



The O1 amongst the Bluebells Photo: Peter Edwards

The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

Issue 1

IN THIS ISSUE

Introduction

By Paul Bromley, Bluebell Railway communications director

Hello and welcome to issue 1 of *The Bluebell Times*.

This is a new publication and one which I'd rather didn't exist.

It's come about because of the closure of the Bluebell Railway until further notice as efforts continue to fight the global coronavirus pandemic.

Most importantly, I hope everyone stays safe and keeps well.

But I also know the Bluebell Railway means a lot to many people. It certainly does to me.

I want to ensure the Railway continues to provide regular updates and information to all those who love and enjoy what has been described as "arguably England's best steam railway experience".

Some of you may be familiar with the story of *The Wipers Times*. It was a publication produced by soldiers in the trenches in World War I after they found an abandoned printing press. It helped to maintain morale during the fighting around Ypres in Belgium.

It was that sense of making the most out of adversity that led me to propose our own version of *The Wipers Times* to keep up spirits at this time. Hence the birth of *The Bluebell Times*.

[cont ...]

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The editor and editorial minions hard at work on issue 1 of The Bluebell Times, while maintaining social distance ...

[...cont]

The publication aims to cater for everyone whether they are a steam railway enthusiast or children looking for something fun to do while they aren't at school.

My pledge to you is that although the Bluebell Railway is currently closed, the lines of communication are still open.

Society News

RESIGNATION FROM THE POST OF CHAIRMAN OF THE BLUEBELL RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY

By Graham Aitken

Having reached the age of 70, I have over the past months been reflecting on the ever increasing amount of time I am spending on Preservation Society business, and that I am finding that it is becoming increasingly challenging to achieve the personal goals I have set for myself.

I have therefore decided that it is time for a change of Chairman and have reluctantly made the decision to resign, which has nothing to do whatsoever with the Covid-19 epidemic.

In my almost four years in office, I would like to think that I have made a positive contribution to the continuing success of the railway, whilst carrying out my duties to the best of my ability. I intend to remain as a volunteer, in the roles that I enjoy, which are: Senior Station Master at Sheffield Park, a Guard and the (unofficial) timetable assistant to the Operations Manager, Chris Knibbs.

I would like to thank all of you who have provided me with so much support over the almost 4 years of my period of office and I know that I can rely on you to do what is necessary to ensure that our railway not only survives the unprecedented situation we find ourselves in at present, but for it to prosper in the future.

Note: BRPS vice chairman Steve Bigg will be acting chairman for now.

BRPS EGM AND AGM 2020 – POSTPONEMENT

By Gavin Bennett, BRPS General Secretary

In the light of the current Covid-19 crisis, it should not come as any surprise to Members that the Trustees have decided to postpone, to a date to be decided, the Extraordinary and Annual General Meetings which were due to be held on Saturday 23rd May. It is an unprecedented decision and certainly not one that is provided for in the rules. Having carefully considered the options, we have concluded that it would be irresponsible to ask Members to assemble at a time when the infection rates are currently predicted to be at their peak. Moreover, in common with other schools, the Burgess Hill Academy has closed its doors for the foreseeable future so we would be without a venue. We will advise Members of a revised date as soon as practicable.

A Closer Look at ... *Stepney*



Photo: Len Walton

We'll be taking an in-depth look in each issue at one of our locomotives, carriages or wagons – all the facts, all the stats, all the numbers that matter.

We start with a chance to go loco over the very first engine to come to the Bluebell Railway 60 years ago.

It's been a firm favourite of generations and our special club for three- to eight-year-olds is named after this engine.

This locomotive will be 145 years old this year and is still looking good for someone of that age.

So here's everything you wanted to know about ... Stepney.

STEPNEY IN FACTS AND FIGURES

Name	<i>Stepney</i>
Number	<i>55 (also carried 655, B655, 2655 and 32655)</i>
Top fact	Bluebell's first locomotive, arrived 17 May 1960
Class	A1x "Terrier"
Wheel arrangement	0-6-0T
Built	1875, for the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR)
Designer	William Stroudley
Cylinders	Inside, 12 ins diameter x 20 ins stroke
Boiler pressure	150 pounds per square inch
Tractive effort	7,650 lbf
Length	26 ft ½ ins
Weight	28 tons
Driving wheel diameter	4 ft 0 ins
Coal capacity	Approx. 18 cwt (just less than one ton)
Water capacity	500 gallons

Information taken from 'Locomotives, Carriages & Wagons preserved on the Bluebell Railway' produced by Michael Philpott, available from the [Bluebell Railway's online shop](#)

Five Minutes With ... Russell Pearce

Role

Driver, Guard, Shunter, Loco Dept Chief Clerk

How long have you been involved with the Bluebell Railway?

