



Flashback to Giants of Steam in October. Photo: David Cable

The Bluebell Times

A Newsletter for Bluebell Railway Members, Staff and Supporters

February 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

Has it stopped raining yet? Another winter is almost over – at least nominally – and it has been a busy one for the various infrastructure teams, with track relaying at Black Hut (before Christmas), Ketches (after Christmas) and construction and commissioning of a new loco yard ground frame. The latter two projects have been much beset by the seemingly never-ending rain, but both are completed in time for the resumption of services this weekend. Nor should we forget that a significant change such as the ground frame replacement does not just mean a construction project: there is now the small matter of ensuring that those who were competent to operate the *old* frame (loco crew, shunters and signalmen) are now trained and shown to be competent on the *new* frame. That means providing operating instructions, training users, creating an assessment process and assessing users – all of which has to be documented. So the midnight oil has been burnt across the Railway, whether your chosen instrument is a shovel or a keyboard.

Of course, for the majority of our visitors, the *how* the Railway works is secondary to the fact that it simply *does* work. To that end, there is a busy programme of events lined up for the year – not just the [Spring Steam Gala](#), but a return of [Road Meets Rail](#) in May, the [Model Railway Weekend](#) in June and the [Southern at War](#) event in July. Add in Footplate tasters, Yard Tours, a packed programme of dining services and of course the family-friendly character weekends, and it promises to be [another full-on year](#). Starting this weekend, with the opportunity to see 3 locos in traffic, including *Fenchurch* on a shuttle service and the Harry Potter star *Wightwick Hall*. The year is starting as we mean to go on.

Tom James, Editor

<i>Watts Occurring</i>	2
<i>Dukedog Moves to the Severn Valley</i>	4
<i>Maunsell Locomotives Overhaul Update</i>	6
<i>News in Brief</i>	8
<i>Education Department – End of Term Report</i>	9
<i>Going Dutch 2026</i>	11
<i>Charity Walk for Heart Valve Voice</i>	11
<i>Latest Changes in SteamWorks!</i>	13
<i>New Museum Exhibition</i>	14
<i>Carriage Shop Donates £500</i> .	15
<i>More Photos From the Museum Website</i>	16
<i>On This Day, February</i>	17
<i>Volunteer Vacancy</i>	20
<i>Tail Lamp</i>	21

Watts Occurring

By Roy Watts, BRPS Chairman

So, here we go again, steam spirals from the running shed area and another season begins. Let us hope that through all our trials and endeavours it's a successful one. Judging by the social media releases, it is abundantly clear that the world of heritage Railways is awakening from its slumbers this coming weekend!

It's not as if railways, and by that I am generalising, shut down completely. Indeed several have continued to run trains, but many take the opportunity to indulge in a period of "rest and recuperation" especially after the hectic activities of the recent Festive Season.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the advantage is taken during the closed period to undertake much needed maintenance and overhaul regimes – it's the heritage railways' version of the Network Rail seasonal closedowns!

However, as we know, there is a substantial difference between a multi-million pound business that can employ and utilise resources and equipment that is available around the clock for the programme duration, and a heritage railway where you can often count the number of people working on projects on the fingers of one hand.

But look around at what has gone on during our closed period. Our hard-working infrastructure teams have worked incredibly hard starting with the track relay south of the tunnel before Christmas, moving onto replacing the ground frame and signals that give access to the loco yard – and before anyone even thinks of writing in, the colour light signals are only temporary while the disc type are refurbished. As I write, the last track panels in the Ketches area north of Sheffield Park are being laid. Groups such as the 1305 Thumper Group, the Bluebell Goods Division, and the Southern Coach Group have all taken the opportunity to undertake major steps forward. The Standard 2, Maunsell and Bulleid groups continue their restoration programmes, with station "Friends" groups cleaning and repairing a season's worth of wear and tear.

Meanwhile, maintenance regimes have continued, the general office continues to respond to customers and sell advance tickets – Valentine's Day services have sold through and the early Golden Arrow trains are full which has bucked recent trends and is very encouraging – and of course advance tickets for our [first gala of the year](#) are selling well.

Obviously, the prime objectives have to be to control costs and overheads and thanks to those who responded to the assistance with business rates – one within hours of *The Bluebell Times* being published! Clearly the prize has to be an improvement in revenues but with example profits of £43k from Giants and a substantial profit from Christmas, it's worth doing.

As always, if anyone does have a revenue generating idea, please do let us know for consideration, after all, it is "our" Railway.

