



Stepney, birdcage – and bluebells Photo: Dave Bowles

The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

May 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

By time this latest issue of The Bluebell Times is distributed, the Railway will be on the eve of waking once again from a second enforced slumber. For those of us on the operational side of the railway, a period of test trains to refamiliarise crew starts on 15 May, with the members' special trains the following Wednesday and then full re-opening to the public the following day.

Keeping the railway running and in a fit state to delight our visitors requires a huge amount of maintenance and restoration work. There is an update in this issue on the latest steps with progress on the overhaul of 'Fenchurch', our oldest locomotive and one about to have a very special birthday. However, striking the right balance between what we need operationally to run a service; what as members and supporters we desire to see restored to the high standards the Railway is justly renowned for; and what we actually have the capacity to restore and maintain is not an easy task. Rolling stock director Bob Pamment discusses this issue with a focus on three items of stock stored in our Ardingly siding. The article is not a comfortable read, but the realities of need, capacity and deterioration are inexorable. We cannot truly be said to have preserved a vehicle that is on our rails, but gradually succumbing to the weather: the OP4 carriage shed will make a massive contribution to arresting the further decay of our to-be-restored stock, but it is important that we collectively consider the collection, now that – for better and for worse – the opportunities for new acquisitions are largely past. If you have thoughts and comments on that, or indeed any other subject, please let the editor know at bluebelltimes@bluebell-railway.com

The above notwithstanding – the sun is shining, our locomotives are being warmed through, and services resume in just a few days' time. Come and enjoy the ride!

Tom James, Editor

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Welcome Back

By Graham Flight, interim chairman, Bluebell Railway Plc

As we approach the re-opening of the railway on the 20th May the level of activity is increasing daily as we prepare everything for our visitors.

This increase in workload affects all our people, staff, volunteers and Directors who I can assure you are making every effort to put on the best and a safe show for every aspect of Bluebell.

However, there appear to be a small number of people who still feel the need to use Social Media as a means of airing criticisms and targeting these efforts with opinions often incorrect and regrettably sometimes using inappropriate language.

This does not help or encourage our efforts towards running the railway, a complex and difficult task even during “normality” and whilst accepting everyone “has a view”, there are common courtesies and good manners that can be used just as easily.

On a much more positive note, the railway is now getting ready to re-open for passengers on the 20th May having run Ghost and Member trains leading up to that date to ensure everything is “good to go”.

This is a huge step forward for us and an opportunity to showcase our railway after a period of great difficulty for us and our visitors and I am confident we will deliver at the highest standard.

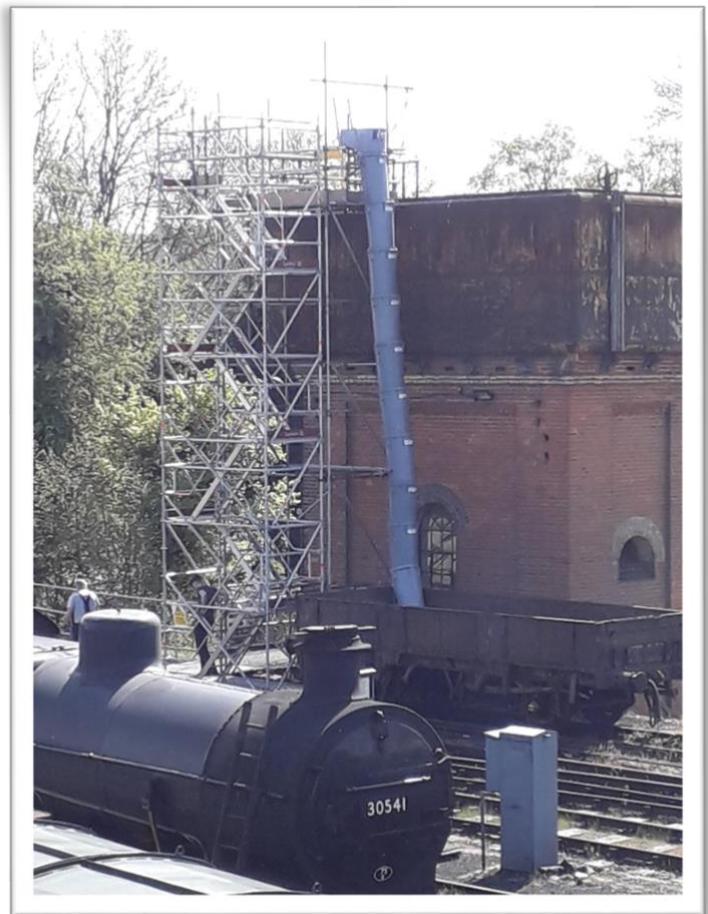
There are of course still restrictions on how we operate for ticketing, seating and catering and I would ask everyone to help to comply with these in a friendly, efficient and professional manner. There are bound to be some times when this is difficult but it can be done. Please ensure you are up to date with the latest Government guidelines and do your best to promote the railway.

There will be more to look forward to as we progress through the year with open seating and many special events deferred from their original planned dates. We have a lot of ground to recover

to regain our operating and financial strength and I am confident we can do so with your help.

