

# HARAKEVET

# הרכבת

ISSUE: 6

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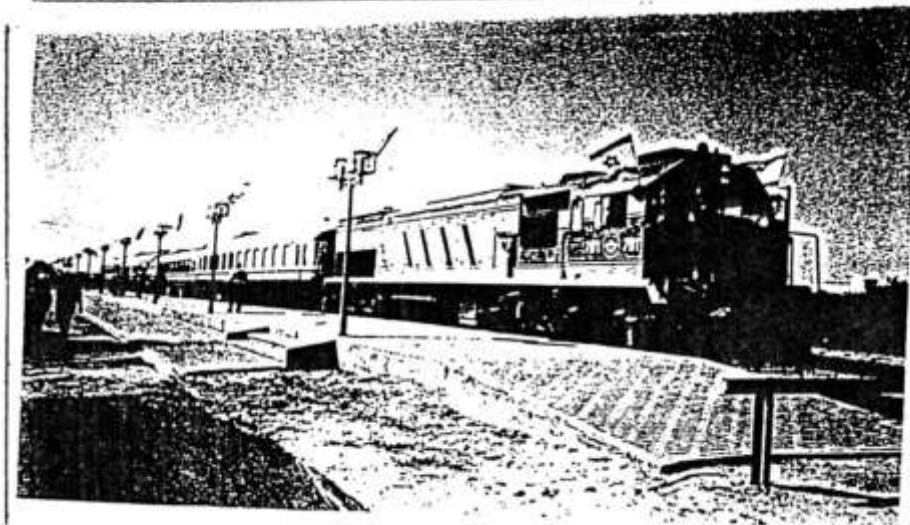
Welcome to Issue No. 6. This is a big issue, and a bit of a mixture. I have received many contributions over the last few months -especially from Paul Cotterell but from other, welcome correspondents all over the globe. It's amazing where bits of memoir or archive turn up ! I've managed to use quite a lot of what has come ray way but, in that famous phrase of all editors, "Some material has had to be held over to a future issue".

You will also note that the layout varies; some sheets were prepared my old way, on a manual typewriter so old I'm just glad it wasn't a pedal version as well; some come direct from the typewriter of Paul in Haifa - a machine noted for the antiquity (until recently) of its ribbon; some have been prepared by myself - or re-touched -using my new pride and Joy, a little Amstrad 8256. Not much to computer buffs, I know, but enough for me to handle for now -especially as I've been too busy to work right through the manual yet. Some of the "clever bits" are thanks to my wife, who can use it better than I. Eventually I aim for an even better presentation - maybe even the odd colour photo - but, for now, just keep sending comments and articles, etc., and we'll keep right on sharing information and enjoying ourselves.

This issue includes articles on the First World War, on the early mandate period, the last years of the Mandate, the early State period, current events (which are quite exciting) - in short, a bumper selection.

N.B. You will also note that I have adapted the page layout to permit printing on both sides of the page - thus allowing double content for the same weight in postage. If you are making your own copies - I hope this is C.K. The newsletter is designed to be clipped into A4 ring binders without clipping holes in the content.

1. Official Opening of Rebuilt Herzliya Station. 23/10/89, (Alon Siton).



Theo Pelz and Harel Even have drawn my attention to some mistakes and amendments to the original update (see 5.5). They are, in order, as follows:

a). P. R. 4-6-4T No. 14 was noted in maroon as early as 1941. (Theo made the sighting at Wadi Surar (Nahal Soreq).

b) .. WD Nos. 71270, 71299 and 70243 were in store at Lod at the end of WWII, and not at Sarafand. Note, however, that Russell Wear in a letter which appeared on p.240 of the Industrial Railway record No. 112, also recorded 70243 as being "in store with the War Department at Sarafand in 1945", as I wrote in Harakevet 5. 5. I see no reason to rule out the possibility that this loco could have been moved from Sarafand to Lod, and was therefore at both locations at separate times.

c). IR G12 bo-bo No. 106 is believed to have been withdrawn following accident damage and it was No. 123 which was withdrawn as a result of sabotage. A search through my files came up with the accompanying photo\* from the "Jerusalem Post" of 12/5/75 which shows the aftermath of this piece of sabotage, the wreck itself having happened the previous day. The story on the incident reads:

"Police with tracker dogs were looking last night for saboteurs who derailed two locomotives near Moshav Bar Giora in the Jerusalem hills yesterday morning.

The goods train the locomotives were pulling - carrying grain for Jerusalem - remained on the track, and the only injuries were slight scratches to the two men in the lead locomotive. The line had been cleared by nightfall.

Police said the saboteur or saboteurs, working at night, had loosened an 18-metre section of rail about three kilometres east of Bar Giora station, apparently hoping the train would topple down the side of the wadi. At ten minutes past six the goods train - the two locomotives and 20 wagons, some of them empty - reached the spot.

The lead engine was derailed and did tumble down into the wadi, luckily rather shallow at the spot. Engine drivers Moshe Goldschlaeger, 50, and his assistant Mordechai Sharamai, 45, were only very slightly injured and needed no treatment.

By another stroke of luck the second engine was merely derailed without toppling over, and the goods wagons remained on the track.

Israel Railways General Manager Zvi Tsafriri said normal service would resume this morning.

In Beirut, UPI quoted an unidentified terrorist spokesman as claiming the train was a military one carrying "vacationing Israeli soldiers", and that "all the cars crashed into a ravine, killing a large number of enemy soldiers". "

By coincidence, I travelled up to Jerusalem by train several days later and the two locos were still awaiting recovery - No. 122 having been swung clear of the tracks, of course, in order that traffic could resume. I even managed a couple of indifferent photographs of the scene. I could not positively identify the second loco as being No. 123. Nevertheless 123 duly turned up at the Haifa diesel depot showing heavy score marks along the bodyside; no attempt being made subsequently to return it to traffic as far as I know.

d). Harel points out that G16 CO-Cos were renumbered from 301-3 because these numbers coincided with those of freight trains, which could have caused confusion.

e). Deutz 0-4-0D No. 202, and not 203. is preserved at Museon Haaretz.

\*(See p. 15 for photo).

3. NEWS FROM THE LINE.

As I write this, in England in the middle of November 1989, - I am dependent on other sources for information. The following is a miscellany, culled from various sources (to whom my gratitude):

1. STRIKE ! The Southern Division of IR went on strike beginning 4/11/89; the Northern Division joined in the next day. The Northern Division strike ended at 2am. on 8/11/89, although earlier reports had suggested it would end on the evening of the 6th. No cuttings or reports I have seen explain the reasons for the strike !

2. The Saga of T44. Following several further breakdowns, the new Swedish-built bo-bo was restricted to trips on the main line only in the company of a second loco. It therefore ran together with a G12 bo-bo for three months, but by early November had managed a week on passenger turns on its own. There had been murmurings amongst the drivers that T44 should be returned to Sweden or put straight into the museum ! It has not yet received an IR number.

3. Unusual Workings

At the end of September 1989 a series of loco failures led to some interesting appearances along the main line. On 27/9 ex-ER 127 was working passengers (including, at least, trains 51 and 22). These former Egyptian G12' s are normally restricted to trip workings, but are occasionally pressed into passenger use when nothing else is available. They have" a particularly deep-throated roar and can be heard from a good distance away when working hard.

Considerably rarer was the appearance of SAFB Bo-Bo 103 along the main line on 28/9. This had been hurriedly sent to Binyamina to cover as line switcher, the usual IR G12 on this duty having taken over the passenger diagram of a failed sister loco. 103 arrived at Haifa about mid-day with empty grain wagons from Hadera Mizrah (East). It was then replaced by another G12 to conclude the day's duties, which mostly consisted of bringing out loaded ballast and stone wagons from the quarry just North of Binyamina. the Belgian-built Bo-Bos are banned from working into the quarry following a mishap with one of them there in 1987. The SAFB locos are normally restricted to light tri p workings, also. One is usually to be found in B'nei Baraq where, among other work, it makes two trips per day with petrol tanks to the Gelilot fuel storage siding on the main line, a couple of kilometres North of Tel Baruch junction. (See 2:7). These locos were taken off passenger turns some ten years ago, and their subsequent emergency use on such trains has been rare in the extreme - the last occurrence of this is believed to have been about five years ago.

4. New Herzliyya Station

On 23/10/89, a four-coach special train was run from Tel Aviv to Herzliyya and return. Purpose of the special was twofold: firstly, ' it took invited guests to the ceremony of formally opening the upgraded Herzliyya station which, from the same date, has a bus service from town connecting with the trains that call there. The ' station now **sport6** a proper platform, attractive lamp standards and a car-park, and has been generally tidied-up. In attendance was the Minister of Transport.

Secondly, the opportunity was taken to show off the first four coaches which have been fitted with air-conditioning. These are nos. 51, (Generator Coach), 687 (ex-BR Mk.II), 637 and 615 ( Restaurant Coach). They have been repainted in a striking new livery of several shades of blue. ( Photos I have seen (Thanks, Alon ! ) show a deep blue lower quarter, a light blue band, a turquoise band, a white band, a light blue band - all this reaching to the bottom of the windows - then a white upper-half, and it looks very attractive). The refurbishing work done on them appears, at first acquaintance, to be

to a high standard. The special train, headed by GT26CW-2 Co-Co No. 701 (with flags flying), worked from Haifa to Tel Aviv and return as e.c.s., though many people took the opportunity for an extended ride in the air-conditioned cars by travelling back to Haifa on the special. This was the first public appearance of these four air-conditioned coaches; indeed they were only released for this special train from Qishon Works the previous evening.

I have received several copies of an attractive folder produced for the occasion (as well as a circular sticker showing the IR, Ports Authority and Herzliyya Municipality logos, with the slogan "Herzliyya Station" and "Israel Railways at your Service" (All in Hebrew, of course). From this it appears that a Herzliyya stop has been inserted into Southbound trains 21, 25 and 39, and Northbound 54, 32, 36 and 38. Full Herzliyyah departures are now: To Tel Aviv: 0711; 0731; 0942; 1444; 1844. To Haifa (&\*: To Nahariyyah): 0610\*; 0710; 1409\*; 1609\*; 1709\*; 1809. Much better than before, and with the glimmerings of an even-interval service beginning to emerge, but still hardly an intensive suburban service. (See comments in 2:9). The Israel Commercial Economic Newsletter, Vol. iii No. 147, (Oct. 25, 1989), p. 14 notes: "Rail service between Herzliya and Tel Aviv has expanded to 11 direct trips daily, following the opening of a new station at Herzliya"; the implication is of 11 trips each way, rather than a total!

The folder also shows a map of proposed new lines in the Tel Aviv area, and an "artist's impression" of a three-platform station with three different types of railcars (one looking suspiciously like a Budd RDC, and one a bit like an Austrian e. m. u. ), with no sign of electrification and a very 1950's bus departing. This is envisaged as part of a system of suburban lines to Raanana, Herzliyya and Kfar Saba. (See p. 21).

5. MORE PLANS. Also from the I.C. E. Newsletter, same issue:

"Transport Minister Moshe Katsav and a visiting delegation from France's national railroad, SNCF, have discussed building a railroad to Eilat. Katsav asked the French firm, which is performing engineering studies for Israel Railways, to examine the feasibility of such a rail link. Katsav believes that bringing Eilat closer to the nation's center is in the nation's interests, even if short-term economic analysis would indicate otherwise. Katsav also requested that the French company expedite the presentation of its report on suburban rail service, particularly for areas that can immediately be connected to existing lines. SNCF has already told Katsav that several projects are worthwhile, including a suburban railroad linking Haifa with cities to its North and the linkup of North and South Tel Aviv along the Ayalon highway corridor. The French company also recommends giving high priority to a rail link between Petah Tikva and Tel Aviv."

[Editorial comment: At last a statement that there is more to the Eilat line than "short-term economic analysis !" This looks very hopeful, though one will really believe it when the first train enters Eilat. As regards the Tel Aviv - Petah Tikvah link - see Israel Cohen's comments of 1920 elsewhere in this issue !]

6. RAILLESS IN GAZA ? Also from I.C. E. N. - issue 141 of 13/9/89, p. 15: "Transport officials have proposed re-opening the railway from Gaza to Tel-Aviv to, provide an alternative way for Gazans to travel to work in Israel. The Ports and Railways Authority said that they had not yet been consulted, but even after forty years of disuse, it would be easy to get the line operating again."

[N. B. Forty years? According to Cotterell, p. 103, Israeli trains operated from El Arish after June 1967].

7. UPGRADING

In August, Moshe Katsav and Finance Minister Shimon Peres negotiated an allocation of NIS 41 Million for improvements to the system's infrastructure. It was Intended to use this money for:

- a). Suburban services in Haifa. (NIS 8M);
- b). Four bridges over the Ayalon River, as part of the Tel-Aviv -Petach Tikvah line; (NIS 13M)
- c). Replacement of 33 km. of track. (NIS 13M).
- d). Safety barriers at 35 level crossings. (NIS 7M).