I would like to formally welcome Paul Everington as Chairman of the Company Board. Paul has an engineering background and has run multi-million pound projects, at home and across the world. Paul's appointment followed a series of meetings and interviews and I am determined to ensure Paul has a comfortable transition into the Bluebell.

Thanks to those who have offered to help which is much appreciated and I will discuss these offers with Paul in due course.

Although I posted the announcement on our HOPS platform, I will leave it to Paul to introduce himself but do take the opportunity to introduce yourself. Please do give Paul a warm welcome.

Following on from last month's *Bluebell Times*, can I say thank you to those who responded to my article and to Vice Chairman, Keith Leppard's article on the restructuring for which there was considerable approval and agreement to the reasoning but it's not going to be an easy journey. Nonetheless, we need to embark on this journey together as it will require much communication

and explanation and that needs to begin now. So I would like to invite you to a meeting in the Birch Grove Suite, Sheffield Park station, at 6.30 on Saturday, the 14th March.

I will hopefully be able to update you on our financial position both year-end 2025 and the current situation and Keith will give an initial presentation which will explain the why, the consequences if we don't and what could happen if we stay "as is" – yes, that's still an option!

More details to follow.

In the meantime, can I thank you for everything you did last year, for everything you will do this year and above all, keep in touch, it doesn't hurt to question a manager or a director as that is what they are responsible for.

Here's to a successful 2026!



As a preview to the Spring Steam Gala, here's a flashback to the last time our own 'Camelot' met visiting locomotive 75069. The two locos are seen on the Severn Valley Railway in September 2025

Photo: Julian Heinemann

Dukedog Moves to the Severn Valley

The Severn Valley Railway (SVR) and the Vale of Rheidol Railway are delighted to announce an exciting two-year locomotive exchange that will bring two iconic steam engines to fresh audiences in new locations.

From Spring 2026, the SVR's beloved GWR 7819 *Hinton Manor*, currently on display in the SVR's Engine House, will travel to the Vale of Rheidol Railway in Aberystwyth for static display. In return, GWR 'Dukedog' 9017 *Earl of Berkeley* will be welcomed to the SVR, where it will go on display and be celebrated by visitors and enthusiasts alike.

This landmark swap reflects a shared commitment to broadening public access to heritage railway artefacts and will give visitors in the Midlands and mid-Wales the chance to see locomotives they might otherwise never encounter up close.

7819 *Hinton Manor* has been a popular static exhibit at the SVR's Engine House since March 2019, where its footplate has been accessible to visitors keen to learn how a steam locomotive worked in practice. Built in February 1939, *Hinton Manor* was the last of the first series of *Manor* class engines and carried out regular service on the Great Western Railway and later British Railways before withdrawal from the main line in 1965. During its working life, it was regularly selected to haul prestigious trains including the Cambrian Coast Express from Shrewsbury. It worked special services to Aberystwyth in the 1960s. Today it remains one of nine 'Manor' class survivors, and its presence in The Engine House has proved a major draw for visitors.

9017 *Earl of Berkeley* is a member of the GWR 3200 class commonly known as 'Dukedog' locomotives, built by combining the frames of the Bulldog class with the boiler and cab of the Duke class. As the only surviving member of its class, *Earl of Berkeley* is a machine of particular interest to enthusiasts and historians alike, embodying the ingenuity of Great Western Railway engineering.

During its long preservation career at the Bluebell Railway, *Earl of Berkeley* gained admirers from

across the UK. The locomotive also has historical resonance in Wales, having worked extensively on the Cambrian network including Aberystwyth and Pwllheli before its withdrawal in 1960, making its return to the heart of the former GWR network at the SVR especially fitting.

This is not the first visit of 9017 to the SVR; it appeared at the Autumn Steam Gala in 2008, when it double-headed with 3440 *City of Truro*, giving the unique sight of the two surviving GWR 4-4-0s together.

The swap not only enriches both railways' heritage displays but also opens up fresh opportunities for visitors, from families to dedicated steam followers, to enjoy and learn more about Britain's rich railway history.

Judith Meredith, the chair of the Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust which owns *Hinton Manor* said:

“We are thrilled to announce this unique locomotive exchange with our friends at the Vale of Rheidol Railway. *Hinton Manor* has been a much-loved part of the Engine House collection and has attracted a wide range of visitors, from local families to steam enthusiasts. In turn, we're delighted to welcome *Earl of Berkeley* to the SVR. The historically significant 'Dukedog' perfectly complements our own GWR heritage.

“We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Vale of Rheidol Railway and to the *Dukedog's* owners, the Bluebell Railway, whose support and cooperation have made this swap possible. This partnership brings these remarkable locomotives to wider audiences and strengthens the bonds between heritage railways across the UK.”