My thanks must be recorded to all those who have continued to work to get the railway ready and to take us into the rest of 2021 in such a good condition.

I am looking forward to my first trip on the railway in 2021 and “Welcome Back”.



Just one of those unseen jobs taking place around the railway to prepare for re-opening. For perhaps the first time in a hundred years, the mud that has collected in the water tower is being cleared out. A shift on the “mud roster” is perhaps a long way removed from the glamour of heading up the Golden Arrow, but without such work, the railway would grind to a halt.

Photo: Bluebell Railway

Society News

CHAIRMAN VACANCY

Acting Society chairman Steve Bigg has announced that he will not be seeking election to the role on a permanent basis.

Steve said: "Having taken over from Graham Aitken when he stood down last March, and thus becoming acting chairman of the Society, I have decided not to offer myself as a candidate for election as Society chairman at the next AGM. After much consideration, my decision is based on the fact that, should I be successful in the election, I will be in my mid-seventies at the end of the three-year term, and consequently I think that the position would be better undertaken by a younger person. The above roles will be of significant influence in the continuity and further development of the strategic objectives and new initiatives already planned/in process and will support the sustainability and future growth of the Railway.

"I intend to complete my second term as vice-chairman into 2022, which will provide continuity whilst a new chairman settles into the role. Acting Society vice-chairman Roy Watts is fully aware and supportive of this proposal, and confirms he is not planning to seek an elected position on the Society committee at the AGM. We will continue working together in our current roles until such time as an AGM election can be held."

Interest in the chairman's role is now being sought from people who have been a BRPS member for three years or more. For further details, please email Gavin Bennett, BRPS general secretary, at gavin.bennett@bluebell-railway.com by 1 July.

TREASURER ROLE

The post of BRPS Society treasurer is vacant following the decision of Jan Kozminksi to stand down. Nigel Longdon has returned to the role as acting treasurer.

The treasurer is a member of the Society's management team and participates in decision making. Ideally applicants should have some background in managing accounts and must be

competent in the use of word processing and spreadsheet software. Responsibilities include tracking the Society's income and expenditure, presenting a monthly report at the Trustees' meeting and preparation of the annual accounts for audit. From time to time the treasurer may be invited to participate in Trustee working groups to develop Society policies.

If you are interested, please contact Nigel Longdon at nigel.longdon@bluebell-railway.com

SOCIETY AGM/EGM

By Gavin Bennett, general secretary, BRPS

The Government's roadmap as a tentative route out of this lockdown means that gatherings of more than 30 people in an indoor venue will still be illegal until at least 21 June - except for those venues in the proposed pilot scheme which can hold an event with a maximum of 50% of the capacity.

There is still much uncertainty about these dates and we also have the threat of a third wave of infections which could result in further lockdowns if people do not follow the rules. Whilst this means we cannot hold an AGM with absolute certainty, I have booked Burgess Hill Academy for Saturday 2 October for an EGM and AGM. The formal notice will be issued in due course.

I sincerely hope that we can actually hold these meetings as we are carrying several Trustee vacancies as well as chairman and treasurer vacancies.

60+1 Event Update

By Robert Hayward, Chairman of the Diamond Anniversary Steering Group & BRPS Trustee

I am very pleased to let you have some very good news about our event to mark our Diamond Anniversary. We originally intended to hold three days of activities last year to celebrate, but this event will now take place from 6 – 8 August 2021. You may have seen our new logo for the “60+1” event.

Over the last few months, the Diamond Anniversary Steering Group has been closely following the Government’s roadmap out of lockdown and developing the plan of what we might do to celebrate in 2021. We are mindful that we are wholly dependent on what Covid-19 restrictions the Government place on us that limit public events, as well as what we can afford as the railway comes out of its enforced slumber.

Our plan is still to showcase to family and enthusiast visitors all the massive achievements of the Bluebell Railway since 1960 and the work that goes on behind the scenes, particularly the craft

skills and the way in which our staff and volunteers make the railway what it is – more than just a ride on a train through the beautiful Sussex countryside.

Whilst the details of the event will be on the [website](#) when they are firmed up there will be a larger update in the next edition of Bluebell News and also in the Bluebell Times as the plan comes together.

Do please put the date in your diaries and tell your friends about the event; we look forward to seeing you in August, whether as a visitor or helping out to make the three-day event a success.



It is a matter of regret that, for two years, we have missed the sight of our trains passing the bluebells that the railway is famed for. Here's to 2022, but in the meantime a photo of No. 80151 drifting through Lindfield Wood during bluebell season back in 2007.

Photo: Derek Hayward

Railway Cuttings - Culture Recovery Fund Grant

By Paul Bromley, communications director

The news of the successful grant application from the Culture Recovery Fund, reported in the last issue of The Bluebell Times, was reported widely in the local and regional press.

[Rail Business Daily](#) used a photo of S15 No. 847 by Andrew Strongitharm to illustrate its story on the grant and quoted Bluebell Railway Trust chairman Vernon Blackburn as well as interim Plc chairman Graham Flight.

