



Camelot at the end of a day on Santa Special duty Photo: Ben Gray

The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

December 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome to the December issue of *The Bluebell Times*, the last of what has been another strange year for the Railway. For those of us in the operations department, it has swung from long months with no turns to suddenly working at a peak of intensity, struggling to cover the available turns and a near daily diet of emails asking for cover from sometimes depleted ranks.

With that background, signs of the way forward are always welcome. One such small sign is that, in the loco department, we have been asked for four-monthly availability for next year, rather than the monthly cycle of the last Covid period: a sign of stability in the planned service. At a more tangible level, Plc chairman Geoff Mee reports in his article on page 2 a number of positive developments, including recruitment into the C&W and catering departments, and plans for volunteer accommodation – both signs of a long-term faith in the Railway. There is also news of the volunteers' workshops to be held in the spring, with an invitation to sign up to one of three available sessions – see page 4.

The [Jewel in the Crown appeal](#) to provide funds to renovate Horsted Keynes station should also not be forgotten. Funding Governor Trevor Swainson has an update in this issue (page 3) of the latest appeal total towards the funds required for the initial phases of the project. Remember, there is still time to see your [donation doubled](#) with available match funding – so if you are a UK tax payer, a donation of £10 could be worth up to £22.50 to the project.

And with that, it just remains to wish a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our readers!

Tom James, Editor

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From Mee to You

By Geoff Mee, chairman, Bluebell Railway Plc

Christmas is just around the corner and Santa and SteamLights are in full flow, we sold everything that was on offer including dining specials and festive afternoon teas. I cannot say thank you enough to all the volunteers and staff that made this all possible, it has made a brilliant end to what has been a really tough year. To see the children coming down the road with their presents after their trip was a delight.

The Board meeting in November had a very full agenda, mostly concentrated on setting the budget for next year, which was agreed by all departments and with some good fortune should result in the Railway breaking even next year, thus creating some stability for the future.

The programme for next year will be shared with everyone in the next few weeks and will form the centrepiece of the presentations at the workshops that are being organised by Gordon Dudman in the closedown period. Details of the workshops are included on page 4 of this edition of *The Bluebell Times* and I am very grateful to Gordon for the work that he is doing to set these up and for the team that he is pulling together to make it happen. If you can make the dates, Society chairman Paul Churchman and I look forward to seeing you.

There were some significant decisions made at the board that I would like to share with you:

- ➔ We will reinstate trackside photography permits subject to the correct training and certification
- ➔ We will provide some temporary staff accommodation in one of the cottages. A more permanent solution is being worked on by Paul Churchman and the Sheffield Park team.
- ➔ We will be recruiting additional staff for Catering and Carriage & Wagon.
- ➔ We are having some success in attracting additional volunteers, and indeed have waiting lists for some roles.

At the January Board meeting we will be looking more to the future with a review of all of the projects that we are hoping to implement in the coming years.

So far all Directors have been preparing a 10-year asset management plan, especially looking at Locomotive, Carriage & Wagon and Infrastructure requirements.

Society trustee Roger Kelly has been working across the board to register all the projects that we can identify. We will then prioritise the projects to match the funding that we have available and then develop a comprehensive action plan for our future.

In parallel we will be looking to develop and agree a Vision and a Mission Statement for the whole of the Bluebell family, which along with our project plans will build our future and I want all our volunteers and staff to be part of defining our plans for the future.

To put the scale of this task in context there are some important statistics to consider:

- ➔ The Trust has 8 Governors
- ➔ The Preservation Society has 12 Trustees
- ➔ The Plc board has 12 Directors
- ➔ The Preservation Society has 10,000 members
- ➔ Over 800 people volunteer on a regular basis
- ➔ We had 143,000 visitors in our last full year

All of these statistics are important to the success of our Railway but the key to our future success is using all of our resources above to grow our visitor numbers year on year. I believe that a 20% increase over a two-to-three-year period is possible but it will need input and ideas from all of us to build the right environment to make that happen. The workshops in the New Year are an important part in making those ideas come to life.

I also want to highlight the great work that appeal co-ordinator Trevor Swainson and the Jewel in the Crown Team are doing to raise the funds to refurbish Horsted Keynes station. We are now nearly 90% of the way to the target; we need just a little more effort from all involved to raise the remaining funds in order that work can start in 2022. Remember that match-funding and Gift Aid is still available so please dig deep down the back

of the sofa to help Trevor's team make the grand total.

