

FOOTPLATE

THE MAGAZINE OF
THE STEPNEY CLUB



AUTUMN 2018

MRS MOLESWORTH'S COTTAGE
THE EVACUEES FROM LONDON
EARLY DAYS OF RAILWAYS

IN
THIS
ISSUE



BLUEBELL RAILWAY



A Letter From Stepney

HELLO BOYS AND GIRLS!

I hope you all enjoyed the hot weather in the school holidays; it was great to see the summer sun, but we steam engines don't like it quite so much. As we always have a fire going, we don't really need a lot more heat to keep us warm, and our poor crews get very hot indeed.

When the weather is hot and dry for a very long time, everything along the railway line also becomes very dry, especially grass, hedges and fields. We steam engines then sometimes set it on fire with the sparks from our chimneys. Of course, we do our best not to, but can't do anything without our fire! Over the summer, the engine crews put out a lot of fires with the pumps that they carry on the tender – the good thing about steam engines is that they carry a lot of water for putting out the fires they start!

Some of my friends from other railways have been very unlucky, because they have had to spend the hot weather in the loco yard whilst the diesels do all the work, and they are not very happy about that, as steam engines love to be out pulling trains. One engine who was very happy doing just that was Mini-Stepney at the Stepney Club fun day at the Teddy Bears Picnic at Pulborough. There were lots of trains to ride on, and a special one for club members with Mini-Stepney on the front. I was told that he went up the hill like a rocket which is exactly what I would do if I were pulling a train up the hill from Horsted Keynes!



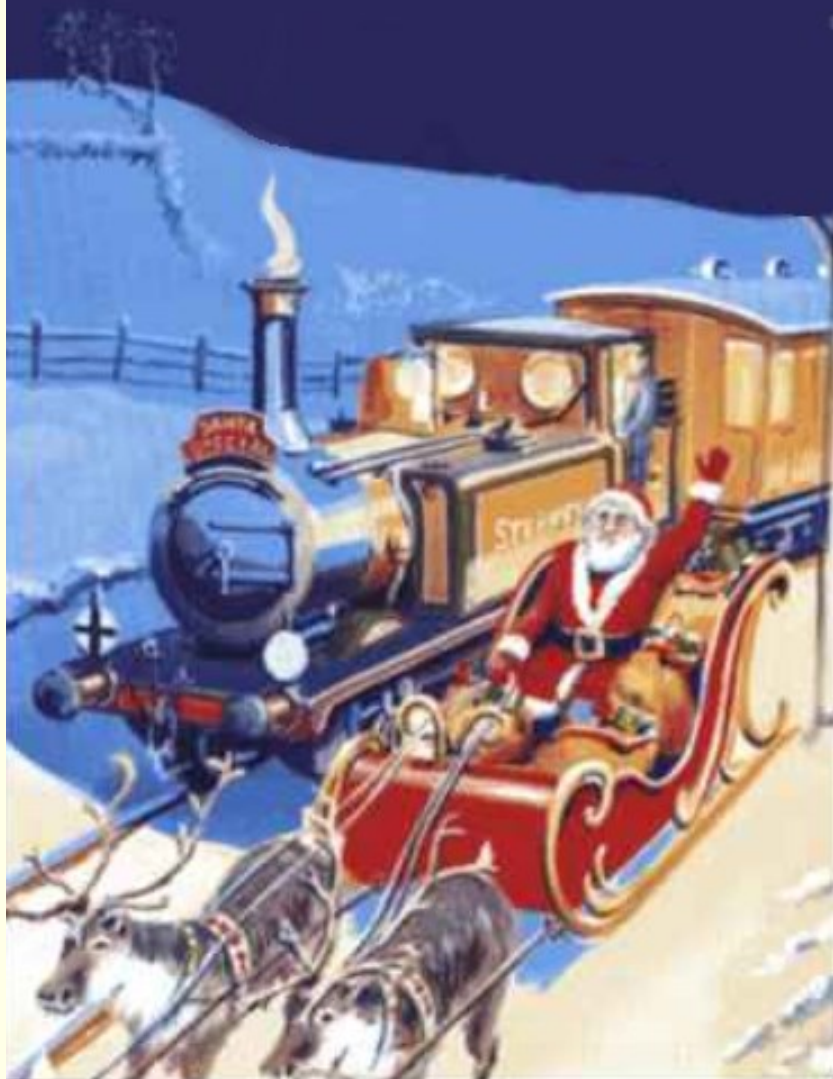


Stepney Club

Special Santa Special

Sunday 2nd December
2.25pm from Sheffield Park

Half price for Stepney Club
Members and their families



Book through Customer Services
01825 720800
(No online booking for this train)



EARLY DAYS

Over two hundred years ago, there were no railways at all, and certainly no cars. The only ways to travel anywhere were by walking, riding a horse, or travelling in something pulled by a horse. It was also possible to travel or carry things by boat, but not everywhere has a river handy!

