

Steaming out of lockdown: Sixty years to the day



COVID APPEAL HITS £400,000

National Lottery Heritage
Fund gives emergency
grant of
£250,000



Our new SteamLights product:
call for volunteer stewards





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Editor: Colin Tyson
 'Westering', 6 Kedale Road,
 Seaford, East Sussex
 BN25 2BY
 colinjtynson@hotmail.com
 Tel: 07943 021585

Editorial team: Roger Cruse,
 Paul Bromley, Roger Price
Design: Anita Waters

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Front cover main: The first
 re-opening train waits to leave
 Sheffield Park on 7 August
 2020. PETER EDWARDS

Rear cover: A recently
 surfaced slide from the late
 Roy Miller Collection -
 Caledonian Rly No 123 leads
 LSWR T9 No 120 at Victoria
 on 15 September 1963 waiting
 to depart on the 'Scottish Blue
 Belle' rail tour to the Bluebell
 Railway. ROY MILLER

Bluebell News is published quarterly
 at the end of March, June, September
 and December. Opinions expressed are
 not necessarily those of the society or
 company.

We are happy to be producing printed
 copies of *Bluebell News* once again, now
 that the Railway has resumed trading.
 Members will also receive printed
 versions of the previously digital only
 Spring and Summer editions for their
 binders, thanks to a special deal with
 our printers, to whom we are grateful.

BLUEBELL RAILWAY

Sheffield Park station, nr Uckfield,
 East Sussex TN22 3QL. Tel: 01825 720800
 Email: info@bluebell-railway.co.uk
 www.bluebell-railway.com www.bluebell-railway.com/brps
 Filming Enquiries: Tel: 01825 720835
 filming@bluebell-railway.co.uk



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 Chris Hunford
Company Secretary Graham Flight
C&W Director Bob Pamment
Communications Director Paul Bromley
Finance Director David Burch
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DIARY

Trains run weekends until January and
 until 5 Jan.
 Plus 'Off the Rails' goods trains and vintage
 vehicles 24-25, 31 Oct 1 Nov.
 For pre-booked Christmas trains and
 catering train offers visit
 www.bluebell-railway.com/timetables-and-calendar/

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Why do we always get extremes of weather whenever the Railway 're-opens'? We remember our triumphant opening day return to East Grinstead on 23 March 2013 which was undertaken in a snow blizzard – so it came as no surprise that the Railway resumed its passenger services on 7 August 2020 on not just the hottest day of the year but, at 36.4 degrees (measured at Heathrow) it was the hottest day since 2003!

Moreover, the plans laid down to symbolically re-open following lockdown since March on what was the very day that marked sixty years since the railway first opened to passengers in 1960 went like clockwork.

It was of course not the way that we had initially envisaged celebrating our sixtieth but rest assured that planning continues to bring about a more suitable celebration for the same weekend next year - a 60 + 1 gala, if you will.

A very big 'thank you' must go to all staff and volunteers who worked tirelessly in the lead-up to re-opening day to ensure that the railway was cleaned, oiled and safe to operate after four months of dormancy.

August traffic was pretty much as expected from a weekend-only Covid-secure timetable of three trains a day plus an offer of several on-train catering options, which was followed by a two-train service, plus catering products, during September.

Having hit the £400,000 mark for our Covid Emergency Appeal (thanks to all our donors and supporters) and our successful application for a £250,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund, all eyes are now firmly fixed upon our seasonal offer – a period that traditionally brings in revenue to see us through the winter months. The good news is that Santa trains are sold out and our new separate SteamLights offer is not far behind, having had to extend its planned operation from 14 November with extra post-Christmas dates due to demand. SteamLights is a new and exciting offer for us and one that we must deliver on and get right. To this end, a call has gone out for all members who live within easy driving distance to come and be a volunteer steward on SteamLights operation dates – see overleaf for further details and how to put yourself forward for the team. The importance of ensuring that our visitors feel Covid-safe while they enjoy their after-dark spectacle cannot be overstated. Please come and do what you can, even if you normally volunteer in other departments. While it is hoped that the usual Santa stewards will once again put themselves forward, there are bound to be some more elderly folk among us who don't yet feel that the time is right for them to return, and that is understandable. Do check with Julia Pique in the office for availability if you can undertake any Santa turns, which will be a slightly different operation now due to Covid. Santa will not travel through the train this year but extra help getting passengers to their pre-booked



'The Blue Belle' Q class No 30541 simmers as it gets the road at Kingscote in order to run round its evening 'Blue Belle' dining train on 5 September 2020. SIMON COLBECK

compartments at Sheffield Park and East Grinstead or stewarding at Horsted for when the trains arrive will I am sure be welcomed.

Aside from next year's 60+1 gala, there are no diary dates yet confirmed after SteamLights ends on 5 January and winter engineering work begins. More news about next year's service pattern and events hopefully by the time the winter issue is published. Please note that the 60th birthday loco dept reunion advertised in the last issue is currently postponed. If you're without kids but feeling festive after such a tough year then full details of all pre-Christmas catering train offers can be found on our website.

Whether you choose to 'eat out to help out' with us or put yourself forward to help see our busy season through, then you will be made most welcome.



Colin Tyson
 Editor

Volunteers – be part of our winning SteamLights team!

Who wants to be part of a winning team? Do you?

Our new and exciting product, SteamLights will be operating on an astonishing number of 39 days between 13 November and 5 January and we will need five stewards on each date. What an opportunity this is for volunteers, members and employees to work together and be part of a winning team, knowing that whilst you have enjoyed yourselves, you will have earned our railway a significant amount of revenue in what has been a very difficult period. We need to find cover for almost 200 turns of duty, all involving evening working – the clue is in the name, SteamLights – and all based at Sheffield Park.

I am therefore asking all our existing Bluebell Railway volunteers – from any department – plus you, our members, with BN, BR, CR, RH, SN and TN postcodes, plus members of staff, to put your names forward and play your part in making SteamLights a successful event for our visitors.

You will be based at Sheffield Park station and need to sign on for duty at 15.30 and off at 21.30 (14.30 and 22.30 on dates when three SteamLights trains are operating).

Your duties will include working with the station staff and

- welcoming visitors and directing them where to park their cars.
- advising them where on the station their viewing area is located, for a great view of the big switch on of the train lights.
- escorting visitors to their carriages and reserved compartments.
- travelling on the train and experiencing



SteamLights for yourself and on arrival at Horsted Keynes,

- assisting the station staff there by helping to guide visitors around the platforms, whilst they take photographs of the locomotive and carriages.
- returning to Sheffield Park and assisting with the disembarkation of visitors.
- helping with making the train ready for its next trip and repeat the process one more time when two trains operate, and another twice when three trains are operating.
- enjoying a complimentary hot meal washed down by unlimited hot drinks between trains.

No previous experience of any of the above duties is necessary, but you will need to be

aged 18 or over. A detailed duty sheet will be sent to you once you have been rostered, and a full briefing will also be given by the Sheffield Park Station Master when you sign on for duty.

I appreciate that whilst these will be fairly long turns of duty, there will be lots to keep you occupied, as in addition to looking after our visitors, there will still be time to have a chat, laugh and joke with other volunteers. I am confident that you will enjoy yourself, which, after all, is why our regular volunteers do so much to keep our railway running. If we didn't enjoy ourselves, we wouldn't do it!

For our members, I hope that you may wish to become a regular volunteer yourself, knowing that you have 'done your bit' for our railway and its visitors whilst enjoying yourself in the process and being part of a winning team.

Dates when SteamLights train operate and when we need stewards are:

November 13, 14, 15, 18*, 19*, 20 - 22, 25 - 29
 December 2 - 6, 9 - 13, 16 - 23, 27*, 28*, 29*, 30*
 January 2 - 5
 * dates when three trains operate

If you would like to help, please complete the SteamLights volunteering form on our website at www.bluebell-railway.com/volunteer-at-bluebell-railway/

Photos, courtesy North Norfolk Railway.

CHRIS KNIBBS
 Operations Manager
JULIA PIQUE
 Santa & SteamLights Co-ordinator



The re-opening safety film

Once we had a good idea of how we could operate in the 'New Normal', we needed safety information in place and available for

prospective visitors. I decided to make a film. By that time we were all fed up with the new measures at the supermarkets and I couldn't

stand the idea of another stuffy set of rules – so I decided to have some fun with the material.

Inspired by old newsreels and Harry Enfield's character *Mr Cholmondley-Warner* I wrote a script and recorded a song. With the help of many volunteers, we recorded and created something special in a very short time. The editing process was, unfortunately, not short – but I got there in the end. The icing on the cake was the generosity of Martin Clunes in donating his time to provide the voice-over. If you haven't seen it, go to the Covid-19 information at www.bluebell-railway.com and be entertained.

RUTH ROWATT



A couple of stills from the re-opening 'safe to visit' film.

Post-lockdown ghost train running

In line with HRA and ORR advice, a period of ghost train running took place on the three days of 2, 3 and 4 August, with BR No 80151 taking three return trains a day to Kingscote, leaving Sheffield Park at 11am, 1pm and 3pm. These ensured that track, signals and pointwork were all ready following attention from our maintenance teams after being dormant since March and also gave loco crews and guards the opportunity to reassess and

refamiliarise in real-time situations prior to public trains running again from 7 August.



No 80151 passes the remains of West Hoathly platforms with a return to Sheffield Park from Kingscote on the first day of the 'ghost trains', 2 August 2020. B243



4 August 2020, the last day of the 'ghost trains' with No 80151 at Kingscote. The Friends of Kingscote are taking their socially distanced lunch break on the up platform. COLIN TYSON



No 80151 returns to Sheffield Park on 3 August 2020 with the 'Met set' ghost train. PHIL BARNES

Passengers return for sixtieth anniversary weekend



The calendar in Kingscote booking office marks a special day in the railway's history.

The weekend of August 7-9 was the one that we had all waited for when passengers returned to the Railway for the first time since lockdown. Very coincidentally it was also our 'official' sixtieth birthday on opening day. The sold-out members' special was to leave Sheffield Park at 9am but not before Plc chairman Chris Hunford said a few words of encouragement prior to the train being waved off by six-year-old Alex Venton, who had donated his pocket money to our Covid Emergency Appeal, under the watchful eye of station master Graham Aitken. Chris also spoke of the 'pioneers' - those early

Bluebell members that realised a dream of running their own full size preserved railway, paving the way for others up and down the land to re-open their own local disused branch lines and the national importance of what had happened on this very platform sixty years ago. Our chaplain, Rev David Murdoch, blessed the train with holy water and asked the assembled to pause for a moment to remember and pray for all those affected by the coronavirus, those who have been sick or lost loved ones, the NHS and essential workers and gave thanks for all those who have worked so hard to make this day possible and

given generously in order for the railway to re-open on such a special day.

The day turned out to be one of the hottest on record and No 65 made sure that loco crew members were kept busy with minor lineside fires, always a danger when the lineside is bone dry. The Wickham trolley and a flat wagon containing barrels of water and beaters were brought into service by the P.Way team for the rest of the weekend. The shop and the refreshment kiosk both recorded good takings during the weekend, alongside favourable passenger receipts. Well done to everyone involved.



ABOVE: The re-opening train passing the former platforms at West Hoathly on its way north. NICK GILLIAM



ABOVE: The members' train about to pass Horsted House Farm foot crossing. JAMES HAMILTON



SER Class O1 No 65 leaves Sheffield Park with the 9am 'The Pioneer' members' special train on Friday 7 August 2020 - the first train on re-opening day and the first train of the 60th anniversary weekend. PETER EDWARDS



LEFT: Someone loves us! A notice on a garden shed at West Hoathly. B243



LEFT: Driver and long standing member Mick Blackburn removes 'The Pioneer' headboard on arrival at Kingscote prior to the locomotive running round for the first return passenger train to Sheffield Park since March. COLIN TYSON



RIGHT: Sunday 9 August and BR No 80151 waits to leave Kingscote with 'The Rocket' lunchtime train. COLIN TYSON

Covid-19 Emergency Appeal reaches £400,000

You will doubtless recall that we launched our CV Emergency Appeal in mid-April earlier this year.

Originally, we were planning to launch an appeal to 'put the sparkle back into our Jewel in the Crown' to coincide with the 60th Anniversary of the Railway. This campaign was to raise funds to restore Horsted Keynes station to its former glory but events rapidly overtook us and we were forced to change tack to launch an appeal to help safeguard the very future of the Railway.

Thanks to good management and a bit of luck, the Plc was confident that the period of closure could be funded through the furlough scheme, by drawing on our scant reserves and positive support from NatWest Bank. Therefore, from the outset, the funds generated from the Appeal were to be allocated to help in the recovery of the Railway once the lockdown was lifted.

Initially we targeted the BRPS members and Plc shareholders via letter. There were quite a few instances where some 'lucky' people received letters from both the BRPS and the Plc. This occurred because we have two quite separate databases for members and shareholders and, despite our best efforts to 'de-duplicate' records, unfortunately a few people received both letters. Yes, it was a bit of a waste of money but at least we tried to ensure that we contacted everyone.

