



Fifties throwback at Horsted Keynes. Photo: John Creasey

The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

August 2025

IN THIS ISSUE

By a quirk of family life, I've not been able to visit the railway for any of July or the beginning of August, and I am writing this editorial 12,000 miles away from Sussex in the middle of a southern-hemisphere winter. So while the railway industry is staging perhaps the largest celebration of its kind for fifty years, my connection has come entirely from the photographs and videos posted by others closer to the action.

The Rail 200 celebrations (and let's not quibble about the role of a group of influential north-eastern Quakers in defining 1825 as *the* significant date in railway history, to the exclusion of other dates of valid claim!) fall at the same time as [our own 65th anniversary](#). It is worth pausing to reflect on that number: for fully one third of the history of railways in this country, the Bluebell has been preserving and operating our own piece of that story. Somehow, by hook or by crook, we have managed to run the line from Sheffield Park for longer than British Railways, longer than the Southern Railway, longer even than the London Brighton & South Coast Railway managed. While there are still a handful of volunteers and members who have been on the whole 65 year journey, in most cases we are into the second, third or even fourth generation of people who have been sufficiently entranced to make that commitment that "this is worth preserving".

Well over 2,000 people visited the "Inspiration" train while it was at Horsted Keynes. In amongst them, let us hope that many were inspired not only by the opportunities afforded by a career in the modern rail industry, but also to look at the value to be had in celebrating and preserving our history of this slice of Sussex countryside.

Tom James, Editor

<i>Watts Occurring</i>	2
<i>Become A Guard In 2026</i>	4
<i>Railway 200</i>	5
<i>Train of the Future Competition</i>	7
<i>New Rails and Toilets at Horsted Keynes</i>	8
<i>Q Class 541 Overhaul Progress</i>	15
<i>84030 Rebuild Project</i>	17
<i>Refreshing East Grinstead</i>	19
<i>Bluebell Archive in Inspiration</i>	20
<i>Carriage Shop Donates £500</i> .	21
<i>Photos From The Museum Website</i>	22
<i>On This Day – 8 August</i>	23
<i>Tail Lamp</i>	26

Watts Occurring

By Roy Watts, BRPS Chairman

I've just despatched the Inspiration Train on its journey to Derby, surely one of the most colourful consists to have graced our rails? Took me back to the early days when our trains ran in rakes of multi-coloured liveries – authentic for the individual stock but of course those coaches were from several different railway companies and "rainbow trains" were a regular feature.

Time has moved on and our regular trains feature a far more refined style of carriages in appropriate rakes. Even Beachy Head at the head of the 4-wheelers and the Chesham set looks absolutely correct.

So the sight of five British Railways Mk3 coaches, topped and tailed by the special liveried class 66s in various bright shades and hues sitting at a 1940's themed station brought a lot of colour to

the scene. Mind you, who would have thought this would have even been possible a few years ago? Like everything that has happened over 65 years, our evolution never stops.

We look back with admiration at those black and white pictures of the railway showing scenes from a bygone era, and make the passing thought that you wish you could have been there to witness the scene yourself. I dare say that that includes those steam-hauled trains of wagons going to Newhaven for scrap, or that great line-up of stock for the North Kent electrification programme – and the sad sight of the redundant steam-hauled stock that it replaced.

Nonetheless, we have gone from those formative years of two locomotives and two carriages and five miles of track to over 30 locos, over 150



Visiting Class 66 Diesel 66710 with our own E6040 leaving platform 4/5 at Horsted Keynes on Sunday 27 July with the 4.02pm departure for East Grinstead.

Photo: Peter Edwards



Horsted Keynes platform 1 with the Railway 200 Inspiration carriages plus an S&T display in the L&SWR brake and the Hastings set in minus one road. See page 8 for a report on recent infrastructure work at Horsted Keynes

Photo: Bruce Healey.

carriages and wagons and 11 miles of track. But we must not forget everything else that makes up our operations and just how diverse the component parts that make up our Railway can be.

Likewise, our volunteers come from a multitude of backgrounds, but each brings their respective talents to the party – and that does not necessarily mean being a train driver as a profession means you become a train driver here is taken for granted. Rather, you choose a role you feel comfortable with and make it work. That might mean gardening, upholstery repairs, building a brick wall or tending the lineside and fencing, there is a multitude of opportunities on offer.

Bluebell people are extremely passionate people, driven by the desire to save and restore items from nothing – more often than not the skeletal remains of an item with a once-proud past. We do it because it is what we want to see and, more importantly, to show the good people who visit us (and pay good money for the privilege) exactly how those skills from a bygone era are maintained.

So far this year some 63,321 people have visited us and I can report to you that our December seasonal services have already started selling well.

All this is quite encouraging considering our current position. Another positive outcome has been that even with some tough financial targets, exceeding the budget is a welcome boost.

Just as our railway is reliant on cash, it is also people-dependent and in the circle of life (apologies Elton!) we need the latter if we are to survive for the next 65 years. Otherwise what we do today will face an uncertain future, and nobody wants that. Therefore, we need to encourage more people to join us in whatever role or department of their choosing to carry on the mantle of 65 years of us being the proud owners of our piece of history. Yes, making the tea for the team is the essential competency requirement, but there are numerous role options to choose from and no contract to sign except becoming part of the team.

I was fortunate enough to be invited to the Great Gathering held at the Alstom works in Derby, a

huge event to celebrate 200 years of Railways. The Bluebell Railway's 4VEP, so well cared for and painstakingly maintained by the [SETG](#), attracted many visitors and compliments about its condition. (I'm not quite sure a 4-car Southern Electric multiple unit ever shared adjoining roads in a depot with an LMS Compound, a Coronation Pacific or even a Great Western King even if it was in blue livery!). The most visible aspect about this event wasn't just the enthusiasts but the families, groups of people of all ages, the attraction of

Railways lives on and it's how we capture such interest and develop it further to an involvement.

