



# Sittingbourne's Steam Railway

Registered charity number: 105 7079

## Press Release

Release date: 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019

### Obituary – Tony Martens

It is with deep regret that we have to record the passing of a long-standing member of the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway, Tony Martens, who passed away on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2019, following a stroke in January from which he did not recover.

Tony was one of the founder members of the Railway, having been involved in the Locomotive Club of Great Britain at the time Bowater UK Paper Company was looking for a group to take over the operation of the line between Sittingbourne and Kemsley paper mills.

He was involved in the conversion of the Railway from industrial to public operations following handover in October 1969 and the setting up of the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway in 1972.

He remained a regular volunteer at the Railway for many years. He was involved in the locomotive engineering and permanent way (track) departments and would regularly help with the dirty jobs.

He is remembered for his work on steam locomotive 'Superb' and diesel locomotive 'Victor'.

After retirement he could not manage the dirty jobs anymore and his life took a different direction as he was unable to walk far in later years, but he was always interested to hear about the Railway through railway magazines, the in-house magazine 'The New Bogie' and through updates from fellow member Alan James.

He continued to make models of the Railway's steam locomotives until very recently and had a fully equipped workshop at home. Under the terms of his Will the majority of his belongings were given to the Railway including his models which will be displayed at Kemsley Down in due course.

Tony was cremated at Kensal Green Crematorium on 20<sup>th</sup> March and his wake was held a few days later in his favourite pub in Borough Market. Both events were well attended.

The first donation of £10,000 from Tony's estate has been received by the Railway and will be used to repair the boiler of 'Superb' which was found to have faults identified in non-destructive testing earlier this year. This will enable us to get Superb back up and running much sooner than expected – next year.

Born in 1932, Tony remembered sleeping at Regents Park Underground Station during the war.

He joined the family printing firm after the war with a break to serve his National Service in the Royal Air Force 1950-52. The company closed down following the introduction of computers. He used to print for Parliament and hotels, sometimes in French.

He then got a job in a model shop where he had been a major customer for years, then as a handyman with BTH at St Pancras and when this closed down, he transferred to Paddington with a railway catering organization until retirement in 1997.

Alan James recalls, "I first got to know Tony in the mid-1960's when as a member of the LCGB we went on some trips. Both of us were original members of what is now the S&KLR from inception in 1969. His models and money are being donated to the railway. We have had a pint together for many years and both joined CAMRA [the Campaign for Real Ale] in 1974.

“After retirement Tony became more interested in sampling new beers than me but we continued to meet from time to time until a couple of years ago when an accident made him almost unable to walk. During this period of time I used to deliver a couple of bottles of beer to him as well as doing his financial matters.

“His condition deteriorated and eventually, on 17<sup>th</sup> January, he was admitted to St Mary’s Hospital having had a serious stroke. His condition got slowly worse and he passed away on 8<sup>th</sup> March.”

(End)

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**Information for the media:**

1. The SKLR is now the longest continuous operator of the railway and is operated and maintained entirely by volunteers.
  - a. 2019 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of handover by Bowater UK Paper Co. Ltd. to the Locomotive Club of Great Britain
  - b. 2020 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of public trains
  - c. 2022 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway Ltd.
2. Postal address: SKLR, PO Box 300, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 2DZ.
3. Photographs of the Railway can be found on the Press Officer’s Flickr account [www.flickr.com/stopem](http://www.flickr.com/stopem) Feel free to use them without a fee but please credit ‘www.sk1r.net’ or ‘SKLR’.

4. Press releases can be downloaded from the Railway's website:

<http://www.sklr.net/latest-news/press-releases/>

5. The Press Officer is available for interviews and recording sessions at the Railway or studios. Other members may be requested for interview through the Press Officer.

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