



Autumn tints of a different kind: The H class against the setting sun Photo: Andrew Strongitharm

The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

November 2020

IN THIS ISSUE

The last month has undoubtedly been one of mixed fortunes. Sadly, dominating the news – both national and on the Railway – has been the imposition of a second national lockdown. Once again, our planned services have been curtailed. This has primarily affected the opening of our SteamLights and Santa services. It is planned that SteamLights services will be extended through January, and affected passengers are being contacted to make alternative arrangements. While this news is an undoubted blow, the safety of our passengers, staff and volunteers remains the Railway’s highest priority.

October saw many positives though. Just as the last issue of Bluebell Times was being distributed, there was the tremendous news of the award of a grant for £727,200 from the Government’s Culture Recovery Fund. Vernon Blackburn, Chairman of the Bluebell Railway Trust, explains in this issue how the award will be used to support the Railway over the winter.

The Railway also staged its first enthusiast special event of the year, with “Off the Rails” taking place over two weekends at the end of October. Despite the rather damp weather, the combination of goods trains and vintage vehicles was well received – there is a photo report on page 11 of this issue.

Finally, there has been more progress with two major infrastructure projects on the railway, with further work on the “OP4” carriage shed at Horsted Keynes, and replacement of Palmers Cattle Creep north of Sheffield Park. The latter project is showcased in an excellent time-lapse video – see page 8 for details. We may be temporarily halted from running trains, but investing for the future continues.

Tom James, Editor

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Chairman's Message

By Christopher Hunford, Chairman, Bluebell Railway Plc

As you'll no doubt be aware by the time you read this in The Bluebell Times, the Railway has cancelled all planned services during the current lockdown period in line with the new restrictions.

I know this is disappointing news for everyone – our staff, volunteers, members, supporters and customers. As has been the case throughout this year – and, indeed, at all times – the safety and wellbeing of everyone remains our top priority.

It is all the more disappointing because this month would have been the start of our new exciting illuminated train service SteamLights and the first of this season's Santa Specials. Thank you to everyone who had put in so much work to prepare for these events.

We had also planned to run trains in this period for Pie and Mash Lunch, The Blue Belle Luncheon, The Blue Belle Evening Dining and Wealden Rambler Festive Afternoon Tea.

Our hardworking customer services team is contacting all of our affected customers about their bookings. The good news is that we have extended the SteamLights season in January and so are offering alternative dates for those passengers unable to attend during the four-week lockdown from 5 November to 2 December. SteamLights will now run until 31 January 2021 and all those volunteers who had offered to help in November are being asked to sign up for the revised dates in January.

As part of the closure, all the Railway's premises are currently closed including all our catering outlets. This includes the well-stocked shop at Sheffield Park station but it will still be operating [online](#) with a range of books, gifts, souvenirs and model railway items.



The Government has said it will look to return to a regional approach at the end of the four-week period depending on the health data. This means we currently plan to run our scheduled services from 3 December onward but this will be kept under review. We will make further announcements to keep staff, volunteers and customers informed when the situation is clearer.

In the meantime, please check our [website](#) and official [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts for updated information.

Also please follow the Government guidance on staying safe.

Although this second lockdown is undoubtedly a setback, I am sure the same spirit and determination which saw us through the first lockdown will prevail once again. We look forward to working together to see the Railway through this period and reopening as soon as we possibly can.

Thank you for your help, support and continued co-operation.

WEBSITE WHO'S WHO

If you've ever wanted to know more about the people on the Bluebell Railway board, then the updated [website Who's Who page](#) has all the details you need.

Each of the directors is listed along with a photograph and some biographical information explaining their professional expertise as well as their Bluebell Railway involvement.

Culture Recovery Fund Grant

By Vernon Blackburn, Chairman, Bluebell Railway Trust

It has certainly been a rollercoaster year for the Bluebell Railway, not least for those of us involved with its finances. The latest lockdown has created yet more uncertainty and this article is very different from the one I first drafted a few weeks ago.

Who knows when or how it will all end or what the result will be other than we can be sure that the “New Normal” will not be the same as before? However, you can be assured that we are all doing our utmost to ensure a positive outcome.

On the day that the last edition of The Bluebell Times was published, our success in obtaining a grant of £727,200 from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage was announced. The background to this and details of it are mentioned below. As you can imagine, it will make a huge difference to the Railway’s finances and our ability to get through the Covid-19 restrictions.

But before I go into detail, it might be helpful to remind readers of the business model of most of the larger heritage railways, if not the bulk of the country’s tourist attractions, for, at the end of the day, that is what the Bluebell is. The revenue generated from fares, catering and shop sales provides the bulk of the funds that we need to operate the Railway. Our yearly business cycle really starts when the regular train services start at Easter. Visitor numbers build up during the spring, peak in the summer and early autumn before declining in October. Santa services provide a welcome and much needed boost to income in December and help to meet all the ongoing costs during the winter when the Railway is largely closed for maintenance and preparation for the following year when the cycle starts all over again and the coffers can be refilled once more.

In the early part of the year we were all very optimistic for the year ahead. David Burch, the Plc’s new finance director, had produced a budget forecasting trading income of approximately £4 million. Detailed plans for the 60th anniversary celebrations were well advanced and the Diamond

Jubilee Appeal for funds for the restoration of Horsted Keynes station was on the point of being launched. But all that changed on 23 March when the coronavirus national lockdown was imposed and, along with everything else, the Railway closed. All our plans were either put on hold or cancelled including the then imminent Branch Line weekend, the 60th Anniversary celebrations and much more besides.

This could not have happened at a worse time, just at the start of the operating season when income from visitors starts to replenish our bank account. Like many other heritage railways, we immediately recognised that, unless urgent action was taken, the lockdown would put it into a precarious financial position. Almost all staff were furloughed and strict cost savings were imposed. Having deferred the 60th Diamond Jubilee Appeal, Trevor Swainson launched the Railway’s coronavirus Emergency Appeal with the objective of meeting the essential cost of preserving our heritage during the lockdown and eventual reopening. This included supporting the costs of our skilled heritage staff, without whom it would be impossible to operate the Railway. More than 2,700 individual donations were received totalling more than £400,000, including Gift Aid – a remarkable achievement.

