

SteamLights SUCCESS!



Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage awards us £727,200

'Off the Rails' gala



Palmers Bridge replacement





The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service

Winter 2020
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Front cover main: No 73082
Camelot heads our new
SteamLights experience train
at Three Arch Bridge on 5
December 2020.
DAVE BOWLES

Rear cover: The goods train
is being prepared at Horsted
Keynes in readiness for the
'Off the Rails' event on 24
October 2020.
JAMES HAMILTON

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O1 Class No 65 approaching Ketches with the 2.30 train from Sheffield Park on 31 October 2020. PETER EDWARDS

Welcome to the winter issue of *Bluebell News*. There is a lot happening at the Railway as I write (mid-December), having just completed my first rostered SteamLights platform staff turn last night. It was so good to see lots of happy visitors once again.

Following the end of England's second national lockdown in early December, our staff, volunteers and visitors breathed a sigh of relief that both East and West Sussex were to be in 'Tier 2', which effectively meant 'Full Steam Ahead' for our seasonal trains. The national situation remains fluid however so we remain cautious going forward. The second lockdown did shave off the start of both our Santa Specials and SteamLights products and the latter was extended into mid-January and then the end of January to meet demand but, as I write, this is not a 'given'. Fortnightly Government briefings continue to keep us on our toes!

During the last quarter we even managed to stage a mini 'special event' in the shape of an 'Off the Rails' gala, with visitors travelling on socially-distanced managed trains that paused at stations long enough to visit various forms of heritage transport displays. Providing a further link to various means of cartage by road, was the return of our demonstration goods trains, ably put together by our recently-formed Bluebell Goods Division volunteers. Well done to all of those responsible for maintaining and restoring our wagon fleet. Here's to many more examples being brought back to operation. As non-revenue-earning vehicles, it's fair to say that

wagons had been overlooked for far too long but it goes to show that when a band of volunteers are able to get the bit between their teeth then they can make great things happen.

This seems to be a welcome trend at the moment; witness the volunteers from the Loco Dept who are moving fundraising forward to accelerate the 9F's position in the restoration queue.

There has also been much talk on social media regarding other potential projects gathering pace for acceptance. Bear in mind that projects still have to be agreed by the railway's management in order to prevent a 'scatter' approach of undeliverable and unfinished projects. Like the wagons, again it is non-revenue-earning vehicles that are attracting attention because there are still many heritage assets on our stock list that remain unloved.

The first is our Southern Railway Travelling Post Office carriage, abandoned after its restoration many years ago when its treatment using a 'new' etch primer didn't etch and the finished paintwork literally fell off in chunks. Its promoters rightly suggest that it has a learning value for our schools/education visits as to how our post used to travel and be sorted in pre-motorway juggernaut days.

However top of the pile is the interest being shown in doing something with *Sharphorn* – the little 0-4-0ST Manning Wardle contractors' locomotive of 1877 vintage that helped to build the Lewes & East Grinstead Railway. Probably unique in its circumstance – a heritage line owning a locomotive that built its line – it would surely

be a prime candidate for specific heritage lottery funding. Funding that would pay for its restoration off-site (candidates such as Statfold Barn or the Middleton Railway which is located in the city of the locomotive's birth, come to mind) and again the story of the contractor and associated navvies building the line could make a great educational story so that would be another box ticked. It is also no coincidence that there is a Manning Wardle sized gap on the track at the south end of SteamWorks! which, with a little attention, could make for a great cameo of pick-axe and shovel wielding mannequins and a push-button recording that tells the story of Joseph Firbank and his merry men.

As it was only designed to pull a few wagons, full restoration would be costly and possibly needless, but a quick fix would be to get this locomotive inside from being out in the elements at Horsted Keynes and letting the 9F Club loose on it when they are allowed to meet again.

Meanwhile, stay safe and we look forward to meeting you in 2021.



Colin Tyson

Colin Tyson
Editor



SteamLights season

No 30541 passes Three Arch Bridge with the 8pm SteamLights train from Sheffield Park on 11 December 2020. NICK GILLIAM

The SteamLights test train ran on Friday 13 November very successfully from Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes twice. The first run was a full dress rehearsal and went

without a hitch with the exception of one string of LED lights which failed on the locomotive *Camelot*. This was rectified very quickly by our contracted supplier of the

equipment at Horsted Keynes and the locomotive returned to Sheffield Park fully lit. The second run was filmed for use in our future marketing activity to

promote SteamLights in future years.

Thanks to driver Jim Grant and fireman Ben Dingley who said that it was a challenge to run the train at the right speed to show off the lineside displays – but they did a terrific job. I have to thank two key staff members for their outstanding work on SteamLights; namely co-ordinator Julia Pique, who has put an enormous amount of planning into this new product and has spent countless hours organising every detail. Secondly hats off to Carriage & Wagon works manager Rowan Millard and his team of employees and volunteers. The promoter of the event, Andrew Pooley, said it was the best rigged train he had ever seen at any of the railways running similar events. SteamLights had to be moved from November due to lockdown and is essentially being run through December and until the end of January and we hope that it will be one of our premier products going forward.

PAUL LELEW
Commercial and marketing director

£727,200 GRANT AID BOOST FOR GOING FORWARD

The Railway has been successful in obtaining a grant of £727,200 from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage.

Apart from funding for the first phase of the refurbishment of Horsted Keynes station which was refused, we were successful in obtaining a grant for everything we asked for – a total of £727,200. However, like the NLHF Emergency Grant, we cannot spend the money as we like – it can only be spent on the 28 specific elements we included in the application. Some are ones that we wanted to do but, unless they were grant-funded, we would not have otherwise been able to afford, particularly in the current financial climate.

Just over £400,000 of the total is to cover the salaries of our skilled heritage and technical staff and our marketing staff between December and March. It also covers various specific overheads from October to March including insurance, utilities, IT support, leasing costs, hire of rolling stock and bank interest and charges. The remaining £325,000 is for 19 separate elements designed to improve and diversify income, save costs and encourage both previous and potential new visitors to come to the Railway.

They include:

- An integrated Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) system to provide essential information on ticketing, catering and shop sales so that financial returns can be improved.
- Raising our online profile by improving our website, expanding the shop website where sales have already increased by more than 20 times, increasing our online advertising, enabling us to produce our own videos and having online 'virtual tours' of various parts of the Railway including SteamWorks!, the loco and C&W works, signal boxes and museum.
- Completing an energy audit and implementing its findings to save on our very large electricity bills.
- Carrying out a detailed feasibility study for the installation of solar panels at inconspicuous locations at the Railway.
- Modernisation of the shop at Sheffield Park, including new lighting to make it more attractive to visitors and encourage them to spend more.
- Construction of a 7¼in gauge miniature railway in the picnic area at Sheffield Park as an additional attraction for visitors and a training facility for youngsters.
- Installation of electric car charging points at Sheffield Park and possibly Horsted Keynes.
- The purchase of our own events tent to allow us to host more and larger revenue-earning events.

More details of the projects will be published in the next edition.

VERNON BLACKBURN
Chairman, Bluebell Railway Trust

HELP YOUR RAILWAY AT THE JANUARY SALES

Hoping to bag a bargain in the January sales? A reminder that you can shop online at over 4,000 retailers to generate funds for the Railway at no cost to you. To set up EasyFundRaising, simply go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk and specify the Bluebell Railway as your nominated charity. You can also shop online at Amazon while earning 0.5% of the value of your shopping for the Railway, again at no cost to you. To set up AmazonSmile, simply go direct to smile.amazon.co.uk or activate AmazonSmile on your Amazon shopping app.

Diary Dates taster for 2021

2-11 April STEM Family Fair

- BrickWorks! Adventure

19-20 June Road meets Rail

26-27 June Model Railway Weekend

7-8 August 60+1 Anniversary

24-26 September Giants of Steam

To be confirmed are beer festivals in May and September, summer open air live music, Diesel Gala (July)

Ghost trains at Grinstead ahead of Santas

Completion in November of defective track near the Eye Hospital between Kingscote and East Grinstead allowed the Railway to operate once again over this section.

'Ghost trains' that carry no passengers ran once again over the weekend of 28-29 November to East Grinstead for loco crew and platform staff refresher training purposes, ready for Santa Specials from 5 December which operated to Horsted Keynes from both Sheffield Park and East Grinstead.



No 73082 *Camelot* runs round its 'ghost train' at East Grinstead on Sunday 29 November. COLIN TYSON

All change for emails and blog posts

All Bluebell Railway email addresses have changed to follow the same domain name as the website. Email addresses follow the format: firstname.lastname@bluebell-railway.com

This brings the communications under the same domain with emails using dot-com to match the Railway's website www.bluebell-railway.com

In order to ease the workload of the customer service and sales team and ensure enquiries reach the right people more speedily, new inboxes and email addresses have been created for specific departments. These are:

bookings@bluebell-railway.com for sales and booking enquiries

functions@bluebell-railway.com for wedding and charter enquiries

pr@bluebell-railway.com for press and marketing enquiries

infrastructure@bluebell-railway.com for infrastructure matters

The popular Bluebell Railway blog has moved to a new web address and can be found on the BRPS section of the website at https://bluebell-railway.com/brps/whats_new/

The section also has updates from various departments including the locomotive works, carriage & wagon, and infrastructure.

Blog contributions should ideally include photos as well as words. The names of the photographers should be mentioned so that credit can be given and possibly used in our wider publicity.

All contributions to the blog should be sent to blog@bluebell-railway.com

PAUL BROMLEY
Communications director

New brooms sweep clean in sponsor deal

Our locomotive department cleaners have happily chucked their threadbare brooms away and are as happy as a pig in ash, thanks to a new sponsorship deal for new brooms from Hillbrush.

Hillbrush, a British company with a Royal Warrant, was founded in 1922 and are based in Mere, Wiltshire. They have very kindly offered to sponsor all the yard brooms, some cleaning brushes and enough loco footplate brushes for every engine and those under overhaul. The sponsorship is ongoing into 2021 and beyond.

We hope to see members of Hillbrush management in late spring at the Railway to thank them for the support. Special thanks to David Hagelthorn of Hillbrush and the wider team for helping make this happen.



Ross Broadbridge sweeping the loco pit with his new broom. BEN GRAY

Bluebell makes Heritage Railway Awards shortlist

The Bluebell Railway has been shortlisted in two categories in the prestigious Heritage Railway Association awards.

We are on the shortlist for:

Communications: 'The Bluebell Times' newsletter, produced to keep members and supporters in touch during the months of lockdown when the Railway wasn't trading.

Innovative fundraising idea or Covid project: 'Steam Returns to Bluebell Railway' reopening marketing video, narrated by Martin Clunes.

Plc chairman Christopher Hunford said: "We are delighted to be shortlisted for these two prestigious awards. It recognises the significant work and dedication by the staff of the Bluebell Railway during what has been a difficult year."

The HRA is still working on details of the awards ceremony but it is likely to be held in March or April.



ABOVE: The Bluebell Times newsletter.

RIGHT: Bluebell re-opening video.



Meet the Plc board



CHRIS HUNFORD – chairman and locomotive director

A chartered civil engineer by trade, I have been a working volunteer at the Bluebell Railway for over 25 years, first joining the railway's 9F Club before joining the Locomotive Department. Moving through the footplate grades, I passed for driving in 2007 and joined the Plc board in 2014 as Locomotive Director and chairman since 2019.



PAUL BROMLEY – communications director

I am a journalist and broadcaster with 35 years' experience working for local, regional, national and international news organisations spanning print, agency, broadcast, online, digital and social media. I am currently a freelance writer, blogger and lecturer having left my role as an editor at Sky News in 2019.

My involvement with Bluebell goes back more than 20 years as visitor, member and volunteer. I am a museum steward and education guide and also an award-winning magician and a member of the Magic Circle.



DAVID BURCH – finance director

I took my accounting exams whilst working for London Transport in the 1980s. I then worked in the print industry in various accounting roles before working for a membership charity in 2005 ending up as Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

I am currently Head of Finance and Operations for the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. Outside of work I am a board trustee and Hon Treasurer of PACEY, an early years charity based in Bromley and am also a Rotarian.



MARTIN CRESSWELL – safety director

A Bluebell life member and volunteer for 41 years, I am married with two adult daughters and one grandchild. A career railwayman with 41 years' service starting with the BR Southern Region Civil Engineers Dept upon graduation in 1979. Currently employed as an operational safety advisor to one of Network Rail's key engineering suppliers.



MIKE ELLIS – operations director

I joined London Transport in 1979 after working for Barclays Bank as an apprentice groundsman. I joined as a Railman later becoming Leading Railman, Signaller then Station Foreman until 1987. I then became a Railway Instructor at White City Training Centre. In 1994 I became a Duty Train Manager on the Metropolitan Line until a transfer back to the Training Centre to carry out a specialist course until 1995. I then transferred to the Bakerloo Line as a Line Controller until 1999 when I was then promoted to Duty Operations Manager, later to be retitled Service Manager. I retired after 35 years' service in 2014.

I became a member of the Bluebell Railway in 1975, finally becoming a working volunteer in 2002 in the Fire Dept until its closure in 2006. I then became a Guard, later Guards Inspector and finally Chief Guards Inspector.

I have a number of interests including model railways both 00 and G scale, speedway, football and cricket, plus I am part owner of preserved London Transport/Country bus AEC Regent III RT604. I am married and live in Shirley, Surrey.



PAUL LELEW – commercial and marketing director

From a career railway family, my grandfather worked for the LBSCR, and was awarded an MBE for his services to the railway. My father spent all his working life as a railwayman and amongst many roles managed the Royal Train for a period.

I was born in Brighton and have spent my entire career in the food industry. I started out as an accountant and worked for Sainsburys initially, followed by a spell in sales and marketing with United Biscuits. I then entered a period of general management for a variety of smaller food businesses. During this time I gained a great deal of experience in how to turn an ailing business into a successful business and became a company turnaround expert.

Before retiring in 2012 aged 57, I spent my final 10 years building up a group of food businesses as Managing Director and shareholder. During this time I spent a lot of time in Italy and the rest of Europe as well as America and travelled extensively seeking supply chain opportunities.

My passion is motor sport, but I do have a soft spot for steam trains. I can remember seeing the last steam engine running from London to Brighton just before it entered Clayton Tunnel.

My other passion is music and I am finance director and presenter with Uckfield FM and broadcast a heavy metal and hard rock programme.



VERNON BLACKBURN – Bluebell Railway Trust chairman

I have been a member and regular visitor to the Bluebell Railway since 1965 when I started volunteering in the station buffet and polishing carriages. I am a chartered accountant with a background in dealing with trusts and charities.

In 2014 I was appointed the administrator of the Trust which supports the railway and in 2019 I became chairman.



BARRY LUCK – infrastructure director

I joined the railway in December 2011 as a carriage restorer, working on the Stroudley 4-wheeler known as ‘Betty’. I fully retired the following May having spent 40 years in the water industry as a civil engineer.

In 2015 I joined the platform staff at Sheffield Park, and passed as Leading Porter a year later, and subsequently Station Foreman. I started training as signalman in 2016 and passed for Kingscote in 2018. I have been managing the construction of the OP4 carriage shed at Horsted Keynes since 2017.

The infrastructure director’s portfolio is huge and varied, from Permanent Way and buildings to air-conditioning as well as everything in between. An interesting challenge!



BOB PAMMENT – rolling stock director

I am a chartered mechanical engineer, career railwayman, family man with three children and three grandchildren and a volunteer on the Bluebell since the early 1970s.

I have been fascinated by railways for as long as I can remember and, living in London’s East End, I spent my youth trainspotting in London stations and steam sheds.

During my railway career I have held a range of rewarding technical and managerial positions including Field Trials Technician on BR Southern Region, Mechanical Riding Inspector on the Western Region, Depot Manager at Old Oak Common, Fleet Manager London and South East for Porterbrook, Depot Manager at Reading and Exeter, Depot Engineering Manager at Bristol SPM and Engineering and Operations Director for Yellow Rail.

Now retired, I enjoy driving trains on the Bluebell and supporting our wonderful C&W Dept as Director.



