



The weather turned out nice again! Winter works at Sheffield Park Photo: Jon Goff

The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

February 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

It is normal practice that the heading photo of *The Bluebell Times* shows one of our wonderful locomotives in action somewhere or other on the Railway. However, I make no apologies this month for showing a completely different, and largely unseen, side of things. Jon Goff's photo of the Infrastructure team at work at Sheffield Park, relaying track amidst falling snow, serves as an introduction to this issue which has a heavy focus on maintenance. Of course, running trains is the *raison d'être* of the Railway, but without a dedicated army of volunteers and staff maintaining the track, buildings, signals, locomotives and rolling stock – often in adverse weather – there would be no trains to run and no railway upon which to run them. When I started as a volunteer, we would generally run 52 weekends per year, but over the last decade or so, it has increasingly been the norm to take the period from New Year to February half-term to allow a substantial track replacement project. So if you ever thought the Railway was quiet at this period – think again!

Nonetheless – service trains now resume! We will be running again from tomorrow (10 February) throughout half-term, and then in earnest from late March. 2024 looks to be a packed year for events, and will also have to special occasions to celebrate the launch into traffic of some long-awaited carriages and locomotives. It promises to be a year to remember.

Tom James, Editor

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Checking in with the Chair

By Paul Churchman, chairman, Bluebell Railway plc and chairman, BRPS

So, here we go again! It's February already and 2023, Flying Scotsman, Giants of Steam, Unicorns and the Festive season seem such a long time ago already!

Yet, here we are packing away the equipment from the first tranche of engineering works this year and across the railway, groups are working hard on their maintenance regimes in readiness for the year ahead.

I'm not sure how many of you use Facebook to catch up on the news and gossip from other railways but this year particularly, I've been amazed at just how many other railways have taken the "closed season" to make substantial inroads into their maintenance programmes. Not just working on novel things like extensions but major track relaying or works concerning their infrastructure.

To me, that's a very clear demonstration of just how fragile infrastructure can be and if you choose to ignore it, you end up paying the high price of that neglect. Just look at some examples that have been recently highlighted on other heritage railways and also on the main network.

When a lot of heritage railways took over their respective lines, they were accepted "as seen" but many had previously suffered periods of neglect and lack of investment – ultimately that being a contributory factor to their demise and subsequent closure in some cases.

Now aged brickworks, collapsing culverts and general failings are having to be addressed and clearly are having an impact on budgets. Not a month passes without a heritage railway promoting a fund-raising exercise for bridges, embankments or general buildings.

I remember a saying by the late Chris White (former Infrastructure Director) who said "everyone forgets the drains at their peril!" yet just

how critical are they? Something that even the Big Railway is now having to address. More so, this is all coming at a time when the effects of climate change are beginning to be felt and the damage Mother Nature can cause is unforgiving.

As Chairman, I am so pleased to see just how much planning, preparation and execution has been put into the amount of big and general maintenance projects since the turn of the year. Standing back, it doesn't seem like stopping. Certainly, when one finishes, the next one is already on its way: our next track relaying begins after half term. *[Continuing south to close the gap in new track from the bottom of Freshfield Bank towards Sheffield Park – Ed]*

Just read in this edition of Bluebell Times to get a flavour of what's currently going on.

It's not just the visible aspect of the railway that's been hard at work but also behind the scenes such as in our commercial team planning for the numerous events we have planned plus of course all the new stock making its debut.

I was very pleased to have attended the return of the Bluebell Railways 4-VEP event in honour of our President, Gordon Pettitt at Waterloo Station on the last weekend in January.

My congratulations to our colleagues at the SETG for an amazing achievement and for all the praise rightly given to them.

How nice to see social media go into an absolute frenzy but also it was noted just how many youngsters there were on the adjoining platform taking pictures of a train some of them would never have seen in squadron service.

I understand that Gordon continues to tell everyone he can about his day even two weeks on.

Dare I say it? Happy birthday Mr. President!

Just as we ended the year on a positive note, it's my intention we maintain that momentum and build on that this coming year with what we have planned.

I promised to get stability in the railway and I believe we have done just that.

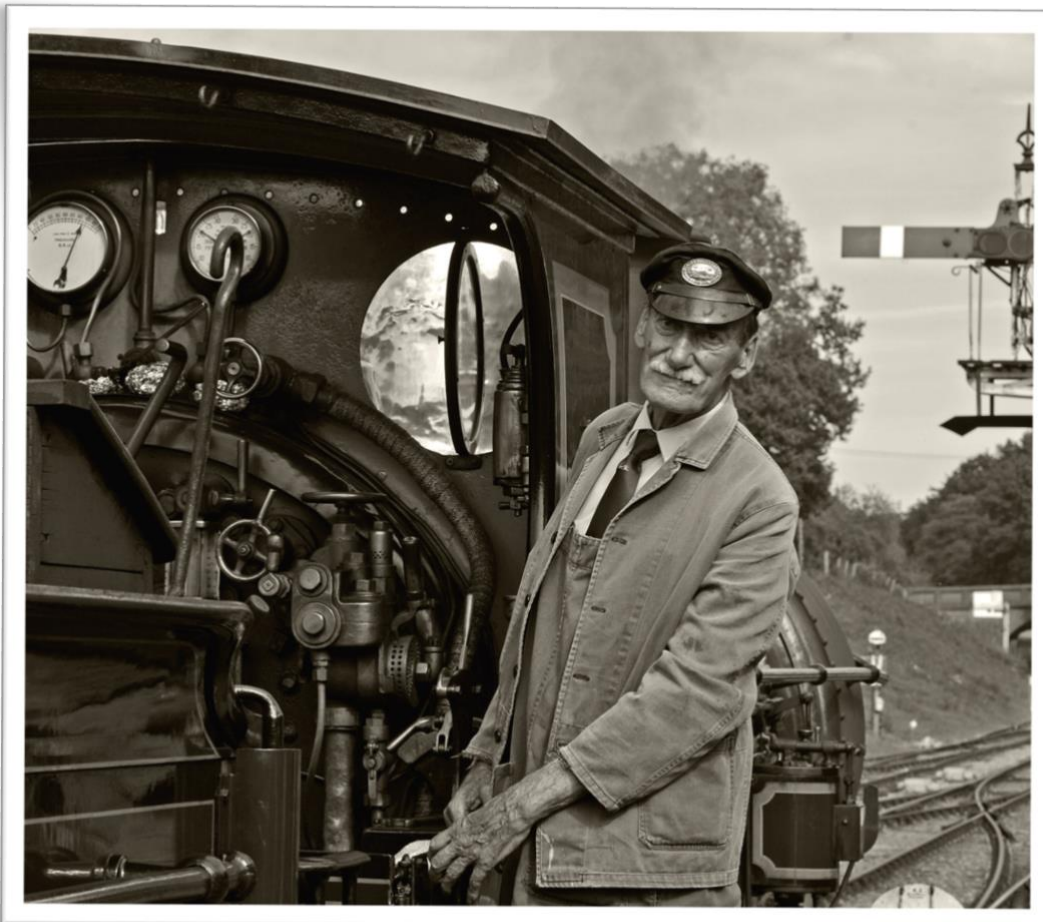
My colleague Roy Watts used to say that as a supermarket manager, during your first year in a new store, you set out your stall however stressful and painful that might be. The second year you built on what you had implemented and in your third year you saw the results of your labours beginning to be come through. Hopefully that process is already well underway.

