



No. 65 on a demonstration goods train Photo: David Cable

# The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

February 2022

## IN THIS ISSUE

This issue of *The Bluebell Times* is published on the eve of the new season. From tomorrow – assuming you are reading this on publication date – public services resume, with a half-term ‘kids for a quid’ offer and even a temporary ice skating rink at Sheffield Park. More significantly, after a two-year hiatus, Pullman dining trains resume, long both a core part of the Railway’s financial model, and an opulent way for diners to be transported back to an age of 1920s elegance.

The line may have had a six-week long break in public trains, but there has been plenty going on, with more track laying at Lindfield Wood – ‘closing the gap’ in new track which now extends from the foot of Freshfield Bank all the way to Horsted Keynes. There has also been significant progress on both the mechanical and boiler overhaul of ‘Fenchurch’, reported in this issue: our oldest locomotive reaches the ripe old age of 150 this year. When it returns to traffic, it will be amongst the oldest operational locomotives in the world.

The first of the planned volunteer workshops also took place in January (two more are planned – see pages 4–6 for details). Jointly led by the Plc and Society chairmen, this was an excellent opportunity to discuss how we want the Railway – our Railway – to progress. A developing theme, made clear by how we weathered the pandemic, is for the railway to become more resilient, which means having the people, rolling stock, infrastructure – and money – to deliver what it says it will. The opportunity is now to help shape that future.

Tom James, Editor

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# From Mee to You

By Geoff Mee, chairman, Bluebell Railway Plc

I hope that everyone is fit and healthy and that we can start to put pandemic issues behind us. As we approach the start of the 2022 services and events on the Bluebell with lots of exciting events for the half-term break, including for the first time an ice skating event at Sheffield Park, advance tickets are going well.

The locomotive footplate experience sessions also sold out in days and we will look at how to expand this offer in the coming months.

Sometimes you get an unexpected surprise and that is just what happened at our first Volunteer Workshop on 29 January at our brand new conference venue at Horsted Keynes. Preservation Society chairman Paul Churchman and I led the day and were supported so well by Gordon Dudman and his volunteer team. Just to say that the input from all who attended was brilliant. Many people had not met before but really engaged with some great discussions and produced some great outcomes.

I am not yet going to share the ideas that came out of this, our first workshop, as we have two more lined up for 12 February and 5 March, a few slots are available for the later date and this will be the last formal chance to influence future plans this year, but the success of the first one would suggest that some form of annual event during the closed season would be welcomed by the volunteers.

When we have had all the sessions, Gordon, Paul and I will share the outputs with you as they will form a big input into our strategic Business Plan which is being re-launched by the Policy and Strategy group, being set up by Steve Bigg with input from the Trust, Society and the Plc, designed to produce a single, comprehensive view of our strategic Future Plans. This will align with a prioritised Project Strategy being developed by the Capital Projects Steering Group. We can then all engage with our Project teams to deliver the agreed plans.

One of the key objectives going forward is to grow the number of visitors to the Bluebell especially at times that we don't have major events on.

We spent a great deal of time, effort and money getting to East Grinstead but we have not made great strides in attracting the London market for a really great day out. One of the major obstacles is not having a really good station interchange at East Grinstead to engage with this market, which is why senior station master Roy Watts and his team are working on plans to improve this major gateway.

The other major obstacle is our timetable of services from East Grinstead to Sheffield Park that enables people to spend more time exploring the whole range of what the Bluebell has to offer at all of our stations. We need an earlier train from EG meeting a Southern service which leaves Victoria about 09.00 for a departure from EG before 10.30.

This means loco and empty coaching stock from SP earlier than at present which would mean very, very early sign-on times for train crew to prepare a steam loco to match the service (it takes 3 hours ± to fire up and prep a steam loco). We are looking at utilising a diesel for our first service to reduce this pressure with steam locos taking pride of place for the core trains of the day. The teams are working this up now and more detailed news will follow shortly. We will be launching a major push on marketing to the London market in the coming months and we will communicate what this means as plans are firmed up.

Another significant item that came up at the board last month was the decision to launch the project to build the Miniature Railway in the picnic area at Sheffield Park. This follows on from the successful planning application announced last month

We have a great project team being pulled together under the leadership of infrastructure director Barry Luck as the project sponsor. There will be much more detail about this exciting project in the next issue of *The Bluebell Times*, but

we want the 9F club to be heavily involved in its construction and ultimately in its operation. What a great training for our next generation of Bluebell volunteers. It will also be a great interface for STEM training with local schools and colleges. We are hoping to announce a new 9F headquarters to take on this major initiative somewhere at Sheffield Park.

One more item which is causing some concern is our energy consumption. Firstly the cost and supply of coal for the locomotives – the price has already increased significantly in the last year and there are fewer suppliers in the market which means that we are having to source our supplies from further afield, our team is working hard on sourcing reliable stock.

The Bluebell is not exempt from general increases in other energy costs for electricity and gas. It's

affecting bills at home and the Railway is also being hit hard with increased costs and we need everybody's help to identify where we can make savings and reduce consumption. Please help by turning off heating and lighting when not needed and suggestions as to how we can further reduce costs would be very much welcomed.

In conclusion I want to say thanks to all of the team that has planned this year's calendar of events which kicks off next week for half-term and the start of the dining train season. Spread the word that it is going to be a great year for events and that more tickets are being added to the [website](#) each week. Many of these sell out quickly so encourage everybody to get in early.

It's going to be a busy year and I want to thank everybody in advance of what will be a busy and fun packed schedule.

## Jewel in the Crown Update

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

The '[Jewel in the Crown](#)' Appeal has now been running for four months and, thanks to the generosity of everyone who has made a donation, we have now reached the magnificent total of £590,000 from nearly 1,000 donors.

Work on the essential repairs at Horsted Keynes Station will be starting at the beginning of March.

The first phases of the work will concentrate on the Station House and platform and, subject to the availability of funds, the work will then continue on to Platforms 3 & 4. There will need to be a bit of a juggling act to cope with the operations of the Railway but, generally speaking, work will continue until October and then re-commence in the Spring of 2023.