In our haste to get the Appeal launched, there was at least one unfortunate mistake in that we referred to donations of less than £500 to be 'small'. The intention was not to demean those donating less than £500 but, rather, to minimise transaction charges levied by our bank – it was an unfortunate example of 'more haste, less speed'. If this did irritate or offend you, then please accept my personal apology as it was my error that no-one picked up on before the launch.

In addition to the mailshots, communications director Paul Bromley generated much press, radio and even TV publicity with the result that we received large number of donations through Virgin Money Giving ('VMG') from the general public - each of whom wanted to see the Railway to continue to survive and prosper.

The initial target for the Appeal was £300,000 and there were plenty of people who thought that was over-ambitious. What happened over the next four months was that we soon reached £300,000 and, by mid-September, we have received the magnificent sum of £400,000, a truly remarkable response from members, shareholders and friends of the Railway. The Appeal remains open if anyone would like to make new or additional donations in the coming months.

Many of the donors were members and shareholders who made well over 800 donations by cheque, bank transfer and standing orders totalling £235,000 on which we were able to

claim Gift Aid from HMRC of £40,000.

Some members and shareholders made donations via VMG and these donations when added to those received from members of the general public amounting to £97,000 plus Gift Aid of £20,000. The number of these totalled over 1,800 individual donations.

The results of the Appeal were beyond our wildest dreams. It does show that an awful lot of people from within and without the Railway were determined to ensure that we continue for many years to come. It makes us all realise the depth of affection and loyalty held for the Railway from across the whole community.

The Appeal would not have succeeded without the strong support of a small dedicated team of Steve Bigg, Paul Bromley, Roger Kelly and myself who organised the Appeal, both in the planning, execution and administration. In the latter case, we had to record and process every single transaction, a task that largely fell upon Keith Riggs.

As recorded above, not everything we did was perfect and we can learn the lessons for the future but hopefully we will be forgiven for these things when we look at the overall success of the Appeal.

Thank you from us all to all of us for the tremendous response in our hour of need.

TREVOR SWAINSON
Funding Governor
Bluebell Railway Trust

JUNE

Much of the coverage this month was about the progress towards the £300,000 initial target for fundraising in the Emergency Appeal.

The *East Grinstead Courier* had a front-page story in its 12 June edition with a picture of O1 No 65 and the headline 'Bluebell Railway's Fundraising Joy'.

The report inside quoted Bluebell Railway Trust funding governor Trevor Swainson as saying: "The money will be used to keep key heritage skills in Sussex and ensure we can reopen when it is safe to do so."

The *Argus* reported on the decision to re-open the railway to coincide with the 60th anniversary. It said the "popular railway has set the wheels in motion for a return on 7 August". Bluebell Railway plc chairman Chris Hunford told the paper "what better way to celebrate the milestone of 60 years of operating than to reopen for business".

Country Living Holidays included the Bluebell Railway in a list of places in Sussex to visit "when all this is over". It described the railway as "lovely".

Heritage Railway magazine featured the Bluebell Railway on its cover under the headline "Six Magnificent Decades".

A special report inside covered 10 pages and told the story of the railway from the late 1950s up until the present day. A timeline produced by the museum team for the 60th anniversary featured across the inside pages.

JULY

The preparations for re-opening and reports of the Virtual Track Trek were the main topics in the press coverage during July.

The *Telegraph* online and in print had a round-up of heritage railways which were planning on re-opening.

The story "Full steam ahead as Britain's heritage trains emerge from their hibernation" included the Bluebell Railway using the description "Sussex splendour".

The *Daily Express* featured a full-page report by James Moore, described as "a lifelong train enthusiast", who said his dad had taken him for a ride on the Bluebell Railway around the time of the 1970 film *The Railway Children*.

He wrote: "for me it is the unique combination of sights, sounds and smells that makes the steam experience so bewitching."

Steam Railway magazine had a 51-page special report on "Celebrating 60 Years" of the Bluebell Railway. The extensive reports inside included a joint interview with plc chairman Chris Hunford, Society acting chairman Steve Bigg and Trust chairman Vernon Blackburn about the future of the railway.

Uckfield News mentioned the railway's first Virtual Track Trek with nearly £6,000 raised for the Emergency Appeal.

It showed BRPS acting chairman Steve Bigg, plc commercial and marketing director Paul Lelew and Trust chairman Vernon Blackburn outside Horsted Keynes station after completing their trek beside the line.

AUGUST

The vast majority of coverage this month was about the reopening of the railway and the 60th birthday celebrations.

The *i newspaper* used the headline "Bluebell line steams ahead" with a picture of six-year-old Alex Venton blowing the whistle and waving the green flag to see off the first train on Friday 7 August.

Sussex Life magazine devoted a



NLHF gives Bluebell £250,000

The Bluebell Railway has been given a £250,000 grant to help it survive through the winter.

The money is from The National Lottery Heritage Fund

which distributes National Lottery money to support heritage organisations.

The railway applied to The National Lottery Heritage

Fund's Heritage Emergency Fund, which was set up to give grants of up to £250,000 to help organisations affected by Covid-19. A total of £50 million

was made available to provide emergency funding for those most in need across the heritage sector.

Bluebell Railway Plc chairman Chris Hunford said: "We are very grateful to The NLHF for approving our application and providing the financial support to keep the wheels turning. Our members, supporters and friends contributed sufficient money to enable us to reopen – this extra financial help will allow us to continue to operate over the next few months."

The grant will help the Railway meet its costs from August to November including paying for heritage and technical staff, the hire of machinery, track repairs, Covid-related personal protective equipment consumables and advertising. Only four railways were awarded the full award of £250,000 – Bluebell, Mid-Hants, Severn Valley and Ffestiniog, so well done to all involved in the application.

Buffer stops installed in SteamWorks!

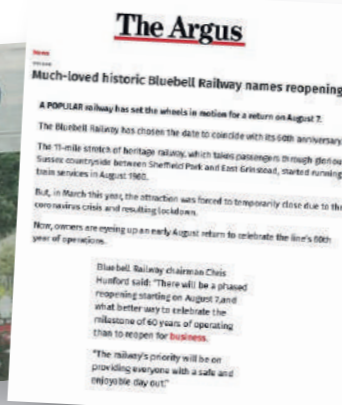


The volunteer Infrastructure team have completed the installation of buffer stops to the three roads in the running shed at Sheffield Park, with the requirement to protect our visitors in the event that something should move towards the SteamWorks! exhibits when it shouldn't, despite the fact that shunting in and out of the running shed is normally early and late in the day when the exhibition is closed. COLIN TYSON

THIRD CALEDONIAN SLEEPER ARRIVES



The third of three former Caledonian Sleeper Mk. 3 coaches to come to Bluebell on favourable terms arrived by road at Sheffield Park on the evening of Wednesday 15 July, having completed its journey from storage at MoD Long Marston. The coaches will be used for volunteer overnight accommodation. ANTHONY MALLINSON



feature to the railway to mark 60 years of operating as a heritage line. The article said: "Since the story of the Bluebell Railway is a remarkable one of overcoming obstacles and succeeding against the odds, a mere pandemic stood little chance of scuppering the 60th birthday party of this

famous Sussex attraction." ITV Meridian reported on the photo opportunity created by the museum team for visitors to recreate the cover of Elton John's 1970 album *Tumbleweed Connection*. It explained that the enamel signs had all been put back in their original positions.

Sussex Live website picked up on the announcement of the SteamLights event and commented: "witness something magical this Christmas." The report added: "As you go on your journey you'll feast your eyes on an amazing light show as you witness festive displays with music and narration."

PAUL BROMLEY
Communications
Director

My lockdown and re-opening diary

During lockdown and prior to re-opening, employees and volunteers of Bluebell Railway made many positive efforts to stay connected with friends, volunteers, members and prospective visitors. We wanted people to know that as soon as we could, we would be back.

I was one of the members of staff that was not furloughed for all of the lockdown period. My role was previously paid for by the Heritage Lottery Fund and there was still work to be done to enable the last interactive to be installed in SteamWorks! and many other activities to finish before the Accessible Steam Heritage (ASH) project could be completed - it was a challenge to do this from home.

My department was able to assist with the fundraising efforts of the Bluebell Railway Trust. By advertising and ensuring people were aware of the campaign through social media, we felt we could help Bluebell steam through the next 60 years! The generosity of people through that uncertain time was amazing.

It seemed to me that there were a great many things we could do through our social media channels to promote the Railway, inform and engage people. These little projects also fitted very nicely with the outreach objectives linked with my role.



Lockdown Bluebell storytime with Ruth. RUTH ROWATT



The completed wheelchair accessible C class No 592, complete with 'moving floor'. COLIN TYSON

As a member of the Stepney Club (although I'm over nine years old) and leader the team of education volunteers, my first thought was for all those children who were looking forward to visiting the Railway this Spring. I knew that between us we could come up with some activities to keep them entertained and thinking of the Railway. 'Storytime with the Bluebell Railway' was very well received. Different people read story books or episodes to camera and these were posted regularly on Facebook, YouTube and through a link from the website. We intend to continue with this project, so look forward to future videos.

We added extra activities and quizzes to the children's section of the website and contributed towards the new digital magazine - *The Bluebell Times*. Previous editions of the Stepney Club magazine were also put online.

With the railway closed, I had more time for reflection and was able to begin evaluating what we do and what we do well. I am currently working on a detailed marketing plan to help us ensure we focus our efforts for 2021 and make the most of current trends (like people choosing a UK 'staycation' holiday next year).

We had planned a great many virtual events for our 60th anniversary and it seemed that these were of double importance with the threat of not being able to open at all on 7 August hanging over us. Many volunteers were involved in pulling together films, facts and live events for the countdown to that weekend, with much planning in advance. Meanwhile we schemed, hoped and prayed that we would be able to achieve a real re-opening on that historic date.

Planning, planning and more planning! Every time a new piece of guidance or information was released by the Government, the HRA or ORR, plans were rewritten. Our biggest challenge was interpreting the guidance and working out how it applied to us.

Once we had a good idea of how we could operate in the 'New Normal', we needed safety information in place and available for prospective visitors. I decided to make a film. By that time we

were all fed up with the new measures at the supermarkets and I couldn't stand the idea of another stuffy set of rules - so I decided to have some fun with the material.

Inspired by old newsreels and Harry Enfield's character *Mr Cholmondley-Warner* I wrote a script and recorded a song. With the help of many volunteers, we recorded and created something special in a very short time. The editing process was, unfortunately, not short - but I got there in the end. The icing on the cake was the generosity of Martin Clunes in donating his time to provide the voice-over. If you haven't seen it, go to the Covid-19 information at www.bluebell-railway.com and be entertained.

I then applied to VisitEngland for their industry standard and consumer mark to reassure our visitors that our business adheres to Government and public health guidance. We were awarded the 'Good to Go' tick mark, which was then added to all our advertising.

We needed new volunteers to help with stewarding visitors and ensuring that our Covid-19 precautions were in place. This would be vital to make sure people had a safe and enjoyable visit. We knew that some folk would have concerns, but we had no way of knowing how great that fear would be and how it would affect visitor numbers.

The railway opened for staff from 13 July, so I organised training of new volunteers. It was important that all staff understood new procedures for their departments. We were very careful not to roster lots of volunteers while we tested our new procedures and processes.

It was with great relief and a lot of press interest, that we did re-open on Friday 7 August. Alongside Paul Bromley, our communications director, my team organised, facilitated and edited some fantastic coverage for the Railway. Now we had to hope that people would feel confident that we would look after them and book to visit.

We were very pleased with the bookings for August and here are a few facts: Our catering trains carried approximately



Ruth Rowatt, our new Marketing and Communications Manager, having completed her work on the HLF-sponsored ASH project. COLIN TYSON

2,567 passengers in August. They tucked into cream teas, ploughman's, fish and chips, breakfast, or a three-course meal in a Covid-safe and well-managed environment. People were able to book boxed meals to eat on 'The Pioneer' too and our catering staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to make our visitors' day out extra special. 618 compartments on 'The Pioneer' were pre-booked for August. Families with dogs, pre-ordered picnics and all the usual paraphernalia of a great day out were packed into those compartments, which were then cleaned and turned around by a team of volunteers including carriage cleaners, stewards and platform staff. Around 3,500 people travelled on 'The Pioneer' in August and that's a conservative estimate!

We received some wonderful feedback from visitors who appreciated the efforts we have made regarding social distancing which made them feel safe. They highlighted how much they had enjoyed their day out and complimented volunteers and staff on their knowledge, enthusiasm and welcoming attitude. A huge thank you to everyone who helped prepare for the re-opening and who has dedicated their time and efforts to making August a success.

RUTH ROWATT
Marketing and
Communications Manager

Preparing to run again, post lockdown

Although almost unbelievable and certainly impossible to have predicted six months or so ago, we ran no passengers services between 15 March and 7 August. With events unfolding and the Covid lockdown coming into place on 23 March, the decision was quite rightly taken to close the Railway until further notice.

It was very strange coming to the Railway whilst it was closed to carry out security checks at the stations to find weeds coming up in the driveway and on the platforms - giving the air of a disused railway, which technically it had become.

