



Night time at Horsted Keynes Photo: Louis Cracknell

The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

January 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

The hardest part of compiling The Bluebell Times each month is to write this editorial; it is always the last part to be completed. Words to comment on what has happened over the last month, and maybe set the scene for what is to come. Certainly the hope a few weeks back was that, with a successful series of festive season trains running throughout December, 2021 would open in a blaze of light with the rearranged SteamLights service: a vibrant start to our 60+1 anniversary year. Sadly, that those trains cannot now run is old news, a casualty of a rapid resurgence of Covid that, in the space of a few days, saw Sussex go firstly into the highest tier of restrictions, and then a national lockdown likely to last at least into February.

Of course, as railwaymen, we know that even within the longest and darkest tunnel – and any fireman will tell you that if you misjudge things on the long climb from Horsted Keynes, even West Hoathly Tunnel can seem plenty long enough! – eventually a light appears. That light is a vaccination programme which holds out the possibility of a return to some degree of normality, hopefully well in advance of the summer season.

You will read on page 2 that the Plc Chairman, Chris Hunford, has decided to stand down from his role. The company has moved quickly to appoint Graham Flight as an interim chairman, supported by strategic guidance from senior figures in the Preservation Society and Trust. So we start 2021 drawing on that same spirit as sustained us through 2020, pulling together as a single organisation through undoubtedly difficult and turbulent times. But whereas in March of last year, the tunnel we entered was dark and of unknown length, this time we can at least see the portal ahead and, injector running, be ready to burst into the sunlight with a whistle and friendly wave to those gathered at West Hoathly crossing.

Tom James, Editor

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Board Update

Chris Hunford has decided to stand down as chairman and locomotive director with effect from 1 January 2021.

The Bluebell Railway Plc board has moved at short notice to provide a new leadership structure. Given the current circumstances facing the board and the Railway as a whole, company secretary and former Plc chairman Graham Flight has agreed to take over as interim board chairman. He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role.

Steve Bigg (non-executive Plc director and acting chairman, Bluebell Railway Preservation Society), Roy Watts (acting vice-chairman, BRPS) and Vernon Blackburn (chairman, Bluebell Railway Trust), will provide strategic guidance and support as part of their current Society and Trust roles.

The process for appointing a permanent successor will now be given priority attention in spite of the current Covid restrictions.

Rolling stock director Bob Pamment will be the main point of contact within the locomotive department for now while a permanent successor to Chris Hunford is sought.

Interim Bluebell Railway chairman Graham Flight said: "The Railway is again at a critical point. The likelihood of another prolonged period without running services means the entire Bluebell Railway community needs to show in 2021 the same determination and collective spirit as it did last year to ensure we can reopen when safe to do so."

The Bluebell Railway board placed on record the Railway's appreciation and thanks for the way Chris Hunford had led the organisation since taking over as interim chairman in August 2019 and, in particular, during the last nine months when it faced

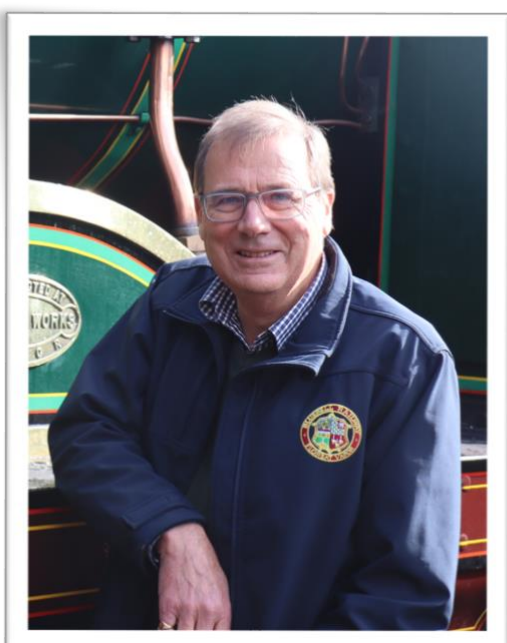
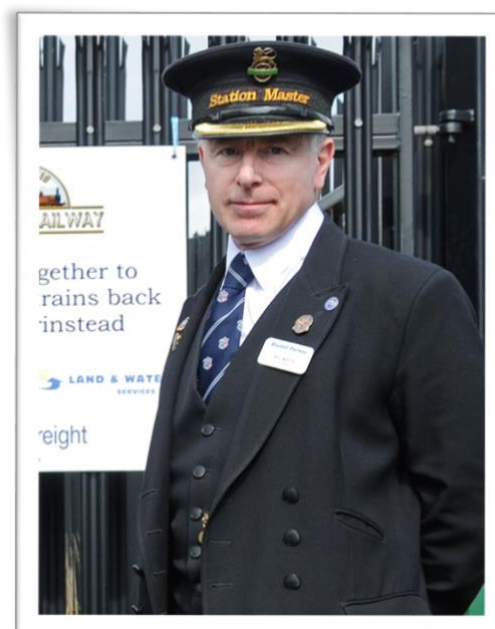
difficulties never seen before in its 60 years.

(Right, top to bottom)

*Graham Flight
Steve Bigg
Roy Watts*

(Left)

Vernon Blackburn



Lockdown Guidance for Staff

By Lisa Boyle, personnel manager

The Prime Minister has announced a new national lockdown lasting at least until the middle of February. In any case, the Railway closed and cancelled all services until further notice when tighter tier restrictions for Sussex were introduced on Boxing Day.

The Government has set out guidance on what people can and cannot do during this new lockdown and all paid employees and working volunteers [should read the rules on the gov.uk website](#).

The Bluebell Railway is a responsible employer and preventing the spread of coronavirus remains our priority both as individuals and as a business.

I want to reinforce the key advice about our way of working in line with the restrictions and the new lockdown.

The Government has set out clear rules and included exemptions in certain instances. This applies to the Railway and its staff as much as to anyone else.

The Bluebell Railway uses the term “staff” to mean paid employees AND working volunteers. The rules and restrictions apply equally to anyone working for the Railway in any capacity whether paid or unpaid, regular attendee or casual employee.

Our advice, in line with the Government’s rules, is:

- ➔ People should stay at home as much as possible to help prevent the spread of the virus.
- ➔ People should work from home if their role and responsibilities mean they can do so without having to attend any Railway premises.
- ➔ Business discussions and decisions should be made using email, telephone or video conferencing.