It was emphasized that all these projects were to be implemented immediately.

4 TOUCH WOOD by Paul Cotterell.

This one comes from Nahum Greenberg, former driver with IR, later Inspector of Accidents, and now a volunteer at the Railway Museum.

One Saturday evening (after Shabbat had finished of course) he had LMS 2-8-0 70605 at the head of freight train 7327 to Lod. Leaving the yards at Haifa East he wanted to make a quick pick-up of the staff at Eiram Crossing. He called his mate, David Peretz, across from the other side of the cab and told him to get his shoulder under the regulator while he, Nahum, leant out to snatch the staff from the signalman. Now 70605 had been fitted with a different type of regulator from her sisters, one that needed a more scientific approach to get it open than the normal wrench. The fireman did not know this, but braced himself enthusiastically - knees flexed -all poised to give her plenty of steam when the word came. The pick-up was made cleanly in the darkness and the shout came for Fireman Peretz to open her up; but when Nahum turned back into the cab from the gangway he nearly fell back out. His fireman had drilled himself through some half-rotten floorboards up to his waist.

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5. In Correspondence from Major C. S. N. Walker, now of Cheltenham:

"I served in Palestine in 1946/7, arriving on the day the King David was blown up. I came on a through train from Cairo to Haifa over the canal bridge but have little recollection of the loco. While at Haifa I was occupied on other matters so did not see much of the Railways but I do remember seeing the Haifa - Acre line then mixed-gauge. Also parts of the line to Nablus- very overgrown but still in situ. The line to Deraa was still apparently useable though I never saw a train on it except an engine shunting at Afula. I was also passing Haifa East when a bomb/grenade went off a little way behind my jeep.

On my first leave the train came to a halt West of Gaza having run into a small camel. Fortunately not derailed. A companion in the train said his train had come once to a halt in the middleof nowhere and on enquiring the cause was told "Mafish water". How on earth you get water to a stranded engine in the middle of the desert I don't know. Finally I left Haifa (as O. C. Train) for Kantara East, crossing the canal on a rather ramshackle ferry. I think it also carried lines."

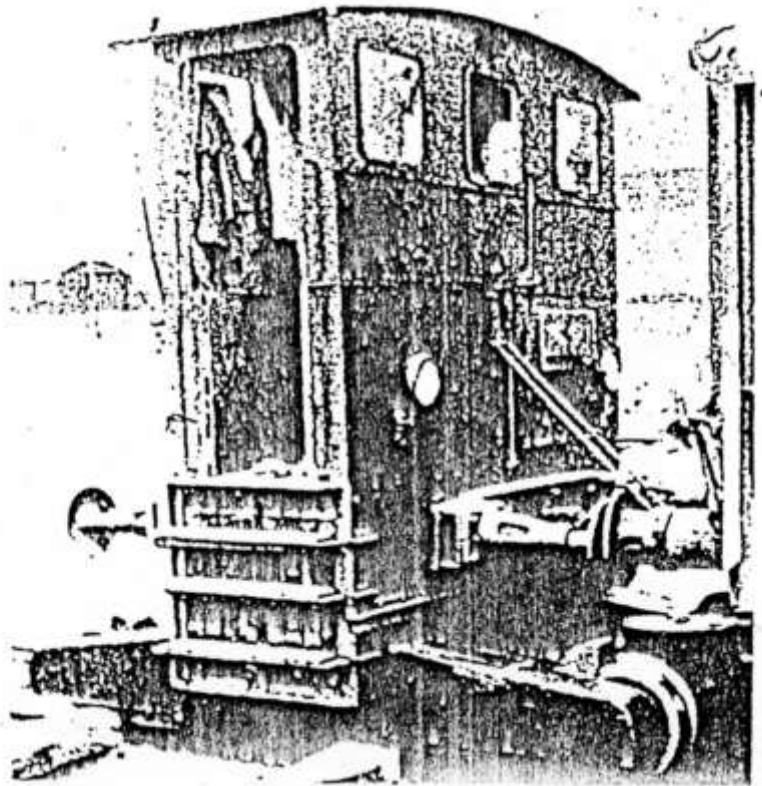
## 6. CAMERON'S CAMELS IDENTIFIED. By Paul Cotterell.

Hughes and Theo Pelz have responded to my query in Harakevet 5. 6, and through their kind interest a fairly representative picture of these "camels" in the Middle East can now be given. The accompanying illustration shows what these curiously endearing machines look like. It shows one of them in operation at Vicenza, Italy, in June 1973, and has been copied from the book "Materiale Motore F. S. Italia 1979.01.01" by Fabio Cherubini, published by Frank Stenvalls Fdrlag of Malmo, Sweden.

These 4-wheeled "camels" - Hugh also refers to them as "mules" - were built by Fiat/Badoni under license from Breuer. On the F. S. (Italian State Railways) they were numbered in the 206, 207 and 208 series, there being differences between these three types. Series 206 appears to have been built in 1931, series 207 in 1935, and series 208 in 1938/1952. Series 206/207 weighed 5.5 tonnes in service and series 208 weighed 6. 8 tonnes, so it is not surprising that they were unable to shift any great load. My Italian is non-existent but it appears from Cherubini's book that series 206 and 207 were originally fitted with benzine-powered engines, being rebuilt with diesel engines after WWII. ("Originariamente con motore a benzina, trasformati con motore Diesel nel dopoguerra").

Seven of these "camels" are noted briefly on page 51 of "Middle East Railways". They had been captured, in North Africa I presume, and taken into Middle East Forces (MEF) stock. Their works numbers are 4172, 4190, 4192, 4194, 4197, 4207 and 4209. Of these, 4172, 4190 and 4209 were given MEF numbers 70 - 72 respectively, later becoming WD 70250 - 2 under the 1944 renumbering scheme. No further details appear to be known of the remaining four, but 70250-2 are recorded as being at Fanara (Egypt), for a time. Hugh adds the information that 4172 (MEF 70, WD 70250) was erected at Suez in April 1943 and then sent to Jaffa, but that by September 1943 it had been returned to the Canal area at Fanara. This would seem to be proof positive that Ken Cameron's "camel" was Fiat/Badoni 4172.

A most intriguing footnote to this story is provided by Theo who reports having seen one of these "camels" in the Nesher cement factory at Ramie on 12th June 1958, where it was evidently being used to shunt wagons brought in over the now-redundant siding from IR. Unfortunately Theo was not able to get close enough to make full notes.



7. From: "The Journal of a Jewish Traveller", by Israel Cohen. Published by John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd. , London, 1925.

From the Preface, dated Dec. ' 24, p. vii:

"This is the story of a pilgrimage that was undertaken between the spring of 1920 and the spring of 1921 to the Jewish communities of Australasia, India and the Far East. It was the first journey of its kind ever made by a Jew to the settlements of Israel in those far-off regions, and its impelling cause was an event of unique significance in the history of the Jewish people. For its purpose was to expound the import of the Balfour Declaration, that pregnant creation of the Great War, and to invoke material support for its practical realization. In the pursuit of this exacting task I was able to observe and study the conditions of the various Jewries in which I sojourned....."

From this brief extract describing the purpose of the 30,000 mile 'journey via Trieste, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Port Said, Fremantle, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sidney, Auckland, Wellington, Fiji, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Japan, Mukden, Harbin, Tientsin, Peking,, the Straits Settlements, Java, Rangoon, Calcutta, Bombay and back to Palestine, we see both the enthusiasm of the man undertaking this mission and a little of his style. What follows is just a short extract from this fascinating book, dealing with his travels in the Middle East.

From Chapter II : "Impressions of Jerusalem".pp. 9 - 11.

"The Children of Israel took forty years to travel from Egypt to Palestine. Their modern descendants can accomplish the journey in less than a day; yet, spoiled and pampered by contemporary comforts, they may murmur on the way perhaps more than the foot-weary hosts that were led forth by Moses. For though you can leave Cairo in the evening in an up-to-date train, in which you can dine satisfactorily, and even slumber undisturbed in the sleeping car which halts overnight at the frontier station of Kantara, you are brought early next morning into the heart of the Sinai Desert, and as you gaze at the vast sandy waste through which the British Army has laid the track on which you are travelling you may slowly and imperceptibly feel a certain misgiving. For hour after hour you pass through an arid, treeless expanse, which is apparently limitless on the one side, whilst bounded on the other by the Mediterranean coast, not far from which the line runs for many miles. For hour after hour you see naught but fine, soft whitish sand, plains of sand, hillocks of sand, and undulating valleys of sand, as far as human vision can reach, until the eye begins to tire and the throat to feel parched.

The journey is interrupted for a few moments at Rafa, where there is a primitive station, and at Gaza, where Samson wrought damage among the Philistines in the hoary days of old, and British projectiles wrought still greater damage a couple of years ago. Everywhere is the same arid, barren, monotonous prospect, void of trees or flowers, of fields or meadows, with not even a pond or rivulet to slake in imagination the thirst of the weary traveller

. So, despite the oppressive heat, there may gently steal over you a faint tremor as you hesitatingly put to yourself the question: "Is this, indeed, then the Promised Land ? Is this the land once flowing with milk and honey?" The question is inevitable, but it should not be put too soon lest it be answered falsely, The physical convenience of reaching Jerusalem from Egypt by land is counterbalanced by the moral ordeal of sustaining one's faith through the wilderness. Those who approach it from the sea are spared this trial of faith, for, though tossed about in the boat that brings them to the Jaffa strand, they soon behold beneath the deep-blue sky the leafy avenues and the picturesque rows of trim white stone houses of Tel Aviv, created by Jewish hands on the very spot that, but ten years ago, was likewise a bare sandy waste.

But there is another trial in store. It is the change at Ludd and the completion of the journey to the Holy City in a train that combines simplicity with discomfort. Before the war Ludd was little more than a name. Now it is a tumultuous, all-important junction. But the offices, stores, refreshment rooms, all are low wooden barracks. The red sandy platform, exposed to the heavens, swarms with a motley, perspiring throng: military officers in sun helmets, nurses in white dresses and straw hats, Galician Jews in long gaberdines, Arab women and children squatting on the ground against the wall, venerable Sheikhs and black-veiled Egyptian women, Europeans and Americans of varied type and accent, all jostled by Arab porters, who seem to carry on their backs as much as an English porter can wheel on his truck. But you seek in vain for a stationmaster or anybody wearing a uniform suggestive of such a functionary. Then you realize that this is still a military railway, and a stalwart non-commissioned officer advises you how to get your luggage together and proceed on the final stage of your journey. The clerk in charge of the luggage-van speaks a medley of tongues, flitting lightly from English to French, from Arabic to Hebrew, with the practised ease of a polyglot professor; and then you find yourself and all your belongings deposited in the train that will bear you, after waiting half an hour, to the Holy City. Most of the carriages are small, with a plain wooden bench on one side, though you will probably be too deeply intent upon the scenery to feel the hardness of the seat. The train starts moving, before you are aware, without any apparent signal, and for the next three hours you are borne up a steady incline, with frequent gradual curves and occasional halts, along a road that runs partly through plains, with a view of increasing vegetation the higher you rise. At the wayside stations clamorous Arab boys offer huge melons at a shilling each, cutting them open first, if you wish, to prove their fitness; atfnd after you have refreshed yourself with the fruit you patiently await the arrival in the Holy City. Even in summer the sun begins to set here soon after six, and as you drive away from the bustling station you see the quiet city bathed in a flood of pale golden light, which quickly fades into dusk.

A little later, (pp.19-22), he travels to Petach Tikvah, by "road"; his experiences are relevant to the later construction of the Petach Tikvah Railway from Rosh Ha-Ayin:

"The first colony that I visited was the first that was established, namely, Petach Tikvah. Its early history is a record of endurance, privation and disaster, for its founders were stricken down by the fever of the neighbouring marshes and were compelled at first to abandon their endeavours. But soon afterwards they returned to the task and triumphed, and Petach Tikvah became one of the largest and most flourishing colonies, it covers an area of nearly 8, 000 acres, and a few years ago it had a population of 4,500; but it suffered seriously during the war, and its inhabitants, through various causes, have diminished by a third. For one month it was the head-quarters of the Turkish Army, and for eight months the head-quarters of the British Army, whilst for an even longer period it was exposed to the shells from both sides .

There is no train to Petach Tikvah from anywhere. There is only a diligence from Jaffa, which runs at fixed hours and at a leisurely pace, and as my time was severely limited I did the Journey in a motor car. I was told that the approach to the colony was rather sandy, but I did not appreciate what this meant until we reached the outskirts. Bad as the road was in many places, it suddenly disappeared altogether in a flood of soft, yielding sand. The car could go no further, and the chauffeur advised us to proceed on foot and send a couple of Arabs to his assistance. We ploughed our way along in the sand for at least a quarter of an hour before we reached the house of the elderly colonist . to whose guidance I was recommended, and after he had sent the required aid to the stranded chauffeur he related to us the experiences of the colony during the war.