As lockdown began to ease, and some of the heritage lines began to re-open, guidance was issued by the Office of Rail & Road and the Heritage Railway Association on how we should plan to restart.

The date was set for re-opening on 7 August. In order to prepare for this, the various station's friends groups sprung into action to sort out the stations: fitting paper towel holders, hand gel dispensers, distance stickers on the platforms, one-way notices and a general late spring clean. The Infrastructure, S&T, Carriage & Wagon and Loco works prepared track, signals, coaching stock and locomotives ready for the re-start.

The ORR were keen that before passengers could be carried a period of 'ghost running' should take place in order to refresh staff knowledge and if required to carry out assessing of staff - especially those who may have become 'out of ticket' during the lockdown period.

So on 2 August the first train ran out of Sheffield Park to Kingscote with the Met set and No 80151, with loco crews, guards, signalmen and station staff all being assessed and also to ensure the signalling was prepared for opening on 7 August. The ghost services ran for three days and it seemed somewhat surreal - stopping at stations with no passengers with three round trips on each day.

The opening day came and with TV, radio crews and the press all attending Sheffield Park the Railway re-opened with social distancing, passengers queuing outside the station in groups and being led to their compartments by guides. The re-opening on one of the hottest days on record (in contrast to the reopening to East Grinstead in 2013 in a snow blizzard) both unusual in weather terms for both seasons, we were beset by a number of lineside fires, most managed by the loco crews with the portable pumps on the tenders and in some cases beating out the flames with beaters.

The service train and catering train showed good loadings, in particular the 11am and



Operations Director Mike Ellis returned to the guard's roster on 7 August 2020. COLIN TYSON



As a back-up to loco crews having to deal with lineside fires during the hot weather of Anniversary Weekend, the P.Way team used the Wickham Trolley as a back-up fire tender, seen at Horsted Keynes on 9 August 2020. COLIN TYSON

1pm departures of the service train, lunch and afternoon tea proved popular as did the fish & chip trains.

As I write, up to and including the Bank Holiday, passenger numbers seem very good on all trains.

As we continue towards the Santa season in the current 'new normal' as the media prefer

to call it, we can but hope that things continue to improve, however the 'new normal' promises to be with us for some time yet to come and something for us all to adapt to. So stay safe and continue to enjoy our Railway in the 'new normal'!

MIKE ELLIS
Operations Director

Post-Covid: 'Survive – Rebuild – Grow'

We are delighted to welcome you to the autumn edition of *Bluebell News*, and hope that you and your families have managed to keep well during the recent difficult and uncertain months we've all been enduring. Sadly, it seems that the effects of the pandemic and the associated economic challenges will remain for some time to come. However, it is encouraging to see the resumption of a certain level of normality in some aspects of our daily lives, even though restrictions still apply.

We recognise that for some of you who don't have access to a computer that this will be the first *Bluebell News* you'll have received since the winter edition. The lockdown had serious effects on printing and mail house businesses, and consequently we published the last two editions digitally. We apologise to those of you who were not able to access these editions, and are pleased to advise that our editor has been able to negotiate an extremely favourable cost to provide members with printed versions of them, which are included in the mailing pack with this latest magazine.

The lockdown has had an extremely significant effect on the finances of many thousands of businesses large and small, and the *Bluebell* is no exception. For a period of over twenty weeks our revenue stream was severed, and this unprecedented situation necessitated some difficult and far-reaching decisions to be taken. A survival plan was initiated to review our cost base and examine sources of much-needed funding into the business to cover the duration of the lockdown and eventual re-opening costs.

As part of this plan, an Emergency Appeal was launched in the weeks after lockdown was announced, and by the time the last edition of *Bluebell News* was published total donations had already reached £300,000. Since then the figure has continued to increase, approaching £400,000 by the end of August. This is a truly amazing figure and we

would like to again thank all those very many hundreds of members and supporters who have so generously supported the appeal, we are most grateful to you all. The appeal is ongoing, so any further donations will still be immensely helpful. The donations were used partly to support the Railway through the period of closure and continue to be utilised to contribute towards the costs of the current re-opening phase. In the next edition of *Bluebell News* we'll update you on exactly how the donations have assisted the survival plan.

In addition to the Emergency Appeal, assistance has been sought from the appropriate government support schemes as well as other grant-giving organisations, and we are delighted to be able to report that at the beginning of September the *Bluebell* was awarded a £250,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund, and our thanks go to Vernon Blackburn, Roger Kelly and others who undertook the application process. The grant will assist with the payroll costs of our heritage and technical staff, other overhead charges, and additional costs incurred for the re-opening and Covid-related items.

Since the last Chairmen's report it has been wonderful to see the Railway operating again, and to be able to welcome visitors once more, albeit within strict Covid safety guidelines. The re-opening took place on 7 August, and most poignantly the very date sixty years ago when the *Bluebell* operated its first passenger trains. Despite having to restrict the number of people at the Railway to ensure social distancing requirements were met, there was still a wonderful atmosphere of celebration as the first train departed at 9am. The train was flagged away by six-year-old Alex Venton, who had asked his mother if he could donate his pocket money to the Emergency Appeal, as he is a great fan of the *Bluebell* even at such a young age. Alex and his family were invited to be our

guests for the day and they clearly enjoyed themselves enormously. Despite the very hot weather, the re-opening day proved a great success, with representatives of local and national media present that, thanks to the input of Communications Director Paul Bromley, resulted in some very good publicity for the Railway.

The successful re-opening was the result of a lot of effort over many weeks by some of our staff and many volunteers, all of whom had to ensure that the permanent way, signalling, locomotives, rolling stock and other operational aspects were all carefully checked for safe condition after over four months of lockdown. In addition, a formal and detailed re-opening plan procedural report was produced, and a small army of volunteers made certain that our stations and other infrastructure were cleaned, painted, weeded or whatever was required to provide our visitors with our usual high visual standards. To all those who worked so hard to achieve a successful re-opening, we send our thanks and huge gratitude. We would not have achieved this without you.

The re-opening programme through to the end of the year is based upon a pre-booking only format so we can ensure adherence to the government's Covid safety guidelines, and this process has proved successful so far. Overall the booking levels for the first few weeks have generated train loadings that have met our estimates, and by releasing booking periods on a rolling basis it has provided the flexibility to adjust the services according to demand for the different product facilities offered. This strategy has proved to be a significant benefit in matching our offer to any changes in customer demand.

The Christmas season is always a most important contributor to our annual revenues, and this year is no exception. For the 2020 season we are running our traditional and popular Santa trains, and have experienced a very positive customer response since bookings opened.



BR 5MT No 73082 *Camelot* at Three Arch Bridge with the return of 'The Rocket' lunchtime dining train, the 2.35pm departure from Sheffield Park, on 22 August 2020. PETER EDWARDS

Additionally, this season we are launching SteamLights a brand-new product for the *Bluebell*. This innovative experience offers visitors a stunning lineside vista of illuminated sights and attractions from the warmth and comfort of their carriage seats, and it captures the essence and atmosphere of the festive season. The concept also seems to have captured the imagination of the public as the level of bookings has been very encouraging to date, and we are looking at the possibility of operating some additional trains during the season.

It is certainly encouraging to be able to report some positive news after the uncertainties and stress of the lockdown period, but realistically we are not out of the woods yet. There still remains much uncertainty about the likely duration of the pandemic, as well as its effect on the extent and depth of the resultant economic recession. Planning has already started on the commercial and operational programme for 2021, and this is being approached with optimism and creativity whilst being balanced with a sense or realism due to the many unknown factors about the future. The Society

committee is working on a full review of the vision and strategic policy objectives appropriate for the post-Covid stage in the development of the Railway, and will support Plc board colleagues in the development of the post-Covid business plan, with its cornerstone objectives of 'Survive – Rebuild – Grow'. Additionally, a considerable amount of work has been undertaken over recent months by Webmaster Richard Salmon and Digital Marketing Co-ordinator Sophie Matthews, supported by Communications Director Paul Bromley, to align the content of the *Bluebell*.com and co.uk websites. This initiative will improve accessibility, navigational simplicity and overall impact by creating a unified *Bluebell* website whilst maintaining the previous wide diversity of content. Much progress has already been achieved and the process continues, to eventually include, amongst other aspects, the *Bluebell* Railway Trust as part of the unified website.

One event planned for 2021 is the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of train operations at the *Bluebell* in a manner properly befitting such a

milestone achievement. Covid-19 restrictions prevented this from being celebrated properly this year, but assuming these restrictions will be further relaxed by next summer, we can all look forward to a wonderful event that should not be missed. It is planned for 6-8 August 2021, so make a note in your diaries now!

Earlier this summer, we wrote to all members explaining the exceptional reasons for making temporary changes to the travel benefits normally available through the various types of Society membership. As explained in the communication, this was a very difficult and much debated decision precipitated by the serious effect of lockdown on the Railway's finances, and was part of the survival plan referred to earlier. We completely understand the significance of such a decision for our much-valued members, and we can assure you that these changes are a temporary measure applying to the re-opening programme for the rest of this year. We have every intention of re-establishing the full travel and access benefits for all types of membership in 2021, and details will be confirmed at the end

of this year. In the interim we would like to repeat on behalf of the Railway our immense gratitude for the support, patience and forbearance of our members during what has been a very challenging year, with the resultant access restrictions to the Railway and its associated benefits. To reflect this appreciation a number of special events specifically for members are being planned as part of the 2021 operating programme.

As you will be aware from previous communications, the 2020 Society EGM / AGM scheduled for 23 May was by necessity postponed owing to the Coronavirus restrictions. The situation regarding a new date is being kept under continual review in the light of evolving guidance from the government but the current ongoing regulations relating to indoor gatherings continue to restrict our options. We will keep you informed as guidance changes.

In conclusion, whilst we can feel genuinely positive about the successful re-opening of the Railway and the associated 'green shoots' of recovery this conveys, there are still many uncertainties and challenges

ahead. However, as always the 'Bluebell community' of staff, volunteers, members and supporters have been absolutely magnificent in their loyal and resolute support for the Railway during this extraordinary year, and this is an attribute that all those past and present involved in the management of the *Bluebell* have always been most grateful for. Indeed, it is this consistent support that has helped the Railway succeed through the good times as well as the more challenging ones over the past sixty years. We look forward to welcoming as many of you as possible to the Railway in the remaining months of this year, and hope that circumstances in 2021 will be such that we will be able to see even more of you at the *Bluebell* to share the excitement of a year when we can hopefully fully and properly celebrate the huge achievement of our Diamond Jubilee!

With our best wishes to you and your families and above all, keep well and stay safe.

STEVE BIGG
Acting Chairman, BRPS
CHRIS HUNFORD
Chairman, Plc

Locomotive Department

This year has been a season like no other in the railway's sixty-year history. The transition from normal operations to complete closure was so sudden that a considerable amount of work was required to bring the Locomotive Department – both its locomotives and crews – back up to an operational pitch.

The workshop re-opened in mid-July. The key priority was to catch up on planned maintenance within the fleet so as to ensure that there would be sufficient operational locos to run the planned service. Each loco required a thorough visual exam, a static steam test, testing of the brakes, followed by a gradual increase in movements, firstly around the yard, then within station limits, and finally along the line.

The priority for that period was given to Nos 80151 and 65 which were used for the initial period of re-opening. Nos 263, 73082 *Camelot* and 30541 all subsequently had their boiler tests between 10 and 14 August, a particularly intense period of work as each loco required both its cold and in-steam tests within that week. The requirements for an annual test were described in the Winter 2019 edition of *Bluebell News*, from which it can be understood that carrying out three in a week was therefore a major undertaking.

From a loco crew point of view, because we had run in February and March, the *Bluebell* was in some ways in a better

position than some other lines which may not have run since the Christmas season. Nonetheless, it was important to undergo a re-familiarisation, for which three days using No 80151 were run before re-opening. Three 'ghost train' trips were run each day, with a change of crew after each trip to give nine crews a refresher.

Operationally, we have made some changes within the department to ensure hygiene and social distancing. Loco cabs are sanitised when crews change and at the end of each day. In addition, duties are rostered for just driver and fireman, with an optional inspector if required for crew re-assessment. No third men are currently being rostered for footplate turns. It is hoped that this can be changed in the near future, initially with formal training turns (cleaner acting as fireman and fireman as driver, with an inspector riding on the footplate) – it is important for the future of the railway that a steady progression of cleaners becoming firemen and firemen becoming drivers is maintained.

The lack of regular trains through the summer, coupled with the prolonged drought, caused operational issues with water quality. The water in the well below the pump house became stagnant which, when it entered the locomotive boilers, caused priming on No 65 and injector problems on No 80151. Flushing through the entire water system from well

to tank to water crane went some way to alleviate those problems. The recent heavy rain and more regular operation of trains have helped mitigate the problem.

