



Visiting Ivatt 2MT 41313 with the SR-livery set during Branch Line Weekend. Photo: David Cable

The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

April 2025

IN THIS ISSUE

So spring is finally here. The first bluebells are starting to appear by the lineside, and recent weeks have been mostly blessed with dry weather and blue skies, a relief from the seemingly incessant rain of the winter. And spring on the Bluebell of course means Branch Line Weekend, enlivened this year by Ivatt 2MT No. 41313, paying a visit courtesy of our friends on the Isle of Wight Steam Railway. The spirited performances of the locomotive over both that and the following weekend give a tantalising glimpse of the future we can expect when the reconstruction of our own closely-related No. 84030 is complete.

This issue in many ways illustrates the diversity of what makes the Bluebell a special place. As well as the Ivatt, Branch Line Weekend showcased "Fenchurch" on a rake of goods wagons restored by the Bluebell Goods Division, and "Beachy Head" on the Metropolitan carriages, now back in service after door lock replacement and a mainstay of services this spring. There is news of the impending launch into service of our next Maunsell carriage, which already looks absolutely stunning. There is innovation and modern technology too: we still need to produce patterns for locomotive parts, but increasingly they are drawn in CAD and then 3D printed. And of course, nothing would be possible without the efforts of a small army of volunteer fund raisers – whether that is displayed by the regularly-seen "Awake the Giant" t-shirts or the incredible long-term fundraising success of the Carriage Shop, supporting a variety of loco and carriage & wagon projects. In an uncertain world, we should cherish the vibrancy on show in our little corner of Sussex.

Tom James, Editor

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Watts Occurring

By Roy Watts, BRPS Chairman

It is not my intention to write too much this month. Following the sad news of the passing of our President, Gordon Pettitt, I feel it is appropriate to leave the words to the obituary written by a Bluebell member and published with permission of The Daily Telegraph. [See page 3 – Ed]

Gordon was of immense help to this Railway at a time when it desperately needed it to reach the goal of running into East Grinstead.

Not only that, as President of the Railway he took a very keen interest in the operation, and in particular its people. On his visits, he would specifically ask to meet certain groups or people and make a point about what they did and what did they need to do the job better. Likewise, a phone call with a pointed question meant there was something he had seen that he wasn't quite happy with or in his eyes, not the way things should be run.

Clearly, he was still a force to be reckoned with even in retirement – witness the comments of many of his former colleagues who would still dread “a call from the Governor!”

At the same time, he commanded and got the respect he deserved; and in return, he would return that respect and certainly offer words of sound advice.

As with most people, there is always a weak link and if you ever felt the conversation wasn't going your way, the tactic was to somehow bring in the subject of Gresley's masterpieces, the class A4 Pacific's, guaranteed game changer!

Becoming custodians of “his” train was the least we could do for all that he had done for the Bluebell and he maintained his close relationship with [4-VEP 3417](#) right through being a frequent visitor to Strawberry Hill depot and in regular communication with the [SETG](#) team.

For that, it makes the mission to return “his” train to Waterloo with all its clandestine activities to achieve that goal, all the more poignant. Even then, as a clear example of the respect held for him, doors were swung wide open to make it happen just by the mere mention of his name. They couldn't do enough!

Judging by the comments on social media and elsewhere, there were many people who knew him through his time on the Railway or his charitable work and it was evident just how much he was held in high esteem, no matter the circumstances.

The Bluebell Railway has sadly lost its President to whom we owe a great deal – but the Railway world has lost one of its Giants.

Rest in peace Mr President.

“Sir Archibald Sinclair” passes Waterworks on a service train on 6 April. It carries a wreath in remembrance of Gordon Pettitt

Photo: Peter Edwards



Gordon Pettitt

GORDON PETTITT, who has died aged 90, was one of British Rail's most visionary and effective leaders in the years leading up to privatisation, as the last general manager of BR's Southern Region and managing director of its Provincial sector, which he relaunched as Regional Railways.

Gentle-mannered but decisive, with a first-rate mind and unruly hair, Pettitt was a key lieutenant of BR's reforming chairman Sir Robert Reid in transforming the railway's component parts from quasi-military fiefdoms into hard-nosed businesses.

After three Southern Region trains collided near Clapham Junction in 1988, killing 35 people and seriously injuring 69, he offered Reid his resignation, but his chairman refused it. He trusted Pettitt – who had just given a series of dignified television interviews – to prevent a recurrence, and restore staff and passenger morale. Pettitt, notably, withstood media pressure to sack

individual signalling engineers he felt were being scapegoated for a systemic failure.

Working alongside Chris Green, the buccaneering sector director of Network SouthEast (NSE), Pettitt at the Southern pushed through the electrification of several lines, improved service quality, and prepared for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Politically astute, he personally signed every letter to the 62 MPs in his patch.

In 1990 he took charge of BR's heavily loss-making Provincial sector, with more than half its route mileage and stations and 37,000 staff. He was tasked with reinventing Provincial – whose offering had already started to improve – as a self-contained business responsible for its own infrastructure.

Pettitt launched Regional Railways in April 1991, with an emphasis on "congestion-busting" in Birmingham, Glasgow and Leeds and driving down



costs. But a year later, John Major was re-elected on a manifesto commitment to privatise the railways, and with another upheaval in prospect, Pettitt left.

Gordon Charles Pettitt was born on April 12 1934, and brought up at Hatfield, Hertfordshire, by adoptive parents, Charles and Annie Pettitt. His father drove local trains for the London & North Eastern Railway. Father and son sang together in the choir of Hatfield's parish church, until Charles Pettitt suffered a fatal heart attack during an evening practice.

Gordon developed a passion for the railways, and leaving St Columba's College, St Albans, at 16 joined what was now British Railways as a junior clerk at Knebworth station. Either side of National Service with the Army in Germany – where he met his wife – he worked in operating posts in BR's Kings Cross division, being selected for management training in 1960.

Pettitt became BR's Sheffield divisional commercial manager in 1974 and regional freight sales manager in 1977. Next year he was transferred to the Western Region as chief passenger manager, just as the High Speed Train fleet was introduced.

He returned to the Eastern Region in 1979, as divisional manager at Liverpool Street, a demanding role in operating and industrial relations terms. He was heavily involved in planning the redevelopment of Liverpool Street station, preparing and presenting BR's evidence to Select Committees of both Houses of Parliament.

The creation of BR's sectors alongside the regions in 1982 brought Pettitt's appointment as Deputy Director, London & South East and Deputy General Manager of the Southern Region; two years on, he was promoted to General Manager.

The Clapham disaster, during the morning peak on December 12 1988, overshadowed his eight years of achievement on the Southern. The 07.18 from Basingstoke to Waterloo was approaching Clapham Junction when the driver saw the signal ahead of him change from green to red. Unable to pull up at that signal, he halted at the next and

urged the signaller to set all signals at danger and contact the emergency services.

