

HaRakevet

Series 17 #3
Issue No. 66 September 2004

הרכבת

A Quarterly Journal on the Railways of the Middle East
Edited and Published by Rabbi Walter Rothschild
Passauer Strasse 4, D - 10789 Berlin, Germany
Tel/Fax +49 30 2124 73889
e.mail: Rothschild-Berlin@t-online.de



66:1. *Heading for Jérusalem! G12 No. 115 propels a train of permanent way materials eastwards from Beit Shemesh on 17/05/04. Taken from a print from a digital photo, we see the mechanised portals laid on temporary track, preparing to take another track panel of concrete-sleepered flat-bottom rail from one of three bogie flat wagons, the fourth carrying a tool container. In the background the cement works and the hills of Judea and the Nahal Soreq. (Photo: Evyatar Reiter).*

66:2.

EDITORIAL.

At risk of being repetitive, it appears that Israel Railways continues to progress from strength to strength. The electrification plans look very ambitious, the schemes for new lines appear to make progress, the line to Ben Gurion should transform the lives of all those who have to travel to this busy but amazingly-inaccessible airport (an HOURLY bus to neighbouring Tel Aviv?), further expansion and upgrading of the fleet - one could only wish that others in the region could concentrate on construction rather than destruction.

Which brings us to an amazing personal account from Iraq - published in an American magazine but originally sent to me by John Baetsch, a friend of the author. It provides quite an insight into working there. And we add some historical items to make up the mix. There is plenty more historical material on file (more always welcome!) and some good modern photos from Israel, but we wish we could get more on other Middle East systems.

Anyway - Enjoy!

The Editor.

66:3.

An IC3 train for Beit Shemesh crosses the rebuilt bridge on the rebuilt line to Jerusalem, June 2004. The train



is just a few seconds away from the former Wadi Surar/Nahal Soreq station. This scene may change in the near future; just out of sight to the left, the Road No. 3 currently crosses the line by level crossing; It is intended to widen this road from two to four lanes and replace the level crossing with a rail overbridge - which will then include some realignment and thus eliminate the sharp curves of this section. The bridge, be-

ing nevertheless 'historic', would be retained as a relic.

(Photo: Aharon Gazit).

66:4.

NEWS FROM THE LINE.

(a). STATISTICS.

From a press release of 04.07.2004 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

During June 2004, 2 million passenger were carried, 19% more than on June 2003; from the beginning of 2004, 11 million were carried, 20% more than in the same period of 2003.

In addition, the comparison of monthly punctuality for the same periods shows the following improvements: January 2003- 90.6%; January 2004 - 87.2% - i.e. minus 3.4% - the only decline through the mentioned periods!

February 2003 -	90.5%;
February 2004 -	94.6% - +3.9%.
March 2003 -	93.0%;
March 2004 -	96.2%- +3.2%.
April 2003 -	88.3%;
April 2004 -	94.0%- +5.7%.
May 2003 -	89.5%;
May 2004 -	93.6%- +4.1%.
June 2003 -	89.0%;
June 2004 -	94.0%- +5.0%.

The Israel Railways General

push/pull train formations, so enabling stock to move from lightly-used lines to those more densely trafficked, particularly at rush hours; this is very important due to the fact that the railways still suffer from a shortage of rolling stock, as well as from low capacity, and outdated carriages, just waiting to be scrapped.

He also gave some data about train frequencies on various lines at rush hours between 06.00 and 09.00:

- Tel-Aviv - Haifa line: 12 trains/direction - a train every 15 minutes.
- Tel-Aviv - Netanya line: 10 trains/direction - a train every 20 minutes.
- Tel-Aviv - Kfar-Sava line: 6 trains/direction - a train every 30 minutes.
- Tel-Aviv - Beer-Sheva line: 5 trains/direction - a train every 35 minutes.

But there's no doubt that the record belongs to the Ayalon railway (between Tel-Aviv University and HaHagana stations) - 18 trains an hour each direction, which brings the figure to around a train every 1.5 minutes!

The rise in traffic per line was as following:

- Tel-Aviv - Rosh-Ha'Ayin - Kfar-Sava line: 145,000 = +52%.
- Haifa - Nahariya line: 160,000 = +16%.
- Tel-Aviv - Haifa line: 444,000 = +11%.

(b). ELECTRIFICATION PROGRESS:

A strategic co-operation contract has recently been signed between the Israeli firm AFCON Industries, and Alstom Transport S.A., in order to create a consortium for competing for the ambitious project of the railways electrification; The date for closing bids for RFI ('Request for Information') was 14.07.2004.

The Israeli company (formerly called Feuchtwanger Industries), is owned by the Israeli businessman Mr. Shlomo Schmelzer, who also owns Shlomo, Sixth, and New Koppel rent-a-car and leasing car companies, as well as the Israeli Shipyards and the assembly hall at Ramta where the IC3 trains were assembled; the last two businesses belonging also to a partner.

Another strategic partner is Motorola Israel.

Alstom/Afcon issued a press release on 23.06.2004 (slightly edited here):-

"AFCON Industries in cooperation with ALSTOM Transport SA will submit an RFI and will bid for the Tender

for the Electrification of the Israel Railways

Israel Railways published at the beginning of June a Request For Information (RFI) inviting potential bidders having the know-how and experience in this field to submit until 04/07/2004 information and data in the field of railway electrification in the world in general and in Israel in particular.

Israel Railways plans to publish a tender for a Turnkey project for the electrification of the railways infrastructure and for the maintenance and operation of that system for 7 years. It is the first project of its kind in Israel, and no local enterprise has the required overall experience in this area. A cooperation between a foreign company having the necessary know-how, experience, and technology in the area and a local enterprise that can assure the maximum local content is therefore needed.

The Israel Railways Electrification tender is one of the biggest projects to be published in the near future by The Israel Railways, to be carried out in Israel over the coming years. The overall project is estimated to have a financial worth of between 1.6 and 2.0 billion NIS for a double track of approx. 700 km length.

AFCON Industries Ltd., whose major shareholder is the businessman Mr. Shlomo Shmelzer, signed a strategic cooperation agreement with ALSTOM Transport S.A. of France, which operates as the transportation division of the multinational concern ALSTOM and specializes in the execution of infrastructure projects that include rail transportation, for competing for the Israel Railways electrification project, including for the joint submission of the RFI response and of the joint bid to the tender (when it is published) and the execution of the works if their bid is selected.

Mr. Ilan Fradkin, Business Development Vice-President of the AFCON Industries group announced that the group is preparing in cooperation with ALSTOM within a multi-national consortium to compete and win tenders to be published in the near future by The Israel Railways for the electrification of hundreds of kilometres of existing and new railways in Israel.

Within this framework, ALSTOM shall provide the know-how, the technology and the system design of the railways electrification system under 25 kV AC including the delivery of specialized equipment, whereas AFCON shall be responsible for the design and delivery of local equipment, transforma-

tion, SCADA system, communications and the overall erection works of the project, under the joint management of ALSTOM and AFCON, which will subsequently maintain the system after its commissioning.

The AFCON Industries group is the leading group in Israel in the fields of contracting, manufacturing, integration, marketing, trade and distribution of electromechanical systems and it specializes in the execution of integrated and complicated projects, which include electrical systems, control, software and communications, fire alarms and extinguishing, safety, security, and air conditioning, all in combination with mechanical and civil engineering works. Israel Railways is one of AFCON's customers.

The controlling interest in AFCON Industries, which has operated in Israel since 1945 and is traded on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, was purchased at the end of 2002 by the Shlomo Group in cooperation with Motorola Israel, which joined as a strategic partner in the group activities in Israel and on the international market

ALSTOM has extensive know-how and experience in the execution of projects of this kind, whose extent totals tens of thousands of kilometres worldwide, including the delivery of Rolling Stock equipment to Israel Railways. The ALSTOM - AFCON group team is therefore a natural competitor in a tender of this kind.

For further information: Mr. Ilan Fradkin. Vice President Business Development AFCON Industries Ltd.. Tel +972-3-939-2500 FAX +972-3-924-4248 E-Mail filan@fil.co.il"

(c). NEW MINISTER OF TRANSPORT.

From a press release of 06.07.2004 by the Transport Ministry:

The government appointed today Mr. Meir Shitrit as the new Transport Minister, to succeed Mr. Liebermann, who has resigned. Mr. Shitrit, who was, earlier in his political career, the Mayor of the town of Yavne, later became a member of the parliament (Knesset) for the Likud (right wing) party, and has held the posts of Minister of Finance, and at another period, the Minister of Justice. (Our correspondent adds: "We'll have to wait and see how he will handle this important ministry:")

(d). SPECIALS.

Three daily special trains (double-deckers) were to be run to Nitzanim for a music festival from 01/08/04-16/08/04 (Saturdays excepted). At

Nitzanim (Km.146.800 between Ashdod Ad Halom and Ashdod) a temporary platform of 180 metres length was to be built. One train ran from Haifa, another from Binyamina, the third from Tel Aviv, and were due at Nitzanim in mid-afternoon. They would then run e.c.s. to Lod for stabling overnight, pick up Nitzanim in early morning and return to three above destinations.

(e). JAFFA STATION NEWS.

It appears that the old Jaffa station, derelict for nearly sixty years, is to be renovated. Details of the organisation or organisations behind this project are not yet fully known, but by summer 2004 work had begun on clearing up the site. The main station building, adjacent goods shed, and an elevated metal water tank are still standing in reasonable condition, considering the passage of years, and lengths of rail had been uncovered here and there.

(f). NAHARIYYA LINE REBUILDING.

The line between Akko and Nahariyya was closed from Friday 13/08/04 to Saturday evening 14/08/04. This was to allow the building of a new culvert as part of the project for doubling this section of track.

(g). BINYAMINA QUARRY CEASES.

Rail traffic into the Binyamina quarry ceased some time ago, it is thought on 01/01/2003. Apparently it was not possible to provide rail access to a new working face. The quarry siding off the main line just north of Binyamina station remains

66:5.

ROLLING STOCK NEWS.

(a). MORE SECOND-HAND IC3 SETS AFTER ALL?

See 65:5. According to 'Today's Railways' 103 p. 57, IR is after all to purchase ten Class Y2/Y2K (IC3 design) dmus from Blekingstrafiken and Skanetrafiiken in Sweden. These are believed to be sets 1369, 1372-1378, 1385, 1386. After overhaul and modernisation, including upgrading of the air-conditioning, by Bombardier at Randers in Denmark, the sets will be delivered between December 2004 and December 2005 for use on the Tel Aviv - Jerusalem route. Sets 1367, 1368, 1370 and 1371 have been sold by these companies to DSB.

(b). DOUBLE-DECKERS ORDERED.

See 65:5. "Lok Magazin" 8/2004 p. 14 notes that Bombardier in Görlitz is to build a further 54 double-deck coaches for IR, the order having a value of ca. 78M Euros. Following the initial order from 1999, of which 89 coaches had been delivered by June 2004 with a further four due in July, this order - to be completed by 2006 - will bring the total of such vehicles on IR to 147.

(c). MORE DOUBLE-DECK ARRIVALS.

From Evyatar Reiter:

12 new double-deck coaches were unloaded from the MV Maria at Ashdod Port on 21-22/7/04: They comprised:
422/ 3/ 4 (driving trailers).
482/ 5/ 6/ 7/ 9/
490/ 1/ 2/ 3 (intermediate coaches).

(d). ALSTOM LOCOS ARRIVE.

New Bo-Bos 764/765/766 were landed at Ashdod Port on 12/07/04. Their works numbers are 2127 / 2128 / 2129 respectively.

It is worth mentioning here that the works numbers of the three previous new IR Bo-Bos (761/ 762/ 763) are 2123 / 2125 / 2126 respectively. Note the missing 2124. This works number was allocated to a diesel shunter (identical to the IR 'Yo-Yos' - Nos. 261 / 262 / 263) destined for Egypt, which was being built at the same time as the three Israeli Bo-Bos

(Thanks to Evyatar Reiter.)

(e). WITHDRAWALS.

Coaches 617, 618 and 634 were officially withdrawn for scrapping on 14/07/04. Two weeks later they were at Haifa East for removal of small items such as door handles and also for stripping electrical circuits, but had disappeared again a few days later.

(f). TENDER FOR NEW COACHES.

IR (it refers to itself now as ISR) has issued a tender for the supply of "New Single-Deck Passenger Push-Pull Locomotive Hauled Trailer and Power Coaches". The full wording includes: "The supply of new single deck passenger push-pull locomotive hauled trailer coaches, trailer coaches with handicapped facilities and power coaches for electric power generating, including a driving cabin suitable for operation on railway track in Israel as specified in the Technical Specifications.... plus an option, to be exercised at ISR's sole discretion, for the provision of conversion services of the Units to be suitable for operation on electrified lines and/or the provision of optional maintenance services of the Units..... The initial purchase quantity required under the Tender is 83 units. Furthermore ISR, at its sole discretion, shall have an option, until December 31, 2015, to purchase an additional quantity of Units, suitable for diesel operation on ISR's track and/or as may be required, in full or in part, to be suitable for operation on electrified lines...."

From this it is clear that IR wants 83 new push-pull coaches, suitable for use with electric traction, plus perhaps a few others for diesel work - though how the operation would be divided is not clear; that is, any trains from diesel-operated branches would, of necessity, have to traverse electrified trunk routes as well to get to, say, Tel Aviv. So what the actual difference between different types would be isn't clear.

The rules for the Tender are pretty stiff, involving substantial bank guarantees, compulsory attendance at a meeting on Sept. 7th., and submission of offers by 20th. October 2005. Whether it is feasible to maintain options (and fixed prices) over a period of ten years is also unclear to your Editor!

66:6.

LATEST ISRAEL RAILWAYS TENDERS.

(i). BN/KB/17/04. Upgrading the stations of Akko and Nahariya.

Works include:

Structure 01- Nahariya railway station.

Structure 02- Akko Railway station.

Structure 03- Upgrading tracks at Nahariya station.

Structure 04- Upgrading tracks at Akko station.

Time for implementation: 12 months. Latest bidding date: 28.07.2004.

(ii). HN/KB/28/04. Double-tracking the Akko - Nahariya line. Works include: Preparation and dismantling, earthworks, excavations, roadbeds and layer of ballast, infrastructure works for signalling and communication cables, and drainage.

Time for implementation: 15 months. Bids by 02.08.2004.

(iii). BN/KB/19/04. Upgrading Beer-Sheva Central Station.

Works include: earthworks, cast concrete, building, sealing, carpentry and frames, sanitary installations, electricity, plastering, paving, and covering, painting, aluminum works, stone works, air conditioning, a break-in detection system, fences, water and drainage, and demolition works. Time for implementation: 10 months. Latest bidding date: 20.07.2004.

Note: this station was only opened on 26.09.2002 (108 years after the 1st train between Jaffa and Jerusalem started operating), but due to very intensive use these works have become necessary.

(iv). BN/KB/20/04. Rebuilding the toilets at Lod Station.

Works include: Construction works, carpentry and frames, sanitary installations, electrical installations, plastering, paving, aluminum works, and dismantling and demolishing.

Time for implementation: 30 days. Latest bidding date: 18.07.2004.

Note: the toilets originate from 1920, and have since been improved several times, but due to a serious rise in traffic recently, they will now be more extensively rebuilt!

(v). BN/KB/21/04. Building a second platform and additional works at Ramla Station.

Time for implementation: 10 months. Bids by 03.08.2004.

(vi). BN/KB/23/04. Upgrading of Kiryat Gat Station (on the Naan - Beer Sheva section) Stage 2. Structure 01 - Infrastructure. 02: Station upgrading. Implementation - 10 months. Bids by 03.08.2004.

(vii). HN/KB/04/04. Infrastructure works for double-tracking and upgrading the Naan - Beer Sheba line - section A between km. 0.800 and km. 18.000.

Works include:

Structure 01- Infrastructure works.