He also said that as a Manager, if nothing bad or obscene was written about you on the toilet closet

walls within two weeks of you taking over, then you had failed miserably!

I'd like to pay tribute to Clive Groome who has sadly passed away. Clive was that smiling face on the footplate who was always prepared to give advice and the benefit of his experience to others and set the standards our crews adhere to today. Thank you, Clive.

I always close on an appeal. Working alongside the fantastic groups and gangs around the railway and listening to what they want to achieve is something really special to listen to. Do you want to be a part of it? Then don't hold back, come along and help YOUR railway build a strong future. There is plenty of room for you on the journey we are on together so let's make it happen.



Clive Groome awaiting the right away at Horsted Keynes, September 2017.

My overriding impression was of how everything he did was with neatness, precision and a sense of unhurried calm. I can count my own footplate career to going on one of his Footplate Days and Ways courses, rekindling an interest in railways that had drifted into the background through University and early career days – a few months after attending for a day driving Stepney running up and down through Horsted Keynes, I'd signed up as a volunteer. I know many other people can trace their step into volunteering back to one of Clive's courses – Ed.

R.I.P Clive.

Photo: Derek Hayward

When Gordon met "Gordon" at Waterloo

By Roy Watts, BRPS Vice President [Photos by Roy Watts and James Cummins](#)

For the second time in as many years, a Bluebell "asset" has ventured onto the mainline only this time, in a rather more groundbreaking manner.

I'm sure by now you will have seen the media coverage of the Bluebell Railways [4VEP unit, number 3417](#), returning to Waterloo station.

The sight of a blue liveried 4-car electric multiple unit, lights on, "shoes down", the sound of a compressor making that regular ringing beat and the slamming of coach doors reverberating off the overall glass roof meant that the drought that had lasted 6820 days since the last service train (or, if we are being specific, 6706 days since the slam door farewell rail tour!) left Waterloo station".

But how had this come around and what was its purpose?

So to begin with, this special event was to recognise the contribution to the Railway industry and Preservation movement by one of its greats, former General Manager, Gordon Pettitt and what a better way than to reunite him with many of his former colleagues and associates from across the railway world. Add to that giving him a first-hand opportunity to achieve a lifelong ambition and you had the perfect ingredients for a special day.

The survival of the unit has been well documented since its original arrival at East Grinstead on the 17th January 2009 but since our colleagues at the [Southern Electric Traction Group](#) took over custodianship of the unit, a slow, painstaking but careful, methodical and well documented restoration has been taking place at the groups base in Strawberry Hill, south west London.

It goes without saying that we know the great man himself, Gordon Pettitt, is President of the Bluebell Railway and he plays an important role providing advice and a constant watchful eye over the progress of our Railway probably more than is apparent.



Having a train named after you means that you closely monitor its activities, and he has done just that in seeking regular updates and site visits to the group at their home base.

Of course, many of Gordon's close friends and former colleagues would often accompany him on these visits and nothing gives him greater pleasure than to show "his" train! Indeed, it was these very people who planted the seed of an idea with the SETG.

Acknowledging that Gordon's advancing years and mobility could become a barrier to him achieving one of his main ambitions, that being to see "his" train under the roof of Waterloo station, the SETG picked up the challenge and set out to achieve just that. They were determined to turn that ambition to a reality and after many years of restoration, they knew it was time to show off the fruits of their labours and so to use a pun, the wheels were set in motion!

Months of hardworking led by Chris Buckland, Steve Upton and many others including Bluebell's Richard Salmon who expertly crafted and fitted the new footboards (and indeed myself who painted an interior cab door!) was rewarded at 8.00 am on the 27th when two GBRf class 73 locomotives arrived light at Strawberry Hill depot to top and tail the unit to platform 19 at Waterloo. Gordon himself with many of his former colleagues and associates on board, travelled up on a special train kindly provided by South West Railway which was also bought into platform 19 where he was able to view a very resplendent 3417 ticking over nicely under Waterloos' overall roof.

Not only was Gordon reacquainted with his unit but there was also many more of his former

working colleagues waiting to greet him, some he hadn't seen for many years. There were a number of Bluebell people in attendance who have worked with Gordon over the years including Kingscote Station Master, Mark Baker, who had just driven his class 455 unit from Shepperton and thought all the photographers were out for him! Sorry Mark.

There followed many photo opportunities and presentations before the unit had to return to its home where the work to maintain her for future outings will continue.

It has been a most useful exercise as to what needed to be done, the necessary groups and people who would make the event happen, all of which has been meticulously recorded for future use and I am sure it won't be long (hint!) Before the unit pays the Bluebell a return visit.

In case you are wondering, with all the recent focus on manually opening doors, there were no passengers on board the unit and was an Empty Coaching Stock move.