Shortly after, the 06.30 from Bournemouth ran into the back of the Basingstoke train. Then a third, empty, train passing in the other direction ploughed into the wreckage. The driver of a fourth train managed to pull up.

Pupils and staff from the adjacent Emanuel School were first on the scene, being commended for their help by Margaret Thatcher. The rescue operation was hampered because the railway is in a cutting, with a metal fence at the top and a wall at the bottom.

Hurrying to the scene, Pettitt met key staff, then briefed the media. He said more work was needed to establish the exact cause of the accident, but the fault appeared to be with how BR had installed the signalling equipment, rather than the system itself.

Accepting responsibility on behalf of BR, he said: "You can rest assured that no trains will run until we are satisfied with the safety." He then rallied his shell-shocked management team, reminding them they still had a railway to run.

The collision turned out to have been caused by a wiring fault. New wiring had been installed, but the old wires had been left in place and loose. The work had been done weeks before, but the previous day equipment had been moved and the loose, uninsulated wire had created a false feed to a relay.

An inquiry chaired by Anthony Hidden QC heard that the technician responsible was working his 13th consecutive seven-day week and his work had not been independently inspected, as it should have been. In particular, a wire count that would have shown a wire had not been removed was not carried out.

Hidden was critical of the health and safety culture within BR, and among his 93 recommendations were that a senior project manager be responsible for all aspects of any major, safety-critical project such as re-signalling. BR was fined £250,000 for violations of health and safety law in connection with the crash.

As Reid made way to a second Bob Reid (from Shell) as BR chairman, Pettitt in May 1990 took charge of the Provincial sector. A month later, the BR Board announced the abolition of the regions from April 1992, with each sector gaining full responsibility for the infrastructure and safe operation of its railway.

Pettitt covered 15,700 miles by rail getting to know his territory – being most concerned at BR's "awful" offering between Birmingham and Manchester. Setting out to "run Regional Railways like a company", he moved its headquarters from London to Birmingham, split it into five geographical profit centres – one for ScotRail – and recruited finance and planning directors from industry. Chris Gibb, later chief executive of Virgin and ScotRail, says: "Gordon had been given a lot of railways that didn't make financial sense, and he turned them into something we could be proud of."

Closures – of the Settle & Carlisle line and in Lincolnshire – were still on Whitehall's agenda, but despite having himself pushed through closures in the past, Pettitt held the line against more. Commissioning research that showed the worst lossmakers were rural lines recommended for closure by Beeching in 1963 but reprieved, he concentrated investment on getting commuter traffic off the roads.

When BR's workshops put up the price of new electric trains Provincial was expected to buy for Birmingham and Manchester, Pettitt found a private-sector supplier. When the Government vetoed new trains for newly-electrified lines into Leeds and Bradford, he secured redundant units from NSE to plug the gap. Regional Railways increased its income despite the economy going into recession, and opened or reopened 25 stations and three branch lines.

Regional Railways operated for just 374 days before Major was re-elected and privatisation came in prospect. By the time Pettitt put his "congestion-busting" proposals – plus plans to electrify the trans-Pennine route – to the transport minister Roger Freeman, the government's mind was on other things.

Pettitt was prepared for the possibility of privatisation, but assumed Regional Railways would be sold off as a whole. When it became clear this would not happen, he retired.

For the next three decades, key figures in the railway industry queued to pick his brain, on a commercial basis or informally. Asked by the Department for Transport for his opinion on the structure of privatisation, Pettitt suggested separating Glasgow commuter services from the rest of ScotRail, but was told this was politically unacceptable.

He worked as railway advisor to the first rail regulator, John Swift QC; contributed to the development of High Speed 1 and the railway to Heathrow Terminal 5; and was involved with French-owned Connex as it bid for franchises. From 2003 to 2006, he served on Network Rail's property advisory board.

In 2004, a preserved former South West Trains electric unit was named after him. Pettitt told the naming ceremony at Waterloo station: "I was bowled over when I was told I would have a train named after me. The unit has been beautifully restored and for the general public it's a piece of history." It was brought back to Waterloo for his 90th birthday.

Since 2014, Pettitt had been president of the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society, having been instrumental in securing the steam railway's reconnection to the main line at East Grinstead.

He was at various times president of the Institution of Railway Operators, a governor of Middlesex Polytechnic and a trustee of the Woking Homes and Railway Charities. He is the author (with Nicholas Comfort) of *The Regional Railways Story* (2015).

He was appointed OBE in 1991.

Gordon Pettitt married Ursula Hokamp in 1956. She survives him, with their three daughters.

We thank The Daily Telegraph for permission to use this obituary – Ed.

News in brief

NEW FINANCE DIRECTOR

By Neil Glaskin, Bluebell Railway Plc Chairman

I am very pleased to welcome Chris Welch to the Bluebell Railway. Chris is joining the PLC Board as our new Finance Director. I will let Chris introduce himself:

“ I was born and brought up in New Zealand during the final years of steam operations by NZ Railways. Occasional train spotting with my father meant I have always found steam power fascinating. I am a retired Chartered Accountant (a life member of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand).

In New Zealand I was a partner in a mid-size business services practice and on the board of a large wine company. In 1997 I came to the UK with my wife and family for a 'sabbatical'. We loved it here and have ended up staying. In the UK I have worked as the Finance Director of a number of non-profit organisations.

I enjoy volunteering – it's great to do something that is fun, interesting and where you get to meet a lot of people while doing something useful. When I'm not working with the Bluebell team, I'm busy with family, cycling, traveling and I have recently bought myself a 1952 Daimler. I have also been involved for many years with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa's foundation for young opera singers.

A huge number of volunteers have worked very hard over many years to make the Bluebell Railway the important and successful organisation it has become. I'm delighted to have a chance to do my bit to help it grow and develop further.”

We are very grateful to have someone of Chris' experience come forward to join the PLC Board at what remains a challenging time for the business.

RECIPROCAL TRAVEL

By Gavin Bennett, Sheffield Park Booking Office

The Society has negotiated reciprocal travel agreements with the railways listed below for WORKING MEMBERS ONLY. Free travel should be granted to each person producing a valid grade card/proof that they are a working member.

FREE TRAVEL (PRIV RATE when Special Event fares in force)

Bluebell (inc Bulleid Society, Maunsell Locomotive Society etc) working members.

- ➔ Avon Valley Railway
- ➔ Dean Forest Railway
- ➔ Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway
- ➔ Great Central Railway
- ➔ East Lancs Railway
- ➔ Isle of Wight Steam Railway
- ➔ Keighley & Worth Valley Railway
- ➔ Kent & East Sussex Railway
- ➔ Llangollen Railway (NOT Special Events)
- ➔ Mid Hants Railway
- ➔ North Yorkshire Moors Railway
- ➔ Ravensglass & Eskdale Railway
- ➔ Scottish Railway Preservation Society
- ➔ Severn Valley Railway
- ➔ Spa Valley Railway
- ➔ Swanage Railway
- ➔ Stoomtram Hoorn-Medemblik (NL)

Want to be a Guard?

