BLUEBELL RAILWAY

TEACHERS' INFORMATION PACK

(With particular relevance to Key Stages 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum)

Copyright of 'Bluebell Railway plc'
May only be reproduced by teachers for educational purposes.

Revised by DC January 2008

BLUEBELL RAILWAY
TEACHERS' INFORMATION PACK

Contents

1. General Information

2. Facilities for School Visits

3. Safety Guidelines and Risk Assessment

4. History of the Line.

5. The Birth and Development of the Railway

6. Organisation

7. Stations

8. Locomotives

9. Carriages and Wagons

10 Complementary Activities

1. General Information

Projects based on the Bluebell Railway will contribute towards the Science, Design and technology, History and Geography elements of the National Curriculum.

1/1 The Bluebell Railway is a single track standard gauge preserved railway based at Sheffield Park Station in East Sussex, between Haywards Heath (7 miles) and Uckfield (8 miles). It currently runs for some 9 miles between Sheffield Park and Kingscote.

2/1 The railway's three stations, its locomotives and rolling stock, cover a period of railway history from the 1870s to the 1950s and, as such, provide children with a unique insight into a way of life that has largely disappeared from Great Britain today. A way of life that was heavily dependent upon the railway both for personal transport and for the transport of goods.

3/1 Visits can be tailored to meet specific teaching needs relating to the syllabus or to provide experience of specific events, such as wartime evacuation exercises. For younger children "Santa Special" services are provide during December

4/1 Facilities available include:-

- Provision for disabled visitors
- Reserved accommodation on trains

- Toilets on the stations and on the trains
- Picnic areas at all three stations
- Dry area for eating lunch
- Refreshment facilities on trains and at Sheffield Park Station
- Classroom seating up to 25 students
- Gift shop at Sheffield Park Station
- Free parking at Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes Stations
- Guided visits to booking offices, signal boxes, engine sheds and to the footplate of a steam engine

5/1 More detailed information about all of these facilities is provided in Section 2 with guidance on Safety Guidelines and Risk Assessment in Section 3. The background material in Sections 4 to 9 should be helpful in terms of setting projects relating to key stages 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum while Section 10 contains a list of complementary activities.

Please note all the above facilities are offered subject to availability

2. Facilities for School Visits

The carriages in which school parties travel are normally the "younger" coaches dating from 1933 and beyond because, as corridor vehicles, they provide the most flexibility and accommodation for larger groups.
Arrangements can however be made for trips in some of our older (Victorian) non corridor coaches but this would require a greater number of adults in the party.
A leaflet describing a journey along the line in detail is also available.

Disabled facilities

1/2 A carriage with a hoist for wheelchair bound or mobility impaired visitors is normally available on certain trains.

Reserved accommodation

2/2 Seating, in open plan carriages, is reserved for groups starting their journeys from Sheffield Park or Kingscote and return. In the case of groups breaking their journey at Horsted Keynes and returning to Sheffield Park or Kingscote we will do our best to provide reserved accommodation on the later train but this, unfortunately, cannot be guaranteed.

Toilet facilities

3/2 Toilet facilities are available on board most trains (not disabled) and at all three stations:-

Sheffield Park - male and female toilets, together with a disabled toilet, are located in the Bessemer Arms restaurant, while a separate male toilet is on platform 1 and a female toilet off the booking hall.

Horsted Keynes - male and female toilets are located on platforms 3 & 4, with a further male toilet being located on platform 5 and a female toilet off the booking hall. Unfortunately no toilet for the disabled is available at this station.

Kingscote - male toilet on platform 1, with a female toilet located off the booking hall and a disabled toilet on platform 1.

Picnic and covered accommodation

4/2 Picnic areas are available at all three stations:-

Sheffield Park - alongside the River Ouse on the right hand side of the approach drive
Horsted Keynes - at the front of the station
Kingscote – access via platform 2.

5/2 In wet weather covered areas are available beneath platform canopies and in the Waiting Rooms at both Horsted Keynes and Kingscote.