Structure 02- an agricultural passage near Yatztiz at km. 1.050.

Structure 03- a Culvert at km. 3.290.

Structure 04- Railway Bridges over the Sorek River at km. 7.557.

Structure 05- A culvert at km. 17.850.

Structure 06- Security Room buildings.

Structure 07 - optional: laying concrete sleepers of type B70 and rails along the alignment.

Time for implementation: 21 months. Bids by 03.08.2004.

(viii). HN/KB/24/04. Completion of works on the Peleshet Junction-Ashdod section.

Works include:

Structure 01- Strengthening of the track near fuel pipelines.

Structure 02- Supporting a graded slope near a monument and rebuilding a drainage ditch.

Structure 03- Building a special support wall near fuel pipelines at km 134.8

Structure 04- Strengthening the piles and upper structure of the historical Ad-Halom railway bridge, built about 1920.

Structure 05- Infrastructure for communication and earthworks.

Structure 06- Various works.

Time of implementation: 4 months; Latest bidding date: 20.07.2004.

(ix). HN/KB/26/04. Construction of an overhead road bridge above the track at Petakh-Tikva Sgula area for access to a garbage site.

Time of implementation: 10 months. Latest bidding date: 27.07.2004.

Note: this bridge is important inasmuch as it will put an end to the 80 year old level crossing which causes traffic disruption for both modes.

(x). HN/KB/27/04. Safety works between acoustic walls at Binyamina.

Works include:

Structure 01: Development works.

Structure 02: Option- electricity works.

Time of implementation: 7 months. Latest bidding date: 19.07.2004.

(xi). HN/KB/29/04. Construction of a pedestrian bridge over the railway tracks at Beer Sheva, to link between Quarter No. 4 and Ramot Quarter. (Both near Beer Sheva North station). Works include. Earthworks, cast concrete, sealing, sanitary and electricity installations, paving and covering, metal framework/scaffolding, and various development works.

(xii). BN/MT/16/04. Measuring services (control and inspection of sub-contractors, on the Lod-Naan-Kiryat-Gat section.

The contract is valid from the moment of signing until works completion. Latest bidding date: 11.07.2004.

(xiii). BN/MT/18/04 - Measuring services (controlling subcontractors' activities) on the Kiryat-Gat to Beer-Sheva section.

The contract covers the time from the date of signing until completion of measuring services.

Latest bidding date: 18.07.2004.

(xiv). NO/SR/06/04. Providing permanent Maintenance Services for Elevators all over Israel Railways Ltd.

The contract includes an option for extending the services for future elevators to be installed. The contract is for 12 months with an option to extend it to additional 48 months. Latest bidding date: 13.07.2004.

(xv). NO/SR/10/04. Providing permanent Maintenance Services for Escalators all over Israel Railways Ltd.

The contract includes an option for extending the services for future escalators to be installed. The contract is for 12 months with an option to extend it to additional 48 months. Latest bidding date: 14.07.2004.

(xvi). MS/RC/2004/2. Providing a coffee and kosher catering trolley at Hadera West station.

The contract is for 12 months with an option to extend it to additional 24 months. Latest bidding date: 15.07.2004.

(xvii). MS/RC/2004/13. Introducing automatic food and drinking machines (cigarettes excluded) at railway stations.

The contract is for 36 months. Latest bidding date: 15.07.2004.

(xviii). MS/RC/2004/15 - Providing catering trolley at Kfar-Sava Nordau railway station, and

(xix). MS/RC/2004/16 - Providing catering trolley at Haifa Bat-Galim station.

The contracts are for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months.

Latest bidding date: 22.07.2004.

(xx). MS/RC/2004/17. Provision of a catering trolley at Tel Aviv University station.

Contract for 36 months, bids by 05.08.2004.

(xxi). MS/RC/2004/18-Putting stands for sales of newspapers, magazines, and books at the stations of: Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv-HaShalom, and Haifa-Hof-HaCarmel.

The contract is for 36 months. Latest bidding date: 22.07.2004

(xxii). MS/MC/07/04. Framework agreement for Stock Counting, for 28,000 stock items on the Railways.

The contract is for 36 months with an optional extension of up to a further 36 months. Bids by 28.07.2004.

(xxiii). MC/RC/02/04. Manufacture and Supply of Electronic Controlled Portal Wheel Lathe. Bids by 06.09.2004.

LIGHT RAIL NOTES.

A. TEL AVIV.

(i). From a press release No. 388 of 01.06.2004 by NTA-Tel-Aviv LRV/Metro project management:

The Chairman of NTA, Engineer Yishai Dotan, has informed the press concerning the beginning of infrastructure movement and development works along the Red Line (1st line) alignment in Jaffa.

The works will last about 3 years and carried out in 3 stages:

The 1st stage, which started several months ago along La-Martin Street, includes moving of a Bezeq (Israeli Telecom) line and renewal of the street's surface.

Within the 2nd stage, works will start at Jerusalem Ave. (the main street of Jaffa), and will include moving water and sewage pipelines using the 'pushing system', in order to minimize disruptions to the street's inhabitants and businessmen; the pushing system enables underground digging by 5 structures (also underground), avoiding the need to open up the whole street; The works will be carried out by the Israeli company Stang through a German subcontractor, the Zublin company, which specializes in this kind of works; also to be installed underground is the overhead high voltage electric line; the cost of works in the pushing system is around \$13.4 million.

In the 3rd stage, secondary infrastructures - water, electricity, sewage, and cables - will be moved. Works will also include new street lighting, furniture, gardens, upgrading streets and sidewalks, and renewal of the traffic lights system.

Towards the completion of all these works, the LRV system itself will be built.

Additional works along the Red Line alignment are being carried out at present at Bat-Yam and Petakh-Tikva.

(ii). From a press release N399 of 01.06.2004 by NTA:

The Chairman of the Tenders Committee Mr. Zvi Halamish, has told the press, that the committee has agreed to the competitors' request to delay presenting the proposals from August 2004, until November 2004, due to their need to reorganize because of the project's complexity; they want to strengthen themselves with additional

international well-experienced companies.

The General Manager of NTA, Ing. Yishai Dotan, said that new joiners will only bring benefits to the project; he added that in parallel to the delay, NTA will shorten the proposals checks, so that the announcement on the winner will be only one month later than planned.

(iii). From a press release No. 403 of 01.06.2004 by NTA:

"NTA has submitted yesterday (31.05.2004) into the statutory approving procedure, the district plan for the southern part of the second LRV line - the Green Line", said the Chairman of NTA, Mr. Yossi Kutchik.

The alignment passes through two districts; the central district in which Tel-Aviv and Rishon-Le-Zion are included, and the Tel-Aviv district, in which Holon and Tel-Aviv are included. Mr. Kutchik said this line is another significant milestone in building LRV lines, which will bring a transportation revolution to the Greater Tel-Aviv Metropolitan Area.

Mr. Dotan said that the Green Line joins the Red Line as the 1st stage of the project; NTA plans to complete the two lines by 2010.

The Green Line, as presented for approval, starts at Kanyon-Ha-Zahav (Golden Mall) of Rishon-Le-Zion, runs through the streets Ehrlich, Bareket and Fichmann, until it reaches Sokolov Street, at the center of Holon; it then runs northwards through Kugel Square and Holon Junction until it reaches Carlebach Street at the center of Tel-Aviv.

Another arm of the line will leave the centre of Holon, pass through Sokolov Street and Jerusalem Ave, and will be linked to the depot.

The line will run on street surface only with own rights-of-way, with the exception of junction crossings; it will be 14 km long with 25 stations, 400 to 500 meters apart in the average; the annual passenger traffic is forecast at 50 million.

(iv). From a press release No 404 of 06.06.2004 by NTA:

Mr. Halamish has told the press that Adanim Group has dropped out of the competition, after the decision of Bombardier Transportation not to participate several months ago; although Adanim had the time until 02.06.2004, the group was unable to find an alternative company; this new situation enables the Speedan Group to add DAN Buses Company; the group

also intends to add the Greek company TERNA, which is responsible of building the LRV at Athens for the Olympic games.

(v). An historical event took place on 23.06.2004 at the Crown Plaza Hotel of Tel-Aviv:

The heads of all the companies in the MTS-Metro Transportation Solutions consortium signed a large co-operation document; thus, the consortium laid the corner stone for its activity in the Israeli historical project.

MTS consists of Siemens AG of Germany, Siemens Israel, Africa-Israel, the Portuguese company Soares d'a Costa, CCECC of China, Egged Buses Company, and the Dutch company HTM. The document was signed by the following:

Mr. Erich Kaeser, the General Manager of TSTK department at Siemens AG; Mr. Lev Levayev- the Chairman of Africa-Israel; Mr. Pinny Cohen - the General Manager of Africa-Israel; and the ambassadors of Germany and China.

The participants have decided on how to divide the functions:

- Egged will participate in the initiative but not in building.
- The rolling stock will be built entirely by Siemens AG.
- The construction itself will be shared as following:
40% by Africa-Israel; 30% by CCECC; 30% by Soares d'a Costa.

Each company will have 20% share in the consortium, to be headed by Africa-Israel.

Meanwhile, Mr. Levayev has told the press that Africa-Israel is planning to enlarge the partnership with CCECC and to start building roads and infrastructures worldwide; Probably the line to Eilat will also be included.

B. JERUSALEM.

Bridge Approval. The Jerusalem LRV project-a press release of 07.06.2004:

The District Committee of Jerusalem, has finally approved the impressive yet controversial LRV suspension bridge to be built at the city's western entrance.

Designed by the world famous Architect Santiago Kattervana, it will be 330 meters long, with a central 106 metres high column to be connected with steel cables.

This approval enables the plan to be submitted for validation, and once this is given, work will start immediately, and will be completed in 18 months.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

a). EMERGENCY WORKSHOPS AT JAFFA. (Paul Cotterell).

There is a query arising from the note in 64:13A concerning the emergency workshops at Jaffa. In file 162/10 they were noted as being 99% completed in July 1941. However, on page 37 of the Report of the PR General Manager for the years 1943-46 it is recorded that "In October 1942, the [Royal Engineers] 199 Workshops Coy...took over and developed the P.R. emergency workshops at Jaffa. There they undertook the repair and maintenance of locomotives of the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli Railway and certain other works on W.D. locomotives".

I had thought that these emergency shops were, in fact, erected specifically for the War Department, but the above quote definitely states that they were originally built for the use of Palestine Railways. I would not have thought that PR itself was in any real need of more workshop facilities this early in the war and, more relevant perhaps, wonder where the skilled civilian manpower to operate them could have been found. Did PR use them between the summer of 1941 and October 1942? There is plenty of evidence for WD activity at these emergency shops, but I can think of none to indicate an earlier PR presence there. Or perhaps this is still hidden away in as yet undiscovered files.

b). MORE ON THE NAQB ASHTAR BRANCH. (Paul Cotterell.)

As a footnote to 62:12 and 63:10, the following remarks are pertinent. They come from the Report of the PR General Manager for 1943-46 (page 36):

"In 1942 [Tourret states 3/42] an extension to the Hijaz Railway in Trans-Jordan was constructed by the Australian Army from Maan to Naqb Ashtar - a distance of 13 [evidently a misprint for 43] kilometres. The material used was mostly supplied by the British Army, but some was recovered from the remains of the derelict Hijaz Railway between Maan and Medina. Special rates were agreed for conveyance of traffic over this line, but traffic never reached a high level because the port of Aqaba, which the line was constructed to serve, was never fully used. The extension was closed down in September, 1943" [August according to Tourret].

c). CRANES QUERY.

Numerous rolls of old drawings relating to PR cranes and vertical boilers of various kinds have come to light at the IRM Archives. It has so far proved impossible to gain any sort of clear picture concerning much of the machinery shown in them. Perhaps one day it will get sorted out for proper presentation. One diagram raises a query about which I'm hoping a reader may be able to provide further details. This drawing carries the official stamp of SPENCER-HOPWOOD LOCOMOTIVE WORKS LTD, DARLINGTON, dated 16th June 1939. There is also a hand-written notation on the diagram, "Boiler PR No. 60,61; 25T crane", and I'm pretty certain that this is in the handwriting of Rudi Ben-Rafael who worked in the drawing office at Qishon Workshops. From a couple of fairly early IR lists on tracing paper (also found among the rolls of diagrams) it is evident that PR crane 60 was works number SB 707 and crane 61 was works number SB 666.

I don't recall the name of Spencer-Hopwood and would welcome enlightenment. Did they actually build locomotives? I searched for the firm on the Web but only came up with a reference to one of their brass boiler plates being sold at auction in England in 2003.

There is another problem with this particular drawing. On the rear is another official stamp for the well-known crane builders Cowans Sheldon. I have no idea why the stamps of two, presumably competing, firms should appear on the same diagram.

d). CHINESE INVOLVEMENT. Re: 65:4:(s).

Emanuel Reider of Philadelphia notes: Re: Harakevet No. 65(s): Chinese labourers did indeed work on part of the U. S. transcontinental railroad, but not Chinese firms. Rather, several U S firms took part in the politically connected and corrupt deals that always seem to accompany big government projects. For a good history of same, read "Empire Express" by David Haward Bain published by the Penguin Group in 1999. In England, Penguin Books LTD, 27 Wrights Land, London W85TZ, England.

e). A FEW CORRECTIONS.

1. The photo in 65:3 was taken by Paul Cotterell.

2. Item 65:12 "Expanding Sarafand" was written by Paul Cotterell. The photo of the dragline excavator in the same article is from the IRM Archives.

3. The photo in 65:15 is also from the IRM Archives.

f). CORRECTION: On 56.8A PALESTINE RAILWAYS TOKENS. The correct name of the numismatic expert cited is actually Ady Bar-Tov. Our apologies for the confusion and any embarrassments caused!

22 Aharonovitch St.,
Rishon LeZion, 75204 Israel.

(g). PERSONALIA.

We are pleased to report that Samuel Rachdi of Steinen in Switzerland is once more back in the saddle of his 'Fahrplancenter News' organisation and timetable agency, and while it seems that he has not yet been restored to full health after a series of difficult operations, a new issue of 'Fahrplancenter News' (No. 37) with extensive reporting on developments worldwide appeared again in June 2004.

(h). F. A. SARGENT.

From Paul Cotterell:

Back in the 70's, while collecting material for my book and having made an appeal for photographs in the 'Jerusalem Post', I received a letter from a lady in Tiberias called, if I remember correctly, Elisheva Ballhorn. She had a collection of old railway photos that she was prepared to let me have. Off I went post haste. The shots, quite small contact prints, were unusually sharp and showed mostly sabotaged or otherwise derailed trains taken during The Disturbances. There were about twenty of them and they constituted a real find. The photographer was F.A. Sargent, a name unknown to me, but I was told he had been in a position of responsibility on PR, that he was a family friend, and had left the prints behind when he left Palestine. I only used one of his shots in my book, that of the derailed Kitson 2-8-4T No.1 on page 62. It was only some thirty years after being gifted the photos that I came across his name again, while leafing through an old file at the IRM. It transpires that, in 1927 at least, he had been Superintendent of the Line. So now we know a little about F.A. Sargent. And I wonder if there are any more examples of his excellent photographic work in someone's album somewhere.

(j). ON 65:10, THE EDITOR'S OBSERVATIONS. From Chen Melling.

"A few notes regarding your account of the visit here:

- No. 936 in Haifa East P-Way Depot should probably be No.986, a Donelli/Geismar trolley since there is currently no rolling-stock unit numbered 936 in Israel.

- Only the first 10 IC3 sets (i.e. the entire first batch of 1992) had their units numbered with th 188 prefix (like 188 7002, 188 7410) but this does not change the identification of the complete sets - 188 7002 you saw at Haifa Hof HaCarmel is just unit MF1 of set no. 02 (the same applies to other cases of 188 7XXX mentioned in the article).

