



80151 starts the gentle climb heading south from Kingscote , 19 March 2022 Photo: David Cable

# The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway  
Members, Staff and Supporters

April 2022

## IN THIS ISSUE

For those of us in the locomotive department, there has been only one subject of mess room conversation for the last few months: coal, or more specifically, the risk of a lack of it. Readers of *The Bluebell Times* will no doubt have noticed that some other railways have had to curtail some services to preserve stocks.

The issue is complex, but in essence there are three overlapping factors. Firstly, supply – can we get coal of suitable type and quality when we need it? Secondly price – what impact will that have on the budget? And finally ecological factors, and the impact those might have on the willingness of the public to visit us.

On the first of those at least, it looks like there is some relief. Locomotive director Paul Russell outlines the situation in this issue, but it appears that for the time being, there is supply available. The Bluebell has not had to cancel services on account of coal, and is not anticipating doing so in the foreseeable future.

Elsewhere, much of this issue is taken up with the initial feedback from the volunteer workshops that took place earlier this year. Such a forum will inevitably produce a range of views, some contradictory, but overall there was much positivity from those who attended. The key now is to use the ideas generated to inform the Railway's future. There is a role for all of us to provide help progressing ideas into actions: don't leave it all to the "They department" which, despite what some would think, is by far from large!

Tom James, Editor

<i>From Mee to You</i> .....	2
<i>Feedback from the Volunteer Workshops</i> .....	3
<i>Coal – the Current Position</i> .....	6
<i>Awake the Giant</i> .....	7
<i>Around and About</i> .....	9
<i>Find Out More Days are Back!</i>	11
<i>Christmas Lunch Will Be Late ... Very Late</i> .....	12
<i>Latest Additions to the Museum Website</i> .....	13
<i>On This Day, 8 April</i> .....	14
<i>What's On</i> .....	18
<i>Tail Lamp</i> .....	19

# From Mee to You

By Geoff Mee, chairman, Bluebell Railway Plc

Well Colleagues and Friends this has been a very busy month for the Railway.

Our Board meeting last week was held in the new conference facility in the Heritage Skills Centre at Horsted Keynes, a great new venue for us which has already hosted the volunteer workshops and, following accreditation as a training venue, hosted our first external training workshop for permanent way engineers, bringing in our first external revenue for the venue.

I am pleased to report that we discussed last year's financial results and I am pleased to tell you all that for the first time in six years we made a profit. This is great news and a fitting reward for all the hard work that the volunteers and staff put in over a really challenging year. The full detail will be available in the annual accounts, but the profit was several hundred thousand pounds.

This result was greatly aided by the generous donations to support the railway through the Covid pandemic and from Government grants. It has enabled us to replenish our reserves which had been used to support us through the hard times, also improving our resilience for the future.

Even better news is that this surplus will enable us, as promised, to put some real investment into the railway over the next couple of years. We had our first meeting of the Capital Projects Planning Group committee and considered all the capital projects on a list compiled, for the first time in one place, by Roger Kelly.

The relevant committees will review the output from this exercise. The board and I hope we will be able to share with you what we are going to invest in for the future in the next edition of *The Bluebell Times*, but Safety and Infrastructure will play a big part in the program.

You will have read in previous editions how pleased Paul Churchman and I were with the volunteer workshops and the enthusiasm and the wide range of ideas that were produced. In this

edition we can share the outputs from the workshops in an "everything that was discussed is recorded" form – you can read Gordon Dudman's article on page 3. Naturally the teams need to evaluate all the ideas regarding costs and benefits and a match with the emerging Business Plan and we will need some volunteers to help to implement the ideas. We may not get the entire article in this edition, but we will follow up and report on progress in future editions. I am so grateful for all of your input and your continued support and particularly want to thank Gordon Dudman and his team for organising the workshops and making all this happen.

Work continues to fill vacancies, both paid and volunteering across the Bluebell with more staff in catering and more volunteers getting into training, I want to wish you all a big Bluebell welcome and hope to meet many of you on my visits.

There are always more opportunities to join across the whole range of activities and we would particularly like to see some younger members join in for loco maintenance and driving and C&W workshop positions. Graham Aitken is always looking for more volunteers and is easily contactable through our [web pages](#).

We have a couple of important Directors' vacancies coming up to bring to your attention, Firstly, our current Safety Director, Martin Cresswell, has decided to step down and we will be looking to recruit his successor to this important post as soon as possible. David Burch our Finance Director is finding that doing his paid day job **and** being a nearly full time Volunteer in this expanding business too much for one person and wishes to help us recruit not only his successor but also some paid staff to keep our day-to-day business on track. These posts will be advertised imminently so if you think one of these could be for you, please keep an eye out for details of how to apply.