STEPHEN BIGG - non-executive director Plc - acting chairman BRPS

A career of five years in the food manufacturing industry was followed by over 30 years in the food retailing sector, mostly with Marks & Spencer. This included management roles in buying, marketing and sales development. Following retirement, I started volunteering in the C&W Dept, where I learnt the heritage skills of carriage upholstery. A period spent on the Governance Review Group was followed by four years as vice-chairman of the BRPS, then in March 2020 taking on acting chairman following the resignation of the previous Society chairman.



GRAHAM FLIGHT – company secretary

I qualified as a chartered accountant in 1976 and have held numerous offices on the Railway, starting with the old Extension Committee and Company in 1982, through managing the conversion to a Plc in 1985 as company secretary and director, and chairman of the Plc for 18 years until 2013.

I wrote the original Bluebell Trust Deed and served as trustee from its formation until 2013. I chaired the Northern Extension Project (NEP) leading to its completion in 2013 and now chair the Western Extension Project (WEP).

Progress on Horsted Keynes Heritage Skills Centre

As we are heading towards the end of 2020, we are making great progress on the Heritage Skills Centre fit-out. The space is intended to be a diverse space for the Railway, ranging from a varnish shop through to offices.

The size and scale of the space is vast but is well provisioned with natural light and will provide full functionality to all users whether they are in the training room or the trim shop.

We are currently working on the partitions with the electrics, plumbing and heating to follow. We are also installing two new staircases that will offer first floor access at both ends of the building, along with toilets and shower facilities.

Construction has continued during the second lockdown which has enabled us to maintain progress which will continue through into early 2021. Whilst we are maintaining some more traditional aspects, we are also exploring some more sustainable options such as air source heat pumps to provide heating to the building.

MELISSA JORDAN
OP4 Project Manager



The first floor of the Heritage Skills Centre, looking south. This will look very different shortly when the space is bisected with partitions for all of the rooms. MELISSA JORDAN

UPDATE ON THE 2020 BRPS AGM AND EGM

Several members have expressed concern that we have not yet held the 2020 BRPS Annual General Meeting, a concern equally shared by the Society committee.

The 60th AGM and the Extraordinary General Meeting were due to be held on 23 May 2020 but of course the country went into lockdown from 23 March for 13 weeks. Gatherings of more than 30 people were and still are banned. Venues were also closed and our usual venue, the Burgess Hill Academy, only re-opened its doors in September for students only.

With a fixed indoor location ruled out for many months and a meeting that, in any case, would be inquorate because of the 30 people maximum, we have explored the option of holding a virtual meeting as a webinar – indeed, most of the Society committee meetings this year have been virtual via the Zoom facility. We were conscious that a webinar would exclude many members who were not on the internet, though it would allow members who lived in other parts of the country or overseas to participate in the meeting. The absolute key document for any consideration as to how you call and hold a Society General Meeting is of course the Rulebook. That stipulates that an Annual General Meeting must be held on a Saturday in April or May, at a location not more than 15 miles from Sheffield Park. The Society committee decided to seek legal advice to see if the current pandemic would give us scope to hold a virtual AGM. That advice confirmed that a virtual AGM is ruled out by virtue of the requirement for it to be held at a physical

location, not a virtual one. Curiously, there is no such requirement when it comes to holding an Extraordinary General Meeting and there is some pressure to hold a virtual EGM as a webinar so as to allow the proposed changes to the constitution of the Society to be implemented. It is however important to bear in mind that it has been custom and practice for at least 40 years to hold EGMs on the same day as the Society AGM so as to minimise postage costs for notices etc, and avoid inconveniencing members.

Until we can hold a physical AGM, the normal business including election of trustees will have to remain on hold. It might be possible to hold an election meeting only at Sheffield Park on an operating Sunday early next year, but at the present time and as part of the Covid-safe measures of knowing who is on site, the company has asked all members to stay away unless they are booked to travel or on duty and this would interfere with the right of other members to turn up and vote.

So far as the 2019 accounts are concerned, these were delayed as there was a need for the company to include a Covid-19 impact statement and certify that it was still a going concern. Consequently, they were not signed off until the end of August, thus allowing Knill James to release all three sets of accounts. The combined accounts booklet is currently with the printers and will be circulated to members early next month along with the Notice for the 2021 AGM.

GAVIN BENNETT
General Secretary, BRPS

Bluebell Railway Plc holds virtual AGM

The Annual General Meeting of Bluebell Railway Plc was held in very different circumstances this year compared with past shareholder gatherings.

The meeting took place at 10am at Sheffield Park station on 1 October 2020 in a well-ventilated, fully sanitised and socially-distanced Birch Grove Suite in line with Covid guidelines.

Company secretary Graham

Flight explained that the AGM would follow the normal format and agenda although shareholders had been advised not to attend in person but to submit any questions and cast any proxy votes in advance.

He said the quorum for the meeting was two shareholders. There were four individual shareholders present (Graham Flight, Bob Pamment, Vernon Blackburn and Gavin Bennett)

plus the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society's majority shareholding with votes to be cast by its General Secretary, Gavin Bennett.

Present at the meeting were Graham Flight, Chris Hunford, Lisa Boyle, Bob Pamment, Barry Luck, David Burch, Martin Cresswell, Paul Lelew, Paul Bromley, Steve Bigg, Gavin Bennett and Vernon Blackburn. Apologies had been received from operations director Mike Ellis.

Six new directors had been co-opted onto the board since the previous AGM and they had all put themselves up for re-election.

The AGM approved the re-election of the six directors: Steve Bigg (non-executive director and Society acting chairman), Paul Bromley (communications), Martin Cresswell (safety), Paul Lelew (commercial and marketing), David Burch (finance) and Barry Luck (infrastructure).

David Burch outlined the financial accounts for the year. He said falling income in 2019 was

concerning and that had made the impact of coronavirus worse.

He said the Railway now had the support of a Covid loan, the bank, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and its Emergency Appeal. He said the Bluebell Railway was in a stronger position than other railways but it was not immune from the pressures of Covid. The accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019 were approved. Knill James were re-appointed as auditors.

Plc chairman Chris Hunford thanked everyone in the room for the time and commitment they had put in to supporting the Railway in an extremely challenging year. He said people were coming to the Bluebell Railway although we were not out of the woods yet by any means.

Graham Flight proposed a vote of thanks to Chris Hunford for chairing the board in the last year and said he had done an excellent job.

The meeting ended at 10.55am.
PAUL BROMLEY
Communications Director

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SEPTEMBER

Much of the press coverage this month was about the £250,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. There was also publicity for our own appeal passing £400,000.

In Your Area online reported on the appeal and quoted Trust funding governor Trevor Swainson as saying that plenty of people thought the initial £300,000 was over-ambitious. He said raising £400,000 was “a truly remarkable response from members, shareholders and friends of the Bluebell Railway”.

Visit South East England promoted the SteamLights service on the official tourist website for the region. It said: “Bluebell Railway is running magical steam trains covered by thousands of colourful lights this winter.” The report added: “Feast your eyes on an amazing light show on the way to Horsted Keynes. With festive displays, music and narration, this is a steam train experience not to be missed!”

Heritage Railway magazine issue 271 featured the recreation by the Railway’s museum team of the Elton John *Tumbleweed Connection* album cover. The report said visitors were being “offered the chance to appear in ‘remakes’ of the cover”. Rock star Elton John and lyricist Bernie Taupin were photographed outside the museum for the album cover in 1970.

Railway Traveller website interviewed Laura Hamilton who presents *A Place in the Sun* on TV. She spoke about her best

railway memories and when asked if she could remember her first ever train journey, she replied: “Yes, my Gran took me on the Bluebell Railway in Sussex. I loved every minute of it.”

OCTOBER

Publicity this month was dominated by the announcement of the £727,200 grant from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage.

ITV Meridian filmed at Sheffield Park station for a report which was broadcast on its 6pm bulletin. The report included interviews with Lewes MP Maria Caulfield and Bluebell communications director Paul Bromley.

Sussex Express reported on Maria Caulfield’s visit to the railway and other heritage sites benefiting from Government funding. She was quoted as saying: “I was pleased to be able to visit both Bluebell Railway and

RAILWAY TRAVELLER
A Place in the Sun's Laura Hamilton Reveals Tips for Travelling with Kids
Laura Hamilton talks her best railway memories and how to navigate train travel with kids...

A Place in the Sun star Laura Hamilton on the Bluebell Railway, meeting with rail and heritage-loving families.

Laura's first railway memory on the Bluebell Railway

Can you remember your first ever train journey?
Yes. My Gran took me on the Bluebell Railway in Sussex. I loved every minute of it.

Newhaven Fort to find out first hand how much this funding will mean to them and their plans going forward under the Covid-19 restrictions.”

Surrey Live promoted the Santa Specials season describing it as “a wonderful winter experience”. It added the Bluebell Railway was “giving families an opportunity to soak up all of the festivities on board a Victorian steam train”.

The Guardian featured The Cat Inn at West Hoathly in a round-up of “the best cosy pubs with rooms for an autumn break”. It said the pub was “quaint, with plenty of beams, logs crackling in the inglenook fireplaces, and pewter mugs hanging everywhere”... and pointed out the pub was near the Bluebell Railway.

SUSSEX EXPRESS
Lewes MP visits heritage sites benefiting from government funding
Maria Caulfield MP has visited Bluebell Railway and Newhaven Fort after they received more than £1.5million in government funding to support them during the coronavirus pandemic.

Bluebell Railway is to receive £727,200 and Newhaven Fort is to receive £850,000.

“I was pleased to be able to visit both Bluebell Railway and Newhaven Fort to find out first hand how much this funding will mean to them, and their plans going forward under the Covid-19 restrictions.”

Visit Britain
Bluebell Railway

Bluebell Railway

Profile

Additional Information

NOVEMBER

The second lockdown and the cancellation of all services between 5 November and 2 December was widely reported in the local, regional and trade press.

Rail Business Daily said the lockdown would mean a delay to the start of the railway’s festive train services which are “a popular annual treat for families”. It quoted Plc chairman Chris Hunford as saying the second lockdown was “disappointing news for everyone”.

The Express website included SteamLights in an article on the “best 2020 Christmas lights switch-on events around the UK for post-lockdown festivities”. The article said of SteamLights: “Taking place on a steam train covered with thousands of colourful lights, this is truly a unique experience”.

Railway Traveller highlighted broadcaster Michael Portillo’s list of railways which survived after the Beeching cuts. He said: “After being closed in the 1950s, it was raised from the dead as one of Britain’s first heritage railways with the beguiling name of the Bluebell Line.”

Visit Britain listed the railway as one of its destinations and said the Bluebell Railway in the heart of Sussex “offers a window onto the world (of) yesteryear”.

PAUL BROMLEY
Communications Director

the Beautiful South
Official tourist website for South East England

SteamLights

Webots
Email
Tel: 01425728000

Mid Sussex
Year Special Events
Bluebell Railway, Sheffield Park Station, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 3QL

About

Brighten up the chilly winter evenings with a seasonal lights spectacular!

Bluebell Railway is running magical steam trains covered by thousands of lights this winter.

Feast your eyes on an amazing light show along the way to Horsted Keynes. With festive displays, music and narration, this is a steam train experience not to be missed!

Above: The cover of Elton John's hit 1970 album *Tumbleweed Connection*. IAN DIGBY OWENS

Right: Bluebell Railway visitor Hugh Stevenson poses in the same position at Sheffield Park as Elton John did in 1970. (R)

Bluebell restages Elton's album cover 50 years on

By Robin Jones

BLUEBELL Railway visitors are being offered the chance to appear in remakes of the cover of rock star Elton John's 1970 album *Tumbleweed Connection*.

The singer and lyricist Bernie Taupin were photographed outside the museum at the heritage line's Sheffield Park station especially for the cover.

The original picture was taken by photographer Ian Digby Owens in celebrating 50 years of operating a heritage line, so we thought it would be a good idea to encourage Elton fans to come and take their picture at the scene!

The railway's museum team discovered some of the enamel signs that were outside the building in 1970 had been moved to other parts of the line. They include signs for Sunlight soap, Rowntree's chocolates, Muzarelli tea, Shear's mineral waters and Raleigh cycles. The team has since replaced them in the same positions and cleaned them ready for the photographer's opportunities for visitors.

The Nestlé's milk chocolate bar dispensing machine had also been relocated to another station on the Bluebell line since Elton's visit but it was still standing!

It too was moved back into position and repaired by the museum's volunteers.

Visitors to the Bluebell Railway have now started posing as Elton John and recreating the album cover including using photo-walking software to produce black-and-white images to match the feel of the original photograph. The railway is encouraging visitors to share their images on social media.

Location
Tumbleweed Connection, Elton John's third studio album, reached No. 2 in the UK album charts even though there were no hit singles.

Other singers who have used the railway and its period stations for promotional filming since it opened as a heritage line in August 1960 include Cilla Black, Ringo Starr, Sherear Factor and the Pet Shop Boys.

→ Bluebell services restart on its 60th anniversary – pages 20-21.

Bluebell railway in East Sussex steams past fundraising total
The heritage line launched an emergency appeal at the start of lockdown.

Submitted by the Bluebell Railway press office

Continued support since the start of lockdown in March has helped the Bluebell Railway in East Sussex push its fundraising appeal beyond £400,000.

The non-for-profit heritage line runs from Sheffield Park in East Sussex, via Horsted Keynes, West Hoathly and Kingcote to East Grinstead.

An emergency appeal was launched in March, asking members and supporters to donate. The appeal was then broadened to include public contributions.

The Bluebell Railway's fundraising organiser Trevor Swainson said: "The initial target for the appeal was £300,000 and there were plenty of people who thought that was over-ambitious."

"What happened was that we reached £300,000 which allowed us to reopen and, by mid-September, we have received the magnificent sum of £400,000."

"This is a truly remarkable response from members, shareholders and friends of the Bluebell Railway. The appeal remains open if anyone would like to make new or additional donations in the coming months."

A "Virtual Track Trek" held in June helped raise further funds with people walking four and a half miles in a socially distanced way to replicate the length of the track from Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes stations. This was a replacement for the regular group sponsored walk alongside the track.

From the Chairmen

“So here it is, Merry Christmas, everybody’s having fun...” so says one of those well-known seasonal songs that gets annually resurrected to generate a feeling of fun and excitement over the festive period. Yet the meaning will probably have worn somewhat thin by the time you’ve heard it for the 500th time! But what a fantastic business model. Make one hugely successful hit song when you are young and live happily ever after for the rest of your life on the royalties, a brilliant concept.

By the time you read this, Christmas and 2020 will have passed. Many will say ‘not a moment too soon’, bringing the start of a new year which more than anything brings elements of hope. We can look forward with some degree of certainty that 2021 may just well bring a return to some form of normal life although the definition of ‘normal’ has yet to be decided.

However, it is very clear that 2021 will still be a difficult year,

both financially and physically, as we try to adapt and embrace new ways of working and living. Outside influences will impact the way we work and live. History will make great reference to 2020 and you can already hear the grandchildren asking “what did you do during the great pandemic Grandad?”

Reflecting over the past year, would, you think, be a relatively easy task. We ran trains for a month, only to close in March and then reopened with great but somewhat subdued ceremony in glorious weather in August, only to close again for ‘second-wave lockdown’ in November, prior to reopening with an amended set of festive services in December. That’s what can be seen on the outside, but as in all business, a huge amount of work and time has gone on behind the scenes – the proverbial ‘swan’ syndrome. Preparing trains, learning new ways of working, reassessing locomotives, rolling stock and operating staff and making some

very difficult decisions in order to ensure the Railway can not only emerge fit and ready but also on a sound financial footing.

This is an important stage but one that sends out an important message to our visitors, staff, volunteers and our members that Bluebell is certainly no longer dormant but alive and preparing itself for what it does best, operating heritage rolling stock supported by the best personnel.

You will have seen the great success the Railway has achieved in obtaining grant aid to help sustain the Railway during these difficult times and to aid its recovery. Add to that the magnificent response to our Emergency Appeal, which leads on to our first thank you. Much of the donations to our Emergency Appeal came from our members, families and friends - witness such acts as that of six-year-old Alex Venton who donated his pocket money. We would like to offer everyone our most sincere thanks for their support.