As we reach the final weeks before Christmas I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for everything that you have done for the Bluebell in this most difficult and uncertain times and to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a very prosperous New Year for the Bluebell and all your families.

Hip, Hip and Almost Hooray

By Trevor Swainson, Jewel in the Crown Appeal Co-ordinator

Great news! The 'Jewel in the Crown' Appeal is well on its way to reaching the minimum target of £170,000. A big 'thank you' to the hundreds of people who have responded so generously and provided the platform – no pun intended! – for the much needed restoration work to Horsted Keynes Station.

So far we have raised £138,916 from members, shareholders and friends of the Railway. Getting closer to our initial target of £170,000! A great response!

That is our minimum not maximum target and we hope that we can beat it by a considerable margin. Overall, the combination of the legacy from the

estate of the late Roger Williams, the grant from the Preservation Society and the matched funding from the Trust gives us a grand total to date of over £497,000, again not far short of our target of £540,000. These figures do not include Gift Aid to be recovered from HMRC that we estimate to be over £27,000.

So, if you have not managed to make a donation yet for whatever reasons, can we appeal to you now to help swell the funds up to and beyond our target. Remember, the Trust is matching funding on a pound-for-pound basis – so every pound donated is worth £2.25 to the Railway when Gift Aid is added. Importantly, every penny raised goes towards this vital restoration work.

HOW TO DONATE

To donate, you can:

- ➔ Go to www.bluebell-railway.com/donate/ – it is completely secure and no credit/debit card details are retained
- ➔ Make a direct Bank transfer to The Bluebell Railway Trust, Account Number : 61059056, Sort Code : 61-10-26. Please quote reference : [Surname]/JIC. Please let us know if you want to make a Gift Aid declaration.
- ➔ Send a Cheque payable to The Bluebell Railway Trust at Sheffield Park. Please quote reference : [Surname]/JIC. Please let us know if you want to make a Gift Aid declaration.

Thank you again to everybody for your support.



Volunteer Workshops in the New Year

By Gordon Dudman, workshops co-ordinator

Are you a volunteer? If you are, then your Railway needs you and your ideas.

It should come as no surprise to any of us, the last twenty months have been exceptionally difficult for our Railway.

Whilst our Gala Days have continued to draw in big crowds, our ordinary operating days are a very different story. Those of you volunteering on the front line will have noticed that the profile of our visitors has subtly changed over the past few years. Many of our visitors now tend to come just for a round trip on a steam train, on their way to somewhere else. We have gone from a situation where we were able to cover our basic operating costs (fuel and maintenance) on almost all our operating days, to one where this is sadly no longer the case.

Sixty years ago, many of our stalwarts were older teenagers and young adults; now many of us are retirees. Although we have worked hard to keep the Railway a safe place, for wholly understandable reasons, some volunteers continue to be hesitant to volunteer. Is there more we can do to support each other? Are there things, if they were done differently, which would boost volunteering time? What about our gF club, what more we can do to keep our gF Club members engaged and become working volunteers? Are there activities and skills we can offer to assist those that see the mainstream rail industry as a career?

One thing is certain, to remain a successful heritage-themed tourist attraction for another 60 years, we need to adapt and be something much more than an operator of heritage steam trains running 11 miles through the Sussex countryside.

If you volunteer and have some ideas on what we need to be doing and thinking – perhaps based on your own conversations with our visitors – we want to hear from you. We are looking to run some workshops, using our new facilities at Horsted Keynes, so that you can share and develop your ideas with fellow volunteers. All with the aim of helping us map out our future. We have allocated three Saturdays in the early part of next year; 29 January, 12 February and 5 March. Nominally all three days will follow a similar format starting at 10am and getting finished by 3:30pm. There is an expectation that this will lead to further small group meetings either in person on the Railway or using an online conferencing service such as Zoom.

Our employed staff have not been overlooked either; we are planning a session for them on Wednesday 2 February. We recognise that those working in our workshops are all vital to the delivery of our train services whilst others are frequently the only face-to-face contact we have with our customers using our catering trains and facilities.