Workshop enhancements

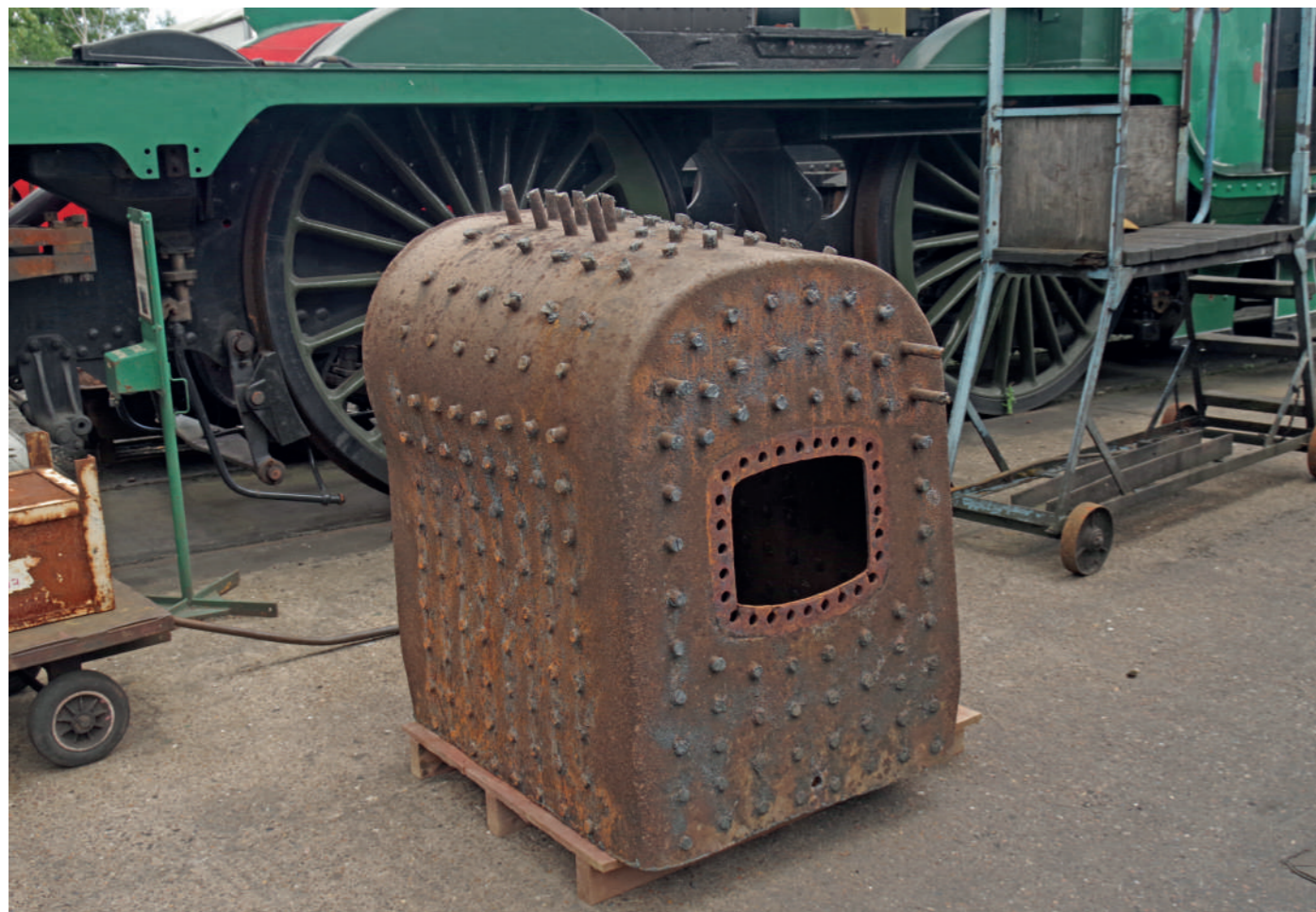
A new barrier system and marked walkways have been installed by the workshop volunteers around the wheel drop to enhance safety. New bonded storage cabinets have also been installed for paint storage. The workshop overhead cranes are also due to be overhauled, which will include fitting of load gauges on each.

Fleet news Wainwright H class No 263

At the time that lockdown happened, the H class was in the final stages of re-assembly following an intermediate mechanical repair, with a race against time to reassemble the loco in time for the Branch Line Gala. The reassembly was finally completed in early August followed by an annual steam test. The loco is available for traffic if required though needs some final adjustment to the valve timing.

Stirling O1 No 65

The loco is currently available for traffic and was used to haul the re-opening day service trains and members' special. The steam valve of the reverser has been serviced.



Fenchurch's inner firebox, which has been removed prior to the loco's restoration. The box is the steel example built and installed by Luggs of Billingshurst in the late 1970s - early 80s. B243



Taff Vale Railway 0-6-2T No 85 is seen leaving the Railway on 5 August, sadly without ever turning a wheel under its own steam at the Bluebell following the Covid cancellation of Branch Line Weekend. ANTHONY MALLINSON

Wainwright P class No 178

In traffic. The locomotive's boiler certificate runs out in October, after which the locomotive will be withdrawn, having performed over ten years in traffic.

Bulleid BoB Pacific No 34059 *Sir Archibald Sinclair*

Work on the overhaul of the boiler has now resumed. Around 90% of the side stays have been fitted, and the remaining stays have been ordered. The boiler has been rotated onto its side which has allowed tapping the inner and outer firebox plates for around half of the crown stays. The crown stays themselves are on order. Mechanically, the ashpan is being refurbished and new Armstrong oil pads have been ordered. As soon as both workshop overhead cranes are recommissioned, the loco will be lifted from its wheels to enable inspection of the axle boxes. The cylinder bores have been measured and show little wear, so the existing pistons can be reused, with just new piston rings fitted.

BR Standard 4MT 80151

The standard tank was used for the crew familiarisation trains and the early weeks of the public service. At the time of writing it is awaiting its annual boiler exam. The loco has also had some minor attention to the left-hand connecting rod to cure a knock.

BR Standard 5MT 73082 *Camelot*

At the end of August, the loco was having some work on the inner firebox completed.

Maunsell Q No 541

The loco had its annual steam test in early August and is currently available for traffic.

Maunsell S15 No 847

Available for traffic, but because of tyre wear, usage is limited, with the loco primarily acting as a spare in case of an unplanned failure from one of the other large locos. To improve reliability, it is planned to add new ends to those superheater elements that have not already been replaced.

Maunsell Schools Class No 928 *Stowe*

The period of lockdown has inevitably delayed

boiler work on *Sir Archibald Sinclair* which in turn had a knock-on effect to when work can commence on *Stowe's* boiler. Therefore quotes have been obtained from an external contractor to overhaul the boiler.

Stroudley Terrier No 72 *Fenchurch*

The inner firebox has been removed from the boiler. Costings have been obtained for all the components required for the boiler, which amount in essence to a complete new inner and outer firebox and front tube plate.

Taff Vale Railway O2 No 85

The TVR 0-6-2T left the railway on 5 August, sadly without ever turning a wheel under its own steam at the Bluebell. Our thanks go to the K&WVR for the initial loan of the loco – perhaps it can return again in the future.

Personnel

Shortly before the railway closed, Paul Auckland was promoted to Passed Fireman.

CHRIS HUNFORD
Locomotive Director
and TOM JAMES



One of Stowe's valve rods being machined.
STATFOLD ENGINEERING

No 928 Stowe

The lockdown, due to Covid-19 restrictions, has inevitably impacted on progress with the overhaul of *Stowe*. All being well, we hope to re-start back at Sheffield Park soon with renewed vigour.

We are pleased to announce that an agreement has been reached that will enable *Stowe's* boiler to be sent away to an outside contractor to conclude the bulk of the outstanding work – ie assemble all the components of the inner and outer firebox and the boiler barrel and insert new crown stays. We are indebted to Bluebell's chief boilermaster Simon Blaker, leading boilermaster Henry Mowforth and loco workshop manager Chris Shepherd for 'working up' the proposal and tracking down a reputable contractor who can make an immediate start on the work. The boiler is expected to depart from Sheffield Park in September and return by late 2021. This development will significantly speed up the return of *Stowe* to working order.

Significant funding has come from the Maunsell Locomotive

Society, which has made a large 'hole' in our reserves.

In addition, since the last report, there has been progress with the valve rods. Thanks to yet more help from Simon Blaker we have been able to agree a price with Statfold Engineering for the work required to the three valve rods. The valve rods were despatched to Staffordshire at the end of August and we expect to have them back before the next report.

Stowe's exhaust steam injector was lent to the Mid-Hants Railway over a year ago to act as a replacement for *Cheltenham's* whilst it was under repair. In return for the loan, the Mid-Hants Railway has had a set of new cones cast and machined and the whole assembly was tested for us in August. We hope to have the injector back at Sheffield Park in September – ready to mount back on the loco. It will be nice to tick that job off the list! Meanwhile, as and when our workforce can return to Sheffield Park – the immediate list of jobs to be addressed includes:

Rebuilding the cab footplate with new timbers.



Stowe's boiler at Sheffield Park prior to going away for further work.
HENRY MOWFORTH

Reinstating the steel 'fall plate' between the loco and tender, once the wooden cab footplate is in place.

Continuing overhauling large diameter copper pipework.

Once the valve rods return, re-fit the valve heads and rings and start to re-assemble *Stowe's* motion.

Q Class 30541 and S15 Class No 847

At the time of writing the workshop staff were checking over No 30541 to get it ready for service. No 847 had yet to be 'checked over' - if declared fit to run, it is expected it will be used just occasionally. See loco department report for details.

U Class No 1638

Still 'in store' at Horsted Keynes.

U Class No 1618

No 1618 remains at Sheffield Park. We intend to oversee this overhaul after the work on *Stowe* is completed.

Fundraising for Stowe

Although the Railway has re-

opened – its income stream is still fragile. So we hope all MLS and Bluebell supporters will continue to offer some support to the Railway to help tide it over what will be a difficult winter. However, if supporters can spare a 'little extra' for the Maunsell Locomotive Society this may help us to fund the final part of the works to the boiler to also be completed off-site. Contributions towards this cost will be gratefully received. Please make cheques payable to 'Maunsell Locomotive Society' and send to the Treasurer, 312 Riverside Mansions, Milk Yard, London E1W 3TA. For donations over £50 we can reclaim Gift Aid if you make the cheque payable to 'Bluebell Railway Trust'. Please enclose a current Gift Aid form (downloaded from Bluebell website) – indicating you would like the donation to be towards *Stowe*. Again – please send such cheques to the Treasurer to enable an acknowledgement to be sent. New members are also very welcome.

STEVE PILCHER

Correspondence

Bluebell's Pullman car fleet

THE ARTICLE in *Bluebell News* Winter 2019 on the acquisition of Pullman 3rd Class Parlour Car No 36 and an outline of the railway's Pullman policy is most interesting. However, there is no mention of 1st Class Kitchen Car *Carina*, which was acquired in exchange for Brighton Belle car *Doris*.

I understand the 5-BEL Trust was to bring *Carina* up to a condition comparable to that of *Doris* when Bluebell released that car, but I do not believe any of that work has been carried out. The benefit to Bluebell of replacing *Doris* with *Carina*, a 1951 1st Class Kitchen Car, was that being wooden bodied it would be easier to maintain than *Doris* which is an all-steel car; also, the braking and electrical systems would have needed replacing. Car No 76 *Lilian*, currently out of service, is also an all-steel car which would not be easy to overhaul so maybe its seating could be transferred to No 36, thereby releasing No 36 for service sooner.

When *Fingall*, a 1st Class Kitchen Car, requires underframe overhaul *Carina* would be a suitable substitute, just as *Car No 36* could substitute for *Car No 64 Christine* when its underframe is overhauled. Although Bluebell does not have another Pullman car with disabled access, *Car No 54* is currently receiving a complete rebuild after which it will be stabled in Sheffield Park carriage shed, so it should be many years before it would require more than regular maintenance.

Carina would undoubtedly be a valuable addition to Bluebell's Pullman fleet, let us hope it can be overhauled soon; I understand new end timbers had already been prepared well before the car arrived at Horsted Keynes.

PAUL DAVISON

Camelot at 107mph

FURTHER TO Malcolm Taylor's letter (*BN* Summer issue), I can confirm that the 73082 Camelot Society became aware of *Camelot's* 107mph high speed run, immediately after the article was published in *Steam Days*. We were able to make contact with Roger Carrell in Western Australia, and he was unaware that *Camelot* had survived into preservation, via Barry scrapyards. At that time, the locomotive was five years away from returning to steam. In 1996 Roger gave the Society permission to re-print that part of the article which related to his run with *Camelot*, in our own book *73082 From Barry to Bluebell*. The book covers the loco's history, its rescue, and subsequent 16-year restoration to working order. Copies are still available from the Society for £4.95. With Roger Carrell living in the southern hemisphere, he was not able to 'pop over' to see *Camelot*. We do know that he did make it on one occasion, as a photo of him on the footplate of *Camelot* some years later, was I believe published in *Bluebell News*.

The southern hemisphere continues to provide the Society with further surprises regarding our

MIND YOUR (RAILWAY) LANGUAGE!