A festive Stepney awaits our young visitors in SteamWorks! on 22 November 2020. PHIL BARNES



BR Standard No 73082 *Camelot* on Freshfield Bank with the luncheon train on 11 October 2020. PETER EDWARDS

In return, we are pleased to confirm that all membership benefits will be reinstated with effect from 1 January 2021 and, as promised; other additional offers such as special trains are being planned and will be duly communicated.

A second note of thanks should go to the editor of *Bluebell News*, Colin Tyson, on negotiating a deal for printing not one but all three 2020 editions in one hit which, judging from feedback, has gone down exceptionally well with the membership and upheld a promise we made, especially for those without computers!

We will ensure that there will be an update on how the monies raised have and are being spent in the next edition of *Bluebell News*. It's quite far-reaching and actually very interesting.

In the last edition of *Bluebell News*, reference was made to the difficulties the Society in its current form faces in concluding its annual AGM business and is currently seeking advice as to what we can and cannot do. We are still heavily regulated on meeting numbers, let alone finding a suitable location to

accommodate people! Gavin Bennett, our General Secretary, explains elsewhere in this issue but please remember; we can only work within the framework of our existing rules. The good news that a vaccine will become widely available makes the possibility of a proper AGM in 2021 a far more realistic opportunity.

You will be reading this after the end of the slightly curtailed Santa season but with the continuation of the new SteamLights services. It is pleasing to report that all Santa trains were sold out and many people are rebooking their SteamLights trip into newly-available dates going forward through January. Although there will be plenty of pictures of the train, seeing the real thing is a superb spectacle and whilst we pride ourselves on our heritage, it's new ventures like this that will help sustain and help grow our offer. With sustainable operation comes some diversification if we are to survive.

And so as we enter 2021, we still face an uncertain future and we are by no means out of

the woods yet. It's abundantly clear that we will have to work to a much stricter budget and financial plan. Whilst emerging news from retailers on the high street looks pretty bleak, we also have to prepare our business. Key has to be the protection of our staff and volunteers and whilst it was very hard to tell people to stay away, it was done so with very good reason.

Feedback from our passengers on the new ways of booking and travelling has been positive. They haven't had to 'fight for seats' and they like 'their compartment'. But if we just run compartment stock, what future is there for buffet cars? When can we return to our premier product - the 'Golden Arrow'? There are a number of conundrums to be explored and resolved as we go forward, hopefully returning to what we would call 'normal', such as planning for special events and galas.

There has been a real step change over recent months with the three entities; The Society, Plc and the Trust working much closer together than before, because decisions cannot be made and then delayed because of

protocol as the demands imposed on the Railway need prompt, effective, defined action. Note the updated 'wheel' on page 2.

While there will be new ways of working, we need to ensure the best of Bluebell is protected. There will be new opportunities to embrace and develop and it's a great time to review what we do and retain our proud heritage of doing it well.

There will be new people to welcome and more importantly new customers to attract and we have excellent tools and equipment to do just that. Very much new world, new opportunities - even the Oxford Dictionary has over 600 new words, including Covid-19...

It only remains for us to again offer our most sincere thanks to everyone involved in and supporting our Railway and we look forward to seeing you at some stage in 2021. To you and your families, we wish you good health, happiness and above all, a safe year.

ROY WATTS
Acting vice-chairman BRPS
CHRIS HUNFORD
Chairman Plc

Filming on the line



Odessa Young ready for action. MICK BLACKBURN

8 October Mothering Sunday

A feature film based on the novel by Graham Swift and set in Beechwood in England on 30 March, 1924. Mothering Sunday falls as the middle Sunday in Lent, and in the early church it was a day to celebrate the Mother

Church, and a day of feasting to break up the Lent fast. Only in the last century or so has it had anything to do with motherhood, a tradition that evolved from the day that girls in service were allowed off to go and visit their own mothers.

Jane Fairchild, played by



Maids in their Sunday best, waiting for the train. MICK BLACKBURN



Nine maids awaiting! MICK BLACKBURN



Titherton station. MICK BLACKBURN

Odessa Young, is a maid in the Niven household and has the Sunday off to go and visit her mother, but she was orphaned at birth and has no mother so she takes the opportunity to spend the day with her lover Paul, the son of a wealthy family.

At Sheffield Park, which became Titherton station, all the maids of the household, dressed in their Sunday best and carrying posies for their mothers, are lined up along the platform awaiting the arrival of their train, the Q Class No 30541 and the Metropolitan set. The Q Class is a little modern for 1924, but it doesn't feature heavily in the shot. All seemed to be going well and the first take was a promising one - except that two of the maids were still wearing their face masks. Later in the day they were all filmed again in the same position on the platform, but this time in their maid's uniforms.

Sheffield Park booking hall and waiting room were painstakingly transformed into the interior of an Oxford tea shop, with period tables and chairs, crockery, candles and table linen. This took two days of set dressing to achieve, but on the day the unit ran out of time and the set was never used. Many of the unused props were discarded - we were the richer by four candles at the end of it.

HEIDI MOWFORTH

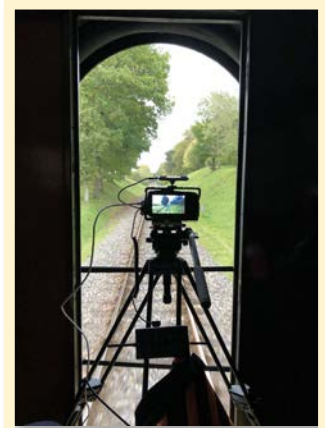
19 October Backscenes for the film industry. the Mob Film Co (TV) Ltd.

An interesting day was spent going up and down the line recording lineside footage to provide backscenes for the film industry. The 'train' was

comprised the 09 shunter and the disabled coach (S4941) which has a lift so that all the equipment could be wheeled on board.

The first job was to set up all the camera positions - six in all - four at the coach door droplight openings and the other two fixed to the front of the 09 and on a tripod in the rear door of the coach. Leaving Sheffield Park about midday, two complete trips were made to East Grinstead - one in daylight and one after dark; with stops at Kingscote and Horsted Keynes to change and charge camera batteries. Hopefully this will be a thing of the past once the generator van BY 404 goes into filming service. Apart from filming, the most memorable thing about the day was the fact that this 'train' was the first to reach East Grinstead since the lockdown in March; and how very cold it was because all the windows in the coach were open and there was no steam heating!

MIKE HOPPS



Recording lineside footage to provide backscenes for the film industry. MIKE HOPPS

This year, unlike any year I would suspect any of us have experienced in our lifetimes, is now drawing to a close and we can all but hope for a better 2021 and some resemblance of 'normal' returning towards the first quarter of the year.

The Railway, having resumed as planned in August with visitor numbers looking promising on both the service train and catering trains, towards the end of October with school half terms taking place we ran a modest gala 'Off the Rails' with displays at Sheffield Park, Horsted Keynes and Kingscote stations of traction engines, road rollers and other vintage vehicles. A demonstration Goods Train ran over both weekends with a steam locomotive on the Saturdays and D4106 on the two Sundays, something we haven't done for some time. Being the Goods Guard on the Saturday of the first weekend it was good to run a Goods once again. The opportunity was also taken to carry out assessments for those of us who were 'out of ticket' for working goods. Demonstration shunting was carried out at Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes over both weekends. The Goods train was made possible by the very hard working members of the Bluebell Goods Division who have done a superb job on the wagon fleet and continue to do so. Two service trains ran on each of the weekends, but the down side was the weather was not the best for the event, but it was pleasing to see that our passengers seemed to be enjoying the event, as indeed were our staff.

Sadly, however, from 5 November we were all once again subject to a second national lockdown and the Railway was once again closed until midnight on 2 December. However during the lockdown, preparation took place for the SteamLights event which included fitting up five Mk.1s with lights and one Bulleid coach, along with BY Van No 404 as a generator van – having only just been restored to a high standard by Mike Hopps and his team. Once the complete train had been assembled on 11 November a test run was carried out and a further test carried out on 12 November. The tests were generally satisfactory and a couple of areas highlighted which required attention, a full dress rehearsal was due to be carried out on 2 December, this would be followed on the 3rd with our first SteamLights passenger service. The whole programme towards SteamLights has required a great effort by all and I am sure the event will be a great success along with, of course, our Santa Specials, reduced this year for obvious reasons.

Another pleasing event to report during November, was the completion of the defective track near the Eye Hospital allowing us to reopen once again to East Grinstead, and 'ghost trains' ran once again over the weekend of the 28-29 November between Kingscote and East Grinstead for crew training purposes ready for our Santa Specials from East Grinstead from 5 December.

On the training front I would like to congratulate Loco Superintendent, Inspector



The rain did its best to dampen our Goods Train running either side of autumn half term, but surely adds to the atmosphere of a real 'working' railway? HENRY MOWFORTH

and Driver Stuart Marks and Loco Inspector and Driver Russell Pearce on passing their 6371 Assessor awards.

In closing I would like to place on record my thanks to all those staff, both paid and volunteers, for the extremely hard work and long hours they have all put in to get the

Railway through this extremely difficult year and continue to do so. We can all but hope that 2021 proves to be a better year for our operations financially, plus of course our 60 + 1 anniversary.

MIKE ELLIS
Operations Director

Locomotive Department



The new firebox outer wrapper plate for Fenchurch. TOM JAMES



Fenchurch's boiler with the throatplate and inner firebox removed. TOM JAMES

Following the return from the first lockdown, our services ran to a revised timetable, with the bulk of the trains being handled by Nos 73082, 80151, 30541, 65 and 263. No 847 was used on a few occasions as required whilst No 263 was in use following return from an intermediate mechanical overhaul.

It is planned that Nos 73082 and 30541 will be used for SteamLights services. During the lockdown period in November, these

two locomotives were prepared with lights, batteries, electrical connections to the train and switchgear to allow the locomotive lights to be powered from the generator vehicle in the train, but switch to battery when running round, allowing the lights to remain on. Various brackets and fastenings were made in the locomotive workshop to carry the equipment on each locomotive, while the electrical system was designed and built in the C&W works.

The final snagging items on the maintenance shed are complete and the ASH project final account is agreed.

One of the qualities that the Railway is justly renowned for is the cleanliness and polished appearance of our locomotives. The SECR locos in particular have a multitude of brass parts, both in the cab and visible externally – most notably the domes and safety valve covers. Keeping the brass work bright is a never-ending task. For the last few years, passed cleaner Ben Gray has been maintaining the brasswork on the SECR locos with a weekly clean, for which Peek brand metal polish is preferred – in Ben's words, "in comparison with other products, Peek produces a far more impressive finish, and allows the job to be completed in almost a quarter of the time. As well as this, a little quantity of Peek will go further than a large quantity of an alternative well-known metal polish product."

Seeing the good work that Ben has been doing on the brass and copperwork and knowing money is a little on the tight side, Loco Department member Andy Taylor set about looking at how we could use larger amounts of this excellent product for the department. Peek is a British brand product still made in the UK but, like other well-known brands, it is owned outside the UK. After a short search he found the webpage and a sales contact email address so wrote a short email explaining about the Bluebell and our new-found benefits of using Peek



Sir Archibald Sinclair has been lifted from its wheels. TOM JAMES



Looking up to the roof of *Sir Archibald's* firebox, showing the stays that remain to be fitted around the thermic syphon. TOM JAMES

within the locomotive department. He left his contact number and also dropped a small hint about supplying some product free of charge. Thinking nothing more about it, later in the day a call flashed up from California! It was Robert Peek, the owner of the company. After a lengthy discussion about the Bluebell, Robert agreed to supply a large quantity of Peek for free. We are now in discussions about a longer sponsorship deal and also using some of the photos of our locomotives on Tri-Peek's international website. This would create a joint benefit to both parties and look at building the relationship further. We are in difficult times and companies want to help the Bluebell. To a company like Tri-Peek this was a small gift but for us this has been a massive help. Long may it continue.

Overhauls Bulleid Battle of Britain Class No 34059 *Sir Archibald Sinclair*

Around 80% of the crown stays have now been fitted, with the final stays ordered and awaiting delivery. The next task is to fit the ring of flexible stays around the base of the thermic syphons. All the side stays and combustion chamber stays have been fitted, and are in the process of being knocked over.

The tubes have been ordered and are expected to be at the railway by the time you read this.

Mechanically, the locomotive has been lifted from its wheels. The frames are in good order and just require cleaning and painting. The axle box crowns are in good order; the thrust faces (which bear against the insides of the wheels when the locomotive is traversing a curve) have been re-whitemetalled and are awaiting final machining. New driving axle springs have been delivered and await fitting. New oil pads will be fitted to the axle box underkeeps; these are on order.

The cylinder bores are in good order; new piston rings will be fitted but the piston heads can be reused. New valve heads and valve rings will be fitted.

The lubrication pipework has been removed; it will be thoroughly cleaned and annealed, and can then be refitted.

Bulleid 'West Country' Class No 21C123 *Blackmoor Vale*

The new firebox – constructed as part of a batch that included the same for *Sir Archibald Sinclair* – has been signed off as complete at



The complete inner firebox for *Blackmoor Vale* at South Devon Railway Engineering. JOHN FRY

the South Devon Railway. The plan now is for *Blackmoor Vale* to be gradually stripped pending commencement of an overhaul, which is likely to be significant in both mechanical and boiler terms.

Stroudley A1x Terrier No 72 *Fenchurch*

Fenchurch's boiler has now been completely stripped. A new outer wrapper has been rolled and delivered – on a small boiler like *Fenchurch*, a complete wrapper sheet is cheaper than buying the material for just the sides (which are wasted) and welding them to the upper part of the existing wrapper. The front tubeplate blank has been ordered; sponsored by a generous supporter. It requires the tube holes to be drilled.

The parts for the inner firebox and foundation ring are on order, and the throatplate is also ready to order.

Running fleet

BR Standard 5MT No 73082 *Camelot*, 4MT No 80151, Maunsell S15 No 847, Q class No 30541 and Wainwright H class No 263 are all available for traffic. *Camelot* has had some of the injector pipework replaced. No 541 has had attention to its regulator.

Stirling O1 No 65 is awaiting its annual steam test. It is planned that the tender brake rigging will be overhauled over the winter; the loco also requires some attention to its reverser. The aim is to have the work completed ready for next season.

Wainwright P class No 178 has now been withdrawn from service after over ten years in traffic. On its last weekend in traffic, it hauled "The Pioneer" service each day, double-headed with No 263.

D4106 – the 09 Group had decided to replace the 14-year-old batteries which were life-expired. The new batteries arrived on the Thursday before lockdown. The shunter was due to run a goods train at the 'Off the Rails' event on the last Sunday of October, but due to water getting into one of the marker lights, causing a short circuit, the locomotive would

not start. The decision was made there and then to change all 48 cells which was achieved in five hours. By late afternoon, the locomotive was running and was used to complete the shunt at Horsted Keynes. It was subsequently available for use on engineering trains in November.

Personnel

Cleaners John Hutchins and Ben Gray have been promoted to Passed Cleaner – congratulations to both of them.

Russell Pearce has stood down as Loco Chief Clerk, and Tim Gray and Andy Kelly are standing down from their joint role as Yard Foremen. Our thanks go to all of them for the work they have put in over the past few years. Nominations are being sought from within the department to appoint their successors. If you are interested, please contact Locomotive Superintendent Stuart Marks at Sheffield Park.

CHRIS HUNFORD
Locomotive Director
and TOM JAMES



The new batteries in D4016. MIKE HAWKINS

Stowe's boiler work sub-contracted

No 928 Stowe

As mentioned in our previous report, an agreement has been reached that has enabled *Stowe's* boiler to be sent away to an outside contractor, Heritage Boiler Steam Services, based on Merseyside, to conclude the bulk of the outstanding work. *Stowe's* boiler and inner firebox were loaded on Monday 12 October 2020 and delivered to the contractor the next day.

Stowe's three valve rods were returned from Statfold Engineering in September after work was undertaken to machine them back to the correct profile.