HOW TO SIGN UP

If you would like to participate, please email Gordon.Dudman@bluebell-railway.com. It would help to know your preference as regards the three proposed dates:

- ➔ Saturday 29 January
- ➔ Saturday 12 February
- ➔ Saturday 5 March

Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Volunteer Review Update

By Graham Aitken, volunteer co-ordinator

And still potential volunteers make contact ... a staggering 91 by 27 November.

Whilst accepting that not all will progress through to becoming active volunteers, if only 50% do, that would still be an increase of 45 more volunteers since the end of September.

As a result, a couple of departments no longer have any vacancies and waiting lists have had to be opened in both the Signalling and Telecommunication departments, and a couple of others are approaching the same position.

Immediately after Christmas I will be asking all managers to let me have details of the establishment number of volunteers that they want for each of their departments/grades/groups so that I can begin to target specific vacancies. Before this can happen though, I will also need the managers to provide me with the number of current volunteers in those roles, including names and contact details, which should of course be readily to hand.

Looking beyond to 2022, exciting developments are being worked up by my Volunteer Review colleagues personnel and admin manager Lisa Boyle and Society vice-chairman Steve Bigg and I hope that I will be able to share our thoughts in the January edition of *The Bluebell Times*.

As this will be my last update before Christmas, I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has helped me to make the review get off to such a flying start: take a bow, or curtsy, and have an extra mince pie as you have deserved it.

I wish all readers, and editors, of *The Bluebell Times* the compliments of the season and, if you find yourself with more free time next year, why not make a New Year's Resolution to volunteer in an additional role in order to enjoy yourself even more.

If you are not sure which role to choose, just contact me at volunteer.coordinator@bluebell-railway.com

News in Brief

ULTIMATE ELTON JOHN

Readers may recall our report last month on the visit of an Elton John tribute band to the museum photo-opportunity recreating the singer's 1970 'Tumbleweed Connection' album.

Sheffield Park station porter Sally Nicholls was on duty when the Ultimate Elton cover band turned up and sent us this photo of the band's singer sitting in the same spot as the superstar 51 years on.

Thanks, Sally. And it seems to me, this Elton John enjoyed his visit as much as the original one.



Photo: Sally Nicholls

NEW FOOTBRIDGE AT EAST GRINSTEAD MAINLINE STATION

Network Rail has announced it is providing a new footbridge and lifts at East Grinstead mainline station.

It says it is investing £4.6m at East Grinstead so that there is step-free access. NR has issued a computer generated image of what the footbridge will look like.

Similar work will take place at Crowborough station to make the two locations easier to use for passengers with accessibility needs.

As can be seen from the pictures, the Bluebell has currently lost its car parking facility for the duration of the construction work.

However, working with the contractor, Network Rail and GTR, an agreement has been reached whereby on Bluebell operating days, 4 disabled parking spaces are provided outside the Southern Railway Station

Signage has been provided for the safe walking route.

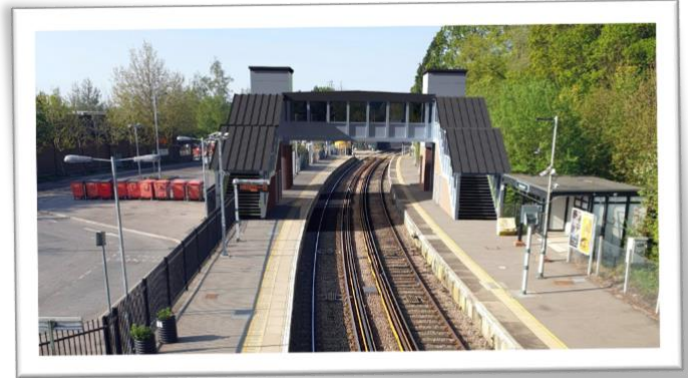
In return, it has been agreed that the Bluebell car park will be fully restored and relined.

NEW IT DIRECTOR APPOINTED

Just as we went to press, it was confirmed that Nigel Page had been appointed to the role of IT Director. We'll carry a full introduction in the next issue of *The Bluebell Times*.

SHEFFIELD PARK DEPARTURE BOARDS

In the last issue of *The Bluebell Times* we showed pictures of new departure boards at Sheffield Park. The boards were designed and expertly produced by pattern making volunteer Richard Tanton, who also waived any production charges.



