

A HISTORY OF THE  
**HERNE BAY**  
**MINIATURE**  
**RAILWAY**

**A short history of the  
7½" gauge railway on the Pier**

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## **HERNE BAY MINIATURE RAILWAY**

**7½" gauge. 1948 - 1950**

### **Introduction**

For three short years from 1948 until 1950 a 7½" gauge steam railway ran on Herne Bay's lengthy Pier - at that time the second longest in the country after Southend. This relatively unknown railway was the brainchild of local engineer Joe Liversage. The poor state of the Pier structure and a disagreement over terms with the local Council (who owned the Pier) brought about the final end of the railway after it had lain dormant during 1951. During these three seasons of operation, three different steam locomotives ran on the railway - all built by Joe Liversage.

### **Herne Bay**

Herne Bay lies on the north Kent coast, between Whitstable to the west and Margate to the east. The city of Canterbury lies some 7½ miles to the south, while London is around 60 miles to the west. Up to the end of the 18th century Herne Bay was a small fishing and shipping community. With road access to Canterbury, goods and passengers for that city made their way through Herne Bay to and from London. The beginnings of the town as a resort were towards the end of the 18th century when it was visited for the then popular cure-all of sea bathing. The first new houses were constructed in the period around 1816-1825.

However, it was the construction of a Pier which allowed the town to develop. The idea of the Pier was to intercept the pleasure paddle steamers, which made their way between London and Margate or Ramsgate and thereby bring visitors into the resort. Construction started in 1831 and the first steamer called in 1832. The history of this and the subsequent two Piers is covered below. Aside from the Pier, probably the most prominent feature of the town's early development was the construction of a free standing clock tower on the seafront. Rising to 85ft (including the weather vane) it was opened on 2nd October 1837 and is said to be the country's first ever purpose built free standing clock tower. Further increasing the number of visitors to the resort was the arrival of the railway in July 1861, allowing faster and easier access from London. Herne Bay probably reached its heyday in the late Victorian period, but remained popular as a holiday destination until the changing habits of holidaymakers took them abroad from the early 1970s.

### **The Piers**

Over the years there have been three Piers in Herne Bay. For a full history *Herne Bay's Piers* by Harold Gough (Herne Bay Historical Records Society 2012) is recommended. The brief history of the Piers below is based on this book.

## **1st Pier**

As mentioned above the first Pier was built to allow London paddle steamers to land and bring visitors to the town - as opposed to a purely pleasure, or promenade, Pier. The first pile was driven on 4th July 1831 and the first steamer called on 12th July 1832 with the Pier being fully completed in September 1832. It was 3,613ft in length with a width of 24ft. Although sometimes attributed to Thomas Telford, the design seems to have been by Thomas Rhodes working on Telford's behalf. The Pier was of wooden construction and was subsequently attacked by marine worm and over the years became evermore frail. The opening of the railway in July 1861 reduced the steamer traffic and the Pier closed at the end of the 1862 season. It was demolished in 1871.

## **2nd Pier**

This was constructed purely as a short pleasure Pier and was erected some 80 yards to the east of the first Pier. Formally opened on 27th August 1873 it was 320ft in length and 21ft wide. Design, using cast iron piles and wooden decking, was by Messrs Wilkinson & Smith.

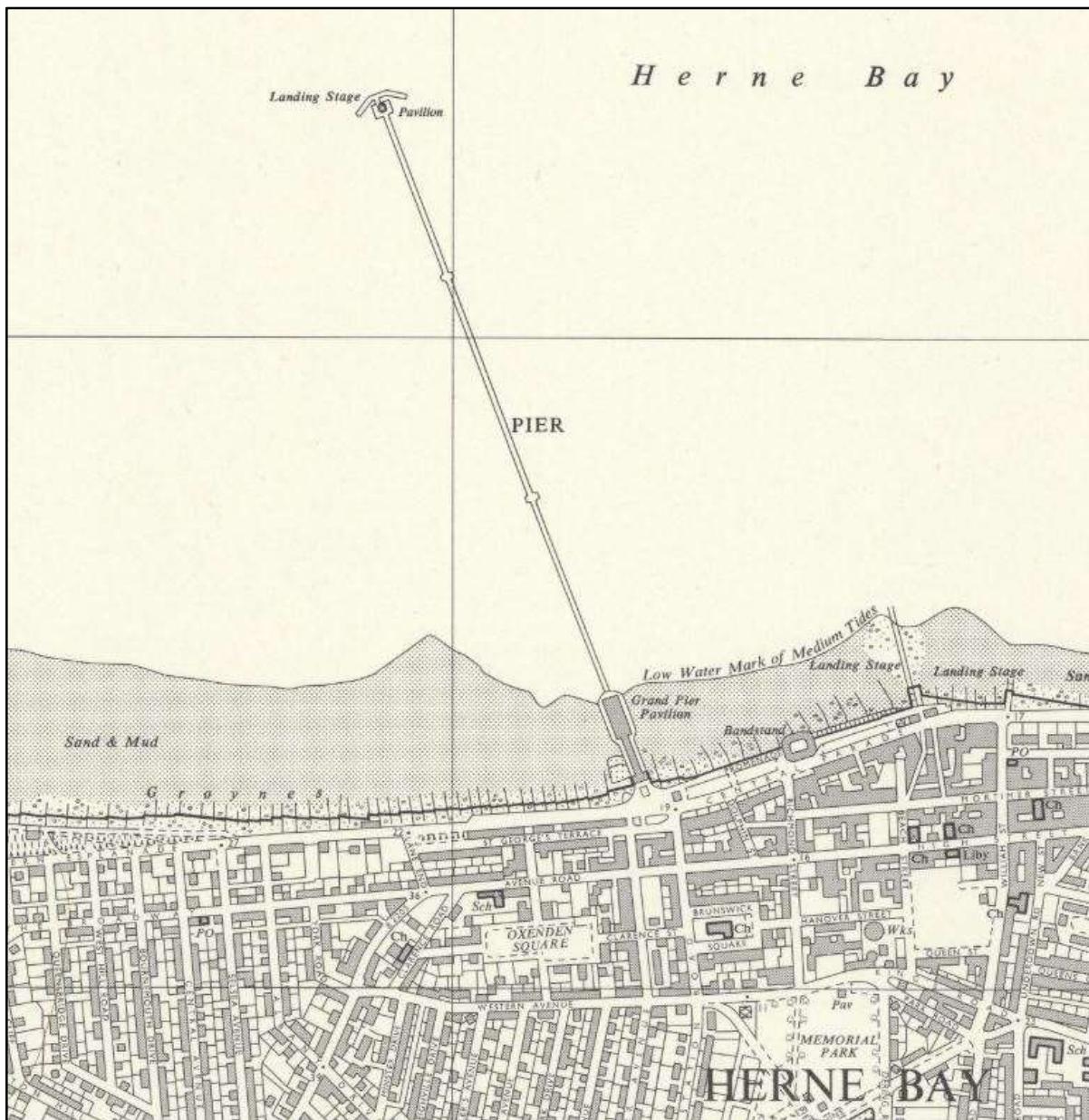
## **3rd Pier**

To attract more visitors and give a boost to the town it was decided that a longer Pier capable of landing the steamers again would be desirable. It was this third Pier that was to host the subject of this work - a steam powered 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge railway. The new Pier was to incorporate the short second Pier and the first pile was fixed into place on 26th August 1896. The new Pier opened at Easter 1899, with a formal opening on 14th September 1899, and brought about a revival in the town's fortunes as a resort. Design was by Ewing Matheson and it was an impressive 3,787ft in length with a basic width of 20ft; 30ft at some points to allow for buildings and shelters. The Pier was acquired by Herne Bay Urban District Council with the formal transfer taking place on 30th September 1909. A new Pavilion was added a short distance out from the land end - opening on 3rd August 1910.

The Pier was closed during the Second World War and in June 1940 two breaks were made in the structure to prevent it being utilised by the enemy. These gaps were 40ft wide (just north of the Pavilion building) and 80ft wide around 700ft from the Pier head. Following the War the inner end of the Pier reopened to the public in May 1945. The two gaps were filled by temporary wooden bridges in late summer 1947 and June 1948 respectively, allowing the rest of the Pier to be reopened - although these were never replaced with steel, thereby weakening the overall structure. Filling the gaps meant steamer services could recommence and these duly resumed on Saturday 10th July 1948.