It leaves me to ensure that all those who made this happen are duly thanked and acknowledged for their part – Network Rail, GBRf, South West Railway and to all the management and staff at Waterloo station who acted as hosts and finally to the men and women of the SETG and all those who have given their time over the last 9 years restoring the unit to its current condition – but as always this is just the beginning.



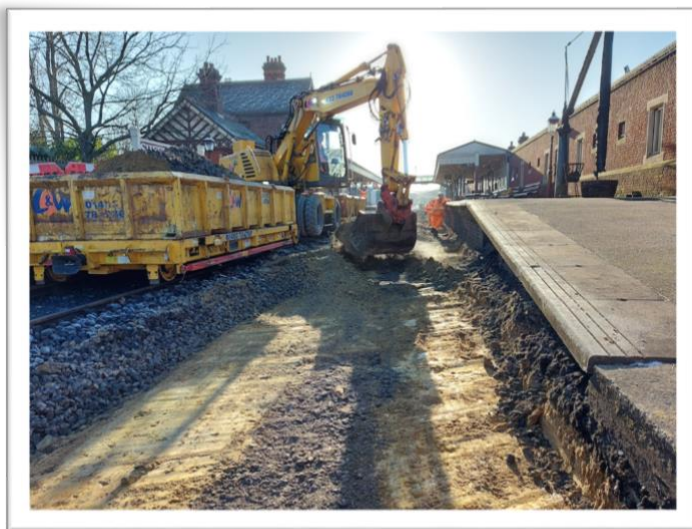
Winter Works at Sheffield Park

By Jon Goff, Infrastructure Department. [Photos](#) as credited

The infrastructure team have carried out a lot of the planned work at the Sheffield Park. Several different jobs all happened at once between the end of Christmas and the school's half term by when they must all be finished so that the railway can open for business then. They included: -

- ➔ Removing all the track in platform 2
- ➔ Digging right out the track bed in platform 2 as it has never been done to the proper depth since it was first built
- ➔ Installing new point rod stools the whole length of platform 2
- ➔ Digging a new drain down the length of the platform and lining it, along with the track bed with a waterproof membrane
- ➔ Replacing the wooden sleepers with bullhead concrete sleepers
- ➔ Trimming the rails to get rid of the cripples at the ends
- ➔ Redrilling the rails and putting the same rails back
- ➔ Ballasting and tamping with all fresh new ballast
- ➔ Digging out a lot of holes and installing point rodding concrete supports
- ➔ Replacing the steps and brackets up to the footbridge on platform 1
- ➔ Digging out and levelling the south end of platform 1 including lowering the manholes lamp posts drains etc.
- ➔ Repair the corbel brick layers at the south end of platform 1
- ➔ Installing cable ducts and a new manhole on platform 1
- ➔ Erect a new lamppost at the bottom of platform 1 ramp
- ➔ Service and re-timber the half-sets, (point blade sections) of the points at the south end of platform 2
- ➔ Install new drainage under the whole length of track in platform 2.

Before work could start ALL staff and volunteers had to go through an induction course first and must wear full PPE, including hard hats before entering the enclosed area around the two platforms. This is because as it is a building site, it



(Left): Starting the dig out. Photo: Jon Goff

(Right): Drainage trench complete. Photo: Tim Crump

comes under CDM (Construction Design and Management) rules and nobody is allowed in without going through the induction. Anyone just passing through or even just crossing over at the ends of the site must be escorted.

A good start has been made in all the above areas despite some inclement weather. The dig showed us that there was virtually no stone at all under the sleepers so it could never be properly tamped as you just cannot tamp mud. Indeed, any attempt to do so would have broken up the hard pan under the track which would cause it to sink in faster than ever.

The dig has revealed some bad news, as most digs seem to. The cast iron pipe down the middle between the two tracks leaks in several places. We know of one leak from the earlier dig a couple of years ago at the bottom of platform 1 but there are a lot more. The whole pipe badly needs to be lined but that is another expense we don't want but will need to be planned in at some point.

The new drainage trench was dug and a new pipe installed over the Terram and plastic sheeting. Ballast was dropped over it to fill the trench to form a 'French drain' under the track as seen in Tim Crump's photo. *[See previous page]*

After the drainage trench was complete and filled with ballast, a good initial 100mm minimum depth of track ballast was dropped on top of the plastic sheeting by Darren in the road-railer. This was checked for depth and levelness using the Laser set up on the platform with the receiver fixed to a height staff. It was a struggle to read the numbers on the receiver in the low early morning sun. It could have been read from the other side but that would mean working with backs to the digger bucket which is not a safe practice and as always – safety first. This would have been the first time ever that there would have been sufficient proper ballast under the sleepers since the railway was first built. Back then small beach pebbles were used over the whole line which don't lock together and form a stable track bed.

With all the ballast laid and whacked down smooth with the triple-wacker, refurbished bullhead concrete sleepers, matching those in platform 1,



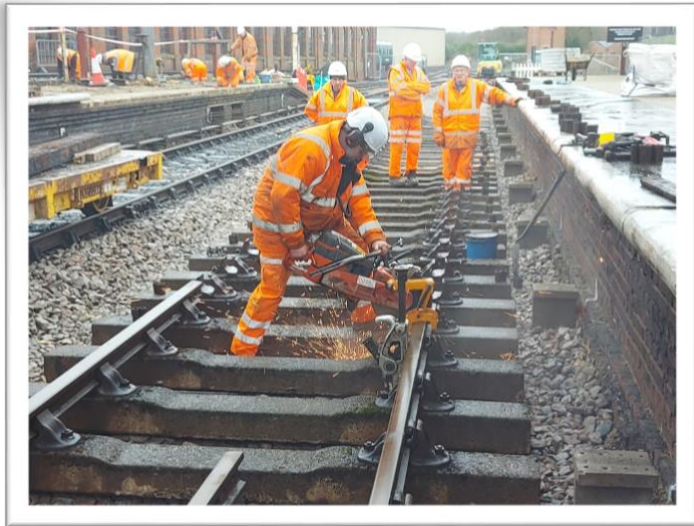
Laying sleepers to the line. Photo: Jon Goff