Most of you will be aware of the coal crisis where costs have skyrocketed, and supplies have become more difficult to source. We have secured a large

quantity of coal ovoids made of compressed Welsh coal dust which the crews say take a bit of getting used to, but they are now using and it keeps us steaming. We continue to look for alternative supplies to keep us going for the rest of the year. Locomotive Director Paul Russell explains the current situation on page 6.

That brings me neatly to diesels and our future. I know that the purists see the Bluebell Railway as a purely steam railway, but the reality of the current situation is that we will always need a contingency. I want to reassure everybody that we will remain predominately a steam railway, with the need for a limited number of diesels to act as thunderbirds, lineside fire risk backup locos and to take the early morning pressure off our footplate crews as we expand our service. Our Class 33 "Ashford" is as old as the Bluebell anyway and will look brilliant when it is fully restored.

It's not just coal that is a problem. Our energy costs are also causing concern. Just as at home the bills are getting more expensive by the week and the Bluebell is not immune from the increase. Our energy bills for the whole of the Railway (gas,

electric and heating oils) are now more than £20,000 per month and we desperately need your help to contain this rising cost. We are going to invest £25,000 on energy saving measures and we are progressing options for solar panels to generate our own electricity – but we need everyone on the Railway to switch off what we don't need. Some heating and lights are left on all the time, please be vigilant and turn off what we don't need or turn it down. We will be looking at what we can do with tariffs etc. going forward.

The Bluebell is doing very well in increasing visitor numbers, at the last count we had 143,000 visitors in 2019. With your help we will have even greater numbers and we can make 2022 a record year. Our next big push is an exciting Easter program, after which tickets for Flying Scotsman will be on sale from May 1. Then we are in for a very busy summer of events and more in the planning. We can only achieve this with your help, please give as much time as you can to support this wonderful railway.

*Geoff*

## Feedback from the Volunteer Workshops

By Gordon Dudman, Trevor Summerfield and Andrew Fairbank

*Over three Saturdays earlier this year, volunteer workshops were held at Horsted Keynes. Feedback from the three sessions has been collated. Part 1 of this report is given below – the second part will be included in the May issue of The Bluebell Times.*

Three workshops, open to all working volunteers, were run in the new Heritage Skills Centre at Horsted Keynes on January 29, February 12 and March 5, 2022. All three workshops followed a common format of small presentations followed by group discussions. This report captures the feedback from these sessions. Each of the three sessions had two common topics: the direction our railway should be taking if it is to maintain its position as a leading UK heritage railway and what we need to be doing to build and sustain our volunteer base. The three workshops then explored a single theme: the first looked at our trains, the second our visitors and the third our estate.

This report summarises both the verbal and written feedback given at the time, along with comments drawn from e-mails received both prior and following these events. There was a general recognition, across all three workshops, that the whole Bluebell Railway "experience" is very much targeted to customer expectation. Our main USP is not just "Nostalgia" it is the theatre of being a "Living Museum" supported by modern technology.

The aim must be to design a Business Plan which would support and develop a "Bluebell Brand" which is clearly recognised by visitors, staff, volunteers and delivers a sustainable railway.



The Plan needs to recognise that our brand must appeal to several different audiences, such as tourists, families looking for a day out, our local community and neighbours as well as traditional enthusiasts. The plan needs to create and maintain an environment that attracts and keeps motivated a diverse volunteer base.

The last session in each Workshop was a look at what pragmatic solutions we could begin to implement within the coming year. Since these tended to bring emphasis to previous discussion, these have not been written up separately.

### SESSION A - BEING THE BEST HISTORIC RAILWAY WE CAN

- The railway does not attract any single group of visitors, they are varied, and their needs tend to be very different; some of these needs will inevitably conflict with each other. There was a feeling (especially in relation to the February ice-skating) that there was a widespread assumption that volunteers would automatically see the benefit such an activity would bring. However, many members would have liked to have had a better understanding of the aims and the expected benefits before these events were up and running.
- Volunteer appreciation and their roles; recognising that not everyone wants to be on the front line, but all should be able to gain, develop and practice new skills.
- Public perception – a popular attraction, offering perceived value for money that offers a friendly and welcoming environment and which will always have open, the facilities we advertise. Not least ensuring a disabled friendly experience.
- Need to appeal to a range of different audiences, our developing business plan needs to recognise that these audiences will all require different marketing approaches.
- Getting the timetable “right” so that there are a variety of journey opportunities from those starting from any of our stations. This should be linked to a review of pricing, such that afternoon visitors, who will only manage one round trip should have a discount to those who may be get the opportunity to have 3 or 4 round trips. Having such a discount structure, could then encourage later visitors use of our tail-end services?
- A better appreciation that many customers do take a considerable interest in our vintage trains. How can we ensure potential customers are aware of what trains will be in operation on any particular day?
- Heritage preservation is fine up to a point, but we need to find ways of bringing today’s technology (and social media) where it will assist understanding and thus profitability. There is nothing wrong with using modern technology to tell the story, we need to find ways of ensuring not too many “wi-fi” weak-spot reception areas across our network. Maximising the use of QR Codes etc. was seen as an important first step in helping to engage in a generation for whom a mobile device is a way of life.
- The visual impact of out of use facilities along with steam locomotives and carriages under tarpaulins, kept in full public view, does much to detract from the ‘Living Museum’ experience. Recognition that this is perhaps seen as an unnecessary expense, would Station Friends Groups/gF Club have the time and skills to at least give the impression that our locomotives are at still much loved whilst waiting for a turn in our workshops?
- Station explanatory announcements need careful scripting so as not to be over the top but also understandable without being patronizing.
- On the theme of station announcements there was widespread feeling that our communications are directed at a ‘one size fits all’ approach. Can we at least review our communications output to give a flavour that ensures we have at least thought about the needs of:
  - Customers
  - Volunteers