(Above) Computer-generated image of the proposed footbridge at East Grinstead mainline station. Image: Network Rail

(Below) Two views of the construction work adjacent to the Bluebell station. Both photos: Roy Watts



Christmas Message

By Father David Murdoch, Bluebell Railway chaplain

Recently some children from St Giles Church School, here in Horsted Keynes, very much enjoyed visiting the Railway to meet the author Dame Jacqueline Wilson and hear more about her new book 'The Primrose Railway Children'. I hope to read the book soon, and understand it is an updating of the original book. 'The Railway Children' was, and remains, one of my favourite films, and I often shed a tear when Bobbie is at last reunited with her beloved father on the Oakworth platform. I was growing up in Lancashire when it was released, and familiar with the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, and Bronte Parsonage at Haworth, where it was filmed.

So much of human life is there: a family divided and reunited, wealth and poverty, false accusation and imprisonment, moving to a new and very different environment, getting to know and being helped by people such as Mr Perks, the Doctor and the old gentleman. The ups and downs of family life, celebration of birthdays, sibling rivalry, a brave act of rescue on the line, the beginnings of teenage romance, kindness and care for a Russian refugee. There is little explicit mention of faith, except when Bobbie's mother suggests she remember 'all prisoners and captives' in her prayers.

Some of these aspects of family life will be familiar to many of us. Others, perhaps, more removed from our experience but still very contemporary: the courage and bravery of hospital staff, emergency services and all who have been sustaining us through the pandemic. The arrival of refugees on our shores, fleeing from oppressive regimes. The Holy family themselves fled into Egypt to escape the cruel persecution of King Herod.

For Christians, Christmas speaks of a God who is not remote and removed, but rather in Christ, shared in our humanity, with all its joys and sorrows.

'He was little, weak and helpless, tears and smiles like us he knew; and he feeleth for our sadness, and he shareth in our gladness'.

Whether we feel sorrow, joy, or a mixture of the two this Christmas, may such faith help us to deeper celebration and sustain us in the year ahead.

With my prayers and very best wishes.

Fr David



Maunsell S15 No. 847 takes the 12:45 Santa Special service from Sheffield Park on Sunday 28 November 2021, co-incidentally with The Bluebell Times' editor as fireman.

Photo: Peter Edwards

Five Minutes With ... Mike Hopps

Name

Mike Hopps

Role

Society infrastructure Trustee, filming liaison officer and regular infrastructure volunteer

How long have you been involved with the Bluebell Railway?

Twelve years

How did you first become involved?

Trains have been an interest for as long as I can remember and probably had something to do with holidays spent with my grandparents in Wales, where both the former Cambrian line and the Vale of Rheidol ran through their village. They always knew where to find me at supper time – I would be down at the crossing being entertained by 'Eccles the Box'. Hard to believe these days, but I can only have been about ten when I was winding the gate wheel, accepting trains from Bow Street and pulling off the Aberystwyth outer home!

I first started volunteering on the Welshpool and Llanfair at weekends back in 1965 when I was still at school, travelling down from Liverpool in an old, converted ambulance driven by a local dentist. I also visited the Bluebell that year and again in 1967, but I really got to know the place when I started in my first teaching post at East Grinstead in 1971. Over the years I visited many times taking many photographs, but pressure of work, family and keeping old cars on the road precluded any opportunity to volunteer.

The push to get the Railway back to East Grinstead happily coincided with my retirement in 2009 and with more time on my hands I decided that now was a good opportunity to do what I had wanted to do for years. Having contacted the Railway, I thought long and hard about where my practical skills would be best used and despite my background, I decided on Infrastructure.



Mike Hopps by the latest new rail-built signal post at Horsted Keynes.

Workshops beckoned, but after living in workshops for the best part of forty years I thought a bit of fresh air would do me good. I think I made the right choice.

What was your professional career?

In 1967 I travelled down from Liverpool for an interview via Birmingham, Reading and Basingstoke; finally arriving in Winchester on what must have been one of the last steam services on the line before electrification. The following year I started my teacher training in what is now Winchester University, learning my 'trade'! A very intensive three-year course followed and because it was a double main subject, 'Handicraft', as it was known then, required you to follow Wood and Metal courses in equal measure as well as Technical Drawing, Graphics, Design, Jewellery-making and Silversmithing. I also followed the Music course for two years, but with the pressure of finishing practical assignments in the final year I simply didn't have enough time to complete the Music qualification.