Refreshment Facilities

6/2 Full refreshments facilities, including meals, are available in the Bessemer Arms Restaurant at Sheffield Park Station and catering facilities are also available at both Horsted Keynes and Kingscote Stations at peak times. On board the train a buffet car is normally available, serving light refreshments, including hot drinks.

Classroom

7/2 The Railway does not, currently, have full scale teaching facilities available but a small classroom is available at Sheffield Park Station, seating up to 25. It may also be possible to make use of our larger Conference Room at Sheffield Park which seats up to 75.

Shop

8/2 The shop at Sheffield Park Station carries a large stock of inexpensively priced souvenir items and is open from 10 30am to close of service. Souvenir packs comprising a postcard, a pencil and a badge cost £1 and can be made ready for parties in advance of your visit. Please telephone the Shop on 01825 720803 to place your order.

Parking

9/2 Coach and car parking facilities are available at both Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes Stations. Facilities at Kingscote Station are however restricted to drop off and pick up because of local planning restrictions.

Guides

10/2 Every effort will be made to allocate a guide to your party but as these are volunteers this cannot be guaranteed. All guides are members of the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society and will be happy to show their accreditation on request.

11/2 Where Guides are available they will be happy to show parties around the stations and to facilitate visits to the footplates of the engines (subject to operational constraints). Where no Guide is available school parties will be able to access the Locomotive Shed and Museum at Sheffield Park Station independently.

Confirmation of Available Facilities

12/2 Confirmation of the facilities available will be made when bookings are confirmed. Any changes will be notified in advance of the visit.

3. Safety Guidelines and Risk Assessment

Whilst schools will wish to conduct their own risk assessments the Bluebell Railway is happy to provide advice and guidance as appropriate.

1/3 The Railway is committed to ensuring the safety of our visitors so that visits go smoothly and are an enjoyable and memorable experience. It is therefore necessary to set down some basis safety guidelines.

- Children should be supervised at all times, one adult to ten or fewer children
- As platforms can become slippery in wet weather sensible shoes and appropriate wet weather clothing should be worn
- Everybody should stand well back from the platform edge when a train is entering or leaving the station
- Nobody should trespass on the railway line; any items falling onto the track should be reported to a member of railway staff.
- Doors must not be opened until the train has come to a complete stop
- Leaning out of windows or carriage doors should be discouraged

2/3 Teachers responsible for organising visits to the railway are invited to contact the Sales and Information Office at Sheffield Park Station (tel: 01825 720825, Email: info@bluebellrailway.co.uk) to arrange for a free preliminary visit (up to two teachers) during which your needs can be discussed.

4. History of the Line

This section sets out the historical background to the construction and operation of the Railway.
A project based around life in the 19th century will help pupils to appreciate why railways were built and their role in society.

1/4 In the late 18th century roads in Sussex were so poor that it was very difficult for farmers to send produce to market in London. A group of local landowners, led by Lord Sheffield, decided that the solution was to build a standard gauge (4 foot 8 ½ inch) railway between Lewes and East Grinstead. From there connections could be made with other rail routes into London.

2/4 The Lewes and East Grinstead Railway Company was formed and Parliamentary powers secured to build the line. Money was however short and the nearby London Brighton and South Coast Railway Company was soon asked to take over the building of the line and it was opened in 1880, with intermediate stations at West Hoathly, Horsted Keynes, Sheffield Park & Fletching and Newick & Chailey. Additional stations were later opened at Kingscote and Barcombe and, in 1881; a branch line was built between Horsted Keynes and Haywards Heath, with an intermediate station at Ardingly.

3/4 Soon after the First World War traffic on the line began to decline as lorries took away much of the goods traffic and the bus and car drained away passenger traffic. It didn't help that the stations themselves, reflecting the fact that goods traffic was their primary raison d'etre, were generally situated some distance from the villages that they were supposed to serve.