By Gordon Dudman

Are you looking for a new challenge supporting your Bluebell Railway? One of the most high-profile jobs on the railway is that of a passenger train guard. You are the individual responsible for the safety of all those visitors travelling on one of our trains. Platform staff, of whom you may currently be a member, have a key role in ensuring safe despatch, but it is the guard who has the ultimate responsibility. Later this year we will be running a training course, a mixture of both theory and practical which will prepare you for this vitally important role. You'll start off with a preview day with one of our existing guards who will give you an appreciation of what the role encompasses, from preparing your train for the day ahead to ensuring that it has been secured at the end of the day. There then follow a series of classroom sessions which combine both theory and practical tasks such as coupling and uncoupling vehicles, shunting, understanding how our signalling system works and your role when things do not work to plan. Most of these sessions will take place using the Stroudley Room in our Heritage Skills Centre at Horsted Keynes. These

will take place one Sunday a month. Once you have demonstrated your confidence in these basic skills, you'll spend time honing your skills under the tutelage of an experienced guard, carrying out all the duties of a passenger train guard.

After working a variety of our trains, you'll then be ready to face an examination in your knowledge of rules and regulations (its mostly multi-choice). Then you get to spend a shift with one of our Guards' Inspectors who will watch you undertake a normal range of guard's duties followed by discussion of 'what might go wrong' scenarios. Then, within a week or so, you'll be on your own, looking after the safety of our visitors and our trains.

If this appeals, please have a chat with the Guards' Roster Clerk, Peter Underwood. Peter can sometimes be found as part of the team at Sheffield Park, or via e-mail: puguardsrosters@hotmail.com or give him a call on 01444 453039 (weekday early evenings are best).



"Little and large" at Branch Line Weekend.

"Fenchurch" pilots "Sir Archibald Sinclair" at Waterworks Bridge. The Terrier was coupled to the service train to save a path working back to Sheffield Park after finishing its working day at Horsted Keynes.

Photo: Andrew Crampton

Volunteering, Patterns and Innovation

Words and photos by Rich Tanton, Pattern Shop Volunteer

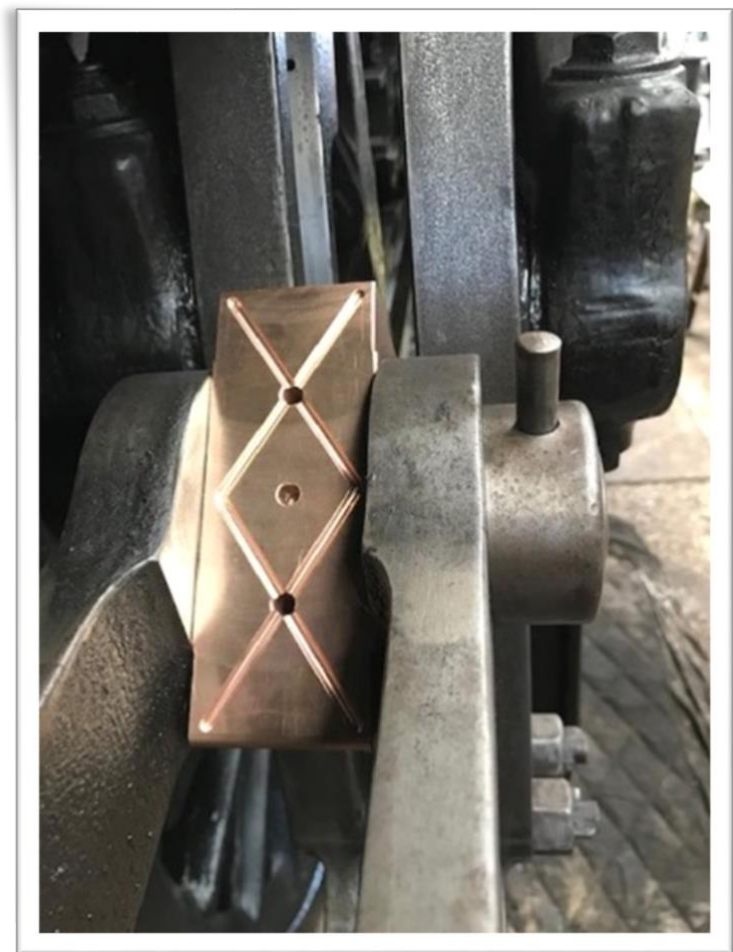
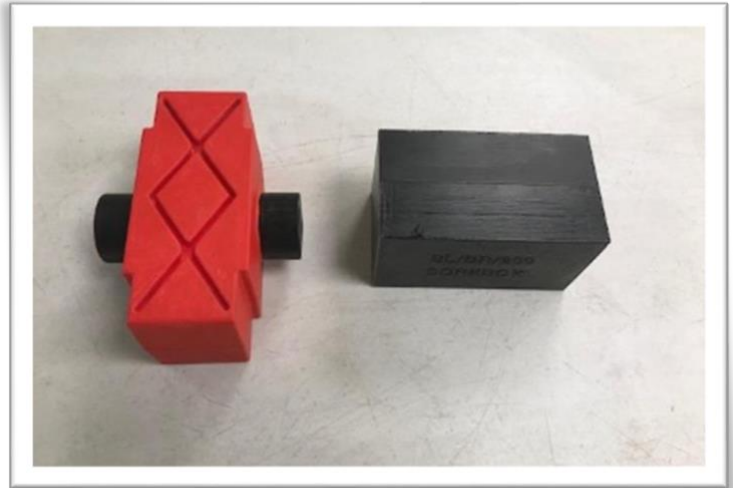
One of the great motivations of volunteering in the Loco Works is the satisfaction in playing a small part in the bigger machine, culminating when a loco leaves the works after a repair or complete overhaul. Seeing the loco head out onto the line to greet the paying public after all the effort, expertise and energy of so many in the team of staff and volunteers is very satisfying.

I am part of the team that repairs, restores and designs and makes patterns. Patterns are generally wooden, sometimes metal and increasingly (under certain circumstances) plastic shapes. These are used to form a mould in sand into which metal is poured (or cast) to make the component. The components are then either used "as cast" (such as firebars) or in many more cases they are returned to our Loco Works for machining to the shape and tolerances required to fit the loco.

The Loco Works has a small, dedicated team who look after our pattern library, organising their storage and cataloguing them. We have many patterns originating from pre-BR times to BR patterns and later. Some are original and many have been made over the years by volunteers and contractors.