The Government’s published guidance says:

- ➔ “You may leave home to go to work, or provide voluntary or charitable services, if you cannot reasonably do so from home”
- ➔ “You may leave your local area for a legally permitted reason, such as for work”
- ➔ “You can only leave home for work purposes where it is unreasonable for you to do your job from home, including but not limited to people who work within critical national infrastructure, construction or manufacturing that require in-person attendance”

The vast majority of Bluebell Railway staff will therefore continue to work from home.

Some roles and tasks require people to be on-site and the Railway is carefully managing those numbers. Only those whose work cannot be done from home or who have urgent tasks at the Railway for business continuity reasons should attend.

In addition, some staff may be invited to attend as and when required for specific tasks. This should be with the agreement of their managers or roster clerks or departmental directors.

In any event, we will still continue to follow all the Covid-secure measures:

- ➔ Do not come to the Railway if you or anyone in your household or support bubble has tested positive or shows any coronavirus symptoms. Report this to your manager.
- ➔ Do not come to the Railway if you are clinically vulnerable or shielding.
- ➔ Do not come to the Railway if you have been told by the NHS Covid app to self-isolate under the Test and Trace scheme.
- ➔ Do not come to the Railway if you are not comfortable with attending.

When on-site:

- ➔ Ensure you wash your hands regularly and for longer.
- ➔ Maintain social distancing and keep apart from others.
- ➔ Work outside if you can or, if inside, with a supply of fresh air by opening windows.
- ➔ Bring your own supplies of food and hot drinks, use your own cutlery and crockery.
- ➔ Stop work if you feel you cannot continue to apply the Covid precautions because of unforeseen circumstances.

These rules are for the benefit of everyone and I’m sure you will all continue to follow them for the sake of all our health and for the good of the business.

Thank you for your co-operation.

60+1 Anniversary Gala

By Graham Aitken, senior station master, Sheffield Park

“The train now arriving at Horsted Keynes Platform 4/5 is running 365 days late ... but better late than never,” or so the station announcement might sound like this August, having been delayed for a year by you know what.

Way back in January 2020 operations manager Chris Knibbs and I (senior station master at Sheffield Park, guard, and unofficial Bluebell Railway train planner) were discussing how we could beat our seriously successful 50th Anniversary Event back in 2010. We knew that the overall aim was to provide 60+1 different things to see and do and showcase our Railway to visitors, members and our volunteers.

It is a very unusual sight (in today’s preservation world) to see locomotives being changed in the middle of a train’s journey and we have already included loco changes in recent Branch Line and Giants of Steam weekends. We decided that we had to think big and come up with a timetable plan that would be very special and different from our normal diet of Sheffield Park to East Grinstead and return trains.

By the end of February, we had convinced ourselves that an intensive service between all four of our stations was the answer as that would allow all of our visitors to travel easily between them, and alight to enjoy the many attractions on offer, knowing that they would not be stranded there waiting a long time for the next train. These are important principles as there will be so much to see and do at our stations, ranging from SteamWorks! at Sheffield Park, to the carriage works and storage shed at Horsted Keynes and our children’s playground at Kingscote, to name but three.

Despite being an 11-mile-long single line railway, we are fortunate in having a crossing loop at Kingscote, a magnificent five platform station at Horsted Keynes, with three through platforms and a two-platform terminus at Sheffield Park allowing trains to effectively cross there as well. The flexibility provided at Horsted Keynes is a train planner’s dream.

While our ideal frequency of trains would be one every 30 minutes, that is impossible given our infrastructure constraints, but we could operate one every 40 minutes. A draft timetable was produced which was quickly accepted by the Diamond Jubilee committee allowing detailed timings, loco and rolling stock plans to be prepared.

With our desire to encourage our visitors to hop on and off our trains in order that they could enjoy all 60+1 of our attractions, it had quickly become obvious that we should base everything around Horsted Keynes, the (slightly tarnished) jewel in our Railway’s crown and the centrepiece of our planned Diamond Jubilee appeal. With three platforms available and the ability to run locos round using whichever platform was empty, it has been possible to produce the following train plan:

- ➔ Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes: three locos and three sets of coaches from the pre-Grouping and Grouping eras, ideally suited to the oldest part of our Railway and running in each direction every 40 minutes.
- ➔ East Grinstead to Horsted Keynes: three locos and three sets of coaches from the Grouping and British Railways eras, ideally suited to the newest part of our Railway and running in each direction every 40 minutes and stopping at Kingscote.

This provides the spectacle of three arrivals, three departures and three locomotives running round every hour at Horsted Keynes. What is not to like?



Loco	1		2	3		4	5
Set	D		E	F		B	A
Platform	2			1			2
Sheffield Park	11:55			12:35			1:15
Horsted Keynes a)	12:10			12:50			1:30
Platform	3		4/5	4/5		2	2
Horsted Keynes d)			12:30			1:10	
Kingscote a)			12:45			1:25	
Line			M			M	
d)			12:55			1:35	
East Grinstead			1:05			1:45	
Loco	1	6		3	2		5
Set	D	C		F	E		A
East Grinstead d)		12:40			1:20		
Kingscote a)		12:48			1:28		
Line		L			L		
d)		12:50			1:30		
Horsted Keynes a)		1:05			1:45		
Platform	3	3		4/5	4/5		2
Horsted Keynes d)	12:55			1:35			2:15
Sheffield Park	1:10			1:50			2:30
Platform	1			2			1

Chris and I are both confident that this will be the most intensive service the Bluebell Railway has ever planned to operate.

COVID-19 then got in the way and our Diamond Jubilee timetable was placed back under wraps. With hopefully more positive news regarding vaccines, the plan is emerging again in the hope that come August later this year, it will be at the centre of our 60+1 Anniversary Gala.

The extract above on page 4 shows the timetable during the period around lunchtime. Why not

come along and experience for yourself an intense steam-operated service and perhaps enjoy travelling in all six sets of coaches while being hauled by six of our locomotives.

Oh, and by the way, remember that there will still be another 59+1 other things to see and do! So why not put all three dates in your diary now and enjoy all that our Bluebell Railway offers. If you see me, stop and say hello, I certainly intend to be there!