In 1971 I started teaching at Imberhorne School in East Grinstead, mostly specialising in Metalwork



First workshop at Imberhome School, 1971

but with odd classes of Woodwork and Technical Drawing in the Middle School. After three years and excited by the prospect of a change of scene, I applied and was accepted on a teacher exchange programme and spent the 74/75 academic year teaching in an American High School in California. Arriving in Washington DC with ninety other teachers, I was the only one going to the west coast who took the train rather than a much quicker flight. Three days on the train, travelling first from Newark behind a Penn Central GG₁, then on by various connections to Kansas City where picking up an Amtrak Southwest Chief transported me to the Golden State. The High School experience in a small desert town where the average summer temperature was over 100 degrees was something of a culture shock, but nevertheless very rewarding – and I did a lot of travelling as well during weekends and holidays. Mexico City by train at Christmas, Coast Starlight back from San Francisco on Veterans Weekend as well as Canadian National Railroad through the Rockies at the end of the year.

Once back in the UK, I moved on and was appointed Head of Technology at Robertsbridge Community College. I was also Examinations Officer there organising entries and exam supervision as well as running ski trips, making sets for productions and running the website. Over the years the Technology curriculum changed. I took courses in conversion to CAD, Micro Electronics and computer programming but retained practical skills-based work, even though as early as 1980 Robertsbridge was probably the

first school in the county to have computers in the workshops. Having learned to type years before, it was a fairly easy transition to writing programs and I soon started developing software which I published myself for workshop teaching and learning. For various personal reasons I decided to stay in East Sussex and finally retired from Robertsbridge after thirty-one interesting and very successful years.

What does your Bluebell Railway job involve?

Anything and everything in Infrastructure – we don't have pet projects, but I usually get the metalworking jobs. I also help the S & T Department making signal posts, repairing old lamps, occasional welding jobs and I am currently involved with experimental work on hydraulic signal motor installations.

How often do you volunteer at the Railway?

Generally, one day a week, but I also work at home on various projects in my own workshop. Most of the replacement parts for the Generator van BY404 restoration were made there as well as rebuilding the droplights, periscopes and making the fan unit. I also manage the filming website, create the odd poster for events and keep a photo archive. Since becoming a trustee I spend a lot more time on paperwork, meetings and emails!

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

I am a filming liaison officer, which involves dealing with the train operation when filming takes place. While working, we act as a link between the location manager, first assistant director (who runs the shoot) and other Railway staff like drivers, signalmen, guards and shunters. We also have a critical Health & Safety role to keep film crews safe when they are working, particularly if on the lineside and away from stations.

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

I don't think so, but there are usually jokes about where I come from.

What's the best part of your job?

Undoubtedly having friendly and helpful colleagues to work with. The banter and camaraderie whatever the weather when working lineside keeps you going. When you retire from teaching, you lose the atmosphere and black humour of the staff room – volunteering at Bluebell has more than made up for that.

What's the worst part of your job?

Having to tell a film director that what he wants to happen in the next five minutes when he suddenly changes his mind about train movements is probably going to take at least an hour to organise!

What is your earliest train memory?

There are so many, difficult to say which came first; but I remember travelling with my father on the Liverpool Overhead Railway when I was about five or six. I can actually date that because it closed in 1956. Also travelling by train on holiday to Wales and London where my cousins lived – taking suitcases down to the local station on the handlebars of Dad's bike for sending luggage in advance!

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

Started with a TT layout back in the Fifties, then a member of an 'O' gauge club in the sixties and after a lapse of fifty years I am finally starting again in 'N' gauge American. Long standing friends from back home joke about me modelling in Standard Gauge at Bluebell.



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

One thing that comes to mind is that on the morning of the first public train south from East Grinstead in March 2013 I was in Imberhorne cutting on security duty. It was snowing hard and conditions for photography were diabolical. However, when Birch Grove came through, I took a few shots not expecting anything useful, but was later rewarded when my photo graced the front cover of the May issue of Railway magazine.

What is the biggest challenge facing the Bluebell Railway?