### HERITAGE RAILWAY ASSOCIATION RECOGNITION

Just as we went to press, we heard that the 'The Jewel in the Crown' appeal to restore Horsted Keynes station has been shortlisted for an HRA award in the category of "Most Innovative Fundraising Idea". The awards ceremony will held on 19 March – fingers crossed for Trevor and the team! – *Ed*.



# Volunteer Workshops

Words and photos by Paul Bromley, communications director, Bluebell Railway Plc

“You’re all part of the solution” – that was the clear message to volunteers from Plc chairman Geoff Mee at the first feedback workshop.

The event brought together approximately more than 30 volunteers from across different departments of the Railway to the conference suite in the Heritage Skills Centre at Horsted Keynes station on Saturday 29 January.

Refreshments on arrival combined with conversation and chatter as people introduced themselves to each other before the formal workshop began.

Geoff and Preservation Society chairman Paul Churchman – supported by Trust chairman Vernon Blackburn – set the scene for the first event of this kind to be held during their time in their respective roles.

Geoff said at the outset there would be a focus in 2022 on locomotives and volunteers before “going big time for proper growth” next year.

“We want you to help Paul and I and the Trust to identify what the next phase of the Bluebell is going to be,” he said.

Paul told those present: “We are as one, we are one family and we have one aim: to preserve what we have and our history and for everyone to enjoy your hobby.”

He added: “We don’t have all the answers. There are 10,000 members and we want you to feed into the business plan. It must be a plan we have all signed up to and that we have all played a part in.”

The two chairmen set out their ambitions for the next three years – a 20% growth in the business from the Plc and an increase in membership from 10,000 to 15,000 from the Society.

The rest of the morning was spent in small groups looking at a series of questions – what it meant to be the best heritage railway in the UK, the role of



## VOLUNTEER VIEW

Brian Anderson, volunteer signalman

*I had no preconceptions about what the day was going to incorporate as I had just been asked to assist Gordon.*

*The day started very well with a presentation by Geoff Mee and Paul Churchman outlining their vision and aspirations for the future of the Bluebell, and what they wanted to get out of the workshops that we were partaking in.*

*It was great to see so many volunteers.*

*We had more than 30 volunteers attend the workshop from all ranges of all departments within the railway and it was great to meet so many different people.*

*The subject matter we discussed during the day was quite diverse and many subjects for covered. Some great ideas were put forward by the groups and were well received by Geoff and Paul. They really welcomed the input from the workshop.*

*I would recommend this workshop to any Bluebell volunteers as it is a good opportunity to have time with both the chairman of the Society in the Plc which is absolutely brilliant. It's a thing that most of us volunteers don't get.*

*It was also good to see that the two chairmen were really focused on the future success of the railway.*

## VOLUNTEER VIEW

Richard Wright, volunteer guard

*I wish the Railway would...*

*Why don't they...*

*When are they going to do...*

*Saturday 29 January was the first of 3 events held by Geoff Mee and Paul Churchman, respectively Chairman of the Plc and the Society. Its declared aim was to get attendees – BRPS Members – to engage in discussions in groups of six and brainstorm ideas that would help secure the Railway's future.*

*I confess to some trepidation at attending. Was I going to have to stand up and give ideas in public? Was it a sham, with everything already in place and the 36 of us just there to nod wisely and agree?*

*No.*

*It was exactly what it said on the tin. There is no hidden agenda, no condescension, no poo-pooing of ideas. It's a genuine desire by the newly appointed teams who run the Railway – our Railway – to engage. Many of the attendees have experience in the workplace which gives a slant on how we view things, how some things might be done more effectively – or done for the first time. All ideas were valued. The engagement of everyone was valued.*

*At the end of the day, if you're a Bluebell Railway volunteer with an opinion – and who isn't? – Geoff and Paul want to know. You can contribute by attending one of the next two on Saturday 12 February or Saturday 5 March. 0930 - 1530. Contact [Gordon.Dudman@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:Gordon.Dudman@bluebell-railway.com)*

our trains, how to recruit more volunteers and train the next generation.

The feast of ideas and suggestions emanating from our brains was followed by nourishment for our bodies with a welcome lunch of sandwiches, crisps, grapes, biscuits and chocolates laid on. This was another opportunity to meet new people and discuss ways of improving the Railway.

Pragmatism was the post-lunch topic as we all thought about ways of encouraging greater numbers of visitors without increasing our operating costs.

Then the group split into two for tours of OP4 (including the varnish area and trim shop) and the Carriage & Wagon works (including the progress on Car 54 and other vehicles). These were ably led by Geoff and Paul (OP4) and by David Rhydderch and Richard Salmon (C&W).

The final session reviewed the workshop – what worked well and what could be changed – before Geoff summed up the day.

"I am really, really pleased at the number of ideas you have come up with and the positivity and energy. It is now up to us to take this forward and run with it," he said.

Both Geoff and Paul pledged that these events would continue to be a regular part of the Railway. There are two more workshops organised by Gordon Dudman planned for this Spring (see next page for details and how to sign up) and the chairmen promised others to be held next autumn/winter.



# Volunteer Update

By Graham Aitken, volunteer co-ordinator

At the annual review meeting of the just completed Santa and SteamLights season, as ever, a number of issues were raised outlining what didn't go so well and ideas that could improve this year's season. Overall, it was agreed by those present that it had been an outstanding success, with very many of our visitors telling us how much they had enjoyed their visit and thanks go to all members of staff and volunteers who played a part in making this happen.

One of the items I raised concerned the best use of volunteers. There were some occasions when volunteers were rostered on for several hours but their duties took only a few minutes of their shift to complete.

I am not blaming anyone but this example highlights the fact that we often work in silos and overlook the benefits of multi-tasking. In the Operations department, there are a number of individuals who volunteer for more than one role. For example, I am the Senior Station Master at Sheffield Park and also a Guard. Other members

of my station staff are Signalmen, one is both a Guard and Signalman, and three members of footplate crews are also Guards. Whilst we are only booked on one of these roles at a time, in other departments that may not be the case.

One of my next moves is to arrange a meeting with all of the managers/roster clerks of all predominantly customer-facing roles to try to work out how they can all work together and help each other at busy times, such as special events and during the Christmas season. Generally, dates for special events and Christmas don't clash meaning that, as an example, Santa train stewards might be willing to work at some special events, or on some of our regular service trains as Buffet Car stewards. I will let you know how I get on.