Events 2021

By Paul Lelew, commercial and marketing director

My team has worked incredibly hard to put together something that is new to the Bluebell Railway: a commercial plan which shows every service we intend to run in 2021 with dates, timings, rolling stock and estimated revenue. This has been shared with all departments in the Railway and ensures everybody understands exactly what is happening throughout the year. We have some new events planned but have made sure the tried and reliable revenue generators have also been included.

Due to the pandemic our plan will be flexible. All dates could be subject to change so please refer to our website for the latest information on services and events.

We have decided that because of the current closed period, SteamLights will not be able to run in January 2021 – this had already been moved from November into January because of the previous lockdown. The good news is that this product has been a roaring success and we will be running it again starting on 6 November and running until 30 December 2021.

Our other very popular service Santa Specials will run from 4 December to 24 December.

Valentine's Weekend 13 - 14 February is due to have Evening and Cream Tea special trains running.

Murder Mystery services are planned for February through to November running at least once a month, sometimes twice. There will also be 10 exclusive member trains and all member travel benefits for 2021 have been restored for when services

BLUEBELL RAILWAY EVENTS 2021
A TASTE OF WHAT'S TO COME!

Provisional date: October half term
The BrickWorks! Adventure **BRICKLIVE**
Our STEM Family Fair returns with interactive workshops, trade stands and building challenges for the whole family. 
Featuring 15 amazing BRICKLIVE Outer Space models, including a 310 cm high Apollo 11 Saturn V rocket made with 68,583 bricks!

Provisional dates in August & September
Bluebell Railway Beer Festivals **NEW!**
Featuring mystery guest steam engines, a selection of great cask beers and live music at an amazing venue. 

19th & 20th June
Road Meets Rail
Traditional Steam Fair featuring working traction engine displays, miniature engines, goods trains and a steam driven children's fair. 

Selected dates this Summer
Open Air Live Music **NEW!**
Rock 'n roll, classical or Blues, this year Bluebell Railway will be hosting a selection of brilliant music to suit all tastes. 

26th & 27th June
Model Railway Weekend
Where miniature meets full size! Ride our trains to see layouts, traders and models. Come and see why model railway grew in popularity during lockdown. 

Provisional date in July
Diesel Gala
Diesel Engines take over the steam railway for the weekend. Guest engines to be announced. The weekend will also feature a beer festival with cask beers and live music! 

6th – 8th August
60 plus! 
Help celebrate our volunteer (and staff!) achievements from over the last 60 years with a packed weekend of displays, activities, music, festivities and, of course, steam engines.
Ever wondered how a heritage railway works? Meet the volunteers and get special behind the scenes tours of our workshops, signal boxes and other staff only areas!
A celebration of what Bluebell Railway does best for the whole family!

are running. There are two visiting engine weekends in May: 14 - 16 & 29 - 31. The first of these weekends will also launch our first ever Bluebell Railway Beer Festival over three days.

Always a great favourite, the Model Railway Weekend, will be held on 26 - 27 June and preceding that will be Road Meets Rail on 19 - 20 June which coincides with Father's Day and on the Saturday there will be a Live Music event.

Moving into July we are planning a Diesel Gala on 16 - 18 inclusive. Watch the website for details of the engines.

Our 60+1 event, to celebrate our Diamond Jubilee that was unable to fully be celebrated in 2020 due to the pandemic, will take place 6 - 8 August inclusive and the 60+1 committee are working hard to make this a memorable event.

Giants of Steam is scheduled for the three days of 24 - 26 September with visiting engines joining our own home fleet. Again, details of the guest locomotives will be on our website nearer the time.

We are introducing Autumn Tints services in October running 11 - 24 October to take advantage of the array of trees lining parts of the line for passengers to enjoy the vibrant colours of the changing leaves.

A new event will be Halloween where we are looking to dress an engine and give the children and their families a new experience running on 30 and 31 October.

Our wedding events revenue was almost non-existent in 2020 but we have rescheduled many of the 2020 dates into 2021, although at present the legislation limits the numbers who can attend.

Our programme has been designed to attract enthusiasts, families and new visitors to the Railway. Although I have given specific dates, we will share the details on our [website](#) but this may all be subject to changes which may be forced upon us by Government decisions outside our control.

In 2020 we as a commercial team met weekly to look at our sales to build on the successes and made sometimes weekly changes to our services to ensure we were maximising our revenue in what turned out to be uncharted territory. As a consequence we only released specific ticketing sales about 2-3 weeks in advance so that we could be constantly reviewing sales and making corrective decisions to improve revenue.

It is highly likely that we will have to use this trading model for 2021.



24th – 26th September
Giants of Steam Autumn Gala
Thundering giants join our home fleet locos for our annual gala. Special guest engines will be announced, so keep an eye on our website.

Selected dates in October
Autumn Tints
Enjoy the glorious Autumn colours as you journey through the beautiful Sussex Weald. Group bookings welcome.

Selected dates during school holidays
The Pioneer Family Specials
Private compartment travel at family friendly prices!

30th – 31st October
Halloween
Have you see the Ghost Train? This will be a unique spectacle **not** for the faint-hearted! A spooky encounter for all ages.

Selected dates November – January
SteamLights
This incredibly popular event returns! Brighten up the chilly winter evenings with a seasonal lights spectacular. Sparkle, glow and shimmer on a magical steam train covered by thousands of colourful lights.

Saturdays and Sundays through December
Santa Specials
Meet Santa on a magical journey through the countryside. Mince pies, presents and a Victorian fairground make this a truly unforgettable family experience.

Dining Experiences
Why not enjoy a delicious afternoon tea while you travel in style and comfort? We offer fine dining, fish and chips and much more! Look out for Mother's Day, Valentine's Day and Festive Services to really treat yourself and those you love.

All dates are provisional and depend upon current Government legislation.

For more details about our events and how to book see our website
www.bluebell-railway.com

Scan to sign up for our mailing list and be the first to know when tickets are released.



Taking Stock

By Bob Pamment, rolling stock director

I wanted to advise you of what has taken place to our rolling stock and, importantly, appraise you of the reasoning behind some decisions.

There's nothing like a challenging revenue climate for focusing minds on key issues such as "what we are about" and "how we best achieve it".

Visitor numbers and associated revenues in the last couple of years have prompted the Bluebell Railway Plc board and colleagues at the Preservation Society and the Trust to take stock of these very issues. After much deliberating and discussion, there has been agreement on just what the Vision is for the Bluebell Railway and how it will be achieved given declining receipts.