Llyr ap Iolo, CEO and chief engineer at the Vale of Rheidol Railway added:

“We are extremely grateful to the Bluebell Railway for the loan of the 'Dukedog', a locomotive with strong historical links to

Aberystwyth and the former Cambrian lines. It has been a privilege to display the engine at the Vale of Rheidol and to give visitors the opportunity to reconnect with an important chapter of local railway history.

We're also very thankful to the Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust for agreeing to the loan of Hinton Manor. The Manor class worked many of the prestigious Cambrian Coast Express services during the 1960s, making Hinton Manor a regular visitor to Aberystwyth in BR days. The locomotive last visited the town on a special charter in 1991, so its return more than three decades later is particularly significant."

Neil Glaskin, Operations Director of the Bluebell Railway, said:

“ The Bluebell Railway is grateful to the team at the Vale of Rheidol Railway for looking after the Dukedog for the past two years. We are excited to be able to work with the Severn Valley Railway to allow a new audience to see this unique locomotive."

Both locomotives will be on static display at their respective host railways for a two-year period from Spring 2026 to Spring 2028. Details about exhibition areas, opening times and associated activities will be published by each railway in due course.

[For the history of the Dukedog locomotives, see [The Bluebell Times Issue 18](#) – Ed]



*No. 9017 'Earl of Berkeley' ready for its relaunch into service, 1 November 2003. The nameplates, which were never carried by No. 9017 while in original service, have generally been carried during the preservation era; in this view they are covered in a sheet prior to the official renaming ceremony.
Photo: Peter Edwards*

Maunsell Locomotives Overhaul Update

By Steve Pilcher and Chris Hunford, Maunsell Locomotive Society

Q CLASS NO 541

Leaky Finders have continued work on 541's boiler, focussing on riveting in the foundation ring as shown in the attached photo, which is now complete.

The fire grate carrier brackets have all been repaired and these are now bolted in place ready for riveting.

Some localised work on the lap seams is ready to take place, after which the last of the patch screws can be fitted.

Work on the chassis continues and is mainly focused on the main frame inserts. The left-hand side horn insert is complete and is awaiting final machining of the horn tie faces before being welded in place.

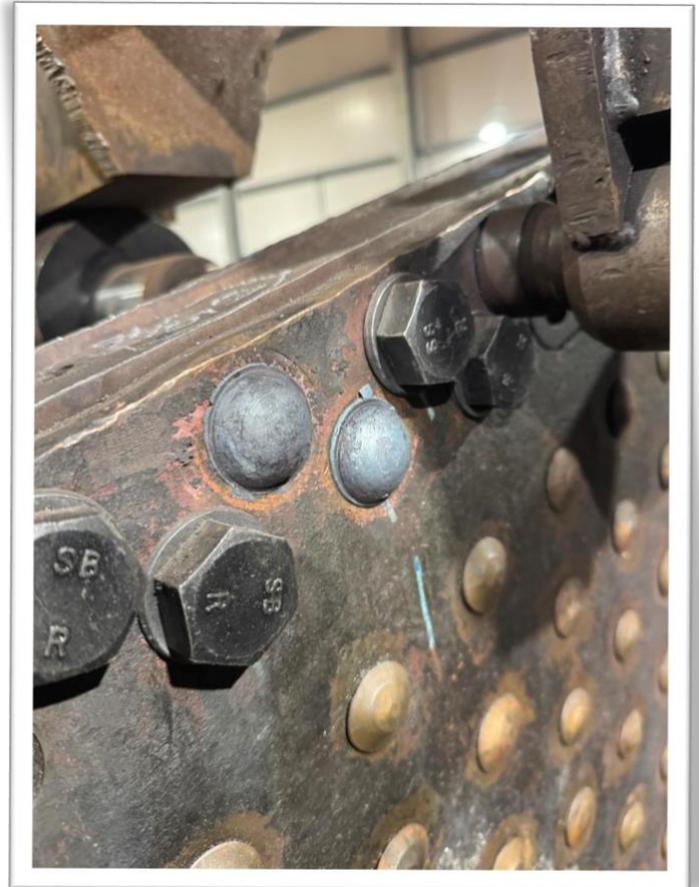
The right-hand side insert has been skimmed in preparation for fitting the horn blocks etc. See attached photo.

Meanwhile back at Sheffield Park, Dave Cox and Bob Butcher are continuing to progress the painting of the exterior of the tender tank, which is now in black undercoat.

Bluebell workshop staff have been working on the tender chassis. The brake beam has been fitted back into place under the front dragbox and brake cylinders and associated pipework have been re-assembled.