"Why is there no proper road to this colony?" I asked. "For the same reason that there is no proper road to the other colonies", was the answer. "Because the Turks had no desire to Improve the conditions of the country. We wished to make a road ourselves, although it would have cost us £20,000; but we had first to obtain the permission of the Turkish authorities, and as that would have cost us another £40,000 we had to abandon the idea. The question of transport is very serious. Our yield of oranges before the war amounted to 400,000 cases, besides 300 tons of almonds and an equal quantity of grapes. All this had to be conveyed to Jaffa by camels for export - a very slow and unsatisfactory method. It, therefore, occurred to us that ; it would be much better to carry our products by boat on the River Audja, but when this proposal was made to the Turkish authorities there was a cry of indignant astonishment: ' What ! The Jews want to have a fleet !' So nothing could be done. But now I am happy to hear that Baron Edmond de Rothschild has generously undertaken to build the road, and the Government has promised to build a railway. "

.....Our chauffeur decided to avoid the sandy track on our return Journey and so struck out along a good hard road, which we fondly hoped would continue all the way to Jaffa. But we had scarcely driven more than ten minutes than we found ourselves, with the darkness thickening, in a narrow path with the branches of the trees hanging so low that we had to hold our hats in front of our eyes to protect them from injury. Nor was it easy to do this, for the car bumped over so many stray clumps and hollows that we were frequently Jolted out of our seats. And then we came to a little ditch before which our driver stopped Just in the nick of time, and it required much patience, ingenuity and energy before we arrived safely on the other side... The second route proved altogether much worse than the first, and when, upon reaching our destination, I learned the amount of the fare, I offered up a silent prayer for the immediate construction of a railway or at least of an electric tramway from Jaffa to Petach Tikvah."

After his trip to Asia and back, Cohen returned once more via Palestine, and his revised impressions are contained in Ch.XXX, pp.267-279:

"When I visited the Holy Land for the first time, two months after the historic decision of the Peace Conference at San Remo, that a National home for the Jewish People shall be created in Palestine, it was still described and treated as "occupied enemy territory", though no enemy of any consequence could anywhere be seen. It was under the administration of G. H. Q. at Cairo, whence dozens of "red tabs" travelled daily in a comfortable dining-car across canal and desert to Jerusalem. The mere civilian needed a military permit to enter the country, and he had to show an unblemished record and weighty reasons, and then wait several weeks in tantalizing suspense, before he obtained the precious pass. Within the Promised Land there brooded an air of stagnation and suppressed nervousness, tempered by a note of expectancy, for trade and commerce were paralysed by the military edict forbidding all land transactions pending the creation of the civil government ....

After the lapse of nine months I was In Palestine once more and I returned to see what changes had taken place. I found that the control of Egypt over Palestine had apparently ceased, that even the close link provided by the convenient railway bridge across the Suez Canal had been snapped, so that one had to walk across a floating wooden bridge, and that the ordinary visa at Kantara was the only permit required. But it was really an extraordinary visa, for it was written in three languages - English, Arabic and Hebrew. Therein I saw the first sign of the evolution of the Jewish National Home, for after nineteen centuries the language of King David had once again

been invested with official dignity in the land of its efflorescence. Not until now did one find Hebrew names, inscriptions and announcements printed and displayed so systematically and profusely, for wherever there was an English or Arabic legend, there too was a Hebrew equivalent - in Government buildings and on municipal notice-boards, in railway stations and post offices, . . . and even on the primitive motor-bus (transformed from an army lorry) which ran from the Post Office Square in Jerusalem to Government House on the Mount of Olives. Even the postage stamps and railway tickets bore a Hebrew superscription...'

The other most striking evidence of progress, apart from the structural extensions and improvements at Ludd Junction, consisted in (the *halutzim*, or pioneers)... Travelling towards Ludd, the rapidly growing junction of Southern Palestine, I beheld from my carriage window the first big group of these *Halutzim*, many of them bared to the waist, working like navvies - though with greater diligence - at the making of a white stone road, one of the many roads wrought by them and their comrades during the preceding months. I saw these pioneers laying a railway line to the wine-growing colonies of Rehoboth and Petach Tikvah, setting-up telephone-poles between Haifa and Ludd....

Apart from the work of the pioneers there were but few signs of progress. The broad-gauge railway from Jerusalem to Jaffa, along which the High Commissioner drove the first train, was perhaps the most notable. But other public works were still in the stage of incubation. Engineers and architects were putting their heads together and drawing up attractive plans for official inspection and approval, but even the best-laid plans, one heard, would have to tarry patiently for execution. There were designs for the construction of a harbour at Jaffa, where immigrants were roughly handled in native boats, and also for the much easier development of a port at Haifa, which was blessed with a commodious bay and destined to become the chief commercial haven in the Levant. Even now some huge engines brought from Austria for a cement factory could not be landed at Jaffa and had to be conveyed further to Haifa, whence they were afterwards transported southwards by rail. . . . But so far no steps could be taken for the realization of all these momentous and lucrative projects, because of the lack of money. The Palestine Administration intended issuing a loan for some of these undertakings, but not until the terms of the British Mandate had received the seal and blessing of the Council **01** the League of Nations could the Government address itself to this needful measure."

(N. B. Editor's Note: The mandate was formally ratified by the League of Nations on 24th. July 1922, and came into full legal operation on September 30th, 1923.)

So - this account ends, typically, with a plea for money and investment, together with stable government. This is not the only extant description of conditions in the early 1920's, but it is a vivid one; it is certainly much easier to understand the construction of the Petach Tikvah Railway, for instance, and the willingness of the colonists to contribute towards the costs.

Israel Cohen was born in Manchester in 1879, so he was 41 at the time of this trip; whilst working at the Zionist Central Office in Cologne he had been interned at the Ruhleben camp during the First World War, and from 1922 was the secretary of the Zionist Organization in London. He died in 1961. (See Encyclopaedia Judaica, 5:677).0

## 8.A TRAMWAY PROJECT IK JAFFA by Paul Cotterell.

The following notes are based on an article written by Shrauel Avizur which originally appeared in "Israel, Nation and Country" (ישראל-עם וארץ) It was reprinted in February 1987 in a duplicated booklet called "The Development of the Railway in the Land of Israel" (התפתחות הרכבת בארץ ישראל), an internal publication produced as background material for a convention by The Geography Department of the Kibbutz Movement (החידור לידיעת הארץ בתנועת הקיבוצים)

The opening of the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway led to a spate of schemes for similar transport improvements in various places in Palestine. As early as 9 November 1892, only six weeks after the official opening of the J&J, a Lebanese engineer, Franjieh, was proposing a tramway in Jerusalem and out to Ain Kerem and Bethlehem. Three weeks later, on 28 November, Franjieh presented a detailed plan for a tramway in Jaffa. (see accompanying map).

Line A left the J&J station to turn right along Bustrus and Howard (הוורד) streets (today Eilat and Raziel streets), past the Bastion and continued along the eastern edge of the Old City to Ajmi neighbourhood where it turned west to the terminus. Total length of Line A was to be 2.035 kms.

Line B was to branch off Line A approximately 800 metres from the railway station to turn east along Jerusalem Street (today Bet Eshel Street) to terminate "somewhere among the orchards". Length of Line B from the junction was about 480 metres.

Line C left Line A "some tens of metres" north of the Line B junction, ran along the sea shore on the northern edge of the Old City (the ruined city wall had stood on the proposed track formation), and ended up at the Customs House. Length of Line C from the junction was 450 metres. A variant route for this line would have seen it leaving the station yard to follow an independent course (presumably along the shore) to the Customs House. This second possible route would have been 1.250 kms long.

In addition to the above single lines a double-track passing loop was to be provided in Clock Square (as it was later known), near the junctions.

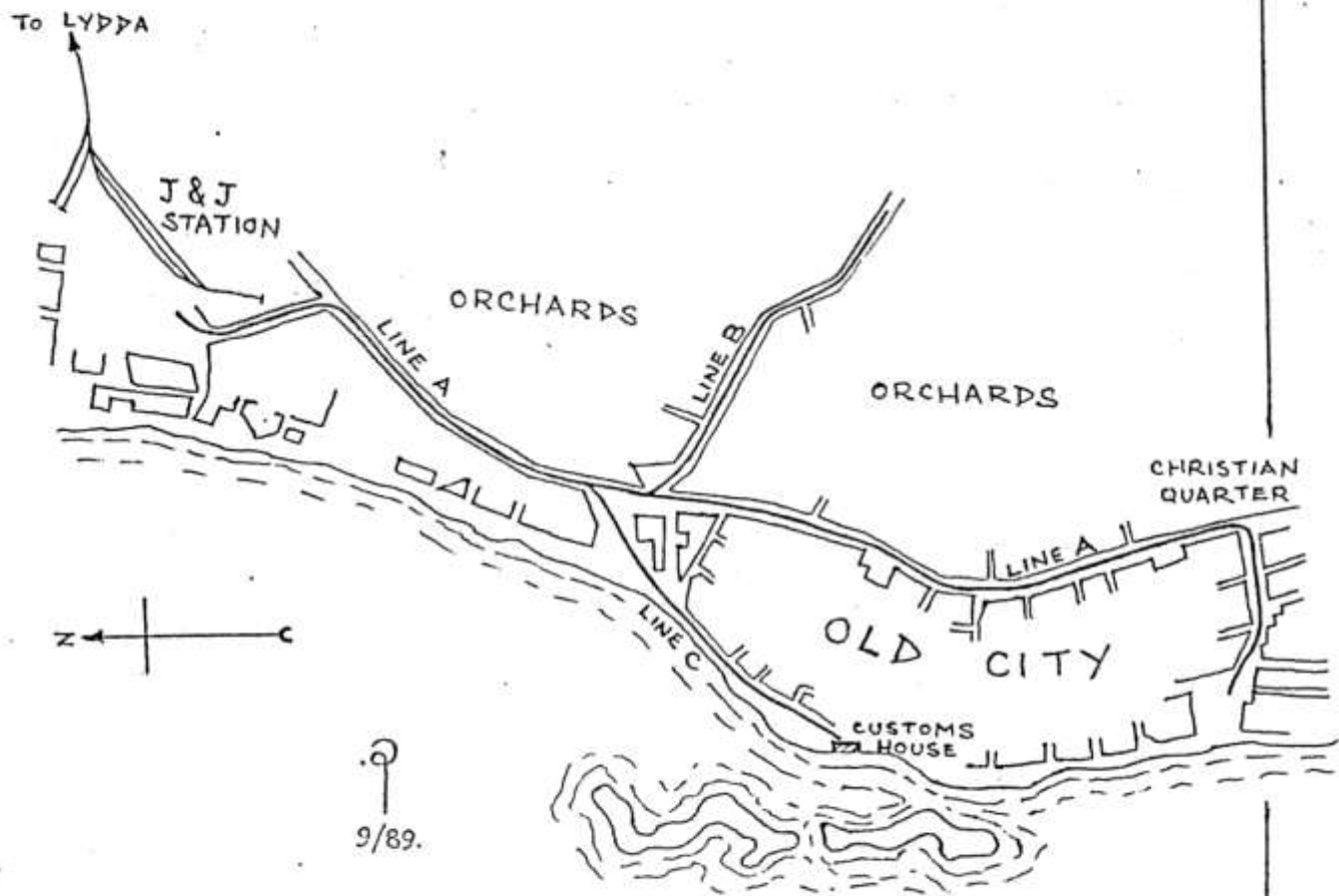
The map as reproduced in the booklet of The Geography Department of the Kibbutz Movement is rather indistinct, but I hope that I have managed to retain fairly accurately the salient features of the layout in my sketch.

Locomotion for the trams was not stated in the plan, but it seems likely that quadruped power was envisaged. According to Avizur the first tramway in the Ottoman Empire was that in Baghdad opened in 1870 (see photo in "Middle East Railways" by Hugh Hughes), followed by one in Constantinople (Istanbul). In 1878 a horse tram began carrying passengers from the Lebanese town of Tripoli to the port over a distance of 2 kms. (A photo of this apparently mule-hauled tram, quite similar in appearance to that in Baghdad, appeared with Avizur's article).

In 1892 Jaffa's population was about 18,000 souls, which was not likely to be enough to repay any investment in a tramway. According to A. Ruppin ("Syrien als Wirtschaftsgebiet" - (סוריה כחבל משקי) the Tripoli tramway cost 200,000 francs for its 2 kms. Operations brought in 15% profit per annum to the shareholders and the shares, nominally worth 100 francs, sold for 350 francs in the market. Despite these figures - which would have caused any holder of railway company shares in Britain to rub his hands with glee - Avizur considers that a Jaffa tramway, initially costing some 300,000 francs, would have been a financial failure. He considers that a passenger figure of 2,600 daily would be necessary and that when a public service of 'diligences' (horse-drawn road carriages) was set up between Jaffa and Tel Aviv before WW1, catering to a much larger population, the daily figure for passengers carried was only 630.