The Pier was damaged in the storm surge during the evening of Saturday 31st January 1953, which devastated much of the east coast of England. Further damage was sustained during the severe winter of 1962/1963 when the sea froze for several weeks for a considerable distance from the shore, well beyond the Pier head. After the thaw in March 1963 ice flowing between the piles caused tremendous vibration, especially in the central section between the two wooden bridges. Following a structural survey the insurance cover for the Pier was withdrawn in September 1968 and it was closed to the public. In 1970 the first section out to the Pavilion was refurbished and reopened and following Local Government Reorganisation ownership of the Pier transferred to Canterbury City Council in April 1974.

The unmaintained and weaker central section finally succumbed during a severe storm on the night of Wednesday 11th January 1978. The inner part of this section collapsed and another storm in February 1979 caused more damage to the outer end. In the summer of 1980 the entire central section was completely removed leaving the Pier head, with its landing stage and restaurant building, a strange isolated island some  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile out to sea where it remains today.



An extract from an Ordnance Survey 6" map, revised in 1957 and published in 1962. The full length of the Pier is shown with the Landing Stage and small Pavilion at the Pier head, some  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile out from the sea front. The large "Grand" Pavilion, opened in 1910, can be clearly seen close to the land end. By the time this map was surveyed both the tramway and the miniature railway had been removed from the Pier.

(Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. CC-BY[NLS])

## **Pier Tramways**

Whilst outside the scope of this work, note should be made of the other railways or tramways that operated on the first and third Piers. For a detailed history of these, please refer to *Pier Railways & Tramways of the British Isles* by Keith Turner (Oakwood Press 1999) and an article in the April 1968 edition of *Modern Tramway*. However, a brief overview follows below.

Given the length of the first Pier, some method of transporting passengers' luggage to and from the steamers was required and a tramway was possibly laid at the time of the Pier's construction. It certainly was in use by June 1833 when a sail powered car was introduced. Although intended for the carriage of luggage, passengers were also conveyed on what was the first Pier tramway or railway in the country and probably the world. The tramway presumably closed with the Pier at the end of the 1862 season. The much shorter second Pier had no need of a tramway or railway. However, with the third Pier - similar in length to the first Pier and likewise built with steamer traffic in mind - there was once again a requirement for a suitable means of transport to and from the Pier head.

The new 3ft 4½in gauge tramway opened on Saturday 1st April 1899 and was worked by a single bogie tram car. This was powered by the Pier's own electrical supply picked up via an off-centre conduit with a conductor rail. The single track line ran from a wider section of the Pier around 100 yards out from the land end (where the Pavilion was later built) to the Pier head. Two additional tram cars (ex-Bristol horse trams) were added in May 1901. The First World War brought a temporary closure of the tramway, although it was not until August 1925 it reopened. As the original trams had been scrapped, a new petrol-electric car was purchased to operate the service. This proved inadequate and a battery powered car was added in 1934. This car's batteries were charged overnight in a corrugated iron shed, built just seaward side of the Pavilion over the end of the line. The petrol-electric car was then converted to a trailer. With the Second World War the Pier closed to the public and the last ever tram ran on 3rd November 1939. The trams remained until after the war - the trailer was dismantled and removed from the Pier in February 1948. In April 1951 scrap merchant Charles Lee of Whitstable paid £12 10s 0d for the right to dismantle and remove the battery car from the Pier (Pier & Entertainments Committee meeting 10th April 1951). The tram shed was probably removed at the same time. However, the rails remained in place - possibly until those sections of the Pier finally collapsed in 1978 & 1979.

## **Joe Liversage (1899-1980)**

Joseph Norman Liversage was born in Saddleworth, Yorkshire in 1899. We know something of his life and work from four articles in various Kent newspapers in the post-war period. These were: *Kent Messenger* (28th May 1948), *Herne Bay Press* (19th January 1951), *Kentish Express* (23rd January 1953) and *Herne Bay Press* (12th July 1963). Joe started work with the London Midland & Scottish Railway at Manchester and later moved to Crewe. He worked in the Civil Engineers Department and was a bridge engineer on his retirement from the railway in 1948. Joe had moved to Herne Bay two years earlier in 1946. Away from his railway work he was involved in the construction of Battersea Power Station in London, where (according to the *Herne Bay Press* of 19th January 1951) he designed the steel work for the boiler house and chimney towers. He took up archery in 1956 and was a member of the Herne Bay and Canterbury archery clubs. Also a master bowman, Joe was the Sussex Open Champion in 1962. Unsurprisingly, he made his own arrows!

Joe seems to have been interested in model steam engines since boyhood and constructed around 30 locomotives from O gauge to 9" gauge. He submitted articles and letters to the *Model Engineer* magazine from at least 1932 to 1969. Joe lived at 17 King's Road, Herne Bay and had a workshop in the garden there. In the 1950s he worked on the 15" gauge Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway in the summer. Joe was a member of the Maidstone Model Engineering Society and was its President from February 1976 until his death on 11th November 1980. He built at least three 5" gauge locomotives, which he ran on the Society's track in Mote Park in Maidstone.

## Introduction

As far as is known, the 7½" gauge railway on the Pier was the first (and only) permanent miniature railway to have run in Herne Bay. However, there were a number of proposals prior to that railway opening in 1948.

The first reference to a miniature railway in the resort appears in the *Herne Bay Press* of Saturday 28th January 1933 where it was reported that the Foreshore Committee of Herne Bay Urban District Council had received an application from "Mr A G Webb for a vacant plot of ground on the Foreshore or near suitable to run a 10½ gauge miniature railway". The "People concerned" had been asked to look for suitable sites for the Committee to consider. There is no further mention of the proposal and presumably it did not proceed. Mr Webb of Basingstoke had previously run a railway at Sandown on the Isle of Wight during the 1932 season. He then applied unsuccessfully to operate a line in Fleetwood, Lancashire for the 1933 season, before finding a site at Wonderland in Cleethorpes for that season. So presumably his Herne Bay application was one of a number of speculative approaches to seaside resorts for a miniature railway.

The next application for a miniature railway was received by the Council before the end of the Second World War. At their meeting on Tuesday 7th March 1944 the Pier & Entertainments Committee "considered a letter from Wing Commander R F G Lea, stating that he has purchased a miniature railway and asking whether there is a suitable site in or near Herne Bay where this could be put down after the War". Robert Francis Gore Lea (1906-1994) was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the King George VI 1942 Birthday Honours. At the time he was an Acting Squadron Leader in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Reserve of Officers. Later a Squadron Leader, by 1943 he had been promoted to the rank of Wing Commander. Along with his brother John, he had been looking for a site to install a public railway. In July 1943 they acquired "Edward VIII" - a 10½" gauge 4-6-2 built by H C S Bullock in 1936. Unfortunately, the Committee instructed the Clerk to inform the Wing Commander that the "Council have no suitable site to offer". This response provoked some discussion at the full Council Meeting on Wednesday 22nd March 1944 (as reported in the *Herne Bay Press* of Saturday 25th March 1944) where some Councillors thought the application had been too speedily dismissed without consideration as to whether there was a suitable non-Council site in the town. It was decided that the Wing Commander's letter should be passed to the Chamber of Commerce. The debate prompted a letter in the *Herne Bay Press* of Saturday 22nd April 1944 supporting the provision of a miniature railway in Herne Bay. This was from Mr A F Brough who had "trained under Henry Greenly" and explained such railways were equally popular with adults and children alike. He concluded by saying "I feel sure that a suitable site could be found in the "Bay" for a miniature railway, and it would undoubtedly be an attractive investment from the moment the signal was lowered". However, no permanent miniature

railway in Herne Bay came from all of this and it seems Robert & John Lea never found a site for a public railway elsewhere, although they did have a railway at the family home of Dunley Hall near Stourport in Worcestershire.

## Planning

The idea of having a miniature railway operating on the Pier came from local resident and engineer Joe Liversage (see above). At their meeting on Tuesday 3rd June 1947 the Pier & Entertainments Committee considered an application from him "*to run a 7½ ins gauge miniature train between the two gaps on the Pier (with the option to extend to the seaward end when the further gap is sufficiently bridged)*". Joe Liversage would "*provide all necessary equipment and rolling stock and at his expense lay the railway in the centre of the existing tram track*" to the satisfaction of the Council Surveyor. He would also provide a driver and "*attendants*" and be responsible for the running costs. The Council would supply the tickets, a "*small shed for storage of the engine*" and advertise the railway. The agreement for the 1948 season, ending on 30th September, was on a 70/30 sharing basis - 30% going to the Council. Fares each way were to be 6d for adults and 4d for children. The Committee approved the application and terms, subject to certification of the railway by the Ministry of Transport (MOT) under the Pier and Harbour Orders Confirmation (No.2) Act of 1909 and suitable additional fire insurance cover for the Pier. There is no further reference to this Act in the Council Minutes, so doubtless MOT permission was forthcoming.