We have upheld the legacy of those Founding Four and we have to ensure that our legacy is that all that has been achieved and painstakingly restored has a secure future and the right people in place to continue our proud traditions.

Happy 65th, Bluebell Railway!



Left: 4VEP unit 'Gordon Pettitt' at Derby for The Great Gathering. **Right:** Class 66719 departs with the 'Inspiration Train', 31 July

Both photos: Roy Watts

Become A Guard In 2026

By Gordon Dudman, volunteer guard

Do you fancy becoming a key part of the Bluebell's operations team as a Passenger Train Guard? The next training programme will start in mid-September and then run monthly sessions through to Easter next year. At which point your training will move from being classroom based to working alongside an experienced guard. The classroom sessions will run, approximately on the third Sunday of each month, mostly at Horsted Keynes

using the Stroudley Room in the Heritage Skills Centre, or at Sheffield Park. The venue will depend on the availability of suitable coaching stock and locomotives with which practice basic skills. If you think this is a challenge that appeals, please contact our Guards Roster Clerk, PeterUnderwood. You can contact him on puguardsrosters@hotmail.com or speak to him when he's on duty at Sheffield Park.

Railway 200

By Ruth Rowatt, Marketing Manager

Across the nation, we are celebrating 200 years of train travel in the UK. The Bluebell Railway has fully embraced the chance to engage with children, families and rail enthusiasts using Railway 200 as a vehicle for improvement and opportunity.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR.

SCHOOLS, GUIDES AND SCOUTS

Throughout June, July and into August the Bluebell team have run educational days for young people. We have welcomed speakers from rail industry talking about topics as diverse as block chain ticketing, rail safety, AI hazard detection, railway engineering, regenerative braking and sustainability.

The railway has opened non-public areas of carriage and wagon and run tours which include comparing carriage development through the ages and identifying safety or design features of signals, telecoms, carriages and locomotives and asked why these were invented and what is the role of an engineer?

On top of that, young people have engaged with hands-on science, technology, engineering and maths activities, which has brought the fun and challenge, including Eggsperiment! (kindly loaned by the London Transport Museum), opportunities to talk to industry professionals and explore railway careers were built into the school visits.

Over this period, we have welcomed around 200 children and young people from Primary, Secondary and Special Education Schools, Scouts and members of Girlguiding. We still have another Guide and Scout date planned for September.

THE INSPIRATION TRAIN

From the 23 – 29 July, 2,286 people stepped aboard the national exhibition train 'Inspiration' whilst it was in the newly restored Platform 1 at Horsted Keynes Station.



Visitors walked through carriages packed full of information and interactive exhibits which represented railways past, present and future. Local partners and our own museum were represented in the partners area and lots of additional activities and displays were available at the station. Access to the special train was free with an All-Day Rover ticket or a Horsted Keynes Platform Ticket. It was a great atmosphere at the largest station on the line, with a constant buzz of visitors making the most of their day.

LEGACY

We were awarded a £250,000 National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to renovate platform 1 at Horsted Keynes to enable us to welcome the national exhibition train 'Inspiration' and create displays and activities throughout the summer. We have also developed a digital visitor's guide, which will launch very soon.

New relationships, and established ones, with rail industry professionals have been created and cemented, enabling Bluebell to explore ways of working together in the future. For example, the signing of a route agreement with Network Rail which gives our railway £30,000 worth of unwanted materials every year.

Notable partnerships with HS2, Crosstech, London South Bank University, Network Rail and GTR have been forged and Bluebell Railway has benefitted from their support through donations of materials, publicity, volunteer support and presence during our education phase activities.

PUBLICITY

A publicity agreement with GTR has allowed Bluebell Railway to reach a larger audience and promote some of the fabulous events and service we provide. We currently have 32 publicity boards on the concourse at Victoria Station explaining the many facets of Bluebell Railway including who we are and what we do. Railway 200 @ Bluebell Railway has featured in the press and on radio.



RAILWAY 200 ISN'T FINISHED YET!

There is still time to enjoy [Railway 200](#) at the Bluebell Railway. Every Wednesday and Friday throughout the Summer holidays, there will be additional activities at Horsted Keynes Station which are free with your travel or station entry ticket. Kids for a quid on the trains also applies (except on special events), so it is brilliant value.

A busy steam timetable plus an early, lunchtime and late diesel service makes it even easier to visit all our stations and make connections with the main line at East Grinstead. Don't forget the [Network Rail 2 for 1 offer](#) if you are travelling by main line train.

FREE ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Available on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the summer holiday.

6th, 13th, 15th, 20th, 22nd, 27th and 29th August at Horsted Keynes Station.

London Transport Museum STEM activity – Breaking Eggsperiment.

Build an underground railway using magnetic Lego track on a backboard. Run the Lego train. Can you get it to and stop in the station using gravity alone? Marquee Platform 5

Intelino Trains

A miniature railway with robot trains which read the coloured codes inserted by the operator into the track. What will you ask the train to do? Marquee Platform 5

GTR Driving Simulator Bus:

Try the train driver simulator that Thames Link and Southern use to train their new drivers. Not as easy as it looks! Via the marquee on Platform 5

Signals and Telecoms display and tours.

A beautifully put together display in carriage 1520 on Platform 1. From here, join a 'secret signalman tour' to the non-public area including signal box and relay room.

Carriage and Wagon workshop access – E Road – self guided and accessed via the station road.

Carriage and Wagon lunch time tour

12:40 – 1:10 pm See where heritage skills come alive and meet with modern engineering. Platform 5

THANK YOU

None of this would have been possible without the huge support of our partners and most importantly, the volunteers. Thank you to everyone who has got behind and supported Railway 200 @ the Bluebell Railway with their time and energy. Hopefully, we have inspired some young people to consider careers in railways and opened their eyes to some of what Bluebell has to offer. We couldn't do it without you.

Train of the Future Competition

Design a train of the future and enter for a chance to WIN tickets for the fantastic Steamlights train!