There can be no better demonstration of the importance of the Railway to so many people, far and wide, many of whom were not members nor previous supporters. The Trust has so far transferred £130,000 from the Emergency Appeal to the Plc to support it during the lockdown and reopening. The balance of £270,000 is being held in reserve for the Plc as and when it is required.

It has been reported previously that Roger Kelly and I put together an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a grant from its Heritage Emergency Fund. The grant was designed to cover specific costs of preserving our heritage during the lockdown and reopening. Roger had very helpful guidance from the NLHF officer he deals with over

the ASH project which resulted in us obtaining a grant of the maximum of £250,000. However, the grant is for the cost of specific items between August and November including salaries of skilled heritage technical support staff, hire of the Wealden Rambler carriage set and the cost of our vital IT support and licences. It also covered specific start-up and other related costs including lineside track clearance, the emergency track repairs near the Eye Hospital between Kingscote and East Grinstead, the operation of pre-opening “ghost trains” and advertising and promotion of the reopening of the Railway.

At the very end of July the Department for Culture, Media and Sport launched its Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage. Only 11 working days were allowed to complete a 42-question application form, cash flow forecast and a detailed action plan to implement the various elements for which funding was being applied. As well as providing funds to meet essential costs during the Covid-19 restrictions and approaching winter, as its name implies this object of this scheme is to assist the recovery of heritage attractions when the restrictions are eased. There is particular emphasis on sustainability for the future, the preservation of jobs, attracting a wide range of new visitors, diversification of income, eco-friendly measures and involvement of the local community, particularly in education and support of minorities. As the grant has to be spent during the six months between October and March 2021 larger longer-term projects could not be included. Capital investment could not be applied for either.

With so little time available it wasn't possible to consult widely or obtain detailed costings. However, the huge effort by all involved was worth it. Apart from funding for the first phase of the refurbishment of Horsted Keynes station which was refused, we were successful in obtaining a grant for everything we asked for – a total of £727,200. However, like the NLHF Emergency Grant, we cannot spend the money as we like – it can only be spent on the 28 specific elements we included in the application. Some are ones that we wanted to do but, unless they were grant-funded, we would not have otherwise been able to afford, particularly in the current financial climate.

Just over £400,000 of the total is to cover the salaries of our skilled heritage and technical staff and our marketing staff between December and March. It also covers various specific overheads from October to March including insurance, utilities, IT support, leasing costs, hire of rolling stock and bank interest and charges.

The remaining £325,000 is for 19 separate elements designed to improve and diversify income, save costs and encourage both previous and potential new visitors to come to the Railway. They include:

- ➔ An integrated Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) system to provide essential information on ticketing, catering and shop sales so that financial returns can be improved.
- ➔ Raising our online profile by improving our website, expanding the shop website where sales have already increased by more than 20 times, increasing our online advertising, enabling us to produce our own videos and having online “virtual tours” of various parts of the Railway including SteamWorks!, the loco and C&W works, signal boxes and the museum.
- ➔ Completing an energy audit and implementing its findings to save on our very large electricity bills.
- ➔ Carrying out a detailed feasibility study for the installation of solar panels at inconspicuous locations at the Railway.
- ➔ Modernisation of the shop at Sheffield Park, including new lighting, to make it more attractive to visitors and encourage them to spend more.
- ➔ The construction of a 7 ¼” gauge miniature railway in the picnic area at Sheffield Park as an additional attraction for visitors and a training facility for youngsters.
- ➔ The installation of electric car charging points at Sheffield Park and possibly Horsted Keynes.
- ➔ The purchase of our own events tent to allow us to host more and larger revenue-earning events.

A lot of hard work will be required to get everything done within the tight timescale but with everyone's co-operation we should be able to do it.

Although our income is expected to be down by more than £2 million for the year, a combination of furlough support, cost savings, business rates relief, grants and funds from the Railway's Emergency Appeal give us cause for optimism.

The forthcoming SteamLights and Santa Specials trains are a major element in this. We are hopeful that they can go ahead from 3 December. However, if the newly imposed national restrictions are extended to Christmas and beyond with all the implications that arise from it, our finances will be challenged again. However, the NLHF has already announced a further round of support grants; it looks as if one way or another I will be kept busy all winter!

Helping the Railway at Christmas

By Trevor Swainson, Bluebell Railway Trust funding governor

Christmas is coming! Despite lockdowns, thoughts are turning to the annual round of presents for family and friends. This year, shopping is more likely to be online. While getting all of the presents in, you can help by registering with either EasyFundRaising or AmazonSmile each of which will pay a small percentage of the value of your purchases to the Bluebell Railway every time you shop.

EASYFUNDRAISING

You can shop at over 4,000 retailers to generate funds for the Railway at no cost to you; same choices, same prices that you would see by going directly to the retailers' websites.

To set up EasyFundRaising, simply go directly to www.easyfundraising.org.uk and specify the Bluebell Railway as your nominated charity.

AMAZONSMILE

Shop online at Amazon to get the same great prices while earning 0.5% of the value of your shopping for the Railway, again at no cost to you.

To set up AmazonSmile, simply go directly to smile.amazon.co.uk on your web browser or activate AmazonSmile on your Amazon Shopping app on your iOS or Android phone (found under 'Settings' on your app).

Thank you for your support.

60th Anniversary Souvenir Tickets

The limited edition special [60th anniversary souvenir platform tickets](#) are still available from the online shop and would make an ideal Christmas present.

The tickets are individually numbered and were printed on the printing press at Sheffield Park station.

A total of £1,150 has been raised so far for the Emergency Appeal from the sale of these Edmondson tickets which were produced by the museum team.