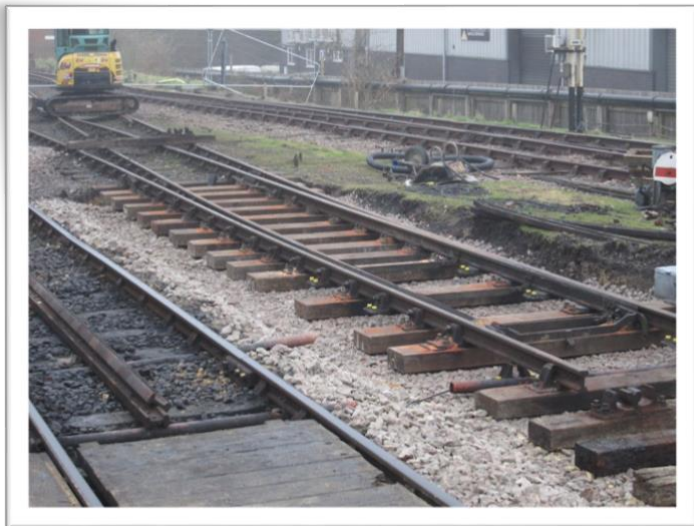
Adjusting the sleeper positions. Photo: Tim Crump



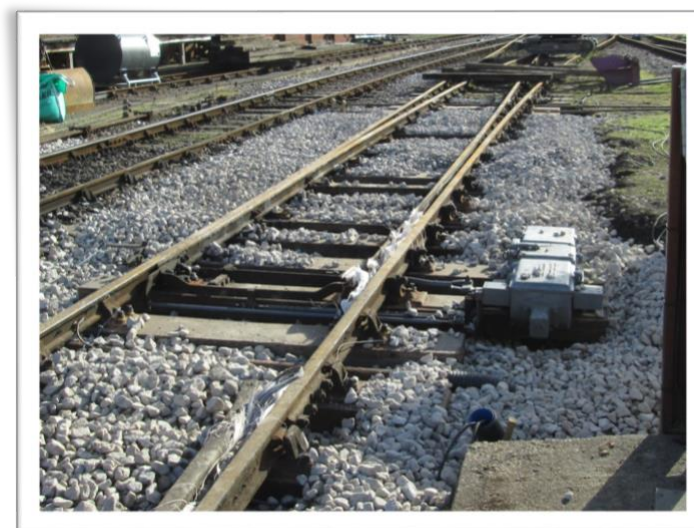
Author annoying everybody by being very fussy about exact measurements. Photo: Tim Crump



Trimming the rail ends. Photo: Jon Goff



Reassembly of the point half sets. Photo: Tim Crump



S&T have refitted the point motor and its cables. Photo: Tim Crump

were placed against a line drawn on the ballast at the correct distance from the platform edge. They were laid out and barred into their exact positions using two tape measures with the spaces marked on them to the millimetre with green spots. This massively reduces the work aligning the sleepers when trying to get the bullhead rail into the jaws of the rail-chairs.

They were laid one panel's worth at a time, and then the rails dropped in before moving onto the next panel. It took two days over the length of the platform to put all the original straight rails back. Some new, second-hand rail was required to fill the gap due to the shortened rails.

All the rails that were in platform 2 were worn but still had a worthwhile length of time left in them yet so, much as we would like to put new rails in, the expense could not be justified this time round. The ends of the rails were in poor condition though, so these were all cut off and redrilled. Careful measurements had to be made on each rail so that with one 650mm section cut off at each end, leaving 26 sleepers per panel, rather than the normal 28, the remaining section was exactly 16,988mm long. The exact position of the cuts required adjusting to miss the old bonding wire holes, and in some cases adjusted so that one of the old bonding holes ended up being over drilled in the middle of a new fishplate hole. Andy Palmer can be seen cutting off one of the ends to the pre-marked position while the others stepped back out of the way.

The points at the bottom end of platform 2, which is the access route to the carriage shed and pump house siding, required new timbers as the old ones were virtually life expired. At this stage, only the point blades – the movable rails – and their associated straight 'stock' rails had their timbers replaced with some we had in stock. This section of the points is called the "half-sets" and they have now been cleaned up and refitted.

With all the rails now back and fully re-connected, the first layer of top ballast was added. The slightly odd set of points (a mixture of C and D components) were reassembled and are fully working. S&T arrived mob-handed on Wednesday

with virtually everyone in the department there. The reason for that was because as the points, ground shunt signal (dummy) and associated wiring and rodding are inside the CDM area, and so the whole department could go through a single site induction course at once.

S&T fixed the dummy in the six-foot way [*the space between adjacent lines – Ed*], finished all the track circuit bonding, fixed the point motor in place and connected and adjusted it to the millimetre-required tolerance all in the one day. After tamping and final alignment some adjustment may still be required though.

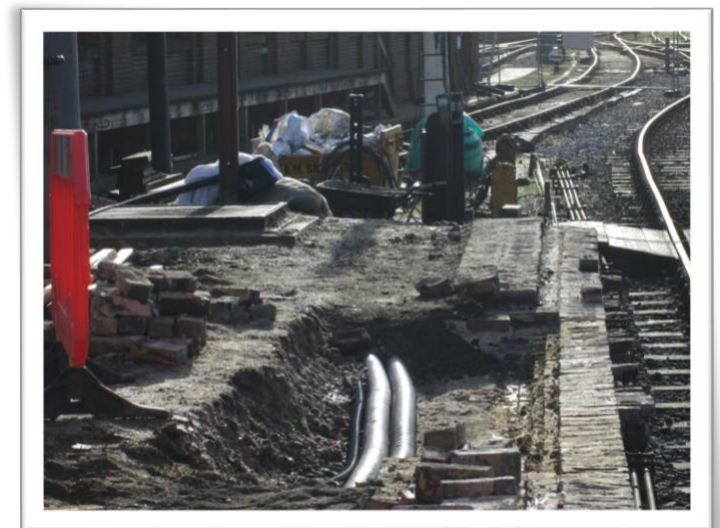
By the end of Thursday, about one third of the relayed track had been tamped using the tamping bank attached to the arm of the road-railer. The picture shows it at the start of the relay where the track is lifted to the required height using six hand jacks and the laser to measure the height of the top of the rail. When finished it should be exactly level and horizontal right through the platform although it will settle a few millimetres and require a full tamp which will be done after the next relay at Ketches after half term. A tidy up is required on Platform 2 before it can be handed back to operations.