- Plasser & Theurer "REM70-E" is probably the EM80-E inspection and measurement trolley (the number 80 indicates its top operating and measuring speed). This unit does not carry an IR number, though I assume that it does have one, at least for insurance purposes.

- All grain hopper wagons noted (in the 600XX, 601XX, 605XX and 660XX number series) have their numbers prefixed by the letter Tav, to indicate they are grain hoppers. That means, for example, that there several wagons numbered 60010 in IR's stock, differentiated by their type letter (in this case Chet for merry-go-round coal, Tet for flats for concentrated loads, Tav for grain hopper and a few others).

- Nahariyya station (that's the current official spelling) still has a run-around loop, much like the one it had before renovation, as well as a short shunting neck at its southern end.

- The Resh 53XXX wagons were brought to Israel by French contractors TSO for use in a ballast renewal contract in the South along with a very large ballast replacment machine built by Matisa, type C330F. The contract includes provision for IR to occasionally hire them for its own use. By the way, they still carry their European UIC numbers, which indicate they are actually registered in Romania."

(j). CKD - A JEWISH CONNECTION.

In English terminology, "CKD" means "Competely knocked down" and refers to a piece of equipment delivered in pieces, needing to be assembled on delivery. However, it is also (if one will forgive the absence of appropriate accents on the 'C' on my keyboard) the abbreviation for a major firm of Czech rolling stock and tramway manufacturers. During a recent visit to Prague the Editor was intrigued to see

a photo and brief text on display at the 'Spanish Synagogue' museum - Emil Kolben (1862-1943) (he was killed at Terezin) who, in 1896, "founded an electro-technical plant at Prague Kysocany, which later became CKD".

(k). BASHATWA MYSTERY.

Paul Cotterell has come across a picture of a PR ticket from Jisr el Majamie to Bashatwa; it cost only 15 Mils and so wasn't that far away - the ticket pictured is no. 0131, but isn't dated. But where on earth is this place, hitherto unknown?

(l). JERUSALEM EXHIBITION.

The David's Citadel Musuem at the Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem is planning an exhibition on the railways to Jerusalem. The Editor, and others, have been approached for material. From margalit Liat, one of the curators, I have received the following:

"It is our intention to open the exhibition towards spring 2005 and to leave it on display the entire summer (including the Jewish Holydays). We are currently putting our efforts into researching the subject and gathering interesting anecdotes through newspapers, photos and media, which could be on display.

As I wrote you before, the exhibition will be divided into two parts: An historical display which will focus on the Jaffa- Jerusalem Railway (will be hosted in our temporary exhibition hall) and a 'garden railway adventure' which will take place in the archeological courtyard of the citadel (we are currently negotiating with one of the relevant companies for co-operation)."

(m). BEIT NABELLA BRANCH - MORE INFORMATION.

(From Paul Cotterell).

"In 47:11 an article on the standard gauge freight only Bet Nabella branch line included speculation about the facilities which existed at the very end of track. Confirmation of these come from sketches, in File 110.1/7 at the IRM Archives, which show two small lime kilns, a stone crusher, and a short length of Decauville track leading from a "new quarry" face on the north side to the standard gauge in the 1920s. The story of the various quarries at Bet Nabella is extremely complicated, and numbingly litigious, with the contractors and local village mukhtars all being involved in the legal manoeuvrings. In fact, the standard gauge line was PR property only as far as Km 4.214, where the original PWD quarry was situated. Beyond that point to the end of line at

Km. 5.449 (its maximum extent, later shortened by some 200 metres) was a private siding belonging to Messrs. Habra & Panayotopoulos who were the main players in the story and owned the later quarries along their siding extension. They constructed the railway earthworks required, with PR providing and laying the track. This private siding had been extended in piecemeal fashion over the years as additional quarry faces were opened up."

66:9. MODELLING NOTES.

Gerhard Riegl of Munich, who works on Deutsche Bahn, is a modeller interested in Middle East Railways, and he would like to arrange for a batch of Roco or other models of coaches built in the DDR, i.e. former Deutsche Reichsbahn types which were also exported elsewhere, to be produced in CFS livery as used until the present in Syria. If there is enough interest, a range of goods vehicles and the Alsthom diesels etc. could also be produced in CFS markings. Is anyone interested? Please contact him direct at Schweigerstr. 16, 81541 Munchen, Germany. tel. 089-650680. There is no e-mail address.

HEDJAZ TOUR.

Another tour of the Hedjaz Railway is planned for October 1st.-11th. 2004 - covering the usual itinerary

Amman - Qatrana,
Amman - Deraa,
Deraa - Bosra,
Deraa - Zeizoun,
Damascus - Serghaya
and
Damascus - Deraa.

**For details, contact The
Railway Touring
Company at
P.O Box 1012,
Kings Lynn, PE30 3YN,
tel. 01553-661500,**

or enquiries@railwaytouring.co.uk

OTHER MIDDLE EAST RAILWAYS.

A. TURKEY.

(i). ESKISEHIR TRAM ON TOUR.

Innsbruck in Austria is modernising its tramway system and has asked potential suppliers to demonstrate their wares. In 'Schienenverkehr Aktuell' June 2004 p. 10 is a report, with two pictures, of tram No. 012, one of the eighteen 'Flexibility Outlook C-Series' (formerly 'Cityrunner') trams built by Bombardier Transportation Austria (BTA) for Eskisehir, undergoing trials and demonstration runs in Innsbruck between 19.04 and 14.05.2004. Livery is white with a yellow stripe along the lower body half. According to this report "BTA originally planned to offer the same vehicles to Eskisehir as those in Stockholm and Istanbul, but after a visit to Linz, the 'EsTram' Board decided to go for the same design as the new trams there. However, the Eskisehir vehicles are shorter, at 29.5m. and in five rather than seven sections. The electrical equipment is built 'in house' and not subcontracted to Elin."

(ii). FREIGHT SERVICE TURKEY - EUROPE.

Some years ago a semi-parody film on the 'Orient Express' was shown on television, in which the same grinning engine driver appeared on various locomotives at various points along the route from Paris to Istanbul. Such is of course totally impossible in reality. But.... Back in Harakevet 57:9 we reprinted an article about the state of the route between Europe and Turkey in 1981. Several magazines have produced reports on a new initiative to increase rail's market share of the heavy traffic between Turkey and Western Europe. To make a point, a special train was recently run from Istanbul to Köln. The following comes from the report in 'Eisenbahn Kurier':

"Show what Rail can achieve - that was the aim of an impressive and effective demonstration. On 9th. May 2004 a through freight train started in Istanbul, with the aim of reaching Köln in 100 hours travelling time, or less, via Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary and Austria - over a route of over 3000km. the train should show the competitiveness of rail against road over this distance, and at the same time stimulate interest in rail service amongst potential customers As well as the Hungarian State Railways, the train traversed the lines of the private GySEV company so that, including Germany, it used the rails of

seven different railway systems. There should indeed be customers for an attractive service, since rail currently carries only a meagre 1-2% of the trade between Turkey and Germany - which amounts to over 3 Million tons - so any attempt to increase this proportion should be welcomed.

Demonstrations of what one can achieve are always an effective marketing tool, and so the heads of DB and TCDD decided to show what they could do. "We wanted to demonstrate with this symbolic action how south-east Europe can be brought closer to central Europe, if all those involved play along" said Mehdorn, "and we can improve capacity over this Pan-European Corridor." The key phrase in this comment is of course "if all involved play along", for here lies a distance much greater than that on the map!

For this test train much more management time and effort was invested than could ever be permitted under normal traffic circumstances. Nevertheless, the success was worth all the efforts - for the train managed the route in only 79 hours - and that was even without all the partners along the route 'playing along'. The train could have been even faster had certain freight documents, incorrectly completed, not led to a delay of four hours on the Turkish-Bulgarian border, and further delays were due to the less-than-perfect coordination of the border control officials between Rumania and Hungary, and between Hungary and Austria. The total of all these hold-ups amounted to ten hours, and demonstrate what could be feasible if only these are avoided in future.

The train was hauled throughout by Siemens Dispolok ES 64F4-089 (equivalent to the DB multi-system Class 189 - in fact this four-system loco only required half its talents, since all railways apart from Germany and Austria are electrified on 25kV/50Hz, and a twin-system DB Class 185 or an ÖBB 'Taurus' could also have managed the route. Coupled inside was Siemens Dispolok Diesel ER 20 001, identical to the Austrian 'Hercules' Class 2016, since some 80km. of route in Bulgaria are still not electrified. The exercise also served as a rolling advertisement for these Siemens locos! The train, 520m long, also incorporated a DB Confer-

ence Saloon, a Restaurant Car and a Sleeping Car for the personnel and journalists conveyed en route. Freight conveyed included industrial, glass and ceramic wares, household equipment and more. The train was labelled "Asia-Europa Express".

Planning had begun in 2000, and this alone shows how far there is to go before such services can become routine. Each railway has its own signalling, locomotive headlight codes, train protection system, its own requirements to license motive power and stock, its own operating regulations, and more, not counting the languages used en route. Nevertheless, an important symbolic step was taken to indicate to potential customers that an alternative exists to the road routes, which increasingly benefit from toll-free motorways.

Departing Istanbul at 16.10 on 9th. May, arrival in Mannheim was expected sometime on May 13th. and a press conference had been arranged for 16.30 that day. In fact, so early was the train that it arrived on the 12th. and had to be held overnight at Darmstadt-Kranichstein while the press conference was hurriedly rearranged for 10.30 instead! Mannheim Yard had been chosen as the location for the celebrations since it is a major nodal point for freight services, and the Class 185 locos based there regularly reach Domodossola in Italy and Metz in France.

"Today's Railways" No. 103 p. 8 notes that route taken was via Svilengrad (Turkish/Bulgarian border), Ruse (Bulgarian/Rumanian border), Curtici (Romanian/Hungarian border), Wulkaprodersdorf (Hungarian/Austrian border) and Passau (Austrian/German border). CFR locos headed the train in Romania, where the authorities would not permit the Siemens locos to operate. Road transport takes six days on average.

(iii). BY MOTORAIL TO TURKEY.

Also from 'Today's Railways' 103 p.43: "From 26th. June to 13th. September a new motrail service will be operated by ÖBB between Wien Süd and Edirne in Turkey. The train takes the traditional route via Graz, Maribor, Zagreb, Beograd, Nis, Dimitrovgrad and Sofia. ÖBB wants to attract Aus-

trian tourists wishing to visit Turkey with their own cars. The service leaves Wien Süd on Saturdays at 23.05, arriving at Edirne on Monday at 07.44. The return journey starts on Monday at 13.45 and arrives at Wien Süd on Tuesday at 23.05. Private operator 'Optima Tours' runs similar trains from Villach to Istanbul during the summer, but these are aimed at Turkish expatriate workers wishing to visit their home country."

(iv). BOSPHORUS TUNNEL - WORK BEGINS. (See 65:8:A:(iii).)

From 'Today's Railways' 103 p.8: "In April 2004, Turkey's Transport Minister Binali Yildirim and representatives of the Japanese Taisei-Kumagai-Fumi-Gama consortium signed the turnkey agreement for the tunnels section of the Marmara project, worth 89.7 billion Japanese Yen (GBP 443 Million). The project, which is likely to cost some GBP 1.4 Billion, consists of a tunnel to provide a rail link from the European to the Asian part of Turkey, and could serve as a part of a future Europe to Asia rail corridor, running from Eastern Europe through Turkey to Iran, Pakistan, India and Central Asia. [See below]. Construction of the tunnel and the associated land links was to begin in June, with work scheduled to be completed in 2008. The project includes the 13.3km. tunnel from Yenikapi to Söğütlücesme and associated work, as well as the upgrade of 63km. of suburban rail lines to create in total a 76.3 km. high capacity line between Gebze and Halkali. The underwater portion of the tunnel will be 1.8km. long and will be designed to be earthquake-proof. There will be new underground stations at Sirkeci and Uskudar, plus a new interchange with metro and light rail at Yenikapi. Work on existing lines will include a third track in 41 stations where all platforms will be lengthened to 180m."

The geographical description given in CRJ 138, p.201, slightly different, reads: "The line will commence at an underground station at Yedikule at the western end of the old city on the banks of the Sea of Marmara, and descend to an underground station at Yenikapi. It will then descend more steadily to a station deep under Sirkeci on the mouth of the Golden Horn. From there it proceeds under the Bosphorus for 1.5km. to a station deep under Üsküdar on the Asian shore, and then climbs to reach the surface at Söğütlücesme. Work was scheduled to start in March and last six years. The project is in the hands of the Japanese GAMA-NUROL consortium, which is

working with various Turkish organisations. Finance of 2.5 billion dollars is being provided by a Japanese bank".

Interesting how one version describes the contract as being finalised in April, the other as work starting a month earlier!

(v). TIMETABLES. According to 'Fahrplancenter News' No. 37 p. 25, TCDD is one of the railways which, this year, has not actually produced a proper new paper timetable.

(vi). STEAM LOCOS.

A report in CRJ 138, p.201, notes that former Prussian G8 44019 and Nohab 2-6-0 34058 were at Kayseri Depot in November 2003, "both in a reasonable state of preservation".

(vii). IZMIR ELECTRIFICATION.

Work has recommenced on this scheme following fresh funding by the Government. Included will be the purchase of electric trains by TCDD. The Izmir bus company ESHOT, which had previously been involved, will now take no part. (CRJ 138, p.201.)

(viii). DERAILMENT & OTHER ACCIDENTS.

On Thurs. 22nd. July an Ankara-Istanbul express derailed at Sakarya. Initial reports state there were "from 40 up to 70 fatalities" and many injured. The train was apparently new, "only a month old". A brief BBC TV glimpse showed refurbished coaches scattered along a single track section of line in scrubby but open countryside.

A newspaper report ('Metro', p.12) on Monday 26/07/04 was a little calmer. 37 had died and 81 injured when the express train derailed - it was reported as having been travelling at 23 mph. over the speed limit for that section. Three crew members - the two drivers and a guard - had been arrested the following day and charged with negligence. But "the accident came as the government faced criticism for pushing through a big high speed rail project, despite concern over the country's ageing tracks" - i.e. it appears the schedules had been speeded up but the permanent way was not up to this 'punishment'.

In fact, an item in 'Today's Railways' 104, p.51 notes that "On June 4th. TCDD introduced an accelerated service between Haydarpasa and Ankara, journey times being cut from 6h. 30 min. to 5h. Once the 437M upgrade of the route is complete, in about 18 months' time, a three-hour journey

time will be possible, with 200 km/h running." Presumably this is the background to the garbled statements above. We would appreciate more information.

On 11/08/04 another accident - this time a frontal collision between two trains - also occurred on this route, with at least nine dead and around 74 injured. Initial press reports suggested one of the drivers had overlooked a signal.

(xix). INSTALLATION OF ERTMS ON ANKARA LINE.

Ironically, the same item cited above notes that "early in June, TCDD awarded a Hispano-Turkish consortium headed by Alcatel an 80M contract to upgrade signalling and train control systems on 250km. of the Haydarpasa - Ankara main line. Alcatel is to provide ERTMS Level 1, with installation of pointwork to permit reversible operation, together with fibre-optic communications systems."

(xx). ELECTRIC LOCO OVERHAULS.

TCDD electric loco E52 515 has been sent to the Koncar works at Zagreb, Croatia, for overhaul, arriving there 20/06/04.

B. IRAN.

(i). LINKS TO CHINA.

The Kazakhstan State Railways have announced that work has begun on construction of a 4,000km. long standard-gauge section of the Trans-Kazakhstan Railway; this ambitious project should fill the gap between the standard-gauge (1435mm) system in Asia and that of Europe, and act as an alternative - and competition - to the broad-gauge (1520mm) Trans-Siberian Railway. The new line should be complete by 2009 and by filling the gap between China and Iran on the standard gauge could reduce transit times by about a week. Investment will total around \$US 2.3 Billion.