Presumably, in case his application for a railway on the Pier was turned down, Joe Liversage also applied for another site in the resort. At the special meeting of the Foreshore & Pleasure Grounds Committee on Wednesday 27th August 1947 they considered an application "*for permission to operate a miniature railway on the East Cliff in the vicinity of the King's Hall*". This location was some ¾ mile to the east of the Pier. The Clerk reported on the negotiations "*which had taken place with the applicant to operate such a railway on the Pier*". The Committee then decided to refuse the application.

However, negotiations for the railway on the Pier continued. At their meeting on Tuesday 9th September 1947 the Pier & Entertainments Committee considered a letter from Joe Liversage stating that he would require a three year term for the railway. He also informed them that the Insurance Company's condition for the fire cover was that "*the whole of the decking between the 3ft 6in [sic] track should be impregnated under pressure with one of the special non-inflammable liquids approved by the Home Office*" and this would have to be a matter for the Council. The Committee did no more than ask the Surveyor to report to the next meeting as to the cost of this treatment. Reporting back on Monday 6th October 1947 the Surveyor estimated the cost of the fire proofing and other work to the Pier decking would be £105 and the "*provision of a passenger shelter at the shore end*" to be £200. The Committee duly decided that Joe Liversage's offer to operate the railway on the Pier "*during the summer seasons for a period of 3 years from a date to be agreed in 1948*" be accepted. They also decided not to construct the passenger shelter, but the Council would pay for the fire proofing treatment.

Negotiations over the detail of the terms were still taking place over the winter of 1947/1948. At their meeting on Tuesday 10th February 1948 the Pier & Entertainments Committee heard that the Clerk and Surveyor had discussed detailed terms of the agreement with Joe Liversage. He had put forward a proposal for an increased fare for children of 9d return and that he proposed to only offer return trips, with passengers not being allowed to alight at the seaward

end of the railway. He further asked whether "*the seats could be removed from the old tram trailer on the Pier and placed by him as a barricade around the starting point of the train*". The Committee agreed to the removal and placement of the tram trailer seats and also authorised the Surveyor "*to dismantle and remove the tram trailer from the Pier*". However, they declined to allow the child fare to be increased, nor the operation of return trips only. (The tram trailer was the original petrol-electric car of 1925 - for the time being the 1934 battery car remained out of use in the tram shed). There was nothing further about the agreement in Council Minutes, so presumably with everything agreed laying of the track and other preparations for the railway could proceed.

## Opening

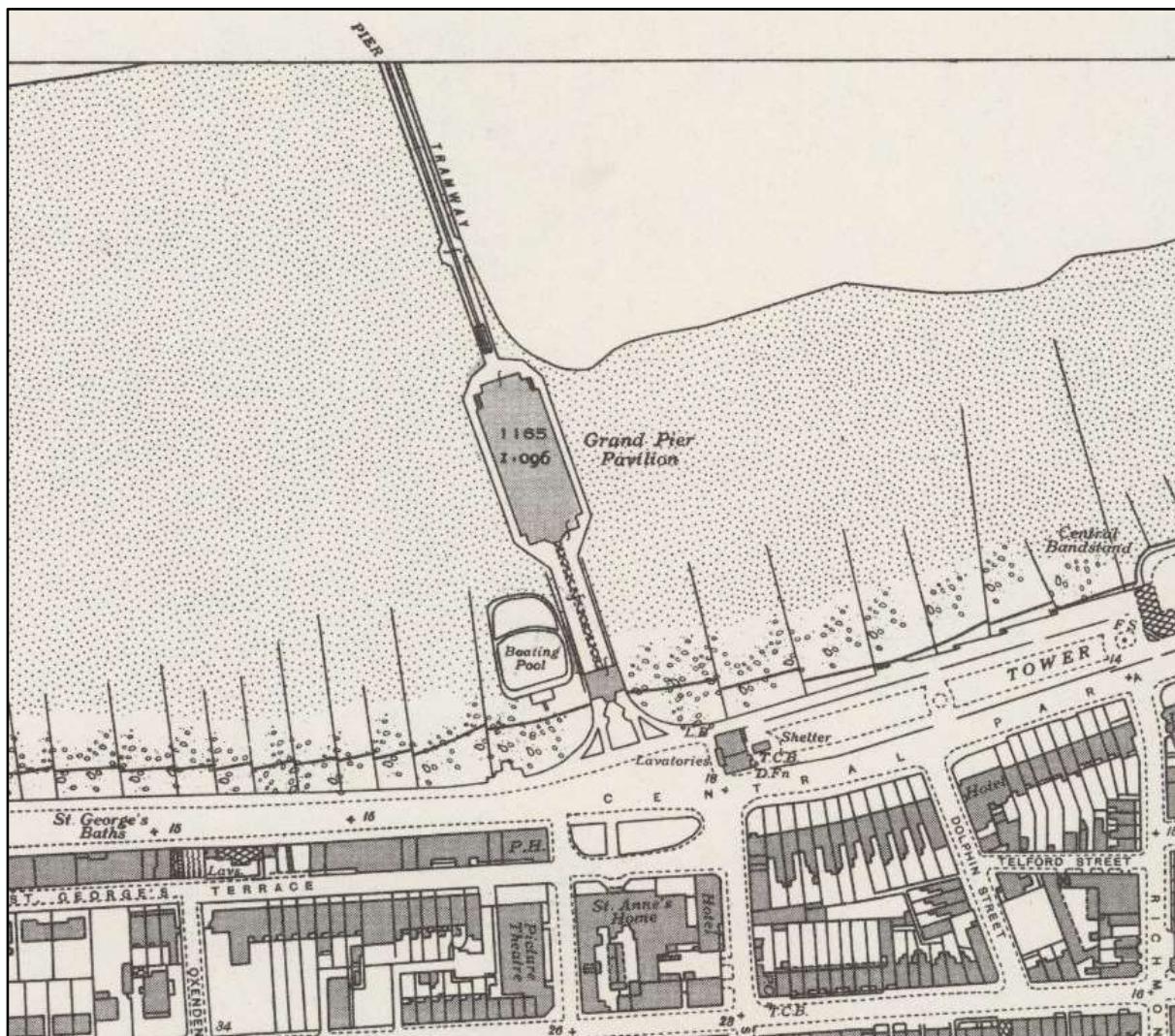
The new railway opened on Saturday 22nd May 1948, a week after the Whitsun holiday weekend. There is nothing recorded in the Council Minutes as to when it commenced operation and oddly the *Herne Bay Press* ignored the opening of the railway. Fortunately, the *Kent Messenger* of Friday 28th May 1948 had a good report and a photograph under the headline "*Kent's longest pier now has a railway*". The paper reported "*A formal opening of the railway on Herne Bay pier was watched by many people on Saturday. "Miss Kent" (Miss Cissie Cox) donned the driver's cap to set the engine in motion on its first trip, her score of juvenile and adult passengers, filling the half-dozen newly-painted trucks, plainly enjoying the novelty of a railway journey on a pier*".