Maunsell Locomotive Society volunteers and other workshop volunteers have been busy cleaning up and painting the tender wheelsets up to black top coat along with axleboxes and other brake gear components.

It is proposed to fit 541 with snifting valves in order to help increase mileage between piston and valve examinations and Peter Loeber has kindly overseen producing patterns for the castings via use of a 3D printer that has been funded by the Bluebell Railway Trust.



Top: Riveting in the foundation ring. Photo: Leaky Finders

Middle and bottom: Frame inserts with horn guides attached. Photo: Leaky Finders

SCHOOLS CLASS NO 928 STOWE

East Coast Castings continue to progress the production of the new pattern for the left-hand cylinder casting that is required for Stowe, as shown in the photo below.

Although we had the finance in place for the pattern and casting, we still need to conclude fundraising to machine the casting. We need to raise £15,000 and as at the end of January we are getting close to the target with over £1,500 being received in January. Many thanks to all those who have been so generous with their donations thus far.

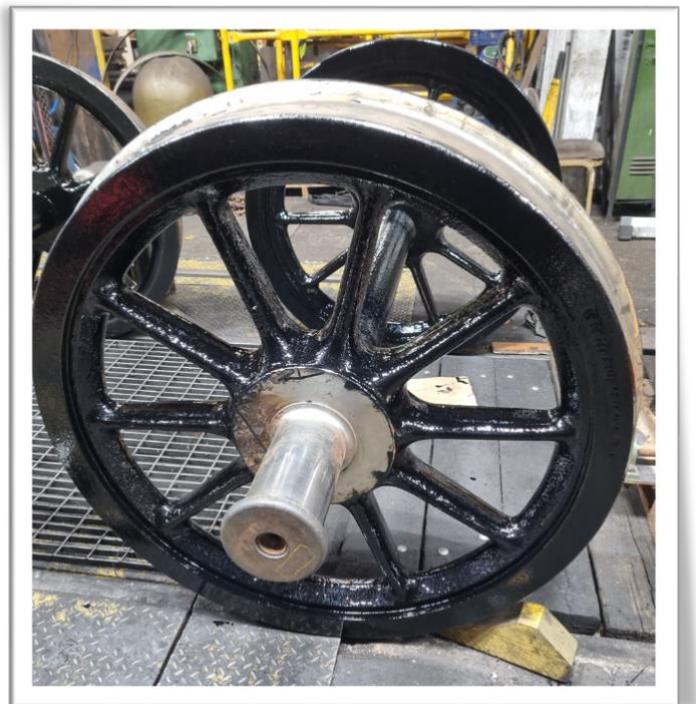
CAN YOU HELP PLEASE?

The [Maunsell Locomotive Society](#) still needs to raise the final £3,000 or so. All extra donations will be gratefully received, preferably via the Stowe appeal in the Bluebell Railway Trust – or contact the MLS Treasurer, Steve Pilcher, jstevepilcher@yahoo.co.uk for further details.

Top: *Painting the tool boxes of the tender tank.*
Photo: Steve Pilcher

Middle: *Tender wheelsets in second coat of gloss black.*
Photo: Steve Pilcher

Bottom: *Work on the patterns for Stowe's new left hand cylinder block.*
Photo: East Coast Castings