Before an unbroken standard-gauge line could link Asia with Europe, two further gaps would have to be filled - these being the transit over Lake Van in Turkey, and the crossing of the Bosphorus. Both currently require use of train ferries.

Transit traffic alone over the Trans-Kazakhstan line is estimated as 35M tons p.a., with a further 20M tons of Kazakhstan exports. Construction has begun at the eastern end, at Dostyk, near the Alatau Pass, and the route should involve 3070km. through

Kasachstan, 770km. through Turkmenistan and 70km. in Iran. No indication was given in the press release of the exact point where the Iranian system will be joined. In various parts of Kazakhstan the standard gauge line will run parallel to existing broad-gauge sections.

(Of course, there are still differences in coupling and braking systems between the China Rail and the European systems, but one supposes suitable barrier vehicles would resolve much of this, a bit of shunting being preferable to total transshipment.)

(ii). PROGRESS ON SEVERAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS.

According to 'Fahrplancenter News; No. 37 p. 19, (the source also for following items), the completion of the doubling of the Tehran-Mashhad line occurred in June 2002 when both tracks went into operation.

A call for tenders has been issued internationally, for the construction of direct rail link between Gorgan and Mashhad, in the North-East of Iran.

On the Kerman - Zahedan line, rails reached Bam in 2003, but the earthquake in that region then destroyed a lot of what had been built.

In the middle of 2002 construction of a railway from Takht-e-Jamshid to the city of Shiraz began.

In December 2002 construction began on the the line to Ardabil, in the Kurdish region of Iran. This line branches from the existing Tehran - Tabriz route, and financing has been assured by avoiding any expenditure on road construction in this area for the past three years!

(iii). LINK TO AZERBAIJAN.

In January 2003 work began on the "Joint dream of Tehran and Baku", a line which had been planned and considered for some twenty years - from Qazvin to Astara. This is in fact politically a very important link, since the route over the border via Djulfa comes to a dead end at Nakhichevan, for political reasons, whilst for Iran a direct link to Russia, an important trading partner, is vital. As evidence of this is a new direct container train from Berlin and Helsinki to Tehran! This train was inaugurated on 1st. August 2004 and is routed via Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and crossing the Iranian border at Sarakhs - a long way round, and trains will run at first every three weeks, though the hope is to increase frequency.

Work on the 212km. long section Qazvin - Rasht - Anzali began at each of these points, since this link will

be very important also for internal traffic in Iran, since Anzali is Iran's most important port on the Caspian Sea. The line will be built as double track for 42km., and 11km. will be in tunnels. Cost for this stretch is set at 105 Billion Rials. As for the Azerbaijan side, Romania has offered assistance from the end of 2004 with renewal of the Baku - Astara line, since at present the state of the infrastructure is poor and a top speed limit of 40 kph applies.

Further information from 'Today's Railways' 104 p.43:- The line will be 340km. and will be built along the south-western shore of the Caspian Sea, from Astara to Rust and Qazvin, to link the Iranian and Russian (SZD) networks. RZD will provide \$US 100M of the capital required. All contracts are expected to be signed in 2004, with work starting in 2005. Estimates suggest freight traffic of around 20M tonnes annually, with profitability attained within four to five years of inauguration.

(iv). LINK TO AFGHANISTAN.

Construction of a line from Mashhad to Herat in Afghanistan was proposed back in 2002 and has now achieved international support. The World Bank will make credits available, although the USA has several times attempted to express opposition to the project.

(v). NORTH-SOUTH LINE.

The north-south line from Mashhad to Bafq, 920km. long, is making progress, according to Tehran. Russia especially is showing interest in this line, since it would provide a direct link to the Persian Gulf. The IIRR (Iranian Republic Railways) has also ordered a further 350 goods wagons, since an increase in freight traffic is expected.

(vi). LINK TO IRAQ.

Whether America likes it or not, Tehran has announced that a contract was signed back in Saddam Hussein's time for construction also of a 150km. line Khorramshahr in Iran, to Meisan and Basra in Iraq. Since Iran had also received the support of Saudi Arabia in financing this line, it remains determined to complete this project at any cost, and there are even reported to have been secret discussions with the transition government in Baghdad. The background to the emphasis on this line is Iran's desire to increase trading links with Syria, Kuwait and Lebanon, without having to traverse the NATO state of Turkey. Saudi Arabia in turn is interested in this line, since it is interested in

intensifying trading links with countries to the north and with Russia.

(vii). LINK TO KAZACHSTAN.

After around a half year in operation, operation of the service between Tehran and Almaty had to be suspended, after it appeared that the railways in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were simply and repeatedly unable to guarantee provision of locomotives for haulage on their sections. Nevertheless the railways of Iran and Kazakhstan remain determined to hang on to this link. In Kazakhstan personnel for this train are receiving additional training (for example in Farsi and English), and Iran is attempting to negotiate lower fees from the two transit countries; if this were possible, Kazakhstan would be prepared to send a locomotive the whole way to Sarakhs. At present the price of \$US 12 per kilometre is simply unrealistic, and Iran would rather pay a maximum lump sum of \$US 600 per trip.

(viii). STATISTICS.

"Raja Trains" has proudly announced improved statistics for 2002 showing a definite upward trend. In 2001 13.11 Million passengers were carried (8.04 Billion Passenger/km.) whereas in 2002 this was 14.3M, making 8.58 Billion Passenger/km. In international traffic to Syria and Turkey over 50,000 passengers were counted - i.e. counting only those travelling from Iran.

The number of passenger coaches rose from 992 in 2001 to 1021 in 2002, of which 951 had undergone a major overhaul during the year. In other years less than 50% of the coaches had been overhauled.

(ix). NEW ROLLING STOCK ORDERS.

At the beginning of 2004 delivery to Raja Trains began of 150 new First-Class Sleeping Cars from China; these are all air-conditioned, have four-bed compartments and audi- and video-equipment in each compartment! The order will cost a total of around \$US 80M.

The Iranian 'Pars' wagon works has begun construction of 200 passenger coaches for internal traffic; these will be delivered at intervals of 30 coaches every six months, including seating and couchette vehicles, and some catering vehicles - all will be air-conditioned.

In 2003 Raja Trains issued tenders for 150 double-deck coaches, including 75 seating, 60 sleeping cars and 15 catering cars. The order will be

worth around US\$ 180M, and the coaches should be in service by 2008.

(x). ROLLING STOCK EXPORTS.

Wagon Pars is also delivering rolling stock to other countries. At the end of 2003 deliveries to Sudan began of 180 vehicles - around 50 coaches and 130 goods wagons. The Sudanese Railway Corporation SRC is also sending around 70 coaches to Iran for complete refurbishment and rebuilding.

(xi). LINK TO PAKISTAN.

The Iranian Railways now treat the line from Zahedan to Mirjawa and towards Pakistan as a separate undertaking. In the six months from January to June 2003, 12 passenger trains were run, carrying 725 passengers in the direction of Pakistan (those in the other direction not being counted.) In the same period 43,000 tons of goods were carried on this line, 5,000 tons less than the same half-year period in 2002. Since the total traffic between Iran and Pakistan is around a million persons and around 3M tons of freight per annum, it can be seen that the rail share is minimal and this fact was used to urge completion of the missing link between Bam and Zahedan. In mid-2003 this pressure had some effect and the government announced further credits to finance the construction - and at the end of 2003 42,000 tons of rails were ordered. Official sources cite 2006 as a date for completion of the line, and the government has even placed railway troops from the Army at the disposal of the builders.

(xii). ACCIDENTS.

Although the Iranian rail system is undergoing continuous modernisation and installation of electric colour light signalling, new radio apparatus etc., it doesn't remain free of accidents, and a major one occurred - as already reported - in mid-February 2004 when a freight train loaded with explosive materials derailed near Neyshabur, and around 500 people in surrounding villages and a passing passenger train were killed. As with the earthquake near Bam, the Iranian government was most of all confused by a condolence telegram from the Pope!

(xiii). NEW DIESEL UNITS ON TEST IN SLOVENIA.

In 'Lok Magazin' 8/2004 p. 33 is a report: RAI ordered twenty diesel multiple units from Siemens in Austria, four years ago. The four-car units have a top speed of 160 km/h, and could be delivered in longer or shorter ver-

sions as well, since each coach is powered, and has its own fuel tank. The couplings permit great flexibility in train formations. Up to three units can be operated in multiple.

On 5.5 & 6.5.2004 the first completed units were sent to Slovenia for tests on the Maribor - Dravograd line. Each vehicle is fitted with the MAN D2842-LE602 Diesel motor with a tractive effort of 558kW. The train should therefore be in a position to traverse the 926km. long Teheran - Mesched line without refuelling.

The units are finished in white with a light blue cantrail strip that dips over the cab, and yellow doors.

C. IRAQ.

(i). TRADES UNION VISIT.

A report in 'Continental Railway Journal' No. 138 p.197 refers to a delegation from the British RMT trades union who visited the Central Baghdad Railway Workshops towards the end of 2003; they reported that 50 main-line diesel locos are maintained there, of which 35 were in working order, and ten Czech-built diesel locos, of which five were working. The main-line locos were quoted as having been built in Roumania and refurbished in China, and not as built in China! [Highly unlikely.] At the time, there was a daily passenger and freight train from Baghdad to Mosul and to the Syrian border. To Basra and Um Qasr [sic] there were one passenger and several freight trains daily, the former taking one or two days, the latter four to ten!

(i). RAILROADING IN IRAQ, 2004.

In 'Trains' for July 2004, pp. 28 - 41 is an illustrated article by Rick Degman, described in the Byline as from Meridian, Mississippi; he has been a railroad man since 1981, starting as an Assistant Trainmaster on the Burlington Northern, then managing Chicago terminals for the Soo Line, Norfolk Southern, and several intermodal, logistics and trucking companies; he was Assistant General Manager for Amtrak's Crescent Product Line, and Rail Operations Manager for the Grand Excursion 2004. His contract as a railroader in Iraq was due to expire in June 2004.

The political fallout of the decision to wage war on Iraq shows, at the time of transcribing this in July 2004, no sign of abating, with murders and bombings and kidnappings and horrific videoed murders of helpless hostages

and more. Nevertheless, this article describes a sort of surreal reality that is rarely if ever described by other journalists. I have omitted various paragraphs to do with aspects of daily life, the banking system etc., and anglicised some American spellings, but present these personal observations on railroad life in Iraq in 2004, "for the record" - it will be interesting to read them in, say, five years' time.

As yet there is no clear overview of how many American railroad experts have been employed to restore the Iraqi system, how they were recruited and employed and on what conditions - or even what they are achieving! Surely this is worth someone researching some time. (Rick mentions only a few - see below - and Captions include references to Milt Ludington of the CPA Program Management Office, and Rob Leverington, Railway Engineering Advisor for the CPA., also U.S. Army Sergeant Jason White of 'Task Force Rail', and Mr. Hakim the IRR manager of track maintenance.) There are, interestingly, vague parallels with the manner in which British officers in 1918 onwards managed the damaged, destroyed and occupied former Hedjaz lines in Palestine, as well as the new standard-gauge lines once released from military control - and also with the chaotic and violent, lawless period of the late 1940's. But the world is also a different place since then.

"Iraqi flies are a little slow. If one sets down within range, you can move your closed fist towards the fly and flick it with your index finger before it catches on. I did this on my first try, much to my surprise. Unfortunately, the fly projectile hit the Iraqi Republic Railways' Finance Manager square in the chest. After a brief look of shock on his face ("What just hit me?"), we all had a good laugh.

This was the highlight of the first major meeting I attended as a Railway Advisor for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. I've been over since Christmas 2003 to help repair, rebuild and revitalize the Iraqi Republic Railways so it can regain its place as an essential part of the country's transportation infrastructure. Gordon Mott, the senior railway advisor, brought me over to help with operational, customer service and support issues. Gordon, Captain Rob Leverington, a civil engineer in the U.S. Army reserve, and I make up the entire CPA Railway Team.

I don't think that flicking the flies was part of my original job description,

but we all contribute where we can. Back to the meeting. This is the third meeting in a week to discuss security on the railroad. There have been sporadic attacks on trains, primarily from looters looking to steal stuff as opposed to insurgents trying to disrupt the railway. Progress on improving security is being made, but there appears to be a large cultural gap between how we Americans deal with issues and how Iraqis do it. What looks like a simple problem with a straightforward solution becomes something altogether different after a three-hour meeting. It doesn't help when most of the meeting is in a language that you don't understand at all, though most managers do speak excellent English. Maybe it's because of the language barrier, or just the sheer number of people, but meetings always break into several mini meetings after about five minutes. Every once in a while the group gets back together to discuss one subject but after a minute or two it's back to the 15 conversations at once. Somehow, after about three hours of this, agreement is reached and progress marches on.

Railroading in Iraq started in 1921 with British construction of various parts of the country. [Wrong There was the Bagdadbahn before WW1, and the British wartime construction. Ed.] Lines north of Baghdad were standard gauge, while lines south tended to be metre gauge. The disparity in gauges was rectified in 1967, when the Baghdad-Basra main line was converted to standard gauge. Major railway construction also occurred in the 1980's, with new lines built from Baghdad west through the 'Sunni Triangle' out to Al Qa'im and Akashat, and from Heqlaniya east through Bayji to Kirkuk.

The older sections of the railway suffered through 25 years of neglect during the Saddam era. Three wars and the complete and utter looting of railway property after Saddam's government was toppled last year brought the railway to its knees. Yet, despite the loss of radio communications, the signalling system, and damage to nearly all locomotives and rolling stock, the railway was the first enterprise in Iraq to resume service after the war. Today, months of hard work and emergency repairs have brought the railway back from ruin to play a vital role in the rebuilding of Iraq.

The Iraqi Republic Railways today operates about 2,000 km. (1,200 miles) of mainline track, with the bulk of the traffic on the main line between the Syrian border at Rabiya, through Mosul and Baghdad, down to Basra and the port of Umm Qasr in the south.

The railway operates daily passenger trains between Baghdad and Basra, Al Q'aim and Mosul, plus a weekly overnight sleeper between Mosul and Aleppo, Syria. In addition to significant amounts of containerized military cargo, the railway also moved grain, oil products, fertilizer and inbound Turkish consumer products. The U.S. Government has committed a significant sum of money (over \$20 Million) for signalling, communications, track, station, backshop and equipment rehabilitation to help get the railway back on its feet. The impact of some of these projects is already being felt, and the railway should be well positioned to handle major traffic growth in the next few years.

It hasn't been easy for the railway or the small group of Americans, both civilian and military, who have persevered through many months of hard work to help bring the railway back. The things we all take for granted in the US, such as regular telephone and electrical service, computer access, and the freedom to move about and inspect the railway, just doesn't exist here. Take, for example, my trip in January to Al Q'aim, a town in far western Iraq, whose claim to fame is large fertilizer and cement plants, and a pretty significant rail infrastructure to support them. The Army has been working with the fertilizer company to get the plant open and provide badly needed product to the farming areas of the country, as well as equally needed wages to workers at the plant.

You can't just hop in a car or train and head west, however. Between Baghdad and Al Q'aim lies the restless Sunni Triangle, not a very good place to drive through. We need to ride in a convoy of two Army helicopters.

Gordon and I head out to the helipad with the Director General of the railway, Mr. Salam, our interpreter Karima, and Lt. Colonel Bob Pelletier, who in his civilian life works as a corridor manager for the Union Pacific in Omaha, Nebraska. Soon after we arrive, two huge CH-47 choppers land. The choppers always go in groups of two, so there's a backup if there is any trouble with one. We board the first one through the rear, walking around the big .50 calibre machine gun mounted on the ramp.