## Description of the Railway

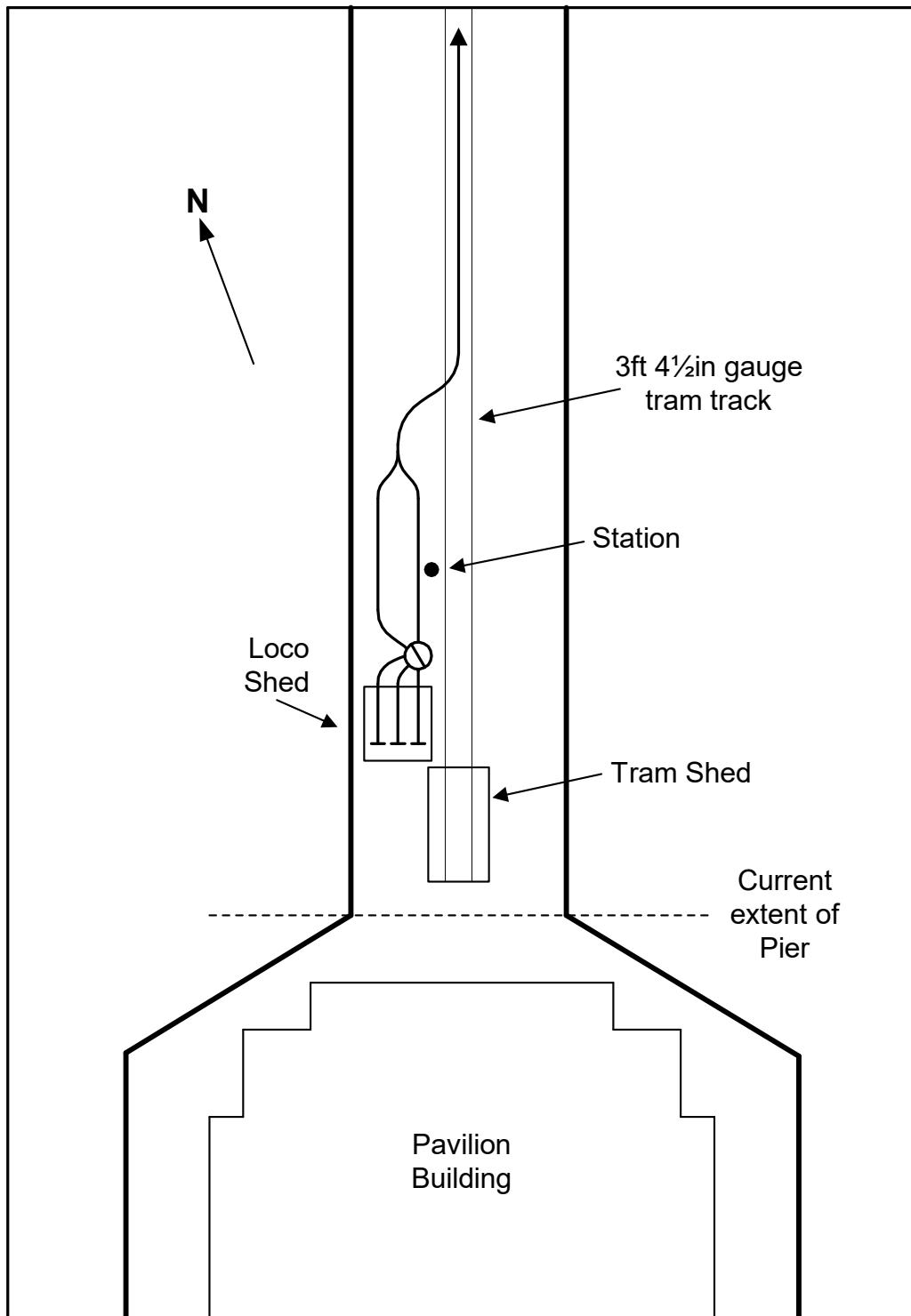
There are few photographs of the railway, so it is difficult to determine its exact layout at the time of opening in May 1948. The railway started from a "station" at TR17246846 (seemingly no more than a boarding point) just north of the Pavilion building and tram shed - close to where the wartime gap in the Pier had been. An amateur film from 1950 appears to show the station was called "Modeltown". There was a small locomotive shed at the south end of the line adjacent to the front of the tram shed. At the station there was a loop, and at this point, the railway and station were set to the west side of the former tramway track. As the loop ended the line went through an S bend and then ran out, between the tramway rails, north along the Pier. The rails were clipped directly to the Pier deck - there were no sleepers.

Exactly how far the railway ran is unknown. The far gap in the Pier was bridged in June 1948, after the railway had opened - so the line probably terminated just short of the gap, being approximately 800 yards in length. The Council Minutes of June 1947 mention Joe Liversage's application for the railway running "*between the two gaps on the Pier (with the option to extend to the seaward end when the further gap is sufficiently bridged)*". There is no mention in any subsequent minutes of an extension over the bridged gap, so it is likely the site of the gap remained the northern terminus of the railway. No photographs have been found which show this end of the railway, so it is not possible to say if a run-round loop was provided there. The few photographs or postcards available show locomotives hauling trains north out of the station by the Pavilion for their run along the Pier. A sign board over the railway by the north end of the station loop proclaimed "*H.B.M.R. Return Fares. Children 8d. Adults 1sh*". Admission to the Pier throughout the time the railway ran (1948-1950) was 2d for adults and 1d for children.

To operate the railway, Joe Liversage used his 7½" gauge (1½" scale) 2-10-0 locomotive, which was a model of a War Department Austerity engine. These were designed by Robert Riddles (1892-1983) and built by the North British Locomotive Company between 1943 & 1945 to support the war effort, with many being sent to Europe and the Middle East. Joe Liversage completed his locomotive in early 1948, in time for the opening of the railway in May. It took him between 12 and 18 months to build, being 8ft long and around 7 cwt in weight. He chose to number and name his locomotive after 73755 "Longmoor", which was completed in May 1945 and became a significant locomotive. Its full nameplate read "*The 1000th British built freight locomotive ferried to Europe since 'D' Day. Locomotive No.73755 Wed 9th May 1945. Longmoor*". The 7½" gauge locomotive had a simpler nameplate with just "Longmoor" and the coat of arms of the Royal Engineers above. The original 73755 is preserved in the Dutch Railway Museum in Utrecht.



An extract from an Ordnance Survey 25" map, revised in 1938 and published in 1946, showing the southern (land) end of the Pier. The tram shed, just north of the Pavilion building, is shown with the tramway running north out towards the Pier head. The current end of the surviving stub of the Pier is between the tram shed and Pavilion. (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. CC-BY[NLS])



The track plan of the southern (land) end of the railway.  
This has been derived from the few surviving photographs and postcards of the railway.  
It should not be taken as a wholly accurate record and it is not drawn to scale.

## Ongoing Operation: 1948 - 1950

The 1948 season finished at the end of September and the railway must have been reasonably successful as Joe Liversage was looking to extend his agreement and add a loop to allow two trains to operate. At their meeting on Tuesday 7th December 1948 the Pier & Entertainments Committee considered a request from Joe Liversage for "*an extension of his present 3 years Agreement with the Council and for permission to run two trains with a loop line with certain other works of improvement and modification*". The Committee decided they could not "*accede to his request at the present time*". After that there was no more mention of a loop and two train running. However, after the arrival of another locomotive in 1949, that would have been possible utilising the station loop line. At least one photograph suggests this may have occurred.

73755 "Longmoor" returned for the 1949 season (the *Herne Bay Press* of Friday 19th January 1951 stated it was "*used on the Pier that summer [1948] and the next*"). However, a new locomotive arrived for, or during, the 1949 season. This was an 0-6-0 narrow gauge freelance locomotive, with a bogie tender, named "Topsy", which was built by Joe Liversage and completed in 1949. Despite this the Pier, Entertainment & Catering Sub Committee, at their meeting on Thursday 23rd June 1949, requested the Clerk to ask "*Mr Liversage to operate a more frequent and regular service on the Miniature Railway*". The subject was not raised again by the Committee. At their meeting a week later on Thursday 30th June they instructed the Surveyor to carry out the "*painting of the miniature railway train shed*". For the 1950 season Joe Liversage built another new locomotive. This was another narrow gauge freelance locomotive - this time a slightly larger 2-6-0, also with a bogie tender, named "Teddy". The origin of the names "Topsy" and "Teddy" is not known. Both locomotives carried their name on the cab side and had "H B M R" on the tender.

Joe Liversage's agreement for the railway with the Council was for three years - covering the 1948, 1949 and 1950 seasons. Interestingly, the impending end of the agreement may have come to the attention of Baydon Miniature Railways Limited. At their meeting on Tuesday 11th July 1950 the Pier & Entertainments Committee considered an application from them to "*build a 10½ ins gauge track miniature railway on the Pier on which to operate one of their Pacific-type locomotives, which are capable of hauling a load of 55 adults on a track with curves and gradients and 70 on a flat run*" (not that "*curves and gradients*" would be a problem on the Pier!). The Committee stated they were interested in the proposal, but before full consideration could be given to it, a report on the condition of the Pier structure would be required. There is nothing more in the Minutes from Baydon Miniature Railways Limited and they went elsewhere to operate 10½" gauge railways. (The Company had been formed on 3rd January 1948 by David Curwen and Stephen Brown, following the successful opening of a line in Weymouth in 1947 - they went on to open 10½" gauge railways at Southend Kursaal [1948], Coate Water, Swindon [1950 & 1952], Exmouth and Skegness [both 1951]). It would be concern over the condition of the Pier structure that eventually brought an end to Joe Liversage's railway on the Pier.