46 years

How did you first become involved?

My parents wanted to get me off their hands after I left school and suggested I became involved. So we paid a visit one Sunday afternoon in early February 1974 and I joined and was introduced to the Locomotive Dept.

The following week I came up by train to Haywards Heath and cycled in from there in the snow. I started as a Cleaner, chipping rust from under No. 24 'Stamford'.

What was your professional career?

When I left school, I was taken on by the Inland Revenue and worked in various roles in the Collection Service until 1989 when I went to work as a legal services officer for the trade union which represented revenue staff.

I took a severance package from there in 1998 and stood as a Society Trustee for a second term of office and then joined the board as Retail Director in 2001 which lasted until 2017.

What does your Bluebell Railway job involve?

All my roles are now within the Operating department, and the principal role is as a Driver, working trains. I also act as a Trainer Driver to coach others through the system and up the promotional ladder.

In addition, I have recently been appointed as the Loco Dept Chief Clerk, which means mainly taking the lead in rostering staff, alongside Mike Lee and Tim Gray, and am also training as a competence assessor.



Photo: Dick Fearn

How often do you volunteer at the Railway?

Several days a week, either on site or at home.

Are you involved in any other departments or areas of the Railway?

In addition to the Loco work, I also guard passenger and goods trains and am qualified as a shunter.

Do you have a nickname? If so, what is it and how did it come about?

Several, probably, but most of them never reach my ears, and I doubt whether they are suitable for a family audience!

What's the best part of your job?

There is tremendous job satisfaction in footplate work, as someone once said in The Ballad of John Axon: "With a steam locomotive, you create the power, you maintain the power, and you control the power".

Without doubt it does wonders for the dopamine levels in the brain to take an engine to East Grinstead, when it is all going well. And if it isn't, then there is a lot of satisfaction in getting to the end of the line with the minimum of lost time - or at all!



1974, just after Russell started volunteering. Photo: Ian Wright

And none of that would be possible without a great team of fellow travellers working together to make everything happen, which along the way helps bring others along and pass on something of an otherwise dying art.

What's the worst part of your job?

Oiling up 847 in the pouring rain on a cold and dark morning, before even the "Today" programme has started.

What is your earliest train memory?

Dad owned a greengrocer's shop in Worthing around the corner from the then Worthing Central station and we used to go to see engines (usually original Bulleids) watering before setting off for Plymouth or Cardiff. I would stand on the cross bar of his trade bike with my nose over the concrete wall at the west end of Platform 3 there.

Also going to Brighton or Portsmouth on the train was a treat, with the distinctive smell of dusty moquette and air brakes that the old SR units had along with warm incandescent lighting they all had.

Do you have a model railway at home?

No, I don't have the patience but I am very happy to enjoy the fruits of others' labours in that respect.

What's the funniest thing that's happened to you at the Bluebell Railway?

Most of what is really funny is unrepeatable! But a stag evening that involved the washout pump has become the stuff of Loco Dept legend.

Anything else you want to tell us?

The Bluebell Railway is without doubt one of the best examples of a truly co-operative enterprise you will find. It could never flourish if it was run on a full commercial basis, because we could never afford to pay all the staff we need to make it a success.

And it is a success because it has been built up over the years as a result of the joint efforts of all the staff who feel a great deal of ownership and will put themselves out for it. To misquote the late JFK, it works because "we ask not what our railway can do for us, but because we ask what we can do for our railway".

BLUEBELL BITES

Loco yard or Bessemer Arms?

Both

Stepney or Camelot?

Fenchurch

Downton Abbey or The Railway Children?

Neither

Southern Railway or British Railways?

The Brighton

In the vanguard or in the guard's van?

Vanguard

Sausage sandwich or bacon buttie?

Bacon and sausage baps

Tea or coffee?