When a new pattern is required, we rely on another team of dedicated volunteers who look after our drawings. This vital and unique resource is underpinned by their great knowledge of the drawings and of our locos. The team have painstakingly catalogued our physical drawings and are digitizing them so those of us at the making end of the system can have easy access to the information we need. Occasionally no drawing exists so we may need to create a drawing from the worn component before we proceed, thus adding to the drawing library. Once drawn and made either in wood, 3D printed or in some cases a combination of both techniques, the pattern is sent to a foundry to be cast.

Over the past two years using the extensive experience of another volunteer we have produced



Valve rod die block pattern and corebox for No. 80151.

Drawing completed in 3D CAD and then the pattern is 3D printed in plastic. The shape is cast in bronze with the hole (part in black) through as part of the shape. The casting is then machined to size in our machine shop and the part fitted to the engine.

a considerable number of drawings using CAD. Some of these are for new patterns and some for where detailed drawings for components are required. Using these CAD drawings and the expertise of our volunteer, we have begun to 3D print some of our smaller patterns. We have proved that these patterns work in practice, they can be manufactured relatively quickly and save money with material costs and machining time. The valve rod die block pattern is a particularly good example of making savings by casting rather than machining from a solid blank. We have produced some patterns which use both traditional wood and plastic 3D printed parts combined within the same product. A clear example of this is the bunker number plates for Fenchurch, which are a combination of traditional wood and 3D printed parts. Initially we used our volunteer's CAD software package and 3D printer until we purchased a printer for the Loco Works last year. We have recently received a generous donation from a benefactor which has been augmented by the Bluebell Railway Trust and has allowed us to purchase an industry-standard 3D CAD package for use within the Loco Works. This is a significant step forward and assistance in bringing this innovation to us. Training on the use of the CAD package starts soon for both paid staff and volunteers.

In short, this shows team work makes the steam work (as my grandchildren would say!)



Fenchurch bunker number pattern

Top: Drawing made in 3D CAD and six parts printed. Parts located together with dowels and then mounted onto a plate.

Middle: Numbers added whole pattern painted and then ready for the foundry.

Bottom: Completed casting, painted and polished and bolted to the bunker side.

Q Class 541 Overhaul Update

By Chris Hunford and Steve Pilcher, Maunsell Locomotive Society

The new tender tank for 541 was due to arrive at Sheffield Park in the week ending Friday 4 April, but at the time of writing this report, it had been delayed due to an issue with the gearbox on the lorry that it was planned to use. Hopefully it will not take too long to rectify and the new tender tank will appear at Sheffield Park.

Meanwhile the Sheffield Park workshop staff have completed fabricating the new front dragbox for the tender chassis and riveting it into place. They have also welded in two short lengths to the inner frames, to replace corroded sections.

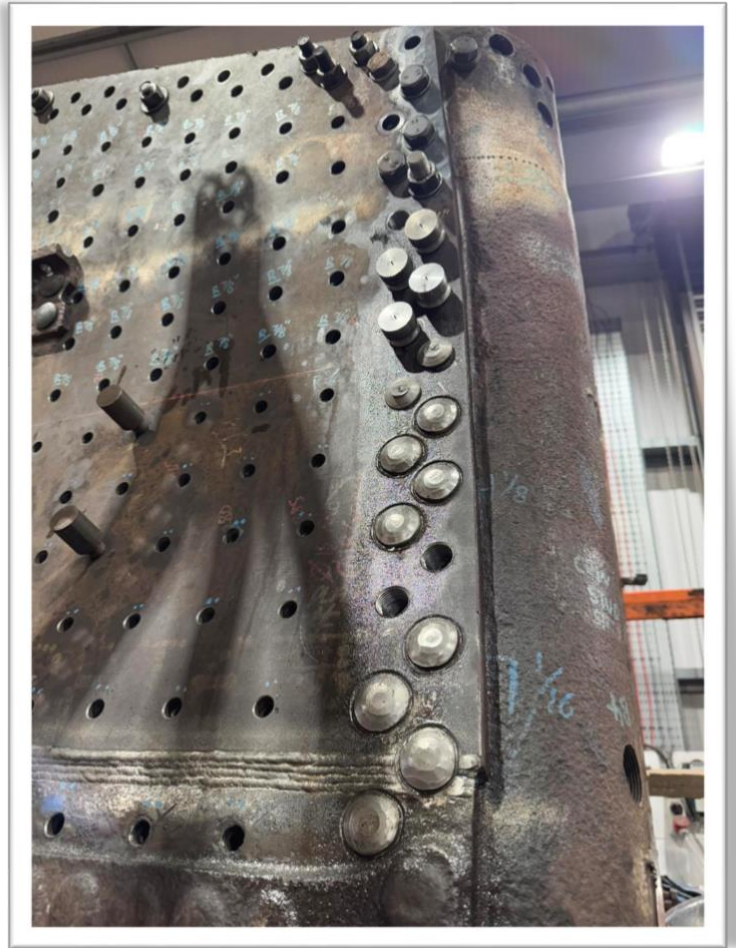
The Maunsell Locomotive Society working party have continued cleaning and painting various parts of 541's cladding.

Down at Leaky Finders, virtually all the new copper stays are in place on the sides of the firebox. New patch screws have been machined on site and the majority have been fitted to secure both the lower outer firebox wrapper sides to the backhead and throat plate. New Monel^{*} stays are being machined in house ready for fitting in due course. New tubes have arrived on site and a start will be made soon on brazing the copper bottle ends onto the flue tubes.

Optical alignment of the left-hand side of the loco chassis has been completed.

The next edition of the Maunsell Locomotive Society's Newsletter has been held back to await the arrival of the new tender tank. More details of the overhaul of 541 and Stowe will be contained in the Newsletter. We would appreciate the support of more members, so if you are not already a Member and would like to join, please download a [membership form](#) from the [Society's website](#).

** Monel is a nickel-copper alloy with high corrosion resistance, sometimes used for firebox stays and other applications where strength and corrosion resistance are desirable – Ed.*



Above: Patch screws being fitted.

Photo courtesy Leaky Finders

Below: Lower half of backhead cladding in grey undercoat.