- Share and other Stake holders
- Our neighbours
- Is our social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) pitched at the right audiences?. Take francis.bourgeois who has 2.3m followers on TikTok or as francis\_bourgeois43 has a further 1.5m followers on Instagram. Do we aim to create interesting content or do we merely report 'what's on' or re-post other people's content? For comparison, the Bluebell Railway Instagram account has 16k followers.

## SESSION B - THE ROLE OF OUR TRAINS

Main discussion points were:

- Most visitors do not know the difference between an Maunsell, Bulleid or BR Mark 1 coach, however it was widely recognised that many visitors value the opportunity to travel on our Victorian and Edwardian vehicles. (These are seen as clear elements of our "Brand").
- Need more disabled access on trains; especially when running Victorian and Edwardian sets.
- On train and station catering (all facets) can add value, however concern expressed at the numbers of occasions when they are not open. It was recognised, that they need to be reliable if they are to be financially viable.
- Need to find ways of telling the customer what style of rolling stock is expected to form the service(s) each day. Suggested were simple leaflets which do not need to be coach specific but could give a broad history of each type of vehicle.
- Cater for a diverse range of "geeks" attending special events (eg Beer festival)
- Work to school curriculum's – period, stock, engineering etc.
- Diesel usage is key to avoiding excessive hours for footplate staff and important emergency response. In the right context forms a key element of our "Brand".
- Are there aspects of our repair and restoration work which would enable us to run a 'hands-on' style (TV) 'Repair Shop'?
- We know we were able to help Hornby maximise the impact of their 'H' class model by using '263' as a backdrop 'prop' so buyers could compare Hornby's model to the real thing. Given the long lead-in time for new models, is there a possibility of further tie-ins between us and them?
- Are there links to model railway societies which could be developed that using facilities in the HSC would enable practical sessions on building (from scratch or kit) or repairing model railway components?
- Once we get the LNWR Observation Car back into service, can we trial having an on-board commentary, pointing out aspects of our railway operation together with some local history? The vehicle needs an on-board person to operate the lights anyway.
- If we wish to be the Number 1 heritage railway, it is 'the train' which for many, for different reasons, is what the central attraction is.

*Part 2 of the report will be published in the next issue of The Bluebell Times. If you have any questions or queries, please feel free to contact the team via [Gordon.dudman@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:Gordon.dudman@bluebell-railway.com) – Ed.*



Photo: Paul Bromley

# Coal - the Current Position

By Paul Russell, locomotive director Photos by Tom James

The Russian invasion of Ukraine sparked considerable concern over the continued security of coal supplies to heritage steam railways. Sanctions effectively removed Russian coal from the market and, allied to this, the invasion has also caused a significant increase in energy prices which comes on top of a backdrop of steadily rising energy costs.

To respond to this situation and deal with the concerns over security of supply while also providing some shield against price volatility, we have currently secured sufficient supplies of coal to see us through until the end of May. This has been a combination of the remaining lump coal available at the time and reformed coal briquettes called "Trevithick Ovoids". These are derived from 15,000 tonnes of Welsh coal stock held by Hargreaves.

Since the middle of February, the supply situation has become clearer. The ovoids continue to be available (and we are currently trialling a higher volatile composition) as well as Polish and Colombian coal imported to Belfast. For context, we use approximately 1,000 tonnes of coal per year and the importer of the Colombian coal brings in 1,000,000 tonnes per year into Belfast, with around 100,000 tonnes destined for the domestic market in Ireland. There are other constraints to consider such as chemical composition and volatility (higher volatility tends to generate more smoke) but it would seem that from the supply side at least, fears over availability have perhaps been overstated.

However from a cost perspective, our coal costs are still around 50% higher than a year ago. – although prices have stabilised recently. A significant increase in price was envisaged and allowed for the 2022 coal budget but despite this we are likely to be overspent this year.