Tea. Preferably "Taste the Difference" loose Assam tea

Many thanks to Russell for taking part. If you would like to feature in a future "Five Minutes With ..." or would like to suggest someone to take part, email me at bluebelltimes@jamesquared.com – Ed.

Emergency Appeal

By Paul Bromley, communications director

The closure of the Bluebell Railway in late March came at a bad time financially.

The biggest source of income for the Railway is general fares from the visiting public. People coming along and buying their "ticket to ride" provides the money to pay staff, overhaul the locomotives, repair the rails and maintain the authentic period features at our stations.

We have been open for only 15 days in 2020 – the nine days of February half-term and a few weekends in late February/early March.

We were just about to reach the start of the Railway's busier period with trains running five days a week in April and then daily services from May onwards.

Many people had already booked for our Golden Arrow dining trains as well as other events.

Thousands of visitors were expected for our ever-popular Branch Line Weekend showcasing the smaller engines in early April. And families were looking forward to our special Easter trails and fun activities.

All this as plans were well advanced for a spectacular weekend in August to celebrate "Steaming Through 60" to mark 60 years of the Bluebell Railway operating as a preserved passenger line.

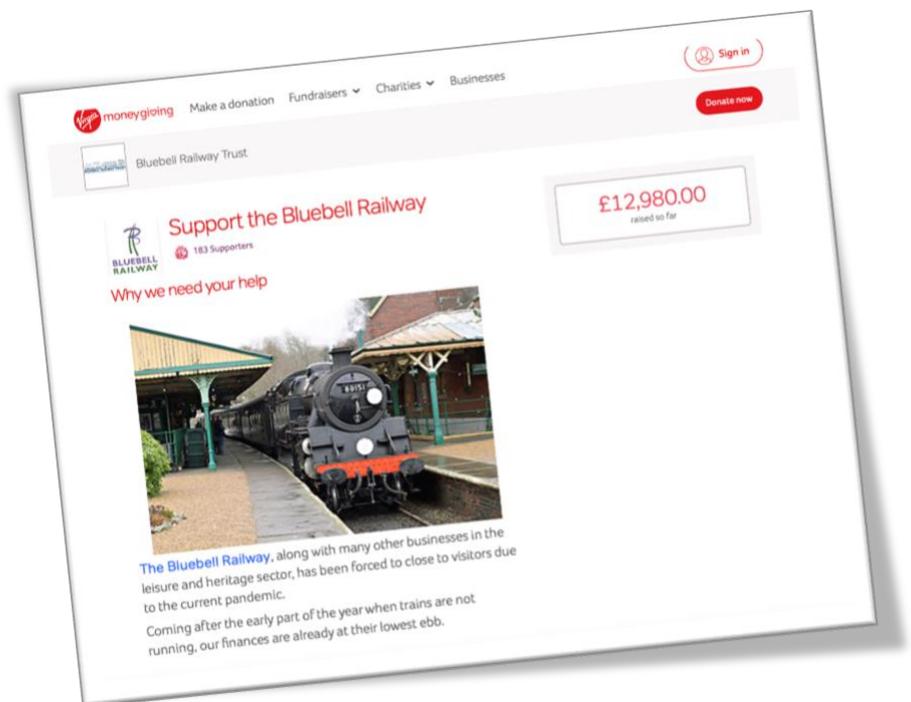
The closure has therefore left the Railway short of money.

So, along with other heritage railways, we have decided to launch an appeal for donations in the hope that anyone who wishes to continue to support the Railway can do so even if they can no longer visit.

No-one knows how long the closure will last, so the more money the appeal raises, the better position we will be in when we eventually re-open.

We recognise, of course, that many people will be giving extra to those support services and charities which need more help. We hope everyone understands why we have launched the appeal.

In the first few days of the appeal, we received thousands of pounds in donations.



Thank you to everyone who has donated so far. Your contributions mean a lot to us.

Anyone who wishes to help the Bluebell Railway Emergency Appeal can donate at <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/support-bluebell>

You can also Gift Aid your donation (if you are a UK taxpayer) which will help to raise even more money.

The motto of the Bluebell Railway (Preservation Society) is *Floreat Vapor* which translates from Latin as "May steam flourish" or "Steam Forever".

Please help us to keep the steam dreams alive.



Guess the Year



Photo: Bluebell Railway Museum Archive

The Bluebell Railway has been used down the years as a location for hundreds of films, TV programmes, fashion shoots and pop videos.