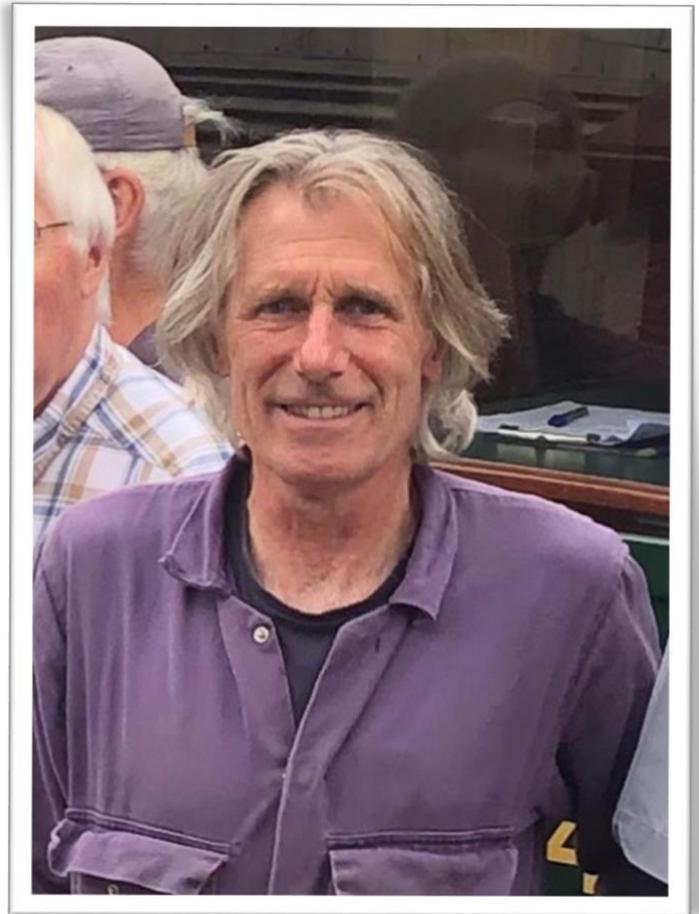
News in Brief

FAREWELL CLIVE NEWTON

By Peter Sulsh

We are sad to lose Carriage and Wagon staff member Clive Newton, who has decided to hang up his big spanner and retire from the railway to spend more time with his family.

He has been a vital asset in the Carriage and Wagon department helping, teaching and welcoming many staff and volunteers to the railway. His dedication, skill and commitment will be sorely missed. He has instigated innovations and changes to improve what we do which will be his legacy for the future. On behalf of all the volunteers at the railway we would like to say a big thanks and wish him all the best for the future



SPRING CLEANING THE LOCO YARD

By John Hutchins, Yard Foreman

Just to prove that it's not all the daily drag of driving steam engines up and down the line in the loco department, a group of volunteers has taken the chance to have some fun deep cleaning the yard at Sheffield Park while there were no services running in January.

The 'Saturday Gang' spent five weekends scraping the grime off the concrete and pressure washing the pits which it turns out are in fact a light grey colour and not black after all!

With the yard now gleaming we can get back to the daily grind of operating our fleet of steam engines in the upcoming season.



Education Department - End of Term Report

By Sarah Amos, Education volunteer

As many will know, the Education Department runs visits to the Bluebell Railway for schools. Visits can be tailored to meet specific teaching needs relating to the National Curriculum or to provide experience of specific events, such as WWII evacuation exercises. The Education Department had another busy year in 2025. Here is their end of year report.

- ➡ We ran 37 trips last year and invoiced over £24,000. This was an amazing achievement and is the highest total we can remember.
- ➡ There were 33 trips for primary schools (3 schools came over 2 days) and 1 trip for a home education group.

In total 1,550 children and 272 adults visited the Railway during 2025. In addition, a similar number of school children visited in the summer as part of Railway200. During Railway 200 all the schools came over 9 days only and a good proportion used the East Grinstead mainline link. Many schools benefitted from free travel on Southern and Thameslink trains, and they came from various locations including from South London. Most of the children were from secondary schools who do not normally visit the Railway as part of their curriculum.

Moving away from R200, many primary schools who visit the Railway do so year after year and of course, school trips build an important and enthusiastic young fan base to sustain the future of the Bluebell. The goody bags and books from the Bulleid Society which are given out at the end of each visit have also gone down very well with the school groups.

Schools came from far and wide in 2025

- ➡ Sutton in the north
- ➡ Hastings to the south
- ➡ Redhill in the west

➡ Tonbridge to the east

There are also other more local schools who have visited from Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill and Uckfield.

There were 22 World War II school trips and 15 topic days. They were delivered by 19 brilliant volunteers. Thank you!

So far, there are 20 school trips confirmed for 2026 but this is likely to rise significantly over the coming months.

An excellent evacuee film has been produced by some of the Education volunteers, and this is a very valuable additional resource which we intend to show in 2026.

Another volunteer has devised two new WWII activities centred around Rationing and Make Do and Mend. These activities were devised following an excellent visit to the Watercress Line in Hampshire.

We are on the lookout for new volunteers who can help with our school trips programme in 2026 – no knowledge of steam trains is necessary, just a friendly disposition and an ability to communicate with younger people. If you know of anyone, please do encourage them to contact us at education@bluebell-railway.com

Saving the best to last... some quotes (amongst many received) from schools who have visited during the autumn and winter months...

Bishop Chavasse Primary:

“ We had the most incredible time yesterday - the children were very engaged across the whole day. The children didn't stop talking about it when they arrived home - in particular the black out on the train!

Annan the Froebel School

“ Thank you so much for the wonderful trip to the Bluebell Railway last week. The children had a fantastic time and we're already seeing how much it has inspired their learning. Please do pass on our heartfelt thanks to the team for coordinating such a brilliant visit – their enthusiasm and care really shone through.