As soon as we're all buckled up, we are off and flying over Baghdad, looking out through the wide-open rear door. The choppers fly low, maybe 150 feet off the ground, and fast, about 100-150 mph. Every once in a while we see our sister bird zipping around in back

through our generous rear viewing area. About 20 minutes into our flight, out past the city and fast, I hear loud noises from the front and rear, lasting about 10 seconds. The front and rear gunners are firing their .50s at some target on the ground. It's so loud that conversation is impossible, so I can't ask what's going on. I assume that some poor fool down below waved a rifle at us and had a rude awakening. It wasn't until later that I found out they were just testing their weapons.

After another hour in the air, we finally land at Al Q'aim. The choppers land on an asphalt road near a cluster of Humvees. We board the vehicles for the short trip through the security perimeter to the railway workshop, which has been taken over by the Army as their base here. Other Humvees cluster around the other chopper, and soldiers start unloading cases of snack food and soda. Apparently this is a regular supply run to Al Q'aim, and we're just along for the ride.

There is a meeting set up here with the local army group, local railway managers, and the fertilizer plant managers to discuss increasing railway activity and serving the plant. The Army is willing to let the railway back into their shop areas. The problem is that segments of the populace in Al Q'aim aren't exactly warming to the American presence. The Army makes periodic sweeps through the town to clear out the troublemakers, but after a month it gets bad again.

As we are meeting with the local Iraqis, who are all well dressed and conversant in English, I have a side conversation with one of the Army Colonels. He says that each one of these men is taking a huge personal risk just by coming to the meeting. It usually takes about three weeks, after a mayor or police chief takes office, before he is assassinated or his family threatened, forcing them to resign. It's highly likely, says the Colonel, that someone from the group I am looking at will be murdered before the month is out. By taking the singular step of going to work, these men are risking their lives. I look at these people with a new sense of respect for what they are doing to try to make things better.

The fight back is loud but uneventful. The desert stops and the green starts abruptly, like crossing a street. I notice that all the farmhouses and hamlets all have working electricity. I see cars and trucks with their lights on, and everything looks so normal. Then with no warning whatsoever, the entire rear of the chopper explodes in a riot of light

and sound. After a brief second of alarm, I remember that it's just the hot magnesium flares military aircraft shoot out on final approach to attract away from the aircraft any heat-seeking missiles in the immediate area. Just another inspection trip on the railway.

It amazes me how the railway copes with so few resources. The IRR Control Centre consists of three rooms with one radio base station, one landline phone, several cell phones, and two space heaters. Forget about computers, at least for now. Men walk in, stand around and talk very loudly for a while, then walk out. There are big sheets of paper, which are dispatcher's trainsheets, and ledger books from which information is magically produced. On a typical visit, it takes U.S. Army Captain Clay Pettit (a Missouri State Trooper in real life) and Sergeant Jason White (a pre-law senior at Southern Illinois University) about an hour to figure out where the military trains are and how they're doing. Rule No. 1 on the IRR: the louder you talk - whether on the radio or in the control centre - the more important your message must be and the quicker you get an answer. Don't ask me how, but it seems to work. When the centre wants to talk to the Taji station, for example, they yell "Taji, Taji, Taji!" into the radio microphone with increasing decibels. Taji doesn't seem to answer until the controller is virtually screaming.

We've actually been able to take a couple of inspection trips by rail. Parts of the country, primarily in the south, accept the presence of the Coalition Forces more than other parts, and are too busy trying to make a living to care one way or the other. We arranged for a special train to operate from Baghdad to Samawa, where the IRR has a large locomotive and car workshop that has been out of action since the war. Our Dutch allies control that part of Iraq, and have been working with local management to try to get the shop running again. We thought it would be a good idea to meet the Dutch and compare notes, while at the same time seeing what kind of condition the railway was in.

We stressed to the IRR how important it was to keep the trip quiet; we didn't want any unfriendly ears to hear about our grand excursion and stage an unwelcome reception. We were hoping to get the Director General or Assistant Director General to come with us, but they had too much work to do in the office and sent a couple of sen-

ior track and mechanical engineers instead.

We arrive at Baghdad Central Station in the morning to find our train waiting. On the point is a Henschel-EMD locomotive from the mid-1980's - one of Saddam's units. Saddam had a special train that he kept in a secure shed north of the station. Three locomotives and ten carriages were assigned exclusively to the train and kept in immaculate condition on the chance he might want to inspect the railway. He used it once. A side benefit is that the three locomotives are still immaculate; without a doubt the cleanest locomotives I have ever seen, inside or out. The train consists of a power/baggage car and a couchette/sleeper, also from Saddam's train. We are milling about the platform, waiting to board, when we discover that the couchette has special locks and no one has a key to the vestibule doors.

"It's not a problem, you can use the end doors and the side doors on the power van", the IRR area manager tells us. This isn't a very good idea in the U.S., as you want to have all exits available in case of an emergency. It's an even worse idea in Iraq. Over there, the opportunities for emergency are boundless, and we respectfully suggested that the trip be postponed until the next day or until the doors would open. This sends the managers and workers into a panic. After about 15 minutes, we're told that the lock mechanisms have been removed and the doors can now be opened. Highball Baghdad!

The trip is not sleep-inducing. We pass through some pretty rough areas south of town, where the railway has found many IED's (improvised explosive devices) along the track. I ride the head end with Sergeant White and two IRR engine drivers. The sergeant and I are both wearing flak jackets and he has his M16 rifle. The engine drivers look at us like we're crazy, but are very friendly and share their excellent chai (tea) with us.

With no functioning signals, the IRR operates on train orders. There is a station about every 10 km. (6 miles), and we stop at each one to get orders. After the first station we realize our cover is blown. Every IRR employee in each area (and there are a lot) have come out in their finest to greet the train. IRR managers historically have not ridden many inspection trains, so this train was a novelty. We are not sure if the employees were coming out to see the train, the IRR managers, or us, but when dozens of employees come out to meet

you at each station, for whatever reason, it looks very impressive.

We probably learned more about the railway on that one trip than the entire previous month in the office. Eventually we hope to be able to inspect the entire railway by train, but some of that will have to wait until security improves.

.....

Most days, you put up with the traffic and don't worry about it. It's a little different when you're carrying \$1.7M in cash, as I was one day in January to meet the railway payroll.

Here was the setup. Railroad payrolls and reconstruction projects have to be paid for. The source of the money is cash seized from the treasuries of the Saddam regime. In a normal world, there would be a wire transfer of the funds from a U.S. Bank to the railway's account in a local Iraqi bank. Since the wires were all looted and destroyed, a more intimate personal kind of cash transfer is required: the cash is physically moved from one bank to another.

Our journey that morning begins at Baghdad Central railway station. Rob Leverington and I pick up the railway Finance Manager, Mr. Muhammad Hafod Zamel, and securely escort him to the Treasury in our pickup. The treasury is a vault in a former Saddam palace now used by the Coalition Provisional Authority. We get Mr. Zamel and his empty briefcase through two security checkpoints and down to the basement of the palace. I follow Rob to a huge vault door in the hallway and look through to see neat bricks of sealed U.S. \$100 bills piled to the ceiling. We are escorted into a small adjoining room, papers are examined, documents signed, and over \$1.7M in cold, hard cash is transferred to our care.

First problem: the briefcase is too small. We put the 'loose change' - \$300,000 - into the briefcase and take turns carrying the 'Brick O'Cash', freshly packed at the U.S. Mint into a convenient, 30-pound, take-out size.

We head out to the pickup and drive over to the convoy staging area.... We meet a young lieutenant, fresh from ROTC and new to Baghdad, and his two-Humvee escort crew. We take out a map, trace our route, and verify our destination, a bank in the Al Mansour district not far from the station. The convoy sergeant tells us the rules:

1. Follow and keep up with the lead Humvee.
2. Do not allow any local traffic between you and the lead Humvee.

3. Make sure your phone works, is accessible, and that you are ready to dial 911 if any problem erupts.

4. Do not leave the vehicle. If we come under fire, do not return fire unless "we (the escort) are taken out."

Off we go. Mr. Zamel opts to ride in the Humvee to help with directions. Rob and I, and the \$1.7 Million - the cash covered by my jacket in the back seat - zoom off in the pickup. At this point, I'd only been in the country three weeks, but I knew my way around the Green Zone and the route we needed to take out of there. We started out on the normal route, made the first turn, then skipped the next one I was sure we were supposed to make. We are now heading straight for the Al Rasheed Hotel, which I'm pretty sure has no out-bound checkpoint. We get close, slow down, then make a U-turn and head back. This must be some clever move to make sure we were not being followed!

So we head south and should be going straight or making a left turn at the next intersection. Instead, we turn right, out towards the Saddam Parade Grounds, and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I know there is no exit here. Sure enough, we drive up to the concrete barrier surrounding the Green Zone, stop, then turn around. Almost immediately, we make a left up to another dead end.

Rob has had enough, he breaks convoy protocol and starts honking the horn. People get out of all three vehicles. After a brief discussion, the Sergeant (who has done hundreds of these trips) asks the Lieutenant if he could be permitted to lead the convoy. The lieutenant, young and inexperienced, but not stupid, accepts the face-saving offer and the lead Humvee swaps with the rear one so the sergeant can lead.

We finally race through the correct checkpoint, into the Red Zone, and... stop. We might be a U.S. Army convoy, armed to the teeth with M16s and .50 cal, carrying more money than I will make in 20 years, but our power pales in comparison to that primary force of nature, Baghdad traffic.

10.45am is not a good time to be driving around. Late-arriving workers clash with the ones who have been there two hours and have decided they've already done a full day's work and are heading home. Humvees always have nose position and therefore the right of way, but cars still need somewhere to move to get out of the way. There is nowhere to go today. Several of the soldiers get out of the Humvees and start clearing traffic ahead of us.

Their method is simple. Instead of a flag or flashlight, they use a loaded M16 to guide errant drivers away. However, instead, of "Move it!" or "Stop!", it's "Get the — away from my goddam convoy!" Apparently, these gestures tap into a primal form of communication that predates language and the waters slowly but surely part.

The rest of the ride is smooth sailing. We drive about four miles into the relatively prosperous Al Mansour district. Its streets are lined with brightly-painted shops and stalls, selling all kinds of strange products. We pull up to a tightly guarded building, the bank, draped in concertina wire and ringed by squads of soldiers and private security forces. The escort disembarks and walks us in.

We realize we are the only Westerners in the building. The place is packed with ordinary Iraqis trying to do their banking apparently all in U.S. dollars). They pay little mind to two armed American civilians and a rifle-wielding sergeant pushing through the crowd using a large block of dollar bills as a battering ram. After a few minutes with the bank manager, who manually counts all individual stacks of bills, we are given an incomprehensible receipt, and quickly leave. No toaster is offered. Another successful mission for the CPA Super Railway Team!

Iraqi people are outwardly very friendly to us. We have a great relationship with the managers and the employees we work with on a daily basis. Most of the rank and file just see us in the hall. A lot of time we're accompanied by U.S. soldiers, who are here to keep an eye on the military traffic coming up from the ports. We come in sometimes wearing flak jackets with a sidearm on our belt. I still was a little shocked to hear that most people are terrified of us, and more particularly, me. Rick Degman, Fighting Combat Railroader!

One day, a few weeks ago, I found myself alone at our office at Baghdad Central Station. Soon after I arrive, there's a knock at the door and a man and his young daughter came in. The man spoke very good English and explained that his daughter had never seen an American and he wanted her to meet me. The girl is about six years old and obviously terrified. I smile and say "habibi, habibi", which means 'friend' in Arabic, and I shake her hand. The man says his thanks and takes the trembling girl away. I have no idea if I lived up to her expectations. She had met the bogeyman and survived.

It's a well-known fact that U.S. railroaders love freebies.... Iraq, it turns out, is just like America in this respect. IRR railroaders swarm around anyone giving away anything.

..... Items that have a clear purpose in the U.S. sometimes have a totally different meaning here. Operation Lifesaver pins in the shape of a railroad crossing signs have become very fashionable earrings amongst the IRR ladies. More surprising is what happened with Amtrak 'Junior Officer' badges. Sometime during my career at Amtrak, I came into possession of some of these life-size, gold, stick-on badges. I told IRR railroaders these were pretend badges for their kids, and they happily grabbed them up. The badges never made it home to the kids. They started showing up on the uniforms of the railway police.

This wasn't as strange as it sounds. The IRR police have never been issued real badges. In fact, it took us almost two months to get the CPA to issue them laminated photo IDs. This is not some minor problem. The railroad police carry AK-47s, and no-one is supposed to carry a weapon without an official permit or ID. The IRR police were getting so desperate for any sort of ID that they actually started paying 2,500 dinars (\$2.50) for a counterfeit badge! The counterfeits were, in some respects, nicer than the ones we ultimately issued, except for a few typos like 'CAP' instead of 'CPA'.

A few weeks ago, we had a locomotive and crane doing some work around Ramadi, in the Sunni triangle. A gang of bandits boarded the locomotive, and holding the engine drivers at gunpoint, started to take everything of value. They saw the brand new Motorola radio on the dash and made a move for it, until the driver stopped them, "You cannot take that radio! The IRR made me sign for it! I will be personally responsible for its cost! Take the seats, the horn, the windows, take my clothes, but you cannot take the radio!" The bandits indeed took everything except the radio. Apparently, if you want something to stay where it is on the IRR, just make somebody sign for it.

We're still having problems with gangs of bandits attacking container trains. The daily passenger train between Basra and Baghdad is usually not bothered, as poor people ride the train and thus it does not pose a lucrative target. The passenger train was head-

ing north one day when some well-armed men frantically waved for it to stop. "Please do not go further! We thought you were going to be a container train and we sabotaged the tracks! Please wait while we fix the tracks so you can go. And please do not tell anybody, so we can attack the next train!"

True to their word they fixed the track and let the train go. Soon after, however, they decided the engineer might have called the police anyway, and departed before a British tank squadron arrived.

Perhaps one of the strangest experiences happened to my friend Mr. Abbas. Mr. Abbas is the driver/bodyguard for the railway's Assistant Director General, Mr. Alladin, and was escorting a group of Syrian railway executives up to the border when they were stopped at a Coalition checkpoint near Mosul. Mr. Abbas had a gun permit with a picture ID issued by the CPA. Apparently the soldiers never saw one and wanted to confiscate his pistol. In desperation, Mr. Abbas pulled out the only other thing he had showing him as a friend of the USA - a picture of me and him together. Believe it or not, the soldier saw this and let him keep his weapon! I had no idea my image had so much power. Only in Iraq."

(iii). MORE ON SADDAM HUSSEIN'S PRIVATE TRAIN.

In the 'Sunday Times', 25/07/04, p.24, is an article by Matthew Campbell entitled 'Fat Controller Saddam played games with his golden train'. As one whose life has been inaccurately reported in this very paper a few months ago - the blame falling on the sub-editors who had twisted the original story - I urge a little caution! For those readers who do not get the allusion, the 'Fat Controller' is a rather bossy character in Rev. Wilbur Awdry's 'Thomas the Tank Engine' phenomenally-successful series of children's stories.

"He may have got the idea from Stalin, his hero. Not content with palaces, food tasters and a house in which he could entertain his mistress, Saddam Hussein kept his own train at a station in Baghdad in case he decided on a whim to travel by rail.

To Iraqi railway employees it was known as "the special train". Even though Saddam seldom used it, the bed linen on board was changed each day and the restaurant car was stocked with his favourite whisky.

"The train was kept there at the ready" said Rick Degman, an American expert employed by the former governing coalition authority to help restore the Iraqi railway network. "It was constantly at his disposal - a whole train just for him".

According to Abbas Jabar, the stationmaster at Baghdad Central, the train had gold fittings. "The cutlery was all gold, I remember", he said, "and there were pictures of Saddam on the walls. Of course, in those days there were pictures of Saddam everywhere - even in the station lavatories."

Two German-made engines and nine carriages imported from France were reserved for the use of the dictator. The engines have already been incorporated into the rest of Iraq's limping railway network, but ..[we were].. able to view some of Saddam's former carriages in a siding at Baghdad station.