One of the principal outputs from this exercise is the clear understanding that the company must focus maximum attention on what assets best tell our story and how we obtain them or, if we already have them, keep them fit to exhibit and fill our visitors with wonder but, at the same time, keeping within our financial constraints.

The Mission Statement for the Railway has now been agreed:

"The mission for the Bluebell Railway is to operate a safe and sustainable heritage railway and preserve its historic authenticity, so as to educate, excite and inspire present and future generations of visitors, volunteers, members, and enthusiasts alike."

The company's Mission Statement is still work in progress but is likely to include wording about immersing visitors "in the world of railway operation and development and tell the story of the way of life at the golden age of railways."

So, we must tell the best story we can with the assets that best tell the story. The story ranges from the humble goods train through to the express trains and luxury Pullman trains. The excitement of seeing a Bulleid Pacific at the head of a rake of green carriages or the Golden Arrow Pullman is undeniable and attractive to our visitors



Avonside Works No. 1972 'Stamford' at Stewart and Lloyds Pilton Quarry, 21 May 1966. Photo © [Charlie Verrall](#)



Pullman Car No. 76 'Lilian', an-all steel 3rd class parlour car from 1928. Photo © Mike Esau

as is the classic little tank engine shunting wagons around a yard or at the head of a two-coach stopping train.

We must maximise these attractive presentations and all the variations in between. In order to assist with this, there has been some consideration of the rolling stock that we have against its relevance and affordability with view to maximising both.

The two practical outputs from this have been the sale of Pullman Car 76 (Lilian) and industrial tank locomotive Stamford.

Taking first Car 76, the decision to sell Lilian was about value for money. We have a need for additional Pullman capacity. For the cost of fixing Lilian, being of a relatively rare monocoque type construction, we could overhaul a number of other conventional Pullman vehicles where the dominant vehicle strength is in the underframe.

In the case of Stamford, the issue was about its relevance and whether its financial value would give a better return if spent on a locomotive relevant to the story of our Railway and of greater interest for our visitors. Stamford has been sold to Rocks by Rail, the Living Ironstone Museum based in Rutland. Stamford is one of a small number of quarry steam locomotives that worked in the ironstone quarries in Rutland.

It is of course important to consider that all of our assets have, at one time, been somebody's dream and/or represent the investment of the time and/or money of our valued Bluebell members – but it is equally important that we best serve the whole membership by maximising the achievement of the Mission and the success of our Railway.

Message of Thanks

By Julia Pique, SteamLights and Santa Specials co-ordinator

To all Bluebell staff and volunteers

As it would appear that our Christmas season has been forced to draw to a close, the time has come to thank and acknowledge all of you for the part you have played in what has, despite everything, been an incredibly successful December.

It is very easy to sit in an office coming up with ideas and plans and composing list after list, but these plans are only achievable with a superb team to make it all work. And be in no doubt that in my eyes you are that superb team and then some.

I suspect many people think that all we have achieved has just happened by a flick of a switch (literally!) and are unaware of the endless hours, often in the dark and the wet and the cold, that have been put in to give us SteamLights and Santa this year. Be very sure that I am only too well aware of the dedication and effort that has been put in by each and every person concerned with Christmas this year.

We have been hit by many obstacles over this last year. I have lost count of the number of times we have had to go back to the drawing board and begin again.

To put on a brand-new event like SteamLights was a mammoth task in itself, never mind introducing Covid into the equation. We have managed to produce an exceptional event which can only grow into something even better next year. To date, I do not believe we have received a single adverse comment, which is an achievement in itself. It was a case of 'I think we can, I'm sure we can, I know we can, I knew we could'!

Social distancing put paid to our standard Santa offering, but the event that we were finally able to put on was little short of a miracle, made possible by an incredible effort on your part. We have received numerous letters of praise and thanks from customers for what we have achieved.

Every single department of Bluebell Railway has had an input into Christmas this year and without



Photos: Jack Lamb (top, bottom); Dave Bowles (centre)

you nothing could have been possible. You have my heartfelt thanks.

I wish you all a very happy and hopefully better New Year and I look forward to doing it all again next December.

Virtual Tours

The first of the interactive virtual tours of the Railway went live just before Christmas.

It gives people the chance to take a closer look at Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes station.

The [virtual tour](#) gives a 360-degree view and can be looked at on a desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile. Viewing is best on a big screen.

Initial views cover aerial views of the stations, inside SteamWorks!, a look inside the signal boxes, a subway tour at Horsted Keynes and the interiors of the waiting rooms.

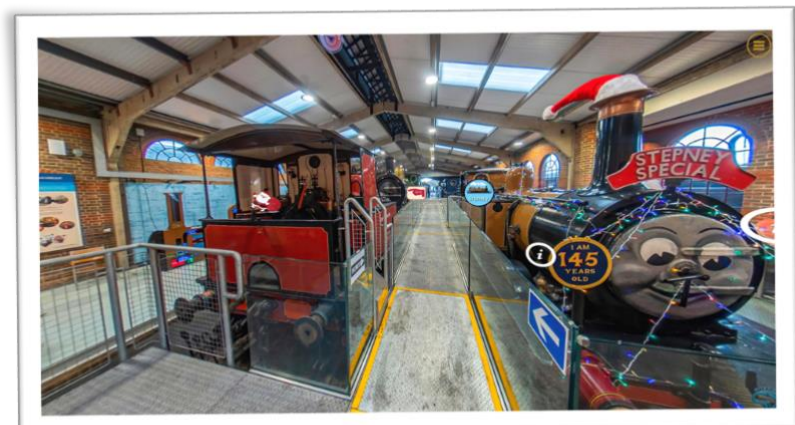
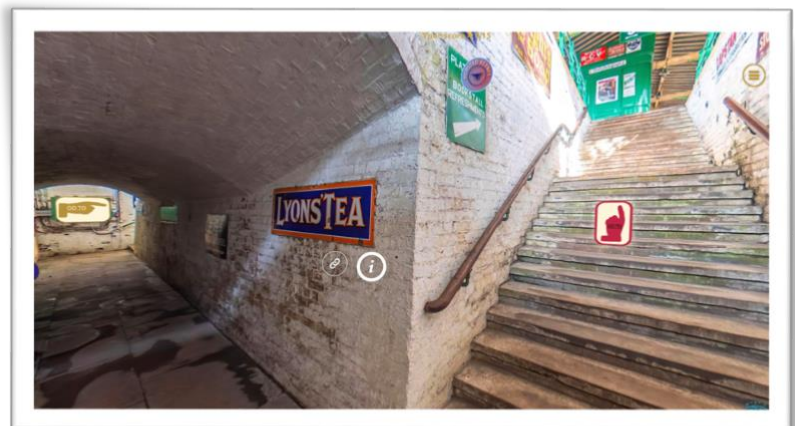
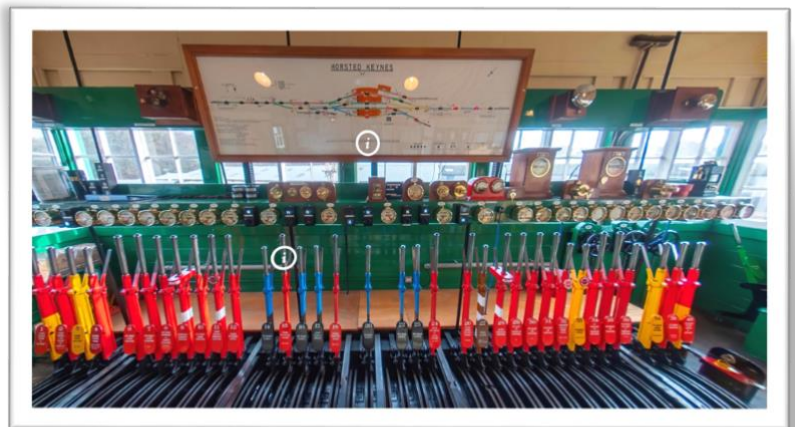
The first tour also has a festive theme with a hunt for 15 hidden Santas. There are text and audio information panels to provide more detail about some of the objects and items.