Here's a picture from one of the pop videos shot at the Railway.

Can you:

- ➔ Name the singer?
- ➔ Name the song?
- ➔ Name the station at which the video was filmed?
- ➔ Name the year in which the filming took place?

Answers in the next issue.

Information from '[The Line to the Stars – Half a century of location filming at the famous Bluebell Railway](#)' by Heidi Mowforth, available from the Bluebell Railway's online shop.

Museum Morsel

By Tony Hillman, assistant curator, Bluebell Railway museum

I recently bought this silver-plated tankard at auction.

I've managed to work out some details about it but I wonder if someone in the Bluebell – or wider – community has the knowledge to fill in the gaps.

It is a pint tankard or pint measure and the engraving on the bottom suggests it is from the Refreshment Department of the South Western Railway (SWR).

The "VR" on the side suggests it dates from the reign of Queen Victoria and I would estimate it is from the late 19th century.

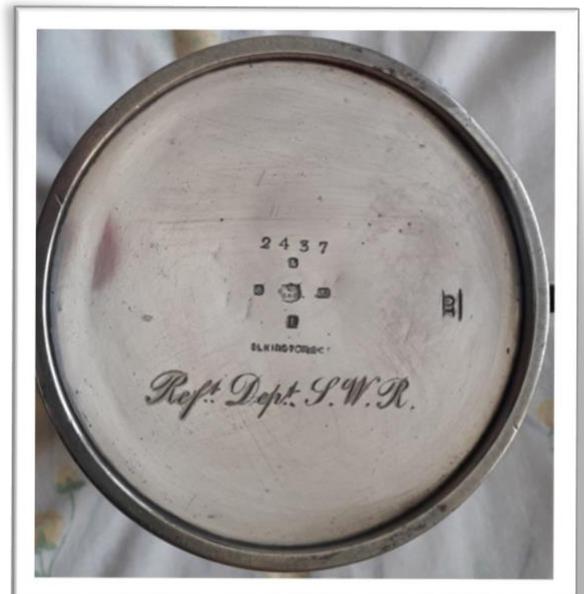
There are several other stamps on the tankard. I have tried to find more details of what each means without success.

I've used a magnifying glass and the number under the crown could be 235, but the 5 is well rubbed. There is another number following the "23" but it could well not be 5. What do the numbers mean?

The letters going around in a circle spell S-U-R-R-E-Y which would be consistent with the route of the South Western Railway which ran from London Waterloo to places in the west country such as Bournemouth and Exeter. Did the tankard come from a refreshment room in Surrey along the route of SWR trains?

If you know more about silver hallmarks or about refreshment rooms or SWR memorabilia, I would love to hear from you. Please help to solve the mystery of this lovely tankard.

You can contact me via the editor of The Bluebell Times at morsel@bluebell-railway-museum.co.uk and use the subject Museum Morsel.



Railway Cuttings

By Paul Bromley, communications director

A collection of press and publicity coverage about the Bluebell Railway.

Express newspapers compiled a [round-up of family days out for Spring](#) and put the Bluebell Railway in No. 1 spot. The article said the railway "is renowned for its historic carriages and enchanting stations, redolent of another age".

Country Living described [12 great rail journeys around the world](#) "for the scenic ride of your life". It said the Bluebell Railway was "one of the most delightful railway journeys for taking in the beauty of the seasons in Sussex" and "arguably one of Britain's best steam trains".



EXPRESS Home of the Daily and Sunday Express

Family holidays: All aboard for the very best spring days out

SPRING is here, with the welcome return of more daylight, warmer temperatures and flowers in bloom. Here are 10 great family days out to enjoy the splendour of the new season...



The Bluebell Railway (Image: SUNDAY MIRROR)

