are at present a small but enthusiastic band, with members coming from as far away as London and Southampton. You will be welcome to join us - no previous experience is necessary, so long as you can wield a paint brush or rust scraper. Of course, anyone with experience in this field would be invaluable at this stage to help and advise.

We would also like to reiterate our appeal for tools - anything is welcome, especially rags. Drop in and see us on any Sunday, in the Goods Shed at Alresford Station if you'd like to assist.

Carriage and Wagon Fund.

From time to time, items of rolling stock of pre-nationalisation origin appear on the BR tender lists or are offered for sale through other sources. Many of these would form interesting exhibits on the Mid Hants but are not vitally needed to maintain services and therefore cannot be purchased from the W & A's limited rolling stock budget. We know from comments and offers of help that many members would be interested in helping to purchase such stock but as the time given to make a decision is usually very limited it is seldom possible to launch a specific fund for any particular vehicle. We therefore propose to establish a carriage and wagon fund with the purpose of such pre-nationalisation stock, with of course a particular emphasis on the Southern and its constituents. We invite members to send their donations to David Vidler, Alresford Station, Alresford, Hampshire, SO24 9JG.

If you have an interest in any specific types of vehicle, don't send a donation but please let us know of your interest and how much you would like to subscribe. If possible, please give a telephone number so that you can be contacted quickly - should anything crop up!

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HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK!

What, you may ask, has the recently-passed Health and Safety at Work Act got to do with the Mid-Hants? You may be surprised to learn that the MHRPS and other similar organisations are, in fact, bound by the implications of the Act and have a responsibility to the members and public who visit us to make the station and railway environment as safe as possible. This is why we welcome ERIC BIRSECK MIOT who is appointed First Aid and Safety Officer. He points out that safety is largely a matter of common sense - you don't, for example, wear running shoes when heaving rails about, or plug in a live power extension in the pouring rain and expect to be immune from injury. Fortunately, we have had a very good safety record to date. There are now fully-equipped first aid boxes at the Station and a first aid bag is available for PW teams and others away from Alresford. A stretcher will shortly be available at the station also. We would, of course, rather that these were never used, so please take care and don't be a risk to yourself and to others. Now that the Mid Hants has the green light, don't make it a blue flashing one for you!

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ANYONE A QUALIFIED FIRST-AIDER?

It would be most helpful if a list could be compiled at the station of any regular visitors who are qualified at First Aid in any way. In this way, should the need arise, it will be known who to approach. Please leave your name with Eric, or with the Duty Director.

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APPOINTMENT - General Manager.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that my fellow-Director of the W & A, David Vidler, has been appointed General Manager of the Watercress Line. He will assume overall responsibility for the day to day activities on the railway, particularly when operation commences.

David is one of those who have done so much towards bringing the hopes of re-opening part of the railway to reality, and has been responsible for much of the 'behind the scenes' work. A familiar sight to all the regulars to Alresford, he has been associated with the re-opening efforts since the line closed in 1973 and is a founder Director of MHRPS and also its Deputy Chairman. Best wishes in your appointment!

COLIN FULLER, Director, W & A
Chairman, MHRPS.

VACANCY - PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER.

This vacancy, advertised in the last 'Mid-Hants News' is still available. The applicant would ideally have some experience in working with the Press, TV and Radio, used to public speaking, and capable of producing regular press releases for the media. Access to a telephone both at home and at work is an advantage. If you feel you would like to help in this important aspect of the Railway's activities, please apply direct to Alresford Station, Alresford, Hampshire SO24 9JG, or through the Editor.

TOM MILLS.....

.....has relinquished his post with the MHRPS as Assistant Membership Secretary, although he will remain active with the Society. Many thanks for your valuable assistance in the past!

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ALRESFORD STATION SHOP.