Marketing and communications manager Ruth Rowatt said: "It's been a difficult year for many people and not everyone has been able to visit the Bluebell Railway as planned. We wanted to create something that would bring the Railway to the visitor's home in an interactive way.

"We wanted to keep connected to our members, visitors and volunteers and thank them for their continued support. We wouldn't have reached our 60th birthday in August 2020 without them."

Funding for the project came from money in the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage grant awarded to the Railway to help with bouncing back from Covid. Further virtual tours are planned this year covering other areas of the Railway and with an update to the existing one.

The tours were produced by Stef van Vuuren of Stef's Photography.



News in Brief

NEW YEAR HONOUR

Picture by Forge Photography

Bluebell Railway volunteer Joanne Monck has been awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year honours.

Joanne works as an independent adviser and global LGBT advocate. She was given the award for services to transgender equality.

She spoke about her personal story in transitioning from male to female and the Railway's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in Episode 3 of the '[Volunteering On the Line](#)' videos produced last year by Forge Photography.

BLOG UPDATE

The popular Bluebell Railway blog has moved to a new web address and can be found on the BRPS section of the website at https://bluebell-railway.com/brps/whats_new/

The section also has updates from various departments including the locomotive works, carriage & wagon, and infrastructure.

Blog contributions should ideally include photos as well as words. The names of the photographers should be mentioned so that credit can be given and possibly used in wider publicity.

All contributions to the blog should be sent to blog@bluebell-railway.com

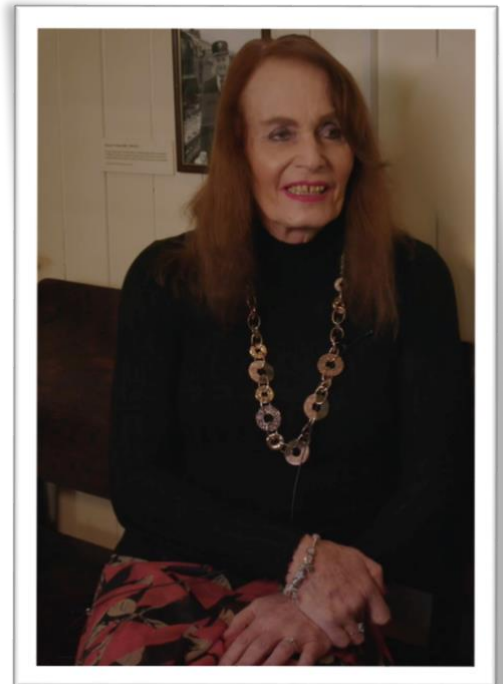
THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

By Trevor Swainson, funding governor, Bluebell Railway Trust

Each month, nearly 200 donations are received by standing order and, over the course of each year, these amount to over £60,000 with the addition, in most cases, of Gift Aid that is recovered making a grand total of in excess of £70,000. These donations are made for a whole range of restricted funds and are essential contributions to the many projects being undertaken.

In some ways, these donations are overlooked in the whole scheme of things but we would like to say a very big 'THANK YOU' to all those who have supported the Railway in 2020 and in many previous years.

If you would like to join this special group of donors, you can do so by contacting trevor.swainson@bluebell-railway.com. We'd love you to join us.



Good Times Just Around the Corner

In the last issue, a variety of people across the Railway set out their thoughts about the most positive aspect of 2020. Here are their wishes for 2021 – note that these wishes were expressed before the latest lockdown!

Robert Hayward, trustee, Bluebell Railway Preservation Society

A return to 'normal' train operations and being able to hold the '60+1' celebrations in August!

Barry Luck, infrastructure director

My most ardent wish for 2021 is for the Railway to get back to some sort of normality so that all volunteers are allowed, and feel able, to return to the Railway.

Graham Aitken, senior station master, Sheffield Park

That we are able to hold our 60+1 Anniversary Gala and the timetable Chris Knibbs and I created for Anniversary Weekend in 2020 will operate. This provides what, I think, will be the most intensive timetable we have ever operated with six trains

per hour at Horsted Keynes, with trains operating to/from Sheffield Park and to/from Kingscote and East Grinstead every 40 minutes, with locos running round their trains at Horsted Keynes throughout the day, meaning that there will always be something moving. Now that will be some celebration. Operations department volunteers, you have been warned!

Vernon Blackburn, Bluebell Railway Trust chairman

That after all the trials and tribulations of 2020, we greatly exceed our modest expectations for 2021.

Nick Comfort, leading porter/booking clerk, East Grinstead and Kingscote

That we shall be able to make up for lost time and host some really exciting special events, with unforgettable visiting locos and loads of visitors by rail as well as road.