Bluebell Railway Brighton Atlantic Project Christmas Cards for 2020



This year's Brighton Atlantic Project Christmas card is now available.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, cards will only be available by post from Matthew Cousins, as Atlantic House is closed to visitors.

This year's card image, from a painting by Matthew Cousins, is of a scene at Victoria station around 1912 with Atlantic 424 and E Class 516.

Cards will be available on the same basis as last year, in two sizes A5 & A6.

Cost will be £1.50 each and £15 for 10 posted for the A5 size and £1.20 each and £12 for 10 posted for the A6 size.

Cheques payable please to Bluebell Railway Trust (Atlantic).

Send your requests for cards to:

Matthew Cousins
1 Sunnycroft Close
Scaynes Hill
W. Sussex
RH17 7PT

Infrastructure news

TAMPER TRAINING

Balfour Beatty and Plasser & Theurer have been using the Bluebell Railway for training on their new tamper vehicles.

The vehicles are used to compact the ballast and stabilise the track bed after re-laying or track movement. Both machines are a new variant not used by Balfour before.

Bluebell Railway is assisting with the commissioning of both machines so they can be used on Network Rail and with the training of Balfour's staff. The vehicles arrived at the end of October and will be at the Railway for six weeks.

Initially trainers from Plasser trained people from Balfour Beatty and ensured all the gadgets on the machine worked as advertised. Then Balfour trainers trained the existing tamper operators followed by the new operators which they are taking on.

For the Bluebell Railway, sections of the line which have been re-laid by the infrastructure department will be tamped to main line standards along with sections which have been identified as requiring tamping. The machine has been working at the Eye Hospital site on the bank north of Kingscote to enable test and training trains to start running again. They have also tamped sections of Horsted Keynes down yard and the bottom of Freshfield Bank.



Photo: Paul Bromley



Old meets new Photo: Paul Bromley

OP4 UPDATE

By Barry Luck, infrastructure director

At the start of the first lockdown in March, all work on Operation Undercover Phase 4 at Horsted Keynes ceased, just as we were in sight of completion of the cladding contract. Work on this element restarted in June and was complete by mid-July, leaving just two external personnel doors to fit. These are due to be fitted next week.

The lockdown also delayed the proposed March re-lay of the track either side of Palmers Bridge. This has had a knock-on effect on the carriage shed since the old track panels were destined for the completion of roads H and J. However, the Palmers Bridge re-lay is now well under way (see *next story – Ed.*), and the track panels will be moved to Horsted Keynes in the near future, to be laid in the shed when resources are available.

Work on fitting out the interior of the Heritage Skills Centre at Horsted Keynes also ceased in March. However, I am very pleased to say that we now have a new Project Manager for this part of the work, Melissa Jordan who is a specialist for this type of work.

Melissa joined us at the end of August, and things have moved on rapidly since then. Contracts have been awarded for the toilet/shower area, stairs, and electric, heating and partitions for the northern end of the building. This work is due for completion by the New Year, with the intention of continuing with the southern end of the building when finances are available.

PALMERS BRIDGE RENEWAL

The infrastructure team have been working on the renewal of Palmers Bridge between Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes.

This involved casting concrete sections for the bridge which was all done in-house. The project also included re-laying 13 panels of track.

Andy Palmer from the infrastructure department produced a [timelapse footage film](#) during the work.



News in Brief

60TH ANNIVERSARY UPDATE

Planning continues for the postponed 60th anniversary celebrations which will be held on 6-8 August next year.

The event will be branded as '60+1' to reflect that it will be held a year on from the actual 60th birthday of the Bluebell as a preserved railway.

Members of the Diamond Jubilee steering group have examined every one of the original items which had been planned for this year's event and looked at whether they can still go ahead as planned or will need minor or major changes because of Covid rules and restrictions.

Robert Hayward, chairman of the Diamond Anniversary steering group, said: "We are still aiming the celebrations at families and enthusiasts as well as our members. We will allow different departments at the Railway to showcase their work and encourage others to join as volunteers."



EMAIL CHANGES

All Bluebell Railway email addresses are changing to follow the same domain name as the website. Email addresses are changing to: `firstname.lastname@bluebell-railway.com`

This brings all the communications under the same domain with the emails using dot-com to match the Railway's website www.bluebell-railway.com

Please use the dot-com addresses from now onward although a system of dual running is in place so that emails sent to dot-co-uk will still reach the intended person for now.

In order to ease the workload of the customer service and sales team and ensure enquiries reach the right people more speedily, new inboxes and email addresses have been created for specific departments.

These are:

- ➔ bookings@bluebell-railway.com for sales and booking enquiries
- ➔ functions@bluebell-railway.com for wedding and charter enquiries
- ➔ pr@bluebell-railway.com for press and marketing enquiries
- ➔ infrastructure@bluebell-railway.com for infrastructure matters

MOVEMENT FOR GOOD

Ecclesiastical Insurance: Movement for Good have launched this year's 12 days of giving, their way of giving back to the communities they serve and championing the issues that really matter to them.

Designed to give eligible charities the financial assistance they need to help them make a real difference, they're donating £1,000 to 10 charities each weekday from 7 – 22 December. That's £120,000 to 120 charities over 12 days.

To nominate the Bluebell Railway Trust, visit www.movementforgood.com/12days/ and click 'nominate a charity now' – the charity's registration number is 292497.

The more nominations a charity gets, the greater its chance of receiving a £1,000 donation, so start spreading the word to your friends and family.

BLUEBELL NEWS

The Autumn issue of Bluebell News is a printed edition and has been posted out to Bluebell Railway Preservation Society members.

In addition, the Spring and Summer issues – which had been digital-only – have been printed and mailed to members at the same time.

The decision to produce digital copies of the quarterly magazine was taken entirely due to the extenuating financial and logistical circumstances caused by the shutdown in March.

The Railway promised to resume the standard magazine format at the earliest opportunity and so all three issues have been sent out at the same time.