The Station Shop is as ever very popular, in fact stocks lately have been exceeded by demand in some cases! However, still available are 1976 calenders, which includes 13 excellent photographs taken on the line in operating days. It is 75p; by post please add 13p. There are also stocks available of the Mid Hants History, at 35p. plus 9p. for postage. Other books and leaflets, photographs, slides, souvenirs and confectionary are waiting to be snapped up also!

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CATERING AT ALRESFORD.

Perhaps the high spot of a day's work on locos, wagons or track at Alresford is a relaxing half-hour in Thelma Evans' Pie Shoppe. She and her lovely band of helpers are there to provide hot pies, home-made Welsh Rarebit (a house speciality), tea (another speciality), coffee and Bovril. The menu also usually includes hot soup. Thelma loves company, so next time you come to Alresford, if you are not already one of her regulars, pay her a call and have a cosy chat over a hot pie. She'll love you for it!

If any ladies would like to join her in feeding the workers and shirkers, then please let her know. With the prospect of decentralisation to Ropley, in the foreseeable future, a second Pie Shoppe will probably have to be opened and staffed!

Thelma also extends her sincere thanks to all those who have helped her during 1975.

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PHOTOGRAPHS...

... and information would be welcome for the full Mid Hants history at present being compiled by Charles Lewis. Many thanks to those who have already sent some most useful material. Any recollections, pictures, historical notes or old manuscripts which might be used please send to Charles Lewis at Alresford Station. They will, of course be returned in due course.

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THANKS...

... to the Alton Line Users Association (November 4), Brightwell Young Mothers Club (November 6), Railway Enthusiasts Club (November 8), Salisbury & South Wilts. Railway Society (November 10), Alton Young Conservatives (November 13), Merchant Navy Loco. Pres. Soc. (November 22), Basingstoke Industrial Archaeology Group (November 24), East Somerset Railway Company (November 28), Fareham Round Table (December 5), Four Marks Young Wives (January 8) and the South-Eastern Electricity Board Camera Club (January 21) for allowing me to get the members, visitors and friends up-to-date with our progress. Especial thanks are due to those Societies who allowed me to add 'The Watercress Line' to their existing plans for their meetings!

CHARLES LEWIS.

Also, a word of thanks to the Severn Valley Railway - London Branch, for inviting Colin Fuller to address them on December 10th.

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NEW LOOK 'MID-HANTS NEWS'

As mentioned in the Editorial, the 'News' is to receive a facelift:

this is the last of the duplicated issues. The next will appear in printed form at around the end of April (copy date 5th April), and this means, of course, that we can now publish photographs and illustrations. In addition, we will sell advertising space, to help offset the printing costs, and classified advertising for members will be available at a moderate cost. For details of these, please contact the Editor. All this should produce a lively publication, reflecting the status of the MHRPS as a successful, going concern with a bright future. The 'News' will continue to be distributed to members free of charge and it will also be sold to the public through the Station Shop.

All we have to do now is fill the magazine - with your help! All contributions will be considered - letters to the Editor, stories, reports, funnies, cartoons, details of events, news of the MHRPS and the W & A, good black-and-white photographs. Your comments and suggestions will also be welcomed.

Please contact the Editor, Ian Crowder, at the address on the front of this issue, or at Alresford Station.

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WOT NO STEAM?

The Fareham & District Society of Model Engineers were due to make an appearance with their 5in. gauge live steam engines on November 16th, as advertised in the last issue. They extend their apologies for not coming, due to unavoidable circumstances (engine failure?) In the event, it was a pretty wet and miserable day, so hopefully not too many people were disappointed.

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ALRESFORD COMMUNITY WEEK - ADVANCE NOTICE.

As part of the Alresford Community Week in June, the Mid Hants has been given an evening to organise a public meeting and film show in the Community Centre, Alresford. This will take place on Wednesday, June 2nd, commencing at about 7.30 - full details later. The programme will include films of railway interest.

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ANOTHER RAIL TOUR.