[Uckfield FM](#) said the grant from the Government would help ahead of the reopening in May and [Uckfield News](#) reported some of the money would pay for the salaries of staff with heritage skills.

[Mid Sussex Times](#) produced a double page spread in its 8 April issue with details of not only the Round 2 grant from the Culture Recovery Fund but also reference to the first grant from last autumn.

There were also reports in the heritage press of all the money granted to preserved railways which listed the Bluebell Railway as among the recipients.



Bluebell Railway receives grant towards reopening



Bluebell Railway. Picture: Andrew Strongitharm.

The Bluebell Railway, a not-for-profit heritage line, has received a Government grant to help it move towards reopening.

It has been awarded £272,400 in the second round of grants from the Culture Recovery Fund.

Vernon Blackburn, chairman of the Bluebell Railway Trust which is its charitable arm, said: "We are grateful to the Culture Recovery Fund for approving our Round 2 application in full. The money will help us ensure we have the people and resources to reopen in line with Government guidelines next month."

Salaries

The money will pay for some of the railway's costs between April and June. It includes the salaries of skilled heritage staff including those working in the locomotive and carriage and wagon workshops who repair, maintain and overhaul the line's fleet of historic steam engines and carriages.

Bluebell Railway Plc interim chairman Graham Flight said: "It is fantastic news that we have received this money from the Culture Recovery Fund which will mean we can continue to provide our customers with the high level of service for which the Bluebell is renowned. We can't wait to welcome passengers back to the line."

Job Vacancy - Medical Officer

The Bluebell Railway has a vacancy for a Medical Officer.

The successful applicant will be responsible for the medicals required for the railway's safety critical staff, and must be fully registered with the GMC and a current licence to practice, holding membership of a medical indemnity organisation.

Experience and health qualifications in Occupational Medicine would be beneficial and the appreciation of the medical factors which could affect fitness to perform safety critical work on an operational railway.

Hours are flexible and payments and expenses (TBA) will be offered.

MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Lisa Boyle on 01825 724884 or email lisa.boyle@bluebell-railway.com for further information.

News in Brief

HRH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Roy Watts – Senior Station Master at East Grinstead writes: We put the East Grinstead flag at half-mast using the correct protocol – raise to the top of the pole, pause for a few seconds and then lower to half-mast. Staff present observed a minute's silence on the blow of a whistle. Similarly, it was lowered in reverse.

REGISTERED TRADEMARK

The Bluebell Railway is now a registered trademark after a successful application to the Intellectual Property Office.

The Railway's logo now appears with the letter R inside a circle to show it is a registered trademark.

CATERING DISCOUNT SCHEME

The inhouse catering loyalty card scheme is to end.

Any existing cards that have not been used due to the closure of the Railway will expire on 31 July 2021.

Discounts for working members still apply when providing evidence to the retail and catering staff.

KINGSCOTE VIRTUAL TOUR

We are pleased to launch our new [virtual Kingscote tour](#). This tour gives you chance to explore our stations wherever you are – and includes areas not usually open to the public, such as the booking office and the signal box.



(Above): [BR Mark 1 BSK No. 35207](#) has moved on loan to the Mid Hants Railway. It is seen here at Ropley shortly after arrival.
Photo: David Chappell

(Right): On 11 April the London Bus Museum organised a running day over the former length of bus route 65 from Leatherhead (former London Transport bus garage) to Ealing. Roy Watts participated and took his RML2731 complete with Bluebell advertising – first time she's been out in almost 18 months. It has the number 10 route blinds because we weren't picking up passengers!

Photo: Roy Watts



Fenchurch Overhaul

By Bob Pamment, acting locomotive director, and Chris Shepherd, locomotive works manager

Terrier No. 672 'Fenchurch' left the Bluebell Railway on 14 April for Statfold Engineering in Staffordshire.

The locomotive is undergoing a standard 10-year overhaul with work on both the mechanical condition and a thorough boiler repair.

The current plan is that the frames would be back with the Bluebell Railway between the end of the year and next Easter. That should give us time to re-assemble 'Fenchurch' ready for the summer. The aim is to have it running for its 150th anniversary in 2022.

At present, we do not know the scope of the work involved in the cylinder block. The contractor is only stripping and removing the cylinder block from the frames at present. We will then decide the way forward: repair or replace. If the decision is to replace, a replacement set of cylinders has gone to Statfold with the frames.

The boiler overhaul requires substantial replacement of material, including replacement of the inner firebox, itself a new item from the locomotives overhaul in the 1980s. We have placed the order for the new flanged and welded firebox from Israel Newton & Sons in Derbyshire. This is scheduled for completion late summer. Most of the work to date has been checking and comparing design options for the replacement parts, gutting the boiler and liaising with the Boiler Surveyor. The new foundation ring has been fitted to the old firebox wrapper and has been sent away to ensure the new box fits it. The rest of the main boiler components are at the Railway already: the barrel extension, barrel patch, smokebox tubeplate, outer wrapper, lower backhead and throatplate pressings. New stays, tubes and rivets will be ordered when sizes and lengths are known.