Midhurst CE Primary

“ The day all ran very smoothly, and I was delighted by some of the writing the children did today in response to it. All of your volunteers were enthusiastic, and I have to say it was especially amazing to chat with the two older gentlemen about their experiences as and with evacuees. For the children to be able to interview living sources and hear oral history is so powerful. The locomotives were all amazing and each of the people on the railway we met - whether the signalman at Sheffield Park or the station staff at Horsted Keynes were all engaging and willing to answer any questions and queries. It has been a great way to really launch our WWII topic and will be something we look forward to doing again in the future.

Castlewood Primary

“ I just wanted to express my sincere thanks for the absolutely wonderful school visit we had to the Bluebell Railway. The children had a fantastic time — they loved dressing up and enthusiastically took part in all the activities, which kept them fully engaged throughout the day. All of the staff were outstanding, and I can't thank them enough for making the experience so special. Meeting the two evacuees was an especially memorable highlight; their stories really brought history to life and helped the children gain a deeper understanding of what life was like during World War II.

English Martyrs Primary

“ We had a school visit with you yesterday. I wanted to say a massive thank you for everything. The tour, the experience was fantastic and the children all really enjoyed themselves and being immersed in WW2 as evacuees.

We are looking forward to 2026 and huge thanks to the many volunteers that make these school trips possible.

Going Dutch 2026

By Roger Price

THURSDAY 2 TO SUNDAY 5 JULY 2026

I am planning a mini tour to the Netherlands on the above dates. Please register your interest by sending me an email to rogerprice@aol.com.

I am awaiting more information from Museum [Stoomtram Hoorn Medemblik](#) (MSHM) regarding plans for their 50th Anniversary Bello Festival, but I know so far there will be two main line special trains, with the locomotives running main line shuttles from Hoorn to Enkhuizen as well as an intensive steam tram service on their own line Hoorn to Medemblik.

I have reserved a number of rooms at the Hotel Petit Nord in Hoorn, a short walk to the tramway and used many times on our previous visits.

Travel by direct Eurostar trains to and from Amsterdam with connecting trains to Hoorn.

The towns of Hoorn, Enkhuizen and Medemblik are delightful in which to spend time and explore all the historic buildings dating back hundreds of years. There is also the lovely Zuider Zee outdoor museum at Enkhuizen with its many attractions and the boat trip from there to Medemblik is well worth including.

I would expect to have a full itinerary and costs in March but a rough guess at this stage would be £500-600pp which includes Eurostar travel, three nights hotel bed and breakfast, and tickets for the festival.

Charity Walk for Heart Valve Voice

By John Deane, infrastructure volunteer

Last month I described my health glitches and recovery, which has led me to now being able to consider walking to raise money for Heart Valve Voice, (HVV), one of the UK's frontline heart charities. Heart research and medical skills have together given me an additional eighteen happy years of active life, which has included much mountain walking, catamaran sailing, public footpath inspection and maintenance, roadside litter picking and, most importantly in my eyes, working on the Bluebell Railway lineside. Since 2011 my railway duties have played a crucial part in helping me to maintain my fitness. I firmly believe that the considerable lineside walking, the scaling of embankments and cuttings and a variety of other controlled task exertions are significantly responsible for my being able to undertake this upcoming Charity Walk, which involves trekking along the entire seventeen kilometres of the Bluebell Railway.

For me the attractions of lineside volunteering are simply the unlimited fresh air, the peace of the countryside, the frequent proximity with wildlife,

the moving experience of steam workings close at hand and, last but not least, the positive experience of being a member of the small, friendly and energetic Kingscote Lineside Gang for two days each week.

With less than a month to go before the Big Walk Day, I have begun my training walking with the help of my good friend, Roger Ward. Roger, who is a fellow member of the Kingscote Lineside Gang, tramps the local lanes with me to toughen up our muscles. Our plan is to repeat last year's pattern of practice walking over the five weeks before the charity walk, progressively increasing the distance and ascent profiles until we can regularly comfortably exceed the likely demands of 3rd March, a day which literally becomes our moment of truth.

On the actual day of the charity walk, our efforts are faithfully supported by my wife, who thankfully appears at each station to offer a drink, snack or plaster to the two trekkers. Of course, this valuable back up saves Roger and me from

needing to carry much heavier packs throughout the entire walk, a fact we were most grateful for last year and surely will be yet again this year.

For the benefit of anyone who missed reading my article in the January issue, I would like to add a few details about my chosen charity, HVV; a charity dedicated to spreading the word about heart treatment options to everyone, and most especially to those who have a serious heart condition. The charity HVV works tirelessly to raise public awareness of the signs and symptoms of heart disease and aims to empower patients with information about all the heart treatment options.