I DON'T know about you, but I am starting to get annoyed with the broadcasters, both the BBC and the independents. Reporters reporting live from 'train stations', references to 'train lines'... the list goes on.

I thought the BBC had a department that advised on pronunciation and grammar, well that has failed!

I was brought up to understand that trains were caught at 'railway stations' and ran on railway lines, or tracks. So, here is a glossary that I would expect to be used.

RAILWAY. The whole system of infrastructure and the trains that run on it.

STATION. The place at which TRAINS stop to allow PASSENGERS to get on or off ('board' - USA)

The station is a 'RAILWAY STATION' not a 'Train station' (Depot - USA)

TRAIN. Is what it says, a number of vehicles (or camels if you live in a desert) running together in a row.

Trains can be 'PASSENGER' trains or 'GOODS' trains ('freight' - USA)

PASSENGERS. We carry 'PASSENGERS' from place to place. 'Customers' visit shops! Platform staff and station announcers please note!

GOODS. We carry goods in 'goods trains' - the content is sometimes called 'FREIGHT' however the term 'freight train' appears to have been accepted into our language.

LOCOMOTIVES. These are used to pull or push 'TRAINS' of vehicles. We have preserved steam locomotives. They are also called 'ENGINES', - we have 'steam engines' and 'diesel engines' but for some strange reason 'electric engines' are only ever called 'electric locomotives'.

RAILWAY LINES, or TRACKS. The infrastructure upon which 'trains' run. They are not 'train tracks' or 'train lines', however in recent times the term 'RAIL TRACKS' has come into common use.

STEAM TRAIN. An unusual use of language as the train is not made of steam but hauled by a steam locomotive.

DIESEL TRAIN. This term is seldom used; however, it relates to a train hauled by a Diesel locomotive. The commonest variation of this is a 'DIESEL MULTIPLE UNIT' or 'DMU' for short.

ELECTRIC TRAIN. This term is in regular use, particularly on Southern's commuter services.

When inviting our passengers to join the train we usually call 'ALL ABOARD', not 'BOARD' (USA).

If you want to really upset the purists, try calling a SIGNAL BOX a SWITCH TOWER!

I expect there are some omissions to these, and I expect some of the younger readers will not be aware of some of these meanings, however I do hope it has you thinking.

CHRIS SAUNDERS

Preservation Standards Trustee



Camelot's front end slides into the turntable pit at Nine Elms in June 1963.
BOTH: STUART BAILEY



loco's BR working life. In January this year we received photos of when *Camelot* disgraced itself at Nine Elms depot in June 1963. On that occasion Stuart Bailey, who worked as a fitter, was on hand to photograph *Camelot* being put back on the rails with a crane, after the front end slid into the turntable pit! We understand

that wet or greasy rails were the cause of the over-run. Presumably there were some red faces around after the incident, but we're not aware of *Camelot's* 'escapade' having made it into any formal report, or loco records.

JULIAN HEINEMANN

73082 Camelot Locomotive Society



LEFT: Nos 928 *Stowe* and 80064 are seen with the 2.27 Pullman train departure to Horsted Keynes at Sheffield Park on 4 August 1990. Note that *Stowe* was running without smoke deflectors at this time.



HALF A (BLUEBELL) LIFETIME AGO

BELOW: On 5 August 1990, the North London Tank No 58550 is seen at the head of a goods train at Horsted Keynes with No 1618 at the other end. Long departed loco No 35027 *Port Line* can be seen just to the north of the platforms.



Phil Barnes reminds us of what we were doing in our 30th anniversary year in 1990.



LEFT: Visiting loco *Bellerophan* and *Baxter* double head a mid-afternoon goods train round the curve at the top of Freshfield Bank on 4 August 1990.

TOP: No 488 and a Bulleid brake coach form the 5pm Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes replica Lyme Regis branch train on 4 August 1990 and are seen on the embankment just to the south of Horsted Keynes.

ABOVE RIGHT: No 323 *Bluebell* and the two coach shuttle train arrive back at Horsted Keynes, having worked to Horsted House Farm over the recently laid track which formed the first part of the Northern extension.

RIGHT: On 15 September 1990, BR 9F No 92240 made its return to service and is seen hauling the stock of the 3pm Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes VIP Special into Sheffield Park station. Note how the backdrop to the right side of the photo has changed!



Restarting projects after lockdown



Words and photos:
Richard Salmon

Since the C&W Dept re-opened at the beginning of August, projects have gradually been ramping back up, starting with the mechanical checks on the rolling stock to be used for the re-opening services, to which has been added SECR 100-seater No 1098 which had received new gutters and a roof repaint just prior to lockdown and, following a paint touch-up and check of the door locks and brakes, has also re-entered service.

LEFT: On the Stroudley Brake Third, No 949, work continues on fitting out the 10 doors. A major step forward, following the glazing of the passenger area earlier in the year, has been obtaining the shaped glass and fitting it to the distinctive guards' van end.



John Coleman has picked up where he left off with the almost complete reconstruction of the timber carcass of the first class seat backs in Maunsell Brake Composite No 6686. The original seatbacks almost certainly date from the 1930s and after numerous re-trims over the years the timbers were riddled with too many tack holes to hold another set securely, so much has been renewed, including the timbers with complex guide slots either side of the arm rests. The trimming team, although not currently at full strength, are making rapid progress on the completion of the re-trim, in a reproduction of SR 'Bird of Paradise' moquette.



The staff and volunteers working on Pullman Car No 54 returned to Horsted Keynes in the first week of September. The only original (ie 1950s) aluminium panel to survive was that around the oval lavatory 'cathedral light' and that is good enough for re-use and has been prepared and refitted. The first of the new panels has been cut and drilled to fit beneath it.



In addition to progressing the SR Bulleid open wagon, and preparing the operational goods fleet for use in October, work has been undertaken on both our brake vans recently. The SR Pillbox brake (No 55993) has been lifted and its I-bolts (spring hangers) replaced with newly-made examples, and this van, which has been out of use for several years will be returning to service soon.

The Queen Mary (No 56290) has also had some of its spring hangers replaced, but will soon require major work on its bodywork, floor and bogies, leaving the railway without a vacuum-braked van able to give brake van rides. If you are interested in assisting with ensuring the future of our fleet of goods vehicles, the wagon team would welcome new volunteers joining them.



Maunsell Hastings-gauge Brake Third No 3687 is the current major 'weekend project', and is progressing rapidly. The toilet compartment is almost completed, as is the adjacent passenger compartment. The lavatory door, 'borrowed' from the old C&W mess coach No 2356, is the last major item still to be refurbished. On the exterior, much of the carriage is now in undercoat, and the first section of topcoat has been applied. Inside the compartments, two seatbacks, the first seat base, arm rests, luggage racks, blinds, ceilings, light fittings and ceiling mouldings are going in. The ceiling in the corridor is also being fitted.



Dame Vera Lynn CH DBE LLD MMus

Bluebell supporter Dame Vera Lynn, who lived in Ditchling, passed away on 18 June surrounded by her close family at the age of 103.

Dame Vera was a close friend of our late president Bernard Holden MBE, actively supporting him and the Railway at our poppy day events and most recently at the launch of our 50th anniversary appeal. Bernard had first met Vera when he was stationed in India and she was entertaining the troops.

Vera Lynn was born Vera Margaret Welch on 20 March 1917 in East Ham in the county of Essex. When she began performing publicly at the age of seven, she adopted her grandmother's maiden name (Lynn) as her stage name. Her first radio broadcast, with the Joe Loss Orchestra, was in 1935. At this point she was being featured on records released by dance bands including those of Loss and of Charlie Kunz. In 1936 her first solo record was released on the Crown label, *Up the Wooden Hill to Bedfordshire*.

This label was absorbed by Decca Records in 1938. After a short stint with Loss she stayed with Kunz for a few years during which she recorded several standard musical pieces. In 1937, she moved to the aristocrat of British dance bands, Bert Ambrose.

During the war she toured Egypt, India and Burma, giving outdoor concerts for the troops. She became known, and is still referred to, as 'The Forces' Sweetheart'; the songs most associated with her are *We'll Meet Again*, *The White Cliffs of Dover* and *There'll Always Be an England*.

She remained popular after the war, appearing on radio and television in the UK and the US and recording such hits as *Auf Wiederseh'n Sweetheart* and *My Son, My Son*. Dame Vera moved to Ditchling in the 1960s, the same village being the home of our late president, where they rekindled their friendship within the work of the Royal British Legion. There must be something in Ditchling's South Downs air that produces such notable centenarians!

In 2009 she became the then oldest living artist to make it to No 1 on the British album chart, at the age of 92 and the same year her autobiography *Some Sunny Day* was published.

Dame Vera celebrated her 100th birthday in March 2017 and the



Dame Vera Lynn at 103.

occasion was marked with a number of events taking place to commemorate this incredible milestone.

A 100: Tribute to Dame Vera Lynn concert was held at the London Palladium on 18 March where stars of the stage and screen came together to perform a variety extravaganza highlighting our Forces' Sweetheart's incredible life. Various tribute shows, events and birthday celebrations were held throughout the UK and beyond paying tribute to this amazing lady, including a home visit by Roy Watts on behalf of the BRPS.

In May 2020, Dame Vera became the oldest singer to score a UK top 40 album, beating her own record set in 2017 with her greatest hits collected, entitled *100*. The increase in popularity for the album coincided with the 75th anniversary of VE Day, marking the end of the Second World War in Europe.

Dame Vera's iconic song, *We'll Meet Again* has taken on special meaning in the Coronavirus

pandemic and was cited by the Queen in a rare speech in early April 2020 in which the Queen acknowledged the grief and financial hardships that Britons are facing during the Covid-19 crisis.

Words Courtesy: The Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity, Avril Gaynor, Colin Tyson.



Thank you Dame Vera for the support you gave to our late president and the Bluebell Railway.



Dame Vera with her 100th birthday card from Bluebell, presented by Roy Watts.

Farewell Ketches Halt

Trying to find out the history of Ketches Halt has proved to be a little tricky. There are odd references to it on the old website and plenty of photographs but not so many facts.

It served Ketches Farm on farm open days for the 1989 and 1990 seasons only, with trains stopping only in the down direction for passengers to alight and re-board there. A footpath ran from behind the halt and along by the fence line towards the farm where visitors would be picked up via tractor-trailer to visit the animals.

It has been out of use ever since, apart from the odd occasion when one of the infrastructure teams may have used it for a convenient stopping point or even just to sit on to eat lunch.

The halt made a brief appearance in the 1996 live action version of the film *Wind in the Willows*. The driver of the C class was caught in a mail bag catcher on the opposite side of the track by the platelayers' hut. Toad, played by Terry Jones of Monty Python fame, then takes controls of the train during the chase.

In the BRPS Summary of the Committee meeting held on 30 January 2009, it was agreed that the halt could be dismantled and the parts used at East Grinstead. This obviously didn't happen as it wasn't at all suitable being much too short for the main platform. A much longer and more permanent platform was built. It wouldn't fit around the other amenities there either.

At the Summary of the Joint Meeting held on Friday 28 January 2011, "It was agreed that the redundant halt would be moved to Imberhorne Lane (South), giving potential for passengers to alight and cross under the road bridge to the tip on an occasional basis." That would have been a lot of work for something that would virtually never be used and would also get in the way of the extension work and so that didn't happen either.

The date of its construction is still unclear but is believed to be in the late 1980s. When a halt of this nature is assembled, work is normally started with a concrete ramp at one end. It is then built up working away from the ramp and propped up against it because the frame is like a line of dominoes until the

back concrete panels have been put in place to lock it upright. We never had the concrete end ramps so at the time, improvised wooden ones were built using old sleepers. These have now rotted away and were removed for safety reasons. Although the condition of the concrete is generally pretty good, the steel cross straps have corroded at the bottom end where they touched the ground, and so the only safe conclusion was to dismantle the whole thing.

A small group from the infrastructure team managed to do this in just one day with Matt Crawford in charge cutting the straps and Darren in the Road Railer lifting out the sections and stacking them safely.

With all the panels removed and the ramps gone, just the skeletal frame remained. Each support was in two sections, the front leg and deck support were cast as one component and the tall back leg with a mating block was the other. Only a loose pin approximately 1in in diameter and 1ft long held them together. With the pin lifted out, the front leg and deck beam was lifted away as all the legs only sit on concrete pad and are not buried in the ground or fixed. Only four of them were removed at a time as the back legs were now very unstable.

Only the thin straps remained holding



Looking north, Ketches Halt and (left) the film prop mail bag catcher from *Wind in the Willows*, as seen on 26 April 2009. DEREK HAYWARD

the rear leg up so the forks on the railer steadied the top while the connecting strap was cut. It was then allowed to fall forwards safely so that the remaining straps could be removed.

With all the panels stacked neatly and the rest of the team of the day arriving to tidy up, what will happen next to the halt? We have no use for it. It would best be sold to another railway which needs a two-car stop somewhere. With new steel straps, new ramps, and a turn with a pressure washer, it could serve a good long turn. And as far as the adjacent film prop mail bag catcher is concerned – eBay? A memento with a film history? Ideas on a post card!