We aim to work on the Terrier boiler alongside No. 34059 'Sir Archibald Sinclair', which now has virtually all items on site.



Fenchurch loaded at Sheffield Park ready for its journey to Statfold engineering (top) and ready to be unloaded on arrival (middle, bottom).

Photos: Keiran Osborne (top); Statfold Engineering Ltd. (middle, bottom)

The Winter's Tale

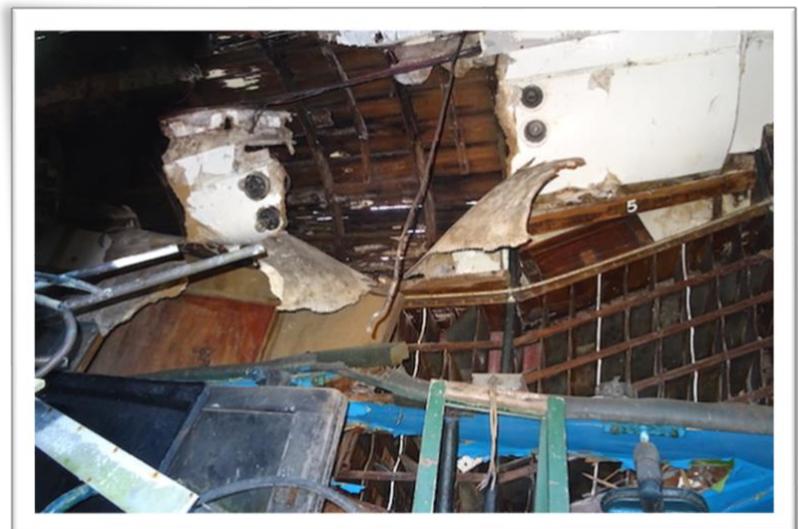
Words and photos by Bob Pamment, rolling stock director

Another winter has passed and taken its toll on some of the Bluebell assets located in the more out of the way parts of our lovely railway. Inspection of the Up yard and Ardingly Spur at Horsted Keynes has revealed storage sidings where nothing appears to have moved for years with a track condition that is, in some parts, so degraded that heavy locomotives cannot be permitted access for fear of track spread and discarded rolling stock items that have reached a dangerous stage of dereliction – a veritable graveyard.

Some items of rolling stock have reached a perilous state requiring urgent action. The first picture shows non-descript brake 4444 with the roof missing and hence the bodysides ready to be blown to the ground. Another picture shows a peep into the interior of TPO 4922, the sunlight can be seen coming through the slits in the roof and the interior is ruined. The last picture shows a wagon that has languished so long that a tree has grown up through the structure. Vehicle 4444 posed such an imminent threat that some hurried discussion with the Rolling Stock Committee, the Carriage & Wagon works manager and an obliging infrastructure manager enabled us to make it safe by taking off the ends and bodysides and salvaging what was worth saving. Given no change from the current stewardship arrangements, more such regrettable culls will have to be enacted – a sad tale in terms of vehicle preservation.

You could be forgiven for asking why we have let things get into such a state? And why didn't we restore vehicles like 4444 and put it under cover? Well, the answer is simple: insufficient resource and what covered accommodation we have being full of rolling stock assets that are higher up the value chain in terms of the railway story that we try to tell.

Our first priority has to be the 41 carriages in our working fleet, and these need a full overhaul every 30 years, an intermediate overhaul every 15 years and a door lock overhaul every 7.5 years which means we have to release in excess of four vehicles off overhaul every year and this is no mean feat. Nevertheless, in our C&W Mission Statement we state that, as well as running fleet overhauls, we will be undertaking one innovative project and one carriage restoration at any one time (as opposed to an overhaul given to the



running fleet members) and I would suggest that the 35 or so vehicles that are in the sidings and OP4 fall mostly into the restoration bracket.

Given the length of time that it takes us to achieve a restoration with the resources at our disposal, I think that I am being optimistic if I suggest that the 35 restorations would take, on average, at least five years each to achieve. If we say that vehicles like 4444 were restored towards the end of the list based on their position in the value chain in terms of the story that we are telling our visitors, then this means that we would not be starting 4444 for another 171 years! In that time most of the dozen or so vehicles not destined for OP4 will have succumbed to the existential threat of nature.

So, I think the issues that we must face right now are as follows:

- How to sustain the operating fleet at a size that meets the operating requirements, noting that failure to achieve this will limit the railway's income generation and could be the single point of failure that prevents all other aspirations being met.
- What the consist of the operating fleet should be in terms of vehicle type and era, noting that it is the output from the overhaul plan that influences this and vehicles that input to the plan must be in a condition that can be overhauled relatively rapidly so as to achieve the release of one 30-year overhaul, one intermediate overhaul and two door and locks overhaul per year.
- Which of the stored vehicles not in the operating fleet can sensibly be identified as destined to enter the working fleet, noting that given the limitations on maintenance and overhaul facilities including manpower, this limits the working fleet to less than 40 vehicles so one new one in means an existing running fleet member out into storage?
- What is the process for the identification of the sequence of the vehicles that will go into the "Restorations and Projects" slot in the overhaul plan such that when they emerge from the "Restorations and Projects" category they can either be put through the elements of overhaul required to make them serviceable at a release date that coincides with the withdrawal of the vehicle determined as sacrificial or go to their pre-determined area for static display (an example of this is the Elephant Van).
- What is the care plan that will sustain all the vehicles remaining out in the open and who will execute the plan, recognising that having

dismantled 4444 then if we change nothing the dozen or so vehicles remaining out in the elements will ultimately succumb to the same fate as 4444?