In the meantime, anyone reading this who wishes to undertake other volunteer roles, in addition to their normal duties, please get in touch with me at [volunteer.coordinator@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:volunteer.coordinator@bluebell-railway.com) and I will ask the relevant roster clerks to get in touch with you.

## VOLUNTEER WORKSHOPS

As reported elsewhere in this issue, the first of the planned volunteer workshops was held in late January, and has been met with very positive feedback.

There are still places on the third workshop, to be held on Saturday 5 March, 09:30 – 15:30, at Horsted Keynes. Lunch and light refreshments will be provided. If you would like to attend, please email [Gordon.Dudman@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:Gordon.Dudman@bluebell-railway.com)



# HRA Interrail Passes

By Gavin Bennett, Bluebell Railway HRA representative

After more than 25 years service as our Heritage Railway Association (HRA) representative, Roger Price has stood down and it has fallen to me to pick up this task on a temporary basis. I would like to place on record my thanks to Roger for his dedication to the role and the part he has played in the HRA over many years.

The HRA runs a scheme whereby:- Directors, Officers, Managers and regular Working Members can buy a pass which entitles the holder and a guest to free or reduced rate travel on most heritage railways or entry to certain museums, valid until 28/2/2023.

This year, the cost will remain at £35 and it should be ordered from me in writing showing your full name with your cheque payable to me G D BENNETT

Please note turnaround of orders from HRA can take up to four weeks from your original application.

Please also send a 9"by 6" self-addressed and stamped envelope for return of the pass.

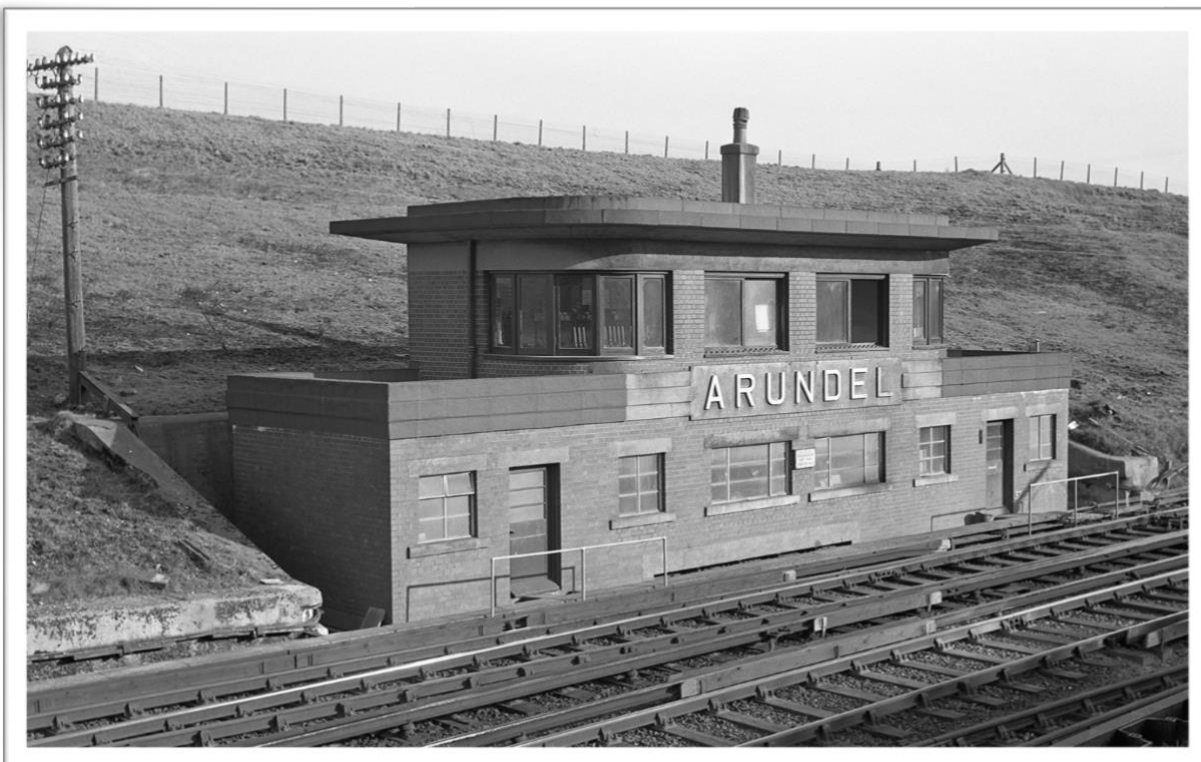
Gavin Bennett (HRA), Flat 8, Welbeck Mansions, Welbeck Avenue, HOVE, BN3 4JU.

# Additions to the Museum Website

By Chris Wilson, Bluebell Railway Museum Archive

In [issue 28](#) of *The Bluebell Times*, we noted that the John Scrace collection of images had been donated to the Museum Archive. We have added the first batch of John Scrace's station and signal box photographs to the [Museum website](#). In line with John's cataloguing system we have added the locations beginning with the letter 'A', 212 in total.

We have also added over 700 of David Esau's photographs. More information on this recent addition to our Archive will follow in the March issue of *The Bluebell Times*.