JON GOFF



Removing the back panels. JON GOFF



Next came the deck panels. JON GOFF



Steadying the rear supports. JON GOFF



Felling the frame. JON GOFF



Neatly stacked, ready for the second team to clear up. JON GOFF

Filming on the line

5 July Music video for Amistat

Amistat is a German band formed of two brothers from Berlin, who came to the railway to make a video for their latest song *Listen to the Silence*.

They took advantage of the lockdown closure of the Bluebell (and everywhere else) to film in and around the tunnel under an engineers' possession, with all social distance rules in place and two actors.

The young couple, she in a lacy white dress, were filmed exploring the tunnel, hopping along the sleepers hand in hand, balancing along



Amistat filming at the tunnel under lockdown.



Amistat *Listen to the Silence*.

the rails and sitting outside the platelayers' hut. The song and the camera work were very romantically evocative, with the couple in a world of their own - the dark quiet of the tunnel contrasted with the pastoral quiet of the country railway line. For Bluebell members, it was also evocative of an unusual time in the history of the railway, summer days with the lines silent and deserted when they should have been busy with passing trains.

The video can be viewed on YouTube – Amistat *Listen to the Silence*.

19-20 August

Murderous History Smithsonian Channel

An exploration of murder through historic cases, two of which had parts filmed at Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes.

Sheffield Park became Nazi Germany in the early 1940s, at a time when fifty women were murdered over a period of time on the Berlin S Bahn, and, at the time, their deaths were covered up. Carriage No 1482 set the scene as a dimly-lit carriage on the S Bahn at night, where a bogus ticket inspector lures a woman into a first class compartment with 'au upgrade' to first class and then murders her with a length of (Cluedo-inspired?) lead piping.

In the pumphouse siding, the bludgeoned woman staggers along the track, bleeding heavily (the actress was supplied with a blood-soaked sponge to squeeze in one hand, allowing the gore to drip



Sheffield Park booking hall becomes a German detective's office for *Murderous History*.

onto the ground) to collapse and die lying across the track, where the body was later discovered. German detective Wilhelm Ludke investigated the case and the booking hall was turned into his office for the day. A suspect was identified and chased over the footbridge by two German policemen, one in uniform and one in plain clothes.

It so happened that the Q Class was undergoing a steam test in the yard on the same day, so the film crew pressed home their advantage and took some generic 'steam effects' shots to add to the day's bag.

Back in England, and at Horsted Keynes station, a scene from the gruesome story of Mrs Dyer the baby farmer was filmed. From 1880 to 1896 she took newborn babies into her care from desperate single mothers who had 'got themselves into trouble', for a fee. She promised to place them with loving adoptive parents but actually consigned them to the care of the waters of the Thames. Her crime was eventually discovered when the inadequately weighted body of a newborn was found floating in the river, leading to the discovery of many more.

On Platform 4 at Horsted Keynes, a distraught mother hands over her lovingly wrapped bundle to Mrs Dyer; the only consolation for losing her baby is the knowledge that the child will be brought up in a loving home and have all the advantages that the mother could not herself provide...

HEIDI MOWFORTH



The police discover the body in the pumphouse siding.



The victim.



A distraught mother hands over her lovingly wrapped bundle to Mrs Dyer 'the baby farmer' for *Murderous History*. ALL: MICK BLACKBURN

5 August 02 Phone Advert

A day's prep was required before filming started in order to transform Horsted Keynes station c1923 to 'Biggleston' station in the present day. Modern seating was set up, posters placed, a fake digital destination display put in place, and lengths of hoses and wiring strung along the canopy for 'film rain'.

The advert features a small blue robot which produces 'idea bubbles' from the top of his head, played by a stand in actor on the day as the robot is entirely CGI.

He accompanies his companion, a young woman carrying a cello case, as she rushes up the subway steps on a rainy day, just in time to see the rear end of her train as it departs. The train was made up of the Caledonian Sleepers, renamed 'Metropolitan Express'. The fake indicator board was rigged to display the cancellation of the next train and most subsequent ones as the cello player and robot arrive on the platform. Robot bubbles with an idea and rushes back down the subway steps and out to the station entrance to hail a passing taxi, which splashes through a puddle and soaks him thoroughly. In a touch of irony along the lines of taking coals to Newcastle (bearing in mind the condition of the local Horsted lanes), the props department had made and brought along their own fake pothole for this scene. Robot, cello player and cello pile into the taxi and drive away – the day's filming will make up ten seconds of a 90-second advert. (Ed's note – the irony of shooting an O2 advert and the Vodafone advert a couple of years ago at Horsted when in reality there is no mobile signal at all there, will not be lost on many members!)



The O2 advert robot.



The mask-wearing film crew for the O2 advert.



A Caledonian Sleeper re-purposed.

Matt Crawford's Gang

The first task following lockdown was to inspect the line. Five months of largely unchecked vegetation growth meant that in places brambles were reaching the track. It took a couple of weeks with the road-railer mounted flails to cut this back. On flat areas next to the line a tractor-mounted flail was also used. Some trees were felled which required transportation of the logs away from the lineside.

With a small number of track faults rectified, the line was available for use.

As reported last quarter, the castings for the replacement of Palmers Bridge (at the foot of Freshfield Bank) are under way but delayed by lockdown. At the time of writing, the sill sections, one deck section and two deck sections with parapets have all been cast. It remains to cast two more deck sections. The sill sections will be placed across the ends of the embankment to act as bearers for the deck sections.

Seven panels of concrete sleepers will be replaced by new flat-bottomed rail. The old rail and sleepers will go towards completing the trackwork for OP4.

Another task delayed by lockdown is the installation of a donated and refurbished SER style kissing gate at Horsted House Farm Crossing. The gate is very similar to the LBSCR version.

The refurbishment of luggage

van BV404 is nearing completion by Mike Hopps' team. It should be available for filming work from October.

Before lockdown, a ditch was dug around the upper field at Horsted. Hornbeam and hawthorne whips were planted on the inner side of the ditch. With the drought during lockdown, we had fears that many of these would have suffered, however some watering was done and about 95% have survived.

The Horsted Keynes up inner home signal is being replaced. The replacement will be a 39ft long rail-built signal post (some of which will be underground) which is being constructed by Mike Hopps. The current signal sometimes requires the erection of scaffolding blocking the track to undertake maintenance on the route indicator.

With the completion of the shell of the Heritage Skills Centre on the east side of OP4, the surrounding ground was in rough condition which became a quagmire in wet weather. The land needed grading with crushed concrete to give a better surface. A roadway will allow light vehicles to travel round the eastern side of OP4. A drain has been dug near the Centre entrance.

BRUCE HEALEY
Following lockdown, where work on the new 'A' road points within Horsted down yard and the realignment of the running-in road from the platforms was on hold, the whole job has been restarted. The new points are now



The castings for the replacement of Palmers Bridge are under way but delayed by lockdown. The sill sections, one deck section and two deck sections with parapets have been cast. BRUCE HEALEY

in place with new or nearly new rail laid from the bay platform points through to the water tower. This is part of the push to get all roads finished and filled in OP4 before winter sets in and to make a high quality access route into the yard which any loco could pass over safely.

Work has concentrated on getting the access road finished quickly and realigned to provide a new long-term smooth entrance to the yard. 'A' road will not be used for some time as the Maunsell coaches stored in 'A' road shed will not be used for a while due to the pandemic. Therefore the road into the shed will not be finished just yet as concrete sleepers are required for the road to the shed and these will be recovered from the next

track relay on Freshfield Bank. Recovered concrete sleepers will be used for finishing 'A' and 'B' roads and for finishing 'H' and 'J' roads within OP4. In addition, by getting the running-in road fully realigned and tamped first, the closure rails into 'A' road will be able to be cut in more accurately.

The changeover started on Friday 14 August with all the remaining old track and points being lifted and the ground levelled to below the bottom of the sleepers. There was no proper ballast under the track, just mainly mud and ash, so this was cleared away. It was decided to install full drainage with some spare pipe we had in stock and connect it to an adjacent manhole installed when refurbishing point 23 in 2014. It was also connected to the broken pipe taking rain water from the old shed roof, thus solving a separate problem in the process.

By the end of Tuesday four short temporary rails put in last year near the water tower had been replaced with two long almost new rails 'stolen' from the Ardingly siding and readied for pushing over onto the new alignment.

All of the drainage was finished with our usual Terram-plastic-Terram sandwich and the formation ballasted with stone salvaged from the old ballast pile at West Hoathly or from beyond the Ardingly Spur buffers. In both cases the stone was cleaned with a rotating ballast sieve on the end of the digger arm. The day concluded with the three sections of the 'A' road points being lifted across from 'H' road outside OP4 where it was built and placed



New drainage underway on the east side of the Heritage Skills Centre. BRUCE HEALEY



Refurbishment of components at Horsted Keynes. BRUCE HEALEY

onto the new ballasted formation.

Wednesday was a very wet day - the day when it was to all be connected up. Progress is always slower in heavy rain and the towel was thrown in earlier than normal. Friday saw brand new rails installed between the end of the 'A' road points and the existing 25 points outside the yard. These were two 30ft rails left over from a previous job put to good use. Final screwing down of the last rail chairs and a push from the digger to get all the new rails roughly onto the new alignment was completed. Further ballast and tamping was all that was required to complete the job.

JOHN GOFF

Sunday Gang

The Sunday P.Way gang returned mid-July and in the two Sundays before trains recommenced we managed to oil a mile of fishplates either side of the tunnel, change eight broken sleepers in Horsted House cutting and jack and pack several joints in the Vaux End area. If nothing else, it proves how much can be achieved when there aren't any trains to get in the way!

Once trains resumed, productivity inevitably dropped but we still managed to replace around 30 of the rubber pads that sit between flat bottom rails and concrete sleepers after some in the Holywell area had been damaged. We have also oiled a further batch of fishplates either side of Deans Crossing as well as replacing various other broken fixtures and fittings identified by the weekly track inspections.

The hot and dry spell in August resulted in the Wickham trolley being employed as a makeshift fire engine one Sunday, following the O1 up and down the line with water and beaters ready to put out any fires before they spread too far. Finally late August saw some work at Horsted with the track at the south end of Platform 4 being jacked and packed to level out some imperfections where the track was sinking into the underlying clay.

JON BOWERS

Wednesday Lineside Clearance Gang (South)

The Southern Team returned to work on 10 June by clearing the foot crossing at Tremains and

dealing with a line of sight issue near Monteswood Lane Bridge, both of which were priority areas to be addressed in preparation for the re-opening. Prior to that, on the previous Wednesday, we had conducted a track walk southwards to Sheffield Park, the purpose of which was to identify areas that needed clearing. Also, in preparation for our return to work, we detailed the arrangements that would apply to ensure safe working in the team during the pandemic - a note which became a template for Infrastructure as a whole.

The clearance backlog was assisted by Darren, who used his RRV and flail attachment to tackle readily accessible cess areas on each side of the line. In July we relocated to Sloop Bridge from where we worked southward dealing with areas not reached by the flail. In so doing we are enjoying parking arrangements at Town Place Farm, courtesy of Charlie the owner, which is making delivery and collection of tools much easier. Apart from rain or heat-affected days, attendance has been above average reflecting a keenness to get back to work!

JOHN DREW

Wednesday Lineside Clearance Gang (North)

The Northern Gang resumed duties a couple of weeks after our Southern colleagues. We had neglected to inform Mother Nature about lockdown and it seems she re-doubled her efforts while we'd been off! Our main focus of activity has been between West Hoathly and Deans Crossing although some tidying up was required first to catch up on work we were forced to abandon at lockdown. Initially the gang split into two groups, one completing the rake-up and burn at Lindfield Wood, while the other worked north of Leamland Bridge and around Horsted House Farm Crossing, before relocating to West Hoathly. Our priorities were concentrated on tasks key to re-opening, including removing growth around signals and location cabinets to enable S&T to carry out their inspections, ensuring signal operating cables were free from obstruction and clearing foot crossings. On completion at Lindfield Wood, the gang re-combined at West Hoathly



The Thursday Gang during the task of replacing rail keys inside the tunnel, many of which had deteriorated due to the damp conditions. TIM CRUMP

to tackle Deans Crossing and the approach sightlines north and south, including removing a large number of saplings on the down side between Deans and New Coombe Bridge. Lew Lewis has been maintaining the West Hoathly station site to his usual high standard and the strimming team joined him to clear heavy growth on the down side, where the original concrete brickworks loading platform and gate have once again been uncovered.

Ibstock has ceased production at West Hoathly Brickworks and road vehicles have been removing bricks over recent weeks. In March, the company announced it would be closing all its UK brickworks as the economy stalled due to lockdown.

Uniquely, only West Hoathly had continued to produce traditional clamp-fired stock bricks in coke-fuelled kilns, accounting for their superior appearance and rich variation in colours, which has contributed to so many character buildings in Sussex and beyond for well over a century. Regrettably, this labour-intensive process, together with pressure from government and environmental lobbies to reduce carbon emissions, are understood to be the principal reasons for closure.