Digital copies of the Spring and Summer editions can still be downloaded from the [Railway's website](#).



KNIGHTHOOD FOR DAVID SUCHET

Actor David Suchet who was a frequent visitor to the Bluebell Railway for filming episodes of Poirot was given a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Sir David was honoured for services to drama and charity. He was cast as the lead in Poirot on ITV in 1989 and he continued to play the role in 70 episodes until 2013.

Much of the filming for the TV series was carried out at Horsted Keynes station.

Sir David is reported as having said: "I feel so very honoured, privileged and full of gratitude to the Queen, my country and my profession."



Sir David Suchet as Poirot Photo: Mick Blackburn

All Change at the Shop

By Paul Lelew, commercial and marketing director

Nichola Favell retired on 31 October as Retail Manager after 13 successful years in the role. Our thanks to Nichola for her hard work and dedication over these years and we wish her well in her retirement. She tells us she intends to spend more time with her grandchildren and on her boat.

Asa Griffiths joined us on 12 October as our new Retail Manager. Asa has extensive retail experience and his last role involved managing a high-end audio and visual retailer with an impressive online presence.

Asa's first project will be to oversee a total refurbishment of the retail shop at Sheffield Park which is planned to take place in February 2021. This will set up the shop in readiness for 2021 and the objective is to make the environment somewhere where our customers want to visit, spend time and, of course, money.

Asa will use his Art and Design background to ensure a positive customer experience will be achieved along with reviewing the items stocked. We can assure everyone that our model railway products will feature strongly in the shop but we will be introducing new lines aimed at meeting our customers' needs.

Asa is also looking for some more keen volunteers to help him in the retail areas so if you would like to volunteer please email Asa at asa.griffits@bluebell-railway.com



EPOS SYSTEM PROJECT MANAGER

The commercial department is looking for a volunteer project manager to manage the implementation of an EPOS (electronic point of sale) system at Bluebell Railway.

This role requires someone with a previous knowledge of EPOS systems and integrating online and offline Point of Sale systems.

This is a volunteer post that carries no remuneration or specific hours of duty. However, the successful applicant will require sufficient time and flexibility to effectively undertake this project.

Following interviews, the role requires an immediate start and would last for six months.

Please contact Lisa Boyle on lisa.boyle@bluebell-railway.com for more information.

Off the Rails

Words by Mike Ellis, Operations Director Photos As credited



The event featured a goods train consisting of a mixture of grouping and pre-grouping wagons. It is seen here on 31 October hauled by No. 80151

Photo: Peter Edwards

demonstrated upon return at Horsted Keynes.

The goods train ran in the traditional way being unfitted, the engine and the guard at the back of the train providing the braking force. Similar in a way to towing a car, keeping the coupling's tight to avoid oscillating and banging the wagons together. The running of the goods train allowed us to also carry out reassessments on those guards who were "out of ticket". The assessment for goods guards is not the same as for a passenger guard.

Although the weather was not brilliant at times, a fair number of people seemed to be around, with steam vehicles (traction engines/steam rollers) in the main car park at Horsted Keynes. Sadly the event field at Horsted Keynes had to remain closed due to being waterlogged, so the exhibits were all assembled in the main car park.

Kingscote also had a number of exhibits in its car park as did Sheffield Park with a display of buses.

The first and sadly the only event of the year "Off the Rails" ran over both weekends of the school half term. The weather was not that kind to us over both weekends, however it appeared not to deter visitors and they generally appeared to be enjoying their day out.

My involvement over the first weekend was as a Goods Guard, a train we have not run for some time and also unusually with a Brake Van at each end. In the days of goods trains on the London Transport system, this was normally how goods trains ran to save running around. On arrival at Sheffield Park, we shunted the brake van at the north end of the train on to the south end so we had both vans together. This also provided those visitors with a small demonstration of shunting, some shunting was also



The timetable was arranged to allow passengers a layover at Horsted Keynes, during which time the goods train was shunted in the sidings to demonstrate this now-lost operational practice.

Photo: Jack Lamb



© David Cable

No. 65 is shown shunting wagons to prepare its train, while No. 263 departs with the up "Pioneer" service.

Photo: David Cable



Railways could only transport goods so far: final delivery would require some form of road transport, for which steam-powered vehicles were still being built into the 1930s. Above is a 6 ton Foden steam lorry from 1928. Below, the heavy truck is a 12½ ton Sentinel waggon built in 1930.

Photos: Jack Lamb





Passenger trains showcased the Bluebell's unrivalled collection of pre-grouping rolling stock and locomotives. No. 65 is seen with one service set, consisting of the pre-grouping Southern bogie carriages.

Photo: David Cable

The other passenger set used the Metropolitan Railway "Chesham" carriages, seen here behind No. 263.

Photo: David Cable



As well as the trains, a selection of road vehicles were on display over both weekends. A Wallis and Stevens tractor, built 1920, is seen at Horsted Keynes (behind). In front is another Wallis and Stevens road roller. Wallis and Stevens were based in Basingstoke, and produced agricultural equipment, traction engines and steam and diesel road rollers.