*Arundel signal box on 11 April 1968.*

*Photo: John Scrace*

# Fenchurch Update

By Paul Russell, locomotive director

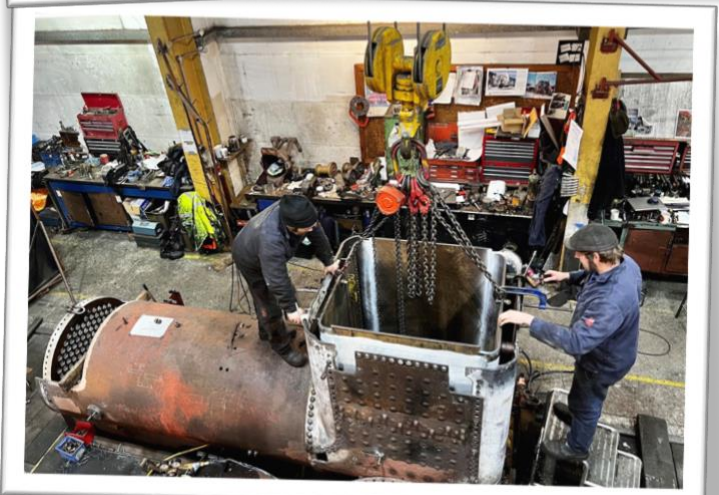
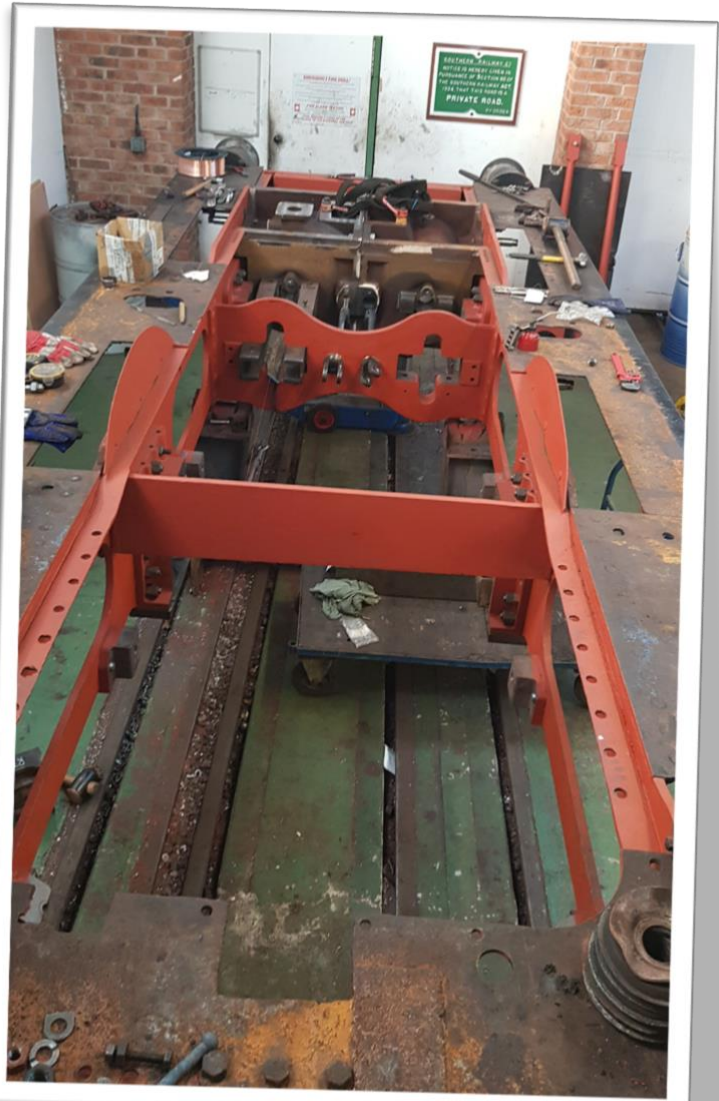
Work continues to progress well with the frames at Statfold Barn. As reported in the winter 2021 edition of *Bluebell News* the new cylinder block has been fitted in the frames and while alignment is good there is still some fitting work to do to ensure the cylinders are exactly aligned in the frames as this forms the datum from which all the parts of the motion and wheelsets are measured and set. Once this has been done the motion can start to be re-assembled and the frames re-wheeled. The wheels and axles have passed their ultrasonic and MPI tests. There was some concern regarding cracks observed in the wheels themselves but this is due to the way the wheels are cast, the spokes being cast on to a central hub and are not considered critical. The testing also highlighted cracks in the big end bolts and new items are being fabricated to replace these. An order has also been placed for the complete painting of the frames as this is more easily accomplished before the locomotive is re-assembled. It is anticipated that the frames will return at the end of March.

Boilersmiths Simon Blaker and Henry Mowforth, and volunteer Andy Kelly continue with the boiler work apace with the return and trial fitting of the new inner firebox and foundation ring. These are a good fit and a start can now be made on fitting it into the new wrapper, throatplate and backhead. The new firehole ring is also on site for fitting – this now being to the correct size for the loco.

The wagon containing a range of ancillary parts for the loco was shunted into the maintenance shed on 16th January and Locomotive Fitter Ben Harvey has made a start on sorting and assessing the work required on the tanks, cladding and a whole host of other parts for the loco. Plenty of cleaning down and painting to do here (hint hint!).

*Fenchurch's frames at Statfold Engineering:  
The newly replaced cylinders in the frames:  
Both photos: Paul Russell*

*Simon Blaker and Henry Mowforth check the alignment of  
the new inner firebox:  
Photo: Andy Kelly*





# Awake the Giant!

By Andy Taylor, Awake the Giant leader

We hope you are keeping well. A quick update this month, with a full update in the March edition of *The Bluebell Times*.

Recently, the Awake the Giant team has organised their first photo competition. We had a great response and raised a large amount of interest in the Bluebell Railway and 92240. The competition featured two categories:

- ➔ the best photo of the Bluebell Railway, which was won by Neil Munro-Thomson with his photo of the three SECR locomotives, triple heading at a Branch Line Gala.
- ➔ best photo of preserved steam, which was won by Adrian Smith with his photo of 'Taliesin' at Boston Lodge on the Ffestiniog Railway.

Our winners' photos can be seen here. The runners-up photos will be displayed on the [Awake the Giant webpage](#)

Runners-up:

- ➔ Dave Jones with a photo of 92212 departing Sheffield Park.
- ➔ Christopher Rose with a photo of No.65 in Golden Arrow dress at Sheffield Park.
- ➔ Clifford Palmer with a photo of the Flying Scotsman on the locomotive's visit to the Railway.

Congratulations to all for taking part.