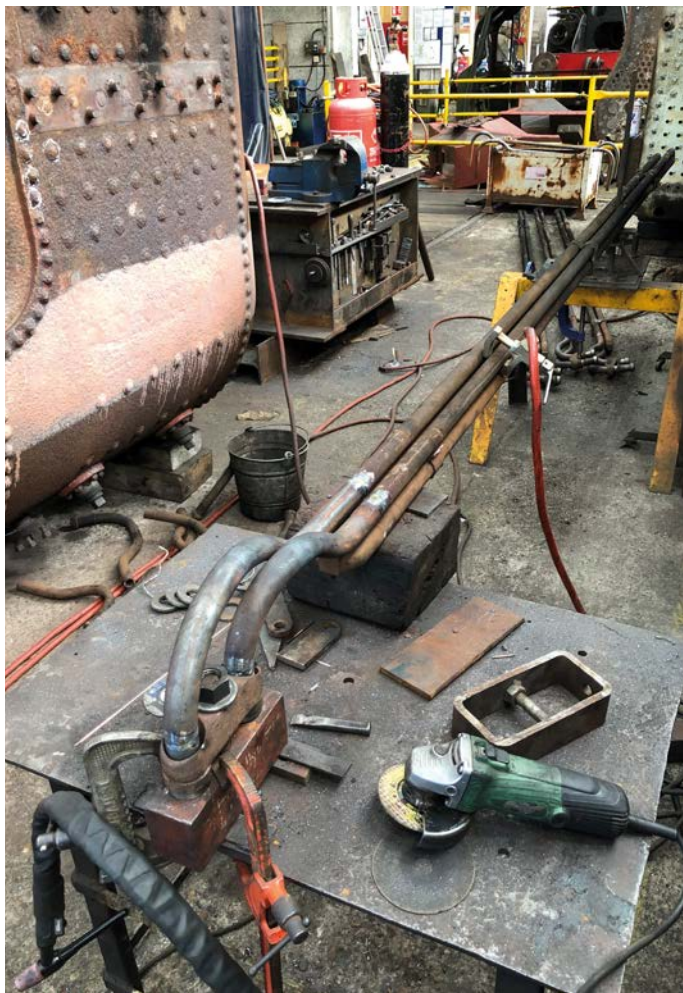
Stowe's exhaust steam injector returned to Sheffield Park in October and we are indebted to the Mid-Hants Railway for the work they undertook to fit new cones and to ensure it is now in full working order.

Agreement in principle had been reached for a small group of the working party to be able to return to mid-week activities at Sheffield Park but unfortunately the second lockdown in November prevented us from restarting – but we hope we might be able to return soon.

Materials are being ordered to enable the working party to rebuild the wooden footplate. One hundred countersunk bolts have been purchased to enable us to bolt down two new sections of footplate that were fabricated prior to lockdown.

Q Class No 30541 and S15 class No 847

Both the Q and the S15 were declared fit to run and saw service after the Railway re-opened in August. No 847 had some repairs undertaken



No 847's superheater elements being repaired. HENRY MOWFORTH



Stowe's boiler inside HBSS, prior to work commencing. HBSS

to its superheater elements in September. It is hoped that they will see further use over the Christmas period. No 847 was booked for a photo charter on 7-8 December and it was requested to run without smoke deflectors for this event.

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 complete.

Fundraising for *Stowe*

The work to *Stowe's* boiler is being joint-funded by the Bluebell Railway and the Maunsell Locomotive Society. £41,000 has been committed by the MLS, which has used up the bulk of our reserves. We would like to help fund purchase of tubes and stays to help complete the boiler overhaul. So if supporters can spare a 'little extra' for the Maunsell Locomotive Society this would be much appreciated. 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 your 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 always very welcome.

STEVE PILCHER

Brighton Atlantic Report

I am writing in early November, just as we are about to enter the second period of lockdown and as yet I am not sure of its implications for our project, but rest assured once we are able we will be pushing forward with the construction of *Beachy Head*.

At the beginning of September, Atlantic staff who are Trust funded were allowed back to work under strict conditions due to the pandemic. Our shed is basically a pod on its own and we all are (or at least members of our families are) in the vulnerable category, so we have been extra careful throughout regarding hygiene and distancing and this obviously continues. Under no circumstances are visitors allowed to Atlantic House unless we have prior knowledge and there is good reason to visit. To look around is not one of those reasons.

Unfortunately due to lockdown from the end of March to the beginning of September with all the lovely weather we had, we were unable to maximise our progress on the boiler lagging and clothing as planned. The result is that although any finish date has been severely set back we have managed to make some progress up until now.

The steam feed, delivery and overflow pipes have been made up and fitted to the injectors. The remaining sections going to the combined injector steam and non-return valves on the backhead will have to wait until the boiler is installed.

The basic boiler clothing sheets have been laser cut and rolled. Each has about 8in of excess material on each end that we need to remove. This is needed to allow the radius of the rolled

sheet to extend fully to the ends. These look thin but it takes three people to move each one, being rather unwieldy as well as surprisingly heavy. A lot of careful work will be needed on these to get them to fit accurately to our boiler with cut-outs for hand rail knobs and splashers, etc, needed. One of these latter cut-outs actually straddles the joint between two sheets and has a boiler band running over it.

The firebox clothing sheets have sufficient paint on them now to allow them to be placed in position on the boiler, primarily to allow us some more room in the shed so that we can undertake further work on the barrel clothing as well the tender clothing. All the insulation material to wrap the boiler is in stock and is now being stored in the tender coal space. Work is starting on the corner sheets that bridge the gap between the firebox sides and the backhead and also the firebox sides to the throatplate. The work involved in these parts seems never-ending. It is difficult to work with and has to be right as it is blatantly on show for all to see.

All of the coal rails and their infill pieces plus the beading around the top edge are now all fixed and the heads of the fastenings will be painted shortly, but we are going to purchase the first two of the tender clothing sheets and work on riveting various pieces to them before fitting. Only then will we obtain the next two sheets which curve round the back. Again handling is a problem as each plate is 10ft 6in long, 4ft 6in high and 3mm thick - each weighing about 200 lbs. (100 kilos for the younger folks).



Although the background is rather cluttered the steam feed, delivery and (unseen here) overflow pipes have been made up and fitted to the injectors.



The basic boiler clothing sheets have been laser cut and rolled.

The front handrails are fitted and work is now taking place on the cab doors and the toolboxes.

We have managed to install all the superheater elements into the boiler so moving forward yet again. Fortunately we have a range of work open to us to cater

for the vagaries of the weather.

I am not sure when our next update will be but rest assured we are still here and will, when possible, be working towards the completion of this wonderful project of ours.

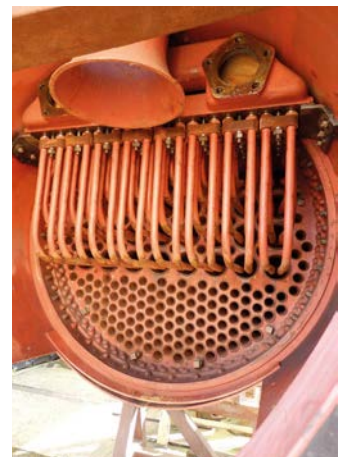
FRED BAILEY



The firebox clothing sheets have sufficient paint on them to allow them to be placed in position on the boiler.



All of the coal rails and their infill pieces plus the beading around the top edge is now all fixed and the heads of the fastenings (seen above as silver spots) will be painted shortly.



All the superheater elements have been installed into the boiler. ALL: FRED BAILEY



Two vehicles which had not run for several years were seen at the 'Off the Rails' event on 31 October 2020. SR pillbox brake No 55993 has recently had new eye-bolts fitted and LMS-designed 3-plank M480222 has not seen use for five years. RICHARD SALMON

The C&W Department were kept busy through October and early November preparing a side-corridor rake of carriages to be used for the SteamLights services. Mk.1 Brake Composite

No 21246 has had further attention to replace some loose bodyside filler and Corridor Second No 25728 received a replacement door and seven compartments' worth of seating

taken from No 25769 (which is now out of service pending overhaul). The remainder of the train is formed of one Bulleid and two Mk.1 Corridor Composites and wheelchair accessible

No 4957, together with freshly overhauled Van C No 404, equipped as a generator van.

The last team to return to C&W duties between the two lockdowns was that working on



H Class No 263 leaves Horsted Keynes with the 10.55 Kingscote to Sheffield Park train on 31 October at the 'Off the Rails' event. During the layover at Horsted Keynes, the Camelot Society's CCT No 2531 and SR Milk Tank No 4430 were added to the Metropolitan carriage set - the first service use of the CCT since restoration. ALEX MORLEY



Just before the second lockdown, the east side of Maunsell Hastings Line brake No 3687 received its first undercoat. RICHARD SALMON



On the inside of No 3687, Compartment A is almost complete, with the cushions in place. ALEX MORLEY



Ex-Bicester Mk.1 TSO, No 4754, is also making progress, with the last structural repairs being to the north end. RICHARD SALMON

Stroudley Third No 328, where roof timbers, prepared by joining two narrow boards to make the replacement boards the same width as the originals, are now starting to be fitted following a lot of work to ensure the roof hoops are all to identical profiles and height. On Stroudley Brake Third No 949, both sets of double doors are nearly completed. Glazing mouldings for the guard's end are being repaired, shaped, trial fitted and painted.

Wagons roll

The big event for the 'Wagon' side of C&W was the operation of goods trains at the 'Off the Rails' event which bracketed half term. It included two vehicles which had not run for several years. SR pillbox brake No 55993 has recently had new eye-bolts (spring hangers) fitted and LMS-designed 3-plank M480222 has for the last five

years been unavailable for use on goods trains whilst storing 1957-built BD type Goods Container BD49908B which awaits a rebuild. The container would, once overhauled, be an appropriate load for this wagon.

During the layover at Horsted Keynes, the Camelot Society's CCT No 2531 and SR Milk Tank No 4430 were added to the Metropolitan carriage set. This was the first service use of the CCT since restoration, and the Milk Tank had also received some attention from the wagon gang to return it to service for this event.

Hastings line brake

Just before the second lockdown, the east side of Maunsell Hastings line brake No 3687 received its first undercoat. The internal and external sidelight (window) frames for this side, which had been machined some time ago,



New timber door-checks are being fitted to No 4754, and then the doors are being re-hung, and fitted with new internal trim.

RICHARD SALMON

have now been cut to size for the individual openings. On the inside, the plywood ceilings and associated mouldings have now been completed in five of the six compartments, and in the corridor. Compartment A is almost complete, with the cushions in place.

Mk.1 TSO No 4754

The ex-Bicester Mk.1 TSO, No 4754, is also making progress, with the last structural repairs being to the north end. On the other door openings, new timber door-checks are being fitted, and then the doors are being re-hung, and fitted with new internal trim.

Pullman Car 54

The work on Pullman Car 54 continues apace. The aluminium



A sample of the skilled work on Pullman Car 54 taking place to stain (so that they all match) and then French polish the new and repaired marquetry panels.

sheeting has been trial fitted to the west side after having been etch primed, undercoated and top coated on the reverse side. The painting of the inner roofs of both saloons has been completed. The specially designed loose chairs for the flexible area in the south saloon are being constructed from beech. The double doors on the west side have been hung, and the wheelchair lift has been trial fitted on that side. The partition between the south saloon and the wheelchair lift area has been constructed and the wide sliding door for it is being made. The section of the original carriage floor which it had been intended to retain has now been removed and replaced.

RICHARD SALMON

From the Archive

DELIVERING THE GOODS



Q1 class loco C1 is seen in the cutting approaching Three Arch Bridge with the 1.40 Sheffield Park to New Coombe goods on 12 September 1992 during the Autumn Steam Gala. The loco had just re-entered traffic on 9 September with a rededication ceremony.

The recent re-emergence of Bluebell goods trains caused PHIL BARNES to select some goods workings from the past. Poignantly, each of the ten locomotives depicted are currently 'cold'.



During the two-day SECR 100 event in August 1999, *Baxter* was displayed on a short goods train at Horsted Keynes consisting of LBSCR and SECR wagons.



At the beginning of the Bluebell's 40th event, the day started with a goods train working. No 75027 is seen near Horsted House Farm working the 9.15 Horsted Keynes to Kingscote goods on 14 March 1998.



Birch Grove in BR black livery passes through Three Arch Bridge with the 12.49 Kingscote to Sheffield Park goods on 9 April 2005, the Spring Goods Train Day.

No 9017 *Earl of Berkeley* approaches Horsted Keynes whilst working the 4.30pm Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes goods on 27 March 2004.





No 1618 climbs Freshfield Bank with the 4pm Sheffield Park to New Coombe goods on 12 September 1992, during the Autumn Steam Gala.



No 672 *Fenchurch* drifts under Three Arch Bridge in sunny conditions with the 11.33 Kingscote to Sheffield Park goods train during the Spring Goods Train Day of 9 April 2005.



During the SECR 100 event in August 1999, No 323 *Bluebell* is in unlined SECR green livery at the head of a short goods at Horsted Keynes on 7 August. The consist had just worked to Kingscote and return.



B4 No 96 *Normandy*, viewed from the top of the cutting approaching Three Arch Bridge with the 11.54 Horsted Keynes to Sheffield Park engineers' train on 27 March 2004.



9F No 92240 climbs Freshfield Bank with the 12.15 Sheffield Park to Kingscote goods on 26 October 2002, during the Giants of Steam event.



9F Club alumni (from left) Steve Goldsmith, Alex Widdowson, Matt Lander, Jack Gregory and Laurie Anderson. THOMAS HUSSEY

9F Club alumni make wagons roll

Due to the Covid restrictions our 9F Club activities in 2019 curtailed at a very early stage and there won't be the usual participation of members as elves and assistants to Santa this year.

We are unsure as to when we will be able to resume any activities as 'socially distanced' supervising in a 'safety critical' environment isn't really feasible, and we can only consider returning when all restrictions are over and the Railway welcomes back non-essential volunteers.

All 2020 subscriptions will be 'rolled over' into 2021 but in the meantime the waiting lists have got longer and indeed the new 2020 members haven't even completed their initial assessments. Sadly, the 9F Club is suspended for the foreseeable future.

Wondering what to write about the club, I came across the above photo from the newly reformed Wagon Group and noticed that four of the people in the photo were all ex 9F Club members. I therefore thought it might be interesting to members to hear how they progressed from being a nine-year-old with an interest in railways and joining the 9F Club to being part of this group which facilitated the reintroduction of goods trains at the recent 'Off the Rails' event. It was such a shame that in these restricted days more people couldn't have witnessed the very welcome sight. In the past the 9F Club have been involved in restoration work on the 'Dance Hall' brake van, the Ransome & Rapier breakdown crane and various other tasks involving sanding, painting, red oxidising etc

of wagons so club members have a good background in this area.

In each of their own words:

Having spent many occasions over seven years in the loco department, the opportunity arose of working within Carriage & Wagon at Horsted Keynes. It was a chance to experience a totally new area of the Railway, seeing a department you don't see very much of. When I left the 9F Club and didn't have much time to do the shifts in the loco department, Laurie approached me to see if I was interested in working with him restoring and maintaining the Bluebell's historic wagons. Having enjoyed the times I have been down there in the past it was a definite YES. Another advantage was that it turned out to also be very beneficial in conjunction with my college engineering course. Having seen comment and reaction to the goods trains on social media following the 'Off the Rails' event, it felt very good to be part of the group and what we are doing. **Alex Widdowson, 18.**

I joined the 9F Club when I was nine. During my time with the club I did the usual jobs at Sheffield Park; emptying pits, loco cleaning and pallet breaking etc, and cosmetic work on the steam crane. Once I reached 16, I became a young supervisor for a few years. I helped with the groups when the club was asked to join in with the winter track relay work.