Photo Steve Pilcher



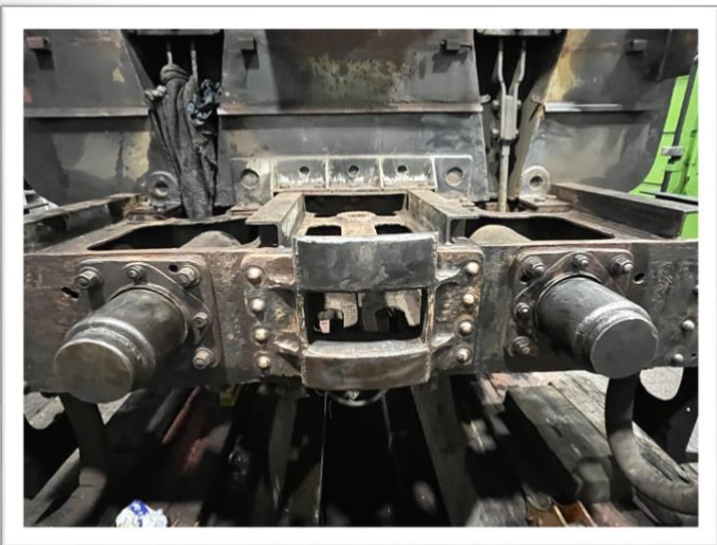
92240 Strides Into 2025

By Andy Taylor and Tom Newble *Photos by* Andy Taylor, Keith Dengate and Tom Newble

It has been a busy early quarter in 2025, for the Awake the Giant team who are working on overhauling and restoring BR 9F 92240. If you are interested in joining the team and being involved, then please get in touch with the Team Leader Andy Taylor by emailing Andy.Taylor@bluebellrailway.co.uk.

Saturday 18 January

This was the first big gathering of team members since the annual team meeting in the previous December, on a very cold subzero day! There was seven team members including a new recruit. Tom and Andy had paired up and started work on the drag box on the front of the tender. They used a range of scrappers and wire brushing with paraffin and white spirit to remove grease and polish up the worked area. During this party Keith continued, from the Friday working parties, on making new gaskets and degreasing the axle boxes. Peter and Rick work on wet and dry sanding the tender sides whilst Duncan and Simon continued working from the pit in the maintenance shed on cleaning underneath the tender. The photo below shows work after the first day's work on the drag box.



Thursday 23 January

Along with SE&CR No. 65, 92240's tender underwent NDT (non-destructive testing) exams on their wheel sets as part of their winter maintenance checks. These examinations are vital for ensuring their ongoing safety and performance. The team are pleased to announce that 92240 passed.

Saturday 1 February

This Saturday was another large working party, on the tender of 92240. Andy and Tom had again paired up with Ken to continue working on the drag box. Work today consisted of degreasing then scrapping and wire brushing the inner sections before adding a coating of primer. The middle section proved very tricky and indeed required needle gunning. Peter continued the wet and dry rubbing down whilst Martin and John worked on the back of the tender and some additional metal work and applying coats of primer and top coats. Duncan and Simon continued in the underneath, cleaning and wire brushing. Due to the tender having been shunted midweek, it was on the adjacent road with no pit meaning, Simon and Duncan could work on the fiddlier areas including the corners and working around the braking gear.

Sunday 23 February

The team had a painting demonstration with a paint expert from the Bluebell Railway. Members of the team learned about mixing the correct quantities of paints for the correct finish and the best way to apply the top coats and gloss for later on in the restoration.

Photo: Andy Taylor

IN OTHER NEWS

The team have new stickers for our younger fans, so when the stall is around, why not pop over and pick one up! Ken Upton has been working on the merchandise selection and has become very popular with members and visitors since it launched. Merchandise is readily available to buy at the majority of galas at the Bluebell Railway. Merchandise can be brought from 92240's stand as well as in the carriage shop. Mark Wilson has been working extremely hard on publishing the recent edition of the 'Giant Gazette'. If you are interested in subscribing, please contact: giantgazette92240@yahoo.co.uk.

Tom Newble has continued to work on building the archive of 92240. If you have any material on 92240 that you would like to add to the collection, please contact Tom at Awakethegiant@outlook.com. Tom has managed to secure the use of a hut at the railway, meaning 92240 now has a pop-up shop and will be on Sheffield Park, platform one. The annual photography competition will be running again, launching at Branch Line Gala. More details will also be available on the Bluebell website.

BUY 92240 A GIFT!

The team are grateful in any form of support and donations towards the restoration of 92240. We have recently launched 'Buy 92240 a Gift' where supporters are able to purchase items which will be used in the restoration rather than donate a monetary gift, from our Amazon Wishlist. Currently, we are the only locomotive group doing this at the Bluebell Railway. If you would like to browse 92240's wish list, please click on the link https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/2PVHCY0MYHBB?ref=wl_share.



Above: The drag box with the first coat of primer applied.

Photo: Tom Newble

Below: The back of the tender after the painting session.

Photo: Keith Dengate



Growing Our Maunsell Carriage Set

By Keith Leppard, Southern Railway Coach Group

We've had three SR Maunsell carriages in service for a number of years, two open thirds to different designs ([1309](#) and [1336](#)) and a brake composite ([6686](#)). They are soon to be joined by the narrow bodied 'Hastings' brake third, [3687](#), which visited the paintshop in March for a final touch-up and varnish. It has since been in the maintenance area while its ride height and vacuum brake system were sorted out. With those jobs done, there's really not much left to do before 3687 enters traffic.

Meanwhile, the rest of the set has been receiving some TLC. 1309 was in the paintshop in December last year, followed by 1336 in the early part of 2025. Now 6686 is in there for some attention to a few bad spots and a full revarnish. The plan is for the three of them to be looking their best, to complement 3687 when it's launched, providing a sparkling set of 1930's splendour and comfort for our passengers to travel in.

Series 16 Episode 4 of Michael Portillo's series "Great Railway Journeys", which aired on 10 April 2025, visited the Bluebell Railway. After a cab ride in 80151 from East Grinstead, Portillo visited the Carriage and Wagon workshop at Horsted Keynes where he was shown the art of trimming carriage seats. The visit concluded by interviewing carriage restorer Kuristo Demans in the splendour of Pullman Car 54 to discuss the ornate woodwork and marquetry in that carriage. The [episode is available to watch on iPlayer](#) – Ed.



Above: 3687 gleams in the sun outside the carriage workshop

Below: 6686 in the paint shop at Horsted Keynes



Looking After Withyham 'Box

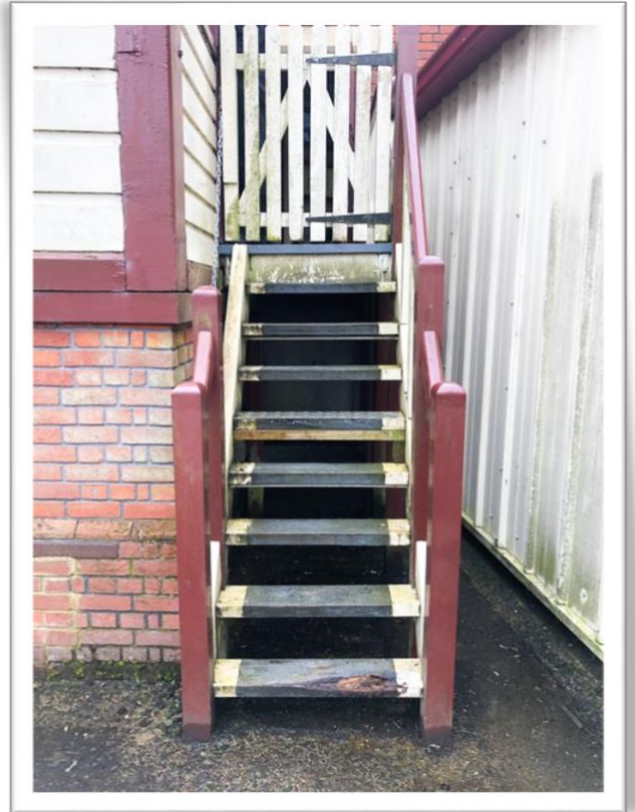
By Alastair Nisbet, Museum volunteer

At the northern end of Platform 2 at Sheffield Park station stands a signal box that once controlled the lines and level crossing in the Wealden village of Withyham. It served its community for more than 100 years from October 1866 to January 1967. Its staff controlled trains on the London Brighton and South Coast Railway between Three Bridges and Tunbridge Wells, and also the level crossing.