There will be one winner from each age group (see more below). The prize includes:

- ➡ Amazing displays. A truly magical and unique winter experience.
- ➡ A private compartment that seats 8 people.
- ➡ A choice of dates: 28th Nov, 3rd Dec, or 4th Dec with a late afternoon or early evening departure available.
- ➡ An invitation for you and your family to see your work exhibited at the Bluebell Railway between 25th August to 7th September 2025.

Runner up prize

There will also be two runners up in each group who will be invited to the exhibition at Bluebell Railway between 25th August to 7th September 2025 and given a family pass to travel on our trains for that day.

All entries should arrive by Wednesday 20th August 2025.

Group 1 – Up to 11 years

Get creative and draw a train of the future from your imagination.

- ➡ Where does it go?
- ➡ What does it look like?
- ➡ Who are the passengers?
- ➡ Does it have any special features?

Group 2 – For those aged 12 to 17

The challenge is to visualise a future train, including interior and exterior design, and practical considerations for construction.

- ➡ Is it sustainable and environmentally friendly?
- ➡ What materials have you chosen to use and why?
- ➡ Is it economical?
- ➡ Does it suit the needs of a train operating company?
- ➡ What elements of passenger safety and comfort have you considered?
- ➡ Is there something innovative about your design?

How we will use your designs

We may display images of your drawings on our website or social media platforms. We will never share contact details and only use them to inform the winners and share any additional news regarding exhibiting the work.

We will curate an exhibition of designs at the Bluebell Railway which will go on a scheduled display from 25th August to 7th September 2025 at Horsted Keynes Station and, depending on the number of entries, may feature at more than one of our stations.

Further details about locations of the exhibition will appear on the [Railway 200](#) page on our website.

New Rails and Toilets at Horsted Keynes

By Jon Goff, Infrastructure department

Since Bruce Healey's report in the [May issue](#) of *The Bluebell Times*, a lot of has been done to get platform 1 finished. Platforms 1 and 2 had their surfaces finished covering up all the repaired and new services as seen in the May issue. Platform 2 was finished first so that it could be used for service trains even though much of Platform 1 still had to be fenced off.

The surround for the water crane drain was a mixture of broken slabs and old concrete some of which had to be removed to get the conduits in underground. It was rather unsightly before we started so after various deliberations within the team, we decided to rebuild a completely new surround out of just old slabs. Rummaging through the salvaged pile, we managed to not use any whole good slabs as a design was agreed upon that used the good pieces of some of the old

broken ones. This produced a much more in keeping and much better-looking finish with no visible concrete.

The new grass area was also re-turfed which is used for a weddings and other events and was used within two weeks of being laid. We are pleased to have received many compliments on how much better the area now looks from all areas of the railway.

The north end of the old model railway room has had two brand new toilet cubicles constructed in a heritage style. One cubicle is an all-new full modern standard disabled access toilet with a modern hygienic standard finish and the other is a unisex toilet which has been built in the heritage style along with the entrance vestibule to both toilets. *[Photos on following page – Ed]*

Other work on the building included, new gutters, repairing the valence over platform 1 and repairing one of the beams behind the valence plus a lot of rubbing down and repainting.

TRACK FORMATION

Platform 1 will be a full running line with passenger trains eventually being able to go out of either end for the first time in well over 100 years.

Platform 1 will only go towards Ardingly, as it has always done – the Ardingly 'up' road. It has never gone towards Sheffield Park. Platform 2 goes to both and will still do, but it will go through a simple track realignment before branching off to become the Ardingly 'down' road.

As a *bona fide* passenger platform, the track must comply with all the regulation heights and clearances. It must be 6' 6" minimum from other tracks and structures and the rails must be 3' below the platform surface. Road 1 was also still at the old standard of 2' 6" below platform height and so the whole track bed had to be dug out and lowered.



Above: Water crane drain having a new stone slab surround.
Below: New lawn laid specifically for wedding photos etc.
 Both photos: Jon Goff





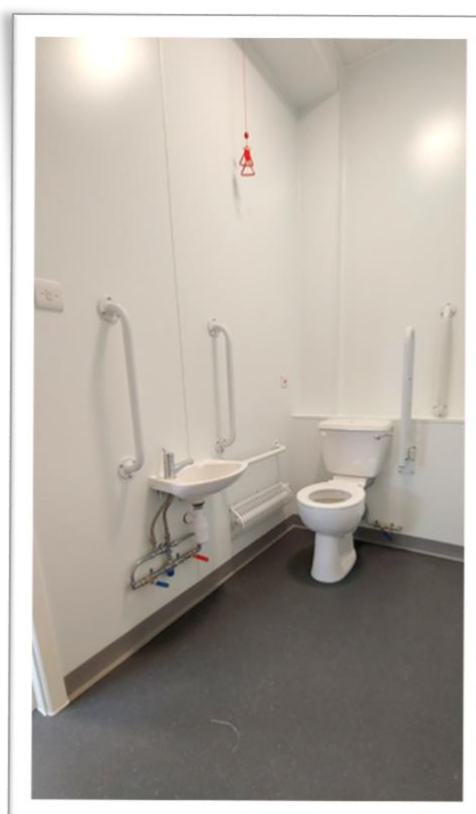
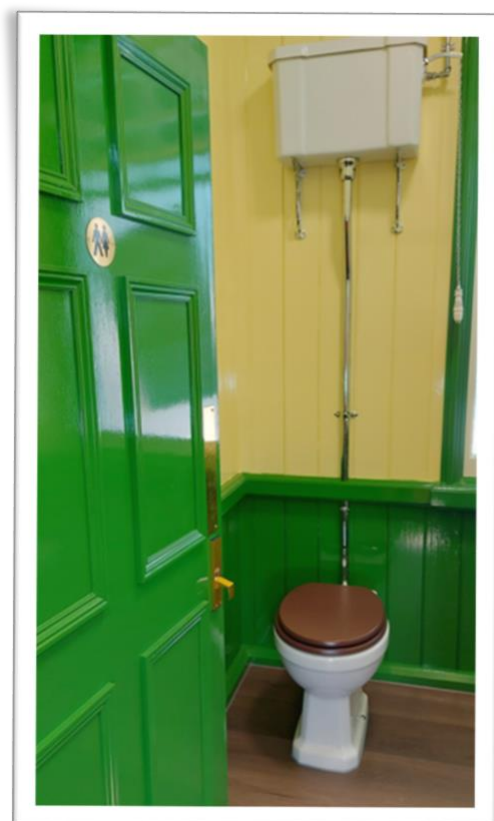
The old model railway room cleared of the model and Pullman display. Note the position of the double doors that lead out onto Platform 1, and compare with the following photograph.