In 2019, Laurie Anderson

contacted me with his proposal for a new wagon gang and whether I would want to be a part of it and it went from there. Since then I've worked on the overhaul of the SR Bulleid 5 Plank No 12058, stripping down and repainting the chassis. This was a great opportunity to get up close and personal with wagons learning what all the parts are and how they work. Fast forward to 2020 and the lead-up to the 'Off The Rails' event, there was a big push to get a goods train in service. My main focus was on the SR Milk Tanker, using soapy water and brushes to clean the algae off the tank. We then stripped and repainted bits of the chassis ready for it to enter service again. **Matthew Lander, 23.**

In the 9F Club I'd always been interested in more than just cleaning engines. I spent a lot of time there working on the cosmetic restoration of the steam crane which was a greatly enjoyable and satisfying project as well as doing P.Way work at Horsted Keynes. The wagon gang was born out of pub talk between myself, Laurie and another ex-9F Club member about how nice it would be to have goods trains of the same quality as some other railways. After all we have the stock for it, just no one to do the restorations and maintenance, and so the idea was born. Laurie put the footwork into creating the gang and it went from the pub to reality and as such I became part of the physical group and am looking forward to the future of the group as we have many plans for it. **Jack Gregory.**

Laurie Anderson writes: We have had a strong intake from the 9F Club, members who have come to the end of their time in the club who are looking for departments to join. It has been wonderful to see them continue in the Railway family by joining us to work on bringing back goods trains and learning new skills from working on wagons. The 'Off the Rails' event in October was the result of the team's hard work and if it wasn't for the ex-9F Club members pushing to start the gang up again we wouldn't have a team to start with so a big well done to them. As well as the above both Harry Shopland and Paul Booth have helped with wagon restorations.

Hopefully, their efforts will continue and the Goods Division will grow. We are always looking for others to join. Department Director Bob Pamment, Works Manager Rowan Millard and David Rydderch, the Wagon Team Leader, have all been very helpful and supportive with the gang. If you are interested in joining please get in contact with David at david@rhydderch.co.uk

As a member of the 9F board it is always rewarding to see ex-members staying and volunteering on the Railway. Our Plc chairman, Chris Hunford, is an ex-9F Club member, so it just shows that any quiet, shy, new nine-year-old member really can achieve great things.

MARTIN WIDDOWSON
9F Secretary



S15 No 847, less its smoke deflectors, heads the goods away from Sheffield Park with a Jon Bowers photographic charter special on 8 December 2020. DAVE BOWLES

The strategy for the future

The Railway completed 60 years of operation in 2020 and over that period it has built up a reputation with our visitors, members and supporters for the authentic way it portrays railways in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is not just the individual historic atmosphere of our stations but the collection of locomotives, carriages, wagons and other artifacts that make it what it is, including the people who make it happen either 'front-of-house' or behind the scenes.

What is clear is that behind every successful organisation there are strategies and processes that set out clear guiding principles that define the actions people in the business should take; the matters that should be addressed and prioritised to achieve desired goals and deliver business objectives. That might sound too much like being 'corporate' but there is no getting away from the fact that the Bluebell Railway is a business that needs to consider and plan its future seriously to ensure that it continues to be successful and sustainable.

What is the strategy for the future of the Bluebell Railway so that we can continue to authentically represent the 'Golden ages of

railways' and also operate sustainably in the 21st century setting? This will involve our original objectives but embrace changing circumstances and increasing regulation, as well as meeting the demands of visitors and members. This was a question that the Society trustees reflected on during the summer as we approached our diamond anniversary in August. It's an important question and one that goes to the heart of what we want the Railway to be in the short, medium and long term.

The Society trustees resolved to form a tripartite committee, the 'Bluebell Strategy and Policy Group' (SAPG), to formulate strategy and policy for the Bluebell Railway. This is being done with the full support of the Company and the Trust as it's the three entities seamlessly working together that will make the Railway a success. SAPG is chaired by Michael Priestley with Steve Bigg, Robert Hayward and John Knight representing the Society, Paul Lelew representing the Company and Vernon Blackburn representing the Trust.

Defining how each part plays its role has been a thought-provoking exercise identifying what are the respective 'goals' and 'visions'

for the future and surprisingly, it has meant more work than originally thought and covers a range of subjects that include strategic policy objectives, preservation policies, heritage management, business development, environmental responsibilities, management of assets and sustainability – in every sense.

The current position is that a lot of work has been done by SAPG to create a framework to hang co-ordinated policy, business and heritage strategy on, but a lot more work is needed to develop and complete it. The result will be a set of joined-up goals to work to and help inform the Company's business plan. These together will enable the Railway to make decisions for the short term (0-5 years), the medium term (5-10 years) and in the long term (10-20+ years) to ensure that the Railway can operate and develop in a sustainable, coherent and organised manner.

This work will be grafted, as part of working in unison with the Company, into the process that will inform and facilitate the Company's first business plan and it is hoped that this will be finalised by next summer. There will be more about this project in due course.

MICHAEL PRIESTLEY



Doctor Beeching opening Holywell (Waterworks) Halt in 1962. BLUEBELL ARCHIVE

Dr Beeching visit

I RECALL in Bluebell's earlier days, an early morning cycle ride from Sutton, Surrey, along deserted roads to Sheffield Park station, where we witnessed Dr Beeching declaring something or other 'open' from a small dais on the platform.

Unfortunately I do not recall what or when exactly. Can you help please with confirmation of what I witnessed?

R.F GEORGE

Reply

Doctor Beeching visited the railway on 1 April 1962. He joined the 'Blue Belle' special pulled by GNR No 1247 at Three Bridges with his wife. The train then ran via Haywards Heath to Horsted Keynes. From there it was hauled by *Stepney* to Sheffield Park, stopping at Holywell for Beeching to open Holywell Halt (as a change from closing stations!)

On arrival at Sheffield Park Dr Beeching visited the 'new' signalbox constructed by Norman Gillett and then gave a short speech with words of encouragement for Bluebell and preservation in general. No 1247 performed well on the main Brighton line with the 'Brighton Belle' relegated to the slow line at Coulsdon for it to pass!

ROGER PRICE
Archivist

Steam or diesel?

I AGREE both with Brian Barry's letter 'Diesel traction on the Bluebell' and the editorial reply in *Bluebell News* Summer 2020.

Yes, supporters visiting the Railway from afar should be able to rely on steam haulage on the trains they wish to travel on, barring emergencies of course. Most of the income from running trains is generated from non-steam era passengers who come for the travel experience. Trains hauled by steam locomotives are generally preferable but diesel traction is better than trains being cancelled. If, as predicted, summers become hotter and dryer, a ban on the use of steam-hauled trains due to fire risk is ever more likely. So having enough diesel locomotives able to operate the timetable makes good sense. This does not mean flooding the Railway with diesels! It is an imperative for the Railway to maximise operating income, resulting in less reliance on supporters' pockets for things like track renewals, station restorations (and another Wickham Trolley?). It is recognised that it costs less to use diesel traction on trains than steam locomotives so that trains early and late in the day and at the 'shoulders' of the operating season could be profitable using diesels instead. If diesel traction is used on trains this should be clearly indicated in the published timetable or widely publicised in a 'high fire risk' alert.

RODNEY F HALL

Bluebell's Pullman car fleet

PAUL DAVISON'S letter in the Autumn edition of *Bluebell News* raises some interesting thoughts, but in part based on misunderstandings, which it is worth taking the time to properly explore.

Kitchen Car *Carina* is at present very much a 'strategic reserve' - we will eventually need a second kitchen car, but for the next decade the train can be serviced by *Fingall's* kitchen, together with the scullery facilities within the LMS BGZ. It was indeed obtained in place of *Doris* (released for the 5-Bel project) since we could not leave ourselves without the potential for a second kitchen car for the long term. However the immediate priority was for a higher capacity vehicle with wheelchair access, which is to be provided by *Car No 54*. The substantial donation we received was indeed initially intended for work on *Carina*, but with *Car 54* a higher priority the donor was very happy for the money to be used on that project instead, since it would not have been anything like sufficient to complete *Carina* which is virtually a bare skeleton.

Car No 36 is to be a replacement for *Car No 76 (Lilian)* which we are currently offering for sale in the hope that a group with the metal-working skills to tackle it will be interested. The current plan is that, subject to funding being available, *Car 36* will receive the intermediate overhaul it requires once *Car 54* is complete. We have seats available for it without stripping those from *Car 76*.

The bogie/underframe overhauls required on *Car No 64 (Christine)* and *Fingall* should take just six months, and the aim is to complete these in early/mid 2021, whereas overhauling *Car 36* and *Carina* will be much more lengthy projects.

RICHARD SALMON

Support from the preservation era's first 'lady of steam'

I HAVE been a Bluebell member for many years as was my late husband. We both came to the opening day of the preserved Bluebell Railway in 1960. We were both firemen on the Talylyn Railway and came with a group of other TR firemen to show our support for the first standard gauge preserved railway. I was the first lady fireman on any preserved railway, starting on the Talylyn in 1957, my husband started on the Talylyn in 1953.

I had previously fired *Prince* on the Ffestiniog Railway in 1956 and 57 and eventually did 11 years on Talylyn locos before having children. My grandson is a boiler shop apprentice on the Mid-Hants Railway and due to start a permanent post there in 2021. My younger grandson, John Hatherill, is a member of your 9F Club.

I regularly visit the Bluebell, living in Croydon, but not recently.

I keep in touch with what is going on via online news. The model engineering society I belong to has a bi-monthly journal which members can have online or printed. I was very pleased when the Bluebell sent information out online during lockdown - I hate throwing away things which I could have had on line - my family are all Bluebell members so can't pass on to them.

Could I suggest that, especially in these times of decreased income, the Bluebell gives members the choice of an online or printed *Bluebell News*?

ANN HATHERILL



Bluebell member Ann Hatherill on the Talylyn Railway in the 1950s.

Reply

Thank you for your suggestion, which is something we are already investigating and will look into further, but it would be some project to dissect those members that would prefer an online copy only from a c10,000 database. Ed.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

As I write it is six months since I took over the role of Infrastructure Director – a challenging, but rewarding six months. The infrastructure folio is enormous and wide-ranging, and basically, if it doesn't move, it is infrastructure – everything from the permanent way, signalling equipment, power, to maintenance of our tenanted properties, not forgetting major projects such as OP4.

With only two paid staff, the department is very reliant on its keen, motivated volunteers. The Friends groups worked hard to prepare their respective stations for the reopening in August, and continue to maintain their areas to the high standard that our visitors expect. The electrical team has likewise been catching up on various maintenance tasks following the first lockdown, and is now in the final throes of fitting lights in readiness for our Christmas activities. The Signalling & Telecoms department have continued with their regular maintenance, and have also been progressing new projects such as the replacement of the up inner home at Horsted Keynes (and the development of its new hydraulic operating system), together with the development of major projects

such as the requirements for the eventual replacement of the Sheffield Park signal apparatus which is nearing the end of its life. The lineside clearance gangs have done an excellent job in catching up with the backlog from earlier in the year.

The permanent way team have also been busy with the completion of the reconstruction of Palmers Bridge, and the associated track relay (see page 34-37), a second relay south of New Road Bridge, and some remedial work south of East Grinstead. The next major project will be remedial works on New Road Bridge, followed by a track relay from the bridge north into Horsted Keynes.

The completion of the Palmers Bridge section (delayed from March) has released sufficient track panels to enable roads H and J in OP4 to be laid. This is due for completion during the next few weeks, enabling more heritage stock to be stored in the shed.

I'm very pleased to welcome Melissa Jordan to the team as the new project manager for fitting out the Heritage Skills Centre. Mel joined us in August, and progress in the HSC since then has been substantial (see 'News'). Another project at Horsted is the new power supply, being managed by Tony

Astor. This has been a complex project, made more difficult by the cessation of work during the first lockdown. However, this is gradually coming together, and will yield great benefits for the whole of the currently underpowered Horsted site.

Elsewhere, members of the infrastructure team have been working on van BY404, restoring it and making it available for use as a generator van for filming. It is currently being used to provide power for the SteamLights train.

The recent grant from the Culture Recovery Fund includes finance for several infrastructure related projects. There are three projects which relate to our electricity usage: replacing C&W lighting with LEDs; an energy audit and works to reduce energy consumption; and a feasibility study on the installation of solar photo-voltaic panels. We have extensive roof areas on OP3, OP4 and AWF which could potentially be used without being visible from the heritage sections of the Railway. The largest of the projects is the proposed miniature railway in the picnic area at Sheffield Park. Plans are well advanced and the ground survey has been completed. Provided planning permission can be obtained in time we hope



The next major project will be remedial works on New Road Bridge. VERNON BLACKBURN

to see this at least partially open by April.

Finally, one gap in the team is in the management of our buildings. Is there anybody who might be interested in the (voluntary) role of Buildings Manager? There is a brief job description here www.bluebell-railway.com/volunteer-at-bluebell-railway/ and if you think this might be the role for you, please contact volunteering@bluebell-railway.com.

Here's hoping that 2021 will be a little less fraught than 2020!

BARRY LUCK
Infrastructure Director

Bookshelf

Southern Style – The Southern Railway

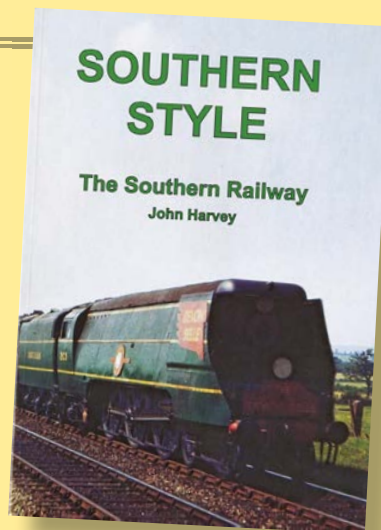
By John Harvey, published by the Historical Model Railway Society, 2020, £35, 240pp, colour and mono photos and drawings, plus folder of specimen colour samples.

This fourth volume of *Southern Style* follows volumes covering the LSWR, LBSCR and BR(S). It includes the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway from 1898 to 1935 and the passenger stock of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway from 1923 until 1930.

The result of many years careful research, and superseding the HMRS's *Livery Register No.3 - LSWR and Southern* (L. Tavender, 1970), the acknowledgement section credits the assistance of many individuals, starting from people who kept contemporary records whilst they worked for the SR, through to the HMRS and NRM, the Maunsell Locomotive and Bulleid Societies, the Bluebell Railway Archive, and the Bluebell's C&W, amongst others. I still remember my own contribution, probably 20 years back, when John and I chipped paint from underframes of stock at Horsted Keynes to uncover fresh samples of original paint covered over many decades before. Liveries and the exact shades of paint colours are always difficult issues, creating much discussion, but John takes care to pull together documented facts, measurements, reported observations going back many years, always building on and hugely expanding

on Tavender's work, with copious illustrations.

I have already consulted it to resolve online discussions regarding 'light' and 'dark' Olive, and the experimental olive green which only appeared on a handful of carriages and did not weather well, immediately replaced by Bulleid's Malachite. Covering wagons, departmental stock, road vehicles, uniforms, ships' flags and funnels and buildings as well as locomotives and carriages, whilst being aimed more at modellers, it provides real academic rigour to reinforce (and against which to check) our own practices in preservation.



RICHARD SALMON



The Wednesday Gang (North) clearing the lineside between Horsted Keynes station and Leamland Bridge on 25 November. NIGEL MENZIES



The new tamper on driver training duties at Kingscote station. 'GRIZZ'

SR Van C (BY) No 404

Work stopped on the film generator van when we were locked down just as we were hopeful of better weather after a prolonged period of rain when we couldn't get much done. What followed was a really dry spell when the final exterior painting could have gone ahead but it was possible to work off-site and a lot of time was spent finishing off the necessary repairs on the droplights and periscope mirror frames for the guard. The droplights were also painted and varnished in more ideal conditions away from the van. Once we could return after restrictions were eased, exterior painting continued along with repairs to the periscope housings and mechanisms. SteamLights has added to the excitement with No 404 being used as the generator van – which has been the intention all along for filming; but it also needed checking for fitness to run. Being moved to E road in the C&W works gave another opportunity for exterior painting in the dry as well as getting a full mechanical service by the maintenance crew. Brake

linkages were all taken down, greased and adjusted, vac system checked and new bags fitted, axle boxes serviced and electricians tested. Finally, with time pressing for imminent service, it was necessary to patch another hole in the south cabin floor so that the generators could be loaded safely. Cable ports have also been made and fitted in the end walls as well as a custom designed fan unit which can be fitted to any of the droplight openings depending on whichever generator is working. The original intention was to vent the generator exhaust through the existing stove chimney, however the size of the generators for SteamLights has precluded this and so exhaust ports have been fitted in the cabin roof at each end in place of a torpedo vent. So BY404 is now entering service at last and will be available for filming at the earliest opportunity in 2021.