Photo: Jack Lamb

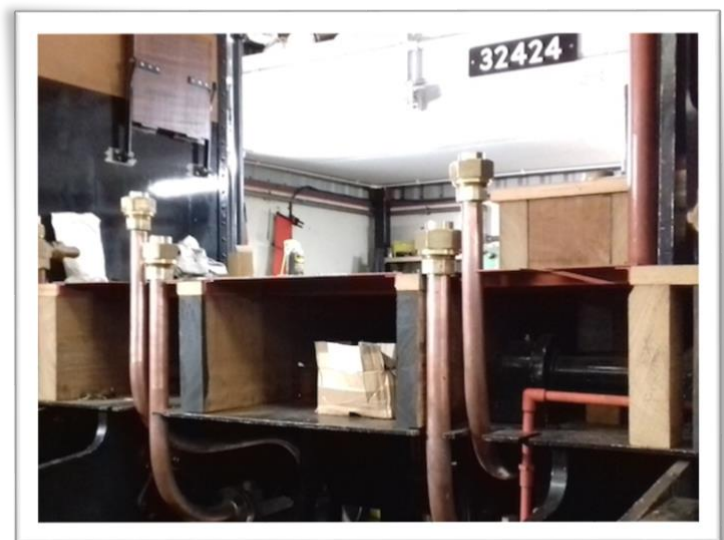
Atlantic Update

Words and photos by David Jones, Bluebell Atlantic Project

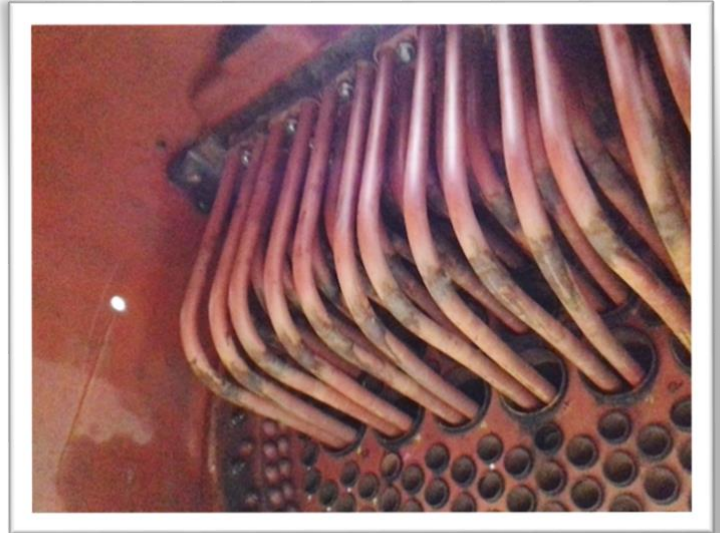
The coronavirus pandemic has had an effect on progress with 'Beachy Head', as would be expected. At the end of March, it was necessary to close down Atlantic House in line with the rest of the Bluebell Railway and also because some of our staff and family contacts are in the 'at risk' category healthwise. It was a pity that the better weather was just starting as we had been thwarted over the wet winter regarding work on the boiler cladding which requires outside fitting and adjustment.

Eventually, the Bluebell was able to resume limited activities in mid-July with planning for reopening on 7 August, 60 years after the first train ran in 1960. After discussions with the Locomotive Director and the Works Manager, permission was granted for Atlantic House to reopen but with various restrictions in place such as working only on weekdays, no casual visitors, signing on and off in Atlantic House itself and restricting the number working to four at any one time. This worked out well commencing in September, and quite a lot has been achieved since then.

During the period when work was possible, the sheet metal cladding for the firebox has had the various holes for the washout plugs and washout doors cut out and the surrounds fitted, then painted to Tony's superb finish. Progress has also been made in Atlantic House on the tender, especially finishing off the top raves, and the pipework from the injectors in the cab area of the locomotive have also progressed. We have received boxes of the ceramic based insulation material for the boiler from Morganite, which have been temporarily stored on top of the tender tank until needed. Cast parts of the handbrake assembly have been received from the foundry, and following machining have been painted ready for fitting to the front face of the tender tank. Thanks are due to Michael Langley and James Young for sponsoring the two major castings of the handbrake actuating assembly. The sheet metal parts for the cab doors have also arrived and



have been cut to size and the strengthening edges fitted. Welding work has been carried out on the two toolboxes recovered from an S15 tender and have been painted in red oxide. Steel brackets to secure the wooden cab and tender floors have been welded up. The other major advance has been the fitting of the superheater elements into the boiler. This proved to be a bit of a struggle as they are quite heavy and awkward to manoeuvre into position via the smokebox door, but at least it is another job ticked off.



Farewell 178!

Ten and a half years after first returning to traffic, the third of the Bluebell's P class locomotives, No. 178, bowed out of traffic in early October. New cylinders will need to be fitted at the next overhaul; sister locomotive No. 27 has already had new cylinders cast as part of its overhaul. No. 178 is seen double-heading with No. 263 at Leamland Junction on its last weekend at service.



Photo: David Cable

“Peek” Performance

Words by Ben Gray, passed cleaner, and Andy Taylor, cleaner. Photos by Ben Gray

Ben Gray sets the scene:

Three years ago I was set the task of polishing the dome of one of our South Eastern & Chatham locomotives that we have at the Bluebell Railway. Previously, this was a strenuous task which few people took pleasure in doing. On hearing my slight annoyance, my Dad (locomotive driver Tim Gray) offered me his tin of Peek metal polish which had been sitting in his locker for several years. I immediately noticed how much easier it was to polish the dome with Peek, and since then I have been cleaning the domes on all of our operational SE&CR locomotives, as well as the other brass work, on a weekly basis, which helps the locomotives maintain a high standard of presentation which the Bluebell Railway is renowned for. In comparison with other products, Peek produces a far more impressive finish, and allows the job to be completed in almost a quarter of the time. As well as this, a little quantity of Peek will go further than a large quantity of an alternative well-known metal polish product.

Andy Taylor continues:

Seeing the good work that Ben has been doing on the brass and copperwork and knowing money is a little on the tight side, I set about looking at how we could use larger amounts of this excellent product for the department.



Covid-19 for me, like many others, has meant long hours working from home with the only interaction with others in the daytime through video conferencing (fun to start with but not so fun after a full day of them).

Escaping the everyday (I've seen that strapline somewhere else!) even for 10 minutes is great to recharge the batteries. This is where there are some benefits of working from home.

In between the calls, I searched the web for the makers of Peek. Peek is a British brand product still made in the UK but, like other well-known brands, it is owned outside the UK.

After a short search I found the webpage and a sales contact email address so wrote a sort email explaining about the Bluebell and our new-found benefits of using Peek within the locomotive department. I left my contact number and also dropped a small hint about supplying some



product free of charge. Thinking nothing more about it, I got on with my day job.