- Who will identify the vehicles that are best seconded to other railways for their long-term future and who will execute the outplacement plan in a timely fashion?

It could be that the following will help:

- Set up a volunteer register to include the volunteers that are prepared to be called upon to assist with carriage overhauls, identifying their skills and attributes.
- Set up a "Fleet Consist Stakeholder Forum", contributors to include BRPS, commercial, operations, C&W works management and possibly finance noting that Rob Hayward could input the Rolling Stock Committee view to BRPS.

It could be that the Fleet Consist Forum have to apply a set of criteria to each of our vehicles as below:

- Does the vehicle fulfil a tangible part in the story that we are trying to tell?
 - If No, then dispose.
 - If Yes, then:
- Is it beautiful/interesting and can we restore it to run and maintain it in service? If Yes, then keep in store of operational/potentially operational vehicles (OP4).
 - If No, can it be cosmetically restored and be part of the exhibition in the "Bluebell Exhibition Hall" (OP5)? If Yes, then keep in a siding until OP5 is built.
 - If No, then dispose.

Further suggestions are always welcome.

Best wishes to all our supporters.

HAVE YOUR SAY

The editor would be pleased to hear reader's comments on Bob's thought-provoking article.

You can contact us by email at bluebelltimes@bluebell-railway.com

Five Minutes With ... Mike Priestley

Name

Mike Priestley

Role

Society Trustee, station staff at Horsted Keynes, member of the Museum Management Committee

How long have you been involved with the Bluebell Railway?

Seven years – time has flown by

How did you first become involved?

I've had a passion for railways, particularly steam since a very early age. Living in Birmingham I was immersed in LMS and GWR and the 'Lickey Incline' was just 40 minutes by cycle – many happy days spent there with a bottle of Vimto and sandwiches watching the variety of bankers! Tysley, Aston and Monument Lane sheds were on the list too for a monthly visit.

Chatting to a business colleague in London over lunch in 2014 I asked him what he is doing at the weekend. Issuing tickets at Horsted Keynes station was the response. I was on the next Bluebell Railway "Find out More Day" – thank you, Clive [Cutbill, Horsted Keynes booking office volunteer].

What was your professional career?

Working for a law firm in London before I retired in 2015 (I was lucky to travel to work by boat avoiding the commuting chaos). Before that, operating two different modes of transport in the Royal Navy, although I had initially set my sights on being an engineer.

A slightly unusual route to my first job was via my pastime as a sea scout sailing on Bittell Reservoir, a canal feeder reservoir below the Longbridge British Leyland car works in Birmingham (where I also worked on the night shift during holidays in my late teens). Aged 16, during an annual inspection of our troop by the 'Admiralty', we were offered the opportunity to put our names forward



Platform duty at Horsted Keynes



Buccaneer ready to go, HMS Eagle, 1971

for a couple of places to gain a private pilot's licence and I was lucky. I could 'drive' a plane before I could drive a car!

This naturally led to the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm and Buccaneers, Wessex 35, Sea Kings and others as the one form of transport and driving ships



Sub-Lieutenant Mike Priestley, HMS Hermes



'My second command' – HMS Minerva

(steam turbines) as the other. This was of course a brilliant opportunity to visit railways around the world on port visits although my latter jobs based at the operational headquarters of NATO in Belgium required me to spend more time in the countries of our former Cold War enemies as well as the 'neutral countries' under the 'Partnership for Peace programme' dealing with their governments and heads of state – many opportunities for train travel too.

I finished my final three years in NATO HQ steering academic research and scientific development projects to provide the weapon systems we needed twenty years ahead, in 2020. During my time I attended many courses but the most interesting two were the 'resistance to interrogation course' and the 'media interview techniques course', both quite similar really! Then it was the start of my transition to civilian life at Manchester Business School.

What does your Bluebell Railway job involve?

As station staff the main focus is safety of the passengers and oneself while at the station. The day starts with a mug of tea and opening up and checking the station, briefing on the timetable, latest Instructions and other movements, and then assigned to one of the four working platforms, engaging with our visitors, and despatching the trains as required. With C&W, the Elephant Van, model railway, cinema room, history of filming at the station, the coffin carrier, Houdini's trunk and the heritage aspects, there is much to talk about with all ages. The day finishes with a mug of tea.

How often do you volunteer at the Railway?

It really depends on the frequency of the service. It can be several times per week, it can be less. Most days I will be doing something concerned with aspects of the Railway though.