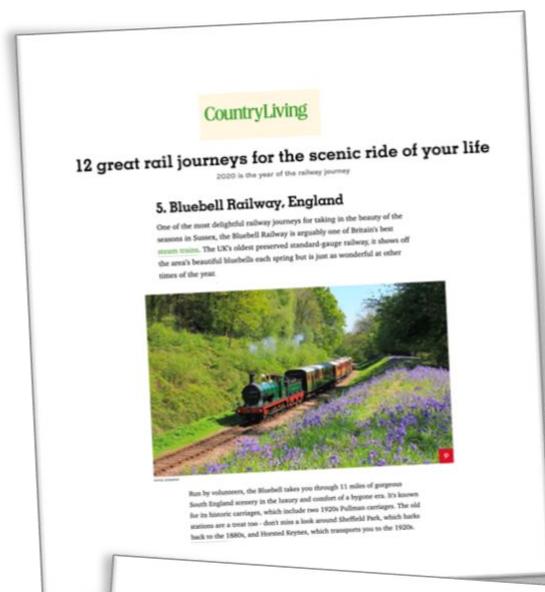
1. BEAUTIFUL BLUEBELLS

The Bluebell Railway, Britain's oldest preserved standard-gauge railway, is renowned for its historic carriages and enchanting stations, redolent of another age.

As the name suggests, the Sussex woodlands bordering the line are at their best in spring, a mass of deep blue among the trees.

Each station is restored to a different period: Sheffield Park to the 1880s; the country junction of Horsted Keynes to the 1920s; Kingscote to the 1950s.

Among the railway's historic carriages are two 1920s Pullman cars, which form part of the Golden Arrow Pullman dining train on Saturdays.



CountryLiving

12 great rail journeys for the scenic ride of your life

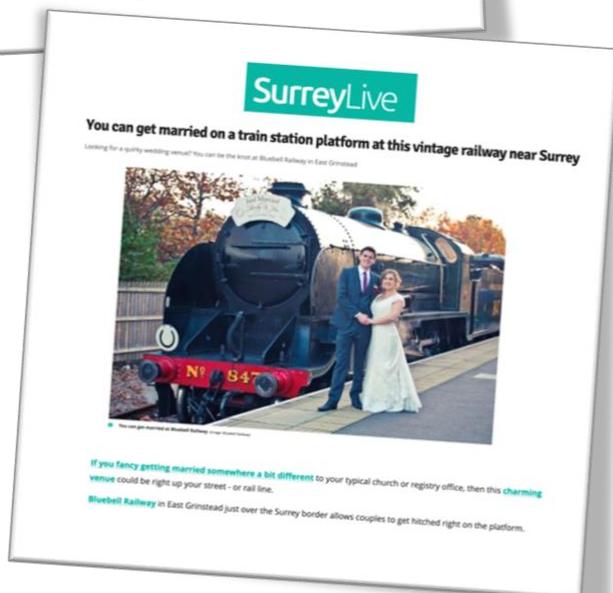
2020 is the year of the railway journey

5. Bluebell Railway, England

One of the most delightful railway journeys for taking in the beauty of the seasons in Sussex, the Bluebell Railway is arguably one of Britain's best scenic routes. The UK's oldest preserved standard-gauge railway, it shows off the area's beautiful bluebells each spring but is just as wonderful at other times of the year.



Run by volunteers, the Bluebell takes you through 11 miles of gorgeous South England scenery in the history and comfort of a bygone era. It's known for its historic carriages, which include two 1920s Pullman carriages. The old stations are a treat too - don't miss a look around Sheffield Park, which harks back to the 1880s, and Horsted Keynes, which transports you to the 1920s.



SurreyLive

You can get married on a train station platform at this vintage railway near Surrey

Looking for a quirky wedding venue? You can be the bride at Bluebell Railway on East Grinstead.



If you fancy getting married somewhere a bit different to your typical church or registry office, then this charming venue could be right up your street - or rail line.

Bluebell Railway in East Grinstead just over the Surrey border allows couples to get hitched right on the platform.

Surrey Live highlighted the opportunity "to get married somewhere a bit different" and said couples could tie the knot at the Bluebell Railway. The article pointed out: "the ceremony takes place in a charming Waiting Room on Platform 1 before your very own private train pulls in to take you gently through the delightful countryside to enjoy your special wedding breakfast on board."

Community Ad said the [Bluebell Railway proved to be a model filming location](#) when Hornby filmed scenes for its centenary video at Sheffield Park station. The report said: "the next time you're watching your favourite film or TV period drama, you might be surprised to find out that it has actually been filmed very close to home at the Bluebell Railway."

Your Sussex Wedding said on Twitter that the [Bluebell Railway was its "venue of the day"](#) and described it as a dream for photographers. The tweet said the railway was "favoured by film companies for the detail of decoration and character" and that Horsted Keynes station gained fame when featured in Downton Abbey.