As far as our train service is concerned there are no plans to curtail services due to coal supply concerns but the costs of running these services is being carefully scrutinised to ensure that our offering remains cost effective. We are looking at how to make cost savings in the provision of these services for example running lighter trains and better utilisation of locomotives.



*Top to bottom:  
The coal pile as it was in late-March*

*Trevithick's ovoids*

*Northumberland hard coal*



# Awake the Giant

By Andy Taylor, locomotive department

2 years have gone by since we launched the fundraising campaign to Awake our Giant once again! In some sense not much has changed. 92240 is still rusting away out in the open at Horsted Keynes. But all is not quite the same. We now have a growing active team of people helping fundraise to get this fantastic locomotive rust free again and much more...

## ON THE MOVE

Things are now moving in the right direction. Locomotive engineering director, Paul Russell has confirmed 92240 will be the next large locomotive to enter the works. All being well and dependent on things running smoothly over the summer, 92240 will be heading south to Sheffield Park at some point in September 2022. We will be towing the engine to the main locomotive yard where we will hold a stripping event. Once at Sheffield Park, the locomotive will have scaffold erected around it and the external sheet cladding removed along with the old fibreglass insulation. We will also take out the brick arch. This will give a chance to fully assess the condition of the boiler and will also give a better idea of cost for the work needed

A detailed planning and costing document is currently being worked on for this. We would hope and pray the boiler is still in a reasonable condition!

We will advertise the move date well in advance and if anybody is interested in helping at the stripping event please contact Martin Payne. Due to the size of the locomotive, currently it is proposed it will go back to Horsted over the winter until workshop space permits its return south.

## THE RESTORATION

This will be lead by the workshop team but with Martin Payne heading up the volunteer side of things so we can assist the workshop as much as possible. We hope to do many of the smaller jobs and encourage further volunteers to help once started.



## WHATS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR?

### Money

Currently on average we have just over £800 coming in monthly this consists of both regular and one-off donations. This is an amazing amount but we need to increase this a fair bit yet, so get in contact if you can help even a little.

[andy.taylor@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:andy.taylor@bluebell-railway.com)

### Fundraising stall

This has been held at both the '60+1' event and also the 'Giants of Steam' along with a smaller stall in Steamworks on most weekends and lastly a pop up stall at Horsted. Thank you to all the team who have helped make this happen.

### Photo competition

Run by Tom Newble (thanks Tom) for the first time in 2021 and hopefully will return in 2022. All proceeds went towards 92240.

### We are on Facebook!

Jared Johnson kindly set up a Facebook page - this will come into its own once the restoration starts.

[facebook.com/groups/231962145391847](https://www.facebook.com/groups/231962145391847)

## Merchandise

The new logo, designed by Bluebell driver Liz Groome, has given the team an opportunity of creating a small range of merchandise. Ken Upton has been instrumental in designing these high-quality products (thanks Ken). These will be sold

through our very own section in the Bluebell shop. Watch out for these appearing very soon.

We hope to expand this range further with other exciting products being worked on including baseball caps, hoodies, a strong Awake the Giant ale, and discussions are being held with Hornby.



## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Between £250,000 and £500,000 is needed. Money is currently coming in at a steady rate but, as always, more is needed.

The fastest way to getting the locomotive back in steam is donating a little on a regular basis. Please get in contact with me at the below address and sign up to donate as little as £3.75 a week.

We would welcome further active team members to help man a small stall at key events or who would be willing to get stuck into the physical work of the restoration.

Please visit <https://www.bluebell-railway.com/brps/awake-the-giant/> or contact myself Andy Taylor at [andy.taylor@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:andy.taylor@bluebell-railway.com) for further information.

Thank you for all your support.

Let's Awake this Giant Again!



# Around and About

Compiled by Tom James Photos as credited

## NEW ASH WALKING ROUTES

Early in April, the Locomotive Department was doing a bit of DIY with building a new walkway for Running Foremen/Shunters, to make accessing the point levers at the south end of the yard easier. Everyone on duty in the yard lent a hand during the day to help build this. It was mentioned it would take a few weekends to build but with the comradery shown that day, it was built in just one day. Well done to all that helped!

*Photos: Laurie Anderson*



## EYE-CATCHING ADDITION TO THE WAGON FLEET

Pictured at Horsted Keynes, engineer's wagon 62002 is making good progress and is close to reaching the point of reassembly. Recently it has come to light that not just the body was SR engineers orange, but the chassis, running gear and wheels too, so a start has been made to this effect.

We hope everyone is looking forward to having this vehicle brighten up the fleet!

*Photo: Matt Lander*



## PROGRESS IN THE BOILER SHOP

Progress continues apace on *Fenchurch's* boiler. The outer firebox is assembled, and the foundation ring has been trial-fitted against the inner firebox. On the barrel, the edges have been prepared on a section cut out adjacent to the front tube plate, and a matching piece of new plate has been prepared to fit the space.