There were railway tracks of some kind, laid down in mines, so that ponies could pull heavy wagons of coal or stone up to the top from the bottom of the mine – the ponies walked between the wooden rails and the wagons ran on them to make it easier. There were steam engines, too. These were enormous engines called 'beam engines' which were in a large building pumping water from the bottom of the mines to stop them from becoming flooded. So, there were railway tracks of a kind, and steam engines, but nobody had yet had the idea of putting the two things together to create a new form of transport. Not until almost two hundred years ago did people start to believe that a steam engine could be capable of moving along metal rails in order to pull wagons along.

The first railway in the world to open was the Stockton – Darlington Railway, which was built to take the coal from the mines to various towns in wagons pulled by a steam engine. There were still no passenger trains, and not everyone thought that they would be a good idea. Some people believed that human beings would suffocate if they travelled at more than fifteen miles an hour, but now trains often travel at more than a hundred miles an hour!

OF RAILWAYS

However, passenger trains were on their way. A new passenger railway was being built from Liverpool to Manchester, the first ever, and locomotives were required to pull the trains. A big competition was held at Rainhill, near Liverpool, to see which locomotive would be the best. Five engines entered the competition, where they had to prove how good they were.

The judges timed how long they took to raise steam, and how much coal they used. Each engine had to travel on a short track several times, to add up to 35 miles, which was the distance from Liverpool to Manchester. They were then allowed to refill with coal and water and do the same again.