A brief word about available treatments for aortic heart valve replacements. It is worth bearing in mind that just six weeks after my TAVI procedure I returned to full duties at my Kingscote lineside work on the Bluebell. Because I underwent the less invasive TAVI procedure, I was able to avoid the typical year-long recovery period associated with the alternative treatment, open-heart surgery. Sadly, in the United Kingdom we lag well behind the rest of Europe in using the less invasive TAVI

procedure, which is both lifesaving and life-enhancing. In my case I spent only 30 hours in hospital and was able to walk a quarter of mile only two days later.

I sincerely hope that you will feel able to support Heart Valve Voice. Your contribution would help ensure that others receive the information, understanding, and treatment choices that you would wish for yourselves and your family and which have made such a tremendous difference to my life. Together, we can help more people live active, fulfilling lives after suffering heart valve disease, whilst at the same time easing pressure on the unduly busy NHS.

For more information on heart valve disease please visit www.heartvalvevoice.com

My donation site is at www.justgiving.com/page/johndeane2026bluebellrailwaywalk

My sincere thanks and very best wishes to all who feel able to respond to this appeal for a donation to a very worthwhile cause.

**LET YOUR IMAGINATION
CLICK INTO
PLACE!**

BLUEBELL BRICKWORKS
Bricks, Trains & Brilliant Builds

**14TH TO
22ND
FEBRUARY**

**BLUEBELL
RAILWAY**

Latest Changes in SteamWorks!

By Malcolm Johnson, Museum Curator [Photos by John Hutchins](#)

Visitors to SteamWorks! on Platform 1 at Sheffield Park Station in half term week will see some important changes:

- ➔ A stainless-steel balustrade has been constructed to improve accessibility, PLUS
- ➔ A new floor has been laid to replace the time-expired one!

Visitors with vision impairment or with mobility aids can now enjoy SteamWorks! without the fear of a fall.

These are great enhancements for SteamWorks!

We are very grateful to Locomotive Department volunteers Tom Lovell, his son Alex, Colin Harris, and Thomas Shrimpton for their hard work in constructing the balustrade.

All the work was funded by the Museum team who are very grateful to Museum Development South East who made a significant grant for the purchase of the balustrade.

If you are visiting the Bluebell Railway at half term, make sure you look in on SteamWorks! on Platform 1, and not forgetting the Museum on Platform 2 – both can be found at Sheffield Park Station.



Carriage Shop Donates £500

By Chris Wilson, Carriage Shop volunteer

This month, the Carriage Shop team is delighted to donate £500 to the Friends of Horsted Keynes Station to support their restoration work.

The Carriage Shop has been restocked and will reopen on Saturday 14 February 2026. We will then be open every day until Sunday 22 February, and every weekend thereafter. For up-to-date opening dates and times, please visit:

[facebook.com/BluebellRailwayCarriageShop](https://www.facebook.com/BluebellRailwayCarriageShop)

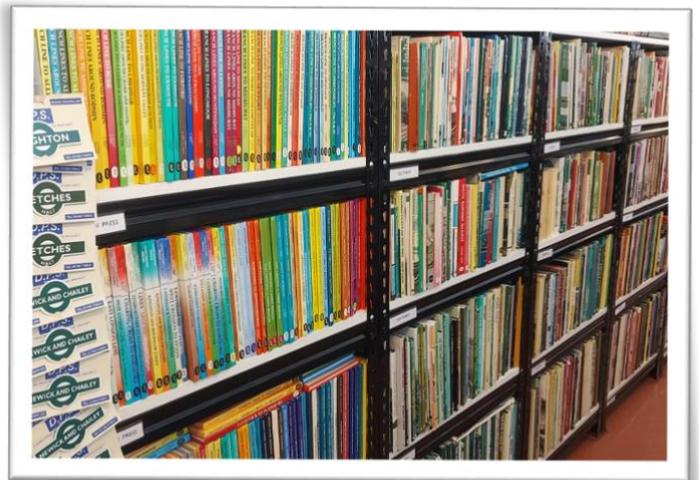
The Carriage Shop was established in 1989 and is fully operated by volunteers, with the sole purpose of raising funds to support projects across the Bluebell Railway.

We are still looking for donations of model railway items, Thomas the Tank Engine books or toys, and railway and transport books. If you can help, please get in touch:

bluebellrailwaycarriageshop@gmail.com

Top: Kevin Leggett and Ian Redman, photo taken on New Year's Day (all Christmas decorations now packed away!)

