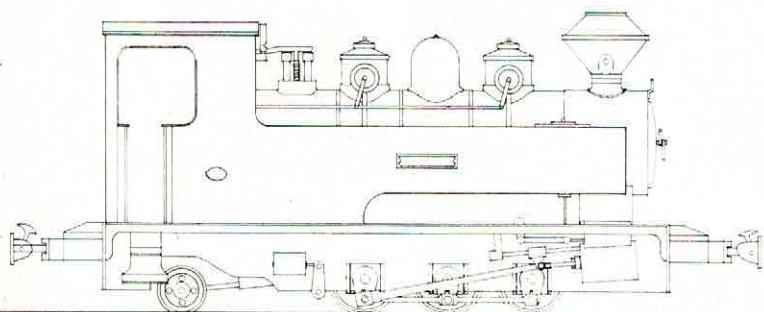


# **THE BOWATER RAILWAY**



**HANDING-OVER CEREMONY  
4 OCTOBER 1969**

**BOWATERS UNITED KINGDOM PAPER CO LTD  
AND THE LOCOMOTIVE CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN**

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## **Introduction**

We welcome you to this handing-over ceremony today — the first occasion on which a large industrial concern has supported the railway preservation movement in so generous a way.

When Bowaters U.K. Paper Company Limited decided to turn to more modern methods of transport between Ridham Dock and their mills at Kemsley and Sittingbourne, the death knell appeared to have sounded for their unique and extensive narrow gauge railway system. This has always been a great attraction to enthusiasts, and a large number of Bowater employees also have a great affection for it. So Bowater management approached the Association of Railway Preservation Societies, asking if they knew of an organisation that would be interested in the preservation of the system. The ARPS chairman, Capt. Peter Manisty, in turn approached the LCGB, and a preliminary meeting was held between representatives of the Club and the local management of Bowaters at Kemsley to discuss the project. Following this meeting, no further progress could be made until the proposals had been considered by the Directors of the Bowater Organisation and their agreement received. Approval in principle was given on 23rd July, and since then numerous detailed negotiations have been taking place, covering all aspects of operating a passenger-carrying railway. Detailed preparations have also been going on for the handing-over ceremony today. It must be remembered that the line has been fully operational for 24 hours a day until now, when the transition to road transport is to be made.

The replacement of the railway by road vehicles is entailing the removal of the line between Kemsley and Ridham Dock, and concurrent works at Sittingbourne will curtail the system at this point. Bowaters have been most generous in agreeing to provide access to the line at Sittingbourne and facilities at the new terminus at Kemsley.

On behalf of railway enthusiasts throughout the country, the LCGB expresses its thanks to the Bowater Organisation for its generosity in enabling this unique line to be preserved, at a nominal rent and with the loan of stock and equipment for its operation. Our grateful thanks also go to the officers of Messrs Bowaters with whom we have conducted negotiations, to the Chairman of the Association of Railway Preservation Societies, to our own officers and members for many hours spent in launching the project and to Stephen May, for supplying the photographs in this booklet.

We trust that you will enjoy the programme today and will return next Spring to see the opening of the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway. T.B. (LCGB)

## **The Bowater Organisation**

Founded in 1881 in the City of London as a family firm of paper merchants and agents, Bowaters today is an international organisation employing approximately 30,000 people, making and selling pulp, paper and board, packaging, building and other industrial products, and disposable tissues. Bowaters maintains some 70 production, sales and service companies in a dozen different countries and exports to a great many more. Bowaters is one of the largest papermaking companies in the world.

Two of Bowater's largest mills in the U.K. are located here at Sittingbourne and Kemsley where today management and staff join the Locomotive Club of Great Britain in extending to all guests the warmest of welcomes.



by 1914 a new dock was under construction at Ridham. This dock was for two years in Admiralty service, before being opened in 1919 as Messrs Lloyd's main transit point. The railway had of course been extended thence, and the service was operated by the Kerr Stewart tanks that are still extant today.

In 1924 the Kemsley Mill was opened, and the line extended considerably. To meet increased loading, more locomotives were bought, including diesel and electric as well as steam types. The most interesting of these was the last acquired, as recently as 1953, and was a bogie tank of 0-4-4-0 wheelbase. Named 'Monarch' to commemorate the year of construction, Messrs Bowaters sold this engine to the Welshpool and Llanfair Railway in 1966.

In 1948 Messrs Lloyds were taken into the Bowater Organisation, ultimately becoming Bowaters UK Paper Company Limited. The progressive new management in 1954 opened a maintenance depot at Kemsley, one of the finest and best equipped narrow gauge workshops in Europe. High maintenance standards were vital, as the little line was the works' lifeline, supplying raw material and clearing finished products and rubbish throughout the twenty-four hour day. A passenger service was also run until 1968 for staff, this being the only example of regular night time passenger traffic on any narrow gauge railway in England.

Now, after over sixty years, the line's work is done, and more modern forms of transport are moving in. As a former method of transport, however, its place in industrial archaeology is assured, and it is to ensure that this is tangible in the years to come, that today's celebrations are being held.

R.L.R. (LCGB)

# MAP OF THE SYSTEM

## Bowater Organization