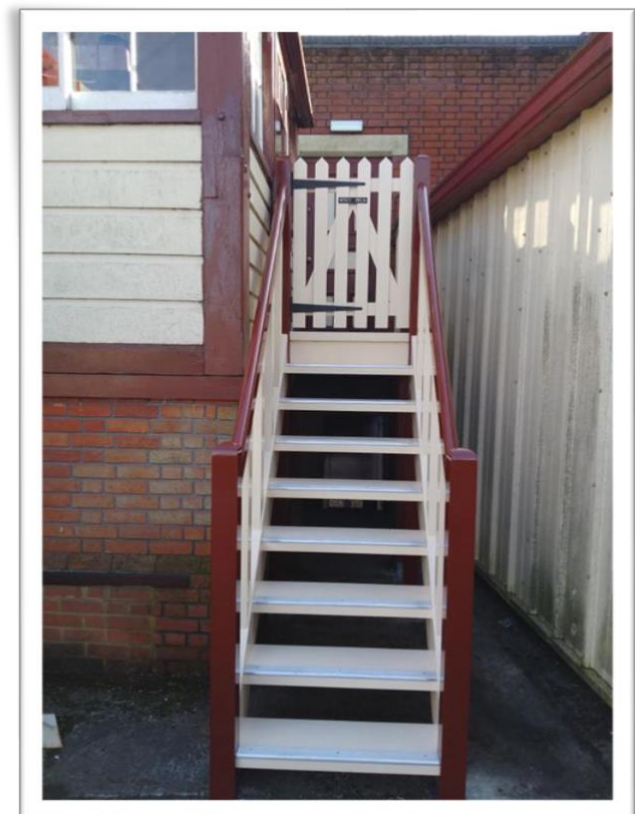
When the line was closed in January 1967, this historically-significant signal box was purchased by the late John Whiting who subsequently donated it to the Bluebell Railway. It was erected at the end of the museum's building on Platform 2 at Sheffield Park Station and now forms an integral part of the Bluebell Railway Museum.

Visitors to the museum are invited to enter the signal box and, under the guidance of a steward, experience the work of a signaller by pulling the original levers and sounding the bells. The signal box is a very popular part of the museum and adds greatly to the museum experience and visitors' understanding of the safe operation of a single-track railway. Because it is not operational, it is the only signal box on the railway that is accessible to the public when the railway and museum are open.

Over time, the steps to the signal box, used by staff, suffered from rot and became potentially unsafe. The steps now have been replaced, to a design more in keeping with the original steps, by the local building firm, Canning Ericsson Ltd. The Museum acknowledges the very generous donation towards the cost of the project made by the [Chalk Cliff Trust](#) in Lewes.



Before (above) and after (below) photos of the replaced steps



Branch Line Weekend

Star of the show at Branch Line Weekend, held 14 – 16 March, was Ivatt 2MT tank No. 41313, making a rare visit to the mainland from its home on the Isle of Wight Steam Railway. Home fleet representation came from Stroudley A1 No. 72 "Fenchurch", Stirling O1 No. 65, Marsh H2 No. 32424 "Beachy Head" and Bulleid rebuilt Battle of Britain No. 34059 "Sir Archibald Sinclair", with the usual intensive timetable in operation.



Left: 41313 heads south from Three Arch Bridge

Photo: David Cable

Below: "Fenchurch" in the afternoon sun with a short goods train heads north towards Horsted Keynes

Photo: David Cable



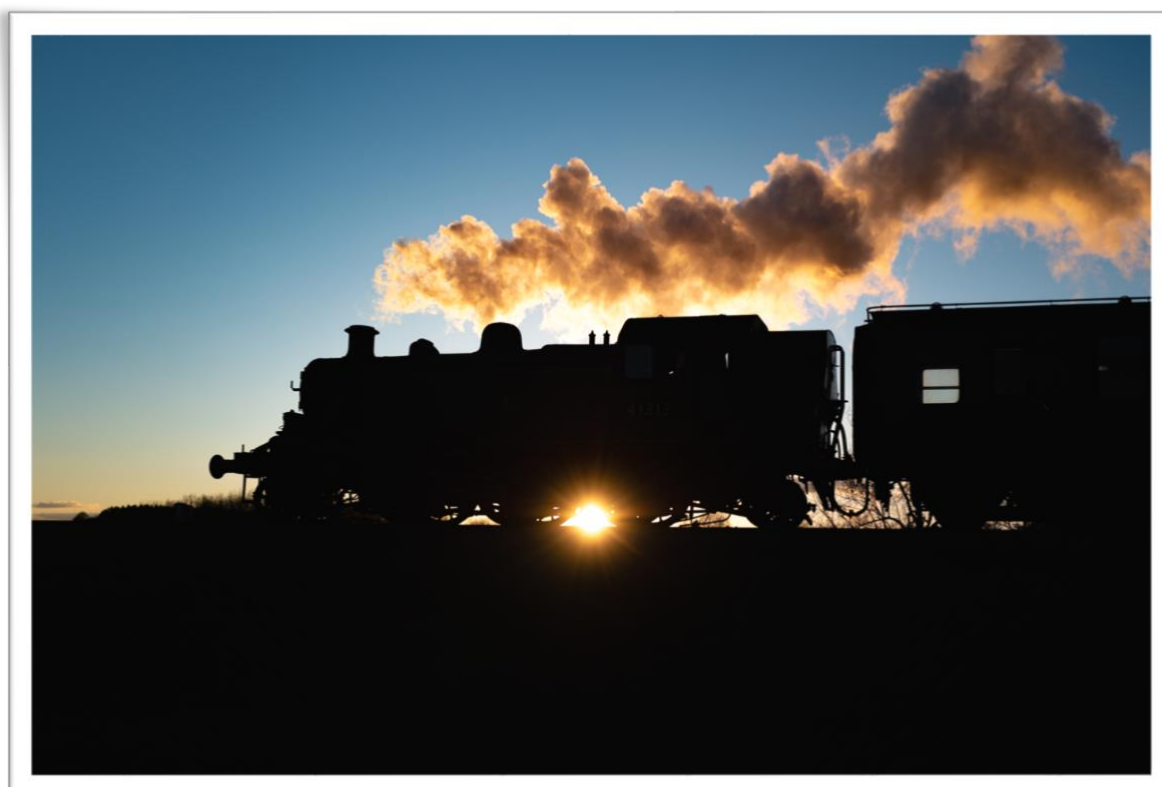


Left: "Beachy Head" with the Metropolitan set at Birchstone Bridge.