4/4 In 1955 British Railways (BR) was given permission to close the line between East Grinstead and Lewes and did so on 28 May that year. However, a local resident then discovered that the closure had been illegal because the original Act of Parliament, requiring the Lewes and East Grinstead Railway and its successors to run four trains a day, had not been repealed. BR was forced to reopen the line on
7 August 1956, operating what was known as the "sulky service" whereby trains ran only between the hours of 9am and 4pm and stopped only at the four stations specified in the original Act - West Hoathly, Horsted Keynes, Sheffield Park & Fletching and Newick & Chailey.

5/4 BR finally secured Parliamentary agreement to close the line permanently with effect from Monday 17 March 1958. The branch from Horsted Keynes to Haywards Heath, which had been electrified in 1939 by the Southern Railway, remained open however but was itself closed on 27 October 1963.

6/4 After closure BR lifted the tracks except those between Horsted Keynes and Sheffield Park - this became the Bluebell line - and between Ardingly and Haywards Heath which was retained for goods traffic and is still open today. The trackbed was sold off to local farmers while the bridge to the south of Sheffield Park Station was demolished, as was a viaduct to the west of Horsted Keynes on the branch line to Haywards Heath. Also, Imberhorne Cutting, to the north of Kingscote was used as a tip for domestic rubbish, so blocking the Bluebell's route back to East Grinstead.

5. The Birth and Development of the Bluebell Railway

This section describes the steps taken to preserve the Railway.
A project based on co-operation and voluntary work will help pupils to appreciate how people can work together to secure a common aim, without having to rely upon local authorities or the State for funding.

First Steps

1/5 Following closure of the line a group of enthusiasts formed the Lewes and East Grinstead Railway Preservation Society (later the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society) and tried to take over the whole line as a commercial venture. If they had succeeded this would have been the first such venture for a passenger carrying standard gauge line, although the Middleton Railway, near Leeds, a standard gauge goods line was preserved at about the same time.

2/5 In those days however the idea of a group of volunteers trying to run a railway was ridiculed and their first approaches were rejected. The Group persevered however and was eventually granted a lease of the section of track between Sheffield Park Station and a point just south of Horsted Keynes Station and began running services on 7 August 1960. Along the rest of the line the track was lifted and the trackbed sold off to local landowners

3/5 It was not until 1961 that the Railway was allowed into Horsted Keynes Station and this was shared with British Railways until the service to Haywards Heath closed in 1963. BR then withdrew and the Bluebell was left in sole occupation.

4/5 In order to operate the service the Bluebell had to buy from British Railways locomotives and carriages and succeeded in buying a number of historic vehicles which would otherwise have been cut up and destroyed. Over the years other stock has been obtained, enabling the Railway to operate the present level of service.

Development

5/5 There were many difficulties in the early years and doubts about whether the Railway would survive. It did so however and such was its

success that proposals were put forward to extend the line. While extension south was prevented by the demolition of the bridge over the A275 to the south of Sheffield Park Station and by houses built on the trackbed at Newick, the Railway could extend north to Kingscote, if the trackbed could be bought back from the local landowners.

6/5 The necessary funds were raised by way of a share issue in 1986 and, following tortuous negotiations with landowners, the Railway was able to reach Kingscote in 1996. En route the line passed through Sharpthorne Tunnel, the longest on a preserved railway and the site of West Hoathly Station - the local residents there did not want their station re-opened.

7/5 The Railway presently operates a connecting bus service between Kingscote and East Grinstead, the original terminus but work is now on hand to extend the line and we hope to reach East Grinstead within two years. In the longer term extension from Horsted Keynes to Ardingly may also be possible.

8/5 In its final years of operation by British Rail passengers were few and far between, today the Railway carries over 175,00 passengers a year and additional facilities are planned.

Future Plans

9/5 The Railway has a number of important initiatives underway designed to enhance the visitor experience. These include:-

- a northern extension to East Grinstead - work on this will commence shortly and the extension of train into this historic town will provide school groups with the opportunity to expand their visit so as to provide children with an insight into the history of the town via its new museum.

- construction of a new Carriage Shed and interactive Museum at Sheffield Park Station - providing school groups with a greater range of activities

- improvements to visitor facilities in the Locomotive Shed at Sheffield Park Station - enabling school groups to more easily study the development of the steam locomotive.