Photo: Jon Goff



New wall installed separating off the new toilet with a new door leading into a new small vestibule with the doorways into the new cubicles.

Photo: Jon Goff



The new unisex and disabled toilets nearly finished.

Photo: Jon Goff



Above: The French drain being filled with track ballast on top of the waterproof membrane.
Photo: Jon Goff

In the photo below the three-way points can be seen with the straight road leading down into platform 2, the left turnout crossing over into platform 3 and the right turnout forming the approach into platform 1. There is a set of catch points immediately before the signal post which

will stay in place with only a very minor realignment adjustment. This also smoothed out the slight wiggle that was in the approach road so that we now have a smooth run into platform 1 for the passenger trains.



Above: The laser dozer at top end of the job with the stop board sitting on the end of the points.
Photo: Jon Goff



Above: Darren doing a bit of dusting with the Triple Wacker.

Photo: Jon Goff

After all the ballast was bulldozed into place, the next thing was to vibrate the surface down with the Triple Wacker. This gives a smooth and even surface to lay the track on. We hire the Triple Wacker for all major relays as it makes the job of getting the rail into the chairs on the sleepers so very much easier.

OUR BIG BALLAST PILE

All the track work required a huge amount of ballast, and we were very grateful to the HS2 project who kindly donated around 4,000 tonnes of ballast to us.

This is a huge saving for Bluebell and is a win-win for both Bluebell and HS2. Similarly, a large number of concrete sleepers have been kindly donated by Network Rail. All donations make a huge difference to our ability to maintain and upgrade our infrastructure.



Above: Part of the gift of ballast from HS2 in our yard at Horsted Keynes. There is another big pile at West Hoathly.

Photo: Jon Goff

LAYING THE FIRST TRACK.

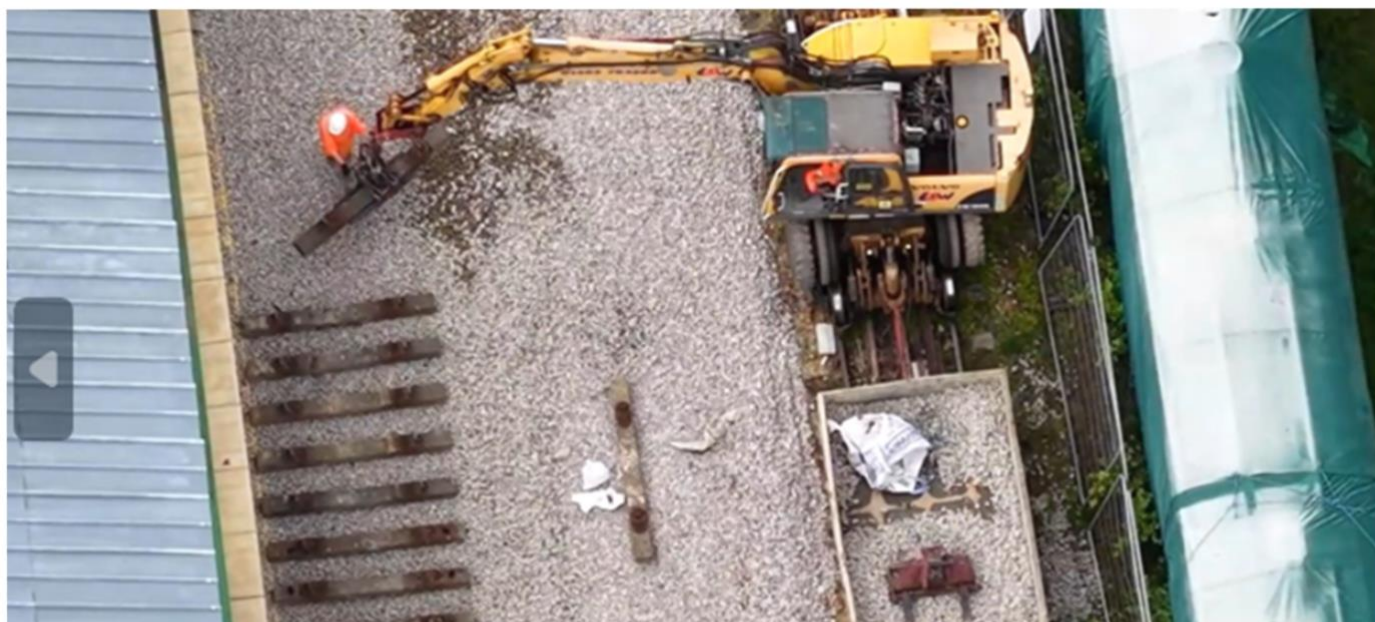
The first section of track to be laid was the siding, road -1 as it could be accessed from road -2 with the road railer. With that laid, the platform road could be laid with the road railer sitting on -1. There isn't a road zero between them; all the approach pointwork is called road zero.

All the track taken out was on old wooden sleepers which were totally rotten away. All the sleepers, or what was left of them were thrown away. They have been replaced with 'heritage' concrete sleepers that will outlast new wooden ones many times over. These are what were lifted from the last track relay at Ketches which is at the bottom of Freshfield Bank. They predate Bluebell by at least 20 years and are still in very good condition.

[Photo on next page - Ed.]