Photo: David Cable

Below: 41313 leaves Horsted Keynes with the 5.15pm train from East Grinstead on 16 March

Photo: Nick Gilliam



Bluebell Charity Walk

By John Deane, Infrastructure volunteer

Roger Ward and I completed the walk in good time, averaging a little over 3mph, and arriving just five minutes late on our planned ETA.

We were greeted at Sheffield Park by faithful supporters, banners and balloons, which made Roger and I feel really welcome. The British Heart Foundation area manager, Helen Smith, was also present to congratulate us and thank us for our efforts. The crowning treats were a mug of tea and a comfy chair in Chris Knibb's palatial office, which we were really grateful for. Walking on ballast is not the most pleasant of surfaces and the constant changing of sleeper interval adds nothing to the experience.

Once again I would like to thank those who allowed Roger and I the freedom to carry out the walk and I have tried to ensure that their kindness has been at least to some extent repaid by my attempts to further the good reputation of the Bluebell. The story of the walk has been carried by both the county and local media and a recent broadcast enabled me to spotlight the Bluebell and discuss the benefits of volunteering in some detail.

This is my final opportunity to pass on my thanks to the 118 generous souls, many of whom remain anonymous, who showed their support by their donations to the British Heart Foundation. As of 28 March the total donated stands at £5029, to which must be added approximately £1000 in Gift Aid, a most gratifying outcome against a target of only £1500. Thanks are also due to my stalwart companion, Roger, there through all the more than one hundred training miles as well as the railway walk on the day. Literally he helped me to press on towards the light at the end of the West Hoathly tunnel.

Finally, I'd like to add my sincere thanks to the editor for allowing me space to share my happiness with you, the readers, at the satisfactory result.



Carriage Shop donates £1000

By Chris Wilson, Carriage Shop volunteer

The Carriage Shop team are pleased to be able to donate £500 to the Bluebell Railway [Southern Railway Coach Group](#) and £500 to the [Bluebell Railway Goods Division](#). These funds were raised from the sales of our Exclusive Ward & Son wagon that we issued last month.

On Saturday 26 April during the [Toy & Rail Collector Fair](#) we will be releasing our next limited-edition wagon. This OO gauge model has been produced exclusively for us by Rapido UK and features the livery of Gregory & Smith of Brighton. It is based on the photograph in Simon Turner's book, [Private Owner Wagons of the South-East – Part 2](#).

This wagon is limited to 150 models and will only be available from the Carriage Shop at Horsted Keynes station.

All profits from the sales of these models will again be donated equally to the Bluebell Railway Southern Coach Group and the Bluebell Railway Goods Division to support each group's important restoration work.

The Carriage Shop has extended opening days throughout the Easter holidays and for the Toy & Rail Collector Fair on Saturday 26 April.

We currently have a wide selection of Horsted Keynes exclusive souvenirs, model railway items, railway and transport books and Railway Art by Matthew Cousins. We are also supporting the [1305 Thumper Gang](#), [Bluebell Railway Goods Division](#) and the [Fenchurch Fund](#) by stocking a small selection of their items in the shop.

The Carriage Shop is always pleased to receive donations of model railway items, books, DVDs, bound magazines, pictures, postcards, photographs, slides, mugs, badges, keyrings or other railway or transport material. If you can help please contact:

bluebellrailwaycarriageshop@gmail.com

For our opening times and news please visit our [Facebook page](#).



Above: Members of the SR Coach Group (left to right) Keith Leppard, David Rhydderch, Tony Clements, Richard Salmon and Richard Bevis. For more information and to join the group please visit www.bluebell-railway.co.uk/sr-coach-group/

Below: Limited Edition 7-Plank Gregory & Smith wagon produced by Rapido exclusively for the Carriage Shop at Horsted Keynes station.



Photos From The Museum Website

By Chris Wilson, Bluebell Railway archive volunteer

This month we have added a further 157 images to the Bluebell Railway Museum website bringing the total now available to 27,206.

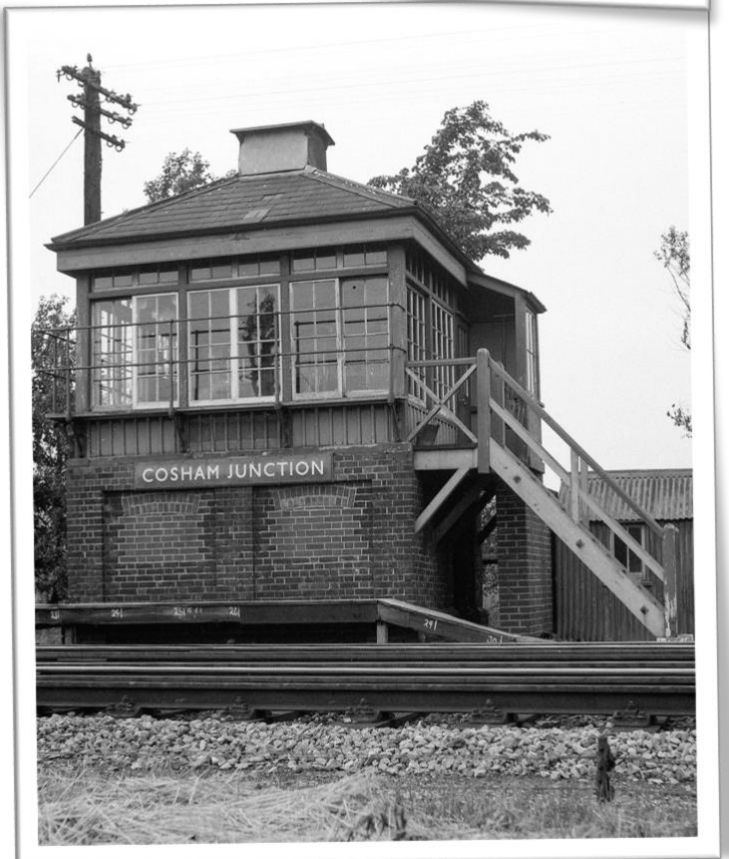
These new additions all come from the camera of Joe Kent and showcase more of his images taken in 1955. Locations on the Southern include Eastleigh, Newhaven, Havant, Cosham, Hove and Preston Park Pullman Car Works. Other locations include Stratford, Derby and Trent Junction.