Whatever the economics of the thing, the Jaffa tramway remained an unfulfilled project

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"Projet de tramways dans la ville de Jaffa".  
 "Plan général du Réseau. 28 Novembre 1892".

As well as the Jaffa tramway project mentioned by Avizur in his article, he also deals briefly with ideas that were afoot for a light railway system from Jaffa southwards to Richon Lezion and eastwards to the settlements of Petach Tiqva and Wilhelma. He also states that there was a suggestion in the early twentieth century to connect the town of Gaza with its port by some form of tramway which was to have been about 4 kms long, while the engineer Nahum Wilbush complemented this scheme with a plan of his own for a cableway from Gaza town which would have strode out into the harbour waters on poles or pylons so that freight could be transported directly between ship deck and the town market.

In conclusion, I know that Walter has extensive notes on a projected tramway for Jerusalem, perhaps he could be persuaded to share his findings in Harakevet.

9. Correspondence: From Ernie Jongs, of Solihull, U.K.

Re: Ray Tustin's article and Paul Cotterell's notes (Issue 5:3): "Engine 813 I cannot reconcile at all. WD 813 never left the UK as far as I know; there was no 813 on the P. R. (although they did have a departmental S13). The D. H. P. did have an 813, but I wouldn't think it could have worked so far South,

(On p. 4 of Issue 5, 813 is referred to as being at Lydda; Ed.) The footnote referring to 70739 would almost certainly be in fact 70729, which I saw in Beirut on 15/1/45. 70739 never existed as such -ex-LNER 6202, it became WD739 but never reached MEF as it was lost at sea along with WD740 (ex-LNER 6335).

I would agree that 70287 never existed as such. It could have been 70387, although it went to PAIFORCE early on as Iran 41. 155, and was back at Suez by 1948, when it came back to 169 Railway Workshops. I doubt if we shall ever solve this everybody's satisfaction

10.

The Battle for Semakh. By Uri ben Rehav. (N.B. "Semakh" is also written "Tzemakh", "Samakh" etc.)

In 1917 the British Government informed the High Command in Egypt that, due to the terrible losses on the Western Front, the public needed a major victory as a morale-booster. Since the Front in Palestine was the theatre of war with the greatest chance of such success, General Allenby was sent there straight from the mud of France, from the battlefield of Arras. Planning started immediately, the goal being the conquest of Damascus. The offensive, better known under its code-name "Operation Megiddo", began in 1918. The German-Turkish general staff were unable to stop the rapid advance of the Allied forces, and in order to block the advance to Damascus determined to fortify the little town of Semakh; the railway station was at the centre of the defences.

The German Commander-in-Chief, Marshall Liman von Sanders, whilst passing through Semakh, personally ordered the manner in which the defending forces should be deployed. On the 20th. September 1918, the day he visited Semakh on his flight from his Headquarters in Nazareth to Damascus, he declared: "It is imperative that we hold, at any cost, the Tiberias Front from the Lake Huleh to Semakh, and the Eastern sector from Semakh to Deraa." In this context it is interesting to read the declaration of Djemal Pasha, the supreme commander of the Turkish forces in Palestine: "No Jew shall be alive to welcome the British"; - and he meant every word of it.

Back to the preparations for the coming battle. Under the command of Rittmeister (Captain) von Keyserlingk, the defending force consisted of 500 soldiers, 150 of them German. Their heaviest piece of artillery was one 77mm cannon, and they had machine guns. This force was deployed around the railway station in rifle pits and machine-gun emplacements, the 77mm. gun to the East behind the railway line.

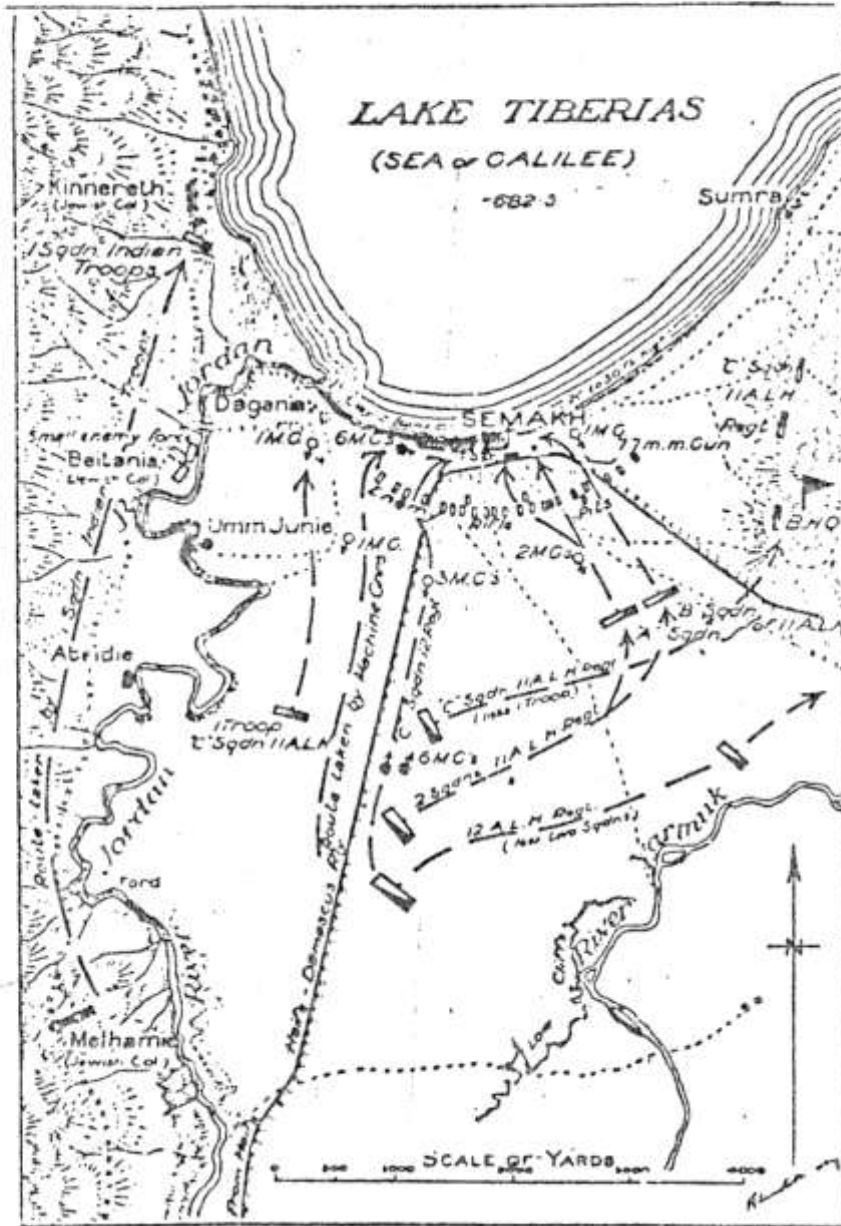


בנייני אבן בתחנת הרכבת בצמח

Stone Buildings at the Semakh Railway Station.

The main Allied force was made up of various squadrons of the 11th. and 12th. Light Australian Horse Regiments, under command of Brigadier-General (Temp.) W. Grant.

On the 24th. of September 1918 the small town of Beisan (Beth Shean) was taken by the British, but the troops camped that night at the banks of the River Jordan in order to water their horses. Their encampment was next to the railway station of Jisr-el-Mejamie. (it is interesting to note that this station - at km. 76.5 from Haifa - held the record for being the world's lowest railway station, being 246m. below sea level ! ) From this station started a track - a "road" in the modern sense didn't exist - that led to Semakh and Tiberias - the key to the conquest of Damascus and Syria.



The British High Command left the decision as to the timing of the attack on Semakh to the "man on the spot", Brigadier-General W. Grant. He had two choices - either to wait for reinforcements or to attack straight away. He took the latter course and, after preparations, the order "Forward" was given.

As the squadrons came nearer to the German/Turkish positions fire was opened on them. The night was very bright, and a full moon made both men and horses into easy targets. Soon many horses were wounded. The Australians, realising that the only way out of this field of fire was forwards, galloped towards the German/Turkish outer ring of defences and managed to destroy it. Drawing nearer to the town, at a distance of about 750m. efficient and deadly fire was opened on them from the railway station, the main point of concentration of the defenders. The attackers reorganised into two forces, one attacking the railway station from the East, the other from the West. Still under fire, both forces had to dismount; at a distance of 150 - 180m. from the station and, finding cover between the houses of the "town", opened fire on the station with small weapons. After approximately an hour of static exchange of fire an Australian machine-gun unit arrived; this opened a storm of fire from the West, reducing the effectiveness of the defenders' fire.

In the last minutes of the night, with dawn approaching, came the final

assault. The light, as it developed, was bitter and cruel. There was hand-to-hand fighting; room after room had to be taken; each storey of the building became a battlefield of its own. By the morning the battle was over, the railway station and the town itself in Allied hands.

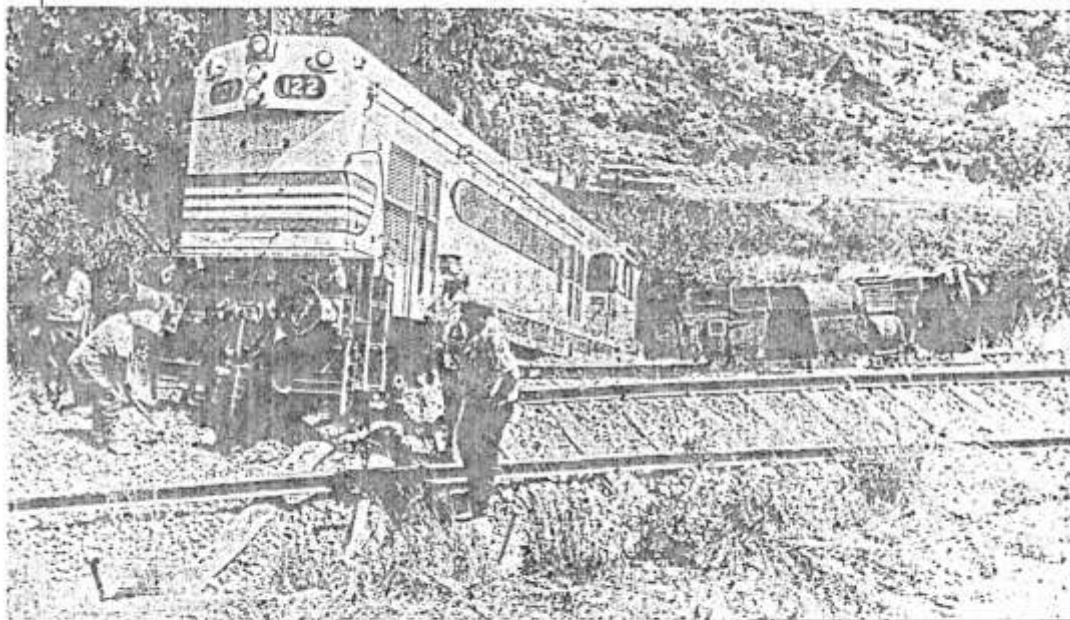
Some of the defenders tried to escape with the help of a motor launch on Lake Tiberias but the boat, being fired on, burst into flames and all on board drowned. The losses on the German/Turkish side amounted to 100 wounded and 360 prisoners of war (among them 150 Germans). The Australian losses were 14 killed, including three officers, 29 wounded and some 100 horses badly wounded.

The Supreme German Commander, Marshall Liman von Sanders, blamed two factors for the fall of Semakh, which opened the way to Damascus; firstly, the superiority of the Australian troops in numbers and supplies; secondly, that the Turkish troops didn't obey his orders, because they didn't place enough emphasis on Semakh and its sector of the Front, in view of its outstanding importance to the overall situation.

Field Marshall Wavell, summarising the campaign in Northern Palestine, stated that: "The fight for Semakh was the most fierce and cruel battle of this theatre of the war; the Australians can be proud of their soldiers."

Editor's Notes: Uri notes that the photograph of Semakh station, whilst undated, appears to show Australian troops. Semakh is still the key junction between the road up the Jordan valley from Beth Shean, that along the bottom of Lake Tiberias to Degania and Tiberias, and that eastward towards the Golan. The station buildings still stand and are now used, ironically, as an array depot. This was at one time the operational division-point between the Palestine Railways from Haifa and the Hedjaz line on to Damascus, and locomotives were usually changed here.