Having sufficient funds in the bank to sustain operations and wages, if and when we have the next crisis. Unfortunately, ticket sales alone cannot support what we have become and so it is vital that we earn revenue from every commercial opportunity that doesn't affect the heritage aspect that is our principal function.

Do you have a favourite locomotive/carriage/wagon/era? If so, explain why.

It won't go down well on here, but my favourite loco is 7822 Foxcote Manor. Travelled behind it on the Cambrian Coast Express when going on holiday to Wales back in the Fifties, but then got to drive it on a Clive Groome course at Llangollen. Bucket list or what?

Anything else you want to tell us?

Lifelong interest in photography – started in the darkroom with my father from an early age. Completely addicted to designing and making things, sometimes in wood, but mostly in metal. Anything from gold jewellery to buffer stops; but seeing something that I invented and on sale in shops, always brings a smile. Skiing is my only form of exercise apart from gardening and working lineside. Playing theatre organs when I get the chance is a lot of fun.

A young Mike Hopps at Devil's Bridge station, Vale of Rheidol Railway, early 1950s.

Museum Morsel

Words and museum photo by Tony Hillman, assistant museum curator



The *Remembrance* Nameplate and plaque has been put on display in the Museum. We are grateful to Laurie Marshall who made the acquisition possible.

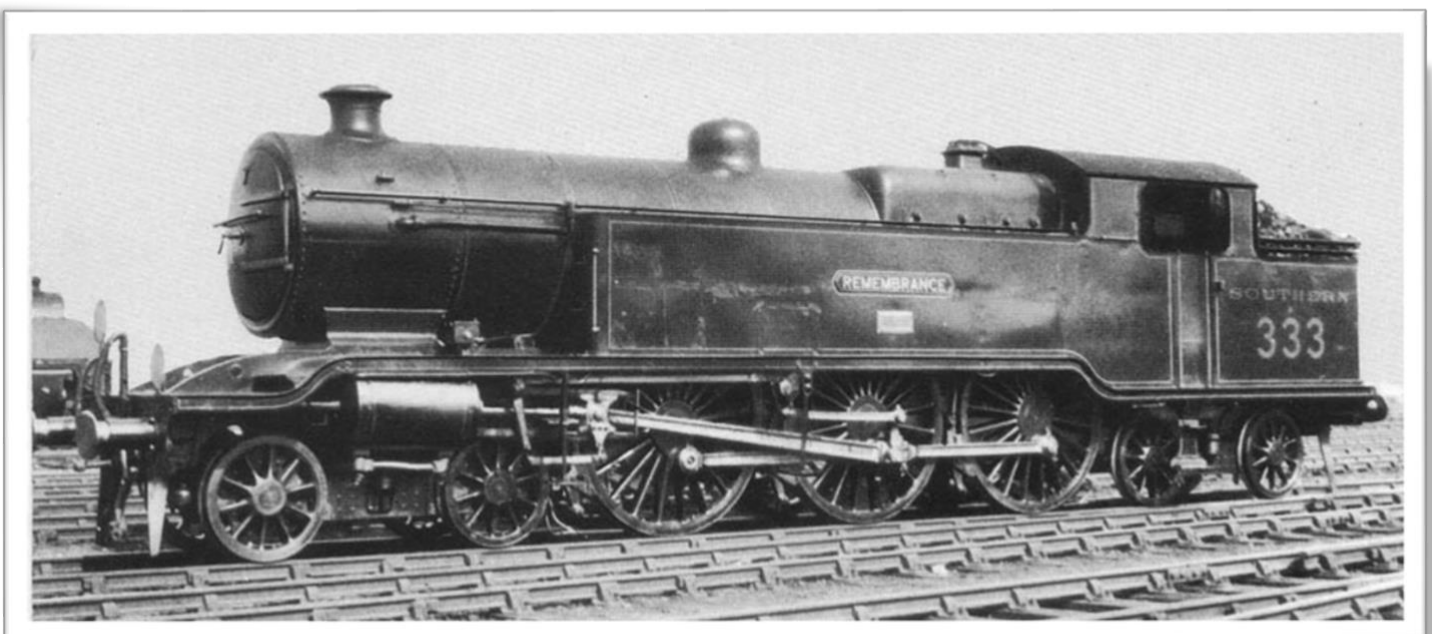
The locomotive *Remembrance* entered service with the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway in April 1922. It was the last locomotive built by the company, and was named in memory of the staff who died in World War 1. In March 1923 the displayed plaque was fitted with the name *Remembrance* painted on the side tanks.