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

Yes, with the Museum on the Management Committee. It started a few years ago with being 'volunteered' to assist with Arts Council Accreditation for the museum and continues with

the project for the Bluebell and Southern Railways Archive Centre.

I was also approached to help with the Governance Review Group and its development phases which was both complex and fulfilling. After the review report I was co-opted as a Society Trustee with an initial task of, together with a small team, implementing one of the review's key findings, the transition of the Society to a company limited by guarantee which we'd hoped to place before Society members two years ago. Hopefully a relaxation of Covid restrictions will let us progress this later this year. Currently I'm working with a Society/Company/Trust team developing the Future Strategy for the Railway – a vision of how we will preserve the Railway's heritage and prepare ourselves for the challenges of the next 60 years. The first 60 have been a tremendous achievement!

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

I do, but it's still 'classified'!

What's the best part of your job?

Colleagues on the Railway and seeing our visitors enjoy their time – a feeling of achievement and enjoyment at the end of every day. Also, I do get a buzz from polishing the brass work on the station – a hangover from those Navy days, I suspect.

What is your earliest train memory?

Brief flashes at the age of five travelling with my grandfather to the Liverpool Overhead Railway on the Manchester – Liverpool train. Clearer memories age six playing adjacent to the Cambrian railway in Dukedog days.

Do you have a model railway at home or in the garden?

Yes and no. Since I moved in 2016 to Shoreham from London to be closer to the Bluebell the 'N' gauge is back in boxes and the board stored although both have been aired during the pandemic! Although, as I type, those boxes have just arrived back in the hallway!

What was the most frustrating aspect of not being able to visit the Railway during the lockdowns?

Achieving 'the best parts of my job'. I do miss polishing that brass!

Anything else you want to tell us such as hobbies, interests or achievements?

The South Downs are about a mile away and most days I'll take a stroll there or cycle up the old rail track along the River Adur, Shoreham – Horsham route, now known as the Downs Link

I haven't lost my penchant for nightclubs – even as a senior citizen – although this has been temporarily thwarted these last 18 months

I'm also busy with the organisation of two Veterans charities: one associated with the Fleet Air Arm, the other connected with the Royal Navy.

Wowo Campsite and the Bluebell Line

By Jim O'Mulloy

When the kids were younger we would organise May bank holiday camping trips with other parents from their school in South London. We often stayed at the "Wowo" campsite, so called for being in earshot of Sheffield Park station at the end of the Bluebell Railway line. So of course we all loved a trip on the railway and a walk in the woods beside Kingscote station.

One day I took my harmonica and under cover of the noisy engine came up with a tune in time with the

chugging wheels and steam. That was the seed of the '[Bluebell Line](#)' song which paints a picture of the lovely time we had rocking alongside the glorious landscape and engineering and as a tribute to the workers and enthusiasts who keep it all going. The music and lyrics of the song 'Bluebell Line', written and sung are Copyright of me Jim O'Mulloy 2010.

For other tunes of mine please search for my name on Spotify. Also a new album is in the works due for release very soon.

Tales from the Shed: Part Two

Words and photo by Russell Pearce, Locomotive Department

In Part One we looked at some of the history of USA Tank No. 30064 and found out that it is a basic type of "Yankee Switcher" that was bought out of service by the SR after the Second World War. In this part we look at what it was like to work on in service.

Most of those who got to use it (which in my time up to its final withdrawal was everyone) really liked it because it was very reliable on the whole, rarely let you down in section and was strong. And, moreover, when you got it right, it went like a bomb and would drag most things up the line.

It was not an engine (many of my contemporaries would agree) for the shrinking violets among us. It has long travel piston valves, and this arrangement lends itself to being driven with a wide regulator and a tight "cut-off". Indeed, to minimise water consumption, it is best to do so. That way you make best use of that 210lbs boiler pressure. However, it is very entertaining when you do drive it like that, and the crew have to learn how to ignore "white knuckles" and enjoy the music.

Crucial to the success of this method is the laying of the fire, as alluded to in Part One, as was making sure the boiler was as full as it could be before departure – it was ideal to have the needle on the line as well. The wise driver would take it fairly easy out of the station to let the fire catch and get the train moving but once in Coneyborough Woods (Ketches), the idea was to pull the valve gear right up in the middle, fully open the regulator and let the gear out again to the optimal position for the weight of train.

This operation was really easy because, being a piston valve engine and with the reverser also being provided with a tasty spring, the pole was as light as a feather to use. That was why one shunter remarked that it was easier to make and break a buckeye coupling with her than with a class 09 (having now done that very task with both, I agree). The regulator handle is quite long because it was designed to be used while the driver was looking out the side and, when fully open, was up in roof so one needed to be a bit on the tall side to use it even though it had a crank, without which it would not have fitted in the cab at all when wide open.

Anyway, having got it in full regulator and the reverser set, all hell would break loose as the engine got stuck into the load. It would bounce on its (compensated) springs, the cylinders would cause the engine to wag its tail quite alarmingly and at the front the smoke box would appear to move from side to side quite independently of the tanks – and everything else. But provided the fire was right before you got to the bottom of Freshfield Bank, the draught would brighten the fire and you would be starting the "jack" to stop it blowing off. This was where that flat grate was good, the fire would stay where you left it. Apart from the blast moving the coal, the motion of the engine would have had your fire on the tube plate in less time that it takes to explain, were the grate a sloping one, such as in "Birch Grove", for example.