Why we do it: for stirring sights like this – Maunsell S15 No. 847 hauling vintage goods wagons. Photo: David Cable

Five Minutes With ... Colin Chapman, Tim Gray and Ben Gray

Most of the 'Five Minutes With ...' interviews in *The Bluebell Times* have featured individuals. We have included one couple: footplate crew Mick Blackburn and Heidi Mowforth. Now we're going one better. In this issue we have three generations of the same family – Colin Chapman, his son-in-law Tim Gray and Tim's son Ben Gray – who give us their own perspectives on volunteering at the Bluebell Railway. They featured in one of the 'Volunteering On the Line' videos produced last year by Forge Photography which can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/AnPk76tbk1w>

Names and Roles

Colin Chapman – station master, weekend roster clerk, occasional operational supervisor cover and NVQ assessor

Tim Gray – driver, acting loco dept chief clerk, cleaners' roster clerk, Sheffield Park yard foreman

Ben Gray – passed cleaner

How long have you been involved with the Bluebell Railway?

Colin: just nine years

Tim: nearly eleven years

Ben: nearly nine years

How did you first become involved?

Colin: my son-in-law, Tim Gray joined the BBR in 2010 and one day in 2011 grandson Ben asked me if I would take him to the Railway to see his dad on the engines. Never having been to BBR and with no real interest in railways, I thought it might be a day out. When we got to Sheffield Park, Ben went off and I remember I stood in brilliant sunshine and chatted with Ron Sale and John Fiander both of whom were volunteers on the platform. I had a really good laugh and they told me what volunteering was all about and I thought to myself "I could do this" rather than sitting at home playing on a computer. I started on 13 November 2011 being met by the late John Griffith, Station Master, on my first day and the rest, as they say, is history.



Driver Tim Gray in the cab of 80151; Passed Cleaner Ben Gray centre; Stationmaster Colin Chapman right.
Photo: Forge Photography

Tim: I was introduced to Chris Knibbs through a mutual friend from my days at the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway. Following on from Chris joining me as a footplate passenger on a Bluebell social charter at the RH&DR, he arranged for me to spend a couple of days as a footplate passenger at the Bluebell, firstly on 1638 then a couple of years later on Sir Archibald Sinclair, and from that I became hooked on standard gauge.

Ben: my dad Tim was a cleaner in the loco department, and I joined the 9F Club when I turned nine. At 16 I joined the loco department officially.

What is/was your professional career?

Colin: HM Customs and Excise for 43 years

Tim: I run the family electrical contracting business

Ben: I'm currently in the final year of doing my A-levels. On my day off each week and during the school holidays I work with my dad in the family electrical contracting business.

What does your Bluebell Railway job involve?

Colin: Several bits really:

Station master – management of staff, making sure that they all enjoy the day and ensuring passengers all have a good time. Linking in to training volunteers in a number of competencies to be able to be promoted. I am also an NVQ assessor for the final promotion competency.

Weekend roster clerk – making sure there are enough volunteers on the platform

NVQ assessor for volunteers who have finished their competencies and wish to move to the next grade

Tim: my job(s) involve carrying out my rostered turns as driver or running foreman, compiling the roster for the crews in the loco dept, dealing with the inductions of the new recruit cleaners (pre-Covid, when we could have new recruits)

Ben: on footplate turns I'm responsible for lighting up, prepping and firing the locomotives. On non-footplate turns I clean the locos, as well as any other yard work which has to be done. Before

lockdown, after the locos had gone off-shed I'd help out with anything I could in the workshop, doing washouts on most weekends.

How often do you volunteer/work at the Railway?

Colin: it varies from week to week and it depends on vacancies or the meetings to attend. A good week, three or four times but others maybe just once a week.

Tim: pre-Covid, I would be at the Railway pretty much every Saturday, rostered or not

Ben: before lockdown it was every Saturday. Now, only when I get rostered, on average two or three days a month.

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

Colin: I was a member of Friends of Sheffield Park but had to give it up

Tim: when Ben was a 9F club member, I also volunteered as an adult helper with the 9F club

Ben: no

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

Colin: probably several but stick with "Old" because that was the one I had at work and I am ...

Tim: Mike Hawkins christened me "Fast Track", as I passed my driving test after volunteering for only eight years, and that is what has been stuck on my locker. But I dread to think of any other things that I may be known as ...

Ben: after my dad was christened "Fast Track" for progressing quickly, I was given the nickname "Half Track" for the same reason

What's the best part of your job?

Colin: being able to meet like-minded people, volunteers or passengers and being able to laugh and joke with them and ensure that they have a good experience at the Railway

Tim: getting to work on the locomotives

Ben: working with people who share the same interest as you, firing the locos, polishing the domes on the SE&CR locos

What's the worst part of your job?

Colin: none that I can think of being at the Railway, just the travelling to get there which is an hour each way

Tim: crawling up into the motion, oiling a loco, when it is dark and raining

Ben: I wouldn't say any job is particularly unenjoyable but doing ashpans at the beginning of the day or smokeboxes at the end are the least pleasant

What is your earliest train memory?

Colin: probably at a young age standing on a cold windswept platform somewhere collecting coach and engine numbers and going home and marking them off in the appropriate book

Tim: my grandparents had a holiday home that backed on to the RH&DR, and that is where my fascination for steam locos came from

Ben: probably seeing my dad on The Bug at the RH&DR on Christmas Eve one year. At the Bluebell my earliest memory is being offered the chance to go on the footplate of Eddystone in the station or standing next to one of the driving wheels of Blackmore Vale in the running shed.

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

Colin: I used to have one but space was needed for other things

Tim: no, but the mainline from Victoria towards the Kent coast runs at the bottom of my garden

Ben: yes

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

Colin: Numerous – being involved in the planning of Santa Specials, the visit of Flying Scotsman, Giants of Steam (9 for 9); assisting in the planning for Children in Need 2013 and then being given a five-minute warning that I was being interviewed



Tim (left) and Ben (right) in the cab of No. 73082 'Camelot'. Photo: Steve Loeber

live in a broadcast from the platform on national TV for Children in Need.

On 13 November 2011 I joined the railway. On 13 November 2013 I took part in a live broadcast for Children in Need. On 13 November 2020 I travelled on the first SteamLights test run.