The plaque states "In Grateful Remembrance of the 532 men of the L.B.&S.C. Rly who gave their lives for their Country. 1914-1919."

When the locomotive was overhauled by the Southern Railway in February 1926 the displayed nameplate was fitted as in the picture of No. B333 shown below.

Known as 'Baltic Tanks' they worked mainly on the London to Brighton main line. Following electrification, they worked between London and Eastbourne. All the 'Baltic Tanks' were rebuilt by the Southern Railway into tender engines, *Remembrance* being modified in June 1935. The nameplate on display was removed at that time to be replaced by a Southern Railway style version.

Former LB&SCR L class No. 333 'Remembrance', taken in early SR days.
Source: Wikipedia / Public Domain



MORE PHOTOGRAPHS FOR SALE ON THE MUSEUM WEBSITE

Over 500 new images have been added to the Museum website, taking to total to 12,935. The new images are more from the Joe Kent collection and 300 from John Scrace.

John was an active volunteer for the Bluebell Railway Museum Archive up until late 2019. It was his wish that his collection of around 15,000 photographs, negatives and slides be donated to the Museum Archive on his death. John died in 2020. Although John did not produce a catalogue all the details are meticulously recorded in John's unique handwriting on each item.

John Scrace was born in Horsham in 1933 and his railway career started in 1953 shortly after being demobbed from national service in the RAF where he was based at Headquarters Bomber Command, High Wycombe. He was accepted for an appointment at Horsham but started at Nine Elms. Going on to hold administration roles at Waterloo and regional offices. Earlier retirement came when it was offered in the mid-1980s.

John's railway photographing started in the early 1950s and it was towards the end of that decade when it became a more prominent part of his life. John took nearly four thousand photographs of signal boxes and stations, the last recorded in 2005. John was a prolific photographer of steam & diesel locos and EMUs, almost all on the Southern network. He also photographed preserved railways across the UK and overseas.

To access the photograph collection go to www.bluebell-railway-museum.co.uk and click on the Archive tab. There are various searching methods, including by locomotive number or class and location. Content key search allows you to see all the images of a particular type, for example, all the images containing Pullmans. Use the New key to see all the latest images.



Location [Winchester City Station](#), 27 August 1963.

Pickfords warehouse can be seen in the distance.

The locomotive is [Adams B4 No. 30096](#), formally LSWR No. 96 'Normandy'.

It is carrying a 71A (Eastleigh) shedplate and was withdrawn 6 October 1963. It was used at a private wharf in Southampton, before being purchased by members of the Bluebell Railway where it is now preserved and on display in SteamWorks!.

Photo: John Scrace

On This Day ... 10 December

By Tony Hillman, assistant museum curator

Three pictures from the Bluebell Photographic Archive taken on 10 December. Thanks to Martin Elms, John Creed, Richard Peirce, Roger Merry-Price and Chris Wilson for finding the pictures and providing the notes.

This month features two images from photographer David Esau who has generously donated his negatives to the Bluebell Museum Archive. These are currently being digitised and will be added to the Museum website early next year, more information will follow in a future edition of The Bluebell Times.



On Saturday 10 December 1960, the time is approaching 2pm and King Arthur (N15) Class No. 30777 *Sir Lamiel* has just arrived at Basingstoke with the 12.39pm semi-fast passenger train from Waterloo. Based at Basingstoke Shed, the loco had gone up earlier in the day on Duty 233 with the 9.04am to Waterloo. Now, at the back of the train, another locomotive is about to remove the carriages and release 30777, its day's work completed.

Built by North British of Glasgow, No. 30777 entered traffic in June 1925. It was part of a batch of thirty N15 Class engines, known as 'Scotch Arthurs', originally designed by Robert Urie but modified by Richard Maunsell, the Southern Railway Chief Mechanical Engineer, for express passenger duties. From new it was allocated to the Western Division of the Southern Railway and was principally used on expresses to Bournemouth and Exeter, including the Atlantic Coast Express.
[cont ...]