Naomi Daw who works at Brighton museums tweeted that the [Bluebell Railway was one of her favourite places](#). She highlighted that the railway is 60 years old.

Jonathan Fenner, a Blue Badge guide for South East England, tweeted that the [Bluebell Railway was the first standard gauge line to be rescued](#) and said it was "a real gem that has captured so many imaginations!" He added: "The story of our heritage railways is one of phenomenal passion and achievement."



Bluebell Railway proves to be model filming location

The next time you're watching your favourite film or TV period drama, you might be surprised to find out that it has actually been filmed very close to home at the Bluebell Railway Station. Bluebell Railway Station is currently preserved as the oldest gauge passenger railway in the UK and the station has been used for many years for filmography.



Their stations are effectively 'walk-on sets' and for more than 50 years have been used as a backdrop to hundreds of films, TV shows, fashion shoots and music videos. The station has previously featured in the Downton Abbey TV series, The Woman in Black film, episodes of Poirot and a TV version of The Railway Children, just to name a few brilliant productions.

The station was right on track when a toy train manufacturer was looking for a site to film a promotional video. Last December, Hornby filmed scenes at Sheffield Park Station on platform 1 depicting a 1940's retro scene, of a soldier going off to war and his girlfriend gifting him a model loco as he gets onto the train. The sequence lasts for approximately 50 seconds and forms part of a six-minute video called "More Than Just a Hobby... A Lifetime's Journey" and can be viewed here:

<https://youtu.be/zIJryE8GFU0> and the scenes are from 0.40 to 1.27.



Naomi Daw @Naomi_Daw · Mar 6

✓

The Bluebell Railway is one of my favourite places, and will be celebrating its 60th anniversary this summer with a special weekend celebration. Lovely to see them being featured in the Brighton & Hove Independent!

brightonandhoveindependent.co.uk/news/people/fit...

[#birthday](#) [#trains](#)



Sussex Police Heritage Crime and 8 others

🗨️
↻ 5
❤️ 17
📌

Word Search

Here's something to challenge even the best of Bluebell brains.

Can you find the list of words in the grid?

The words may be hidden horizontally, vertically and diagonally: forwards and backwards.

Helpful hint: this puzzle is best tackled with a cup of tea in hand!

No prizes but we will reveal the answers in the next issue along with a new word search.

Good luck!