Tim: on my first driving turn (a Sunday lunch Golden Arrow), which happened to be the day after passing my driving test, whilst the train was being unloaded before we could shunt the stock away, a member of the public asked me how long I'd been a driver. I looked at my watch and replied, "around 18 hours". I don't think she believed me ...

Ben: there are too many funny moments to list. Any day on the footplate or in the yard with decent people can be a laugh. Listening to stories in the mess room at teatime is also a great form of entertainment. The best thing that's happened to me is passing my firing test.

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

Colin: not being able to meet friends and colleagues at the Railway

Tim: not being able to enjoy the atmosphere of the loco yard

Ben: not being able to progress, not seeing some of the people and not having a laugh in the yard

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

Colin: preparing the rosters before the opening date and attended meetings. Station master on the platform.

Tim: I had my second-year re-assessment as driver on the first day of ghost train running, progressing from being a passed fireman to a driver

Ben: polished the dome on the O1

Anything else you want to tell us (hobbies, interests, achievements)?

Colin: at the moment DIY and Bluebell Railway. Also walking my three-year-old golden retriever Lucy. Achievement: I was "invited" to leave school before taking exams and now being at the Railway I have enjoyed being able to work through the various competencies to become a station master and passing the NVQ assessor course at the age of 69.

Tim: prior to getting involved with railways, in my late teens and early 20s, I competed in water ski racing at national level, becoming national champion in my class in 1998. Water ski racing is basically circuit powerboat racing, with skiers behind the boats.

Ben: in 2019 I won the Freddie Webb Award which is an award given to people who go above what is expected of them without anything in return. In mid-October last year I passed the final part of my firing test to become the youngest fireman (passed cleaner) on the Railway.

Santa On the Slide

Photo: Museumstoomtram Hoorn-Medemblik

Our twin railway in the Netherlands came up with a novel Covid-safe way for Santa to deliver presents to children visiting the venue.

Museumstoomtram Hoorn-Medemblik posted on Facebook that it was not possible for Father Christmas to hand over gifts in person. So they came up with the 'Santa slide' sending presents down a chute from mail luggage truck D 6 of the 1904 Friesian tram.

Unfortunately, the scheme lasted only one weekend because the museum had to close as part of a five-week lockdown in the Netherlands from 15 December. The museum said its rides had been sold out until 30 December and it was now working on a "beautiful and safe next season" for 2021.

Thanks to Bluebell Railway archivist Roger Price for alerting us to this story.



A Closer Look at ... No. 541

The Southern Railway always needed plenty of mid-sized, versatile mixed traffic locomotives, able to run on both goods trains and the secondary passenger duties. On the Southern Railway's Western Section – the lines radiating from Waterloo – a number of antiquated Adams "Jubilee" 0-4-2s handled many of those duties, concentrated at Eastleigh and Guildford sheds. By the late 1930s however, those locomotives were approaching fifty years old with withdrawal planned for 1938 – 1940. The railway's Chief Mechanical Engineer, R.E.L. Maunsell, therefore considered a more modern replacement that could handle the same duties. Originally a 2-6-0 design similar to the N class was considered, but with the railway's resources targeted at further spread of the electric network, a cheaper alternative was substituted. This then was the genesis of the Maunsell Q class. Maunsell himself retired before the first of the class was constructed, but ultimately twenty locomotives were built, appearing in 1938 and 1939.

The class worked efficiently, but with little fanfare, handling freight throughout the war years. No. 542 was caught up in enemy action resulting in significant shrapnel damage to the firebox. The boiler was repaired and, some years later, the boiler ended up on No. 541. The repaired damage was still clearly visible at the most recent overhaul of the locomotive.

When the end came in early 1965, No. 541 was towed to Woodham Brothers scrapyards at Barry. There it rusticated until 1974, when it was moved to Ashchurch in Gloucestershire following purchase by the "Southern Q fund". A start was made there on restoration to traffic; however, impending modernisation of the Gloucester to Cheltenham mainline made it clear that the loco might become trapped unless it could be moved. After some negotiation, the group moved to the Bluebell Railway in 1977, shortly thereafter merging into the Maunsell Locomotive Society.

At the Bluebell, the locomotive is a firm favourite with crews and enthusiasts alike, powerful enough to haul any train we routinely operate; but economic on lighter trains and with a few quirks to keep the crew on their toes. Maunsell's reputation was as a designer of reliable, unflashy, no-nonsense workhorses: in No. 541, the railway has a locomotive that perfectly encapsulates that philosophy, still doing what it was built to do over eighty years ago.



Photo: David Cable

NO. 541 IN FACTS AND FIGURES

Number	541, later 30541
Class	Q
Wheel arrangement	0-6-0
Built	1939 at Eastleigh Works by Southern Railway
Cylinders	Two, 19 ins diameter x 26 ins stroke
Boiler pressure	200 psi (pounds per square inch)
Tractive Effort	26,150 lbf
Length	53 ft 9 ½ ins
Weight in working order	90 tons 0 cwt
Driving wheel diameter	5 ft 1 ins
Coal and water capacity	5 tons coal, 3500 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.

Museum Morsel

Words by Tony Hillman, assistant museum curator, and Chris Wilson, museum archive
Pictures from Casserley collection

Henry Cyril Casserley and his son Richard are well-known photographers and many of their photographs have appeared in books. In December 2020, the second part of the auction of their railway negatives took place. The Bluebell Museum Archive managed to purchase some of the Southern negatives. The not insignificant cost was covered by individuals supportive of the Archive. These negatives will be scanned and catalogued to become part of the Archive collection with prints available for purchase.

Back in 'The Bluebell Times' issue 3 it was reported that the museum had purchased what was thought to be a tender plate from SE&CR Stirling F class built 1894 and rebuilt in 1906 as an F1. In 'The Bluebell Times' issue 5 it was confirmed the tender plate was from the locomotive as we had seen a photograph, but unfortunately at the time we could not publish the photograph because of copyright issues. That changes now as the negative is now part of the Archive, included in the Casserley purchase.

Enlargement of the tender number plate on Stirling F class No. 31 shown in H.C. Casserley's photograph and (right) the same plate as now preserved in the Bluebell Railway Museum.



THE BLUEBELL PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The Bluebell Photographic Archive gets many requests for photographs to use in publications. Three books using Bluebell Archive photographs have recently been published. Reproduction fees help to fund future purchases.