11. From "Jerusalem Post" of 12/5/75; see Item 2, page 2, this issue.

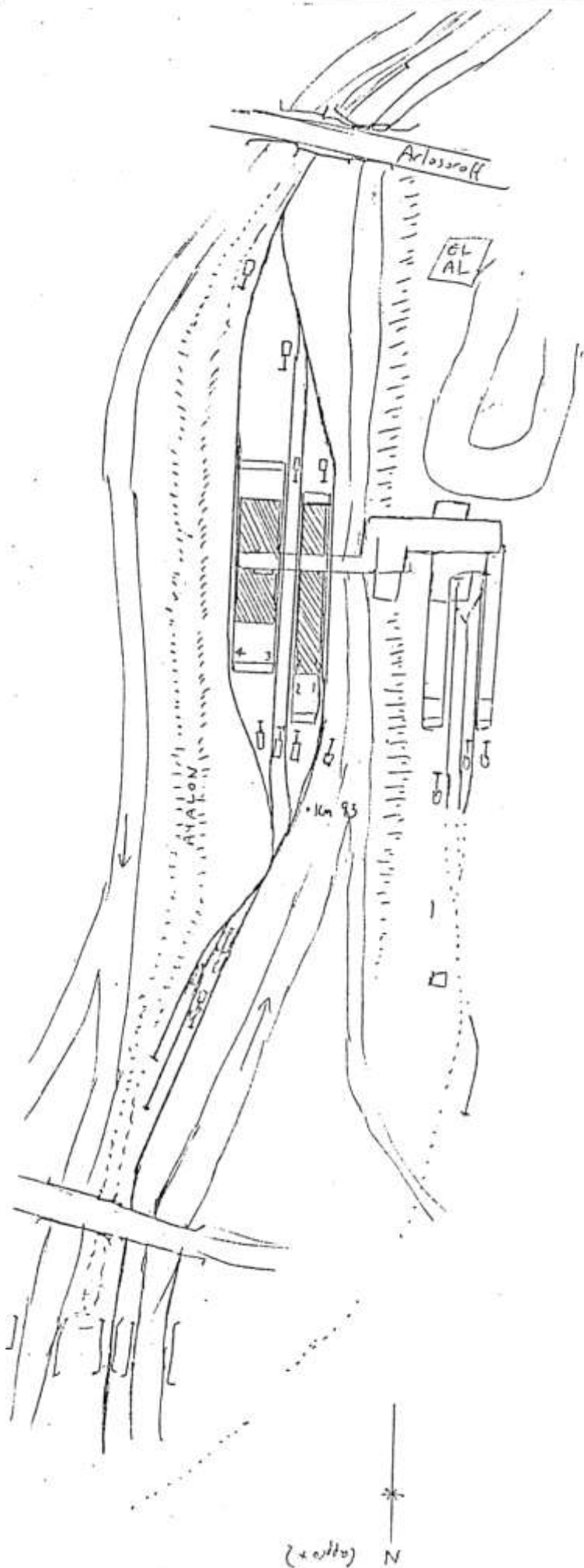


OFF THE TRACK. — Railway workers looking yesterday at the snout of the second of two locomotives derailed that morning by track sabotage near Moshav Bar Giora, outside Jerusalem. The underside of the lead locomotive can be seen to its right. Regular rail service to and from Jerusalem resumes this morning. (Story — Page 2.)  
(Rahamim Israeli)

12. Tel Aviv Merkaz  
(Central) Station.

Sketch plan based on visit  
March 1989. • Not to  
scale.

(See p. 20).



New station of 1989 is situated between the two carriageways of the Ayalon roadway, in the valley. The Ayalon river is now confined to a channel, on the West side of the railway. To the South, the valley narrows (and is called the "Ayalon Canyon"), but the trackbed for the extended railway is largely prepared. A footbridge over the platforms of the "new" station links it to "ground level" and the site of the "old" (1954) station, which is still largely intact; the main "building is still in use as booking-office, buffet etc. Most of the track in the platforms is still in situ, apart from a point and part of one buffer covered to, form a small garden area. Beyond the throat, the signals still stand and the signal box is derelict; massive roadworks have changed the topography substantially. Hatched areas mark canopy



13.UP THE H.B. T. : ALONGSIDE THE COASTAL RAILWAY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON IN 1983.

By Harel Even, Haifa.

Not much has been written about the condition of the railways in Lebanon in the last decade, so, as I travelled on the coastal road from Rosh Ha-Nikra Northwards to Beirut, I wondered whether I would see any signs of rail traffic.

In the summer of 1982, Israel's Transport Minister, Mr. Haim Corfu, considered the reconstruction of the coastal railway between Betzet (North of Nahariyya) and Beirut, at a cost estimated by Israel Railways at 15 Million IS at the time. The reconstruction plan included the rebuilding of 4km. of track and two bridges in the Rosh Ha-Nikra area, and was due to be completed in six weeks. This plan was, of course, never implemented.

The coastal standard-gauge line was part of the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli (H. B. T. ) built in 1942; it is characterized by a largely-level alignment but, as the Lebanese coast is narrow and indented, the line is very curved.

On the Southern section, from Rosh Ha-Nikra North to Zaharany refinery (about 60km.), I found the track in a derelict condition, and dismantled in parts. Remnants of a double-track station could be seen beside the main road near Nakura, just North of the border. Five kilometres to the North, the blocked-up entrance of the 1,500m long tunnel under Ras Bayda could be seen to the West of and not far from the road.

After an hour's journey from the border, near the Zaharany refinery (the outlet from the Trans-Arabian Pipeline to the sea), I saw a Northbound freight-train composed of seven oil tankers. Later I learned that the section, about 25 km. in length, between Zaharany and Ras Nabi Unes was at the time the only railway being operated in South Lebanon. It was used for transporting oil distillates from the refinery to the power station which supplied electricity to Beirut. Track was laid on double-block concrete sleepers, level crossings with the main road were not protected, and I saw no sign of signalling or interlocking systems.

Motive power included at least two General Motors 600hp. 6-wheeled diesel-electrics, numbered 602 and 604, in a dark green livery. Each train included seven bogie tank wagons - two of them were carrying the numbers S.'R. 16981 and S. R. 16982. Also visible from the main road were some two-axle flat wagons and a bogie wooden box van, inside the power station at Ras Nabi Unes.

On the Northern section from the power station to Beirut track was laid on wooden sleepers but, despite being unused, it was in a much better condition compared with the derelict Southern section. I could not visit Beirut station, but I noticed some new concrete bridges above the main highway at the southern entrance to the city.

I haven't been there since 1983, and I have no idea whether rail traffic still exists South of Beirut.

.....Editor's Note: My thanks to Harel - I doubt if many trainspotters would risk going to Beirut right now to check on the rolling-stock !

Hugh Hughes' "Middle East Railways" includes a photo of EMD 0-6-ODE No. 504, taken by P. J. Bawcutt in 1974, p. 70. Lebanese railways were nationalised on 1st. Jan. 1961, becoming the "Chemin de Fer de l'Etat Libanais (CEL); Hughes lists the standard-gauge diesel locos of the DHP/CEL as: 0-6-0's 601 to 604, GM/EMD class GM6, works nos. 25462-65 of 1960. Elderly steam locos, 0-6-0's and 0-8-0's of Austrian and French pre-First-World-War origin, were certainly still in use in 1974. Where are they now?

By coincidence the Oct. '89 issue of "Modern Railways" included the following note:

"MODERN RAILWAYS" 10/59

**LEBANON**

**Train services at Beirut**

A correspondent in our contemporary *La Vie du Rail* writes that public rail services in the Lebanon have been confined to the 37km (23 miles) between Beirut and Jbeil on the standard gauge coastal line. Railbuses have operated morning and evening during lulls in the fighting. The vehicles were acquired from Germany in 1984 with the intention of operating a service between Jbeil, Beirut and Saïda, the southern terminus. The railways also have three Czech-built diesel-electrics of 1,660hp which have been used intermittently, when conditions permitted, for supplying fuel to power stations at Zouk and Jiyeh, respectively north and south of Beirut. It is noted that up to a few months ago there were occasional Sunday excursions from Beirut to the lower slopes of Mont Liban on the narrow gauge (1.05m) system, which is partly a rack railway where it crosses the mountain ranges between Beirut and the Syrian border.

The map excerpt is from a 1:1,000,000 sheet on "Syria and Lebanon", printed 1982 by "Anaf Hamdidot" in Israel and bought that year from Steimatzky's for 30.00 IS. I have added a few place-names in English, though I can't find Ras Nabi Unes.

I do hope the Army had more accurate maps than this ! It shows the entire narrow-gauge network in Israel as still extant (including the Nablus branch through Jenin) and doesn't show the 1950's "coast line", now the main Tel Aviv - Haifa route, but only the "Inland Line" through Hadera East and Tulkarm ! This closed in 1968



14. Further Notes on the Syrian Ottoman Railway, from Uri Ben Rehav.

1. From the newspaper "Hahavazelet", 30th. Dec. 1892, Jerusalem: - "Lady Pilling, the wife of the head of the Company which has received the Firman to build this railway, was granted the honour of laying the first stone in the presence of the Minister of the Sultan. All Government clerks and many spectators came to the place of honour for the day, some 15,000 in all. At the end of the ceremony the directors of the company gave a large banquet for the clerks and the notables of the town and surrounding area."

2. The reasons for the "tragic" end of the Syrian Ottoman Railway were not only financial. The main reason was a typical one for the latter years of Ottoman rule - i.e. Corruption.

The French also had a Firman for construction of railways in the Levant; for the D.H.P. (Damas - Hame et Prolongements). They got this Firman for a line from Beirut to Damascus, but also built a line of 101km. from Damascus southward to Muzeirib. They paid the "big bosses" of the Turkish Government more than Pilling, so most, if not all of the agricultural products such as wheat from the rich Hauran region of southern Syria went to the port of Beirut by their trains; added to intrigues between the shareholders of the S.O.R., and lack of finance, all combined to let the Turkish government cancel the Firman. In 1889-90 the Company was organised anew, the new contractor being "Palmer and Triton" of London. (The same firm built the port of Haifa thirty years later). The Firman was granted again, work was started in several locations (mostly just earthworks), in the Emek Jezreel - but in 1902, with work progressing on the Hedjaz line, the Firman was finally taken away. Compensation was paid (150,000 Turkish Pounds, i.e. 3,000,000 Francs) and all works of the S.O.R. were used by Meissner Pasha for his Hedjaz branch to Haifa.

(Editor's note: It will be noted that some of these details vary slightly from Hugh Hughes account. I'd still like to know what happened to the track and any wagons used during construction.)

15. AN ILL WIND by Paul Cotterell.

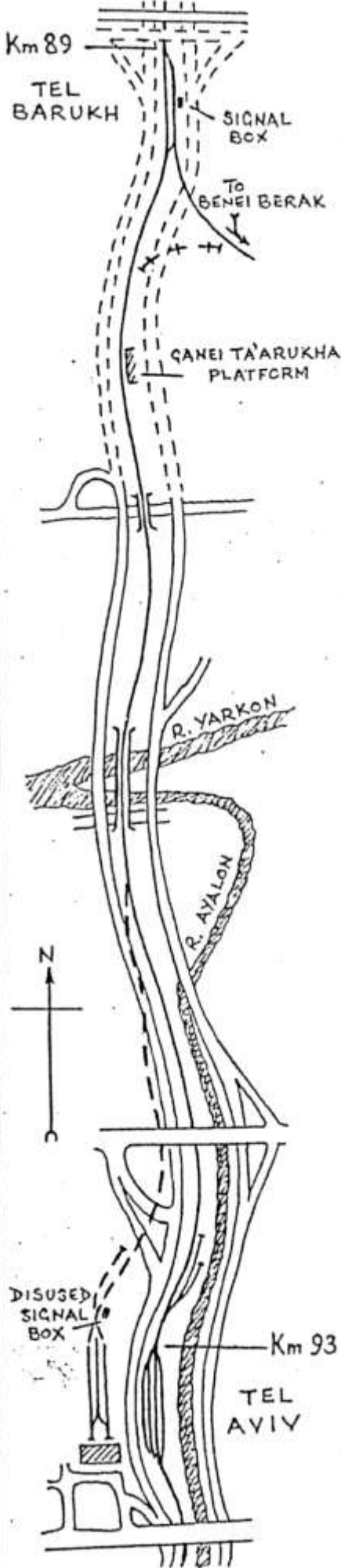
Here's another from Max Seidenberg, raconteur extraordinaire of IR.

Back in the days of the War of Independence and establishment of the State of Israel some very interesting characters came to volunteer their services in one capacity or another. One of them was an Australian who had acquired the fine Hebrew name of Yonah (Jonah) during his sojourn in the Holy Land. Whether or not he'd been a professional railwayman Down Under I'm unable to say, but he had been elevated to the position of driver on the newly-formed Israel Railways. And so it was that Max found himself firing to Yonah on one of the infrequent early IR passenger trains made up of a motley collection of coaches including one of the old WVfl ambulances equipped with a double roof to ward off the heat.

It was the khamsin season. That awful desert wind was whipping down off the southern heights of the Mount Carmel range as the train drew to a halt at Zikhron Ya'akov. Passengers got on and off. Pleasantries were exchanged with the crew. Max went across to put on his injector. Suddenly a particularly fierce gust of wind swept over the station, causing the tall eucalyptus trees to cry out in protest as they bent before its force. There was a tremendous tearing sound, a tumult amongst the passengers, and a great flapping in the air. Astonished, Max turned to his driver hanging imperturbably over the cabside.