- completion of a new picnic area at Horsted Keynes Station

- construction of a replica of London and Brighton Railway engine “Beachy Head” - in essence a new steam locomotive.

- a possible extension from Horsted Keynes to Ardingly through Lywood Tunnel.

10/5 Further information will be provided about these plans as they are developed.

6. Organisation

This section outlines the different groups involved in running the Railway. A project based on organisational structures will help pupils to appreciate the complexities involved in providing public transport services. A separate leaflet is available describing the signalling system in use on the Railway.

Ownership and Operation

1/6 While the Bluebell Railway Society, a registered charity, actually owns the line, the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society, which has around 10,000 members, is responsible for operating the railway. The Railway employs a small number of paid staff but most of the work is carried out by the 600 or so volunteer working members who come from all walks of life, some from the railway industry, but many with no previous experience of railway operations.

2/6 Staff are grouped into the following departments:-

Carriage Cleaning

3/6 One of the unglamorous but vital parts of life on the railway as the older stock, in particular, suffers from being stored out of doors. The team, who are among the first people to start work in the mornings, are responsible for ensuring that carriages are clean at the start of each working day.

Carriage and Wagon Department

4/6 The Railway's coaching stock ranges from the 1890s to the 1950s and has
to be maintained in first class condition - the responsibility of the Carriage &Wagon
Workshop based at Horsted Keynes. The Workshop is also responsible for the
rebuilding of older carriages and wagons, some of which were once sold off by the
Railway Companies and used to form instant holiday or storage accommodation.
Such coaches can often be restored to their original condition but, where this is not

possible, use can often be made of the remaining fittings.

Catering

5/6 Catering facilities are provided in the Bessemer Arms Restaurant at Sheffield Park, the Victorian Buffet at Horsted Keynes, the picnic chalet at Kingscote and in the buffet on board certain trains. The department also provides ploughman's lunches and cream teas, lunches and dinners on the Golden Arrow Pullman dining car train and special event themed evenings.

Civil Engineering and Permanent Way

6/6 "The Permanent Way" is the technical term for the track on which the trains run and the structures that go with it, i.e. bridges, embankments, tunnels, drainage and fencing. The department is also responsible for new works, including changes to the track layout, new buildings and facilities and other civil engineering projects. A full time permanent way team is employed to make sure that the trains can run in safety.

Guides

7/6 Many visitors to the Railway are content to take the train ride but a visit to the line can be enhanced by a detailed description of the line's history and the way in which it is operated today. This is the job of the Guides who meet pre-booked groups and accompany them during the journey. The Guides also undertake tours of parts of the railway not always seen by the casual visitor, and day and evening station tours.

Locomotive Department

8/6 This department, which is based at the Railway's headquarters at Sheffield Park Station, is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the locomotives and for the repair and restoration of older locomotives. It is set up on traditional railway lines and new volunteers start off as cleaners and have to pass through a number of grades before finally emerging as a Driver.

Operations

9/6 A lot of time and effort goes into ensuring that the Railway operates smoothly for visitors. In the first place decisions have to be made about which coaches and engines should be used on any given train and arrangements have to be made for those vehicles to be available.

When visitors arrive at the Railway, staff are required in the Booking Office to sell tickets and then, on the platform, to check tickets and to keep the station clean and tidy. On the trains themselves tickets are checked and unpaid fares collected by the travelling ticket inspector while the Guard (not the driver) is responsible for the safe running of the train.

Retail

10/6 Many of our visitors like to buy souvenirs of their visit, while enthusiasts often want to purchase specialised items relating to railway operation. Both groups are catered for in the shop at Sheffield Park Station, which sells toys, books, magazines, postcards, DVDs/videos, and model railway items.

Signals & Telegraph Department

11/6 Comprises three departments in one. The Signalling Section is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the equipment which governs train operation, the Telecommunications Section looks after telephones while the Electrical Section is responsible for power supplies and the maintenance of all electrical equipment.

7. STATIONS

This section is designed to provide an overview of each of the Bluebell's stations. A project based around design and technology will help pupils to appreciate how the Victorians laid down a substantial architectural legacy for future generations.
Booklets describing each station in more detail are available.