The books are:

- The Southern Way Special Issue No. 17. The Southern Railway Oil-Burning Engines: 1946 – 1951. Published by Crecy.
- Southern Electrics Scrapbook Volume 1. Published by Strathwood. An interesting selection of photographs including a 4-Cor electric unit at Horsted Keynes.
- Steam's Lament. Bulleid Light Pacifics. Published by Strathwood. 206 pages of pictures of Bulleid Pacifics, every engine included many in both original and rebuilt form.

These books can be ordered from the [Bluebell Railway shop](#).

Our range of photos currently available to purchase as prints or downloads can be found on the [Bluebell Railway museum website](#).



Two photographs of Stirling F1 class No. A31. Both photographs were taken by at Maidstone West on 3 December 1932 by H.C. Casserley.

The apparent change in tone on the tender is caused by water vapour preferentially condensing against the tender tank, thus clearly showing the relative proportions of space given to coal (front) and water (rear) on a Stirling tender – most of the tender is in fact water. A similar effect can often be seen on the Bluebell's own locomotives on cold, damp days.



On This Day, 8 January

By Tony Hillman, assistant museum curator

Two pictures from the Bluebell Photographic Archive taken on 8 January. Thanks to John Sharp, Martin Elms, John Creed and Roger Merry-Price for finding the pictures and providing the notes.



A misty Saturday morning on Platform 11, Waterloo station, 8 January 1966. Bulleid West Country class 34001 *Exeter* awaits its 09.20 departure on the "Last Steam Train to Exeter Central" rail tour. It will haul the train as far as Salisbury, where classmate 34015 *Exmouth* will take over. A group of enthusiastic photographers capture the usual front view of the loco: perhaps you can even spot yourself among them? Our view is rather more unusual and illustrates various of the boiler fittings etc, not usually seen in the standard shots. Also seen to advantage is the nameplate and accompanying City of Exeter shield, both of which had been removed from the other side of the locomotive.

The train was routed outwards via Havant and Eastleigh, with a one-hour stop at Salisbury, due to arrive in Exeter at 14.10. The return at 16.25 was booked for just over three hours, with *Exeter* taking charge once again at Salisbury, and running main line direct to Waterloo.

Photo: Barry Fletcher



Winchester Junction signal box, pictured on the very same day as the *Exeter* photo, 8 January 1966. It was misty here as well! This was the second box on the site, having opened in 1894 replacing the original provided in around 1871. The box seen here is of the "SW4" type, which was the LSWR company's standard design from the mid-nineties onwards, with more than 130 built and the last few examples not being completed until after the Grouping.

The line from Alton is on the right, and being a single line, it was worked by a token system. A platform for the signalman to stand on, to deliver the Tyer's No.3 Electric Tablet to, or receive it from, drivers can be seen built out around one-third up the box steps. On the far left is the stub of the wartime spur line which gave access for northbound trains to the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton line, reducing conflicting moves at Shawford Junction to the south. The points in the Up main line have already been recovered.

Electrification is in progress, conductor rails are lying in the ballast on the Southampton main line, and three impedance bonds are lying in the space between the main and branch lines, awaiting installation. Colour light signalling was introduced here on 13 November 1966, controlled from a new panel box at Eastleigh. Winchester Junction box was reduced to "ground frame" status, and finally closed on 25 March 1979.

Photo: John J Smith

In the On This Day feature in December's issue, the name of one of the locations for the photos was incorrect. This was a result of a production error. The correct caption should have read: "The 1.59 pm Pulborough to Midhurst branch train leaves the Mid Sussex line at Hardham Junction on 11 December 1954." We incorrectly named the location as "Hadham". Our apologies to the museum archive team.

Word Search

All the words this time are about the planned events for 2021.

There are some exciting new activities in store this year including the BrickWorks! Adventure, beer festivals, open air live music and a diesel gala as well as regular items including Road Meets Rail, Giants of Steam, SteamLights and Santa Specials.

All events are subject to change so please check details on the [website](#).

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.

H C E I M Y K R U I X A Y N M
 R Y U K W D W G B N J C I H H
 I K W N F O I F O Y O M D Y O
 A B A J R X B E T J O U Z F E
 Y L D K X R R P S C N S Q X G
 V F S L A V I T S E F I K Y O
 J M P Y X C C X P Z L C V R Y
 L E Z T H K K O G L X E C E A
 Z X M R R T N P I V J G V E K
 S C S E C Z U T K L N F A B L
 N W B B D M O W Q G B X D J I
 H I V I K D G N B Z K O E L V
 E R U T N E V D A C V K W R E
 S O Z B O G K W J G A L A Z C
 W R B H G V S B W N X G W L Z

BRICK
 WORKS
 ADVENTURE
 BEER
 FESTIVALS
 OPEN
 AIR
 LIVE
 MUSIC
 DIESEL
 GALA

SOLUTION TO WORD SEARCH IN ISSUE 15

A D I T N I Q O M O G W R V V
 O E F Z G B P L X W N X Q C L
 G Q I B U G M F R T V Q H N Y
 E G Z P N S Y L D M B R Y I S
 J C F R C C O A U Z I Z M P R
 K N U B O E M S T S Y Q R E L
 Y K U B U N T K T Y P A Y R U
 B N I U I E S M Z D Q M Z C M
 B L P R U Q A D F A H G O Y Q
 U A X P Y S M V C O N W Q P Y
 S W U V N Q O R X C O W K X Y
 H B D B F D H P F V E H I N O
 P H K M L S T N Z F J G T P Z
 J R A D N E L A C L E N V B I
 E L O N D O N U N Z N Y H R V

- ➡ Christmas
- ➡ Snow
- ➡ Bauble
- ➡ Scene
- ➡ Calendar
- ➡ London
- ➡ Hip
- ➡ Bus
- ➡ Flask
- ➡ Percy
- ➡ Thomas

Christmas Spot the Difference

By Chris Wilson, Bluebell Railway Museum Photographic Archive

In December's issue, we showed you a colour photo taken by Joe Kent at Brighton station in December 1975 and a different version with seven differences.

The seven differences were:



- ➡ Father Christmas is missing from bottom left
- ➡ Orange baubles changed to yellow
- ➡ Red bauble changed to blue
- ➡ The two passengers have gone for their train!
- ➡ Number 4 on platform gate changed to number 25
- ➡ Red squares in unit 7361 changed to black
- ➡ Left-hand number on unit 7723 is missing



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or feedback about this
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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](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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