In the background is the boiler of *Sir Archibald Sinclair*, a contrast in size!

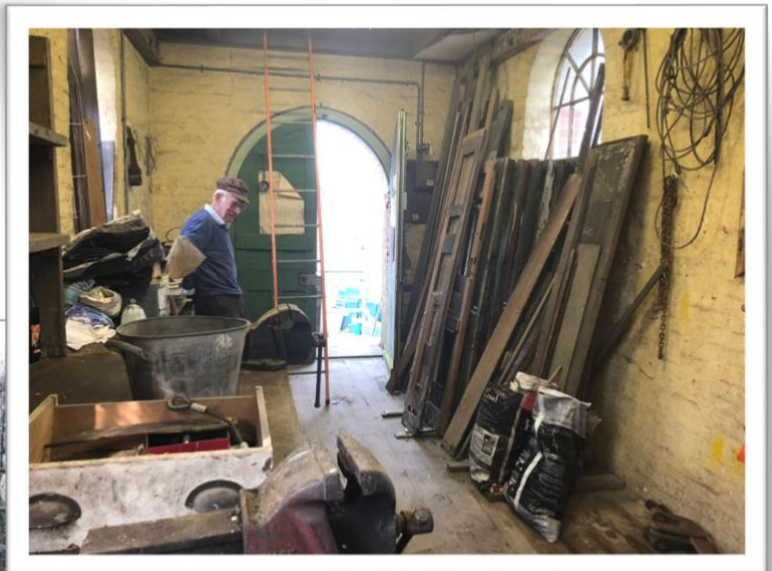
*Photo: Andy Kelly*



## HORSTED KEYNES WATER TOWER

In late March the infrastructure team made a start clearing the upper floor of the water tower in readiness for a structural survey to take place. When the scaffolding came down after the new roof was installed, they made arrangements for the stairs to be relocated to the upper floor door as a temporary measure. Access to this floor has only been accessible by ladder since the walkway fell down some time ago and so years of storage, old carriage doors, scrap timber, old p/w nuts and bolts, rusty tools, solid tins of paint and sundry detritus has remained largely undisturbed in a heritage time capsule. Once cleared, useful items will be retained, wood scraps and carriage spares sorted for further use in C & W, nuts and bolts moved to the Salt Yard, while rubbish will go to the bonfire or the metal skip. We also had the opportunity to look at the underneath of the new roof and to also check out the delights of the top floor which awaits now the jackdaws and mice have been evicted.

*Photos: Mike Hopps*





# Find Out More Days are Back!

By Graham Aitken, volunteering co-ordinator

With the Bluebell Railway now hopefully back to normal after the Covid years, David Chappell, Martin Lawrence, Steve Bigg, and I are keen to resume Find Out More Days which give potential volunteers the opportunity to learn more about the roles that they can undertake on our railway.

Whilst details of all of these roles can already be found on the Bluebell Railway website at [www.bluebell-railway.com](http://www.bluebell-railway.com) by clicking on JOIN and then on Volunteers on the drop-down menu, if you are not sure what job you would like to do, Find out More Days are designed to help. They cater for potential volunteers who have not made up their minds on which job they would like to do, by giving the opportunity to talk face to face with members of the Volunteering Team and seeing for themselves. Whilst it will be impossible to spend more than a short time at any one of the departments/locations that volunteers may be interested in, follow up sessions can, and will, be arranged.

## TIMETABLE FOR EACH FIND OUT MORE DAY

10:30am – Meet at Sheffield Park station and spend 90 minutes visiting and learning about what volunteers can undertake there.

12:15pm – Break, with opportunity to buy lunch in the Bessemer Arms.

1:00pm – Travel by train to Kingscote, spending 30 minutes there, fact finding.

2:09pm – Travel to Horsted Keynes, spending 75 minutes there finding out about our Carriage & Wagon and Infrastructure departments.

3:38pm – Board the train back to Sheffield Park and discuss which roles you may be interested in undertaking, in order that next steps can be arranged.

4:05pm – Arrive back at Sheffield Park and finish.

## PROPOSED DATES OF FIND OUT MORE DAYS

- ➔ Saturday 9th April
- ➔ Sunday 8th May
- ➔ Saturday 11th June
- ➔ Sunday 10th July
- ➔ Saturday 13th August
- ➔ Sunday 11th September
- ➔ Saturday 8th October

To guarantee a place on these popular Find Out More Days, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteer.coordinator@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:volunteer.coordinator@bluebell-railway.com) asap, giving details of your name, an idea of what you would like to do, if known, and the date of the of the tour you wish to join.

Details of where to meet at Sheffield Park will be given when you book your place.

Please note that you must be aged 16 or over to join one of the tours.

Suitable clothing and footwear should be worn as we will be out and about, regardless of the weather, and sandals are definitely not considered suitable.