"What's happened?", yelled Max above the din. ' ; "Bloody wind took the bloody roof off that old coach", replied Yonah.

16. ALL CHANGE AT TEL AVIV by Paul Cotterell.'



They don't call it The City That Never Stops for nothing. Unless they are referring to the traffic jams, that is. Israel Railways have had to move house to make room for road improvements intended to relieve some of the monumental traffic congestion associated with commuting into and out of Tel Aviv from towns such as Netanya and Herzliyya to the north. And who knows? - this road r.cheme might even do what is expected of it: for a while anyway.

Not everyone will be familiar with the new layout at Tel Aviv Merkaz (Central) station, but the accompanying map gives an idea of the changes.

The main building of the old station is still in use for booking tickets, refreshments etc. From here a footbridge leads across to the two new island platforms. Most of the track remains in the old station, though a very pleasant landscape garden now occupies the former buffer-stop area. The new station was brought into public use on 10/1/88, and officially opened on 3/5/83. Photos of this new station have appeared in 'Railway Magazine' for September 1988 and 'Continental Railway Journal No. 75' of Autumn 1988.

The Ganei Ta'arukha platform is only used occasionally when there is a show on at the adjacent Exhibition Gardens (after which it is named).

Most of the track on the south curve of the triangle at Tel Barukh is still in situ, though there are buffer-stops at each end where short lengths of track were lifted many years ago. Tel Barukh signal box is normally switched out as the panel at Tel Aviv Merkaz controls the main line as far north as Herzliyya.

South of the new Tel Aviv station the track is laid for a distance of about 200 metres. This is eventually intended as part of the extension to the presently dormant Tel Aviv Darom (South) station, which would provide a through route for the city.

- - - LINE LIFTED.  
+ + + LINE CLOSED BUT IN SITU.

9/89.

21' FROM TEE KAF ROOM - 1.  
Paul Cotterell.

I've recently been spending time in various departments of Haifa University doing some research. The map room on the third floor of the library is producing items of interest giving greater detail of station layouts, junction arrangements etc than I was able to include in my book, and I hope to share the results of my searches in this and future issues of Karakevet. Rather than try to use photocopies of the original maps (which are not likely to reproduce too well) I've prepared sketch maps of each locality, including what I feel to be the salient features.

For the first map let's take a closer look around Messudie (or however else you care to spell it). This sketch is based on a Palestine Exploration Fund map revised to April 1915. The incredibly sinuous nature of the lines in the mountains of Samaria (Shomron) is readily apparent. The contours were followed as closely as possible, reducing to an absolute minimum the earthworks, bridges etc needed to give straighter, but much more expensive and time-consuming, alignments. Two points, in particular, should be noted. Firstly, the track south of the first station out of Messudie is shown as a dotted line, indicating that rails had yet to be laid from this spot into Nablus. Secondly, while the PEF map shows a single siding at Messudie station, photographic evidence shows the layout to have been marginally more sophisticated. In the Imperial War Museum collection is a photo (Q15213) showing there to have been two sidings or, perhaps, a loop and a siding. A three-coach passenger train is standing on the outer (southernmost) loop/siding, and there are five high-sided bogie wagons to be seen occupying the platform road. The photo was, no doubt, taken after the British army had conquered Palestine in September 1918 but, looking long and hard at my copy of the LWM photo, it seems certain that the extra loop/siding would have been there the previous April for there is no evidence of recent tracklaying.

Messudie station (or Sebastiya as it is more commonly known in Israel) later gained a certain notoriety when - in 1969 I think it was - the derelict old station building was occupied for a time by members of Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful), becoming the first camp of this movement which later established more permanent Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories.

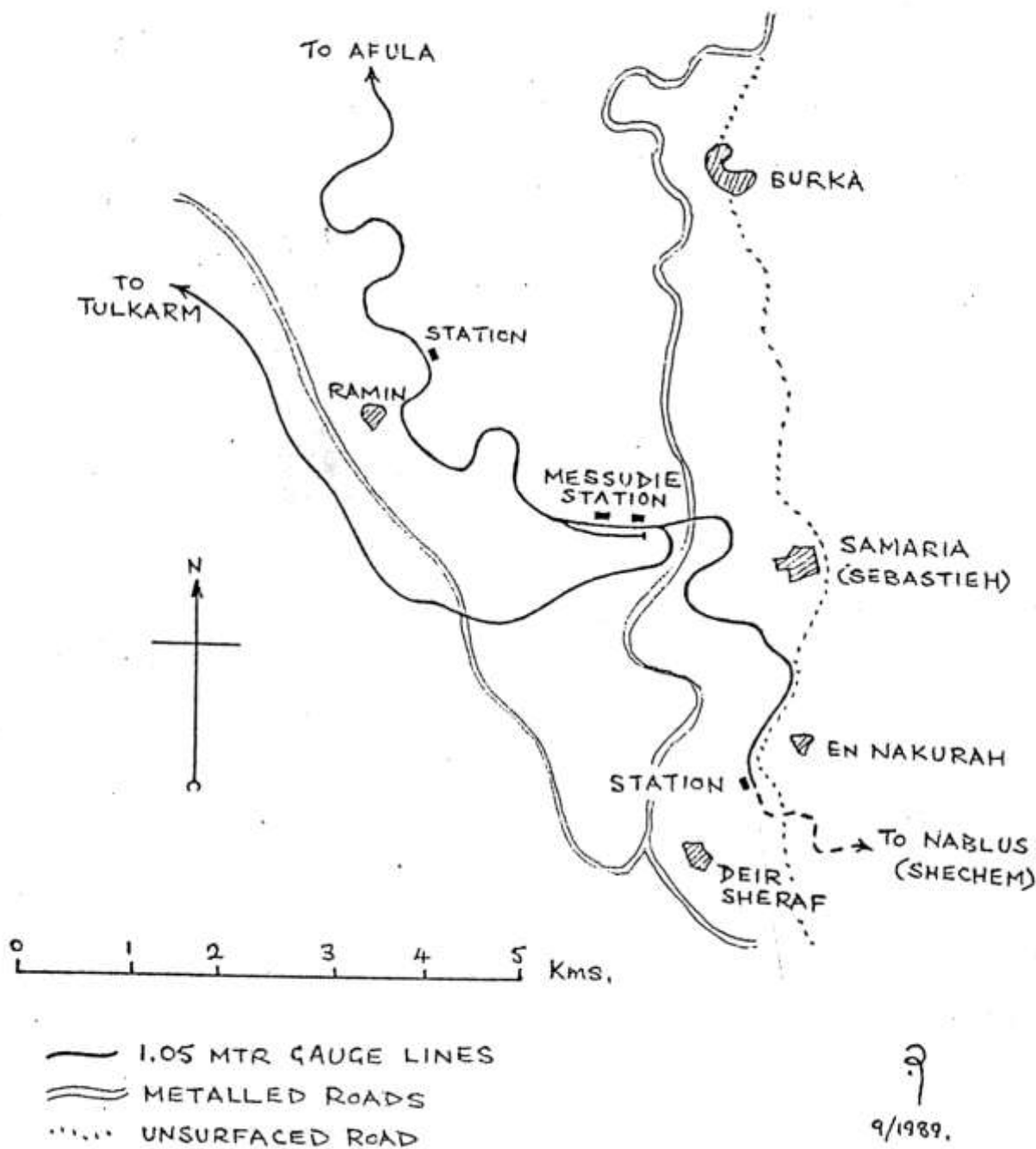
I am not able to identify the two outlying stations shown on the map. Judging from the relatively contemporary timetables in my possession (those for 1920 and 1924), the station north of Messudie was no longer in use. -(it is quite amazing - and very bewildering - how small wayside stations and halts in Palestine appeared and disappeared from the columns of PR's timetables at short intervals). It is possible that the southern station is that known as Shomron in the Hebrew edition of the 1924 timetable. In this trains are shown as taking 19 minutes from Messudie to Shomron and 12 minutes in the opposite downhill direction over a distance of some 3 kms, which does not seem excessive by the standards of the narrow gauge HR lines.

(See Map on Next Page).

18.

See: "News From the Line", para.4.  
This picture appeared in the promotional/souvenir brochure and represents ideas for future suburban rail services to the North of Tel Aviv.





19. RAINING ROCKS by Paul Cotterell.

There must be plenty of amusing stories to be collected among Old Timers. This one war-told to me by Max Seidenberg, who began his footplate career with Palestine Railways in 1935 and now conducts groups of visitors around the Railway Museum at Haifa East. It dates from the War of Independence in 1948-49, and happened at about the time the Egyptian air force had carried out a few tentative air raids on Tel Aviv and other places.

Max was fireman on a Baldwin 4-6-0 one day, heading a southbound freight past the stone quarry a couple of kilometres north of Binyamina. In those days the working face was much nearer the tracks than it is today. Just as the train chugged slowly past the quarry an ill-timed explosion boomed out and sizeable chunks of stone beat upon the van roofs and ricocheted off the engine cab with ringing clangs.

"My life.", exclaimed the driver, considerably alarmed. "Come on, let's get to Binyamina quick, they're bombing us with rocks now."

20.MIDDLE EAST RAILWAYS IN 1914.

I am grateful to Victor Isaacs of Australia for sending me photocopies of several timetables. The most interesting are from an unidentified Austrian handbook of August 1914 - just before the First World War changed the face and character of the Middle East forever. As interesting as the actual schedules are the various notes. The copies relevant to our area are reproduced here, with my comments.

As a beginning, we should note that there is absolutely no coordination of timetables. They commence at differing dates - 18th. May, 15th. June, 14th. March and 10th. March ! How travel-agents and timetable-compilers coped, I do not know. Services are sparse, and complicated in places. Despite the paucity of services, some trains carry extravagantly-wild reporting numbers !

1•Table 431 Beirut - Mameltein. This was run by the "Tramway Libanais", of 1.05m. gauge, construction starting in 1895 as part of a scheme to reach Tripoli; by 1908 it had reached only Mameltein, and this became the terminus - a total of 20km. Trains are described as "Mixed", taking about an hour and a quarter for the trip, with stops almost every kilometre. Trains 321/2 run only when especially required - why ? Good bathing weather ? There is a picture of TL 0-6-OT No. 6 on p.62 of Hughes' "Middle East Railways", and the line had eight such locos, built 1895/6. Fouar, Kasslik and Bitar are request stops, and those wishing to alight are asked to advise the Conductor accordingly.

Vom 18. Mai 1914.						431. Beirut—Mameltein.								
Gemischte Züge						Kfz	Soc. Anon. Ottom. d. Tramw. Libanais.	Gemischte Züge						
301	303	305	307	321	309			302	304	306	308	310		
5 22	8 00	11 22	2 40	3 18	6 00	1	ab Beirut Hafen 433	an	7 25	10 40	2 15	5 22	8 10	8 50
5 02	8 00	11 31	2 46	3 21	6 04	1	ab Médawar	ab	7 21	10 45	2 10	5 28	8 08	8 45
5 02	8 10	11 35	2 50	3 25	6 10	3	an Beirut Bhf. 433	ab	7 25	10 40	2 04	5 22	8 01	8 40
5 11	8 15	11 42	2 55	3 28	6 13	3	ab Beirut Bhf. 433	an	7 21	10 35	2 00	5 17	7 55	8 34
5 11	8 22	11 48	3 02	3 35	6 17	4	W Dora	an	7 14	10 38	1 53	5 10	7 45	8 24
5 22	8 26	11 52	3 06	3 39	6 22	5	W Nahr-EI-Mott	an	7 09	10 33	1 48	5 05	7 42	8 21
5 22	8 33	11 59	3 14	3 47	6 22	6	Fouar X	an	7 02	10 17	1 40	4 58	7 38	8 17
5 24	8 38	12 04	3 19	3 52	6 40	8	an Dbyé	an	6 55	10 11	1 33	4 53	7 29	8 10
5 25	8 43	12 10	3 24	3 57	6 45	9	ab Dbyé	an	6 50	10 06	1 28	4 48	7 24	8 05
5 25	8 49	12 16	3 30	4 03	6 51	12	W Nahr-EI-Kelb	an	6 45	10 01	1 23	4 43	7 19	8 00
5 29	8 55	12 23	3 36	4 09	6 57	14	Antoura	an	6 39	9 54	1 17	4 38	7 12	7 53
5 29	9 01	12 29	3 42	4 15	7 03	15	Y Kasulik X	an	6 33	9 47	1 10	4 33	7 05	7 47
5 27	9 05	12 30	3 45	4 18	7 02	16	an Sarba	an	6 39	9 44	1 05	4 34	7 05	7 45
6 01	9 09	12 34	3 49	4 22	7 06	17	W Djouni	an	6 36	9 41	1 02	4 31	7 02	7 42
6 07	9 15	12 40	3 55	4 28	7 12	18	Y Bitar X	an	6 20	9 35	12 54	4 15	7 00	7 35
						20	an Mameltein	ab						

\* Die Züge 321 und 322 verkehren nur auf Grund besonderer Verabbarung.  
 † Bedarfshaltestellen: falls Reisende dort anzusteigen wünschen, ist dies dem Schaffner vorher bekannt zu geben.