At their Wednesday 7th June 1950 meeting the Foreshore & Pleasure Grounds Committee turned down an application to "*operate a miniature railway on the East Cliff Downs*". It is not stated who the applicant was, but it may have been Joe Liversage thinking he might need a new site for his miniature railway if the line on the Pier could not continue. The site was the same, or close to, as that he had applied for back in August 1947 (see above) some ¾ mile to the east of the Pier.

## Closure

The railway ran for the last time in September at the end of the 1950 season and presumably Joe Liversage then removed all his locomotives and rolling stock back to his workshop on King's Road in Herne Bay.

The track was, however, left in place. By mid-September lengthy discussions had started about the state of the Pier structure and whether the railway would be able to operate again. At their Tuesday 12th September 1950 meeting the Pier & Entertainments Committee considered an application from Joe Liversage to "*renew, for a period of at least three years, his agreement to operate the miniature railway on the Pier, which terminates early next year*". At the same meeting it was reported a Consulting Engineer had been appointed to report on the condition of the Pier structure. The Committee therefore deferred any decision on the railway until the Consulting Engineer's report had been obtained. That report was received by the Committee on 13th February 1951 and at their Tuesday 13th March 1951 meeting the Committee referred the report to the full Council for consideration. At the same meeting they agreed that the Clerk should ask "*Mr Liversage to remove any equipment relating to his railway still on the Pier*". This presumably related to the track and other equipment he still had there.

However, Joe Liversage had not given up yet on being able to run the railway again. The Pier & Entertainments Committee heard at their Tuesday 4th December 1951 meeting that an application had been received from him to "*operate the miniature railway on the Pier during 1952*". The Committee were informed that in their February 1951 report the Consulting Engineer had recommended that "*Before the miniature railway resumed operation, four test runs should be made with one and half times the full passenger load to test the strength of the timber joists which carried the track*". Therefore, the Committee decided that: a) the Consulting Engineer arrange with Joe Liversage for the test runs to be made, b) the cost of the test runs should be shared - 70% by Joe Liversage and 30% by the Council, c) should the test runs be satisfactory, Joe Liversage be permitted to operate the railway during the 1952 season on similar terms as before, but with the possibility of altering the agreement if required for the proposed Pier repair works.

A special meeting of the Pier & Entertainments Committee on Wednesday 27th February 1952 heard that these conditions were not acceptable to Joe Liversage, unless he was offered a period of five years instead of just the 1952 season. In reply the Committee offered an agreement for the 1952, 1953 and 1954 seasons on payment to the Council of £250 for each season. Furthermore they agreed the Council would pay the cost of the test runs required by the Consulting Engineer. It would appear the Committee were keen to retain the railway on the Pier and were prepared to amend their terms to get an agreement. However, even these terms were not acceptable to Joe Liversage, the Pier & Entertainments Committee were informed at their meeting on Tuesday 11th March 1952. In response they offered the same three season period, but on a reduced payment of £175 per season. The matter came to a head at the Pier & Entertainments Committee meeting on Tuesday 8th April 1952. The Committee were told that Joe Liversage had stated the revised terms for a three year agreement were still not acceptable to him. The Committee, probably reluctantly, therefore decided that "*Mr Liversage be asked to remove his equipment from the Pier*". Joe Liversage then lifted his track from the Pier and removed any other railway fixtures and fittings that were still there.

This was the final end of the railway on Herne Bay Pier, although it hadn't operated since September 1950, the track had remained in place in the hope the Pier structure was sound enough to carry its weight. However, the necessary tests to prove this were never carried out as Joe Liversage and the Council could not agree terms for its continued operation. The railway had operated for a mere three summer seasons: 1948, 1949 & 1950.

## Afterwards

In 1951, while all the deliberations on the Pier structure and future of the railway were proceeding, the Festival of Britain was taking place. This was an attempt to promote a feeling of recovery and progress and to promote better quality design in the rebuilding of towns and cities after the turmoil of the Second World War. The main Festival site was constructed on a 27 acre area of London's South Bank and opened on Friday 4th May 1951. Although the main site was in London, the Festival was a nationwide affair with exhibitions in many towns and cities throughout the country. There were also Land Travelling Exhibitions and the Festival Ship "Campania", which travelled around the country, between 4th May 1951 and 6th October, staying at each port for 10 to 14 days. The *Herne Bay Press* of Friday 19th January 1951 reported under the headline "*Britain will see it*" that Joe Liversage's 2-10-0 locomotive 73755 "Longmoor", would be displayed in the Railway Transport Section of the various exhibitions aboard "Campania", which was then being fitted out at Birkenhead. The ship finished its itinerary at Glasgow on 6th October 1951 and "Longmoor" returned to Joe Liversage's workshop in King's Road, Herne Bay. The main Festival site in London closed on Sunday 30th September 1951.

However, "Longmoor" was not the only one of Joe Liversage's locomotives to have a summer trip away from Herne Bay. "Topsy" was loaned to the Bridlington Miniature Railway for the 1951 season as a standby locomotive. This 7½" gauge railway, operated by Robin Butterell, assisted by Brian Rogers, had opened that year on the Spa Promenade on the south side of the east Yorkshire seaside resort. Joe Liversage had sold them a second hand 4-4-0 locomotive and some coaches in 1948 with which they opened their first miniature railway venture at Llandudno in North Wales. 2-6-0 "Teddy" presumably remained with Joe Liversage at King's Road in Herne Bay.

After negotiations with Herne Bay Urban District Council finally failed in April 1952, Joe Liversage looked to dispose of his three locomotives and presumably the track and coaches. The *Kentish Express* of Friday 23rd January 1953 reported that the three locomotives "*may soon come out of retirement*". Joe Liversage was quoted as saying "*They have been standing idle since 1950, when I had a disagreement with the Council and stopped running them. There is no likelihood of them running along the pier again, so I've decided they must go*". The paper noted all three were to go to a "*London engineer who will add them to his collection of models which run in his garden*". Oddly, the paper refers to 2-10-0 "Longmoor" as "Jubilee Queen" observing "*The Jubilee Queen was shown in the transport section of the Festival of Britain ship which toured the country*". The "*London engineer*" was Jack Lemon Burton (1911-1994) of Cavendish Road, Kilburn in north London whose business was the general engineering firm Shelmerdine & Mulley of Cricklewood. His main interest, however, was Bugatti cars and he was the President of Bugatti Owners' Club at the time of his death in November 1994. Some coaches may have moved to Kilburn with the locomotives, although six coaches went to the Greywood Central Railway at Walton-on-Thames in Surrey - the forerunner of the present Great Cockcrow Railway at Chertsey.

It appears "Longmoor" was not sold to Jack Lemon Burton along with "Topsy" and "Teddy", but was retained by Joe Liversage and spent some time on display at New Romney on the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway. In 1959 Joe Liversage presented "Longmoor" to the Science Museum at Kensington in London, where it was allocated Object Number 1959-71. Around 1985 (still owned by the Science Museum) it moved on to the Great Cockcrow Railway, where "Longmoor" still resides on loan. Here it may well have met up with some of the coaches used on Herne Bay Pier. Jack Lemon Burton later sold "Topsy" and "Teddy" on. The latter ran for some years on the Hilton Valley Railway near Bridgnorth in Shropshire as No.2 "Hilton Queen". However, both locomotives survive in private ownership.

## **Other Railways & Locomotives**

In its report on the opening of the railway on the Pier the *Kent Messenger* of Friday 28th May 1948 noted "*Not long ago he [Joe Liversage] made a 200 yards track for the Herne Bay County School for Boys, and this season he also has a children's miniature railway on Whitstable west beach*". The former was probably a track that could be laid down on the school sports field, or elsewhere, for fund raising. Whether Joe Liversage also provided a locomotive and coaches is not stated, and no more is known. Whitstable is only around 4 miles west of Herne Bay and also on the north Kent coast. Whitstable Urban District Council invited Tenders for Seasonal Rights in an advert in the *Whitstable Times & Herne Bay Herald* of Saturday 17th January 1948. These included a "*Miniature Railway Site. West of Beach Walk*". A special meeting of the Open Spaces & Entertainments Committee on Monday 9th February 1948 confirmed that the Miniature Railway Site "*West of Beach Walk*" had been awarded to "*JN Liversage of Herne Bay*" for £15 for one season - 1st April to 31st October 1948. There is nothing else in the Council Minutes about this railway, nor is there anything in the *Whitstable Times & Herne Bay Herald*. What gauge the railway was, and what motive power Joe Liversage employed is unknown - if in fact he actually took up the site on the terms offered, although the note in the *Kent Messenger* of Friday 28th May 1948 suggests he did. Whitstable Urban District Council advertised Tenders for the same miniature railway site for the 1949 and 1950 seasons, but there does not appear to have been any applicants.