MIKE HOPPS

Tuesday Gang

Following our last report, we completed clearance of the lineside between Sheffield Park and Ketches. This also involved

the felling and removal of several trees that were suffering from disease. We also took the opportunity to trim back a number of trees where branches were getting dangerously close to the track. This resulted in plenty of logs removed to West Hoathly using the Wickham.

We have now moved to work north of Horsted Keynes starting from Horsted House Farm crossing. The track here is due for renewal soon and we have trimmed and tidied all along the section from the foot crossing under the farm access bridge towards the cutting. There was a lot of weed growth on the bridge so we have taken the opportunity to clear that. As usual this was mainly ivy and moss which isn't always easy to reach! We plan to continue northwards in the period leading up to Christmas. There are a number of fallen trees that need addressing along the way and at the time of writing we have removed the first of those ready for logging. Leaf fall was blocking the drainage ditch in the cutting and we have made good progress in clearing that and it is flowing nicely after all the recent rainfall!

KEITH LAWRIE

The Sunday Gang spent the autumn undertaking a range of routine maintenance tasks as well as helping out with a number of 'can you just...' jobs. The former have mainly involved correcting faults identified by the weekly track inspections, such as replacing a number of rusted panlock fastenings in the tunnel, replacing life-expired sleepers at Sheffield Park, cursing stuck fishplate bolts at various locations along the length of the line (and sometimes replacing them too), and unblocking drainage

pipes that had got bunged up with assorted combinations of leaves, cut vegetation, mud and ballast. A number of preventative maintenance tasks have also been undertaken, including completing the fishplate oiling along the section between West Hoathly and Kingscote station, as well as jacking and packing the usual problem spot at Vaux End. Meanwhile the 'can you just...' jobs have generally involved shovelling ballast (lots of it!) in advance of both phases of the Palmers Bridge relay as well as around the new A-points in Horsted Keynes down yard.

JON BOWERS

Wednesday Gang (North)

It's difficult to be topical with reports of our lineside activities, since, as the reader will appreciate, they relate to work undertaken during the previous quarter and are written some weeks before they appear in print, by which time they are usually out of date. However, picking up from where we left off in our autumn report, we do seem to have been stuck in a time warp, having spent an inordinate number of hours working at West Hoathly. Although Lew Lewis continues to maintain the former station area in pristine condition, it has been a few years since the gang was there last, so there was much to do. It's pleasing to report that clearance work has now been completed on both sides of the line between Deans Crossing and the tunnel, once again opening up views of the line from Station Road above. Sadly, ash dieback has been identified in a number of mature trees close to the tunnel entrance and, at the time of writing, are due to be felled.



1892-1914 map of Ardingly spur.



Old A points and new A points. JON GOFF



During our time at West Hoathly, trimmer operators were called upon to assist with removal of vegetation close to the running line in other areas, where this could not be accessed by the rail-mounted flail or tractor mower, in an attempt to reduce fire risk during the hot summer weather. In October, the strimming team cleared the west side of the line between New Road Bridge and Three Arch P-way hut, in connection with the photo charter planned for 7-8 December.

In November the full gang returned to Horsted Keynes, where both sides of the line have been cleared between the station and Leamland Bridge.

At the end of November, we returned to our usual pre-Christmas location, working south through Three Arch Cutting, which we customarily prepare annually in readiness for the spring wild flower display.

BRIAN KIDMAN

Wednesday Gang (South)

As Bluebell management confirmed that lineside clearance was considered an essential activity during Lockdown 2, the Southern Gang decided it was safe enough to carry on, given the precautions in place. Since then the team has continued working 'down' from Sloop and Town Place Bridges, clearing areas not dealt with by the summer flail. In so doing we have also cleared an area in preparation for a forthcoming Jon Bowers photographic charter. We have now reached our walking limit going south and are in the process of returning to Sloop Bridge on the 'up' side. While working in this area we have benefited from the generosity of Bluebell neighbour, Charlie, in

kindly allowing us to park at his Town Place Farm property.

One disappointment is the disappearance, now assumed stolen, of a number of rakes and pitchforks, which we thought we had left securely out of sight under cover.

JOHN DREW

Matt Crawford's group

The principal focus of Matt's group this quarter was clearly Palmers Bridge and the two-phase track relay over it, as in the separate report. However, that was not the only task worked on.

A road points were finally finished, the Ardingly spur and Kingscote goods yard layouts were surveyed and some planning carried out.

The tamper seen here is for driver training and for machine approval before it is allowed on Network Rail's system. It is brand new, just arrived from Plasser & Theurer in Austria and has not yet been signed over to Balfour Beatty. It won't be signed over until all the teething problems are ironed out which is why Network Rail don't want it on their tracks yet. Balfour is paying us for the use of our rails for the training and approval exercise and we also get tamping done for free. It has already tamped the Palmers Bridge relay and the A road point in Horsted Keynes down yard although it will need tamping again when more ballast is put down.

It does a measuring run before doing a tamping run. It can then do another measuring run and from the results make a recommendation for the maximum speed of any particular piece of line. One section near the eye hospital came out at over 100mph! Not bad for a 25 mph

railway, we obviously got that track repair right!

The tamper has also been active in Horsted yard, mainly for training, mostly up and down the new long siding, now named 'New Road Siding'. It also tamped the running-in road, finally producing the smooth gentle curve we planned some time ago. We expect a second similar tamper to arrive in the new year and should be able to get our winter relay tamped by one of them.

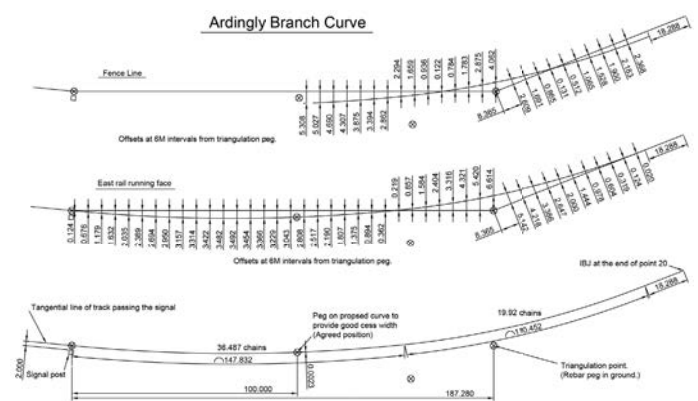
The A road point is also finally finished. By the time you read this, it will also be connected to A road in the shed and finished. It will have the best, smoothest and gentlest curve into the shed that it has ever had but will still be a bit tighter than we would like it at just over 6 chains radius. To get the curve up to our preferred minimum of 9 chains we would have to move the running-in road over so far that the main line would have to be moved over as well, together with the dock road points, the points into platform 5, the dummy signal and even the water tower, so we'll stick with the 6-chain radius.

It may at first seem a silly thing to work out now, but some effort has been spent on plotting the

correct line for the track down to where Sheriff Mill viaduct was, especially as there are so many other more urgent and more important things to use our limited resources on. Although we are not going to relay the track in the foreseeable future, its correct position has been accurately plotted because we need a boundary fence beside the track.

Looking at old maps we found an old 25in map dated 1892 to 1914 which best showed the old Ardingly track. From this we could work out that curvature was 29 chains (583m). After surveying the existing track which has a straight in it and a very sharp curve, too sharp for some stock, a new curve was set splitting the radius into two due to the current different arrangement by the signal box and the signal placed at the other end of the formation. The two curves meet to within quarter of a millimetre! One other area to be surveyed is Kingscote goods yard. Trying to get good curves and pointwork to get three sidings in, including one for the crane around the builder's yard fence line has proved to be difficult. More on this next time.

JON GOFF



New curvature, with offsets from datum lines.

'OFF THE RAILS' GALA



The goods train consist being assembled at Horsted Keynes on 24 October. JAMES HAMILTON

The Railway ran its first post-lockdown special event, entitled 'Off the Rails', either side of the autumn half term holidays, on October 24-25 and 31-1 November.

Consisting of a gathering of vintage road vehicles, including traction engines, at Horsted Keynes and Sheffield Park stations whilst the Railway ran goods trains on the Saturday of each weekend, hauled by

BR 4MT No 80151. On each Sunday the 09 D4106 was shunting at Horsted Keynes, however on Sunday 31 the diesel wouldn't start and the rostered passenger locomotives SECR H Class No 263 and SER O1 No 65 undertook some shunting during their scheduled one-hour stop at Horsted Keynes. Also a couple of goods wagons were attached and run with the

passenger stock for authentic branch line effect.

On 25 October a small celebration took place at Horsted Keynes to celebrate the 125th anniversary, to the day, of the completion of Fowler A4 6nhp traction engine No 7459 of 1895 *Endurance*. The engine has been in the ownership of the Langley family of South Chailey for several generations and is

currently in the process of being completely overhauled by Ian Langley.

Ian has the use of the Searle family of Horsham's Fowler B5 road locomotive crane engine No 8920 of 1901 *The Great North* and with so few opportunities to use it in 2020 was keen to attend the Bluebell event with it and take the partially complete Fowler traction engine on a heavy



The goods train preparing to leave Sheffield Park behind No 80151. JAMES HAMILTON



A Bristol bus, Fowler traction engine No 8781 of 1900 *Monty* and RT 2043 at Sheffield Park on 24 October. JAMES HAMILTON

WEEKENDS



haulage trailer. At about 8am on Saturday 24 October, Ian and his significant other, Sam Gunn as steerswomen, left Chailey with a long road train behind the Fowler consisting of the haulage trailer, trailer and large living van. Considering the narrow lanes and steep hills of the route they did well to cover the ten miles to Horsted Keynes in a little over two and a half hours.

To mark the occasion a cake in the form of the engine was cut and shared with those present to celebrate *Endurance's* 125th.

JAMES HAMILTON



ABOVE: Aveling & Porter road roller No 10574 of 1923 *Lionheart* at Horsted Keynes. JAMES HAMILTON

LEFT: The road train on its way to Horsted Keynes from South Chailey, hauled by Fowler No 8920 of 1901 *The Great North*. JAMES HAMILTON

RIGHT: Under restoration Fowler No 7459 of 1895 *Endurance* made a rare public appearance out of its shed to celebrate its 125th birthday. JAMES HAMILTON



Jim Hatfield steamed his 1930 Sentinel DG6 waggon to Kingscote from his Newick base. COLIN TYSON



A 1969 Royal Mail van on the dock at Kingscote. COLIN TYSON

Future needs – Sheffield



Option 1: This illustrates how things may look in the future, the signal box image is from Lewes although it has been reversed to reposition the stairs to the left. It is also a little longer than we would require and we need to negotiate any changes with the listing authorities. The building had its lower windows bricked up during the Second World War and we would restore these to original Victorian condition. What is not depicted is the 'cottage' housing the 'techy' kit but this would likely be behind the signal box but nearer the proposed archive facility. Montage by Mike Hopps.

In the Autumn *Bluebell News* S&T report I suggested that plans were afoot to replace Sheffield Park Signal Box. I am pleased to expand on the background of this project and would be delighted to correspond with members who have constructive ideas or are interested in helping with the scheme.

For a number of years the condition of Sheffield Park Signal Box has been giving the signal engineering team increasing concerns. Its fitness will soon reach a point where major component replacement will be required. Subsequently I was tasked to research options and gather the ideas from as many people as possible on how we could deal with the developing situation.

Signal boxes and their associated infrastructure must be considered slightly different from other assets, if serious issues develop it is not possible to just

use a spare or hire in a temporary replacement. To prevent a future damaging breakdown of the signalling system we need to predict how long we can guarantee a safe and effective working system and subtract that from the time any replacement would take to design, approve, install and commission. This, of course, is not an exact science but I am using the broad experience of my fellow engineers to ensure reliability is maintained.

My priorities on any solution are to maintain and improve safety, uphold preservation standards, enrich the visitors' experience including the disabled and ensure the final product can be easily maintained to modern standards.

When built, Sheffield Park had two so-called signal boxes, one at the south and one at the north end of the station. Strictly the south end was the block post and thus considered a signal box,

the north end was technically a ground frame working under the instruction of the south end signalman. This was not the most efficient deployment of staff but I guess in reality with a very light and predictable train service the two 'signal boxes' could be worked by one signalman. When the Southern Railway came on the scene, they replaced the two 'signal boxes' with a lever frame behind railings on the platform such that one person could operate the points and signals, issue tickets, deal with the staff exchange and dispatch trains.

Once the Bluebell took control, the lever frame evolved, going through many incarnations into a full-blown signal box we all now enjoy. Alas, it has involved piecemeal development using kit that was available at the time. This has resulted in the use of illogical technology and obsolete equipment. A classic example is that the only set of mechanically

operated points are furthest from the signal box, the closest being power operated. Any proposal must sidestep this temptation of piecemeal development by carefully considering possible future enhancements alongside full consultation with all concerned experienced in the present operation.

The current signal box occupies a critical position on the platform creating a serious pinch point for visitor flow, a particular risk when considering opening of carriage doors. On the other hand, of course, this setting has a superb benefit for the public to witness a working signal box and must have encouraged many visitors to research the black art of signalling. Within the signal box, access to much of the safety critical devices requires the signalman's floor to be removed, not appropriate for even minor maintenance and even less suitable for major reconstruction.

Park Signal Box options

To protect the future safety and operating facilities at Sheffield Park, doing nothing is not an option. After considering various possibilities, we have settled on proposing a replacement Victorian-styled signal box in a new position. I could devote columns of text explaining the technical reasons for the decisions but I am sure of most interest to members is revealing what the final proposal could look like, its benefits and how it will be achieved. One thing that is certain, whatever solution is finally decided on it will not be cheap and we are obviously in financial competition with other deserving projects.

The building, although specified by the signal engineer, requires construction expertise from the civil engineers and therefore there is a need to build up a specialist team to oversee this work. An important early consideration is to decide on the size and style of the building. A bespoke 'new build' signal box could be very expensive. Alternatively, and perhaps cheaper, would be the re-use of a suitable decommissioned Network Rail structure. This could also attract heritage donations.

John Saxby was an important local entrepreneur providing

signalling widely to the LBSCR, the UK and around the world, A Saxby and Farmer Type 5 signal box style has been a long-standing Bluebell ambition for any replacement and so we began looking for a suitable donor structure of this style. Newhaven Town could have been ideal but its all-timber condition was very poor so I turned my attention to Lewes. A site visit confirmed in my mind that this was a strong contender but a number of obstacles were likely to become a challenge. As a listed building I was pleased to discover the listing sponsor was broadly supportive of its relocation and reuse. The council conservation adviser was also on board although having a number of issues to resolve. Also supportive are the Sussex Coast Rail Partnership and Network Rail but a collective site visit was vital before we could make any further progress. Frustratingly the virus halted a proposed early site meeting and then again when the second lockdown was announced.

The proposed signal box site has generated much dialogue debating the options with the operating authorities and considering the technical requirements. In reality the north end of platform 2 is the only practical location along with an equipment room (relay

room) required to house the telecommunications, signalling interlocking and power supplies. It's proposed to construct this building in the style of a Myer's railwayman's cottage to disguise it from its real purpose. The site considers any future platform extensions. We have already moved the signals and the visitors' viewing area will need to migrate towards the river bridge. Visitor access to this viewing point would be via a footpath to the rear of the signal box and this will permit the possibility of including an observation window revealing the secrets of the lower floor of a signal box including a demonstration layout of vintage electrical equipment. Similarly, a window in the relay room will allow visitors to view a demonstration heritage telephone system, using dial operated telephones.