2• Table 432. Damascus - Muzeirib. Operated now by the D.H. P., this was the ill-fated Belgian-built line 103 km. long - which was outflanked and made largely-redundant by the construction of the Hedjaz line. It opened in July 1894, and was also to 1.05m gauge. During the war the Turks pulled up the track to use on their extensions Southwards from Afuleh -and that was the end. Here we see one train each way on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, taking five hours. Why are they numbered "11" & "12" ? This line was lifted in 1915 so this timetable acts as a sort of tombstone.

Vom 15. Juni 1914.				432. Damaskus—Muzeirib.			
E 11		E 12	Soc. Ottom. d. Ch. d. P. Damas-Hama et Pal.		E 12		
61-8	11		433, 434, 435	61-3	12	12	
			ab Damaskus-Baramké	an	5 55		
			W Damaskus-Midan	an	5 45		
			9 Daraya	an	5 14		
			12 Bahaya	an	5 04		
			22 Kessoué	an	4 37		
			24 Khan-Danoun	an	4 21		
			37 Zerakié	an	4 05		
			41 Ghabagheb	an	3 36		
			54 Sunamein	an	3 01		
			67 Keneia	an	2 35		
			70 Kaveibé	an	2 25		
			82 Cheik-Meskine	an	1 37		
			91 Daél	an	1 05		
			97 Tafas	an	12 30		
			10 an Muzeirib 435	ab	12 30		



3. Table 433. Beirut - Damascus. This is the famous rack line over the Lebanon mountains, opened in August 1895, also to 1.05m. gauge. Operated by the DHP. Luggage is not conveyed on three of the services. Interestingly, three of the Damascus-bound trains run only until 10th. or 31st. October, whilst in reverse direction two cease after the end of September and the other after the 2nd. November ! There must have been some interesting balancing-workings, if this is to be taken seriously. One train runs only on Saturdays, when necessary. According to Hughes (p.61) the 147km. (91 miles) journey normally took about 9 hours in 1898; here it appears that 11 hours is needed ! There is overnight running.

Syrrien. 433-434a										
Vom 15. Juni 1914. 433. Beirut-Damaskus.										
G1-3	G1-3	G1-3	G1-3	G1-3	G1-3	G1-3	G1-3	G1-3	G1-3	
1 bis	1	20	5	3 bis	3	7	4	4 bis	5	
6 45	7 15	11 50		3 25	5 00	10 50	ab Beirut Hafen 431, 1	8 25	9 40	11 20
7 00	7 30	12 05		3 38	5 13	11 05	3 ab Beirut Hf. 431	8 38	9 53	11 30
7 33	7 53	12 28		4 03	5 33	11 21	71 Hadatt	8 58	10 01	11 47
7 43	8 10	12 49		4 23	5 56	11 33	91 Dasheda	9 13	10 14	11 54
8 04	8 33	1 20		4 48	6 11	12 13	12 Jamhour	9 23	10 26	12 03
8 34	9 03	1 55		5 13	6 41	12 33	17 Araya	9 50	10 50	12 30
9 30	9 40	2 48		6 03	7 21	1 00	21 Alep	10 50	11 52	1 35
9 33	10 13	3 28		6 13	7 31	2 00	27 Bhamdoun	10 58	12 00	2 35
10 15	10 40	4 01		7 07	8 25	3 00	318 Sofar	11 00	12 03	3 05
							401 Mederrice			
	11 33	5 04			4 15		44 Mrejjat		7 13	1 04
	11 48	5 33			4 27		47 Idirah		6 34	12 36
	12 01	5 33			4 28		52 Said-Neil		6 14	12 23
	12 20	5 45			5 07		56 Mallakab		6 00	12 13
	12 48				5 27		60 an Rayak 434a		11 40	1 10
	1 13				6 00		60 ab Rayak 434b		11 06	1 06
	1 48				6 33		78 Yanfoufah		10 40	1 00
	2 17				7 03		87 Zerghaya		10 19	1 09
	2 48				7 33		98 Zebdani		9 45	3 87
							101 Modaya			
	3 14				7 59		110 El-Téquiéh		9 16	3 15
	3 35				8 09		113 S. O. Barada		9 03	3 53
	3 38				8 30		119 Deir-Kanoun		8 50	2 34
	3 50				8 38		124 Atn-Figez		8 39	2 19
	4 04						126 Achrafie			
	4 17				8 51		130 Ideyda		8 31	1 37
	4 33				9 03		134 Hameh		8 11	1 45
	4 47				9 11		137 Doummar		8 01	1 39
	5 00				9 37		144 Damaskus-Baramk4		7 45	1 10
					9 50		147 an Damaskus-Midan 432, 434, 435 ab		7 17	12 46

↓ Keine Aufnahme von Reisegepack.

4. Table 434. Damascus - Medina. The Hedjaz Railway runs, it says, according to Local Time - which is as good an excuse as any. At this time T.E.Lawrence was still safely out of the way in England....

The single train takes all of Monday, Wednesday or Saturday to get from Damascus to El Hassa (383 km), then the whole of Tuesday, Thursday or Sunday to get the further 577 or so km. to Medain Salih, and arrives at its destination in mid-afternoon on the third day and 1307th. kilometre after Damascus. Note that, after Deraa, fares are higher per kilometre. A 1st-Class single Damascus-Deraa would cost 64 piastres; the fare on to Medina (assuming that, as an infidel, you'd be allowed anywhere hear the place) would be a further 707. 40 piastres. No wonder Lawrence took his camel! The same train also changes reporting number along the way; perhaps this reflects crew changes.

The Bosra branch timetable is squeezed in sideways - clearly not very important. Examination shows that, on Mon. , Wed. and Sat. , one could arrive at Deraa from Damascus at 1223 and leave for Bosra at 1330 - not a bad connection. However, the return train (also running those days only) brought you to Deraa at 22. 45, with the next available departure southwards around 36 hours later, or northwards at 0950 on Thurs. , Sat. and Mon. - a ten-hour wait .if you arrived at Deraa on Wednesday evening, a 254 day wait if you got there on Monday, a 154 day wait if you arived on Saturday. Who are they trying to kid ?



Vom 14. März 1914.		434. Damaskus—Medine.		Chem. de fer du Hedjaz. (Örtliche Meridianzeit)		1-3. Kl.	
Fahrtplan	Flaster	1-3. Kl.	Km	ab	an	1-3. Kl.	
Per Person u. Kilometer				ab	an		
1. Kl. 0,50				ab	an		
2. " 0,375				ab	an		
3. " 0,20				ab	an		
Per Person und Kilometer				ab	an		
1. Klasse 0,50				ab	an		
2. " 0,375				ab	an		
3. " 0,20				ab	an		

5• Table 435. Haifa - Damascus. No great surprises here; one daily train in each direction, taking almost 12 hours for the 289km. Again, the Deraa-Damascus section has a differential fare, though affecting only third-class. Local time applies. Tables 435a/b show a daily return Haifa-Afulah-Jenin - then the limit of the line southwards, though this branch was soon to have much greater significance - and an incredible suburban service of three trains .to' Acre/Akko.

Vom 14. März 1914.		435. Caifa—Damaskus.		Chem. de fer du Hedjaz (Örtliche Meridianzeit)		1-3. Kl.	
Fahrtplan	Flaster	1-3. Kl.	Km	ab	an	1-3. Kl.	
Per Person u. Kilometer				ab	an		
1. Kl. 0,50				ab	an		
2. " 0,375				ab	an		
3. " 0,20				ab	an		

6• Table 436. Jaffa - Jerusalem. The 87km. still take a painful slog of almost three hours, up the metre-gauge. One engine diagram starts from each terminus, and no 3rd-class fare is given at all.

Vom 10. März 1914.		436. Jaffa—Jerusalem.		Chem. de J. Ustman, de Jaffa u Jerusalem		1-3. Kl.	
Fahrtplan	Flaster	1-3. Kl.	Km	ab	an	1-3. Kl.	
Per Person u. Kilometer				ab	an		
1. Kl. 0,50				ab	an		
2. " 0,375				ab	an		
3. " 0,20				ab	an		

g<sub>1</sub>- FROM THE HAP ROOM - 2 by Paul Cotterell.

Very little is known about the Turkish military lines of World War 1. Photographic evidence appears to be practically non-existent, and much of what little is known has been discovered from British accounts and sources of the Palestine Campaign. These, naturally enough, concentrate on the action as seen from the victor's viewpoint, generally giving only an outline picture of the enemy's side of things. History is, after all, written by the winners.

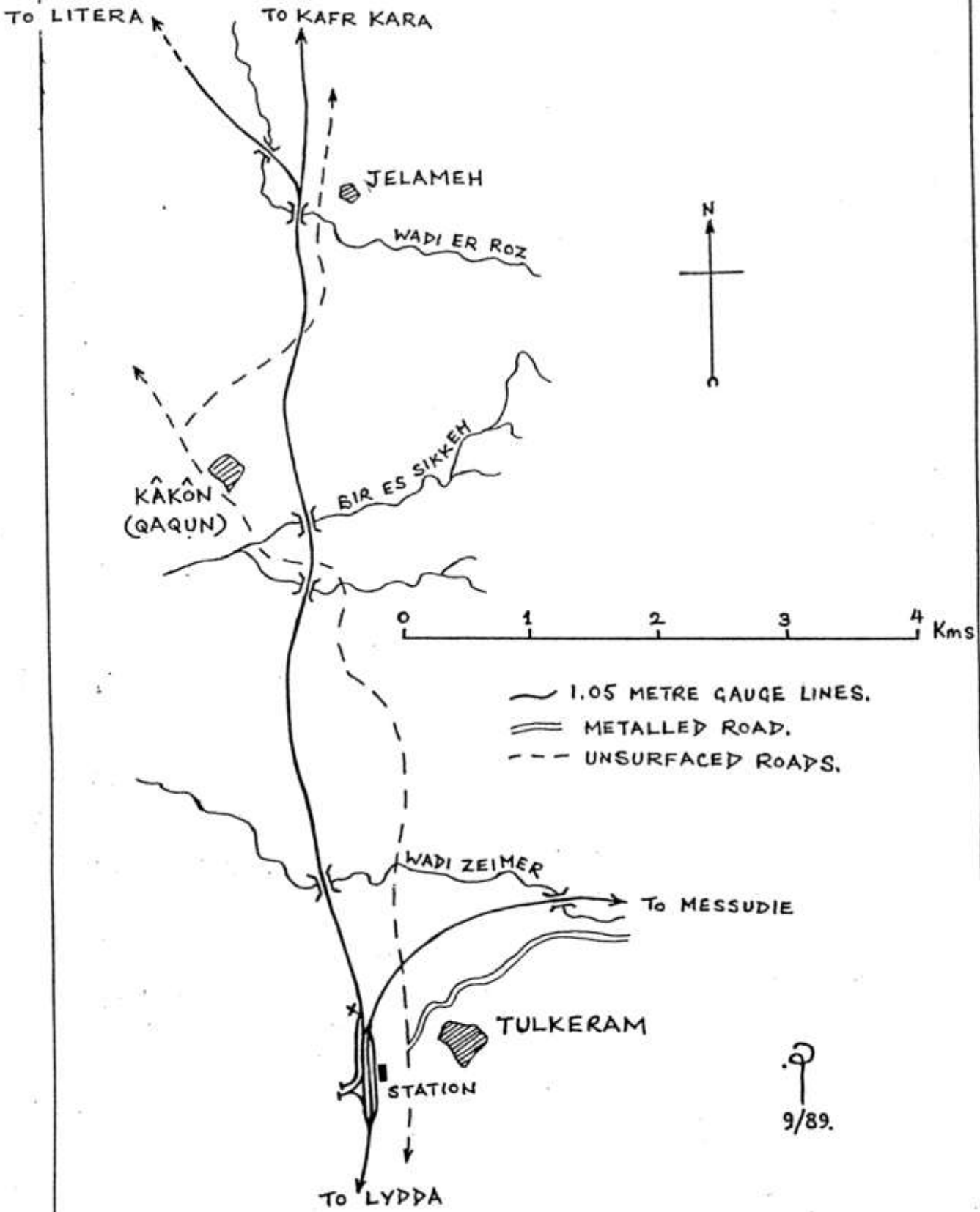
There is a series of aerial photos taken by the Geriman Air Force in 1917 which show the Turkish railways in excellent detail and definition, and are now housed in the Geography Department of the new campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (that's the one near the Knesset building). The late Doctor Walter (pinchas) Pick of Jerusalem made a study of these aerial photos, but he died a few years ago, and attempts to contact his widow have been unsuccessful, so it seems that his findings could be irretrievably lost. My own perusal of these photos was fleeting and cursory, but I have no doubt that they would repay an intensive study by anyone who can spend time going through them properly. Do we have a volunteer?