Work on platform 1 was divided into two sections, the bridge steps and the south end platform surface. The group working on the platform also progressed well. Firstly, all the old uneven tarmac was lifted from the footbridge down to the bottom of the ramp. A photo by Tim Crump shows the platform dug up and new conduits being buried. The top loose corbel brick layer was removed together with the big drain grill for the water tower. All the other drain covers etc. were at slightly different heights and these are call trip hazards in today's language. By the end of the week, all the covers were cemented down at the new lower height and all levelled as a safety measure as a part of upgrading the safety standard of the whole of the south end of Platform 1.

The back of the platform had the blue coping stones which were also lowered to the same height as everything else, prior to new fence posts being fitted as this is not a bay platform and



Starting the initial tamp. Photo: Tim Crump



Platform 1 dug out and new conduits put in place. Photo: Tim Crump



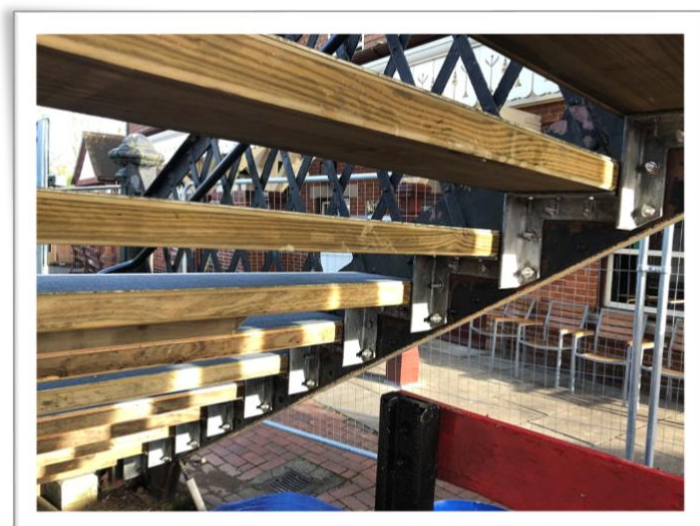
Drain surround replaced. Photo: Jon Goff



Bob the Builder replacing corbel brickwork. Photo: Jon Goff



New smart edges. Photo: Jon Goff



Underneath the new steps. Photo: Mike Hopps

needed a safety fence added. There is no access from the platform to whatever may be parked in the siding.

Our own 'Bob the Builder' rebuilt the corbel brick layer under where the new slabs were laid and over the old compensator recess after 'new' rail support beams were installed. The old ones were badly rusted and had to be replaced. The new water tower drain surround did have all its original stone slabs put back as they were in good enough condition and now look very smart.

The old edging stone slabs were in too poor a condition to reuse and new stone slabs being beyond the current budget, new concrete slabs laid along the edge, which actually look very smart albeit 'too new looking.' However, they will tone down like the ones on platform 2 after the black boots worn by the engine crews have been over them a few times.

With everything now level and at the new constant height, a new base layer was put in, smoothed out and compacted and is now ready for the new tarmac which should be in place by the time reader get this copy of *The Bluebell Times*.

While this was all going on, Mark Padgham and his team replaces the steps on the platform 1 side of the foot bridge. They are now much smarter and definitely a lot safer.

The timber planks for the new steps were chamfered and grooved on the underside for the rainwater 'drips'. All the steps were removed with their old brackets, bolt holes in the wrought iron sides enlarged and cleaned up and painted. The anti-slip surfaces have been put back as there are essential. Wet wood is absolutely lethal to step on and couldn't be worse on steps. The anti-slip surface is excellent in the wet despite not being the prettiest finish. As always safety has to come first.

SR Maunsell Restaurant Car 7864

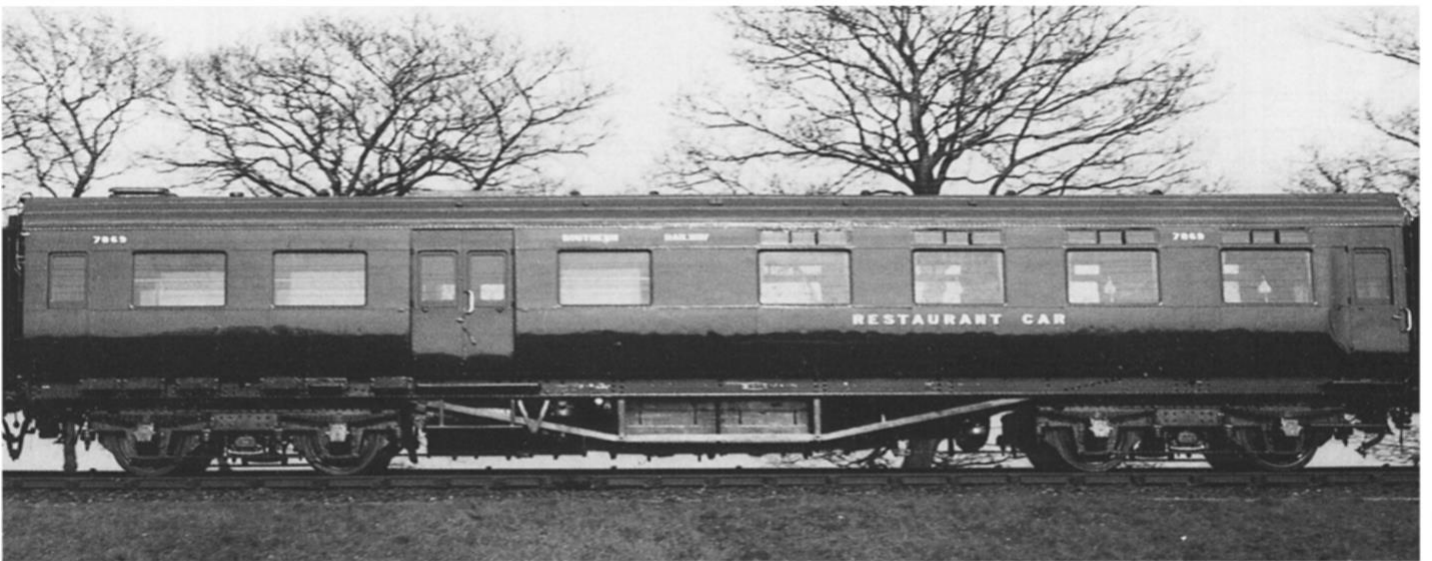
By Keith Leppard, Sothern Railway Coach Group