There were ordinary sleeping compartments for the guards and a saloon and sleeping compartment for Saddam. It had been stripped bare by looters at the end of the war. "Nothing was left" said Jabar. "Many fine fixtures were stolen".

Opinion is divided about how often the famously paranoid Saddam boarded the train. There were suggestions that he used it more to confuse his enemies and would-be assassins than than he did for personal travel. "Sometimes he would put his guards on the train but it was just a decoy journey", said Ahmed Mazen, one of the railway managers. "This would make people think he was on the train, while in fact he was still in his palace." Louai, a train driver, was put at the controls of the special train on one occasion when he believed Saddam was on board. "Some of Saddam's guards stayed with me in the cabin", he said. "They were saying, 'Do this, do that, slow down, speed up, stop here.' I never actually saw Saddam, though." Others believe that Saddam, who is awaiting trial on charges of war crimes and genocide, used the train only once - to travel north to Mosul in the 1980's. Whatever the case, there is precious little goodwill towards him among rail staff. "He stole from the people" said Jabar. "This train is an example of that. What a waste!"

The railway system worked quite well in the days of the dictator but collapsed after last year's American-led invasion. Looters ransacked not only Saddam's finely-appointed compartments but most of the rail network throughout Iraq. "Anything that could be carted off was carted off by looters", said Degman, who worked

for America's Amtrak rail company before volunteering for a job with the Iraqi reconstruction team. "Don't ask me why anyone would walk off with the master cylinder of a Chinese locomotive, but they did."

America is funnelling £150M of reconstruction aid into the rail network, which was started by the British after the first world war. Some of the money is being spent on refurbishing the British-built Baghdad station where the two clock towers and a giant chandelier in the domed entrance hall make it an imposing landmark. "It is one of the most impressive buildings in Baghdad" said Degman.

In the heyday of Iraqi rail travel in the early 1900's trains went from Baghdad to Istanbul and linked to the Orient Express for connections to Paris and London. The service deteriorated in the 1990's because of United Nations sanctions, although Saddam did spend large sums building a new station in his home town of Tikrit. It is now running at just 5% of its pre-war capacity.

Beside the amount of equipment looted after the war, railway carriages and engines are regularly damaged or destroyed in attacks by pro-Saddam rebels and bandits. "Terrorism and criminality is a big obstacle" said Isa Omran Salman, the train drivers' manager in Baghdad, who complains that "shootings, bombings and even rockets" are being used to derail his wagons. He said four drivers had been killed and several injured in attacks over the past few months. "They are martyrs", he said, holding up photographs of two of them.

Some of the engines and carriages at the station are riddled with bullet holes. Ali Qasem, a driver, said he was often shot at while carrying cargo containers to Baghdad from the southern port of Basra. "It's when they fire rocket-propelled grenades that you have a problem", he said. "And a bomb on the railway line can cause a derailment."

New engines have been delivered from Russia and will soon go into service, said Salman. "We want to get back to work as soon as we can", he added.

As for Saddam's private carriages, they will be put into regular service. "They will serve the people", said Salman, "and not just one tyrant."

D. HEJAZ RAILWAY.

(i). SEVERANCE.

From John Alexander comes a worrying note from 'Steam Railway' No.

299, p.76:

"New line severs Hedjaz Railway. Construction of a new standard-gauge line in Damascus has severed parts of the old Hedjaz Railway (1,050 mm-gauge).

Damascus Hedjazi station has lost its tracks and the site is being completely redeveloped for a new station and commercial units. So there is no line from Cadem (where the shed/works is located) to Hedjazi and on to El Hami on the Serghaya branch.

Two locomotives, 2-6-0T No. 755 and 2-8-0 No. 90, are kept at El Hami now there is no access to Cadem. The Serghaya branch is blocked by a landslip beyond Deir Kanoun, so trains on this branch are restricted to El Hami-Deir Kanoun. The landslip happened in April 2003 and officials were hopeful then that services would be restored by June 2003. More than a year later however, there seems to have been no change.

On the main line south from Damascus to the Jordanian border at Dera'a, there is only one working diesel locomotive for the twice-weekly passenger and occasional freight duty. Staff say that around once a month steam has to be used, with one of the three 'best' locomotives: 2-8-0 No. 160 or 2-8-2s Nos. 260 & 262.

One of the most interesting engines here is 0-4-4-2T Mallet No 962. It is in poor condition."

John adds: "Presumably the proposal relates to an extension of the standard gauge from Cadem to Kanawat which is obviously logical. I hope that the redevelopment will be able to retain the original station building at Kanawat or at least the magnificent booking hall. I also hope that the proposals includes the restoration of the narrow gauge into Kanawat. Presumably it must at least include restoration of a link between Cadem and the Serghaya line. It would be interesting to know when the work is expected to be completed. Hopefully the slip above Deir Kanoun will be cleared this summer. The reference to the poor condition of 962 is surprising as it is only a short time (April 2003?) since it left the works after a major overhaul."

(ii). NEW BOOK?

John Alexander also writes: "You may be interested to know that a new book on the Hedjaz Railway is expected to be published about the end of the year. I met the author, James Nicholson, who has borrowed some of my slides for the book. He works in Saudi Arabia and the book will deal particularly with the Saudi section of the Railway. I will keep in touch with him and ensure that you receive more details near the time it is published. (It is hardly unknown for such dates to slip!)"

E. ERITREA.

C.R.J. 138, p. 184, has a report on a tour here in December 2003. "The Fiat railcar, surprisingly, took the party down the hill from Asmara to Nafasit. Previously its brakes had given problems, hence its restricted use by a party in November. A rail lorry was also used to Nafasit. At Asmara Works the staff were justifiably very proud of the facility. In general their ages are high, with the supervisor claiming to be in his 90's. Unsurprisingly, younger blood was being sought to join the work force. New tubes were on hand for steam loco boiler refits.

The party also went by bus to Keren and saw some of the disused line beyond Asmara. This would need a lot of work to restore it, but the railway personnel were hopeful. The old railway station at Keren is now used as a bus station. Another hope is that some freight traffic will be carried between Asmara and Massawa."

66:12.

CLOSING THE RAFA - BEERSHEBA LINE.

by Paul Cotterell.

File 134.1/1 at the IRM Archives gives a good insight, via internal PR correspondence, into the short-lived standard gauge line between Rafa (Rafiah) and Beersheba which was laid in 1917-18. It has much to add, in particular, about the bridges at Shellal and Wadi Hanafish which featured in 65:11. The following are very short extracts from that file, and include a few interesting incidental points not directly concerned with the Rafa-Beersheba branch line.

The correspondence centres on Engineering Department matters and, while there are gaps in written material from other departments, it does allow a clear overall picture to be built up. The file opens in 1921 with a remark on the LSWR 0-6-0s which were recorded as operating all traffic over the line. These locos, however, were giving serious problems (unspecified) and it was hoped that Baldwin 4-6-0s could be used instead. However, the Baldwins would probably be too heavy for the wooden trestle bridge at Shellal and the long metal bridge over Wadi Hanafish at Km 43.500. (Incidentally, the Wadi Hanafish bridge is referred to as both steel and iron in different memos, but the preponderance of opinion indicates it was iron). To accommodate the Baldwins the Shellal trestle would probably need replacing and the Wadi Hanafish bridge would have to be strengthened. A later inspection showed that the Shellal bridge suffered from the effects of heavy dew penetrating cracks in the timbers, but regular maintenance and coating with tar might overcome the trouble, in which case Baldwins could probably be allowed across it. The Wadi Hanafish bridge was considered too weak for the weight of Baldwin locos. It was not being properly maintained and "the girder is in very bad condition". There was even a suggestion that it could be strengthened with timbers from the "old Yarmukh trestle bridge" (this being the temporary wooden trestle which replaced the original Yarmuk No.2 bridge near El Hamme on the Haifa branch of the Hedjaz Railway that had been sabotaged by the retreating Turks in 1918).

In 1923, as these deliberations continued, the PR General Manager (Holmes) decided to make a trip south to inspect the two bridges at first hand and also "with a view to studying the possibility of diverting the line to Gaza". The idea was to replace the Rafa-Beersheba line with a new one from Gaza which would have gone via Tel Esh Sheria and utilised the derelict Turkish 105cm gauge military formation thence to Irgeig. The GM set out from Haifa at 0800 on 22nd November in saloon coach No.99 attached to Train No.2 [sic]. As we know, of course, the idea of a new line was taken no further, but the report of the GM's trip makes for some entertaining reading of what might have been. There were even notes on the Turkish military lines south of Beersheba. At Beersheba itself there was "some derelict 3'6" rolling stock of which only one covered wagon would be worth salvaging". It was noted that from "Beersheba to Asluj (30 kilos) no track exists". In an appendix to the report (written by a Mr Ille following an inspection in April 1922) it was remarked that on the Beersheba-Asluj section (suddenly extended to "35 kilometres!") "most of the steel has been stolen or sold by the District Governor". [I trust he was only responsible for any sale and will not be perpetually maligned by a missing comma!]. "Of those [sleepers] remaining, 80% are damaged by being cut in two. 25% of the



sleepers are steel, the rest wood". Between Asluj and Auja el Hafir it was found that "All rails [are] in the ground but 40% are damaged...The sleepers are intact and 25% are steel". From Auja to Kosseima ("about 30 kilometres") Mr Ille recorded that "All rails and sleepers [are] intact and formation complete". This last observation gives particular cause for pause and concern as it contradicts everything that has been believed until now, and is in complete opposition to (among other reliable sources) the British *Military Handbook on Palestine* of June 1917 where it was clearly stated that "All rails [are] removed south of Auja, except for first 3/4 mile..." (see 57:10). So could Mr Ille have relied on a distant view of that first 3/4 mile, decided he didn't fancy a hot and dusty journey further into the desert, and simply **assumed** that the rest of the section to Kosseima was also complete?!

There is another telling remark in this report, concerning the Shellal bridge where it was found that "Timber trestles [are] sound except at their bases. These should be cut off and mounted on concrete foundations brought up well above ground level as already done in some cases". This modifies my note on the subject in 65:11. Apart from

those "some cases", already done, this work was completed in April-May 1924 and the bridge was then tarred and other repairs carried out. A speed restriction of 5 km/h was imposed while these works were proceeding, with a pilotman accompanying each train across the trestle. On 26/5/24 the GM noted that the Shellal bridge was now capable of supporting Baldwin engines but the Wadi Hanafish bridge still could not. This, therefore, was not of much help in solving local motive power problems, and the LSWR 0-6-0s continued to trundle along the line. Repairs and painting were carried out to the Wadi Hanafish bridge, but the plans for strengthening it to accept Baldwin locos were not implemented.

In August 1924 the GM required to know the lengths of these two bridges. He was informed that the Shellal bridge ("timber trestles & stringers") was 96 metres long - ie. 8 metres longer than recorded on drawing A/3/4 (see 65:11). The Wadi Hanafish bridge was noted as 126.8 metres long.

At some unknown date between 1924 and 1926 some unknown person made out a report which included what are thought to be the last observations and basic estimates on that contemplated new line from Gaza to

Remains of the 60cm. gauge Decauville formation on the west bank of Wadi Gaza / Nahal Bessor near Gamli, in June 2004. An embankment is clearly visible running from bottom right corner and disappearing in the dirt road. The two stone blocks stand on the former trackbed. Viewed looking west. (Photo: Amnon Gat.)

Beersheba. If he had any personal opinions on the matter, the anonymous author wisely kept them to himself: as he did concerning a contemporary suggestion for "extending the standard gauge system from Haifa to the Syrian Frontier at Ras el Nakoura".

Then, on 8th July 1926, with no advance intimation in File 134.1/1, the GM (by now Campigli) memooed his Engineer, Ways & Works that "It has been decided to abandon the Rafa - Beersheba branch". A whiff of this decision soon leaked and spread, the vultures quickly caught the scent, and a month later the Superintendent of the Line was "being pressed for information as to date of removal of the line by many contractors". Nevertheless, there was no hurry to close the line while possible alternative transport routes (both road and rail) were discussed. It was noted disapprovingly in the meanwhile that on 7/12/1926 Train No.10

"was timed over several Kilometres...at [a speed of] 70 K.P.H., while the speed [allowed] for the section is 50 K.P.H." Those old LSWR 0-6-0s could still break into a canter occasionally, though such speeding over deteriorating track was not to be encouraged.

The line was eventually officially closed on 31st July 1927. Train No.10, out of Beersheba, on Tuesday 26th July was the last train on which public traffic was accepted for despatch. Presumably the next five days were used to work any remaining rolling stock off the line. Instructions were also issued to remove sidings and other installations at Rafa which would become redundant with closure of the Beersheba line. Most, if not all, of the railway buildings at Beersheba were left *in situ*. The contract for lifting the line was awarded to Messrs. Mohamed El Sayed Abdul Hady and Elias Boutros Egail, or Ageil, of Haifa (Abdul Hady later withdrew from the partnership).

The timber trestle bridge at Shellal presented no difficulty for the demolition men, but the iron bridge at Wadi Hanafish would be much more costly and complicated to cut up and remove. Several ideas were proposed (there is even a drawing in the file showing how the bridge might be dismantled using a Cowans Sheldon 25-ton steam crane) but it was finally decided simply to leave it where it stood. Lifting of the Beersheba line was due to be completed by the end of 1927 using PR locos and wagons to transport recovered track and other material, but file correspondence peters out in September so we cannot be certain that this timetable was adhered to.

Since we are down in this neck of the desert, and as a footnote to the article in 65:11 on WW1 British military lines in the locality, it is worth noting here that Amnon Gat has again been out and about in the field and come up with further fascinating discoveries. He photographed remains of the 60cm gauge 'Decauville' light railway which ran from Gamli to Karm and El Khasif. On both banks of the Wadi Gaza/Nahal Bessor in the vicinity of Gamli there are still short sections of the narrow gauge formation to be seen on the ground. Amnon's photos show that at least one section on the east bank, a low embankment, is well preserved and readily discernible. There is also another particularly well defined embankment to the west of Wadi Gaza. This is marked by two large squared stones where a gravel road has encroached on the narrow gauge trackbed. Amnon notes that the standard gauge line from Gamli to Shellal Junction and westwards through Sheikh Nuran seems to have left no trace as this area has been extensively cultivated.

A postscript - I heard a nice story told by Prof Ze'ev Zivan who visited the museum:

The year 1927 is apparently still remembered by the Negev Beduin as The Year of the Train. This was a drought year. So bad was the drought that the Beduin tribes and their flocks were evacuated from the Negev Desert by train to the north of Palestine until the following rainy season. It seems this was an emergency government relief programme - so the drought must have been severe indeed.

66:13.

FROM THEN TILL NOW (Part 15).

Noted in reading by Paul Cotterell from Baruch Katinke's book 'Me'az v'ad Hena'; see earlier installments in 11:22, 13:17, 16:15, 19:19, 20:15, 24:11, 30:21, 38:15, 46:12, 59:15, 61:9, 63:11 and 64:9. The following are extracts from the chapter entitled 'A Woman from Lebanon & a Woman from Armenia', the missing sections having no railway or other historical significance.

(After leaving Jerusalem, following his decision not to desert his post with the Turks [see 63:11], Katinke and his two companions make their way to Damascus. At Amman station they happen to meet Katinke's nemesis, Dieckmann, who promptly accuses them of desertion. They narrowly escape being hanged as traitors in Damascus and are then sent to Afula station where Katinke is again put in charge of the HR from Samakh south to the British front line. Now read on.)

The seat of the Supreme Command of the Turkish Army under the command of Djemal Pasha the Big was then at Nazareth. Alongside was the Joint Command of the German-Austrian-Hungarian forces under the command of General Falkenhaym who was later replaced, because of differences of opinion between him and Djemal Pasha, by the German General Limon von Sanders.