We would like to thank Chris Totty who has generously donated his collection of ca.2,000 photographs to the Archive. These photographs were taken by Chris and will be available on the website in due course.

If you have a collection of photographs, negatives, slides or digital images you are interested in depositing with the Archive and preserving for the future please get in touch with us by emailing photos@bluebell-railway-museum.co.uk.

Every photograph sale directly helps the Photograph Archive giving us much needed funds to invest in conservation and storage materials. The information needed to pay for orders online by BACS is now included on every order form.

To view and order go to www.brm-archive.co.uk. There are various searching methods, including by locomotive number or class and location. The content key search allows you to see all the images of a particular type, for example, all the images taken of Pullmans. Use the New key to see all the latest images including those mentioned and shown here.



Top: BR(S) H2 class No. 32421 'South Foreland' at Hove on 29 June 1955.

Photo: Joe Kent [200148]

Middle: BR(S) class 70 No. 20002 leaving Newhaven Town with a Boat Train to Victoria on 25 June 1955.

Photo: Joe Kent [200124]

Bottom: Cosham Junction Signal Box on 25 June 1955.

Photo: Joe Kent [200120]

On This Day - 11 April

By Tony Hillman, Deputy Curator

Three pictures from the Bluebell Photographic Archive taken on the 11 April. Thanks to John Creed, Martin Elms, Richard Peirce, Chris Sutton, Roger Merry-Price and Chris Wilson for finding the pictures and researching the notes.



Despite the northern half of the Kent & East Sussex line having closed to all traffic, over three months earlier, in January 1954, Saturday 10 April 1954 saw the passage of a permanent way train from Ashford to Robertsbridge.

That evening, between 10pm and 5.55am the following morning, track replacement was due to take place between Robertsbridge and Battle. An engineering crane was necessary and the one selected from Ashford was, according to the Railway Observer 'out of loading gauge' to travel through the tunnels of the Hastings line. Accordingly, it was decided to route the train, in both directions, via the KESR, reversing at Headcorn on both the outward and return journeys.

Consisting of a steam crane, wagon and two brake vans the train left Ashford sidings at 1.25pm behind an ex SECR 0-6-0 O1 class. Upon arrival at Rolvenden at 2.50pm the locomotive was detached and returned to Ashford shed (74A) as it was too heavy to continue over the southern half of the line. The train was taken over by an ex LBSCR 0-6-0T A1X class from St. Leonards

shed (74E). Arrival at Robertsbridge was scheduled for 4.10pm whereupon the crane and wagon were left in the Down Long Siding for use that evening.

The photograph, taken the following morning, Sunday 11 April, shows the same train en-route from Robertsbridge back to Ashford, between High Halden Road and Tenterden St. Michaels, O1 31064 having replaced A1X 32655 at Rolvenden. The train had left Robertsbridge at 3.15pm and was scheduled back at Ashford sidings at 5.55pm.

31064, then No. 64, was built at an O class in November 1896 at Ashford Works, one of a class of 122, to the design of James Stirling. His successor, Harry Wainwright, started modifying some of them to O1s. No. 64 was one of 58 so treated, being rebuilt in September 1913. The locomotive was withdrawn from Stewarts Lane shed (73A) in May 1958.

Photo: J.J. Smith [043657]



On Saturday 11 April 1959, ex-Midland Railway 1P Class 0-4-4T, 58065 stands together with push-pull coach M24448M at Southwell, Nottinghamshire with the 2.15pm to Rolleston Junction. The view here is looking west, the line to Rolleston is behind the photographer and the route to Mansfield continues beyond the level crossing in the background.

Southwell was opened in 1847 by the Midland Railway initially at the end of a two-and-a-half-mile branch from Rolleston on the Nottingham to Lincoln line. By 1871, the line had been extended towards Mansfield on the Nottingham to Worksop line. Several short branches were subsequently constructed to serve expanding collieries in the area.

After the First World War the number of people travelling on the line fell sharply and in 1929, with the exception of the original Rolleston Junction to Southwell stretch, it was closed to passenger traffic. By the 1950s, this short section was being worked by the type of single coach push-pull train

shown in the photograph. This shuttle service, known locally as the "Southwell Paddy", ran about around 15 times a day, with an end-to-end journey time of five minutes.

58065 was one of fifty-six 1P Class locomotives built by the Midland Railway between 1876 and 1900. It entered traffic in February 1892 as 2019, although it was renumbered to 1367 in 1907. By 1959 it had been allocated to Lincoln (40A) and, along with 58085, was one of two 1Ps regularly working the Southwell branch. The locomotive was withdrawn in October 1959. Interestingly, the final 1P in service, 58086, ended its career on 31 August 1960 at Highbridge Shed, which until 1958 had been part of the Southern Region.

Southwell closed to passengers on 16 June 1959, soon after the photograph was taken. Nevertheless, the whole Rolleston to Mansfield line continued to be used by freight until the late 1960s and the last section near Mansfield only closed in the early 1980s.

Photo: John Smith [045213]



Viewed from an elevated position on Thursday 11 April 1968 is Arundel Signal Box. Just over 30 years since it opened on 27 March 1938, it replaced a life expired Saxby & Farmer box opened in 1876.

Classified by the Signalling Record Society as an S.R. Type 13, it was one of a number built between 1936 and 1940 by the Southern Railway in a distinctive style, colloquially known "Glasshouse" or "Odeon style" Signal Boxes. Succeeded during the war years between 1940 and 1945 by S.R. Type 14 ARP (Air Raid Precaution) boxes, a few Type 13s were built after WW2 as they had been planned before war broke out.

Containing a Westinghouse A2 type frame of 42 levers at 4in centres, it worked with Arundel Jct. to the south and Amberley to the north, although between the latter two was a "break section" box called Burpham, dating from 1914. It was only manned when traffic was heavy, such as Bank Holiday weekends, but closed in 1964 as traffic

had declined following the loss of leisure traffic to the private car.

In November 1979 the lever frame was replaced by an NX Panel in anticipation of the role of the box changing, as on 9 December 1979 it took over control of the triangular junction previously controlled by Arundel Jct. and Ford signal boxes, now working with Angmering, Littlehampton and Barnham boxes.

In March 2014 the line northwards was re-signalled between Arundel and Horsham, controlled from Three Bridges ROC (Railway Operating Centre). Thereafter Arundel "fringed" with Three Bridges ROC as opposed to Amberley. This remains the current situation pending the eventual transfer of the overall area of Arundel control to Three Bridges ROC.

Photo: John Scrace [o80022]

RAILWAY 200

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SHEFFIELD PARK & ON
SELECTED TRAINS



Photo: Rob Howard

The Bluebell Times

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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](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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