The SR Coach Group, set up last year, is taking on the restoration of the railway's Maunsell Restaurant Car No. 7864, for which fundraising has been going on for many years. We began work to restore some interior components recovered from No. 7864 over the past year, but the project is only really beginning in earnest now, with the entry of the coach into the works at Horsted Keynes. It was shunted in on 5 February and is now sitting at the north end of D road, where it is easily visible from the public viewing gallery. *[See photo on page 12 – Ed]*. Restoring 7864 to its former glory will be the main focus of the SRCG Maunsell team for the next few years. The first steps will be to get the tarpaulin off and then to carefully photograph and document everything before taking anything apart. We know that the coach will then need significant repairs to the timber frame.

Although 7864 came to the railway as early as 1962, it has never yet run in Bluebell service. Instead it was used as a static buffet at Sheffield

Park from its arrival until 1981, since when it has been in store awaiting restoration. Built in 1932 as a Restaurant Kitchen First, the coach was rebuilt in 1947 to an unclassified Kitchen Buffet, in the process losing 16 of its 24 seats. We plan to restore it to its original condition, providing for full-meal catering on our regular services plus evening catering trains of various types. More details of 7864 can be found at <https://www.bluebell-railway.co.uk/bluebell/pics/7864.html>

You can find out more about the SR Coach Group, including how to join the Group and support our work, on our [web pages](#). Our first newsletter is planned to go out to group members in March so please consider signing up. You can also follow progress with 7864 and other projects on our Facebook page (facebook.com/SR.coach.group) where you can be sure there will be lots of pictures of 7864 without its tarpaulin wrapper very soon. Don't expect it to look great just yet though, it's a big project



7869, a sister vehicle to our restaurant car photographed in 1940, showing how 7864 will look when restored to its original condition.

In the Works



Maunsell Restaurant Car [No. 7864](#) being moved into its new spot in the works at the north end of D road, 5 February. See article on page 11 of this issue.

Photo: Keith Leppard

BR Mark 1 Second Open [No. 4941](#), now converted to a wheelchair-accessible multi-purpose saloon, approaching completion of repainting at Horsted Keynes, 31 January.

Photo: David Chappell



Less than a week later, on 5 February, 4941's place in the paint shop had been replaced by '[Sir Archibald Sinclair](#)'.

Photo: Laurie Anderson





Two photos of 'Beachy Head' at Sheffield Park.

Left: The recently fitted lubrication pipework which runs along the outside of the boiler.

Photo: David Jones

Right: Tony Funnell's chalk guidelines ready for the final lining and lettering on the right hand cabside. The left hand one was done some years ago as that was on view to visitors to Atlantic House. The right hand nameplate sponsored by Guy and Robin Cooper of Swadlincote is also ready for bolting on.

Photo: David Jones





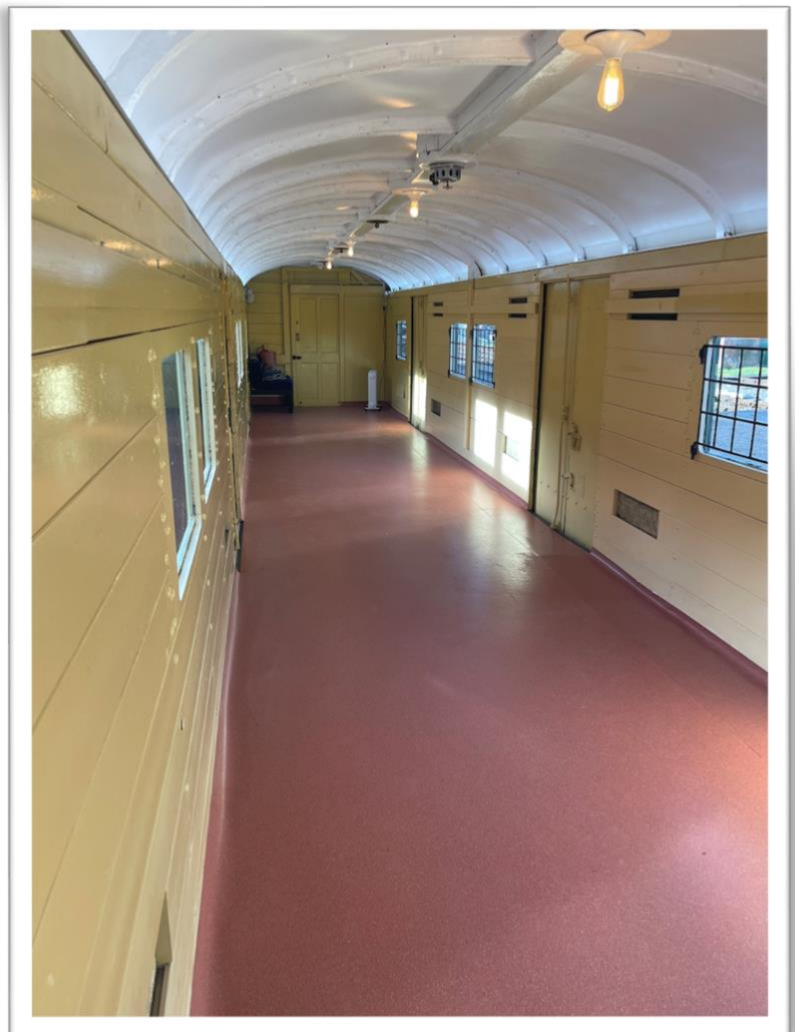
Two views showing progress on Southern Railway [Van C No. 419](#) and [Gangway Bogie Luggage Van No. 2462](#) – see [page 15](#) for more information.