Afula station was bustling with soldiers and Turkish and German-Austrian officers. The trains operated only at night, because in daylight they were attacked by the Anglo-French air forces, and all the supply and transport of units was done by the railway as military road vehicles were few and fuel for them was in very short supply. Not only were the railway workshops called on to carry out a great deal of varied mechanical work for the army, but we also had to repair military vehicles and heavy weapons. I was burdened with work from morning till midnight, and at midnight, before laying down to sleep, I would patrol the station to check that everything was ready for the night journeys and that all the train crew[s] were in place...

About a month after the affair of the women from Lebanon I was called to Damascus and put in charge of the central railway workshops at Cadem near Damascus to expedite the repair of locomotives and try them out after the repairs. At the small Jewish hotel in Damascus I met two of my friends: Shimon Levin with whom I had worked years before in the 'Atid' [later 'Shemen' - PC] factory in Haifa, and David Bloch-Blumenfeld (who was afterwards mayor of Tel Aviv) my friend from the Agudat Poalei Zion in Palestine. The three of us decided to rent an apartment together and live the communal life. We found a four-room apartment with kitchen in the Salhiya neighbourhood, and we employed a female help to manage the house and kitchen. We were often away on travels outside the city, but it was pleasant to know that a warm and clean home awaited us on our return.

Jerusalem had already been captured by the English and I had received no news from home there. I sent letters to some of my acquaintances in Switzerland and asked them to forward the letters to my wife. I did not include her address because it was forbidden and dangerous to make known that she was in the British-occupied zone. But I mentioned that she was still living where we had lived a year ago. A few of these letters were received by my wife after they had meandered around for many months.

Life in the commune was quite pleasant, and in our free time together we enjoyed ourselves on trips around the fruitful and green city, and we had ourselves photographed together as the first commune in Damascus.

One day, when I was on a three-day leave at my mother's in Haifa, Armenian refugees who had been expelled from their land by the Turks were brought to Damascus. These refugees, remnants of the terrible massacre carried out by the Turks in Armenia, had journeyed all the way from Armenia to Damascus on foot. Those who fell by the wayside were murdered by the Turks, the survivors arrived starving and exhausted. Most of them were women. The Armenian men were sent to army work camps, while the women were taken to Arabia (today Saudi Arabia) and there they were distributed freely as servants and sex slaves to those with connections and influence.

Shimon Levin told me afterwards that he'd seen the coming of the camp [of refugees]. He, and many of the Christians who lived in Damascus, came to help the miserable refugees and invite them into their homes. Shimon Levin invited a woman with a baby to work as housekeeper in our commune. The next day Djemal Pasha issued an order that anybody giving refuge to an Armenian man or woman would himself be deported to the Armenian camp. Obviously, therefore, any Armenian who found sanctuary in a compassionate home hid himself away and did not go out of the house for weeks or even months.

I was unaware of all this.

When I returned to Damascus after my leave in Haifa I tried to open our door with my key. The lock worked but the door did not open because it was closed from within by a bolt. I realised that someone was in the house. I knocked loudly on the door and asked in Arabic and Turkish that it be opened. I heard a woman's voice asking me what I wanted. I replied that I was one of the tenants and asked her to open the door. She refused, in Turkish, and said that the owner was not at home and that without him she would not open the door. I told the woman to look through a small hole in the door and that she could then vouch that I was a tenant of the house as hanging in the large room was a photo of me with my two friends. Having found this to be so, she opened the door. When I entered and asked who she was, she told me all that had happened to her and her family since the beginning of the war. She served us for two months.

And then I received an order to leave Damascus for the Hedjaz Railway line from Amman station to Medinah which would henceforth be in my charge as Chief Mechanical Superintendent. Once again I left on my wanderings.

66:14.

RAFIAH STATION THROUGH THE YEARS.

(By Paul Cotterell.)

Sheet S75/53 in the IRM Archives contains several plans of Rafiah/Rafa station which allow us to follow the track layout alterations made there between 1918, just a year after the station was first laid out, and 1938. I have redrawn the earliest and latest of these plans and, as can be seen from the accompanying sketches, the changes were drastic.

The main plan shows the purported situation between 1918-23, though I think that some latitude should be allowed for at least slight alterations during those years. Back then Rafia was kitted out with what looks like a couple of diamond crossings (though they might be double-slips) giving access between the main line and inside loop. Such diamonds are few on the ground even today, and I imagine they must have been a rare innovation indeed in 1918. No doubt they reflect the amount and importance of military traffic being carried at the time. I guess the four-road engine shed, out beyond the turning triangle, to have been simply a corrugated iron affair erected on a wooden or, more likely, perhaps, metal frame. The large number of associated sidings here again hint at the magnitude of wartime traffic and the numbers of locomotives needed to work it. I have never seen a photo or other details of this engine shed, but there is a very slight reference to it in 15:18:g. By 1924 all the sidings in the loco yard had been lifted, the triangle ended in a single headshunt (one of the two southern-most sidings) and the engine shed stood isolated without any rail connection. It had disappeared by 1926-27. The turning triangle and adjacent sidings had gone by 1929. There was presumably no further need for them following closure of the Beersheba line in summer 1927.

A decade later, as seen in the inset sketch, Rafiah station had been reduced to the main line and three loops - a far cry from its earlier glory days. The small building once surrounded by the triangle was the only one surviving from 1918, (apart from what appear to be some railwaymen's quarters not shown here), and I'm fairly sure this was the Station Master's office. It seems that the Second World War was to see an expansion of the layout again, but I have no details to hand of these subsequent alterations.

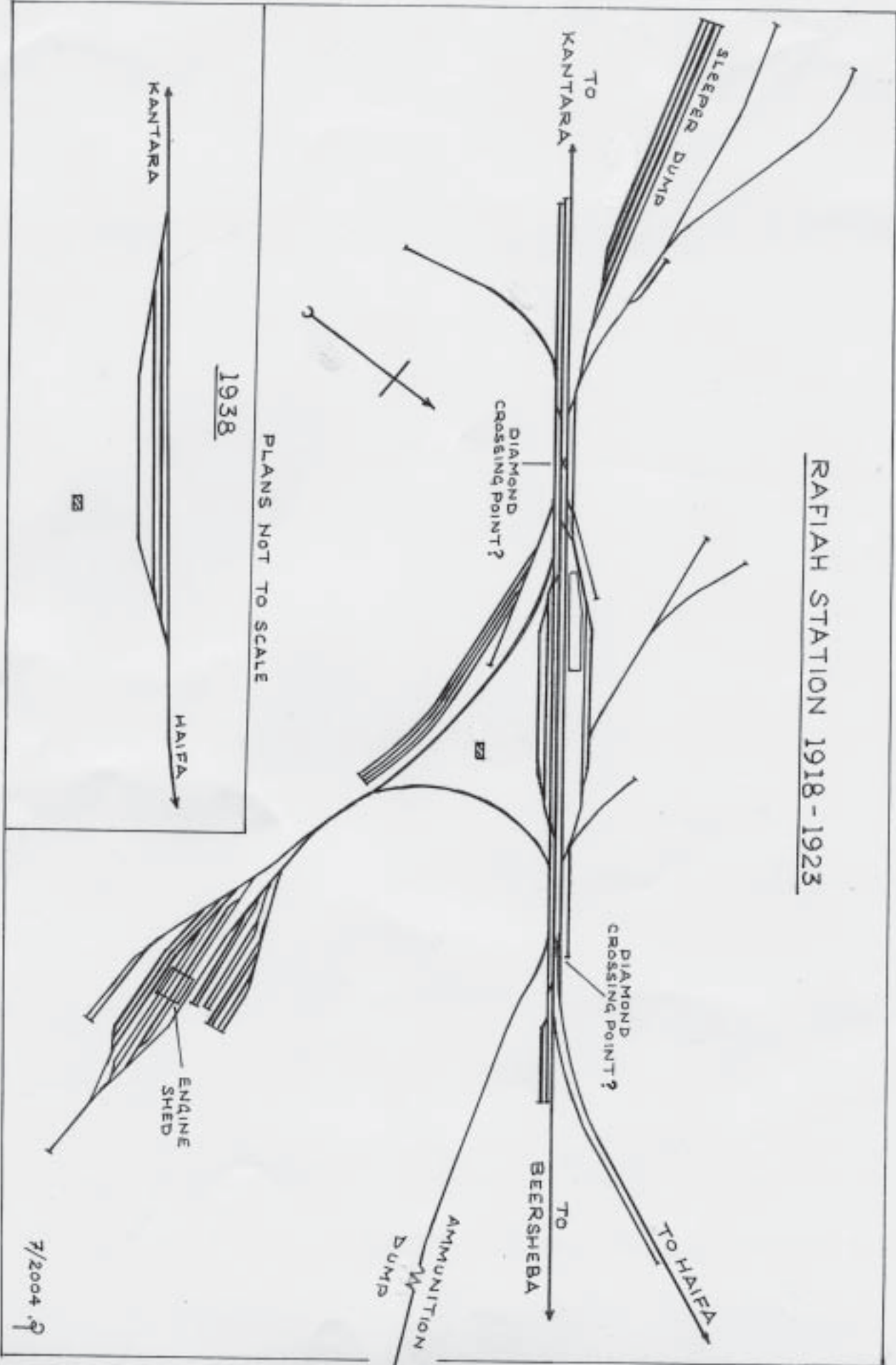
The Editor adds: One complication later was that the Palestine - Egypt frontier officially went through the middle of the station! A major depot was indeed built at Rafah (as it was then referred to), and afterwards this led to problems. In Sept. 1947 at the 29th. PR Officers' Monthly Meeting, Minute 671, we read:

"The Acting General Manager drew attention to probable developments at Rafa. The Egyptian Authorities required the British Army to evacuate from Sinai territory a depot which was more than half on that side of the frontier at Rafa. In all probability this would be followed by an evacuation in due course of Palestine Railways, in which case consideration would have to be given to our requirements in the way of a new frontier station, possibly a joint station with the Egyptian State Railways, possibly a separate one. The War Department wished to know the probable development on the part of the Palestine Railways in such a case, in order that their own depot and particularly the siding serving it, might be sited to best advantage.

It would therefore be desirable for the ACE to survey the district, and he was submitting an estimate of the cost of survey for the GM to consider."

In October (30th. Meeting, Minute 684) the Chief Engineer reported that the survey at Rafa was well in hand but that plans were not yet available. In November, when the political situation had altered yet again, the General Manager nevertheless "directed that the Chief Engineer continue with the survey and complete the plans" (Minute 700), and by the December 1947 (32nd.) meeting, Minute 715, it was noted "This matter had been completed by the Chief Engineer." It is doubtful whether any actual work then took place in the increasingly chaotic period leading to the evacuation.

RAFIAH STATION 1918 - 1923



66:15.

THE NEW LINE TO BEN-GURION AIRPORT.

From Aharon Gazit I have received several photos of what seems to have been a special pre-opening train for Israel Bonds representatives over the new line to Ben Gurion Airport on 15/06/2004. Shown here are three -

(photo 1).

The view of the new two-track station from the cab of an IC3 unit.



(photo 2).

View down to the island platform and tracks from a circulation area. Note newly-placed palm trees on the left!

(photo 3).

View into the tunnel - note only one track laid as yet.

(photo 4).

Works under way for the extension on to Modi'in. Visible at centre are the two buffer stops marking the current end of operations.



THE FIRST ISRAELI TRAINS TO JERUSALEM.

"Trains" in the plural. A recent visit brought material from Sybil and Paul on the matter of events of the late 1940's, and a chance to walk part of the trackbed of the line currently being refurbished and rebuilt gave an opportunity to reflect on the former situation at Bittir, at Beit Safafa, at the locations where the railway line ran close to or even formed the border with a hostile Jordan from 1948 to 1967. As we all know, if History had not been the same as it was, it would have been different - one of those daft truisms - and quite simply, had the 1967 cease-fire lines been half a kilometre in a different direction at a few spots, then we can safely say the chances are that the railway to Jerusalem would have suffered the same fate as that to Nablus or to Beirut or Damascus - i.e. it would have been abandoned after 1948, and there would have been precious little to refurbish by now.

So we present here five separate but related items, on the battle for the line at Beit Shemesh, on the reopening train from Tel Aviv, on the first train to make its way from Haifa (which also meant bypassing the Jordanian-held Tulkarm station by a new diversionary route), and on a recently-rediscovered item of stock which, in all probability, featured in at least one of these special trains.

(a). From the 'Palestine Post', Tuesday July 20th. 1948.

Israel Holds Clear Corridor from Jerusalem to Coast.

The villages of Hartuv (Jewish) and Artuf (Arab), 6 kilometres west of Bab el Wad, and the Teggart Fortress a kilometre and a half to the south, were occupied by Israel Forces just before the country-side cease-fire came into force on Sunday. [i.e. on the 18th.]

The two strategically important villages on the Bab el Wad - Beit Jibrin road, commanding the Jerusalem - Lydda railway crossing, now form - together with Kasla, two and a half kilometres southwest of Saris and two kilometres southeast of Beit Mahsir which was captured at the same time - the last connecting links in a continuous chain from Jerusalem to the coastal plain, said an Israel spokesman yesterday.

Hartuv, he said, was also the first Jewish settlement in this district to be

re-taken by the Israel Forces. It had been wrecked by the Arabs. He recalled that during the early stages of the war, it had been completely isolated, but now it was another link in the series of Jewish and Arab points held by the Israel Army in the Judean Hills.

The capture of Kasla, the spokesman said, was of lesser strategic importance, except for the fact that its possession widened the Jewish corridor. That corridor was now about 10 kilometres wide, he said, most of the Jewish-held territory lying south of the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway. Its narrowest point was near Biddu, still held by the Arabs, though with the capture by Jewish forces of Suba, directly to the south, the corridor was secure.

Legion Road Covered.

On this side of the Latrun front, too, the Jews had made important gains before zero-hour on Sunday, the spokesman said. With the capture of the heights commanding the Ramallah - Latrun road near Beit Nuba, and of the villages of Bir Ma'in and Burj to the north, the Jews now commanded a considerable stretch of the Arab Legion's supply road, which meant that the Legion on the Latrun front was practically encircled.

Since, however, no Jewish road-block had been erected on the highway itself, the Legion could get in and out of the pocket during a truce. On the other hand, should the fighting be resumed, the road would come under Jewish fire.

Asked whether the Jews would demand the setting up of UN checkpoints on the Latrun - Ramallah Road, the spokesman said that this question had not yet been discussed, but such a step was possible.

The problem of bringing water to Jerusalem during the present truce is not as complicated as last time, as Israel Forces now hold Ras el Ein.

With the capture of Ramle and its central telephone exchange, the authorities will try to repair the line between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. To resume a train service between Jerusalem and Lydda would be too expensive,

despite the fact that the Jews commanded the belt to the north of the railway line along its entire length."

(b). From 'Palestine Post', August 8th., 1949.

"REMEZ PROMISES AIR LINK AS FIRST TRAIN ARRIVES".

Crowds Line Rail Route to Speed Maiden Journey. By Asher Lazar.

Aboard the Jerusalem Train. There have been few occasions as joyous as that of this morning when more than 70 railwaymen and workers anxiously awaited the moment the first Israel train was to move out of the Tel Aviv station for Jerusalem. Most Tel Aviv citizens awakened and returned to their jobs as on any other Sunday morning, but a small crowd gathered at the railway station. There were Mr. D. Remez, Minister of Communications; Mr. M. Paicovitch, General Manager of Israel Railways; the engineering staff, veteran trainmen, and the press.

Just before the departure, the Minister of Finance, Mr. E. Kaplan, arrived and made a hurried inspection of the coach and salon wagon freshly painted gray and striped in blue.

Exactly at 8 am. the train pulled out of the station on its maiden journey as the Station Master gave a blast on the whistle. In the cab was Mordechai Schwartzbach, a veteran of 23 years with the Palestine Railways. He was clad in brand-new blue overalls and his colleagues envied him his job.