It seems Joe Liversage also built a second 7¼" gauge War Department Austerity 2-10-0. Evidence of this comes from the article in the *Kentish Express* of Friday 23rd January 1953 mentioned above, when he was disposing of his three other locomotives. The paper noted Joe Liversage was currently "*making a 2ft, 2-10-0 Austerity transport model to keep my hand in*". Quite what was meant by "2ft" is uncertain. Additionally, writing in the *Model Engineer* of 6th October 1967 about "*Model locomotive design*" and commenting about a 5" gauge 2-10-0 locomotive, Joe Liversage stated "*My particular interest in this engine is due to the fact that it will be roughly the same size as two 1½in scale WD 2-10-0 locomotives that I made many years ago*". He goes on to add that one of the locomotives was "*Longmoor, now in the Science Museum*". Quite what happened to this second 2-10-0 is unknown. However, a partly dismantled 7¼" gauge War Department Austerity 2-10-0 locomotive from the "*late builder's family, after having been stored in a garage for many years*" was sold by Station Road Steam of Metheringham, Lincolnshire (Stock Code 9259) in November 2020. This may well have been the second of the WD 2-10-0s.

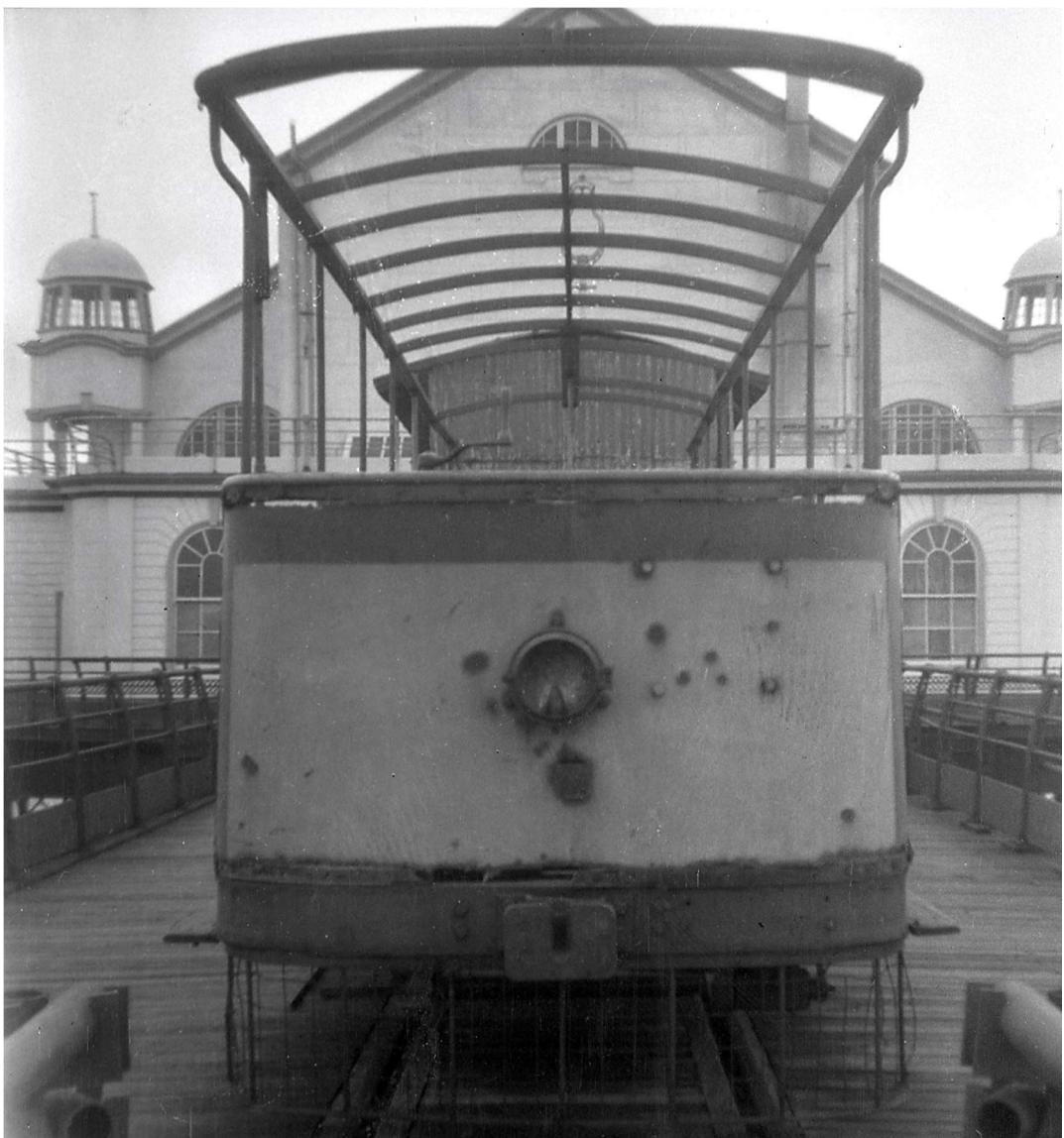
Joe Liversage also built three 9" gauge steam locomotives for the private Torry Hill Railway between Sittingbourne and Lenham in Kent. These were: GNR 4-4-2 No.3 "Rose" (Works No.28) in 1956, GWR 4-6-0 No.6000 "King George V" (Works No.30) in 1963 and SR 4-6-0 No.4 "Lord Howe" (Works No.29) in 1967. "Rose" and "King George V" were built for Douglas Leigh-Pemberton, a friend of Joe Liversage and the then owner of the railway. "Lord Howe" was initially based at the Torry Hill Railway, but still owned by Joe Liversage. After passing through another owner, it had come into the ownership of the Leigh-Pemberton family by 1986. He also built at least three 5" gauge locomotives, which he ran on the Maidstone Model Engineering Society's track in Mote Park, Maidstone. These were: 0-4-2T "Topsy II" (a Midge built in c1970), 0-4-0+0-4-0 "Cayalti" (South African Ferro Cayalti Narrow Gauge 1973) and 0-6-0T "Marquis" (Hunslet 1975).

After closure of the railway on the Pier, Herne Bay did not have another permanent miniature railway. The Council placed a "*Tenders Wanted*" advert in *The World's Fair* of Saturday 8th March 1958 for a "*Miniature Railway*" on part of the Tower Gardens, which were immediately east of the Pier on the seafront. The site offered was between the Central Bandstand and the Clock Tower, but only 22 feet wide. However, the advert stated the railway was to be "*preferably of the "Peter Pan" type*". The *Herne Bay Press* of Friday 25th April 1958 reported that no offers had been received by the Council and no further action would be taken on the matter.