The size and layout of the signal box would allow an area for the signalman's domestic needs and an area for invited visitors to witness the operation without interfering with the signalman's duties. I am very conscious the existing signal box does allow for disabled visitors to experience signalling processes so a lift is proposed, secreted away at the rear to provide similar access. The frame of 40 levers

(ex-Newhaven Town) will allow passive provision for any future requirement at the south end of the station. Where the signalling and points are within the view of the general public they will be operated mechanically and where possible in the style of classic LBSCR design. This will include a mechanical facing point layout adjacent to the foot crossing.

Major challenges remain of course; how the project is financed is the most acute and, if the Lewes option is pursued, how do you recover a listed building from a site adjacent to a working National Railway, but of course any progress at present is hindered by the damned virus.

If any member would like to assist me in developing any element of this project I would be pleased to hear from you. I can be contacted on brian.hymas@bluebell-railway.com

Finally, it is expected that any modern project has a branding name. Any suggestions gratefully received, a few ideas so far:

SPARS (Sheffield Park Area Resignalling Scheme)

RASP (Resignalling At Sheffield Park)

ROSP (Resignalling Of Sheffield Park)

ROSBOX (Replacement Of Signal Box)

BRIAN HYMAS

OBITUARY JOHN PADGHAM



A typical Padgham pose!

A much respected and much missed Bluebell driver, John Padgham, died in April 2020.

John was a fireman at Three Bridges shed during the 1950s and early 1960s and he brought to the Bluebell the relaxed, confident skills which the true ex-professionals had. Barbara Watkins recalls 'his wicked sense of humour. Was irreverent, extremely funny and rolled off his tongue without hesitation...his quick wit had no bounds.'

A day with John was always an instructive, relaxed and rewarding experience. He was a natural teacher, which was notably illustrated when we worked together on the driving and firing experience courses, from which the candidates gained unique insight and much enjoyment.

When Clive Groome was obliged to use qualified help to assist with his 'Footplate Days and Ways' courses, John was a natural to be employed as one of his assistants and this relationship lasted many years. It continued also when Clive conducted courses on other railways up and down the country.

Following his railway career, John was an HGV driver, then for some years ran his own landscape gardening business before latterly working extensively with Matt Crawford on Bluebell P-Way tasks.

For a number of years John also made a large contribution to the running of the Lavender Line at Isfield.

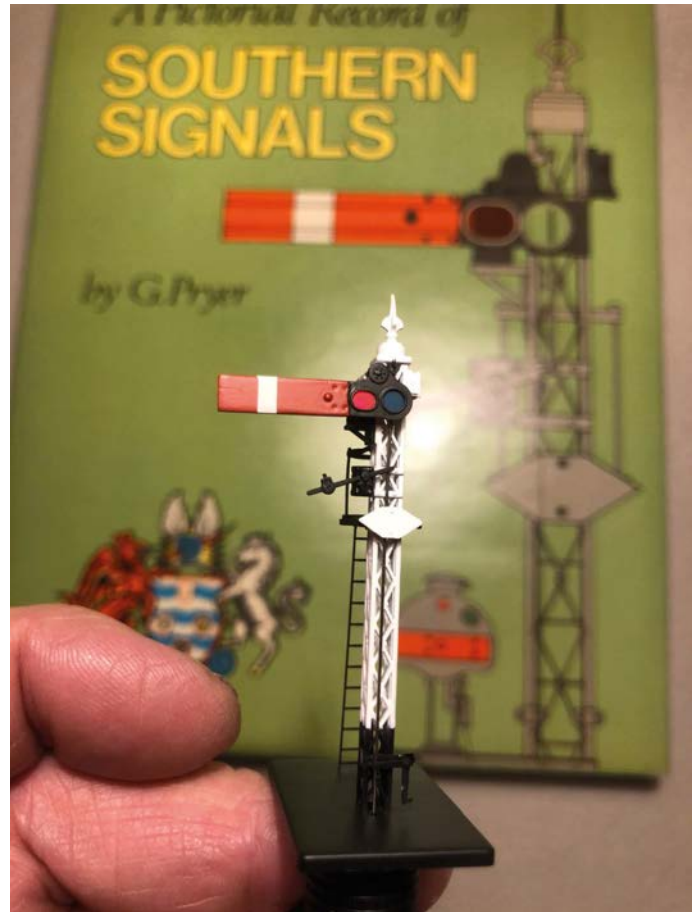
MICHAEL TOPLIS
Senior Fireman, retired

Dapol's operating semaphore signals

Back in my youth train watching was quite a respected hobby – I was yet to become a train spotter. In those early days my first unaccompanied adventures were watching the GNR N2 class 0-6-2Ts on the coal train that served Mill Hill East gas works and the coal depots at the wayside station goods yards on what is the overground section of London Underground's Northern Line. These trains were also to influence a boy in Highgate who now has a much bigger train set than mine. That boy became the famous rock star Rod Stewart and his model railway is legendary, and what is ironic, is he likes American trains and the Pennsylvania Railroad – I have those same trains too, it must have been something in the smoke that the N2 emitted! When Santa squeezed a bike down the chimney I broadened my horizons and discovered the close proximity of the LNER main line. Mum and dad never challenged me when I said I was going to Oakleigh Park, little did they know it was just the name of a suburban station with five tracks passing through it. The northbound island platform was just the spot for here I could

watch the trains streaming south whilst keeping a watchful eye on the northbound fast line signals. It was a very busy railway on those Saturdays I spent there, one train after another, and all steam. I don't ever remember seeing a diesel. When the two arms of the short post of the northbound signal went up it was time to look the other way and peering a mile down the line you could see through the tunnel and beyond. The excitement began as a dot on the horizon grew bigger and you could see the billowing steam as it raced towards the tunnel, then all went dark as the tunnel filled with smoke. Moments later with a gush of white steam, the train burst out the tunnel and grew larger and larger heading straight towards me. It was time to step back from the platform edge and savour the sight as it roared through the station with its chime whistle blasting. There was nothing quite like seeing a Gresley A4 streaking north from just a couple yards away... awesome! There were also lots of A1s, A2s, A3s, V2s and B1s and each time those signals went up I wondered what would appear next!

Signal magic returned in full volume when I was spending a



Dapol 00 gauge SR lattice starter.

week doing lineside photography on the lonesome Settle & Carlisle railway. This was back in the days when the line had no status but to

the few enthusiasts in the know. There were no hordes of train enthusiasts to swap information with and the memorable joy was just that, the peace and quiet of being alone in God's Country. One just had to keep a good eye on the signals and that was all part of the excitement. Suddenly that peg was off, a quick check that all on the camera was set properly, shutter speed, aperture and focus... and of course that the film was wound on! I knew what time those Jubilees would come by but nothing else... wow what's this coming? A Britannia, snap and it's in the can I hope! Similar memories remain indelibly etched from days linesiding steam on the Southern. I had become aware that these signals, whilst constructed purely for functionality, were in themselves fascinating features of the railway infrastructure and very different over the regions.

They were built in all sorts of permutations according to the requirements of the location, but



Dapol's 00 gauge LH bracket signal.





Clear road ahead: Rail-built signal in detail.

LEFT: Dapol 00 gauge SR rail-built home signal.



Dapol N scale GWR wooden post distant signal.

even the humblest of single post signals were just so pretty and now just so rare. I loved those very tall LSWR lattice posts with their ornate cruciform finials. Each company had its own distinctive finial.

The evolution of the railway signal is a fascinating journey through a period from when policemen were employed to stand with their arm out to warn a train driver when and when not to proceed based on time lapse intervals. I'm glad they had disbanded that system by the time the A4s came out!

One of the most eye-catching accessories on a model railway are the signals. For those modelling the pre-diesel era when the semaphore signal was

dominant across the nation, good models of signals always presented a serious challenge. For years the only quality models were kits in 00 available from Ratio which took considerable skill to paint and assemble and at best, being very delicate, were challenging to make operational. Some modellers have built their own signals but these rare but stunning models were constructed with a watchmakers fidelity and most of us don't have that sort of time on our hands. Modern day production techniques have now allowed for these fascinating items to be made durable in large numbers and Dapol have to be commended for grabbing the initiative. Available in all scales, N, 00, and 0 gauge.

Various permutations are now available and the most recent addition to the range is the 00 Great Western Railway branch line, or loop line bracket. As operational models they have an LED lighted lamp fitted into a housing that is the correct shape of a paraffin burner signal lamp. Maybe a bit bright for some but very pleasing to all and our N scale / 00 / 0 gauge loco drivers will be hard pushed to excuse a SPAD by not seeing the light.

Having watched many real signals over the years whilst waiting to photograph a train, there are characteristics of operation of semaphores that tell you a lot about the temperament of the signalman. Semaphore signals had been designed that

if the cable operating them should break, the arm would automatically drop back to the danger position by virtue of the kinetic energy stored in the counterweight. Thus when the signalman hurriedly released the lever from the off position, the signal arm would drop rapidly and then 'bounced' as it settles back in its danger position. Even this 'bouncing' movement has been replicated in the latest of Dapol's signals.

A plug and play set of connectors make the models operational in minutes. For fun value of what they add to a layout and for what they cost, in each of the scales, these models represent stunning value for money.

CHRIS KAPOLKA



Dapol N scale GWR wooden post home signal.



Dapol signals plug and play control unit.

HOW PALMERS BRIDGE BECAME PALMER'S PALMERS BRIDGE

The infrastructure team have built a bridge which they are very proud of and with good reason. In proportion to its size, it is probably one of the best constructed, strongest and long-lasting on any UK railway – including Network Rail. It is probably also one of the cheapest. This is the story of the homemade bridge from start to finish, its reasons for replacing the old one, its construction and installation. To see a time lapse video of the construction go to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCP1ClNjP8

Like all heritage railways, Bluebell's track is wearing out. Some of it dates back over a century. We are one of the few railways that are running a major programme of track replacement to ensure we stay as a working railway and not just a static museum. The increased tyre wear on the rolling stock and the increase in the number of broken springs, causing locos to fail in service, was causing significant concern, hence the major replacement programme.

The bulk of the track between Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes has been replaced already and one of the interfaces between the old and new track has gradually been moving down Freshfield Bank over several years. The last section of straight track to be replaced here, thirteen panels immediately before the curve through Ketches, passes over a frequently used cattle creep, a farmer's access bridge called Palmers Bridge.

The bridge was showing its age. Although surveyed and deemed safe by expert bridge engineers, it was agreed that it wouldn't have a lot of years left. Therefore, it would be sensible to replace the bridge deck before laying the new track over it as the new track would certainly outlast the old bridge by many years.

The bridge abutments are built of brick nearly a metre thick and only needed some facing bricks replaced. Some were replaced around thirty

years ago with a different type of brick which doesn't blend in well despite being in good condition. However, locally sourced matching bricks have been purchased for the work required this time.

It was decided early on to reinstate the whole of the bridge deck, i.e. the full double track width. This was for several reasons: one being infrastructure does not do jobs by halves these days and likes to do a 'proper job'. On a previous deck replacement exercise years ago, the down side was not replaced and so extra fencing around the 'hole' was required. By replacing the whole deck, the safety aspect over the 'missing half' was completely removed. In addition, having the down side in place provides access for safety vehicles and maintenance machinery as well as making the overall job of rebuilding the bridge easier and safer.

We are fortunate to have our own friendly bridge design engineer, Dick Beckwith, who has designed many bridges of all sorts during his career. Following his sketched design, Andy Palmer (no relation to his namesake's bridge!), who is paid staff and Matt Crawford's right-hand man, set about turning the drawings into the major components required for the bridge replacement. This required some major design and timber construction work in itself to create the moulds in which the concrete would be cast. The majority of the work was carried out by Andy Palmer and Garry Whitaker although additional help was given at some point by most members of the team.

As there were to be more than one piece of each shape, the moulds were designed to be reusable. They were built quite ruggedly to ensure they would take the weight without sagging or bowing at any point, even after being used several times. In fact, they were made so strong that they could probably be used for several bridges if required, not that we have that requirement.

The old bridge relied on just two riveted steel beams to take the weight of passing trains. These were getting rusty and the bridge would flex and shake when a train passed over. Although technically still perfectly safe, it was not an enjoyable experience when the S15 passed over when I was underneath doing some measuring.

The new bridge has 24 I-beams embedded in the concrete rather than just rebar as the reinforcement, although the weight of a train would be distributed over only 15 of them at once. The I-beams or RSJs were slightly smaller than the old beams but made of stronger more modern structural steel rather than three wrought iron plates and four pieces of angle iron riveted together. That meant that the bridge could be made slightly thinner and yet be much stronger and ensure that no headroom was lost under the bridge – and still give a good depth of ballast on top of the bridge.

The bridge design was broken down into a total of nine separate castings. The deck was made up of three main flat section each with six I-beams inside and two smaller sections with three beams inside but with a parapet wall upstand on one side. These had to be cast in two separate pours, with the first pour scabbled and primed before the second pour could take place. The deck sections would sit on two new sill beams which in turn would sit on top of the existing brickwork. To make handling much easier, each of these were cast in two sections with an approximate one third, two thirds split.

The reason for the uneven split was so that the east side of the bridge could be fitted in place without disturbing the west half of the existing bridge and trains could run unaffected. The existing bridge with the rails still on it could be used to build the east side one third, but significantly when the old west side bridge was being replaced and the track was cut, the new east side could be used for plant and worker access. That also massively reduced the construction time, complexity and plant hire costs and made the work safer.

The formwork for the moulds started a year ago using H road in OP4 as a flat level base to work. H road only reached halfway down the shed and J road didn't exist then either as the space was required for access to build the Heritage Skills Centre on the side of OP4. It was under cover, out of the winter weather and out of the way tucked behind the observation car



The first deck panel, cast on 18 March 2020. CLIVE WHITCROFT



Lifting the I-beams into the parapet sections. CLIVE WHITCROFT



Brickwork required. BRUCE HEALEY



The two 1/3 sill beams fitted as the track is being lifted and laser bulldozed in the background. JON GOFF

which had been shunted in the shed to dry out for the winter.

The plan was to gradually build all the sections after the winter relays were finished so that all the castings had at least two months of concrete hardening time before the bridge was replaced in September. We were on track with the first concrete pour taking place on 18 March 2020. However, just five days later on 23 March, Covid-19 stepped in and spoilt that plan. Fortunately, limited work could resume after the first lockdown with only a two-month delay.

The concrete used for the bridge could not be homemade as regulations stipulate that the concrete must be a certified mix. Therefore, a pre-mixed load was shipped in and initially poured into the ballast box on the digger trailer. This was then driven into the shed and poured into the moulds slowly, a digger bucket at a time. Vibrating pokers were then used to ensure that the concrete flowed consistently onto all corners, nooks and crannies within the moulds. The vibration also lifted out any surplus water within the mix which consolidates the concrete into a stronger, denser form.

With all the sections made, they were transported to site ready for use but were allowed a little extra hardening time while the first part of the track relay was completed.

The rail replacement either side of the bridge was carried out in two sections with the first planned to be carried out in the first week in September when there were no weekday trains. However, a further delay was encountered due to the shortage of ballast required.

Due to the unusual weather patterns this year, Network Rail had suffered an unusually large number of land slips and had taken all available ballast to repair them. We only use small quantities of recycled stone by comparison and can only get a supply when a recycling run is being carried out for someone else. After various negotiations regarding funding, authorisation was given to purchase a large enough quantity for the reprocessors to do a run specifically for us, and hence a large pile of ballast has appeared at West Hoathly which will cover several relay projects.

While waiting for ballast, everything was transported to site for the track relay of 13 panels and the bridge replacement. With that done and still waiting for the ballast, we decided to have a 'poke' with the bridge on the missing east side. By the end of the day we had removed most masonry required down to the level needed for the new sill beam. The two corroded steel beams originally intended to carry the down rails for the double track were removed together with their sandstone pad stones. The bottoms of these marked the level on which the new sill beams would sit.

The sill beams are very much larger than the original pad stones which were only 25 inches square. The two halves of the beams together will spread the weight evenly over the entire width of the bridge. By the end of the next day, the surface on which the sills would sit was cleaned back to the full 3ft thickness of the abutments and a pair of levelling plates were mortared into place on each side of the bridge using a laser to match the heights exactly. The next day the two sill beams for the east side were in place, levelled and fully mortared in.