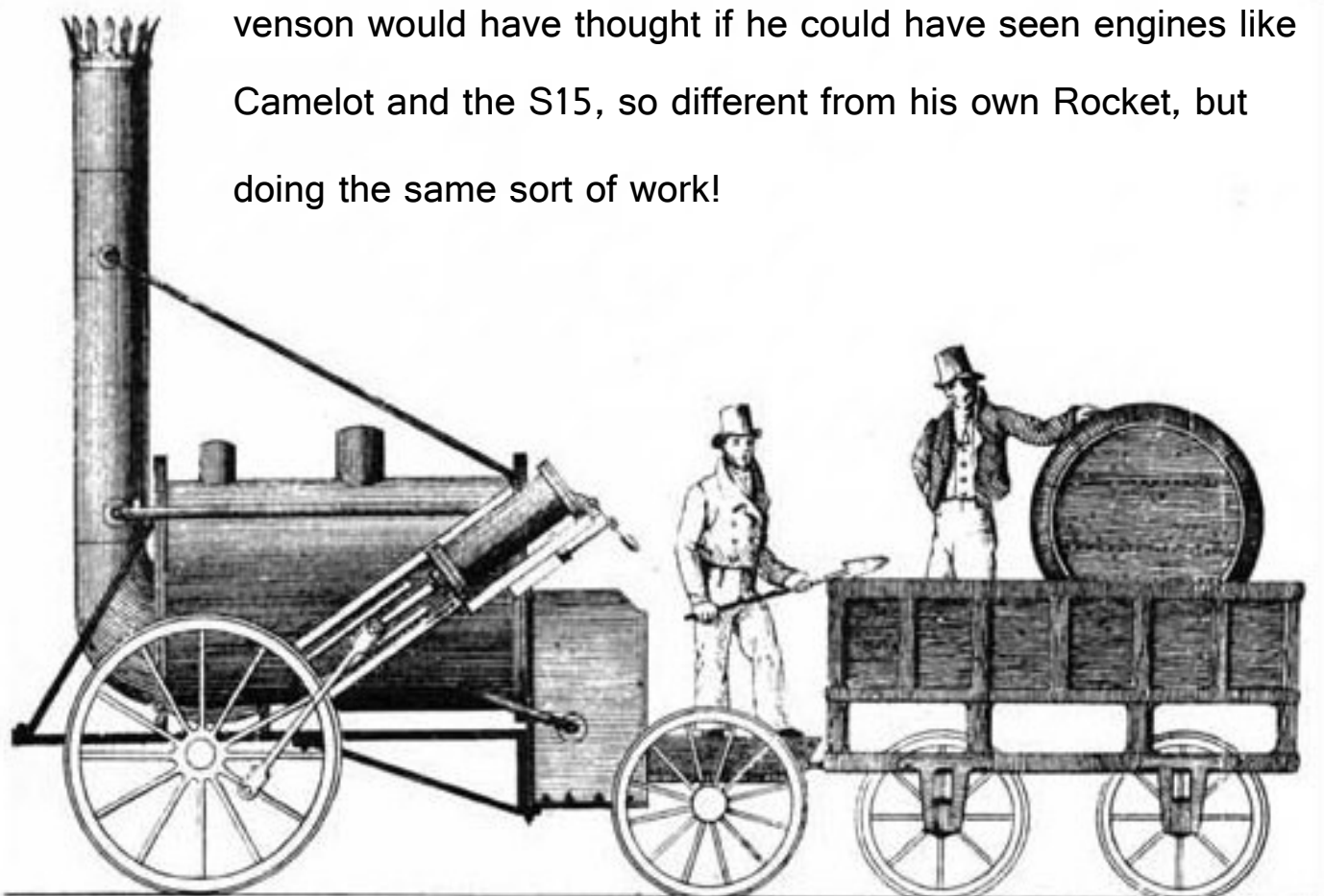


A replica of 'Rocket' when it visited the Bluebell Railway

The rules stated that the engine had to travel at ten miles an hour, which was faster than the coal trains on the Stockton- Darlington Railway!

The only engine to complete the trials and stick to all the rules was Rocket, built by Robert Stephenson. The others either broke down, or could not go fast enough. Robert Stephenson then built more engines for the Railway, and soon there were more engines being built for more and more railways. Rocket looks very strange compared to the steam engines that we are all used to, with a very tall chimney, enormous wheels, and no cab for the crew at all. The actual engine 'Rocket' is still in the Science Museum in London, and now too old and delicate to run any more, but there is a replica, which is a new Rocket built in exactly the same way, and that one has been to the Bluebell, a long time ago. I wonder what the engine designer George Ste-

venson would have thought if he could have seen engines like Camelot and the S15, so different from his own Rocket, but doing the same sort of work!



A drawing of George Stephenson's 'Rocket'



The new Interactive
Steamworks! Exhibition opened at Sheffield
Park Station on Saturday 20th October. Alongside
Stepney is a full size model of him where you can
operate the controls and experience life on the foot-
plate. In addition there are a number of hands-on
exhibits to explain the operation of steam-
powered locomotives.



Do come and say
'hello' to your old
friend Stepney -
he will be very
pleased to see you!

Mrs Molesworth and the

Mrs Molesworth lived by the railway line at Horsted Keynes, in one of a row of railway cottages. She was very proud of her neat little cottage, with its cream and green paint. All the same, as she looked at the front of her cottage one day when she was picking herbs in her front garden, she could see that it was getting a bit tatty. She hadn't painted it for a few years, and the cream was looking a bit dirty, the paint was peeling off in places, and the windowsills were not gleaming as they used to do. There was nothing for it – it would have to have a tidy up and a fresh coat of paint.

The next morning, Mrs Molesworth got Mr Molesworth to help, and they got out all the ladders and paintbrushes and the cream and green paint. Before they could start painting, they had to wash the walls, and found them dirtier than they had expected. The passing trains had left their mark over the years in soot and dirt! Once the walls were clean, the painting could begin. Mr Molesworth held the ladder and Mrs Molesworth climbed up to do all the high bits, making sure that she didn't miss anything.

Once the walls were done, Mrs Molesworth painted the windowsills and the frames, and stood back against the fence to take a look. She was very pleased with the result – the cottage was gleaming once more.

The following day, Mrs Molesworth was busy indoors, tidying up the bedroom. She had just changed the bedlinen, and had the window open, as it

newly painted cottage

was a lovely hot summer day. She could hear Stepney going past in the cutting, and he seemed to be struggling. There was a rather peculiar noise coming from the chimney, very unlike the usual crisp blast, and the train slowed down, and then got going again. Mrs Molesworth went into the bedroom to see black spots all over her clean duvet, and then rushed to the window to look out at the passing train. The newly painted windowsill was also covered in black spots!

When Mrs Molesworth heard the train returning from East Grinstead, she marched off down to the station looking extremely cross. When the train drew in, she was there to meet the crew!

“What do you think you were doing!” she said, wagging her finger at them.



"I've only just painted my cottage and it's covered in soot from your engine!

"We didn't mean any harm at all" said the driver, trying to calm her down.

