

THE KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY

Hugh Nightingale

The original Rother Valley Railway, later the Kent & East Sussex Railway, ran from Robertsbridge to Headcorn, being opened in three stages between 1900 and 1905. Its progenitor was the celebrated engineer Holman Fred Stephens who ran it as part of his private light railway empire until his death in 1931. His assistant, William H. Austen, duly succeeded him, and in an age of rapid change and international tension, nevertheless kept most of the rag-tag-and-bobtail collection functioning in one shape or form, including the K&ESR, until Nationalisation in 1948.

Having proved its worth as a diversionary route during the Second World War, and in part still useful for freight until 1961, it suffered a long, lingering death in the hands of BR. This painful strangulation was followed by a 13-year-war to save part of the line.

Eventually trains started running from Tenterden Town to just beyond Rolvenden in 1974, but the battle to return trains to Bodiam, close to the famous Castle, had barely begun. It would take another marathon 26 years and funding through Bond Issues, Grants and the National Lottery before trains would once again run over the whole of the permitted 10.5 miles, approximately half of the original route. Appropriately this occurred on April 2nd 2000, exactly a century after passenger trains had commenced running on the RVR.

Through 140 full colour images Hugh Nightingale takes a photographic journey along what is arguably the most eccentric, and quite possibly the most scenic, preserved railway in England. His collection will be an unending delight, not only for those who know and love the Kent & East Sussex Railway, but for all who appreciate steam in its natural setting.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hugh Nightingale has been photographing the KESR on an occasional basis for over 30 years. He became an early member of The Terrier Trust, formed in 1995, which now owns engine 32678 and most of the celebrated "Bodiam", which run on the line; for the past six years, Hugh has been a Trustee, organising an educational website. His appreciation of these locomotives, through the lenses of several generations of cameras and variety of formats, is apparent throughout the pages of this book. A member of both the KES and North Yorkshire Moors railways for decades, Hugh combines his time working for Network Rail, currently as a Signaller in Ashford IECC, the town of his birth, with his wife Rebecca, managing a busy home that revolves around four more Terriers – dogs, not engines!

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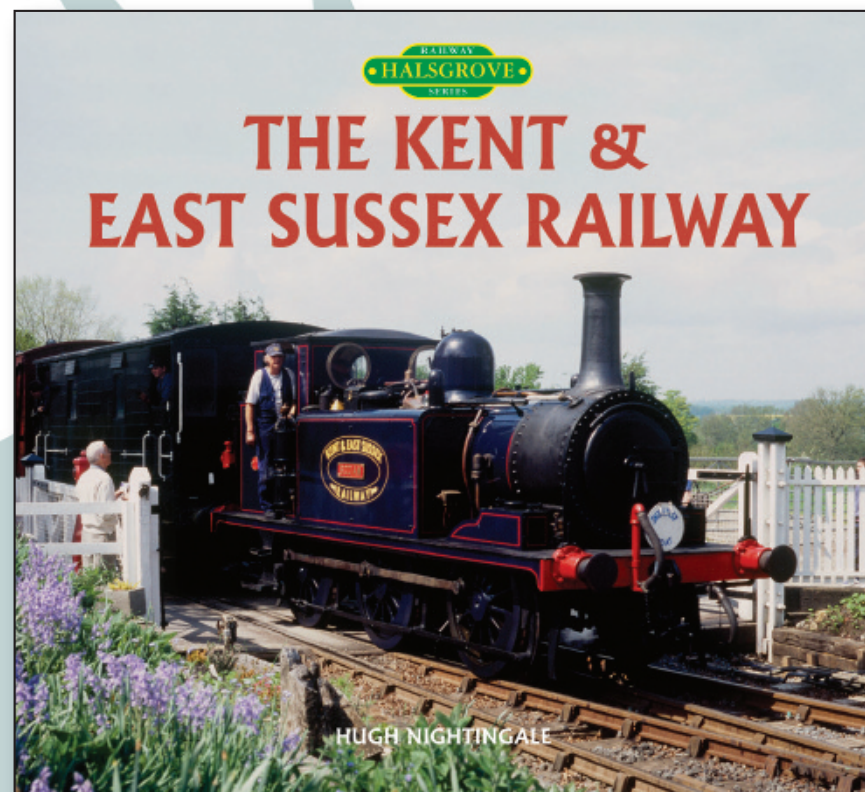
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4575-class GWR Small Prairie 2-6-2T No.5552, completed at Swindon Works in November 1928.



32678 turns from black to gold in the early evening sunshine as she drifts downhill just below Cranbrook Road Level Crossing once more with 753 on 4th December 2005.



32678 makes a fine sight working uphill with the delightful High Weald countryside in the background.



Left: Approaching the shallow cutting between Cranbrook Road crossing and the Tenterden Town Home Signal, with the January sun already starting to dip noticeably.

Right: Former Dorking Greystone Lime Co No.3 "Baxter", built by Fletcher Jennings of Whitehaven in 1877, and a Bluebell resident since 1960.



Example of a double page spread



Top right: The late George Wright on the footplate of "Rocket" just to the north of the platform at Tenterden Town with the tower of St Mildred's Parish Church included in the background. 15th September 1981.



Midland experimental 4-6-0 No. 211 "Northbrook" at Cranbrook Road Level Crossing with the 11.30am train on 10th December 2005. It was hauled at 11.30am on 10th December 2005. It was hauled with the exception of the 11.30am train on 10th December 2005. It was hauled with the exception of the 11.30am train on 10th December 2005.

No. 24 in the background is possibly the 11.30am train on 10th December 2005. It was hauled at 11.30am on 10th December 2005. It was hauled with the exception of the 11.30am train on 10th December 2005.



The 11.30am train on 10th December 2005. It was hauled at 11.30am on 10th December 2005. It was hauled with the exception of the 11.30am train on 10th December 2005.



Right: WD1960 "Wainwright" standing in the Up Platform (Platform 2) waiting to depart for Bodiam with the "Wealden Pullman" on 16th October 2005.