Some of the brickwork on the abutments required a bit of attention although largely cosmetic. This was mainly on the east side where there has not been a bridge deck to protect it for many years. Some of the brickwork only required repointing fortunately, but some bricks did need replacing as well. In the picture it can be seen that on the right-hand side the eroded bricks have been removed ready for replacement with matching bricks. On the left the bricks replaced some years ago unfortunately do not match and look out of place despite being sound.

Before the autumn half term when trains ran midweek, seven panels of track were relaid, extending the relaid track on Freshfield Bank down to immediately before Palmers Bridge. Within just three days, it was reconnected and ballasted. Because of the constant refining of the techniques we now use to relay and align replacement track, we can do these relay projects quickly and to a standard that passenger trains can run over the fresh track even before being tamped, albeit with a speed restriction. Network Rail admit to not being able to do that! For details on



Old and new: Two old wrought iron beams versus 15 new to support each train. BOTH: JON GOFF



Lifting the main section of sill beam. TIM CRUMP



Lifting in the central deck section. ANDY PALMER

how we do the relays see *Bluebell News* Spring 2019.

With the first half of the relay completed, attention turned to the bridge. Initially one deck section and one parapet section were laid on a thick rubber mat on top of the sill beams. Drainage channels and pipes were put in beside the beams ready to accept any water from the deck sections.

Replacing the existing bridge

The first task in replacing the old bridge was to remove the track over it. A minimum length section was cut and lifted out to give just enough space to clear the abutments but leave as much rail as possible in place so that the road railers could get as close as possible to the bridge. The railer on the south side then scooped up all the ballast from the old wooden deck and put it to one side for reuse later. This revealed a deck in an unexpectedly good condition. It also showed that the deck was not screwed down or attached in any way. Surprisingly the timbers were just laid on the two wrought iron beams with just a thin rubber strip under them.

After lifting off all the timbers, which were in good enough condition to be used again elsewhere (but not on a bridge) the top brickwork was broken out so that the beams could be removed. It could be seen that they sat on 25in square pad stones, quite a contrast to the new sills for spreading the weight of a train onto the brickwork. With them removed, the rest of the brickwork could be removed down to the level of the bottom of the old pad stones and cleaned up. Levelling plates were then mortared into place using the laser to get the sills absolutely level easily when being lowered into place.

After the old beams were removed, they were put on one side and inspected. The beams that were on the east side and had not been covered by a deck for decades were in quite poor condition – one reason for the



Waterproofed and ready for ballast. TIM CRUMP

concern about the overall condition of the bridge. However, the pair of beams that supported the deck on the west side were in much better condition although they did show some corrosion.

More surprising was the original bridge design and the fact that just these two beams took all the weight of the passing trains. Even our bridge engineer, after looking at them, was heard to say “Would you want to put a train over them?” It has clearly been safe although it didn’t look like it. Trains of all sizes and weights have passed over them for 140 years. The original riveted wrought iron design is very common in the UK and obviously plenty good enough, but when compared with what we have put back in their place, we were all filled with huge confidence that we have built a very good bridge indeed!

The two remaining pieces of the sill beams, 2/3 of the overall bridge width, were placed next. Being very heavy, a big road railer was hired in for the job and was parked on the south side of the bridge where the new bridge sections were stored. First, the north beam had to be lifted across the gap and although the road railer was rated to be able to lift that weight that far, as a safety precaution, a section of old track was lifted and placed across the gap first and then the beam lifted across onto it. The second railer could then lift it into position with the jib close in. The method reduced the possibility of either road railer tipping up due to the heavy weight at the end of an extended jib.

After a PVA bonding mix was washed over the whole of the area under where the sill would sit, a full bed of wet mortar was spread out and levelled to just above the top of the landing plates. This was so that when the sill was lowered in place the mortar would squeeze down to the correct level and the sill would become an integral part of the abutment walls.

Next was the two remaining deck plates. Before they could be lowered into place, the heavy rubber mat was rolled out and cut to size. This prevents the concrete plates grinding against each other over time with thermal expansion and contraction. It also provides vibrational isolation, which also prevents the grinding action and takes up the tiny level differences due to any irregularities or roughness in the concrete.

The two deck sections were placed with a 6mm gap between them in which expansion foam matting was inserted. Finally, the second parapet section was placed with its cranked hand rail to comply with modern train clearance regulations. If we had double track, we would have cranked the east side hand rails as well. The only alternative to cranking the hand rails would be to widen the bridge with wider parapet deck sections, which would require a total rebuild of the wing walls on a wider profile.

With all the major components in place, the next job was to stitch them all together. Provision was made in the castings for large ‘U’ shaped rebar sections to be let into the top of the deck and cemented in, effectively stapling all the sections together. The edges of the sections were then grouted above the expansion foam and all the lifting/support eye sockets filled, eventually giving a smooth unbroken surface between the two parapet walls.

The gullies and drainage pipes were next finished off at the side of the

bridge with a DPC lapping up onto the top surface of the deck. Keeping water off the bridge, or at least down to a minimum, is the secret to the longevity of the structure and so extensive waterproofing was applied.

Instead of just the usual bitumastic paint being applied, a two-part mix was used which still looked like 90% bitumen and 10% PVA. It chemically reacts like epoxy and hardens, and is supposed to be much better and longer lasting than bitumen. Only our great grandchildren will know if it worked! Before the epoxy hardened, a protective layer of 18mm thick composite board in one metre squares was laid down on top, overlapping the gully PVC at the edges. The epoxy was also painted on the parapet walls and covered with the protective board up to the approximate final level of the ballast.

The waterproofing task proved to be a very sticky one. The following day everyone who worked on it seemed to be wearing new trousers! For me, my trousers, my 30-year old striped, baggy and holey jumper and my gloves were all donated to the local council, who may well end up with a waterproof landfill site!

To finish off, sealing strips were laid over the joints on the protection boards with a special primer which makes it work like impact glue. Throughout the whole job, one thing we had to work around and be careful not to damage, was a pair of cables that ran over the bridge as seen laying on the final protective layer. These carry the signal and token machine information and must not have been broken otherwise tokens could not be issued to drivers and some signals would not work. In other words, no trains!

With the bridge essentially finished, apart from some cosmetic brickwork which will be organised in the new year, phase two of the track relay could be carried out. This was just six new panels including the track over the bridge. First, the saved ballast from the old bridge was spread out over the new bridge which allowed the tracked vehicles access over the bridge without causing any damage.

Very simple ballast retainers were piled into the embankment, either end of the parapet wall, before any more ballast was placed. These were very simple. Two scrap concrete sleepers held in place by two pieces of scrap rail driven down into the embankment. This stops the ballast 'leaking' away down the embankment over time.

All the remainder of the old track to be replaced was then lifted and placed out of the way. The end of the old track that was to join onto the new track was cut long, leaving about half a metre overlap to be cut precisely when the rest of the track was laid. The whole section was laser bulldozed flat and then whacked to produce a good even trackbed. Before the track could be put down, just like the first phase a few weeks before, a line had to be painted on the track bed up to which the sleeper ends could be laid.

Before any relay is started, as part of the preparation, marker posts are placed beside the old track, typically 10 metres apart on straight track and 5 metres on curved. These are set at an exact distance from the running face of one of the rails, normally 2 or 3 metres or 1.5 metres if the embankment falls away too quickly. A nail is hammered in the top of the post so that the back of the head of the nail is within 1mm of the chosen distance. This gives a very good reference line when putting the track back. We can choose whether to follow it precisely or vary it to smooth



Operations Manager Chris Knibbs helps with the line marking.
TIM CRUMP

out a curve, or take a kink out of a straight.

One of the line markers was Operations Manager Chris Knibbs. He likes to join the infrastructure team whenever he gets the chance and is obviously very welcome. Though measuring the line can be done by one person alone, it is easier, and more pleasant, with two.

A string line was pulled taut and measured from the post to what was to be the end of the sleepers and then a spray marker sprayed over the length of the line.

The sleepers were then laid out one panel at a time against the line and a tape measure with green dots on it at the precise sleeper spacing, again to within 1mm laid over the top. The sleepers were then adjusted to the correct spacing and then the rails dropped straight into place. This works very easily with flat bottom rail but requires a lot more fiddling with bullhead as it has to be hooked into the jaw of each chair.

All rails were laid in place and clipped down. The last pair were cut into the existing bullhead at the beginning of the curve so that not an inch of new rail was wasted which is true for every piece of new flat bottom rail we have laid in every relay undertaken.

With all the track in place, three ballast trains were required to drop enough ballast not just for the six panels freshly laid, but further up where phase 1 of the relay required a bit of finishing off. Finally, it required tamping to consolidate the ballast under the sleepers and to smooth out and fully align the track perfectly straight.

We are in the fortunate position that there is a brand new £4.2m tamper at the railway at the moment straight from Plasser & Theurer. It is here for operator training and for approval and a shakedown of the new vehicle before it is allowed to be let loose on Network Rail. We are being paid for it to be here and allowing it to train over whichever part of the line serves the training best. Balfour Beatty get a cheap training track which serves their requirement well and we get free tamping... a true win-win.

Palmer's Bridge, now Andy Palmer's version of Palmer's Bridge, or Palmer's Palmer's Bridge filmed by Andy Palmer is all set to last longer than probably any other part of the Railway before any maintenance is required. It is certainly a bridge to admire.

JON GOFF



Dropping ballast over the bridge. TIM CRUMP



Tamped and finished. 'GRIZZ'

Membership matters

As we venture into more Covid-19 restriction tiers and the Railway starts its Christmas festivities we can look back on a very strange year. It started well when January and February produced a steady stream of renewals. Then, the lockdown struck. However, it has been very encouraging that during the last nine months we have received a steady stream of new members, including quite a few for five years and three new life members.

With the first lockdown in March the railway closed and the site was made secure. The membership team were not able to access the office. Over time limited access has been possible. Now, by limiting access to one member of the team at a time in the office we have slowly been clearing outstanding queries. I thank the membership for their patience. Hopefully, come 2021, we shall be working as normal.

A few gentle reminders: on the front of the renewal notice, please check and correct your email address. If it's not shown, please fill it in. You will also see a date when the form with your payment should be received by your assigned assistant membership secretary. The average cost of posting the final reminder costs us around an extra £100 in postage. Please also include your stamped address envelope.

On the back you will find a Direct Debit mandate form along with the date you

should send it to the membership office. Any received after this date cannot be collected. You will be asked to make the payment by cheque or by card, by calling the membership office. The information will be retained for payment by Direct Debit the following year.

Finally, Peter Rickard, one of our membership team, who has been in post far longer than I have as membership secretary, has decided to step down. I would like to say thank you to Peter for all the help you have been over the years and I wish you well.

The draw for the free year's membership has been held over until the spring *Bluebell News* when there will be two tickets drawn as we have not had any visitors available to carry out the draw.

Do take care and keep safe.

DON BREWER
Membership Secretary
membership@bluebell-railway.com

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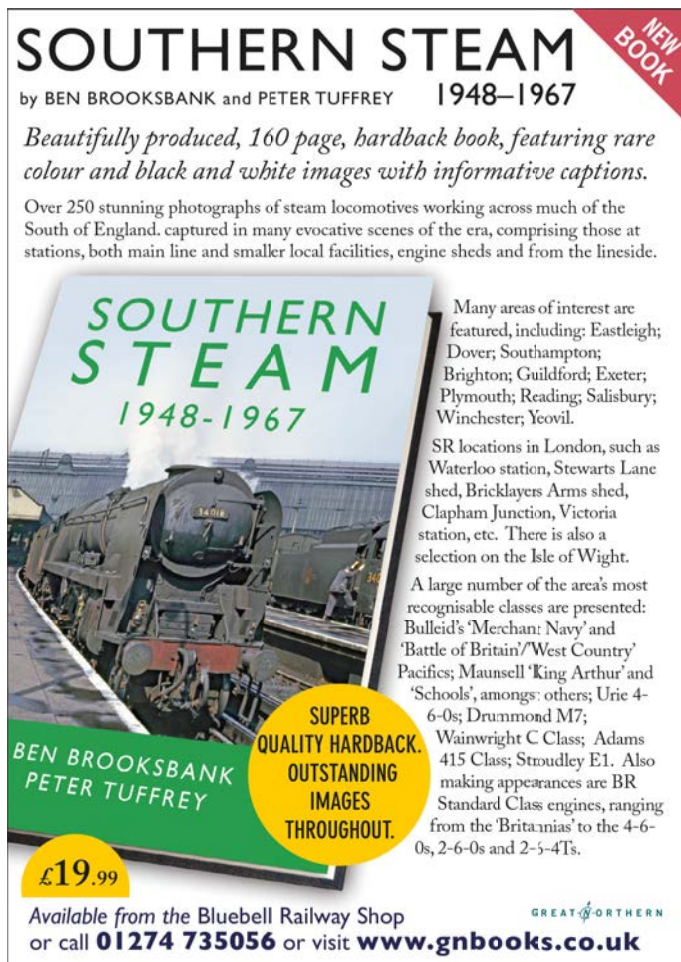
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Unfortunately these are currently suspended due to ongoing social distancing regulations.

Member's lineside photographic permit half-day safety courses are also on hold until further notice. Current valid lineside permit holders should now 'sign in' and 'sign out' at the Customer Service and Sales Office.



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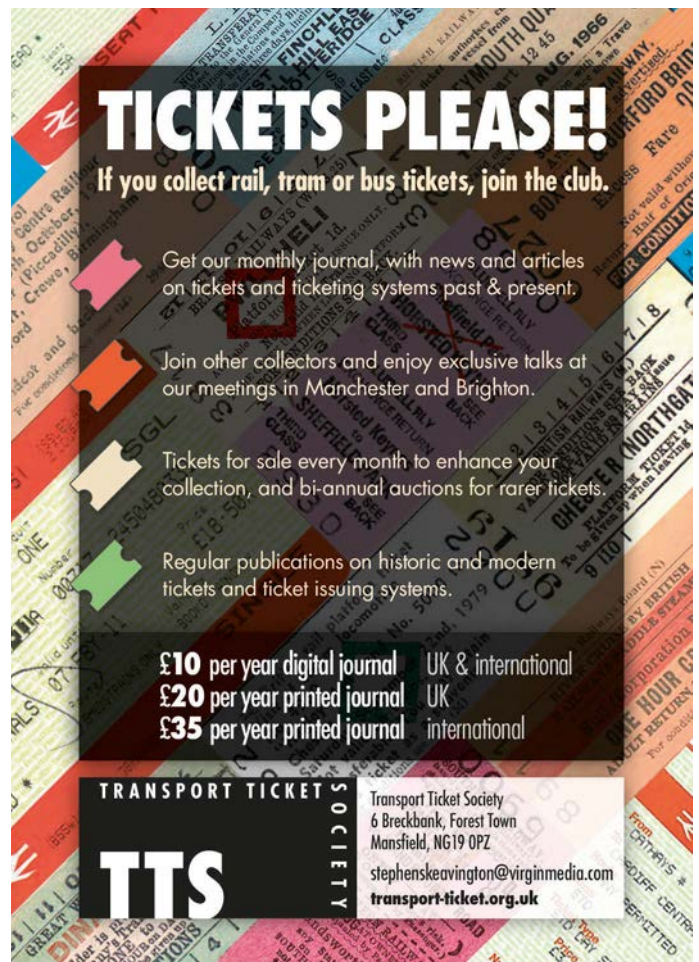
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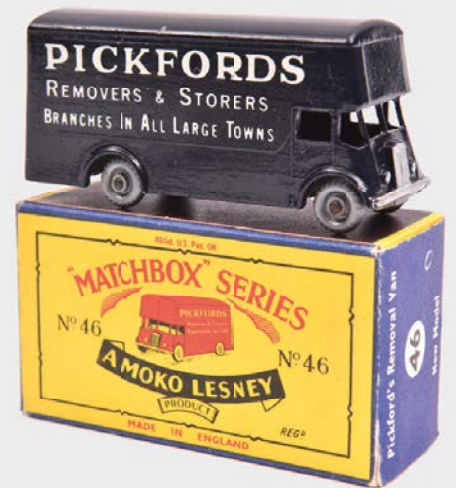
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