"Poor old Stepney is due a boiler washout, so some of his dirty boiler water has been thrown out of his chimney."

"Yes, and thrown all over my nice clean house and nice clean bed!" said Mrs Molesworth crossly.

The stationmaster had heard the argument and hurried along the platform.

"Now then, now then" he said, "What's all this? We can't have these arguments on the station, you know."

Mrs Molesworth placed both hands firmly on her hips.

"What are they going to do about it? that's what I'd like to know" she said.

Stepney's driver sighed and looked across at the fireman.

"There's only one thing we can do" he said. The fireman nodded.

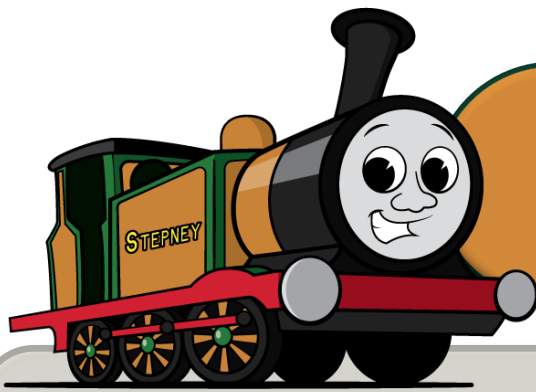
The following morning, not long after breakfast, the driver and fireman appeared at the gate of Mrs Molesworth's cottage, carrying buckets and cloths and scrubbing brushes. Mrs Molesworth got the ladder out again, and the two of them spent a busy morning scrubbing the soot off the wall and windowsill, although they couldn't do anything about the duvet – Mrs Molesworth had to put that in the washing machine. When they had finished, the cottage looked as good as new, and Mrs Molesworth made them a nice cup of tea!

LIMERICKS

A cleaner in Sheffield Park yard
Was finding the work very hard
He shovelled the bits
Of wet ash from the pits
And wished that he could be a guard

The carriage shed carpenter said
That morning he'd run out of bread
So out he did pop
To go to the shop
But he came back with biscuits instead

The signalman making his tea
Was followed around by a bee
His heart it was kind
So he made up his mind
Through the window to let it go free



DEAR
STEPNEY...

Dear Stepney,

The time has come for me to take a well earned rest, after 10 years of trundling up and down the line and shunting in the stations. So, I'm really happy that we are going to be in the new Steam Works! Exhibition together. I'm looking forward to welcoming our visitors and especially the Stepney Club members! Here's a photo of me on my last trip.

Yours sincerely, Captain Baxter (Retired)



Mike Anton

Dear Captain Baxter,
It's a shame you can't work any more, but we old engines need to take it easy these days! It's lovely in the exhibition, not dark like it used to be in the old shed.

*Best wishes,
Stepney*

Dear Stepney,

Firstly, I want to say that my owner and I had a brilliant time when we visited the railway, but I have a tiny complaint that I wonder if you could help me with. We travel on the Big Railway every day and I wait on the platform for the doors to open automatically and then I jump on board. I think the doors on your carriages must be broken, because we waited and waited, but the doors didn't open. In the end a very kind gentleman opened the door for us by turning a handle!

Love from Oscar the Guide Dog

Dear Oscar,

Thank you so much for your letter. Our carriages are very old and they were built before automatic doors were invented. Lots of people get confused by the doors, but the only way to open them is by turning the handles and opening them manually. I hope it wasn't too much of an inconvenience for you and your owner and I hope you'll visit again soon!

Best wishes,

Stepney

Dear Stepney,

Thank you to all you engines for the great time and warm welcome you gave us at the vintage bus day at the railway. It was wonderful to bring lots of passengers to the Bluebell and chat to other buses about the old days. We all had so many stories to tell! Some of the buses thought they were better than engines, but after discussing it, we see that actually we all do a very important job. We're all looking forward to coming back to the railway soon.

Love from Billy Bristol

Dear Billy,

Thank you for your letter. I'm very glad you had a good time at the Bluebell, as are all the other engines. You're right, we all do a very important job taking people to where they need to be. It really doesn't matter how many wheels you have or whether you travel on roads or rails!

Best wishes,

Stepney



Steve Lee

Dear Stepney

I want to complain in the strongest possible terms. It has come to my attention that you and your associates call yourselves 'Terriers'. Well, I'd like to point out that terriers have four legs and not six wheels! It's really not on and I'd like you to stop this outrageous behaviour immediately.