For 33 minutes until the train pulled into Lydda Junction crowds lined the tracks to greet the train. Children and old people, ploughmen, truck and car drivers who stopped at crossings, all waved and shouted "Shalom l'Yerushalayim!" (Peace to Jerusalem).

Children's Welcome.

At Lydda Junction school children and townsmen gathered at the station to welcome the resumption of railway traffic. Mrs. and Mrs. Remez were presented with a bouquet of flowers by Miss Yella Kassis, daughter of a veteran Arab railway employee who remained in Israel during the fighting and is now back at his old job. The Minister chatted with Mr. Kassis and other railwaymen, and 10 minutes later the



Saloon #95 believed to have been taken at Bet Shemesh on the occasion of the first IR train to Jerusalem. (this is photo 2 in item [e] on page 25).

journey was resumed.

There were four more stops before the train ended its 85-kilometre run.

At Hartuv, the station still could not be occupied because of the extensive damage suffered during the fighting. At Deir esh-Sheikh and Bittir additional Army patrol jeeps joined the train, and escorted her along the roadside as she twisted through the hills several hundred metres from the border.

At Mekor Haim Quarter, the Prime Minister and Mrs. Ben Gurion were waiting. Crowds had gathered on either side of the tracks to watch the Prime Minister being greeted by Mr. Remez and Mr. Paicovitch, as he and his wife entered the salon wagon.

The train entered Jerusalem at a snail's pace, to the cheers of thousands of Jerusalemites.

A security locomotive preceded the main train and an Army scout plane flew over it all the way. During the four-hour journey, Kol Yisrael staff members recorded statements of the passengers. The interviewer was Mr. Bar Kochba Shur."

A note adds: "Stepping from the train yesterday, the Prime Minister, Mr. Ben Gurion, began his speech by saying: "Mr. Mayor of Tel Aviv..." After a pause, followed by a wave of laughter from the crowd, Mr. Ben Gurion cor-

rected himself, adding:- 'What is now in Tel Aviv will soon be in Jerusalem'." Noteworthy is a complete absence of any report on Remez's speech and his promise mentioned in the headline!

(c). From 'Palestine Post' March 2nd. 1950.

"CAPACITY CROWD ARRIVES ON FLAG- DECKED JERUSALEM TRAIN.

By Robert Gary.

Gaily tooting its tenor-like whistles, the first passenger train from Haifa and Tel Aviv heaved and snorted its way into Jerusalem yesterday about a minute ahead of schedule, to forge still another link between the capital and the rest of the country.

Like a model railroad on its best behaviour, the express train, which had started its journey at 7.14 a.m. from Haifa's Central Station, and had later picked up passengers from Tel Aviv at the Lydda station, chugged into Jerusalem at 11.19 a.m. carrying a capacity crowd of notables, newspapermen and just plain passengers. The flag-be-decked engine, with three passenger cars and one dining car was greeted by enthusiastic crowds from the moment it reached Bet Safafa until the station where a cheering crowd and the Jerusalem Police Band welcomed the train. The driver was Mr. Zeev Gehlblum, who had also bought the first goods train to the capital.

Mr. David Remez, Minister of

Communications, who joined the train at Lydda, made a brief address from the steps of one of the coaches, praising the overall effort that had gone into making the service possible. During the trip from Lydda to Jerusalem he walked through the coaches, accompanied by Mr. N. Lifshitz, the Ministry's Director-General, and Mr. Moshe Paicovitch, Acting General Manager of the Israel Railways, asking questions and noting the operating. Children aboard the train constantly thrust their tickets at the Minister, asking for his autograph.

Mayor's Greeting.

The Mayor, Mr. Daniel Auster, who greeted the train's arrival, declared that it was "an excellent Purim gift."

Almost all the seats were occupied soon after the train pulled into Haifa. Many of the passengers admitted that they were making the Jerusalem trip - at a cost of 800 mils one way - just for the honour of being on the first train to the capital, a number of them adding that they were returning in the evening to Haifa aboard the same train.

The passengers obviously were in a festive mood, as was apparent by the absence of undue pushing and shoving in the dining car. The waiters and counter girls were quick and amiable. The only general complaint heard was that the dining car was in the Class IV category, which the critics maintained was too high for the average public. Mr. Lifshitz later answered that since there was only restaurant aboard a train, it must necessarily serve the best food.

Mr. Paicovitch noted that although at present there was but one train servicing the capital, it was hoped that soon two would be in use, one also leaving Jerusalem in the early morning for Haifa and returning in the evening. He also said that the train service to Nahariya would soon start. This would mean that Israel was ready in her area to participate in the Istanbul-Cairo run of the 'Orient Express'.

A luncheon was given for Mr. Remez at the Salvia Hotel.

The train left Jerusalem at 4.50 jammed tight with youngsters going north on hiking trips. Passengers were forced to stand and the aisles of the buffet car could not accommodate all those who sought refreshment."

Fascinating. A photo shows Baldwin No. 884 on this train, and clearly Paicovitch and others still dreamed of making IR into a link in a through international route - something which has never yet happened. And was it a dining or a buffet car? What does Class IV mean in this context - clearly something high and not '4th. class'!

(d).

THE RAILWAY STATION AT HAR TUV.

By Amitai Etzioni; from "Hadar", August 23, 1949. Translated by Sybil Ehrlich.

"The train clatters and whistles. A cloud of steam mixes with the rising wall of smoke. Another loud whistle. The train slows down. Home. The well-known and familiar station is fast approaching.

'On the left - the ticket window' I reminisce. The carriage is full of journalists.

'Where are you from?' There was the Shekem. In the second room was the clinic. Again I'm off reminiscing. The train stops for a few minutes. Two reporters hurry to the telephone. The first grabs the instrument and the phone directory, to beat the other one to it. Here, the train is going and the second one won't manage to file his story. I have nothing to rush for; I was here before them. If we hadn't been here, these two wouldn't have been able to have their petty spat at the Har Tuv railway station. But nobody remembers that. Not they and not the organisers of the festive trip. Everybody would have forgotten to invite the representatives of the units who freed the line.

It was the last day before the second lull in the fighting. Behind us were ten days of speeded-up action. The failed attack on Latrun, the conquest of Tzora, the night the battalion infiltrated as far as Eshtaol, we were tired and weary. But there was no opportunity to rest.

At 8 in the morning we advanced. In a long rear column, past Artuf. At 12 Artuf was conquered. The Egyptians retreated. Everybody knew that we had to finish by 7 in the evening, when there would be a cease-fire. We had to get at least to the railway line. The 'corridor' to Jerusalem was too narrow. It had to be widened. The road to the Negev was cut off. Would it be possible to break through at Har Tuv and Beit Jamal?

At 4pm. Jewish Har Tuv was in our hands. The section under my command plodded wearily on. The sun was

burning. The water didn't arrive in time. The body - so it seemed - was full of lead.

We entered the battalion headquarters. Ten wild animals. The disciplined soldiers of a moment before pounced on a 'tank' of water. To drink.... What wouldn't we have given for a glass of cold soda?

The late Mordechai Efrati Ben-Geva was the battalion commander. I remember his calming influence. I remember once I got too excited when telling him something, and perhaps I even raised my voice too much. When I'd finished he said, 'Good. But why are you shouting?' I was ashamed. But I thought he hadn't been listening to me properly. The next day I was present when he took perfect care of it.

'You see the police station?' Motti asked, looking at the threatening Teggart fort, and at the tired squad and the three sappers who had joined them at the last moment. I understood that the moment had come. 'About how many Egyptians are there?' I asked.

'I don't know,' was the answer. 'We'll cover you from there.'

'Where do I have to approach from?' I asked, embarrassed.

'You choose', was the answer. You must remember that, ten days earlier, I was bending over exercise books on a sand table in the military academy. And now it was real. You choose.

The 'you choose' didn't startle me so much. But the lives of ten people depended on this 'choice'. And they forced me to think, to check, and check again.

I chose the wadi for the desired advance. The squad began running after me. The machine guns opened long fusilades. Something the Egyptians also know about. The fence was breached. The iron gate flew in the air. 'Follow me!'. An easy sprint. We were inside. Now a hasty check of the rooms in the building. The machine gunner trained his weapon on the turret. It was 4.55. The Har Tuv police station was in our hands.

A short distance away a whitish strip crossed the green valley. That was the railway to Jerusalem. Close to the track, on a ridge, were the Egyptian snipers and their machine guns. A torrent of fire everywhere. The clock wouldn't stand still. Seven o'clock, the time of the cease-fire, was hanging over us. At once we organised forces. A few minutes before 7 there was a loud explosion. A 'pillbox', a concrete box built to guard the track, rose in the air. It wouldn't serve the enemy any more.

Mines were planted hastily. The door of the railway station was burst open. The station was empty. The clock showed 7.

Months passed. The cease-fire ended., Battles raged again. Beit Jamal was conquered. The Egyptians were expelled far to the south. Israel Railways climbs up to Jerusalem. A couple of Jewish journalists at the Har Tuv railway station. Who will call his paper first? What does it matter; neither will remember the fighters who conquered the station. They are more interested in reporting the joke that was told in the carriage."

(e).

THE COACH AT BEITAN AHARON.

By Paul Cotterell.

"The old wooden coach seen in the accompanying photo (No. 1) taken at Beitan Aharon on 27th. February 2004, was first brought to my attention by Amith Ben-Shalom early in 2004. It subsequently, both directly and indirectly, caused much entertaining confusion and speculation among interested local parties before an identification could be made and a little added to its history. A visit to Beitan Aharon, just off the coastal highway north of Netanya, initially compounded this confusion as the coach was seen to have workplates (minus date unfortunately) from the Midland Railway on its frames, but the body was obviously of a different design. A search through my collection of official rolling stock diagrams revealed a very rough sketch of PR Saloon No. 95 and this fitted nicely with the coach at Beitan Aharon; most particularly the doors unusually (perhaps uniquely) located partway along the body, the asymmetrical window arrangements (nine on one side and eight on the other), and the corridor connection at one end only. The sketch is too crude and indistinct for publication so I have redrawn it here, including all the features shown on the original. This saloon coach was built in 1944 on the frames of a Midland vehicle, evidently PR 99, 105 or 305, which were withdrawn, possibly because of damage in The Disturbances or WW2, before 1947.

Another search in the IRM collection turned up a photo (No. 2) which certainly appears to include PR Saloon No. 95, as the midway side door and nine windows can clearly be seen which means that the corridor connection is at right. Details of this photo were ob-

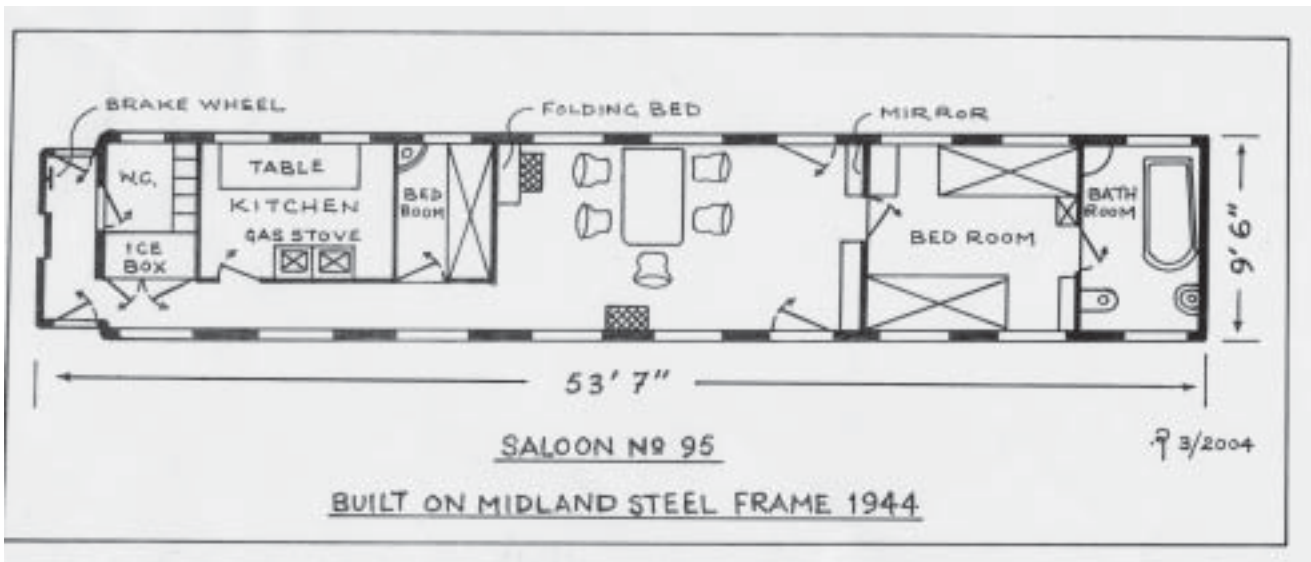


scure and it, too, was circulated among those above mentioned interested parties. A further, um, discussion immediately erupted, rife with suppositions and accusation and mutual recriminations in the usual Middle Eastern manner. The main problem this time was the location. Another print of the scene was presented, notated as having been taken at Lod which neither it, nor the present print, in any way resemble. I have no doubt that the view was taken at Beit Shemesh station looking west. This is supported by a bracket semaphore signal and ridge of distant hill just discernible at top left of picture, and a large eucalyptus tree towering over the last vehicles of the train.

I am also convinced that the train shown is the first to Jerusalem (7th. August 1949) after establishment of the State of Israel. There is a smudge of smoke from a Baldwin loco (a 4-6-2T I think) which has buffered up to the rear freight vehicles ready to bank the train to Jerusalem, and this accords with another photo taken from the banking engine later in the journey which shows the same mixed consist as seen here. The head and shoulders of Moshe Paicovitch, first General Manager of IR, can be seen near the head of Saloon 95, to the right of the woman in the right dress. He is wearing a smile and his trademark bow tie. More mysterious is the leading wooden freight van with its prominent diagonal side strengthening stanchions. Could it be a 15-ton Inspector's Van (Fig. 26 in 'The Railways of Palestine and Israel') about which I can offer no details?

But back to Beitán Aharon and some background on Saloon 95. Evyatar Reiter relates that it had been looted by Arabs towards the end of the Mandate but was repaired for further use in the early years of IR, eventually being written off in 1969 after a period out of service. Yaron Adiri, who acquired the coach for use as a visitors' centre, told me that it had been sold by IR in 1976, going first to Kibbutz Netzer Sereni for a couple of months for refurbishing. Amith Ben-Shalom dug around some more and found that even without wheels, it continued to go to places. From Netzer Sereni it went to Kziyot (better known to most of us as Kusseima from the Turkish military railway of WW1) where it was used as workers' accommodation in the construction of Israeli army facilities. In 1978 the coach moved on to Nir Zvi near Tzrifin (Sarafand) and was used as a store. In 1984 it went to Kfar Truman, east of the Ben-Gurion International Airport (see 47:11 for a location sketch), for another period of use as a store. By 2003 the owner of Saloon 95 at Kfar Truman was apparently ready and willing to be rid of it, and Yaron transported it to Beitán Aharon in November that year.

The coach is in remarkably good condition, despite its multiple owners and perambulations, and despite having been sandblasted! This has given it a rough surface, rather like sandstone, but at least it has been coated in a preservative which, I'm told, is absorbed into the wood. Some of the interior fittings have survived and hopefully, others will be added to give it a more original ambience."



Readers may be interested in these two additional photos submitted by Evyatar Reiter with that reproduced on the front page.

66:17.

Back Cover: Caption:

Israel Railways IC3 set in "Wow!" advertising livery at Haifa Central Station. 23/05/2004. (Photo: Chen Melling).



HaRaquet is typeset & printed in England by CPS Airedale. 0113 226 7497. Harakevet@cpsairedale.co.uk