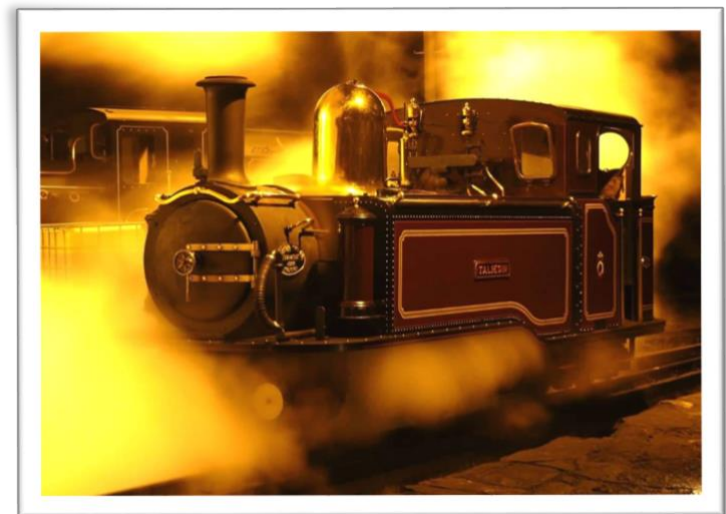
If you wish to help with fundraising or on a practical side with 92240, please contact Andy Taylor [andy.taylor@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:andy.taylor@bluebell-railway.com)

See you in March for some exciting news on our merchandise launch!



*Triple header*

*Photo: Neil Munro-Thompson*



*Taliesin*

*Photo: Adrian Smith*

# News in Brief

## WINTER INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS

There may have been no public trains running in January and early February, but the Railway has been far from asleep. The Permanent Way team has laid 310 yards of track in Lindfield Wood, between Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes. This joins up two long sections of new track laid over the previous few years, and means there is now a continuous section of new track from the foot of Freshfield Bank all the way to Horsted Keynes. Meanwhile, the Signals & Telegraph team has replaced the Horsted Keynes up home signal. Illustrated reports on both projects can be found on the [Railway's website](#).

## NEW CUSHIONS FOR SHEFFIELD PARK'S PORTERS!

Words and photo by David Middleton, Sheffield Park senior station master

Being aware of the forthcoming refurbishment of the Porters' Room in the station house at Sheffield Park, I thought it was about time the three carriage cushions on the long bench were re-covered. They were in BR "chain link" moquette and have been there as long as I can remember (possibly 50 years!) and were in a pretty horrible state. I approached trimming team leader Steve Bigg to see if the C&W trimmers would be prepared to do this work. Steve was only too pleased to do this and mentioned that it might be useful as a training exercise and that they could use offcuts.

Each cushion was taken to Horsted Keynes in turn and returned in exchange for the next when finished. Steve did suggest that they may not all be in the same moquette but in fact enough "red candy stripe" was found to cover all three and they look very smart. The standard of workmanship is fantastic; each cushion has a seam right down the middle but I defy anyone to see it from more than six inches away. In fact I only found it by feel.

Thank you to Steve and the trimming team for your work on this. I think we can be very proud to have such craftspeople in our midst.

## MUSEUM VISITORS

An analysis of the comments left in the visitors' book in the museum on Platform 2 at Sheffield Park has revealed people from 51 countries (plus the Isle of Man and Guernsey) gave their feedback over the last five years.

Museum curator Tony Drake commented: "There must have been visitors from at least 51 countries to visit the Bluebell Railway as a whole. It is quite remarkable really."

The painstaking work in reviewing the comments was carried out by museum steward Geoff Davis.

## MUSEUM ARCHIVE

Further to the article in the last issue of *The Bluebell Times* about the archive on the move, we have been asked to point out the John Smith collection was purchased by the archive and not inherited. Also his house was not inherited.





## SPRUCING UP THE PITS

Words and photo by Lance Allen

There may have been no trains running in January, but there is plenty of work going on to prepare for the new season, with the pits and concrete surfaces being cleaned of accumulated grime. The new Kärcher steam pressure washer helped enormously in loosening thick layers of grime. It will require three sessions to do the whole of the yard's concrete and brick surfaces.

The picture shows locomotive department members John Hutchins, Ben Gray, Barry Evans and Greg Wales.



## GOODS DIVISION

The Bluebell Railway Goods Division have been making great progress on their two current projects, [SR Engineers Wagon 62002](#) and [Bulleid open wagon 12058](#). The team maintains an active log of their work on Facebook at [facebook.com/Rail.Goods.Division](https://facebook.com/Rail.Goods.Division)



A wagon tarpaulin is prepared in the C&W workshop. The two carriages in the shot are [Maunsell Restriction o brake 3<sup>rd</sup> No. 3687](#) and [Stroudley 3<sup>rd</sup> No. 328](#).

Photo: Bluebell Railway Goods Division

## JOIN THE 500+ CLUB

The 500 club is one of the main ways to support the Railway's Battle of Britain class locomotive 'Sir Archibald Sinclair'. Members are entered for a regular draw to win prizes, with the surplus money used to help fund the locomotive's restoration. Entries for this year close on 28 February – for more information, see the [500 club web page](#).

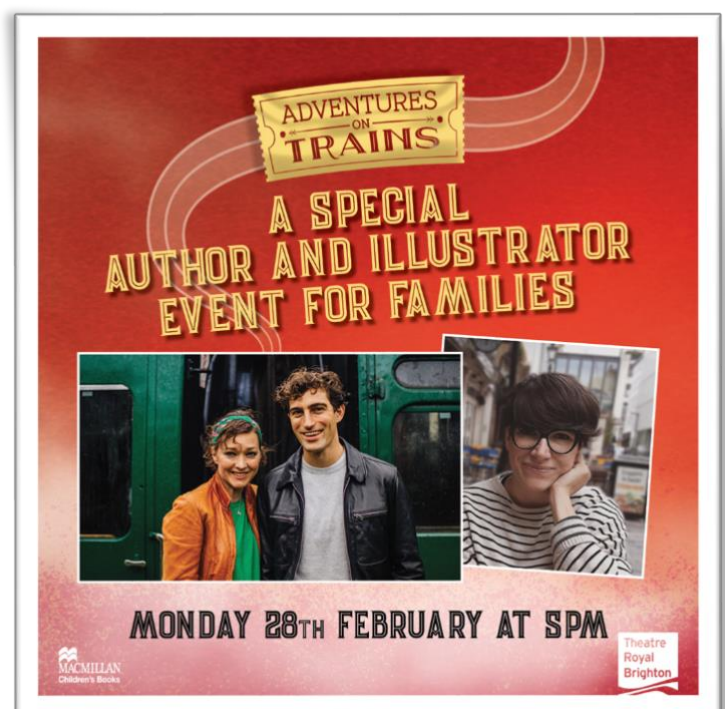
## BRIGHTON TRAIN BOOK LAUNCH

Brighton-based author and regular Bluebell Railway visitor M.G. Leonard is holding a special event to celebrate the publication of the fourth book in her 'Adventures on Trains' series.