The second joint 8F-Group/MHRPS rail tour will take place on Saturday May 8th 1976. This time, the destination is the Keighly and Worth Valley Railway in Yorkshire and represents a round trip of some 600 miles - a good day out by any standards! The K & WVR, which runs through the beautiful Bronte countryside, from Keighly to Oxenhope, was the venue of the film "The Railway Children". The fares are adults £9-50. children £7-50. - which represents good value for money for a journey more than one-and-a-half times longer than the last tour, to the Severn Valley. Motive power for the trip will be a Hastings 6-L diesel-electric unit, and on the K & WVR it is hoped that our train will be hauled by an 8F. The tour is advertised elsewhere in this issue; please don't delay and return the slip for further information.

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THANK YOU.

Thank you to all those at Alresford who were kind enough to send flowers and condolences to my Mother and I, when my Father died recently, after his illness. We were overwhelmed by your kind thoughts and although we have tried to reply to everyone, we may have missed some. Please accept our most sincere thanks.

JOHN BUNCH.

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MID-HANTS IN MINIATURE.

In spite of one of those last minute hitches which, thank heavens, the public are not aware of, (no power and not knowing where the electricity meter is located), the first Model Railway Exhibition to be organised by the Watercress Model Railway Club, set off to a good start shortly after 10 a.m. on the 12th October, 1975.

We were fortunate in having Mr. John Arlott to perform the opening ceremony. In his opening remarks, he made the point that the tremendous upsurge in interest in railways, as shown by the presence of so many people in the hall and the support for the various preservation societies (including our own) only showed the magnitude of the mistake in withdrawing rail services from places such as Alresford.

Visitors came steadily during the day to see exhibits covering a wide spectrum of railway modelling from the 'O' gauge tin plate of yesterday, down to the latest in miniature scale, where a container turned out to be a suitably disguised sugar lump! The realism of detail in the exhibits had to be seen to be believed, showing what high standards have to be met by clubs or individuals wishing to take up this way of life.

Our thanks must go to all those people who helped stage the exhibition - the exhibitors, the ladies who did the catering both in the hall and at the Station, officers of both the Company and the Preservation Society and finally, the number of people who supported us - we now have enough funds to commence the building of the scale model of Alresford, which we hope will be on exhibition sometime in 1976. If you have an interest in our project, or are interested in model railways in general, then please drop a line to the Watercress Model Railway Society, Alresford Station, Alresford SO23 9JG. You'll be welcome to join us!

---O---

POETS' CORNER.

'STEAM DAYS'

The electric train may be quieter
And speed on silken rails
But give me the age
of the steam pressure gauge
And the thrill that never fails.

The diesel train may be cleaner
Driven by hidden power
But give me the haze
in those halcyon days
Of the steam train's golden hour.

The billowing cloud from a smoke stack
The hiss of escaping steam
The tangible feel
of coal, oil and steel
when man and machine were a team.

MARK NEWBERRY 1975.

---C---

THE SECOND JOINT SF GROUP/MRPS RAIL TOUR WILL VISIT KEIGHLY & WORTH VALLEY RAILWAY on Saturday 8th May, 1976.

An opportunity to visit this attractive and popular railway, which runs through the beautiful Brontë countryside of Yorkshire. This is the railway on which was filmed the 'Railway Children'. An ideal day out for Dad, Mum and the kids! FARES: Adults £9-50. Children £7-50. MOTIVE POWER: Hastings 6-L diesel-electric set to Keighly. We hope for an SF on the K & WVR. ROUTE: Via Birmingham. DEPARTS: Portsmouth and Southsea approximately 07.45, stopping at Fareham, Eastleigh, Winchester, Basingstoke and Reading General. RETURNS: Approx. 23.15 at Portsmouth & Southsea. During the steam-hauled run on the K & WVR time will be allowed to inspect the facilities and exhibits at Howarth and Oxenhope. The fares are very reasonable, especially in comparison with the BR fares required to undertake the same trip by service trains. A round trip of about 600 miles. For further information, timings and so forth, please complete and return enclosed slip with stamped addressed envelope.

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