Anyway, we are on the move and steaming and we need water in the boiler. The injectors could be tricky in a way which those familiar with 541 will appreciate because if you are too aggressive with the steam valve the injector will just blow out. The violence of 30064 in motion made this more difficult to avoid and those walking the track could see where the process had failed because the overflow pipes point at the ground. If the jacks did blow out, a hole was dug in the ballast.

The whole business of using the engine was likely to cause sensory overload. The chimney was not that noisy (compared with, say, No. 541 or a "P") but everything else was. The ride caused all the plate work to vibrate and rattle and, of course, the fire irons had to hang on a hook in the middle of the cab and so got very involved in the "jam" session of mechanical music, punctuated with the chime whistle and the clatter of the firehole door.

I say the chimney was not especially loud, and nor is it compared with other engines, but it does make quite a noise when the beast is let out the cage, but this depends on the valve gear which has an odd trait. Under power, the engine would move off



sedately enough but there was a point at which the difference of one notch on the reversing quadrant could make was marked. It had a dual personality, the “quiet” notch or “noisy” notch we called it – you get the idea anyway.

One day I was firing to a fairly-new driver and we had a fairly experienced third man. The driver wanted to fire and I was instructed to show the third man how to drive. So the driver carefully crafted his fire while sat in the station as usual and on getting the tip I coached the cleaner in setting off nicely, getting the train on the move and round into the woods. Around the P-Way hut I told him to pull the engine up into mid-gear and open the regulator fully (being a below average height individual I had to assist with this). Then I told him to let the engine out.

Now, I was a Senior Fireman at the time and quite used to driving the engine, both shunting and up the line under Jack Owen’s eagle eye. But I did not appreciate that this cleaner was less familiar with the engine than me and was expecting him to simply drop the gear out to the optimal setting, having opened the “big-valve”. After all, as I say, the gear is as light as a feather. I was not expecting him to be

quite unused to the additional pull on the reverser now that the regulator was fully open. Thus when he released the catch handle, the valve gear tasted freedom and leapt straight out into full forward gear – the chimney practically leapt off the smokebox, the cleaner, still hanging on to the reversing lever was dragged bodily into the space between the boiler and brake ejector while the carefully laid fire was almost entirely sprayed around the Sussex countryside for all to enjoy. I leaned in and offered the advice that maybe that was a bit much and pulled the gear up to the “quiet” notch while the driver hurriedly got some coal back on the grate. The air from that side of the cab may have been blue and the cleaner learned something new. Every day, as they say is, after all, a learning day ... how we laughed!

In Part Three we will look at some of the practicalities of using the Yankee tank on a busy Sunday and think about its legacy.

On This Day, 14 May

By Tony Hillman, assistant Museum curator

Three pictures from the Bluebell Photographic Archive taken on 14 May. All three photos by John J Smith. Thanks to John Sharp, Martin Elms, John Creed, Richard Peirce and Roger Merry-Price for finding the pictures and providing the notes.



The 10.44am departure for Sevenoaks leaves Bexhill West on Sunday 14th May 1950. Bopeep Tunnel, between Bopeep Junction and St Leonard's Warrior Square on the main coastal line to Hastings, had been closed for engineering work since November 1949, and would re-open in three weeks' time. During this period, some Hastings departures towards Tonbridge were rescheduled to leave from Bexhill West, regaining their normal pathways on the main line at Crowhurst. In this case the 10.40 from Hastings to Sevenoaks became the 10.44 from Bexhill West, running 4 minutes behind the original 10.40 path of the branch shuttle service, which normally provided a connection at Crowhurst into the main line train.

The 10.40 branch service was usually a pull-push set, but here we see the regular main line formation of an ex-SECR L Class locomotive and three coaches. The three passenger-rated vans were not diagrammed for this train, but possibly

included to avoid running a separate freight service. Loco 31769 is in an "in-between" condition, with its BR number painted on buffer beam and cabside, but not yet provided with a smokebox number or shed plate. Over two years after nationalisation, the tender still proclaims "SOUTHERN". A September 1952 photograph of 31769, on a hop-pickers' special at London Bridge, does show both plates now fitted to the smokebox door, lined livery and the early BR lion on the tender side. This loco was one of the first twelve of its class, built as SECR 769 by Beyer, Peacock in 1914. The remaining ten were built by Borsig in Berlin, shipped over to the UK in kit form at erected at Ashford Works by Borsig fitters in June and July of the same year. These men then returned to Germany shortly before Britain entered the Great War. 31769 was the first locomotive of its class to be withdrawn, in April 1956, while the last two lingered until December 1961. None was preserved.