The advanced restoration of No. 419 – for comparison look at the photo of this side of the van in [The Bluebell Times](#) from [October last year](#).

Photo: Chris Wilson

A view of the empty GBL showing the new floor covering.

Photo: Chris Wilson



Farewell Retsor!

By Peter Richards and Adrian Lee

Retsor began life on 19 February 2000 as an aid for Signalmen so that they could see their rostered turns online, and also submit their availability requests for the forthcoming roster period. It was an immediate success which led to a request from the Operations Manager for it to also have the STN [*Special Traffic Notice – Ed*] available. This was not so straightforward as some on the management of the railway did not want to have sensitive information involving third parties posted to the Internet. Following a debate we found a compromise which was the PTI (Public Train Information), a watered down version of the STN without any details of individuals' bookings etc.

Retsor soon expanded across the Operating Departments and, now fully password protected, included the Guards, all the stations' staff, the Loco Department, the Loco Department's Mutual Improvement Classes and finally Assessors in its pages. In the meantime, the STN had been added to the Retsor family, initially with its own password protected logins for those entitled to view it but not in one of the departments involved in rostering, and eventually fully incorporated into the roster pages so that everything was available from an individual's department's pages.

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 monthly draw to win prizes of up to £500, with the surplus money used to help fund the locomotive's maintenance. Entries for this year close on 28 February – for more information and the application form please see the [500+ Club web page](#) which is part of the Bulleid Society website www.bulleidsociety.org.

As this issue went to press, 'Sir Archibald Sinclair' entered the paint shop at Horsted Keynes for final painting and lining – see photo on page 12 – Ed.



Then along came BROOSS, which was meant to provide the same functions and more, but when that proved unsuccessful, Retsor was left to continue. Now HOPS has been established and is taking over all the functions that have been provided by Retsor so it is time for Retsor to be closed down after the expiration of the Special Traffic Notice covering 10 – 16 February 2024. Having started as an aid for Signalmen it is probably fitting that the last active section is that for the Signalling Department.

Throughout its whole life Retsor never cost the Railway a penny.

Our thanks go to all who have contributed to its success down the years.

Horsted Keynes Carriage Shop Reborn - and Donates £2,000

Words and photos by Chris Wilson, Carriage Shop volunteer

The Carriage Shop team are delighted to start 2024 with two donations. Firstly, £1,000 to the Horsted Keynes station fund. This was raised from sales in the Kiosk on platform 4 over the Christmas period. Thank you to the Station staff who opened and closed the Kiosk and the Carriage Shop volunteers who covered days during Santa Special trains. The Kiosk will be open again during the February running days.

Secondly we are pleased to have been able to provide a further £1,000 to cover for materials for the restoration work being undertaken on BY 419, which will become the storage van for the new Shop. We would like to thank all the volunteers that have completed work on 419. It looking absolutely superb with nearly all the external work completed. See the Bluebell Railway's Southern Coach Groups Facebook page for photographs from the restoration:

facebook.com/SR.coach.group

Since the Carriage Shop closed following the Giants of Steam last year a considerable amount of work has been carried out. Firstly on packing up the contents of the shop in preparation of moving the Carriage slightly South on platform 1, which after such a long time of being static went remarkably smoothly. After a short time there the Carriage then moved over to Dock outside Carriage & Wagon where more packing and clearing work could be completed. Matthew Cousin's opened the GBL (Gangwayed Bogie Luggage Van No. 2462) for a last hurrah in its Art Exhibition & Shop format for selected dates in December. During January the GBL was packed up, and fully emptied and cleaned. At the end of the month the floor was repaired, screeded and had a strong vinyl floor covering laid. During early February the van will have the electrics upgraded. Then the fitting out work will commence in earnest with a target date of reopening the new shop around Easter. The shop in the GBL will have most of the former offerings of the Carriage Shop

with Art by Matthew Cousins in a fully integrated shop, not two separate ventures in one vehicle.

To restock the new shop we are in urgent need of donations any model railway items, any Thomas the Tank Engine toys, toy cars or buses and transport jigsaw puzzles.

If you can help please contact:

bluebellrailwaycarriageshop@gmail.com Even if you have one spare wagon it would be greatly appreciated.

In addition we are always pleased to receive donations of books, DVDs, bound magazines, pictures, postcards, photographs, slides, mugs, badges, keyrings or other railway collectables.

For up to date information including our reopening date visit our Facebook page:

facebook.com/BluebellRailwayCarriageShop



Horsted Keynes Deputy Station Master James Young accepting the donation for Horsted Keynes station.

See page 14 for photos of vans Nos. 419 and 2462.

New Additions to the Museum Website

By Chris Wilson, Bluebell Railway archive volunteer

This month we have added a further 204 images to the Bluebell Railway Museum website bringing the total now available to 23,520.

This month all of the photographs come from the camera of David Esau and were taken on British Railways Eastern Region.

The images in the Archive are predominately Southern but we always prefer to keep a photographers collection together which is why you can find images from across the UK and Overseas on the museum website.



Top: A4 No. 60029 'Woodcock' with an express near Hadley Wood on 6 August 1960.

Photo: David Esau [158183]

Left: N7 No. 69697 passing North Woolwich signal box with a train for Liverpool Street on 7 September 1961.

Photo: David Esau [158273]



VIEWING AND ORDERING

Every photograph sale directly helps the Photograph Archive giving us much needed funds to invest in conservation and storage materials. The information needed to pay for orders online by BACS is now included on every order form.

To view and order 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. The content key search allows you to see all the images of a particular type, for example, all the images taken of Pullmans. Use the New key to see all the latest images including those mentioned and shown here and the Nearly New key to see what we added last month.

On This Day, 9 February

By Tony Hillman, Deputy Curator

Three pictures from the Bluebell Photographic Archive taken on 9 February. Thanks to John Creed, Martin Elms, Richard Peirce, Chris Sutton, Roger Merry-Price and Chris Wilson for finding the pictures and researching the notes.