David, Martin, Steve, and I look forward to meeting you on your tour, and perhaps then working with you in the future.

As most of the readers of the Bluebell Times will either be employees or volunteers, this information is provided so that you will be aware of what is taking place in our quest to welcome new volunteers that will allow us to continue to deliver our railway in the best possible way we can. If you see the FOMD attendees on the day of their visit, please talk to them telling them what you enjoy doing and encourage them to join us. It is our railway, so we must all play our part in making it successful and not leaving it to just a few of us to do so.



# Christmas Lunch Will Be Late ... Very Late

By Paul Bromley, museum steward *Photos by* Lance Hodgson and Tony Hillman

Members of the museum and archive teams put on their festive outfits and tucked into their Christmas lunch ... in March.

Stewards, archivists and their partners gathered at the Birch Hotel in Haywards Heath for a postponed get-together on a warm Spring day 13 weeks after the recognised time for Yuletide celebrations – and after the official end of winter.

The museum team last held a Christmas lunch at the hotel in December 2019 and had already booked the venue for their following year's annual meal by the time Covid struck in early 2020. The gathering that year was put back until December 2021 only for the rise of the Omicron variant to put paid to their plans once again.

And so it was on Wednesday 23 March this year that the group was finally able to sit around tables and enjoy a traditional meal of roast turkey with all the trimmings and Christmas pudding!

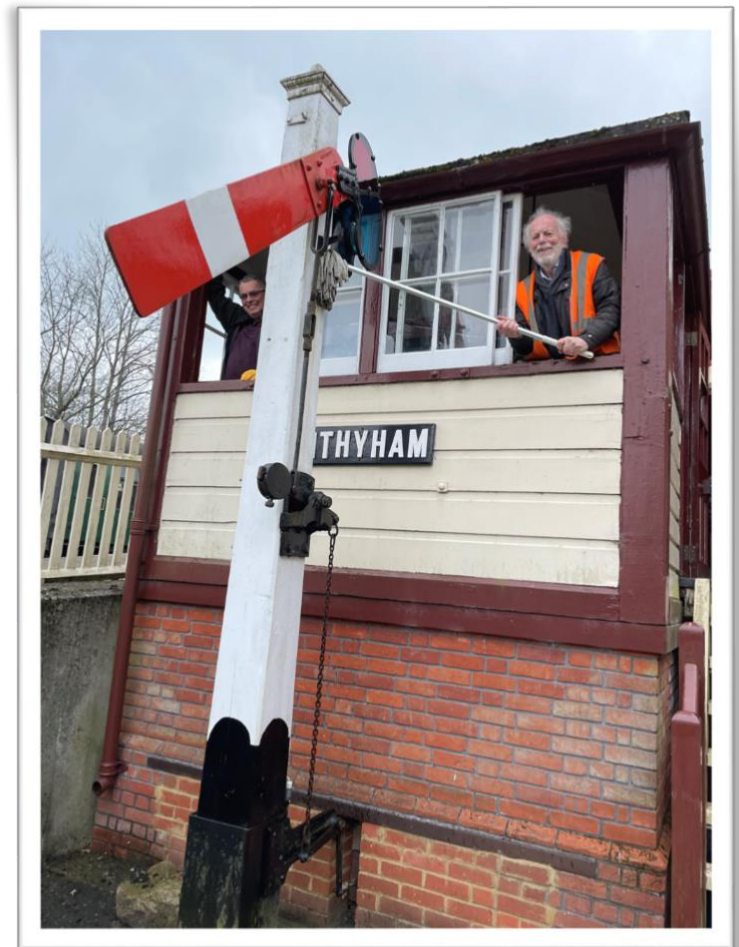
Museum curator Tony Drake, wearing an appropriate tie showing trains and snowy scenery, thanked the stewards and archivists for their work over the last couple of years.

And just a week later, the team were together again for their annual Spring clean of the museum on Platform 2 at Sheffield Park. At least this event was held at the right time of year!

Assistant curator Tony Hillman led a team of 12 stewards who spent three hours polishing, mopping, cleaning and wiping all the exhibits.

Tony commented: "There were plenty of buckets of black water - the steam engines passing by make the museum quite grubby."

The museum is open on running days. Full opening times at <https://www.bluebell-railway-museum.co.uk/>



# Latest Additions to the Museum Website

By Chris Wilson, Bluebell Railway archive volunteer



New to the website for April are the next batch of John Scrace's station and signal box photographs, 127 locations beginning with the letter D.

We have also added 100 of John's locomotives images. These are all catalogued in numerical order and the majority of this set are Schools class locos.

To view and order go to [www.bluebell-railway-museum.co.uk](http://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. The content key search allows you to see all the images of a particular type, for example, all the images taken in West Sussex.