We have been gifted a load of rubber level crossing components called Strails from network rail which are very quick to lay with the road railer lifting them. They are bulky and heavy. They make a very good solid safe and durable crossing which can be easily craned out for tamping and maintenance.

Road 1 was continued all the way down past the bottom end of the platform using all new rail as we have a small stock of new bullhead rail. It is our policy that all track renewals for passenger lines

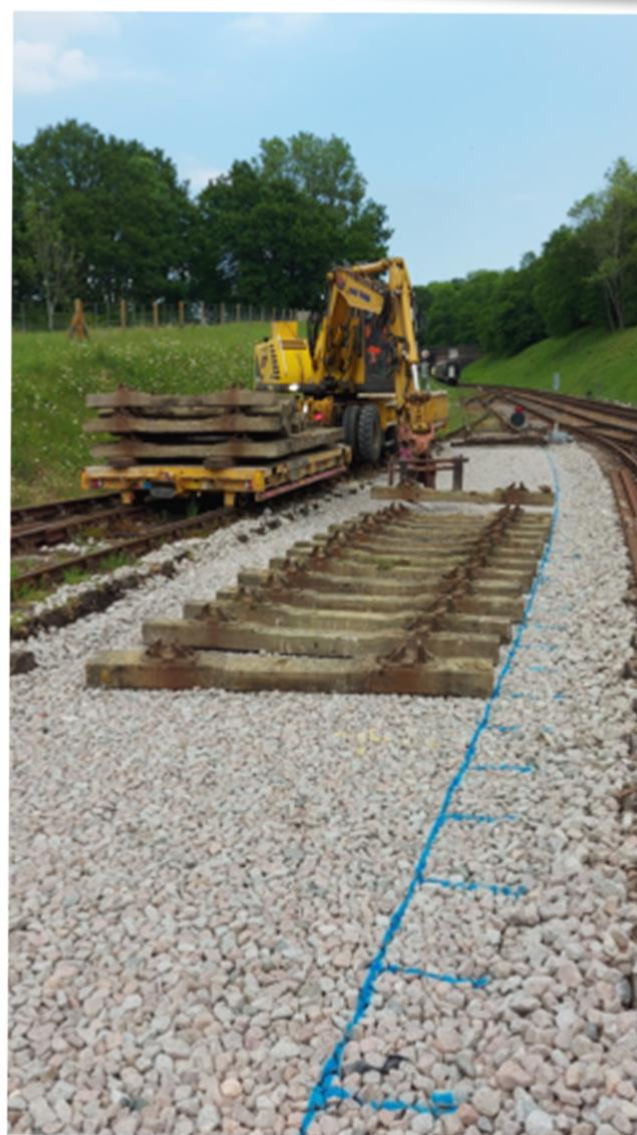


Above: Drone view of the road railer with the sleeper grab, being used to place sleepers next to the platform while being guided by a volunteer member of the team.
Photo: John Harwood

Right: The thin blue line. Unloading the first sleepers.
Photo: Jon Goff

Below: New foot crossing using strong and stable rubber Strails.
Photo: Jon Goff

Bottom: Relocated cabinet on its new base. Photo: Tim Crump.





Above: The new platform 1 close to being in use for passenger trains
Photo: Jon Goff

will be new rail. For sidings we save money by using second-hand rail, the better quality for regular use sidings but more worn rail for pure storage sidings.

At the south end the track has been put as close as possible onto its original alignment past the signal box. Some track side items placed by Bluebell in the past were found to now be in the way. One group of these items was a line of three brick drains right along the line of the platform 1 south approach road. These have now been removed as they didn't actually contribute to the drainage.

Another obstacle in the way was the grey location cabinet also near the signal box. This has a lot of cables going into it underground which must not be damaged or disturbed. This only needed to be moved a little way under the supervision of S&T, to ensure the 6' 6" (1.97 m) clearance from the running rail. {See photo on previous page – Ed}

With the remaining obstacles now out of the way, the road 1 dig could be safely continued right down to within inches of the signalman's crossing. It is hoped that by the time this issue of *The Bluebell Times* is distributed, the track will be extended a little further, past the signal box and beyond.

Road -1 has been laid down to a buffer stop about 50 feet short of the re-sited cabinet. It needs another 45-foot length of track but we have run out of concrete sleepers and so cannot do that last little bit until after the next track renewal just outside Sheffield Park next year.

The running in boards need to be repaired before they go back and new signs fitted. The new flower bed under the south running in board has also just been replanted by the gardening team for the summer and it all looks very smart.



Above: Running-in board repairs
Photo: Jon Goff

The latest progress can be seen in Tim Crump's photo where platform one is being used, but not for passenger services just yet as the signalling and track circuits have not yet been completed. It also shows the new track on the original alignment passing the signal box, coming off the now straight section of platform, also as originally built. It's out of the station block and on its way to the Ardingly branch although it cannot go any further

just yet as the old '20' points are in the way as seen in the foreground. They cannot be moved until after Rail 200 and Bluebell 65. Point 23A, seen on the right will be rebuilt with a slightly longer geometry and moved about one panel south later on, which will make room for both up and down tracks to run smoothly out of the station and down to the old viaduct end so as to provide a much-wanted dual track training and filming area.



Above: Onward towards Ardingly!
Photo: - Tim Crump.

Q Class 541 Overhaul Progress

By Steve Pilcher and Chris Hunford, Maunsell Locomotive Society

A briefer than normal report as due to holidays etc. neither of the authors have had chance to visit Sheffield Park recently, so we are unable to report on recent work on the tender. However the Maunsell Locomotive Society volunteers have continued cleaning and priming various sections of the loco's boiler cladding that are present at Sheffield Park.