Photo: JJ Smith [042817]



On a clear winter's day, ex SECR C Class 0-6-0, No. 31717 approaches Rotherfield and Marks Cross on the 1.50pm Tunbridge Wells West to Eastbourne service. With the ex SECR 'Birdcage' carriage set, it still manages to capture the look of an Edwardian branch line train.

It's Saturday 9 February 1952 and the working is part of Tonbridge Duty 296. The service is due to arrive in Eastbourne at 3.16pm and leave at 4.39pm, returning to Tunbridge Wells West at 6.26pm.

The 109 C Class engines were built from 1900 onwards, to the design of Harry Wainwright, the Chief Mechanical Engineer of then newly formed South Eastern and Chatham Railway. This locomotive was built by an outside contractor, Sharp Stewart and Co, as their works number 4689 entering service in January 1901 at Bricklayers Arms depot. After nationalisation it was at Tonbridge from July 1951 until December 1956, returning via a very brief stay at Norwood Junction to Bricklayers Arms.

It was finally withdrawn at the end of February 1961 and cut up the following month at Ashford works.

The railway through Rotherfield and Marks Cross was first opened on 1 September 1880 when the LBSCR completed its line between Hailsham and Eridge via Heathfield. As it formed a link to the Hailsham to Polegate line, opened in 1849, this development enabled through workings between Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne to begin.

The whole Eridge to Polegate section eventually became known as the Cuckoo Line after the fair of the same name held annually in Heathfield. The line suffered the inevitable loss of passengers in the 1950s and despite attempts to raise patronage by increasing the weekday service of eight daily passenger trains to hourly it could not escape being listed for closure in the Beeching Report. The last passenger trains ran in June 1965 and by late 1968 the railway had closed completely.



Following the previous train on the same day, E5 Class 0-6-2T No. 32588 ambles along the Cuckoo Line near Rotherfield and Mark Cross with the 2.35 pm freight from Tunbridge Wells West to Polegate. The featherweight load of one wagon and a brake van is hardly enough to justify the generous plume of smoke, but more wagons may be added as the train stops on the way to Polegate.

Confirming the information about the train required a degree of research, as the original photo caption from over 70 years ago was short on detail. Despite Duty No 676 on the headcode disc, the E5 was working Eastbourne Duty No 800, the return working of the 7.10 am freight from Polegate to Tunbridge Wells West. Usually rostered for a C2X Class 0-6-0, the two trains formed the Cuckoo Line Pick Up Freight in each direction, potentially serving all stations if required.

The E5 Class was designed by R.J. Billinton, who succeeded Stroudley on his death in 1889 and was

responsible for several successful classes of locomotive. The Class numbered thirty, built at Brighton Works between November 1902 and November 1904. Four were rebuilt by Marsh with a larger boiler between January and July 1911 as Class E5X. Apart from two early withdrawals, the rest of the E5/X Class survived to become part of the Southern Region, but all were withdrawn between 1949 and 1956, replaced by newly built 2-6-4Ts.

No. 32588 was built at Brighton Works in December 1903 as LBSCR No. 588 and named 'Hawkenbury'. It was allocated to Eastbourne shed from January 1951 until transfer to Brighton shed in September 1952 from where it was withdrawn in November 1953.

Photo: JJ Smith [042819]



Sunday 9 February 1958 and ex LSWR T9 4-4-0 No. 30719 departs Uckfield on the 12.55pm Brighton to Victoria. The locomotive is working *Stewarts Lane Duty No. 504* scheduled for a *Fairburn 4MT*. On this particular day the two double trips from London and return were worked by four engines all of different classes, only one of which was of the class rostered for it.

The unusual motive power is explained by the T9 being ex Brighton Works having had a 'light casual' overhaul, which included the fitting of 122 new tubes. Presumably Brighton shed saw the Victoria train as an opportunity of returning 30719 back to its home depot of Nine Elms. *Stewarts Lane* having provided BR Standard Class 4 4-6-0 No. 75065 on the down working, the 9.38 am Victoria to Brighton via Edenbridge Town and Eridge, as a rather tortuous way of getting it to Eastleigh Works!

This engine designed by Dugald Drummond, was one of sixty-six T9s. Built in September 1899 by

Dubs & Co. at a cost to the LSWR of £3,200. It was allocated to Nine Elms from June 1951 until June 1959 when it moved to Exmouth Junction shed for use on the North Cornwall line. Withdrawn in April 1961 it was cut up at Eastleigh Works the same month.

The train formation consists of a Maunsell (Restriction 1) 4-car set described in the Carriage Appendices as 'E Sets'. Consisting of two CKs between two identical BCKs they were used extensively on the Oxted lines as they were permitted to run between Tunbridge Wells West and Tonbridge.

Uckfield station is now the terminus of the line from London and Oxted. The station seen in the background was closed in May 1991 and replaced by a Portakabin style building and platforms on the north side of the level crossing. Network Rail replaced that building in March 2010 at a cost of £750,000.

Photo: JJ Smith [044757]



Vacancies

KITCHEN ASSISTANT

We currently seeking a self-motivated and enthusiastic individual to join our catering team as a kitchen assistant. This exciting opportunity provides an ideal platform for someone who is passionate and keen to contribute to the seamless delivery of exceptional dining experiences.

As a key member of the kitchen staff, the successful candidate will possess excellent organisational skills and be able to work effectively as part of a strong team. Responsibilities will include preparing ingredients, assisting with food preparation, maintaining cleanliness standards, and ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations.

A positive attitude is paramount, along with the ability to follow instructions accurately to meet high-quality service expectations. Applicants must be over 18 years old and will be required to be flexible mid-week and take on weekend working.

To apply, visit <https://www.bluebell-railway.com/job-vacancies/>

MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Megan Laughlin megan.laughlin@bluebell-railway.com for further information.

LOCOMOTIVE WORKSHOP VOLUNTEERS

In order to keep our fleet of locomotives in operation, we are always looking for volunteers who can assist in the locomotive workshop. We are particularly keen to hear from those with demonstrable mechanical engineering experience. If you would like to be involved in working on what is probably the biggest and most diverse collection of locomotives outside the National Railway Museum, then please get in touch.

MORE INFORMATION

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



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Tail Lamp

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

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

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