Use the New key to see all the latest images. As we are now able to add images more quickly than before a new key "Nearly New" has been added. This shows the set of images that were new previously.



*Top: Deal Junction Signal Box, 26 May 1970. This 'box is now in use at Wittersham Road on the Kent & East Sussex Railway*

*Bottom: Schools class No. 928 Stowe at Stewart's Lane Shed, 29 May 1963*



# On This Day, 8 April

By Tony Hillman, assistant museum curator

Four pictures from the Bluebell Photographic Archive taken on 8 April. Thanks to Martin Elms, John Creed, Richard Peirce, Roger Merry-Price and Chris Wilson for finding the pictures and providing the notes.



Sunday 8 April 1951 and LBSCR Class 13 4-4-2T No. 32030 of Eastbourne shed (75G) is seen near Polegate with what is described by the photographer as the 10.16am Eastbourne to Tunbridge Wells West via the 'Cuckoo' line. Whilst the relevant working timetable confirms the departure at that time, the public timetable, however, shows a later departure at 10.22am! Quite what the passengers thought of this we do not know, but any explanation of the discrepancy would be gratefully received.

The train consists of a 2 car PP set with a van for milk traffic. The working timetable indicates it to be a "Pull and Push" train but the 13 class were not PP fitted: the use of the set was simply a way of getting it to Tunbridge Wells West where it later formed the 6.40pm to East Grinstead.

The 13 class were designed by Douglas Earle Marsh, built at Brighton Works and first introduced in October 1907. No. 32030 was built in March 1910 and was

withdrawn in August 1951, just four months after the picture was taken. In September 1952 the same train was rostered for one of the brand new BR Standard 4 2-6-4Ts which, together with the LMS-designed, but Brighton-built, Fairburn 2-6-4Ts resulted in the mass withdrawal of most of the remaining elderly LBSCR passenger tanks.

The Cuckoo line was so named from a tradition observed at the annual Heathfield fair where, every April, a cuckoo would be released as the first cuckoo of spring. It opened in three stages, the first from Polegate to Hailsham in May 1849, from there to Heathfield in April 1880 and on to Eridge in September 1880. It was recommended for closure in the 1963 Beeching Report, "*The Reshaping of British Railways*". Passenger services were withdrawn in two tranches: Eridge to Hailsham closed in June 1965 whilst Hailsham to Polegate followed in September 1968.

Photo: John J. Smith





An unusual view taken on the Railway Quay at Newhaven, on the same day as the previous picture, and looking approximately south east. The engine shed is behind the camera whilst to the right just visible is the Harbour and in the distance, Fort Hill.

To the forefront is 0-6-0T Class A1X No. 32636. Built in 1872 as [Class A No. 72 Fenchurch](#), it was sold out of service to the Newhaven Harbour Company in 1898 and used on the lightly-laid West Quay line. It was then upgraded to a Class A1X in 1913 and sold back to the Southern Railway in 1927, acquiring the number 636. It remained at Newhaven throughout this period up until 1955, a total of 57 years. After leaving Newhaven it worked on the Kent & East Sussex line and then the Hayling Island branch, where with No. 32670 it hauled the last passenger train on Sunday 3 November 1963. By this time it was the oldest locomotive still at work on British Railways. Withdrawn shortly afterwards it was bought in Spring 1964 by the Bluebell Railway. As part of its overhaul in 2001, it was converted back to a Class A1 and renumbered No. 72. It is currently in works

and is expected to be back in traffic this year to [celebrate its 150th birthday](#).

The engine behind is Class H2 4-4-2 No. 32426 *St Alban's Head*, built in 1912 for the LBSCR fast Brighton expresses. After electrification of that line in 1933 it was used from Newhaven on Boat trains or fast commuter services; it remained there throughout the 50s until withdrawn in September 1956. The Bluebell Atlantic project is currently recreating sister engine [No. 32424 Beachy Head](#). Finally, the engine in the background is probably Class E4 No. 32594, withdrawn a few weeks before the picture was taken and scrapped by the end of April 1951.

*Photo: John J. Smith*



crossing gates, just out of shot to the right. An eleventh lever was added later to work wicket gates for the crossing. The clapboard upper storey was the standard design for SER boxes until shortly after 1900, along with the slate roof. The rather clumsy wooden finial was more unusual; most boxes were longer

Chart Signals, or to quote the full name, Chart Intermediate Signal Box, photographed on 8 April 1961. This box was provided to break up the block section between Pluckley, 3½ miles to the west, and what was then the first box at Ashford (Kent), West Yard (later 'C' box), 2 miles to the east. It was one of several introduced on the South Eastern main line in the 1880's, to cope with the growth in traffic. The smallest of these worked just distant and home signals in each direction, from a ground level frame in what was little more than a shed, but Chart was privileged to have a proper SER signal box, albeit a rather small one.