1/7 All three stations on the line are original and were built to the same architectural style (as was Ardingly Station on the branch line from Horsted Keynes to Haywards Heath), with the booking office on the right as you enter and the waiting room on the left. The Victorians believed in constructing edifices that gave an impression of permanence and prosperity and stations were designed so as to impress intending passengers. The three stations each represent different periods in the line's history but all three have collections of enamel advertising signs, a list of these is available if required for projects

SHEFFIELD PARK STATION

2/7 This is the headquarters of the Railway and the station is painted in the colours of the London Brighton & South Coast Railway. It is however the least representative of the three stations in terms of historical accuracy. This is because, as the station most used by visitors, it has been necessary to incorporate new features such as a Shop and Restaurant which did not feature in the original layout. It nevertheless retains a number of interesting features as well as providing interest in the form of the Locomotive Shed and the Museum.

3/7 The main station building is basically the original 1882 construction although the tiles on the Station Master's house to the right of the entrance were added at a later date. On the wall of the building, to the left of the entrance porch are the initials of the London Brighton and South Coast Railway and the opening date of the railway.

4/7 The station was originally lit by oil lamps and these continued in use into the British Railways era, electricity being brought to the station house and the booking office in the 1950s. The Bluebell replaced the oil lamps with gas lights and these now provide a pleasant ambience for the drive and the platforms on dark winter afternoons and evenings.

5/7 A footbridge is available to enable passengers to cross the line although, for those passengers unable to cope with the steep stairs, arrangements can be made for them to be conducted across the line by a member of the Station Staff. Viewing areas are also available, enabling passengers to obtain excellent views of the engines from ground level and providing good places from which to take photographs.

HORSTED KEYNES STATION

6/7 The station is painted in the green and cream colours of the Southern Railway circa 1930s and maintained in the style of that era. It was previously a junction, with the line to Haywards Heath via Ardingly branching off to the west.

7/7 What immediately strikes visitors is the sheer size of the station which, with its five platforms, was built to serve a village some 1½ miles away with a, then, very small population. The large goods yard and sidings help to reinforce the impression that the line was built primarily to serve the surrounding agricultural area.

8/7 There were originally two signal boxes at the station but in 1914 the London Brighton & South Coast Railway, looking to reduce costs, demolished the north signal box together with the buildings and the canopy on platforms 1 & 2. The buildings and canopy were replaced by Bluebell volunteers some two years ago and the station now forms a backdrop to many popular films and is attracting increasing interest as wedding venue. It is also used for school wartime evacuation experience exercises.

9/7 The Railway's Carriage and Wagon Workshop is located in the station goods yard and a viewing area is available to enable visitors to appreciate the work carried out to maintain and restore vintage carriages.

KINGSCOTE STATION

10/7 The station retains the aura of a British rail station from the 1950s. It was in very poor condition when purchased by the Railway in 1985, having been a private residence since the mid –fifties, and was re-opened in 1994. The main station buildings and the platforms but even today there is no large scale development near to the station and peace and tranquillity descend when no trains are present.

11/7 Being a small country station few facilities were originally

provided for passengers but today a grassed area behind platform 2 is used as a picnic site, safely away from the tracks but with a good view of the trains.

12/7 At present the station represents a temporary terminus before we extend the line to East Grinstead. On certain days a bus service, funded by the Bluebell, is used to take passengers between Kingscote Station and East Grinstead town centre and Mainline Station.

8. LOCOMOTIVES

This section provides an overview of the Railway's fleet of steam locomotives. A project based on design and technology will help pupils to appreciate the evolution of this form of transport - more detailed information about individual locomotives will be found on the website. Technical leaflets describing how to identify locomotives, how engines work and the wheel arrangements of locomotives are available.