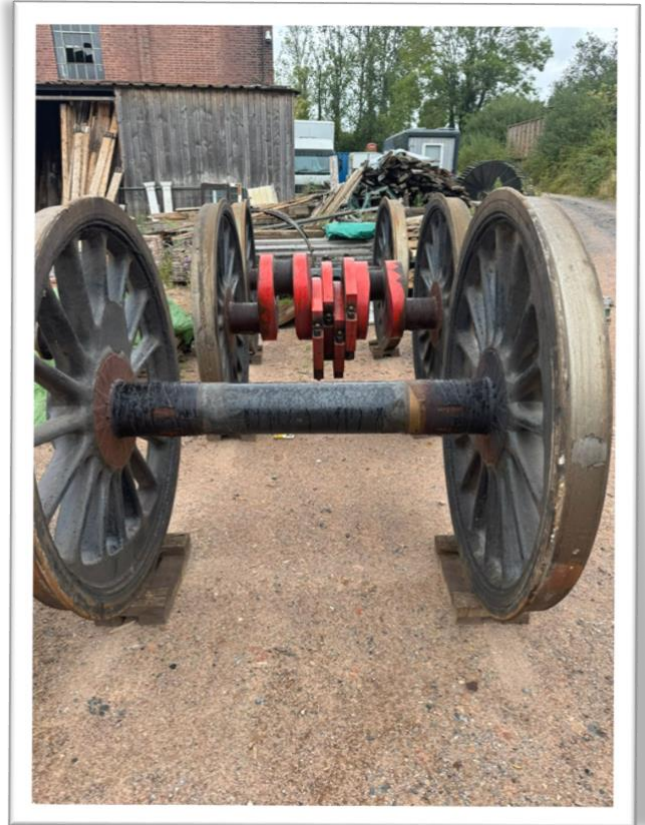
Meanwhile down at Leaky Finders works in Devon, the driving wheels have returned from the South Devon Railway having had their journals and thrust faces machined. Work can now start on setting everything up for machining of the new crowns. The new lefthand side frame insert is drilled and ready for fitting. Before this can be completed, the horn blocks require some cast iron welding repairs which will be completed at a specialist supplier. Once returned these and the frame insert can be fitted.

Work on the boiler has focused on repairing fractures to the copper doorplate and completing the manufacture of the foundation ring rivets. These rivets are now away for heat treating. Once the fractures are repaired the steel backhead and door plate can be fitted, which should be taking place as you read this. The next step is then to complete the riveting of the foundation ring. The boiler will then be able to be turned and positioned upright so the process of fitting the boiler tubes can begin.

Whilst submitting this report, it is timely to mention that the Maunsell Locomotive Society's [PMV van](#), (which is used for storage at Sheffield Park), has been for a trip up the line to Horsted Keynes. It has been used as part of a photo charter by Jon Bowers and whilst it is up there it is hoped that a few remedial works can take place.

Top: Q class wheelsets after turning of journals and thrust faces.
Photo: Leaky Finders

Bottom: New section of steel backhead being trial fitted. Photo: Leaky Finders





Left: Another view of the new tender tank and chassis temporarily re-wheeled.

Photo: Steve Pilcher

Below: The Maunsell Locomotive Society PMV is the second vehicle behind 80151 in the photograph below, which was taken on a Jon Bowers' photo charter at Horsted Keynes on 12 July. Jon writes:

"[Various operational issues earlier in the day] meant we only had about half the time originally intended and so weren't able to get as many pictures as hoped. However all the Ops Staff did a brilliant job to maximise what we could get in the time we had left, especially so given the high temperatures.

Quite a lot of planning went into the logistics for this charter so thanks should also go to the loco works for getting No.32424 repaired in time to take part; to the C&W staff who ensured the vans were fit to run for the event; to the respective van owners and custodians who very kindly allowed us to make use of their vehicles; to the infrastructure teams for keeping the areas we wanted to take pictures in relatively free of modern clutter; and to Martin for keeping the buffet open for us for a steady supply of drinks and snacks throughout the evening!"

Photo: Jon Bowers



84030 Rebuild Project

By Chris Wren

During the winter months, being outside, progress on the engine was at times a little slow but now with warmer weather it is full steam ahead!

With the welded seams, beading to the top panels and final rivets installed work has nearly finished on the bunker. The rear panels and buffer beam have had a top coat of paint added. Now attention is being aimed at completing the steps on the bunker, cab and the front of the engine, plus plenty more painting to the bunker sides panels and doors.

Another area of work has been started on the floor supports with the intention of fitting a temporary wooden floor to provide a safe working area for the cab panels to be installed. Drawings for the cab panels are currently being produced to provide details for profiling. This is proving to be a bit of a jigsaw puzzle especially when trying to decipher old BR drawings many of which are poor quality.

An non-destructive testing (NDT) inspector recently visited the Railway to carry out an NDT test on the B4 tank engine which is under overhaul in Atlantic House. Whilst the inspector was at the railway the opportunity was taken to bring the boiler for 84030 currently stored on a wagon at Kingscote down to Sheffield Park for an NDT inspection.

The boiler was thought to be in reasonable condition as it had only a 10 year working life as a BR engine before being scrapped having been left outside at the Bluebell for over 42 years on top of the 17 years spent at Woodham's scrap yard in Barry.

The result was encouraging, the test revealing thinning of the firebox lower outer casing, which was expected, and a known weak spot on the head of the boiler showed some cracks. The cracks were by the side of the strength shoulder plates on each corner of the boiler.

We are advised that neither issue is a major problem and both can be rectified with a new



Above: Bunker with all lamp brackets and steps plus a coat of paint to the bunker back panel and buffer beam



Above and right: Bunker (above) and cab (right) steps in their final positions



outer plate on the lower section of the firebox and the cracks welded.

One area requiring investigation is the balance pipes between the side tanks. As originally designed a 6" copper pipe was used to connect the 2 tanks at the front of the engine with a 4" balancing pipe between the tanks at the rear. To use 6" and 4" copper pipe will be very expensive if readily available, therefore, steel pipes are being considered. The rear pipe runs under the cab floor requiring a number of bends and 'sets' in the pipe. This ideally needs to be installed at the same time as the cab floor.