Elevated on a low brick base, Chart box originally boasted ten levers, working distant, home and starting signals in the Up direction, distant and home on the Down line, a short Up siding for agricultural produce and the accommodation level

and had a roof ridge, rather than coming to a single peak. Unlike its contemporaries such as the LBSCR and LSWR, the SER did not appear to deem visibility of movements from the box to be of great importance. The minimal domestic-style sash windows seen here were also found in much larger SER boxes; at Chart the only way to see trains approaching from Ashford was to look through a glazed pane in the box door.

Chart box opened on Monday 6 February 1888, and closed with the opening of the Ashford stage of the Kent Coast colour-light signalling scheme on Sunday 29 April 1962. The crossing remains, though padlocked and for authorised users only.

*Photo: John J. Smith*





On Wednesday 8 April 1964, Q Class 0-6-0 No. 30543 runs “wrong line” with a single wagon from Redhill Down Yard back towards the station on the Down Tonbridge Branch line. We have been unable to ascertain the exact nature of the move, but the *Railway Observer* records that on several occasions about this time, 30543 substituted for a 350 h.p. diesel shunter on local duties around the Redhill area.

The Q Class was designed by Richard Maunsell; twenty locomotives were constructed by the SR at Eastleigh Works immediately before the Second World War in 1938 – 1939 by Maunsell’s successor, Oliver Bulleid. They were intended for use on medium distance freight trains, but were by no means unknown on passenger trains.

Three Bridges Shed was closed as an independent depot on 6 January 1964, but 30543 was not formally transferred to Redhill until May 1964, although recorded in service at Redhill earlier. By August 1964 it saw occasional use, but had no diagrammed work. In late September 1964, after a failure, it was stored in a siding at the Earlswood end of the shed yard, in company with fellow Q Class No. 30531 and N Class No. 31400. Later, it was to be repaired for Christmas parcels traffic, for which Redhill was a major centre and

1964 was the last year in which steam played a significant role. To deal with this traffic, in addition to No. 30543, six locos were loaned to Redhill from the South Western Division. Although due to be withdrawn on 20 December 1964 it was officially recorded as working on the following two days, before going for scrap at Thos. W. Ward, Grays, Essex in April 1965.

In the background can be seen what at first glance appears to be a brick retaining wall, but in fact is the rectangular surrounding of a ventilation shaft from the LBSCR’s Redhill Tunnel on the Quarry Line, which passes below the SER at this point. The line below was the scene of a collision between three goods trains early on 18 April 1918, which resulted in the tunnel being blocked from track to the crown of the arch with debris, including several tons of live ammunition. As WW1 was still in progress, this was not disclosed at the time, but bravery awards were made to several railway staff involved in the clearance of the tunnel.

*Photo: John Scrace*



# What's On

Friday 8 April – Thursday 12 May

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.

## DINING TRAINS

Friday 8 April – [Fish & Chip Special](#)

Saturday 9 April – [Golden Arrow Dining](#)

Sunday 10 April – [Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Friday 15 April – [Fish & Chip Special](#)

Sunday 17 April – [Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Tuesday 19 April – [Wealden Rambler Afternoon Tea Train](#)

Saturday 23 April – [Wealden Rambler Chocolate Afternoon Tea](#)

Saturday 23 April – [Golden Arrow Dining](#)

Sunday 24 April – [Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Saturday 30 April – [Golden Arrow Dining](#)

Sunday 1 May – [Golden Arrow Luncheon](#)

Saturday 7 May – [Golden Arrow Dining](#)

## EVENTS

Friday 15 April – Monday 18 April – [Easter weekend](#), with [Service B](#) and Easter-themed events

Sunday 1 May – [Toy and Rail Collectors Fair](#)



# The Bluebell Times

*A Newsletter for  
Bluebell Railway  
Members, Staff and  
Supporters*

*The Bluebell Times is published  
monthly on the second Friday of  
each month. The next issue is  
scheduled to be available on 13  
May 2022 from [bluebell-  
railway.com/bluebell-times](http://bluebell-railway.com/bluebell-times)*

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

*The Bluebell Times editor  
Tom James*

[bluebelltimes@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:bluebelltimes@bluebell-railway.com)

## 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](#).

Contributors to this issue

- ➔ Graham Aitken
- ➔ Laurie Anderson
- ➔ Paul Bromley
- ➔ David Cable
- ➔ John Creed
- ➔ Gordon Dudman
- ➔ Martin Elms
- ➔ Andrew Fairbank
- ➔ Tony Hillman
- ➔ Lance Hodgson
- ➔ Mike Hopps
- ➔ Tom James
- ➔ Andy Kelly
- ➔ Matt Lander
- ➔ Geoff Mee
- ➔ Roger Merry-Price
- ➔ Richard Peirce
- ➔ Paul Russell
- ➔ Trevor Summerfield
- ➔ Andy Taylor
- ➔ Chris Wilson