Our lineside maintenance has become an increasingly sustainable operation, with the euphemistically termed 'arisings' from our activities (and those of the Tuesday Gang in particular) now substantially funding our tools and equipment. Long may that continue!

BRIAN KIDMAN

Thursday Gang

We were glad when the call came to return to volunteering on a Thursday. Our numbers are down as some of the team have not returned yet for a variety of

reasons. To return in July with no trains running gave us the chance to head off to the tunnel to replace many of the keys which over the years had deteriorated in the damp conditions - quite hard work to get them out as many were rusted. This was a 'two Thursdays' job as we also took time to undo, grease and replace the fishplates from the north end of the tunnel towards the foot crossing.

We spent two Thursdays on replacing 'A' road points, as reported above.

TIM CRUMP

Tuesday Lineside Clearance Gang

After the easing of lockdown, the Tuesday Gang returned to Sheffield Park to help ready the station and surrounds for resumption of services. A lot of strimming and mowing around the picnic area was required and we have cleared the road bridge over the stream at the entrance to the car park ready for inspection. We have also cut down overhanging tree branches and bushes along the stream up to the culvert that runs under the railway between the car parks and the water tower.

We then concentrated on clearing the lineside between Sheffield Park and Ketches and the results are clear to see. The good weather has also allowed us to remove some dead ash trees which were logged and removed to Horsted Keynes and West Hoathly using the Wickham trolley.

We recently returned to the areas around Sheffield Park station and that work may continue for a further week or two. Plans for September included moving north of Horsted to concentrate on checking and clearing around culverts before winter sets in.

KEITH LAWRIE

Signal & Telecommunications

Lockdown

Sadly, lockdown has affected everything and of course the Bluebell Railway's S&T maintenance and installation has been no exception. We are told that working at home is a solution but difficult on most practical fronts, an exception has been catching up on the paperwork and the issuing of permanent variations to records.

Gordon Callander, who normally beavers away behind the scenes producing all our signalling technical design and records has taken full advantage, ensuring those remaining working records are fully up to date. With a freezing of budgets, a number of members contributed to an S&T emergency fund to allow a couple of homework projects to continue. It also allowed us to take up an offer of accepting valuable surplus material that would otherwise have been skipped. Missing from our regular routines has been the mess room banter and gossip so Chris Chambers organised a weekly Zoom 'virtual mess room gathering', giving the opportunity for all the latest news and ideas to be exchanged. Not quite the same as the real thing as the team did not experience my tea making skills but it did give the opportunity for those far-flung members to join in.

Preparing for re-opening

The ORR circulated advice for heritage railways on checks that should be completed before re-opening to the public. The

S&T was only mentioned in a couple of lines which in effect suggested 'check everything'. They were too late; Kevin Clark from the Telecoms team had already produced an action plan and Chris Bassett had put pen to paper and had forwarded a strategy for consideration covering all the signalling issues. When a return to volunteering days was announced, Mick Sargeant organised a roster of staff to carry out the checks, keeping teams small to support the social distancing requirements. The mess rooms were reorganised to maximise space and staff allotted different days to minimise the number of staff gathering together. The telecoms team co-ordinated their checks and tests with signalling to prevent any duplication and centred their activities on the three telephone exchanges. Although these are heritage electromechanical systems, they all worked well with only a couple of minor issues. It is often forgotten that an assortment of miscellaneous kit like public address, networks and national telecoms links are looked after by the telecoms guys taking up a considerable amount of volunteer time. A number of configuration changes to the external phone system were required at Sheffield Park to facilitate the new working practices and these were carried out by our telecoms specialists. All but a couple of checks were completed in time for the ghost train running. The original tests had identified two defective lineside phones which were



Preparing for the re-opening. Chris Chambers examines the signal equipment whilst Chris Bassett records the details. CHRIS MAJER

replaced and, as expected, rusty rails caused some irregularities but otherwise all went well...

Then the heatwave struck. We suffered a number of power failures both from external utility supplies and battery backups, at Sheffield Park a number of temporary fixes were employed to maintain the systems and fingers were crossed for our 60th Anniversary re-opening. The telecoms team who support most of our stand-by battery systems were giving advice and behind the scenes the signalling team were on stand-by duty but all went well and the final fix was installed on the third day of the celebrations. During our start-up checks, one major issue was identified that needed prompt attention - the point machine at the south end of Sheffield Park station was now beginning to give concern. Before lockdown we had prepared a replacement machine but five months of lying dormant

seems to have accelerated its problems. Mick Sargeant and Doug Steptoe confirmed the prepared machine was correctly configured, it was bench tested before transporting to site and fitted on the Wednesday before re-opening. With the exception of an existing bolt that just refused to be removed in the traditional manner, the replacement and testing of the machine went well under the blistering heat.

Wickham Trolley

The Wickham trolley, shared by most of the infrastructure teams, is arguably the most important piece of plant that we own and is used on a regular basis. It was built in 1974 but using 1960 technology and has spent most of its life being used to get staff and material to those awkward sites along the line. Sadly, its overall condition is not good and it is common to attend the railway with plans to use the

trolley for important work only to find it 'red-carded'. Before Christmas 2019 a major problem developed with the clutch and John Smith (Infrastructure) took on the challenge of gathering replacement parts and replacing the hydraulic operating system, unfortunately John fell ill and the work was halted. Just before lockdown Ali Bruce from our S&T team assessed the possibility of taking over the repair drawing on his experience gained from our hydraulic signal development. During the shut-down and with co-operation from John a plan was developed so that as soon as volunteers were allowed back, work could restart on the repair. Regrettably John has had to shield so Andy Palmer, back from furlough, assisted Ali and the repairs were quickly completed. Although out of use for over six months, the engine started straight away but it could not be moved - being trapped by rows of concrete sleepers prepared for the postponed track renewals. To solve this problem the traction unit and trailer were craned on to the adjacent siding whilst taking the opportunity to turn the trolley through 180 degrees and thus presenting the radiator to the predominately uphill direction. The brakes need to be continually nursed and Bob Bird and Jon Bowers are regularly seen tweaking the adjusters to keep them in spec. A strategy is now being developed to reduce the need for this constant attention. An intermittent electrical fault was another regular challenge to keep the beast serviceable, again Ali used his signalling skills and rewired the vulnerable circuits thus significantly improving its reliability.

Back Stroke Locking

During lockdown I was contacted by an enthusiast who is writing a book on LSWR signalling. He was looking for information on a safety device developed after an accident at Nine Elms Loco Junction in 1880. The rather complicated mechanical contrivance was a variation to the existing signal box lever locking but fell out of favour when confidence on an electrical alternative was developed early in the last century. The chances of having a working example of what was known as Back Stroke Locking (BSL) still in existence was tiny and even Charles Hudson, a veteran authority



Horsted Up Inner Home Signal, to be replaced by a more conventional signal to the left. BRIAN HYMAS

on lever locking, had never witnessed the mechanism. After some research we discovered an example had existed at North Kent West Signal Box (closed 1981) and much earlier and perhaps more interestingly at Ventnor West on the Isle of Wight (closed 1952.) In our S&T archives at the Bluebell we are the guardians of a demonstration (Stevens Tappet) model lever frame. It was believed to have been built by apprentice(s) at the Wimbledon S&T workshops and now used by us for training. I had a suspicion that this may include an example of back stroke locking but was frustrated at not being able to visit the railway to check during the closedown. It was

therefore very satisfying when we were allowed back and to find the model indeed did have an example of this locking and may possibly be the only specimen in existence.

Proposed Replacement Signal

At Horsted Keynes the bracket signal for the up direction (HK37) approaching the station has been a challenge to maintain for all its working life. To reach some of its components a scaffold or cherry picker is required and this situation is not practical or safe to continue. It seems this cantilever design was used because the embankment on the conventional left-hand side

was steep and the earlier home signal had started to slide down the bank. Since then the land between the site of the signal towards the Ardingly branch has been reclaimed and stabilised with infill from the capping spoil from Imberhorne cutting and dirty ballast from permanent way renewals. It is now possible to provide a stable base for a more traditional signal and remove the last uncharacteristic colour light signal from this otherwise mechanical 1930 area. The recovered bracket signal can then be refreshed and reprofiled for use on the Ardingly branch whenever this may be required.

New Signal Box

Very early plans are afoot to replace Sheffield Park Signal Box. Although not in immediate danger of causing major issues, many components are now coming to the end of their natural life, some have been working for all of the 60 years in preservation and some much longer. It will not be possible to replace this structure in a similar location for a number of practical and safety reasons. Informal discussions have started on various options and when firm proposals are agreed they will be made public.

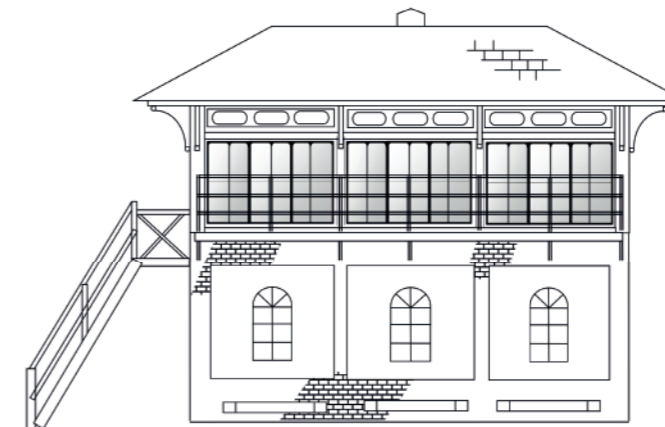
BRIAN HYMAS and KEVIN CLARK



Mick Sargeant, ably assisted by Alan Rogers, adjusting the replacement point machine at Sheffield Park during intolerably hot conditions. MARTIN LAWRENCE



The Wickham Trolley being retrieved and turned at Horsted Keynes Sidings. The conductor rail was isolated! ALI BRUCE



The future at Sheffield Park? An engineer's impression of a classic Saxby & Farmer signal box. BRIAN HYMAS

OUR TWIN RAILWAY - 25 YEARS ON



Bello, which was tailed by tram loco No 18, is seen hauling the 15.00 Medemblik to Hoorn mixed train (a Bluebell members' special) past Medemblik windmill on 22 May 2014. PHIL BARNES



During its visit to the Bluebell, No 18 *Leegwater* is seen departing Sharpthorne Tunnel with the 11.30am Sheffield Park to Kingscote service on 7 September 2000. PHIL BARNES

Although I had personally visited the Museum Stoomtram Hoorn Medemblik in the past, the first official Bluebell trip in which I was involved was in September 1995 when a group of 17 members travelled to Hoorn for a long weekend.

This followed a group visit by MSHM volunteers to us earlier in the year. We travelled via Eurostar and connecting trains to Hoorn, which is about 40 minutes north of Amsterdam. We stayed in the Keizerskroon Hotel, just a short walk from the station.

Rene Van de Broeke, who is now the General Manager of MSHM, hosted our visit and allocated activities for the following day. Working members had been invited to take their uniforms and to shadow our Dutch colleagues operating on their railway. Saturday saw our members undertaking duties as ticket collectors, guards, buffet attendants, signalmen and enginemen. The MSHM methods are a little different to Bluebell's - with the guard having to leave and join the (slow!) moving train to man their many level crossings. The on-train staff have to pass between the four-wheeled ex-Austrian coaches on open balconies protected only with bars or chains. It was all very different but good fun. The locomotive on the main train was decorated with Dutch and UK flags in our honour.

Three years later in June 1998 our flagship loco, P class No 323 *Bluebell*, was transported to Hoorn to help the MSHM celebrate its 30th anniversary and ran for a day manned by Bluebell staff.

An ambitious event then followed in September 2000 when MSHM steam tram locomotive No 18 *Leegwater* and two beautifully restored wooden coaches were transported to Sheffield Park to run on Bluebell for ten days. This unique occasion led the way to our twinning arrangement. The transport was kindly underwritten by European Union funding for cultural exchanges. It was initially thought that No 18 normally running on level track in Holland would find the steeply-graded Bluebell too much but all doubts were swept away on the trial runs to Kingscote and back.

Two years later No 672 *Fenchurch* crossed the Channel to run on the Maldegem heritage line in Belgium as part of their annual weekend gala followed by two weeks at Hoorn running the full length of the line, her air braked capability allowing operation of the brakes on MSHM coaching stock. She was a big attraction. During the visit on Sunday 19 May a formal twinning ceremony took



BRPS chairman Roy Watts shakes hands with Jaap Nieweg at the twinning ceremony at Hoorn on 20 May 2002. ROGER PRICE

place at Hoorn attended by Roy Watts, Chris Knibbs, Tim Baker, Tony Sullivan and myself. Lewis Nodes and Russ Hubner looked after *Fenchurch* during her 'holiday' in Holland.

The General Manager of MSHM at that time was Jaap Nieweg and he has been a good friend to Bluebell over the years. He is also president of Fedecrail - the international body which represents heritage railways in Europe - but is soon to retire from this position.