Bluebell Railway Word Search

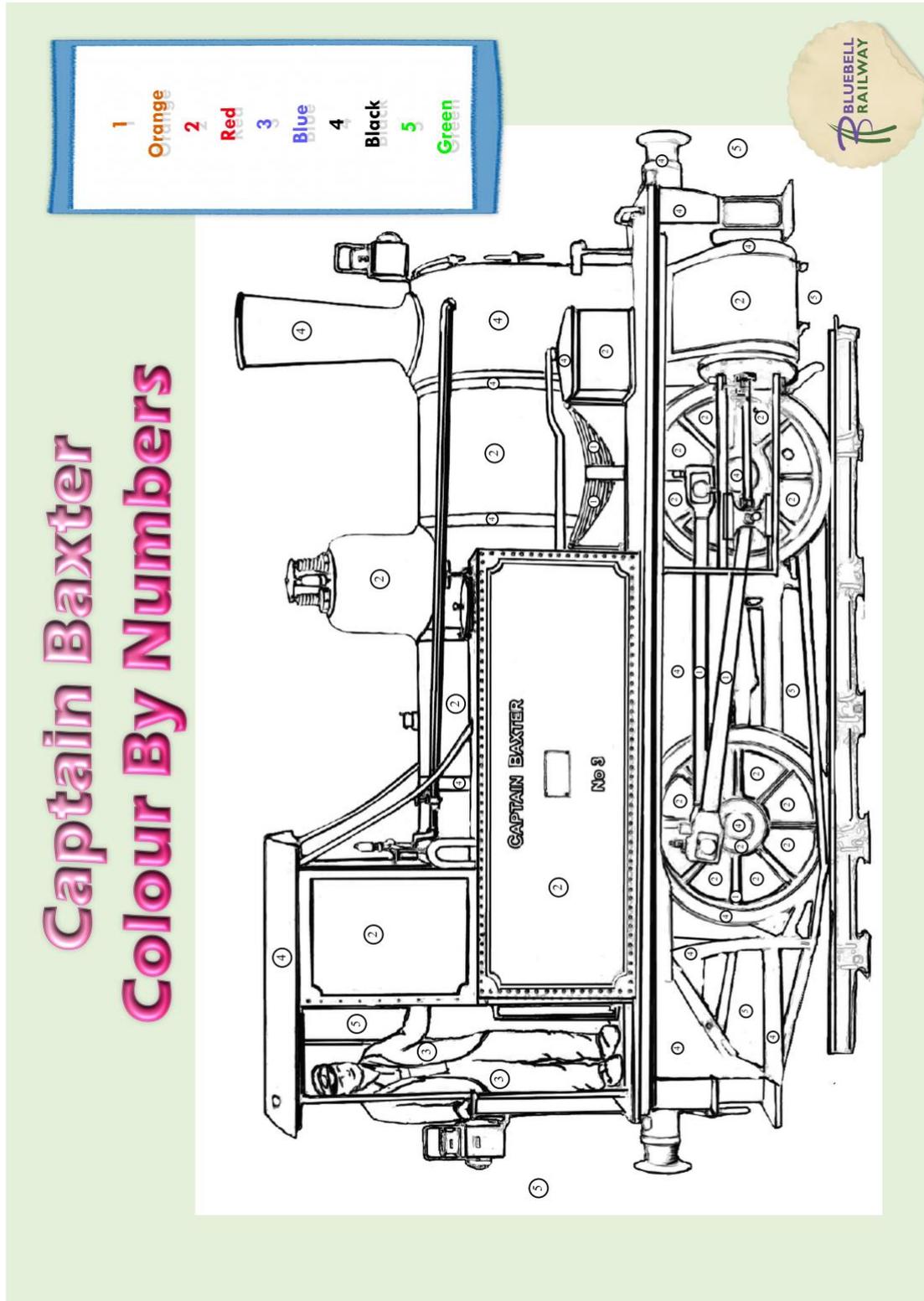
K	Y	N	S	R	L	L	E	B	E	U	L	B	N	C
R	W	Q	G	C	E	O	F	U	P	N	D	Y	N	B
O	Y	K	P	R	V	T	D	H	U	R	X	G	J	E
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L	D	O	O	T	O	Q	S	U	U	X	E	E	P	E
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C	Q	S	K	V	O	Z	Z	L	E	E	P	F	H	E
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L	A	K	Y	G	S	Q	K	U	B	A	P	S	V	A
R	N	H	C	W	H	Y	H	O	R	S	T	E	D	R
M	U	Y	A	W	L	I	A	R	O	B	L	Z	O	K
P	V	V	Q	M	H	W	F	T	B	B	T	Q	F	I

BLUEBELL
RAILWAY
LOCOMOTIVE
BESSEMER
ARMS
SHEFFIELD
PARK
HORSTED
KEYNES
KINGSCOTE
EAST
GRINSTEAD

Just for Kids

There's lots more information about activities for children including how to join the Stepney Club (three- to eight-year-olds) and 9F club (ages nine and over) on a [special section of the Bluebell Railway website](#).

COLOUR BY NUMBERS



TRACKS AND TUNNELS

TRACKS AND TUNNELS

Finish

Start

EAST GRINSTEAD

HELP STEPNEY TRAVEL TO THE FINISH AND COLLECT HIS CARRIAGES

To play this game you will need dice and small toys or objects to be counters. Throw the dice and move through the numbers from the start until you reach the finish. Watch out for dangers and lucky breaks!

1 Great cleaning! Get a head start and move to 7

2 You've lost a wheel! Roll back to 1

3 The distant signal says be prepared to stop. Move to 7, then miss a turn!

4 Take a short cut through the tunnel - Go to 16 and play from there.

5 Steaming up the hill now - whizz on to 17

6 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

7 The points are in your favour - Short cut to 19 and play from there.

8 Take on water at East Grinstead. Miss a turn!

9 Stop and play at SteamWorks! Miss a turn!

10 Go the wrong way through the tunnel - back to 8. No return.

11 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

12 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

13 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

14 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

15 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

16 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

17 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

18 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

19 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

20 The points are wrong! Head down the wrong road back to 12. No return.

STEAMWORKS!



Tail Lamp

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

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

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The Bluebell Times

*A Newsletter for
Bluebell Railway
Members, Staff and
Supporters*

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