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The Historic England Aerofilms collection contains this aerial view of the Pier from 26th April 1947, which shows the wartime gaps in the Pier. It can be viewed at:

Reference: EAW004747  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/EAW004747>



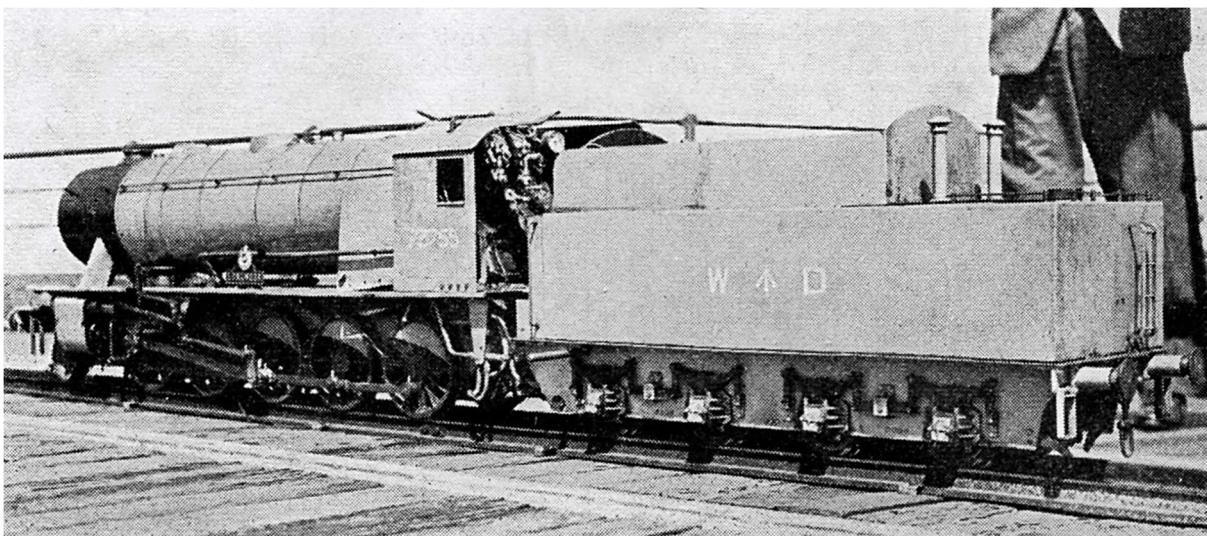
The derelict tram trailer (the original petrol-electric car built in 1925) stands outside the tram shed. The imposing Pier Pavilion building can be seen behind. Four days before this photograph was taken the Pier & Entertainments Committee had agreed that Joe Liversage could use the seats from the tram trailer at the miniature railway station and further authorised the Surveyor *"to dismantle and remove the tram trailer from the Pier"*.

(J. Meredith. 14/02/48)



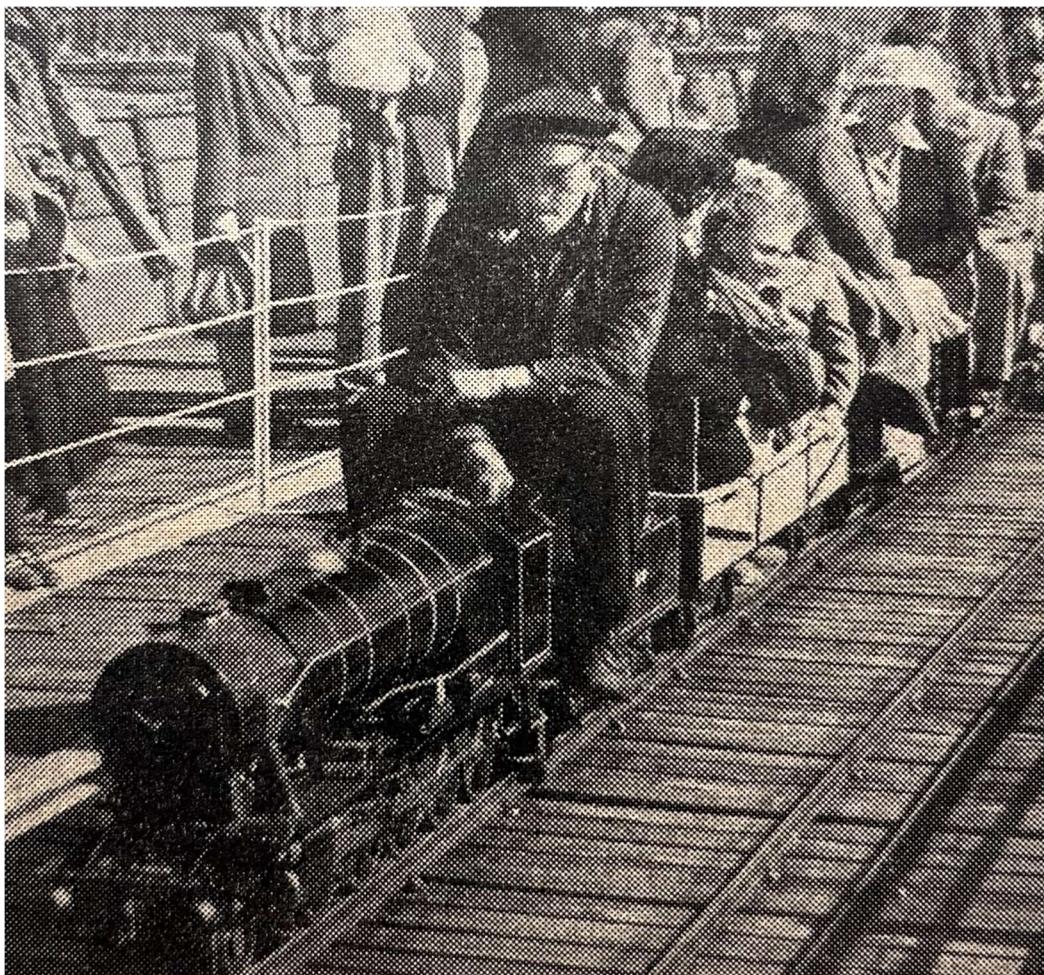
Miss Kent drives Joe Liversage's War Department 2-10-0 73755 "Longmoor" on the opening day of the railway - Saturday 22nd May 1948. Note the station loop to the right and the small wagons used as coaches. The Pier Pavilion can be partly seen top right.

(*Kent Messenger*. 28/05/48)



The impressive War Department 2-10-0 73755 "Longmoor" is seen on the Pier. Note the rails are clipped directly to the wooden Pier decking, without the use of sleepers.

(*Model Engineer*. 27/04/50)



Joe Liversage, with trademark pipe in his mouth, takes his 2-10-0 73755 "Longmoor" out of the station with a well-loaded train for a trip down the Pier.

(*Herne Bay Press*. 19/01/51)



This interesting view looking out from the station, north towards the far end of the Pier, shows how the railway curved in an S shape from the station loop to run along between the rails of the former 3ft 4½in gauge tramway. The large overhead sign reads "H.B.M.R. *Return Fares. Children 8d. Adults 1sh*". There are only a couple of people visible on the Pier, so perhaps this photograph was taken early morning or during the early evening.

(J. Meredith. 22/09/48)



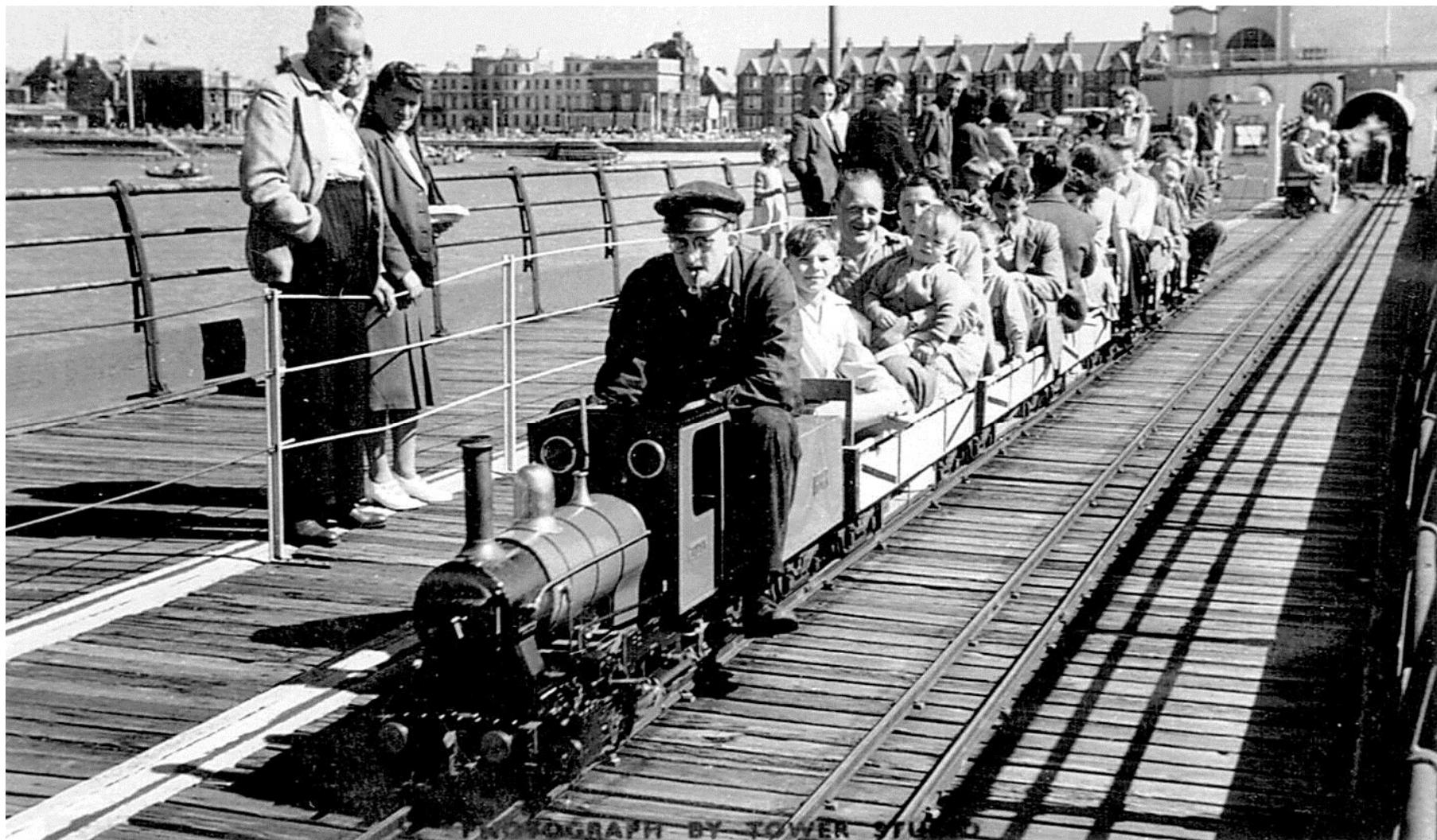
With Joe Liversage driving, 0-6-0 "Topsy" heads out for a run along the Pier. 2-10-0 73755 "Longmoor" appears to be following the train, dating this view to during the 1949 season, when "Topsy" was new. The train is running over the S bend seen in the previous photograph. Note the different types of coach in use.