Later in the day a call flashes up on my mobile from California! It was Robert Peek, the owner of the company. After a great discussion about the Bluebell, Robert agreed to supply a large quantity of Peek for free. We are now in discussions about a longer sponsorship deal and also using some of the photos like the ones on this page taken by Ben and

using it on Tri-Peek's international website. This would create a joint benefit to both parties and look at building the relationship further.

We are in difficult times and companies want to help the Bluebell. To a company like Tri-Peek this was a small gift but for the locomotive department this has been a massive help. Long may it continue.

Museum Morsel: 'Ardingly' Nameplate

Words and pictures by Tony Hillman, assistant museum curator

In September, Roger Cruse, a member of the Bluebell Railway's museum management committee, emailed to tell me that he had seen on Facebook that the nameplate from Schools Class locomotive "Ardingly" was coming up in an auction. Following this tip, I found the nameplate was to be auctioned in a general auction near Cambridge on 24 October. I was told that the nameplate came to the auction as part of a house clearance and there were no other railway items.

The museum already has a Lord Nelson nameplate, along with King Arthurs so a Schools would complete the set of Southern nameplates with the class cast into the nameplate. Also, if we

could choose, "Ardingly" would be the nameplate of choice for the museum.

Unable to attend the auction in person due to Covid restrictions, I organised a phone bid. Eventually on auction day the phone rang and in less than a minute the nameplate was ours.

A day trip the following week to Cambridge and the nameplate was collected.

The pictures show that the plate has a casting fault in the right end. The picture of the nameplate on the locomotive also shows the same fault although we have not been able to confirm which side our nameplate is from.





The nameplate had been stripped of all the paint, so it was necessary to repaint it. The picture shows it being 'displayed' outside the museum.

A large part of cost of the nameplate was funded by the generosity of museum management committee members along with friends of the museum. Special thanks go to Chris Wilson from the Carriage Shop at Horsted Keynes who made a significant contribution to the cost.

When we are able to visit the Museum, the first job will be to display this plate next to its big brother Sir Walter Raleigh.

By way of background, "Ardingly" No. 30917 was a member of the Schools class of locomotive built in May 1933 by the Southern Railway at its Eastleigh Works. The locomotives were designed by Richard Maunsell and intended for the express semi-fast passenger services. They worked on the Southern Railway and British Railways between Weymouth in the west and Dover in the east.

In total 40 were built and they held the title of "the most powerful locomotive in Europe with a 4-4-0 wheel arrangement". Three have been preserved including "Stowe", owned by the Maunsell Society here at the Bluebell Railway.

The Schools class was the locomotive of choice for the non-stop Bournemouth Limited which ran between Bournemouth and London in the morning, returning in the evening. The fastest recorded speed was 95 mph between Wool and Moreton.

No. 30917 was withdrawn from service in November 1962.

The Schools class locomotives were all named after public schools. If the school was in the Southern area, then shortly after being built, the locomotive visited the school that it had been named after. This was so the pupils could see "their" locomotive. No. 30917 visited Ardingly on 17 October 1933.

When the locomotive was withdrawn, one nameplate was donated by British Railways to the school. The Bluebell Railway now has one nameplate and the nameplate from the other side of the locomotive is at Ardingly College.



Five Minutes With ... Liz Groome

Name

Liz Groome

Role

Driver

How long have you been involved with the Bluebell Railway?

For most of my life it feels... I joined the Loco Department 23 years ago but spent regular weekends working around the yard, cleaning engines and enjoying a few unofficial footplate rides for around four years beforehand. Prior to that, another few years of less regular visits spent watching the engines, playing in the old picnic area and making camps in the pallet stacks!

How did you first become involved?

When my dad (Clive Groome) was invited to run footplate courses at the railway and first joined the roster, my sisters and I would visit with my mum at weekends when he was on duty. As we got older and could do more around the yard and on the locos, things became more interesting: we made friends, enjoyed the work and had a lot of fun. We joined the roster, did our firing tests a year later and enjoyed a very different 'teenhood' to the rest of our friends at the all-girls school in Croydon.

What is your professional career?

Graphic Designer. I enjoy the creative side of things but sitting at a computer is the downside. I much prefer being active.

What does your Bluebell Railway job involve?

I can be rostered to drive any loco, with any crew. I oil up while the fireman lights up, checking that nothing is broken, missing or worn as I do so. Before we go off-shed, I test the brakes and sanders and blow the engine down. It's my job to run the train to time and make sure the rest of the crew are doing their job properly too. If we stop for lack of steam or water, or the train's not been coupled up properly for example, the driver is ultimately responsible. We can swap jobs on the



footplate so that the fireman learns to drive and the cleaner learns to fire. Therefore, I could be instructing rather than driving a trip, it also means that I get a chance to fire every now and again too!

How often do you volunteer at the Railway?

I do around 2-3 turns a month, plus a week in the summer.

Are you involved in any other departments or areas of the Railway?

No other departments but I organise the Loco Party with Bob Blake and last year's Road Meets Rail event with Steve Paxton, Neil Glaskin, Jason Massey and James Young. We had started to plan this year's event when the lockdown happened and all events were cancelled. The graphic design has come in handy for a few adverts and logos I've produced for the Railway in the past.

Do you have a nickname? If so, what is it and how did it come about?

Don't know... and not sure I'd want to know if so!

What's the best part of your job?

Having the opportunity to drive and fire these powerful, old machines and finding the best way to work them so that they do what you want, when you want! For me the best feeling comes from firing to a white-hot fire when the loco is working hard, half shovels of coal or dust even, needle hovering on the red line, coal igniting as you flick it in the door and knowing you've cracked it (for that part of the trip anyway...)

What's the worst part of your job?