*Yours sincerely,
Tommy the Border Terrier*



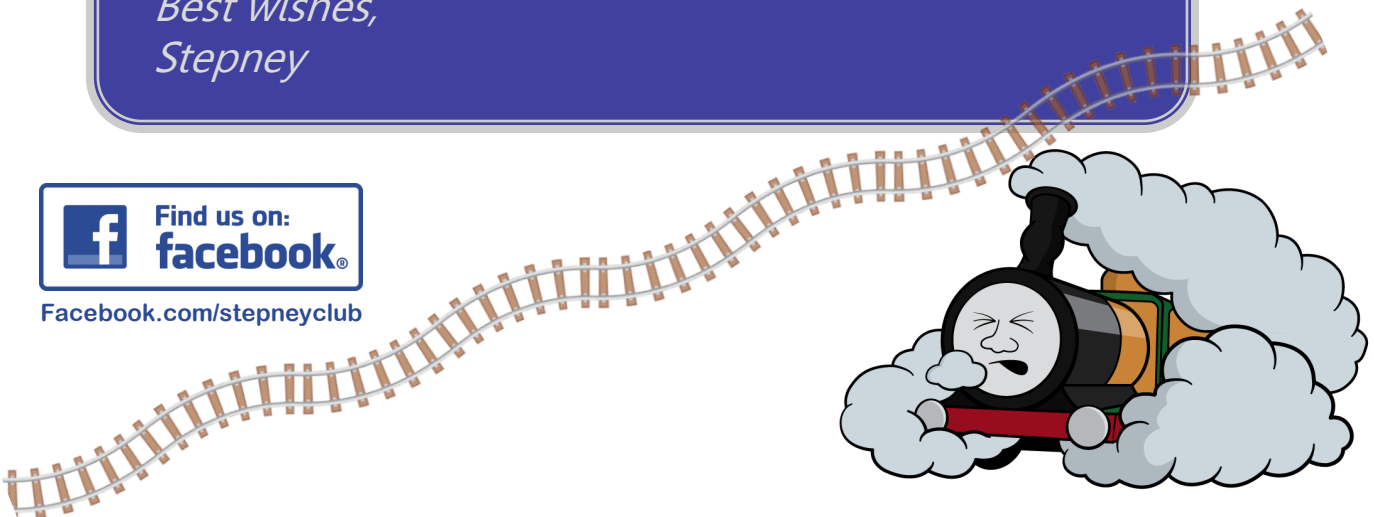
Dear Tommy,

Thank you for your letter. I'm sorry you feel so strongly about it, but isn't there room for different types of terriers? We were all built almost a hundred and fifty years ago, so we've been around for a very long time. Our designer called us Terriers, maybe because we were all brown, small and cute, just like you!

*Best wishes,
Stepney*



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THE EVACUEES FROM LONDON

It was a warm, sunny summer morning, and the S15 was enjoying her day of work hauling the train, especially because her crew could also enjoy the sun and wouldn't be complaining to her all day about getting wet. It was an ordinary day in the middle of the week, and she wasn't expecting to have many passengers, so they were all looking forward to a nice, quiet day.

The big green engine was settled at the front of the train at Sheffield Park, steaming gently to herself, when she saw a large group of people coming along the platform. Most of them were children, with a few adults, but what surprised her most of all was that they were all dressed in the clothes that people wore over 70 years ago in the 1940s, during World War Two. The S15 was built in the 1930s, and she remembered those days, as did many of the engines at the Bluebell. But why were all these children dressed in that very old fashioned way? She knew that schoolchildren usually wore school uniform in a certain colour – they didn't wear clothes like that any more!

Some of the children came up onto the footplate, and she was soon able to learn all about it. The children were from a school in Burgess Hill in Sussex, and they were all doing a topic about World War Two. They had been learning all about how children were evacuated from London to the countryside to keep them safe from bombs. That meant that thousands of children left

their London homes and schools, and travelled by train to go and live with people in the country, where there were no bombs being dropped. The school children from Burgess Hill told the S15 and her crew that they had all dressed up in the clothes that evacuees might have worn, and they were travelling on her train into the countryside, to see what it would have been like. They had learned quite a lot about the days of World War Two, and told the S15 all about food rationing, air raids, and blackouts.



Real evacuees from London during World War Two

As they chatted away, the S15 remembered her own far off days during the war. It seemed a long time ago to her now. There had been no diesel or electric trains then, and all the trains in the country had been hauled by steam engines like herself and her friends at the Bluebell. It was always

hard work, as there was a great deal to do. Apart from the ordinary everyday trains to get people to work and home again, there were extra trains to carry all the evacuees out of London, and to carry soldiers around the country in large numbers. The railway lines were often bombed, to stop the trains from running, and the line had to be repaired as fast as possible, with gangs of men working day and night to get it done.