In 1951 it was reallocated to the Eastern Division and was based at Dover Marine Shed until June 1959. A short spell was then spent at Feltham until in October 1960 it went to Basingstoke, where it was a popular engine, until withdrawn in October 1961 for scrap. However, as the original locomotive chosen to represent this class as part of the National Collection

(No. 30453 *King Arthur*) was found to be severely damaged, No. 30777 was selected to replace it.

After many years in store, the locomotive was restored to main line running and is currently on the Great Central Railway awaiting an overhaul, due for completion in 2023.

Photo: David Esau



A little later on the same afternoon, Schools (or V) Class 4-4-0 No. 30912 *Downside* arrives at Basingstoke on the Down Local line, rattling over the connections from the ex-Great Western branch from Reading. The train is the 1.24pm Waterloo to Salisbury, composed of the booked 5-coach Bulleid set. As indicated on one of the headcode discs, it is operating Nine Elms Duty 11, an out and back turn to Salisbury, returning on a milk train at 10.22pm, although that train had originated at Sidmouth Junction. The rear of the train has just passed Basingstoke 'A' box, formerly the LSWR East box. The 1.24pm was "non stop" from Farnborough to Basingstoke, the intermediate stations being served by the 12.39pm from Waterloo, seen in our previous photo. From Basingstoke, the 1.24pm was "all stations" to Salisbury.

The Schools Class was designed by Maunsell and 40 were built at Eastleigh between 1930 and 1935; from mid-1931 the class became the mainstay of the Tonbridge to Hastings line with its restricted loading gauge. Allocated to St Leonards and Bricklayers Arms sheds they were finally replaced by Hastings diesels in 1957/8. Pre-war the class also saw service, until electrification, on the Eastbourne and Portsmouth lines, as well as the Bournemouth and Kent Coast lines. In the post-war years the whole class was allocated to Central and Eastern Division sheds. No. 30912 was reallocated from Ramsgate to Nine Elms in May 1959, rendered surplus to requirements there by Phase 1 of the Kent Coast electrification.

Photo: David Esau



Itchingfield Junction was the point where the northern end of the Steyning line joined the slightly older Mid Sussex line, opening to traffic in October 1861. The original signalbox here was a Saxby "box on stilts", just north of the junction on the west side of the line.

By 1920, the original box was in need of replacement. Since 1898 the LBSCR had been building a new standard style of signalbox, designated LB 3a and LB 3b, many of which were required for the widening of the Main Line as far south as Balcombe Tunnel. Most of these were completed in the years up to 1914, plus a handful during World War 1. There were over 110 such boxes, but by the end of the war this design too was dated and the LBSCR came up with a totally new pattern, which had the innovation of an inside staircase. Cooden (opened 1919), Bromley Junction and Itchingfield Junction (both October 1920) were the only three LB 4 boxes built, all in brick throughout. Cooden and Bromley Junction were both provided with windows at the front and the lever frame in the rear of the box, as was by

now standard practice. But Itchingfield Junction was unique in that it had the frame more central in the box, with operating floor windows on all four sides. It stood in the vee of the junction, thus giving the signalman an excellent view of both main line and branch trains as they approached him.

As one might expect, the Grouping led to the Southern Railway standardising on a new box design for the entire network. Unusually this was based on a SECR pattern, rather than the usual SR policy of "ex-LSW is best", but either way no more LB 4 boxes were built. Itchingfield Junction closed along with the branch south to Beeding on 7 March 1966. The photograph was taken on 10 December in the same year, the view being westwards across the branch, with the main line behind the box.

Photo: John J Smith

What's On

Friday 10 December 2021 – Thursday 13 January 2022

Information is correct at time of going to press but subject to change. Full details at <https://www.bluebell-railway.com/timetables-and-calendar/>

Please check the website for any updates.

SEASONAL SERVICES

Friday 10 December – Saturday 8 January (Wednesdays to Sundays) [SteamLights](#)

Saturday 11 December – Friday 24 December (weekends until 19 December then daily from 21 December) [Santa Specials](#)

DINING TRAINS

Wednesday 15 December [Festive Afternoon Tea](#)

Thursday 16 December [Festive Afternoon Tea](#)

Friday 17 December [Festive Afternoon Tea](#)

Monday 20 December [Festive Afternoon Tea](#)





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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.

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