*(Author's Collection. 1949)*



Waiting for the driver, 2-6-0 "Teddy" stands in the station ready to depart with a train. Note the screen behind the tender. 0-6-0 "Topsy" can just be seen in the loco shed. The station seats may be those from the former tram trailer. There are plenty of onlookers.

*(Tower Studio Postcard. 1950)*



"Topsy" is departing the station with Joe Liversage (and obligatory pipe) driving. There appears to be another locomotive and train behind.  
(Tower Studio Postcard)



A nice view of 2-6-0 "Teddy" and 0-6-0 "Topsy" together at the S bend just north of the station, allowing a comparison between them. Both locomotives had bogie tenders.

(Tower Studio Postcard 1950. M. Easdown/Marlinova Collection)



A good rear view of the larger 2-6-0 "Teddy". Note the former tramway track.

(Tower Studio Postcard 1950. M. Easdown/Marlinova Collection)



Here we can see the design of some of the coaches, which had individual seats and a sunken well for the passenger's feet. The lady with the small child is clearly enjoying herself.

(M. Easdown/Marlinova Collection)



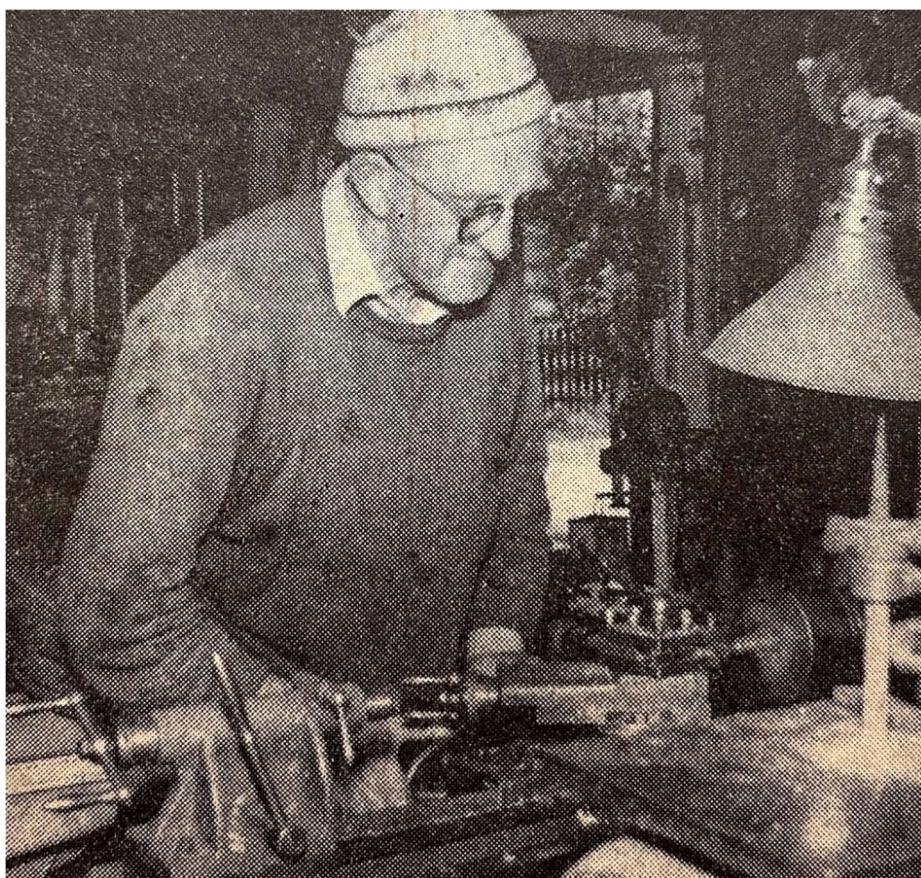
This is the War Department 2-10-0 73755 "Longmoor" as presented to the Science Museum by Joe Liversage in 1959 and looking immaculate on its section of display track.

(National Railway Museum)



Here we see 2-6-0 "Teddy" running in Jack Lemon Burton's garden in Kilburn, north London.  
The coaches do not appear to be those from the Pier.

(NGRS. *Dave Holroyde Collection*)



Joe Liversage working in his workshop at 17 King's Road, Herne Bay.  
(*Herne Bay Press. Friday 12th July 1963*)

## Summary

Opened: Saturday 22nd May 1948  
Closed: September 1950  
Layout & length: End-to-end, 800 yards

## Locomotives (7¼" gauge)

73755	Longmoor	2-10-0	Joseph Liversage	1948	WD Austerity	1
	Topsy	0-6-0	Joseph Liversage	1949	Freelance	2
	Teddy	2-6-0	Joseph Liversage	1950	Freelance	3
		2-10-0	Joseph Liversage	c1953	WD Austerity	4

- 1 From: new 1948. Ran on Pier for 1948 & 1949 seasons.  
Displayed aboard Festival of Britain exhibition ship "Campania" 4/5/51-6/10/51.  
To: Science Museum, Kensington, London. 1959.
- 2 From: new 1949. Ran on Pier for 1949 & 1950 seasons.  
To: Jack Lemon Burton, Kilburn, London. 1953.
- 3 From: new 1950. Ran on Pier for 1950 season.  
To: Jack Lemon Burton, Kilburn, London. 1953.
- 4 Built c1953. Uncertain if ever used and, if so, where.  
To: sold partly dismantled by Station Road Steam, Metheringham 11/2020?

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**Modern Tramway:** April 1968 p127.

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**The Narrow Gauge:** No.173 p22.

**Railway World:** June 1994 p54.

**The World's Fair:** 8th March 1958 p3.

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[www.stationroadsteam.com/7-14-inch-gauge-wd-2-10-0-stock-code-9259](http://www.stationroadsteam.com/7-14-inch-gauge-wd-2-10-0-stock-code-9259).  
(Accessed 20th December 2023).

<http://sussexhistoryforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=18584.msg84802#msg84802>  
(Accessed 24th December 2023).

**Huntley Film Archive:** Film 1017906. Amateur Home Movie 1950s.

Nice views of the railway at 5m 33s with what appears to be 2-6-0 "Teddy".

[www.huntleyarchives.com/preview.asp?image=1017906](http://www.huntleyarchives.com/preview.asp?image=1017906).  
(Accessed 20th December 2023).

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Canterbury Cathedral Archives.

Narrow Gauge Railway Society Library.

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## A HISTORY OF THE HERNE BAY MINIATURE RAILWAY

A short history of the 7¼" gauge railway on the Pier

### MINOR RAILWAY MINI HISTORIES - M5

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