The S15 remembered it as a frightening time in many ways. Every time she went out with a train, there was a chance that the line could be bombed, and she could have an accident, which made every journey a worry. She

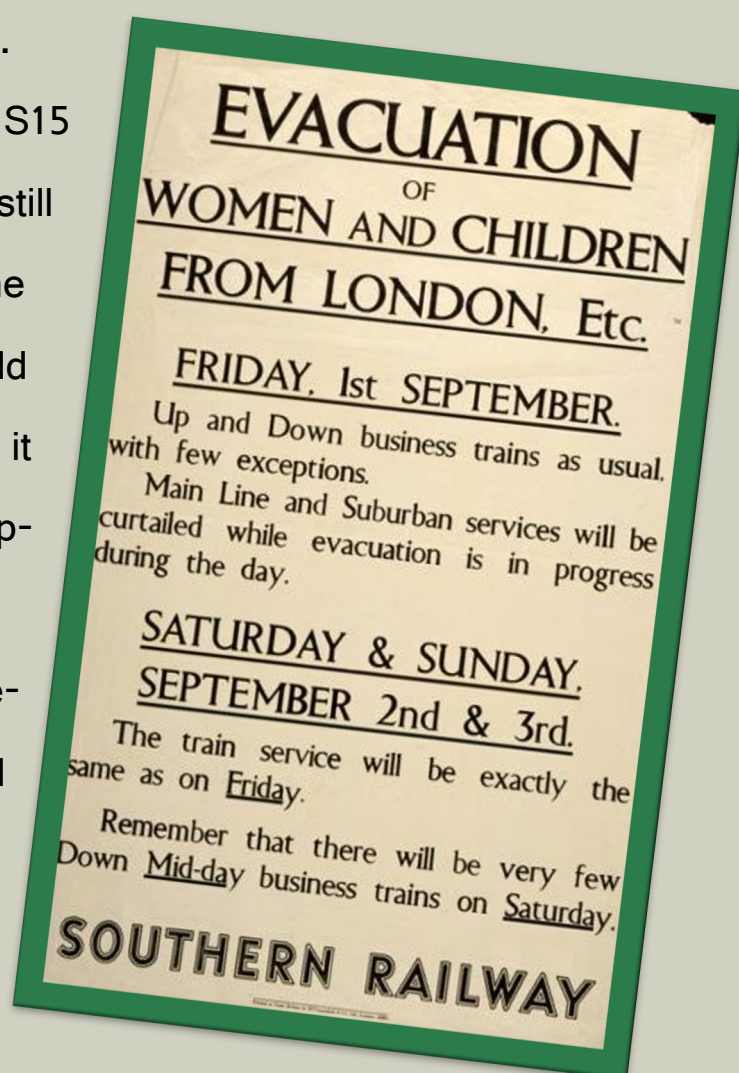


Burgess Hill School for Girls World War II Day (Mid Sussex Times)

had some very clear memories of hauling trains full of soldiers through the dark night, with her crew trying to keep the engine and cab as dark as possible. She had a big sheet tied down over the top of her cab, and the fire-

man used to open the fire door as little as possible so that no light from her fire would show. Even the slightest flash of firelight would be enough to show enemy aircraft overhead there was a railway line to be bombed! But neither the engines or their brave crews ever considered not going out and doing their job, however dangerous it was, and she also remembered feeling very proud every time that she and her crew had achieved another difficult run! Suddenly there was a lot of whistling from the guard, and the driver blowing her own whistle, and she realised that she was back at Sheffield park in 2018. The schoolchildren were all on board the train, and they were about to set off for East Grinstead. The war years faded away as she steamed along towards Lindfield Wood in the summer sunshine with a trainload of happy children and their teachers. They all got off at Kingscote to go and have a picnic lunch, waving to her as they left.

As the train pulled away again the old S15 was pleased that schoolchildren were still learning so much about the times of the past, and that she and her friends could help them to experience what some of it would have been like. But she was happiest of all that there was no more bombing of railway lines or children being taken away from their families, and that the children of the school in Burgess Hill were just dressing up and pretending, learning and having fun.





The mini 'Stepney' at the Teddy Bears' Picnic on the South Downs Light Railway in July. Everyone had a great time!



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