Oiling up on a dark, rainy, winter morning with water running down your neck and up your sleeves. To make it worse you'd have just clambered up behind the axle on something like the H, squeezed between the firebox and the big end in the wrong position, balancing on an oily spring, when you drop a cork or the feeder itself and have to start all over again!

What is your earliest train memory?

I'm not sure. I have vague memories of standing on the footplates of the Dukedog, the Adams tank and the North London Tank when we first visited the Railway.

Do you have a model railway at home or in the garden?

No. I can appreciate the skill and effort that goes into building a model railway but I'm more interested in working on the full-size version.

What's the best or funniest thing that's happened to you at the Bluebell Railway?

So many 'best' footplate turns spring to mind - firing a trip on Green Arrow as a Cleaner and then being offered a drive too from Gerry Butler; firing the 9F on a frosty October morning goods train - the day of the Loco Party I think; firing Normandy on a goods train to take the steam crane up to Kingscote; firing the Baxter test train; firing a trip on Tornado with my sister (the rostered fireman) and my dad driving; driving a trip on the C with my sister as the first all-female crew (thanks to Mike Lee who handed over to me for that trip!); driving Flying Scotsman with my sisters Ruth and Rebecca as rostered crew; and firing Mayflower last year during the Giants of Steam event. As for 'funniest memories', there are lots but none that I think I should be sharing here!



(Top to bottom): Forming the Bluebell Railway's first all-female crew, with sister Ruth Lee

On 'Baxter' with Dave Gillam

An early visit to the railway with sister Ruth and father Clive.

What was the most frustrating aspect of not being able to visit the Railway during the first lockdown?

Not being able to do the job I enjoy.

What was the first thing you did at the Railway when it reopened?

I had a rostered driving turn on 15 August. I can't actually remember what loco it was or who I was on with but I do remember that it all felt very familiar and good to be back.

Anything else you want to tell us?

When I'm not at the railway in the summer, I'm likely to be at a steam rally. My partner Steve owns a Burrell tractor and we road it to the events. This year has obviously been very different, but usually we'd road to Dorset and over to Kent as well as the more local rallies. We've also taken it to Littlehampton Bonfire for the evening, up to Devil's Dyke and out in Brighton for the day. Other than that, I run quite a bit and usually enter several

races throughout the year, and I ride a motorbike ... though not as much as I'd like to - it's currently sorned - even with the lockdown I don't seem to have time to do everything that I'd like to do!

BLUEBELL BITES

Bluebell or Blackmore Vale?

Bluebell - I'd usually go for the bigger engine but have a soft spot for 323.

A night on the town or a day on the downs?

Both! Love a busy day and never want to miss out.

Opening the regulator or swinging the shovel?

Swinging a nicely shaped shovel to make the coal 'zing'!

Through the tunnel or over the viaduct

Tunnel is more exciting, going north of course.

Tea or Coffee

Black coffee, no sugar.

Sharpthorn in Miniature

Model and photo by Chris Saunders



Featuring "Sharpthorn" in the previous issue of Bluebell Times prompted Society Trustee Chris Saunders to send this photo of his nearly completed model of the locomotive. It is built to a scale of 1:8, designed for 7 1/4" track. The original locomotive helped construct the railway in the late nineteenth century; perhaps the model will in turn be able to run on a miniature track at the railway.

A Closer Look at ... No. 488

Of the many vintage locomotives on the Bluebell Railway, few lived as charmed a life before preservation as the Adams Radial Tank No. 488. The locomotive was built in 1885, one of a class of 71 similar locomotives designed for the passenger traffic between Waterloo and the London suburbs. In that role, the class was a marked success, but the combination of electrification and construction of more modern locomotives saw some of the class moving to country sheds, while withdrawal was already being contemplated before the outbreak of World War 1. The thirty locomotives in worst condition were laid aside for scrapping by June 1914 – amongst them, No. 0488. The outbreak of the war caused the scrapping order to be withdrawn, and in 1916, No. 0488 was overhauled and then sold to the Ministry of Munitions in 1917, where it worked at Ridham Dock, near Sittingbourne. With the end of the war and the declining need for military traffic, the locomotive was sold again in 1920 to the East Kent Railway, one of the network of light railways operated by Colonel H.F. Stephens, where it worked – as EKR No. 5 – through to the outbreak of the Second World War.

With the exception of two locomotives, all of 488's sisters had been broken up by the middle 1920s after around forty years of work. The exceptions were two used on the Lyme Regis Branch, where the combination of power and light weight made them the only locomotives suitable for the line. With only two locomotives available, heavy repairs were difficult to achieve, with the result both locomotives were in dire need of repair by the end of the war. The Southern Railway therefore purchased No. 5 in near derelict state and gave it a thorough overhaul. The locomotive was purchased for £120, but cost nearly 15 times as much to overhaul – a familiar story! Once in traffic at Lyme Regis, it allowed the other two locomotives to undergo much-needed overhauls in turn. Thus reprieved, the locomotive – by now SR 3488 – continued working the five twisting miles of the Lyme Regis branch until final withdrawal in 1961, at 76 years of age and over 1.5million miles covered.

Fortunately, fate smiled once again on the then 30583, and she was purchased for use on the Bluebell Railway. After a decade of hard service, a thorough overhaul was carried out at Swindon Works in 1971: the cost – of £18,000 – being controversial at the time when finances were tight and seemingly member priorities



Photo: Derek Hayward

were as varied as today! Repaired, the locomotive put in many more years of service, repaying the investment – but as erstwhile shedmaster Bill Brophy wrote at the time, “what value can one put on the only working standard gauge 4-4-2 tank in this country?”