In 2004 a complementary ceremony took place at Sheffield Park to cement the twinning arrangement and this co-incided with a visit to Bluebell of *Bello*, the flagship locomotive of MSHM, which ran on Bluebell for two weeks. Built by the Schwartzkopff company in Germany in 1914, she ran on tram lines in rural Holland. A replica worksplate and model of *Bello* presented on this occasion by Jaap Nieweg can be seen in the museum at Sheffield Park.



In 2002, No 672 *Fenchurch* crossed the Channel to run on the Maldegem heritage line in Belgium as part of their annual weekend gala followed by two weeks at Hoorn. Bluebell's Russ Hubner poses with a Dutch family. ROGER PRICE



Bluebell's roving ambassador No 323 *Bluebell* teams up with *Bello* at Hoorn in 1998. ROGER PRICE

A number of discussions have taken place since then regarding further locomotive exchanges but the uncertainties of Brexit and now Covid-19 as well as the cost implications have meant that nothing has so far been agreed.

However the spirit of co-operation has been kept alive with the 'Going Dutch' tours which I ran in 2004/5/8/14 and 2018 and in return visits by MSHM groups or individuals to Bluebell. The largest of these was in 2018 when 55 MSHM members filled all the rooms at the Roebuck Hotel at Wych Cross for a long weekend visit to Bluebell. Our Dutch friends are always most welcoming and I like to think that Bluebell reciprocates with the return visits. Free or reduced travel is available to Bluebell members on MSHM with a reciprocal arrangement on our railway.

As a further sign of our co-operation,

in 2016 Tony Hillman and I sourced and arranged to reconvert back from electricity to gas, several vintage lamps which now hang under the canopy of the new station building at Hoorn.

It has been a real pleasure to facilitate the many exchanges and visits over the past 25 years, making many good friends in the process.

If you have not travelled to this part of the Netherlands, then do go when you are able; it's very easy now with both direct trains and flights from London to Amsterdam. As well as the delightful MSHM, the local towns with their beautifully preserved 15th century buildings, the harbours featuring picturesque sailing boats and the Zuider Zee outdoor museum which rivals Beamish or the Black Country museum are all worth a visit.

ROGER PRICE



Bello and *Fenchurch* attack Freshfield Bank on 1 September 2004. ROGER PRICE

RAILS OF SHEFFIELD

00 GAUGE LBSCR A1X 0-6-0T BY DAPOL



The BR late livery model stands proudly on its elegant box. Just look at the lovely rivet detail on the smokebox.

Whilst they were tiny, diminutive even, they shared the same adoration of steam that was lavished on the greats, the Duchesses, the Kings and Castles and yes those Gresley creations too. Stroudley's A1X 0-6-0Ts

were the masters of longevity, and loved for it, for they seemed to have a sneaky way to evade the ways of Father Time! First introduced in 1872 some of them were still working on the national network until November 1963

on the much-lamented Hayling Island branch. Nicknamed 'Terriers' because of their bark, they were built for suburban traffic on the LBSCR. They had a very short period in their prime role, usurped by

electric trains, and then were cascaded to lesser duties such as works shunters or being sold off to work lightly laid branch lines. A couple strayed on to the LSWR on the Lyme Regis branch till they too were ironically displaced by LSWR Adams Radial tanks that had also been built for London suburban traffic, and also usurped by electrification. Several were bought for Colonel Stephens' Kent & East Sussex Railway, as was a class 0415 where a century later they have returned to a reborn railway. Even whilst a number of the class were still in the employ of British Railways, a Terrier was in private ownership chugging up Freshfield Bank here on our embryonic Bluebell Railway.

The Dapol of old first brought us a model of a 00 gauge Terrier way back when, which disappeared as the company changed ownership and direction. It resurfaced within the Hornby range where as an old model it was flogged to death. Dapol had during that time brought out N scale 'Terriers' which rather stunned everyone that a working model loco could be made so small. Like the prototype, it has

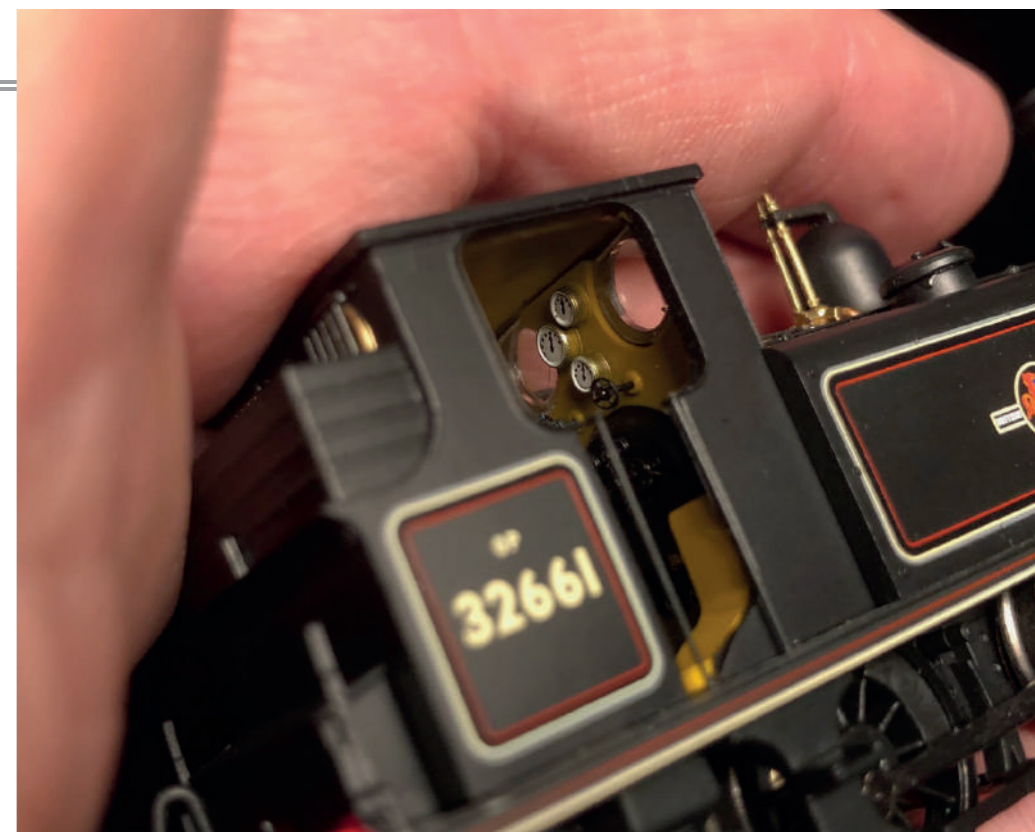


The 00 gauge model keeps good company with its N scale baby brother.

stood up very well to the ways of Father Time. It was reviewed here on these pages not so long ago. Dapol more recently followed their N scale model with their first dalliance into 0 gauge and... wow what a tremendous winner that was too! RTR (Ready to Run) 0 gauge was here to stay. The affordable 0 gauge Terrier had started something powerful and new, which till then had been the domain of the expensive custom hand-built modeller. 0 gauge was now open to all of us, not just those with financial resources to support an exclusive scale. Full marks to Dapol for their business acumen in producing what is a stunning model for the price. A stream of other stunning locomotives and rolling stock have now followed in the wake. That scale that was originally spawned by Frank Hornby in the ancestry of model railways is now back as mainstream, and 00 gauge has its equal partners.

All good things come to he who waits, a well known quotation, and it's been well worth the wait. The Rails of Sheffield 00 gauge Terrier made by Dapol completes that 'hat trick' and is now here. The box it comes in says so much about the product. The high gloss laminated thick card carries a design drawing plus all the marketing emblems that are distinctive to the retailer *Rails of Sheffield*... the benchmark of packaging set by Dapol... it's their usual classy presentation box, a statement of quality, and always a pleasure to open. Inside the model is protected by the standard transparent plastic ice cube which protects the model sitting on its cradle.

The anticipation of opening the box is equally rewarded by a beautiful model which perfectly captures the sort of cheeky charismatic nature of these ancient locos. From every angle it looks so right. I love those spectacle plates, with their delicate brass surround, they are just like a pair of eyes staring out at the road ahead. The fine pipework and brass whistle are pretty eye-catching too. Below the running plate those little wheels have particularly delicate spokes with their respective balance weights added. The very finely shaped coupling rods complete the old and dainty character of these locos. In that tiny cramped cab all the detail is



Peering into the cab you can see the calibrations on the gauges...super detail!



Hot stuff! The firebox glow really makes the model come alive.

there, even those tiny gauges are calibrated.

The model comes with a glowing firebox feature which certainly lights my fire! It's a brilliant little extra that Dapol started some time ago and gives that extra dimension of reality, making the model really come alive just like a real steam locomotive, a true primeval machine, which is why we love them.

Tooling variations cater to differing detail differences throughout the class, from the original Stroudley A1 locomotives, to the later A1X

with extended smokebox. These 'Terriers' are available in a range of historical liveries according to the period. The rather stunning Stroudley Improved Engine Green with all its incredible intricate lining must have taken ages in the paint shop. The later Southern Railway version looks equally good on the models and there is also a named Isle of Wight Railway version in Southern Olive. A number of locos were sold out of service to other railway companies and these liveries are also catered for, such as the SECR, GWR, KESR and Weston, Cleveland

& Portishead Railway. The collection is completed with the British Railways liveried versions with both early and late crest.

Needless to say these models are exceptionally fine runners – as quiet as a mouse, not that 'Terriers' were known for that! They come DCC (Digital Command Control) ready or fitted and a sound fitted version that won't run as quiet as mouse. In conclusion these models are so nice you'd be barking not to have your pet 'Terrier' on your own layout.

CHRIS KAPOLKA

Membership matters

We have all experienced strange times since the end of March. Our freedom to meet with family and friends, enjoy a holiday or visit places we want to be such as the Bluebell Railway. However, life at the Railway is slowly getting back to a degree of normality with a limited train service at weekends and Santa and SteamLights bookings are rapidly filling up.

The membership team now has access to the office at Sheffield Park station and we are working hard to catch up with any outstanding issues you may have.

It has been most encouraging that over the lockdown period we have received applications which total 216 new members - 26 in March, 94 in April/May, 41 in June, 28 in July and 27 in August - to which we say a very big welcome. Against that we have been informed of the passing of quite a few long-standing members.

Twelve members returned their reminders to the membership office with their bank details to convert to payment by Direct Debit. Three returned the form to the Assistant Membership Secretary too late to process the request. If you wish to convert to Direct Debit, at the top of the section you fill in is the date by which you

must return it to the membership office. Any received after that will have to be paid by cheque.

On the front of the form is a date by which it would be helpful if paying by cheque for it to be returned to your AMS, along with a stamped address envelope please.

We have now added a box that displays your email address that we have on record. If this is not correct or is missing please add the correct one in the box in CAPITAL letters, email address is not case sensitive, passwords are. Recently the Society wished to contact you all and out of the emails we have on record over 800 bounced back as being no longer valid, so please let us have your current email address.

When informing us of a change of address, please give us your old address, or at least the postcode, to help us identify you - with 10,000+ members we can have several members with the same initial and surname, and don't forget your new address, telephone number and email address.

As we have not been able recently to conduct the draw for a year's membership, I have decided that there will be two winning tickets this autumn. The two winners are Mr Heal of Horley and Mr and Mrs Buck

of Old Coulsdon. The winner's tickets were drawn by Ruth Rowatt on 3 September at Sheffield Park. Congratulations, amended membership cards have already been sent.

You could also be a winner of a year's membership - just add £1 per entry when you send in your membership renewal. You can add this to your Direct Debit mandate. Good luck.

DON BREWER
Membership Secretary
membership@bluebell-railway.co.uk

USED AND UNUSED STAMPS FOR BLUEBELL FUNDS

Stamps, albums, picture postcards, phone cards, etc.

Please do not leave at Sheffield Park
BUT SEND DIRECT TO:
Tony Pond, 26 Hesketh House, Cawte Road, Southampton SO15 3SN
Tel: 0792 300 6375

Obituary FRANK GLUE

It is with great sadness to report the unexpected and sudden death of Frank Glue, on 1 September, at the age of 74.

Frank had been part of the Maunsell Locomotive Society's working party at Sheffield Park for over 20 years. He played a key role in several projects, including the restoration of U class No 1638, the overhaul of S15 No 847 and latterly the ongoing major overhaul of Schools class *Stowe*.

Frank had worked as an engineer at Amberley Working Museum and was undertaking the overhaul of his own ex-Southdown bus which is based there.

He was a highly competent engineer, who could turn his hand to a whole range of tasks. In particular he helped Melvyn with the big job of drilling and tapping hundreds of new holes for stays on



Frank Glue working on No 847's boiler. JO FAIRCLOUGH

the outer wrapper below the running plate level of No 847's firebox.

He was also a director of the Maunsell Locomotive Society for 13 years and his sound common sense was appreciated in discussions. His good nature

and sense of humour were also much appreciated at lunch time chats and when organising what needed to be done next.

In addition to his interest in railways and buses, he grew a whole range of food on his allotment, brewed his

own wine and was a keen and regular swimmer in the sea, in his home town on the Sussex coast. Our sympathies go to his partner Sue, his children and grandchildren.

STEVE PILCHER

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