The latest book, called Danger at Dead Man's Pass, has been written by M.G. Leonard and Sam Sedgman who both came to the Bluebell Railway for publicity pictures for the first book in the series The Highland Falcon Thief.

They will be holding an event aimed at families at Theatre Royal Brighton at 5pm on Monday 28 February. The series illustrator Elisa Paganelli will also be at the event and will be live drawing throughout.

The event is being marketed as being "packed with interesting facts about trains, railways, mystery stories and how to be a good detective". The authors will also talk about their adventures writing together and what goes into researching their books. Tickets are available from [ATG tickets](#).







As designed, the locomotives were somewhat different looking from how No. 65 now appears. Most notably, they had the Stirling family hallmarks of a domeless boiler and rounded cab. The reverser was steam operated, though at that time mounted horizontally in the cab. The buffer planks were wooden, sandboxes were mounted under the running plate and the locomotives carried no brakes, braking being confined to a handbrake on the tender.

For three years, those initial twenty locomotives remained the only members of the class, but from 1882 onwards, a handful more of the class were built each year through to 1899, mostly at Ashford, until the class numbered 122 locomotives. Over time, detail changes crept in, most visually notable the incorporation of the sand boxes into the leading splashers above the running plate, and the move of the reverser from inside the cab to the right-hand running plate beside the boiler. Later locomotives were also fitted with vacuum brakes and many found use on passenger

trains as well as goods. No. 65 was one of the last locomotives, being built at Ashford in 1896 at a cost of £1,430.

With the impending formation of the South Eastern and Chatham Railway in 1899, the directors considered the best goods locomotive design for the new line. Accordingly comparative trials were held between an SER O class, and a Kirtley B2 from the London, Chatham and Dover Railway. The LCDR loco proved superior both in hauling power and economy, and accordingly when Harry Wainwright – who had been appointed Locomotive Superintendent on formation of the SE&CR – designed his new C class 0-6-0 goods locomotive, it was heavily influenced by the LCDR B2. Nonetheless, the Stirling O locomotives were still comparatively new with potentially many years useful life left. Therefore, as the boilers fell due for replacement, Wainwright fitted a boiler of his own design, which was the same as fitted to the H class 0-4-4T and various other reboilered SER and LCDR designs. The new



*No. A65 on shed at Ashford, exactly 88 years ago to the day from this issue of The Bluebell Times: 11 February 1934.  
Photo: Kenneth Nichols*



No. of Engine	Arrival at Works		Erecting Shop		Paint Shop		Sent to Work		Station
	Ln	Out	Ln	Out	Ln	Out	Ln	Out	
65	4. 4. 98.	21. 4. 98.	16. 5. 98.	17. 5. 98.	23. 5. 98.	26. 5. 98.			Ashford.
	11. 8. 99.	14. 8. 99.	29. 9. 99.	29. 9. 99.	3. 10. 99.	5. 10. 99.			—
	24. 4. 01.	3. 6. 01.			22. 7. 01.	15. 8. 01.	15. 8. 01.		—
	7. 3. 04.	12. 4. 04.	28. 6. 04.	28. 6. 04.	4. 7. 04.	5. 7. 04.			—
	10. 3. 06.	20. 4. 06.	11. 7. 06.	11. 7. 06.	20. 7. 06.	21. 7. 06.			—
	8. 1. 08.	3. 3. 08.	4. 9. 08.	4. 9. 08.	23. 9. 08.	24. 9. 08.			—
	22. 2. 11.	11. 3. 11.	20. 5. 11.	20. 5. 11.	25. 5. 11.	26. 5. 11.			—

Ashford Works record for No. 65, showing the dates of overhauls. Note in particular the six months in the works between March and September 1908, during which time it was rebuilt from class O to class O1 form.

Source: [South Eastern & Chatham Railway Society](#) archive

boiler had a deeper firebox and sat higher in the frames, requiring a new cab – the reboiled locomotives became known as the O1 class, and that is the form in which No. 65 survives today. A total of 57 such rebuilds were carried out by the SE&CR between 1903 and 1918, with surprisingly two more conversions following in 1927 and 1932 under the Southern Railway. The remaining locomotives were withdrawn as class O. The surviving SE&CR locomotive records show that No. 65 underwent the rebuilding to class O1 between 3 March and 4 September 1908, returning to traffic on 24 September that year following repainting. Cost of rebuilding averaged £815 in SE&CR days prior to World War 1, considerably cheaper than the cost of a new locomotive.

In their final form, the locomotives continued to give good service on lighter duties. BR inherited 55

of the class – 52 from the Southern Railway and three that had been sold to the East Kent Railway – which by that time were typically between 50 and 60 years old. By 1960 only two survived: Nos. 31258 and 31065. No. 31065 was the very last in service, piloting Wainwright C Class No. 31592 (also now owned by the Bluebell Railway Trust) on the last Hawkhurst Branch service on 11 June 1961. It then spent a few days at Tonbridge on shunting duties, before being withdrawn at Ashford. On withdrawal, the mileage was recorded as 1,388,742 on 24 June 1961.

No 65's history in the preservation era will be described in next month's issue of *The Bluebell Times*.



No 31065 leads Wainwright C class No. 31592 on the LCGB South Eastern Limited rail tour over the Hawkhurst branch, 11 June 1961. This is believed to be the last passenger working of No. 31065 before withdrawal about two weeks later. Both locomotives are now owned by the Bluebell Railway Trust.

Photo: Colin Hogg / Bluebell Railway Museum Archive



# Funding for No. 65

By Trevor Swainson, funding governor, Bluebell Railway Trust

Once it was announced that the Lewis-Evans family wished to sell the O1, immediate action was required to secure the locomotive's future at the Railway. The process of enquiry, negotiation, drawing up legal agreements and finally payment was completed discreetly in a matter of days. Failure to act so quickly might have resulted in other potential interested parties becoming aware of the sale and making competitive bids and the very real possibility that the locomotive might be lost to the Railway for ever.