Adams Well Crossing, situated between Groombridge and Tunbridge Wells West, photographed on Monday 14th May 1951. The train is the 10.45am service from London Bridge to Tunbridge Wells West, headed by Maunsell U1 Class loco 31903. The U1 was a three-cylinder version of the earlier U Class, hence the flat plate between the smokebox door and the buffer beam, behind which the third central cylinder was located. The entire class of 20 new locos were built at Eastleigh in 1931, following trials with the unique converted three-cylinder ex-K1 Class *River Frome*. None of the U1's survived into preservation, but four of the two-cylinder U Class remain: two of these are maintained by the Maunsell Society and based on the Bluebell Railway.

The level crossing only carried a bridleway across the railway, hence the ballast surface, and was initially controlled from a ground level hut located in the space seen here behind the wicket gate. This was replaced by the elevated signal box on 26th March 1924; fifteen months after the

Grouping. However, the box is of LBSCR design, suggesting it was one of the last produced in the ex-LBSCR signal works at Coldblow Lane, New Cross. It also contained an LBSCR 1905 pattern lever frame. Until 1933 the box was a block post, but was then reduced to a gate box in one of the SR's economy drives. It was finally abolished, along with the four signals it controlled, on 3rd December 1958. Despite the closure of the line by BR in 1985, it was re-opened by the Spa Valley Railway in 1997, and trains do once more pass Adams Well. The substantial pair of semi-detached railway houses have been demolished, but the bridleway still crosses the line here.



This photograph was taken by John J Smith when he visited the closed SER Elham Valley Line, situated in East Kent, on 14th May 1952.

Seen here is Lyminge Station, on the southern section, opened on 4th July 1887 and finally closed to passengers on 16th June 1947. The main station building, in the centre of picture, consisted of a single storey, faced with Kentish clapboard, and was on the Up Canterbury platform. The design was one that was common at smaller SER stations, including Elham and Barham. The Down Folkestone platform had a small SER passenger shelter, again faced in Kentish clapboard.

The line was double track throughout and a 21-lever signal box was built to the north of the Up platform, to the right of the photographer. A siding was provided for the local coal merchant, visible here under the loading gauge. Another siding, on the right just before the bridge, served a dock for cattle and sheep.

In 1931, as an economy measure, the line was singled between Lyminge and Harbledown Junction, with the closure of signal boxes at the five intermediate stations. In 1937 the box here was demolished and replaced by a signal frame in the station booking office. A bay was built out onto the platform to give the porter-signalman a clear view; it can be seen projecting from the main building.

Passenger services were suspended during World War 2 when the line became a military railway. After closure to freight in March 1948, the yard and station building continued to be used by the coal merchant. From the mid-1950s until 1982 the site was then used by Kent County Council as a highway maintenance depot, then in 1987 the station building was renovated and re-opened as Lyminge Library; it can still be visited today.

Word Search

Compiled by Paul Bromley, communications director

Many singers and celebrities have visited the Bluebell Railway over the years and this month’s puzzle looks at some of those famous people.

You may recall the feature in the September issue (issue 12) of The Bluebell Times about the museum team’s photo-op recreating the cover of Elton John’s 1970 ‘Tumbleweed Connection’ album. The Railway has also been used for pop videos by stars including Pet Shop Boys and Tracey Ullman.

There are more details about the Railway’s filming connections in a special book ‘[The Line to the Stars](#)’ available from the online shop.

The answers are hidden horizontally, vertically or diagonally and in a forwards or backwards direction.

L N M Z H O N O T L E N S L A	ELTON
E L V E E A P A V K A A S G F	JOHN
R N F A J R H Y K S D M O X T	CILLA
N W W P Z T M E N T S L B Q E	BLACK
T Q L R H Q K C D T J L U X P	RINGO
R P S R G T R A A Y M U W F I	STARR
M I S P U Q J R O A Q V T B T	PET
B A N Z S O R T U S M U B T Q	SHOP
L V W G V S V Q P X Z Q Y W Q	BOYS
A I F A O H Z C I R H D B F D	TRACEY
C K Q D N O S N I M N V J B J	ULLMAN
K W L Z B P Y S F U H T S I G	
X M N O T G O H G D O D J I I	
U T J B H F B O H J J C N I Y	
M H F D P D A L L I C K W N E	

SOLUTION TO WORD SEARCH IN ISSUE 19

H A X L I D O F F A D E Q R S	EGGS
I O L W H W P A I J C T N A A	HUNT
R R S R U Y U E D A R A P K I	CHOCOLATE
U U P Z V S Q Z D U M L A X N	BUNNY
B G X K C G N N F E C O V Q Q	HOT
B U N V F T O H A H G C I J D	CROSS
W K L U K H H B K W I O M I L	BUN
Q M L E I P R S B S W H D C R	DAFFODIL
B G W G W B J R U D R C D O B	PARADE
R M O G A M M H Z O Y J S R Z	BONNET
X H U S J Y L Z O T N M N F O	
Q L E A N T P C S V N C T E O	
X N Y Y E B A F A M U U H J G	
B I J E B T E N N O B I H M K	
C U J Z K S S O R C E L Q M N	



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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](http://www.bluebell-railway.com) or follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/bluebellrailway), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/bluebellrailway) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/bluebellrailway).

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