If you know anyone interested in joining the working group especially if they have an engineering skill, please ask them to contact me, Chris Wren on ccwren@gmail.com and remember the project can only progress by providing a stream of income, one way is by a donation(s). Please see our [web page on the Bluebell Web site](#).

And finally, we like to welcome 2 new working members who have recently joined our group; John Croft and Richard Holmwood.

More importantly both successfully completed, with honours, the tea making ritual!

Right: Cab floor supports under construction and shovelling plate in final position

Below: The boiler at Sheffield Park



Refreshing East Grinstead

Words and photos by Harry Watson, Friends of East Grinstead volunteer

As you may well know the northern half of the line was closed last winter due to engineering works. The Friends of East Grinstead team decided to capitalise on this rare extended break by taking the opportunity to revitalise some of the station infrastructure.

In recent years East Grinstead had been looking a bit dilapidated and in need of some TLC. Numerous members of station staff got involved, meeting twice a week in all weathers and undertook a huge amount of work. The booking office, bookshop, buffet, toilet block, porters' room, forecourt fence and platform white line all received repairs where necessary and a complete repaint; the booking office floor was completely replaced and new posters for under the canopy were sourced and put in place – all completed in just over 3 months.

And what a difference it has made! However, seeing how good everything looked motivated the team on further and in recent months the station sign frame and lamp posts have all been repainted, the platform fence and canopy has just begun its repaint which will continue into the autumn and winter – it's a big job! New flowers have been put in place around the station, the bookshop will receive some new bookshelves in the coming weeks to increase capacity, and the station staff room will undergo an internal refit in the next couple of weeks to make it a much more accommodating space.

All of this work is funded through our bookshop at the station so please do pop in if you are visiting. We could always do with some more help so if you would like to get involved please email volunteer.coordinator@bluebell-railway.com



Top: Repainted porters' room, toilet block, buffet and bookshop

Middle: Repainted booking office and canopy

Bottom: Repainted running-in board

Bluebell Archive in Inspiration

By Tony Hillman, Deputy Curator

On 26 and 27 July the Bluebell Railway Museum Southern Railways Archive had its Railway 200 collection on display in the fourth coach of the Inspiration Train at Horsted Keynes. One item from each of the 20 decades between 1825 and 2025 was shown together with a relevant image and explanatory text.

The Archive Team invited historian and TV presenter Tim Dunn to visit and view the display in the carriage as well as a similar collection of artifacts in the Museum at Sheffield Park.

Among the objects that Tim and other visitors found interesting was an Employee Misconduct List created by the LBSCR in 1862. Created as an example to others, this list of employee misdemeanours and punishments includes one entry detailing the sending of 'mischievous' messages by a telegraph clerk who had also 'assumed the signal of a different station.' The clerk was dismissed.

Another cause of fascination for people viewing the collection was the diary kept by London Brighton and South Coast Driver Harland in the early 1870s. The document is an important testimony to the long and varied hours worked by footplatemen at this time.

The Railway 200 exhibit is available to view at the Sheffield Park museum until October (see the [June issue](#) of *The Bluebell Times* for more details).

Meanwhile, if you have a group who would like to view the documents that were on display in the Inspiration train and hear a talk about them, or if you are researching any aspect of railway history in Southern England over the last 200 years and want to visit the Archive, get in touch with the team at archivist@bluebell-railway-museum.co.uk



Carriage Shop Donates £500

By Chris Wilson, Carriage Shop Volunteer

The Carriage Shop team are pleased to be able to donate £500 to the Friends of Horsted Keynes Station fund to support the good work being completed by the station staff. This amount has primarily been raised from sales in the Kiosk on platform 4.

The Carriage Shop at Horsted Keynes station is open throughout the Bluebell Railway 65th Anniversary weekend and every weekend in August.

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.

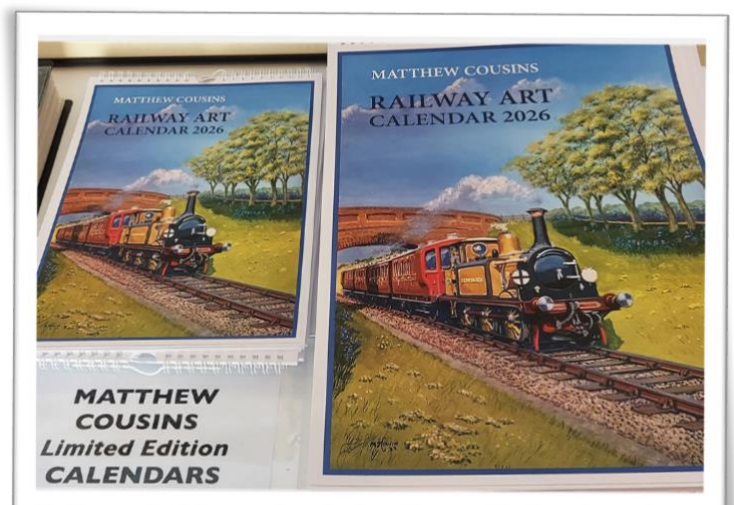
The Carriage Shop is always pleased to receive donations of model railway items, books, DVDs, bound magazines, pictures, postcards, photographs, slides, mugs, badges, keyrings or other railway or transport material. If you can help please contact:
bluebellrailwaycarriageshop@gmail.com

For our opening times and news please visit our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/BluebellRailwayCarriageShop>



Above: Graham Poulson, Horsted Keynes Station Master alongside Chris Sutton from the Carriage Shop team.

Below: Matthew Cousins 2026 Railway Art calendar in small and large sizes, available from the Carriage Shop.



Photos From The Museum Website

By Chris Wilson, Bluebell Railway archive volunteer

This month we have added a further 356 images to the Bluebell Railway Museum website bringing the total now available to 28,221.

These new additions are all colour images taken by R.C. Riley and are of or connected to the Bluebell Railway. There are view of Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes in 1955; West Hoathly and East Grinstead in 1958 and the Ardingly Branch in 1959, and views across the Bluebell from 1960 – including the 20th Anniversary cake!