There was one obvious and immediate problem to be overcome and that was how to raise funds to finance the purchase, especially due to the time and privacy restraints. The Trust therefore had to pay for the engine from its existing resources which were intended for use on other projects on the Railway.

We therefore need to rebuild our reserves by raising funds to help finance the purchase of the O1. Launching a new general appeal so soon after the very successful 'Jewel in The Crown' Appeal would not have been appropriate. Instead, we decided that we would invite specific donations from those with a general interest in locomotives and those with a keen interest in the O1 and our other SECR locomotives.

If you would like to help, there are several ways you can do so:

- ➔ By making a donation via the website at [www.bluebell-railway.com/donate](http://www.bluebell-railway.com/donate); or
- ➔ By cheque payable to The Bluebell Railway Trust, quoting the reference 'SECR065'; or
- ➔ By bank transfer directly to the bank account of The Bluebell Railway Trust, again quoting the reference 'SECR065' – account no. 61056056, sort code 60-10-26.

In the latter two cases, if you have made a declaration for Gift Aid purposes, you need to take no further action. If you do not have a current declaration, please contact [funding@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:funding@bluebell-railway.com) so that we can send a Gift Aid form for you to complete.

Subject to satisfying safety regulations, anyone making a donation of £500 or more will be invited for a one-way cab ride on the O1 between Sheffield Park and East Grinstead. We are considering other incentives which will be announced in due course.



*No. 65 in use on the Bluebell.*

*Photos:*

*Top – Jon Bowers*

*Bottom – Dave Bowles*

# OP4 Emerges Like a Flower in Springtime

by Trevor Swainson, Bluebell Railway Trust governor and Roger Kelly, BRPS trustee

## BUT WHERE DID THE WATER COME FROM?

In the excellent article last month about the progress on OP4 little mention was made of how the project was funded. It told how C&W volunteers raised more than £32,000 which, together with a grant of £20,000 from The Bluebell Railway Trust was used to gain planning permission in 2011. It was done discreetly in the background so as not to deflect from the primary focus of fundraising to get us to East Grinstead.

So, what happened after that?

In 2014 Steve Bigg, Sam Bee and Roger Kelly spent countless hours making an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (now the National Lottery Heritage Fund) for a grant towards the full cost of construction then estimated to cost some £3million.

In the event the application was rejected but valuable lessons were learned that led to success in getting a grant for the ASH (Accessible Steam Heritage) project in 2016 and for grants from the Covid recovery funds during the early days of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021.



*This sketch shows the initial thoughts (2008) on the project design – the final shed has four storage roads on the right rather than three, and one maintenance road in the centre rather than two, as well as a raised roof over part of the maintenance road. The sections on the left are the pre-existing carriage works and shed.*

Illustration: Matthew Cousins



So, at first faced with rejection, there was a major re-think on how to proceed. It was decided to tackle the problem in stages, thus:

- At the end of 2014, we launched the first OP4 Appeal. Our aspirations were modest. We hoped to raise the £250,000 that was estimated to cover half the proposed carriage storage area with a “Dutch Barn” – essentially a roof supported on a metal framework. This would provide protection for some of the carriages and other rolling stock, but it was very short of the overall requirement.
- We were amazed by the rate at which donations came in. The target of £250,000 was soon passed and, remarkably, by the time the appeal closed £450,000 had been raised, including a grant of £50,000 from the Trust. This was enough to clear the site, erect the steel frame and roof the whole area of the maintenance and four storage roads. Work started in the autumn of 2015.
- Even though the appeal was closed, donations continued to be received and, together with further grants from the Trust, a further £230,000 became available.
- Sufficient progress had been made to enable a small celebration to be held in 2017 when the first carriage was shunted in, attended by many of the major donors.
- The carriage shed was far from finished – walls needed to be installed as well as a dividing fire wall between the maintenance road and the four storage roads. It was therefore decided to run a second appeal in the autumn of 2018, this time with a Double Donation Dash which raised over £200,000.
- The Appeals were not the only source of funds for OP4. We received legacies from former members who had passed away and left monies to the Railway. These included David Hand who left us a gift in his will of which £100,000 was for OP4 and George Goodwin, one of the stalwarts of the Trim Shop, who left a bequest of £14,000 specifically for the Trim Shop and the Moquette Store.

- In 2019 work started in earnest on the adjoining Heritage Skills Centre, now practically complete and in use.

In total donations and legacies from approaching 2,000 supporters have amounted to nearly £1.1 million, with a further almost £400,000 being contributed from the Trust. That is a lot of water for the OP4 Flower we see today. Our collective thanks to all who made donations or assisted with the fundraising. Your support has been and continues to be greatly appreciated.

Although now in full use, OP4 is far from complete. The main outstanding work is the essential dividing firewall between the maintenance road and the 4-road carriage shed. Including the remaining part of concrete base on which it stands: costs for this alone are likely to be in the region of £120,000. Up to £50,000 is needed for outside pathways, fencing, gates and security and hard standing. And then there is the question of doors, yet to be considered, but likely to be very expensive!

This spirit of support has stood the Railway in good stead for many years making numerous projects ‘happen’ for the benefit of the Railway. This spirit lives on as we have seen most recently with the support of the Emergency Appeal and the current ‘Jewel in The Crown’ Appeal for Horsted Keynes Station.



*Inside the maintenance section of OP4, with ‘Fingall’ undergoing maintenance to its running gear. The roof here is raised to allow lifting of carriages clear of their bogies*

*Photo: Tom James*



# On This Day ... 11 February

By Tony Hillman, assistant museum curator

*Three pictures from the Bluebell Photographic Archive taken on 11 February, all by John J. Smith. Thanks to Martin Elms, John Creed, Richard Peirce, Roger Merry-Price and Chris Wilson for finding the pictures and providing the notes.*



Saturday 11 February 1956 and Surrey's North Downs are covered in snow. SECR Class D1 4-4-0 No. 31487 of Tonbridge shed is seen climbing the 1 in 96 Gomshall bank with the 10.16 am Redhill to Reading. The train, consisting of a van and a 3-car Birdcage set, had started its journey as the 9.08 am from Tunbridge Wells West, the D1 coming on at Redhill. Motive power for this train on a Saturday was rostered for a Redhill-based Class N, but a change had been made on the day, possibly because of the inclement weather.