The accompanying sketch map is the most detailed (scale 1:20,000) that I have seen of the Tulkeram (sic) area during the twilight of Turkish rule in Palestine. It is based on another PEF map, revised to April 1918, just a few months before the British finally swept the Turks and Germans out of the country. I do not think that it shows the full extent of sidings at Tulkeram, but probably gives a good indication of the general layout. Notice particularly the turning triangle (or Wye for our American^readers) used for getting locos facing in the right direction of travel.

There is a most interesting panoramic view of Tulkeram station in the collection of the Imperial War Museum (catalogue number Q 15209). This was taken from a freshly-turned mound of earth to the north-west of the station (the approximate spot is marked x on my sketch map). It is evident from several details that the photo was almost certainly made in the spring of 1919 by which time the British had laid standard gauge tracks north and south of Tulkeram. In the background a shiny Baldwin 4-6-0 stands light-engine opposite the station building, and there is a standard gauge siding serving a camp of army tents apparently on the site of the turning triangle. In the left foreground of the photo a rake of seven picturesque, very British goods vehicles stands on what I presume to be a siding, along with a tiny hand-propelled inspection car. There is a cluster of impressive buildings and a fine circular stone-built water tower - all in typical Hedjaz Railway architectural style - grouped together on the east side of the remaining narrow gauge tracks. (It is quite remarkable how the Turks - or more likely the Germans - built such substantial and attractive structures for these military railways). Also in the foreground of the photo is the standard gauge track laid by the British on the formation of the Turkish line to Litera, which was incorporated in construction of the British main line up to Haifa.

But let us return to the sketch map for more comments on the Turkish lines north of Tulkeram. These were laid to transport wood for firing locos when the coal supply ran out (see Uri Ben-Rehav's account in 5.13). The names Litera and Kafr Kara do not appear on the PEF map, but are shown as such in Uri's article. The branch heading north-west "To Litera" is known to have terminated in the locality of Hadera, an area of wetlands and natural woods in those days (the Arabic 'Khudera' means green). By April 1918 the Turks had evidently already retrenched on this branch line since it is shown as a dotted line only from approximately 1-j kms past the junction near Jelameh. I assume that the tracks to 'Kafr Kara' were still used at this date for bringing down newly-cut wood.

Those of you who live in more pacific parts of the world may wonder why it is that villages and towns in Palestine should be by-passed by the roads. The reason for this is that settlements are built on available hill tops or high ground for security, while travellers are forced to take the low road.



**22. World War I - Noted in Reading.**

"A Village by the Jordan", subtitled "The Story of Degania", was published in **1960** by Ichud Habonira (Press Dept.) to mark the **50th.** anniversary of the founding of Degania Aleph in **1910**. It consists of the personal memoirs of one of the founders, Joseph Baratz. Ch. **6** deals with the period when the Jev/ish settlers were persecuted as "enemy aliens" by the Turkish authorities during the First World War. The following comes from pp. **95 - 975**

"...Naturally enough, as the war went on the authorities took strict measures. They arrested our leaders on suspicion and deported them - among them were Ruppin, Ben Zvi, Ben Gurion....

In the meantime all the Jews were driven out of Jaffa and from the settlements along the seaboard, and to these refugees were later added fugitive; from the places where there was fighting. Our own valley was filled with them; ' in Tiberias children who were separated from their parents or were orphaned, roamed the streets hungry and in rags. Joseph Bussel went to Tiberias and worked night and day to relieve their suffering. Food was terribly scarce and we worked all out to produce bread. ,

As the Allies advanced, detachments of Turkish troops would fall now on this settlement, and now on that; they arrested all the men and held them for a week or so, trying to get money, arms or information. They tormented them in the old-established ways - flogged them, beat them on the soles of their feet and put hot eggs under their armpits. So it happened also in Degania and in Kinnereth. It was a bad moment....

We waited eagerly for the English, they were coming up from the South towards Jerusalem. We had kept up our links with the outside world and occasionally got news of how the war was going.

We even got presents sometimes - through Jewish soldiers serving in the Austrian or German Armies, or through our own people who had been sent to Turkey - some of them had been released there. One day I heard that Ruppin who was in Turkey had sent us quite a big sum of money and it was waiting for me in Jaffa. I managed to get through to Jaffa and to collect it, and now the problem was to get home. I tramped to Rass-El-Ein (sic), the railway junction i next to Petah Tikva, but here the train was full of soldiers; no civilians were allowed on. All the same I wriggled in; the soldiers didn't mind ;the train started, I thought I'd made it, then it stopped at the control post - ! there was nothing for it but to jump off. What was I to do now ? Fortunately it was dark. I crept forward and climbed up onto the engine, just behind the headlights. Nobody had seen me. We moved again. But now I was in terrible l trouble - the engine got too hot, I didn't know what to do, I vjas being roasted to a cinder. Luckily it was a very old engine; when it had to climb an incline it kept stopping and puffing every few minutes, so I was able to get down and cool off and climb up again. Like this, jumping on and off, with great difficulty I got to Afuleh, and from there I walked home."

! Editorial note: This account raises several interesting questions.

Ras-el-Ain (Now Rosh Ha-Ayin) didn't become a junction until the Petach Tikvah Railway (**6.5km.** long and jointly-owned by the Government and the Petach Tikvah settlers) was built in **1920/1**;the route must, by definition, have been the Turkish military line via Tulkarm and Massoudieh - which isn't all uphill, so the engine can't have stopped so frequently all the way ! Still, ! there is little information on the short-lived Turkish military network.

**23. Military Memoir:**

Whilst talking to members of the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway they mentioned Driver A.T. ("Bert") Green, formerly of Kings Cross Shed and holder of several unofficial speed records on the E<sub>as</sub>t Coast Main Line, who landed at Gallipoli in **1916**; when an appeal was made for engine drivers, he volunteered - on the strength of **2** years as a cleaner at Immingham shed I - ani so became an Engine Driver on the Palestine Military Railway.....

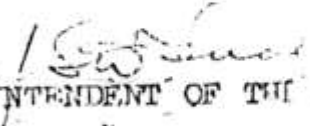
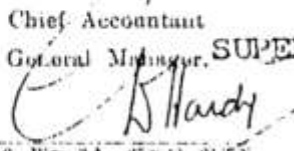
Alas, Bert passed away in **1969**. I wonder what other tales he would have had to tell ? They say his was the first A4 to be scrapped, and he could never work out why.....

Zk. A FLIMSY REMINDER by Paul Cotterell. •

There is an enormous amount of choice background detail to be gleaned from railway ephemera; such items as tickets, inter-departmental memos and similar flimsies. In the nature of things, examples of these tend to disappear rather quickly - thrown out to rot, or burnt - but those that survive can illuminate the day-to-day running of a railway. Witness the accompanying Notice of Infliction of Fine sent by the FR Superintendent of the Line to the Assistant District Traffic Superintendent at Kantara, concerning a signalman who nodded off on duty one night and held up FR's premier train No. 1 (from Haifa to Kantara) for thirty minutes at his outer home signal. The unfortunate Signalman Soliman was docked one day's pay, plus another 206 mills for Compensatory Allowance (whatever that was exactly). His misdemeanor would have had far-reaching repercussions as the train had to continue across the Suez Canal at El Firdan to reach Cairo, and there were, no doubt, delays to connecting services.

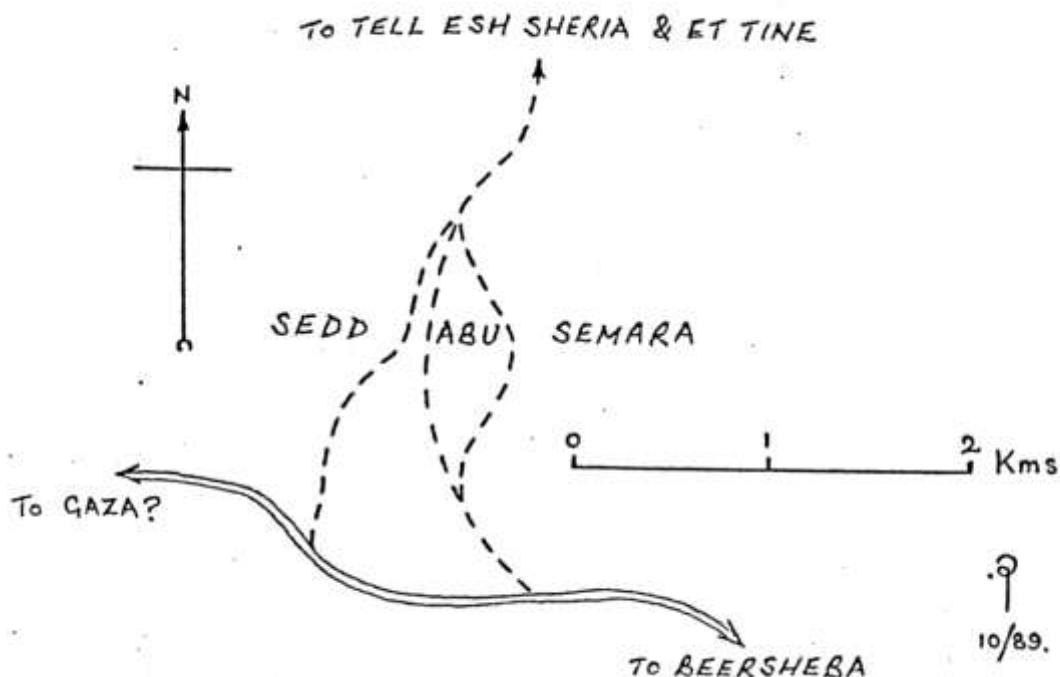
I do not know the precise location of Tel El Heir. It does not appear in any of the PR or ESR working timetables in my files. I would guess it to be an isolated signal box, possibly built to break up a long single line section between stations, and perhaps one erected to cope with greatly increased wartime traffic.

My thanks to Nahum Greenberg at the Haifa East Railway Museum who brought this interesting flimsy to my attention recently.

Palestine Railways		P.R.F. 1
Ref. No. <u>SL.4/2/5716.</u>		
GENERAL MANAGER'S OFFICE		
HAIFA STATION		11.2.44
To: <u>N/D.T.S. Kantara</u> W/R to his <u>K.3/2/939</u> of <u>7.2.44.</u>		
<u>NOTICE OF INFLICTION OF FINE</u>		
Dept. No.	<u>T.4205.</u>	Grade <u>Signalman.</u>
<u>K.A. Soliman.</u>		is charged with
having at <u>Tel El Heir.</u>		
on <u>the night of 27/28.1.44.</u>		
been at fault, in that he <u>was asleep whilst on duty</u>		
<u>thus causing 30 minutes delay to train No.1</u>		
<u>at the O.H.S.</u>		
▼		
He is to be <u>FINED One day's pay (200 m/ms)</u>		
and to be warned to exercise more care in future, <u>plus 206 m/ms</u>		
<u>Compensatory Allowance.</u>		
Please note and so inform him, also arrange to make the necessary deduction from the next issue of pay due to him.		
Copy to:--	Chief Accountant	 SUPERINTENDENT OF THE LINE.
" "	General Manager	
M. S		
1111 12976-6060-1078. 3A.-258.42-21075.		

25. FROM THE MAP ROOM - 3 by Paul Cotterell.

The subject of this sketch rather took me by surprise when I came across the original. It is based on a map dated 1938. The site is on the erstwhile Turkish military line between Beersheba and Et Tine.



Sedd Abu Semara is, or was, a location several kilometres south of Tell Esh Sheria (World War 1 junction for the light railway to Abu Karera), and well to the north of Irgeig Junction where the British standard gauge line from Rafiah joined the Turkish 1.05 metre gauge line on its way into Beersheba. It is possible that Sedd Abu Semara should better be rendered Sayed Abu Semara (Sayed, Father of the Swarthy One) - but I really don't want to get into the convoluted intricacies of transliterations. And, since the original map is in English and not Arabic, let it remain Sedd Abu Semara. One thing only is almost certain today - that Sedd (or Sayed) Abu Semara appears on no present-day map.

What took me aback was the appearance of these lines serving, what I assume to have been, a Turkish military camp smack in the middle of the desert and only a short distance from the Tell Esh Sheria base. It is more than possible, also, that the original map (scale 1:20,000) does not show the full extent of loops and sidings at Sedd Abu Semara, but merely gives an indication of the layout. Note that the dotted lines showing dismantled track disappear into the road to Beersheba, which means that the road was built on the formation of the redundant railway. It seems that, in the other direction, this road goes to Gaza but, as the roadway simply runs off the edge of the original map without any indication of its ultimate destination, I can't be positive on this point either.

There is much, I feel sure, to be discovered about these old lines - both British and Turkish - in the Negev Desert. Our knowledge - mine certainly - of them is scanty in the extreme. Perhaps someone with better access to the area might care to undertake more detailed research into their history.

And what, I wonder, has yet to be uncovered in archives in Turkey and Germany?