We have been fortunate to receive a small collection of photographs and a larger collection of negatives in the past month. Thank you once again to those who donated these items to us.

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.

Below: Sheffield Park station on 30 April 1955, with the 3.35pm Oxted to Brighton service in the platform. BR 4P No. 42081 heads the ex SECR Birdcage carriage set. Photo: R.C. Riley [105529]



On This Day – 8 August

By Tony Hillman, Deputy Curator

Three pictures from the Bluebell Photographic Archive taken on the 8 August. Thanks to John Creed, Martin Elms, Richard Peirce, Chris Sutton, Roger Merry-Price and Chris Wilson for finding the pictures and researching the notes.



In the 1950s, when many families didn't own a car and foreign holidays were a far-off dream, British Railways ran many through trains on Summer Saturdays from the industrial towns and cities in the Midlands and the North to seaside resorts around the country.

One of these trains was the return 12.13pm Ramsgate to Derby (Friargate) seen here on Saturday 8 August 1959 on the West London Line at Chelsea having just passed over the River Thames. It was scheduled to comprise 10 Eastern Region Corridor coaches, plus in high summer (20 June to 5 September) an additional "loose" corridor second. On this occasion however it appears to be 9 Eastern Region Corridors, mainly Gresley, but including at least one British Railways Mk 1, hauled by two Type 2 Sulzer 1160 hp diesel locos D5009 and D5002 coupled together. It is nearing Kensington (Olympia) where the two diesels will make way for an Eastern Region B1 Class 4-6-0 for the journey north up the Great Central Main Line to Nottingham and Derby.

The southbound working was the 11.35pm (Friday) Derby (Friargate) to Ramsgate, utilising the same rolling stock and the same two diesels south of Kensington. Based at Hither Green, the diesels were working South Eastern Division turns 41 and 42. They were not built for the Southern Region but came from a batch of 15 loaned from the London Midland Region to assist with the Kent Coast Electrification Scheme.

D5000 to D5014 were part of 40 Type 2 diesels (later Class 24) ordered as part of the 1955 Modernisation Scheme. Built at Derby in 1958-9 they arrived at Hither Green during the early part of 1959. The D65xx Class diesels which were designed and built specifically for the Southern Region were delivered between 1960 and 1962. As deliveries progressed the D50xx were returned to the London Midland Region, a process completed by the summer of 1962.

Photo: J. J. Smith [045773]



There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics. Included in the latter is the Southern Regions list of locomotive transfers that took place in the summer of 1959 following completion of Phase 1 of the Kent Electrification Scheme.

BR would have had railway enthusiasts believe that Nine Elms shed (70A) welcomed 106 additional locomotives made redundant at sheds like Gillingham, Faversham and Ramsgate, although allowing for transfers away, the net figure was actually 93 engines. The transfer included the entire complement of the E1, L and L1 4-4-0s together with the R1 0-6-0Ts from Folkestone Junction. Also included were twenty-five Cs, nine D1s, seven Hs, two O1s, nine Schools, nine BR Standard 5s and three modified Merchant Navys!

Of course, the transfers, as would later be discovered, were only on paper, and the vast majority of the locomotives never went anywhere near Nine Elms. Many were immediately stored, never to steam again, at depots such as Feltham,

Guildford, Basingstoke and Reading South. The ultimate destination of some of these Kentish engines remains, to this date, uncertain, as is how many actually made their way to 70A.

This photograph depicts two locomotives that were in theory based at Nine Elms when the photograph was taken on 8 August 1959 at Redhill shed (75B). On the left is SECR Class L 4-4-0 31771 still with its Tonbridge (74D) shedplate. There are conflicting accounts regarding its subsequent usage, with at least one report that it was at Nine Elms, albeit not in steam in September 1960. It was subsequently withdrawn in December 1961.

The other locomotive is SR D1 4-4-0 31247 with its Bricklayers Arms (73B) shedplate. Another photograph taken in March 1961 shows it stored at the same location and as it was withdrawn four months later, I think we can assume it was one of the many that never made it to Nine Elms.

Photo: John Scrace [140613]



First opened by the London Chatham and Dover Railway (LCDR) in 1882, Otford is located on the line from Swanley to Sevenoaks via Bat & Ball, just north of the point where the route towards Maidstone and Ashford branches off. This photograph, taken by John Scrace on 8 August 1989, shows the station building after it had been repainted into the colours of Network SouthEast.

Otford was a relatively late addition to the network, appearing twenty years after the opening of the rest of the line. In 1862, the Sevenoaks Railway Company, later absorbed into the LCDR, built the line from Sevenoaks Junction (later renamed Swanley Junction) to Sevenoaks (now Bat & Ball), with intermediate stations at the villages of Eynsford and Shoreham. Despite it having a similar population to the other two, a station for Otford village was not included in the plan.

In 1869 the line was extended to Sevenoaks Tubs Hill (now Sevenoaks) via a junction with the South Eastern Railway's 1868 extension from Chislehurst to Tonbridge. The line from Otford Junction to

Maidstone East was opened in 1874 and extended to Ashford in 1884. Although a wooden platform was installed at this junction to facilitate changing between Sevenoaks and Maidstone trains, it was never accessible from the village. In fact, it was not until a local schoolmaster, Richard Hoff, began extensive lobbying that the LCDR finally decided to open a station on the current site in 1882.

Otford's main building, unlike many LCDR stations, is constructed from red brick. There used to be a bay platform, once served by a shuttle service to Sevenoaks, a small goods shed and a yard. Electrification arrived in 1935 when the line to Sevenoaks was energised. The third rail was also extended to Maidstone East in 1939.

Today, Otford is served by Southeastern services running between stations on the Ashford line and both Victoria and Charing Cross, as well as by Thameslink trains linking Sevenoaks with Blackfriars and points beyond.

Photo: John Scrace [082650]



Photo: R.C. Riley / Bluebell Railway Museum and Archive [105240]



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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