1/8 The Railway has the UK's largest and most comprehensive collection of ex-Southern Railway locomotives and those of its three main constituent companies, the South Eastern Railway, the London Brighton and South Coast Railway and the London and South Western Railway, together with a representative selection of locomotives from other parts of the country. It also has the largest collection of British Railways' standard designs and is the only UK preserved railway where you can guarantee that you will not be hauled by a diesel engine on a scheduled passenger train. A diesel shunter has however been hired for a limited period to assist with the construction of the extension to East Grinstead.

2/8 In age the locomotives range from our oldest, 'Stepney' and 'Fenchurch', two diminutive Brighton "Terriers" built in the 1870s, to the most modern, a 9F heavy freight locomotive. This was built for British Railways in 1961, some three years after the Bluebell line originally closed.

3/8 The last steam locomotives were withdrawn from BR service in 1968 as part of a modernisation scheme, being replaced by diesel and electric traction. Following withdrawal most were sent to scrapyards for disposal and were cut up. One yard however, at Barry in South Wales, retained the old engines and many were subsequentially purchased by UK heritage railways and by individuals for restoration. One of these was Southern Railway U-class No 1618, one of the first to be rescued from Barry scrapyard and the success of this locomotive led to other ex-Barry "wrecks" arriving at Sheffield Park, many subsequentially returning to

traffic.

4/8 At present there are some 30 locomotives on the railway and most can be seen either hauling trains or in the Locomotive Shed. All steam locomotives however require a complete strip-down, for a boiler overhaul and insurance inspection, after ten years' operation and at any given time only a selection of our engines are operational. With our oldest locomotives now 130 years old a great deal of work is required to keep them in a serviceable condition, this work is carried out, for the most part, in our own workshops at Sheffield Park, although some work is contracted out to specialist firms.

9. CARRIAGES AND WAGONS

This section provides an overview of the source and age of the Railway's fleet of carriages and wagons – a separate stock list is available and more detailed information is available on the website. A project based on design and technology will help pupils to appreciate how today's railway coaches have evolved from the humble stagecoach and the improvements that have been made in passenger comfort over the years.

1/9 The Railway has one of the most extensive collections of railway carriages in the country, with over 70 passenger carrying vehicles, their ages spanning seven decades and ranging from 1880 to 1956. Of these, around 31 are operational, seven are under active restoration or overhaul and another 27 await restoration.

2/9 Those operational include twelve pre 1923 vehicles, the design of the earliest of which mirror the style of the stagecoach. Among the early vehicles are:-

- London, Brighton and South Coast Railway coaches - dating from 1856 to 1906
- a Great Northern Railway Saloon - dating from 1897
- London, Chatham and Dover Railway coaches - dating from 1894 to 1907
- Metropolitan Railway coaches - dating from 1898 to 1900
- a London and North Western Railway semi-royal saloon - dating from 1903
- a London and North Western Railway Observation Coach - dating from 1913

3/9 The Railway's collection includes carriages from the 1850s to the 1950s, including a number of superb Pullman coaches which are used on the Golden Arrow dining car train.

4/9 The very early railway carriages were built as non corridor vehicles, meaning that passengers had no access to toilet or refreshment facilities. Later, corridor coaches and dining cars were developed. Initially three classes of accommodation were provided, first, second and third but second class was later abolished, which is why only first and third class (standard class on the main line) coaches are seen on the Railway today

5/9 The Railway also has a collection of goods wagons from earlier years which show how goods were carried before the advent of wide scale road transport.

10. Complementary Activities

The material included in this Guide can be utilised as part of projects designed to meet Key Stages 1 and 2 requirements of the National Curriculum. The complementary activities set out below can contribute to a greater understanding of the role of the railway in the life of the UK.

1/10 As well as trips along the line the Bluebell is able to offer a range of complementary activities for school parties, including:-

- guided tours of the stations
- guided tours of the locomotive shed
- quizzes relating to individual stations
- visits to the footplate of locomotives
- colouring books
- wartime evacuation exercises (based at Horsted Keynes)
- studies of particular aspects of railway operation
- Santa for schools days

2/10 Further information on all of the above activities can be obtained from the Sales and Information Office of the Railway:-

Tel: 01825 720800

Email: info@bluebellrailway.co.uk www.bluebell-railway.co.uk