NO. 488 IN FACTS AND FIGURES

Number	LSWR 488, 0488, EKR 5, SR 3488, BR 30583
Class	0415
Wheel arrangement	4-4-2T
Built	1885, Neilson & Co., Glasgow, for the LSWR
Cylinders	Two, outside, 17 1/2" diameter x 24" stroke
Boiler pressure	160 psi
Tractive Effort	14,920 lbf
Weight	54 ton 2 cwt
Length	36ft 5 1/2 in
Driving wheel diameter	5ft 7in
Coal and water capacity	1 ton coal, 1,200 gallons water
Valve gear	Stephenson

Information taken from '[Locomotives, Carriages & Wagons preserved on the Bluebell Railway, 2020 Edition](#)' produced by Michael Philpott, available from the Bluebell Railway's online shop. Additional information from the [Locomotives page](#) of the Bluebell Railway website.

Down Memory Line

Words and pictures by Eric Gates

My father and I joined the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society in the very early days and I have copies of the Bluebell News for the first few years. They include accounts of the many different locos that the BRPS could not afford to buy (for apparently trivial sums of money) and which therefore went for scrap. A K class mogul was considered too large ...

The photos are not particularly distinguished or exciting but they were taken when my father and I visited the Bluebell Line in its early days. They are on a page in the photo album that relates to 1960 and I know that we visited the line that year and I had a footplate ticket, giving me a ride on both Bluebell and Stepney.

The photo of the Adams tank, however, suggests a further visit from the following year. I think the picture of Bluebell, with passengers standing by the lineside may be Bluebell Halt at Horsted Keynes.



On This Day, 13 November

By Tony Hillman, assistant museum curator

Two pictures from the Bluebell Photographic Archive taken on 9 October. Thanks to John Sharp, Martin Elms, John Creed and Roger Merry-Price for finding the pictures and providing the notes.



LBSCR E4 0-6-2T No. 32485 hauling two condemned locomotives, LBSCR D3 0-4-4T No. 32390 and LCDR R1 0-4-4T No. 31698, seen at Lewes en route for scrapping at Brighton Works on 13 November 1955. The movement is waiting in the Up Brighton platform while a preceding train is signalled on the Up Brighton Loop behind. 32390 was the last surviving D3 and was a regular on the Bluebell line until 1953. She was withdrawn from Tunbridge Wells West on 19 September.

No. 31698 was withdrawn from Tonbridge shed in October but had undertaken little recent work because of being in poor mechanical condition. Both locomotives were scheduled to be scrapped at Ashford Works, but because of a labour shortage were subsequently towed to Brighton.

Photo: John J Smith

LSWR T9 4-4-0 No. 30726 about to leave West Meon station on 13 November 1954 with the 10.20am Alton to Fareham freight. The train was scheduled to arrive at West Meon at 11.55am and shunt the yard until departing south at 12.28pm. During its 33-minute stay it crossed the 11.56am Fareham to Alton passenger train consisting of a LSWR M7 and a pull-push set.

Whilst the Meon valley line closed to through freight in 1955, two stubs were retained, one from the north to Farringdon until 5 August 1966, the other from the south as far as Droxford until 30 April 1962. The intervening West Meon viaduct, 62 feet high and consisting of four arches, was demolished soon after closure of the through line by Thomas W Ward Ltd, with work commencing in March 1957.



Photo: John J Smith

Word Search

The puzzle is all about Railway Works.

In the early days, railways bought their rolling stock from several independent manufacturers. By 1840, there were 12 manufacturers of steam locomotives and others who specialised in carriages and wagons. Most of the railways then built their own workshops to manufacture their own stock.

The Brighton Railway Works was one of the earliest railway-owned locomotive repair works and was founded in 1840 by the London and Brighton Railway. It pre-dated the more famous railway works at Crewe, Doncaster and Swindon.

More information and displays about Railway Works are in the [Bluebell Railway museum](#) on platform 2 at Sheffield Park. The answers are hidden horizontally, vertically or diagonally and in a forwards or backwards direction.

As ever, no prizes but we will reveal the answers in the next issue. Good luck.

N L A N C I N G W S D E I M S	ASHFORD
S K R O W R H M J B Z P F G E	BRIGHTON
K J V Y N X D V I K P B R U N	EASTLEIGH
G L O N G H E D G E F R F O J	LANCING
P Y O B A R K B V N Y S T E N	LONGHEDGE
A Z H G I E L T S A E H M E I	NINE
R U K J L X P Q Z Y G K U L C	ELMS
K V K C P R D F I I Y V W M M	PRESTON
N W S T E P L K R L V D W S D	PARK
K P Z S K P H B G G W Z C O M	RAILWAY
F X T S V A E Q D R O F H S A	WORKS
S O G N R A I L W A Y Q F U P	
N N I N E R C R B O U O V W B	
L W J H G B I D U Q Y F L Q V	
V X S G I C D F H S J P D H T	

SOLUTION TO WORD SEARCH IN ISSUE 13

S P L F X U J Y B K B H Y Y A	➡ Off	➡ Tractors
Y N B U S E S E G K R G O K L	➡ The	➡ Traction
N I I U Q H B D V I N T A G E	➡ Rails	➡ Engines
G O Z C S N Z D A O B Q S S T	➡ Vintage	➡ Goods
S O U M T E E P T L L O T R F	➡ Buses	➡ Wagons
F T O W D R Z F F O W Q A D O	➡ Cars	
W N D D U U A X F X R C R T L		
O A O L S J Z C P Q T N K M D		
B V G C S T I J T I U R B U Q		
E J F O H B Z D O O F R Y K N		
V L S E N I G N E R R E J E C		
G L N D L S R C D W C S V A V		
I C O D S L I A R A G P K I K		
A S S D X K M Y R R B U Q N F		
T R X H I Q F S R N U O B C A		



The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

The Bluebell Times is published monthly on the second Friday of each month. The next issue is scheduled to be available on 11 December 2020 from bluebell-railway.com/bluebell-times

If you have any comments or feedback about this issue or suggestions for future articles or features, contact:

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Tail Lamp

If you've enjoyed this issue of The Bluebell Times, feel free to pass it on to other people you think might also want to read it.

To find out when the next issue is out and for other updates about the Bluebell Railway, check our website www.bluebell-railway.com or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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