No. (31)487 was originally built at Ashford in 1902, designed by H.S. Wainwright, and designated as a D class. However in 1921, under the design of R.E.L. Maunsell, the locomotive was one of ten rebuilt by Beyer, Peacock & Co. into an improved D1 class. These were so successful that a further eleven were rebuilt in-

house at Ashford Works, mostly in 1927. No. 31487 survived until withdrawal in February 1961, with the last of the class gone by November in the same year.

Steam lasted on the Tonbridge-Redhill-Guildford-Reading services until January 1965 when most services were taken over by the 3R diesel units (later known as Class 206) but better known as Tadpoles because they comprised two 'narrow' coaches from former Hastings units, coupled to a standard-width former EPB driver trailer. The route, known as the North Downs Line, is nowadays operated by the Great Western Railway using Class 165 and 166 Turbo diesel units, a far cry from the 2-6-0s and 4-4-0s that were the mainstay of services in the 1950s.

*Photo: John J Smith*



Moving forward five years to Saturday 11 February 1961, the 2.15pm Tonbridge to Redhill is seen to the west of Edenbridge, about to cross over the middle of Little Browns Tunnel where the Hurst Green – Edenbridge Town line passes underneath. The train was running “wrong line” from Edenbridge to Godstone, reason unknown, although reference to the relevant weekly notices held in the Bluebell Archive shows it was not pre-planned work. This suggests something last-minute or an emergency, which the photographer, J. J. Smith, could well have been aware of as he worked for the Southern Region of British Railways.

The train was hauled by N Class 2-6-0 No. 31851, allocated to Redhill Shed and working that shed’s Duty 635, its working day reaching Brighton via Tunbridge Wells before shuttling between Redhill and Tonbridge. The rolling stock is 4-car Corridor

Set 181 plus a PMV (Passenger Mail Van). No. (3)1851 was one of a batch of 50 locos purchased by the SR from the government at Woolwich Arsenal in kit form, and assembled at Ashford Works, being released to traffic in February 1925. To the enginemen these engines were the “Woolworths”, a corruption of their Woolwich origin. No. 31851 ended its days at Redhill Shed, being withdrawn around August 1963 and then scrapped by King’s of Norwich.

Passenger trains on the Redhill – Tonbridge line were largely steam worked until the arrival of the “Tadpole” 3-car DEMUs from 4 January 1965. However, by that time most freight trains and the occasional inter-regional passenger were hauled by D65xx Class diesels, based on the South Eastern Division.

*Photo: John J Smith*





Around 1½ miles west of Little Browns Tunnel, the Crowhurst Spur from the Croydon and Oxted Joint line met the old SER main line at Crowhurst Junction South. The signal box there is seen on the same afternoon as the previous image, standing on the south side of the main line, with the junction facing points just visible immediately in front of the locking room window. It carries a typical SECR enamel nameplate, below which is a Saxby & Farmer maker's plate. On the plank between the two, three pairs of bolt heads can be seen. These correspond to the positions of the three working distant signal levers in the lever frame, and are fixings for the associated wire adjusters used to regulate tension in the signal wire as the temperature dictates.

Saxby & Farmer were major signalling contractors, with well over 200 boxes recorded on the Southern company lines. But only a handful were on the SER, scattered across the network. Crowhurst Junction South was one of these, as it was provided as part of a large S&F contract for signalling the 1884 line between South Croydon

Junction and East Grinstead. The line was the joint property of the LBSCR and SER as far south as Crowhurst Junction North, where SER traffic took the spur to South Junction to regain its own lines, while the LBSCR trains continued southwards.

The box design seen here is designated "SF 5" in the Signalling Study Group classification, and the original boxes on the joint line, and as far as East Grinstead, were all to this pattern. All were built either of brick, or with a brick base and wooden upper storey, except this one. The location on an embankment meant that a heavy brick box could not be supported, so the alternative all-timber model was used: this was a standard S&F product, common for example in colliery areas where subsidence was a problem. Crowhurst Junction South, however, is believed to have been the only example erected on the SER. It was abolished in October 1965.

*Photo: John J Smith*



# What's On

Friday 11 February – Thursday 10 March

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

Saturday 12 February – Sunday 27 February [Kids for a Quid](#)

Saturday 12 February – Sunday 27 February [Ice Skating](#)

(Ice rink open every day from 10am to 9pm with late skates until 10pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Valentine's Day)



## DINING TRAINS

Saturday 12 February [The Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Sunday 13 February [The Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Monday 14 February [The Golden Arrow Valentine Dining](#)

Saturday 19 February [The Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Sunday 20 February [The Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Saturday 26 February [The Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Sunday 27 February [The Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Friday 4 March [Pie & Mash Special](#)

Saturday 5 March [The Wealden Rambler Afternoon Tea](#)

Saturday 5 March [The Golden Arrow Dining](#)

Sunday 6 March [The Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

## OTHER EVENTS

Friday 11 February [Footplate Taster Experience](#)



# The Bluebell Times

*A Newsletter for  
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Members, Staff and  
Supporters*

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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](http://bluebell-railway.com) or follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/bluebellrailway), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/bluebellrailway) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/bluebellrailway).

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# Bluebell on Ice

## At Sheffield Park Station

### 12 - 27 February

#### Bluebell on Ice

Experience the most unique venue for ice skating - the locomotive shed at Sheffield Park Station. Get advance tickets on line for timed sessions. Tickets include skate hire and free parking at Sheffield Park Station. Why not double up with a Kids for a Quid ticket this half term. Tickets can be purchased on the day subject to availability.

#### Kids for a Quid!

Look out for half term bargain tickets for children on our standard timetabled train services - starting with this February Half Term! Children travel for just £1 when accompanied by a fare-paying adult. Explore our museum, the interactive exhibition in SteamWorks! and travel on vintage steam trains. Check our website for more information.



# Kids for a Quid

## This Half Term