Middle and bottom: Carriage Shop, restocked and ready for reopening



More Photos From the Museum Website

By Chris Wilson, Bluebell Railway archive volunteer

OVER 30,000 PHOTOGRAPHS NOW AVAILABLE

This month we have uploaded a further 498 images to the Bluebell Railway Museum website, bringing the total now available to 30,067.

We have added 154 colour images taken by John J. Smith, which include views of signals and signal boxes (internal and external), industrial locos and diesel traction, in various locations across the UK.

From John Scrace, we have 200 images showing Diesel Multiple Units at locations across the Southern, Western, Midland and Eastern Regions.

From Joe Kent, we have 144 photographs taken during August 1952 at locations including Cambridge, Clapham Junction, Salisbury Shed, Falmer, Dover, Salisbury and Eastleigh.

Every photograph sold directly helps the Photograph Archive, providing much-needed funds to invest in conservation and storage materials.

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

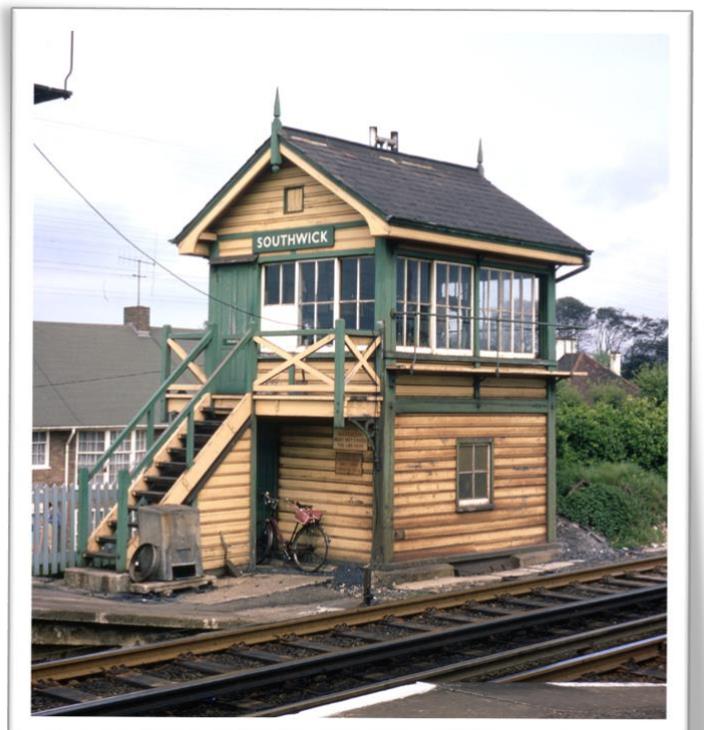
We are grateful to have recently received a number of interesting collections of negatives and photographs. These are currently being catalogued and, where appropriate, will be scanned and added to the website in due course.

If you have a collection of photographs, negatives, slides or digital images that you are interested in depositing with the Archive – so they can be preserved for the future – please get in touch by emailing photos@bluebell-railway-museum.co.uk

Top: BR(S) ex SECR P class No. 31179 alongside Britannia class No. 70004 'William Shakespeare' at Dover Shed, on 18 August 1952. Joe Kent [090444]

Middle: BR(S) class 201 DMU No. 1007 leaving Hastings with the 1.33pm to Charing Cross, on 28 August 1985. John Scrace [233692]

Bottom: Southwick Signal Box, view on 19 March 1967. John J. Smith [060543]



On This Day, February

By Tony Hillman, Deputy Curator

This month we again have the same problem as in previous winter months in that there is a shortage of suitable photographs actually 'On This Day'. Accordingly, we have selected three from across February for this edition. Thanks to Martin Elms, Richard Peirce, Chris Sutton, Roger Merry-Price and Chris Wilson for selecting the pictures and researching the captions.



In early 1957 the BBC began to remake Edith Nisbet's 'The Railway Children', using the same producer - Dorothea Brooking, script and a few of the cast members from the original 1951 production. Spread across 8 episodes the plan was to film all the outdoor railway scenes on one day at Baynards Station on the Horsham to Guildford Branch. Presumably Baynards was chosen as it was very photogenic, close to London and had no Sunday service.

The photograph was taken on 8 February 1957 at the south end of the station. To the right is ex-LSWR Class M7 30026 from Guildford Shed (70C) with the front of the cab number covered over to make it appear as No 26. The smokebox numberplate and shedcode were removed whilst other British Railways (BR) transfers were covered up.

To the left of the picture on the platform are some members of the cast but it is difficult to identify them nearly 70 years later. Amongst others who appeared in both productions were Jean Anderson (starred in *The Brothers* 1972-76) who

played 'Mother' and Clive Dunn (Corporal Jones in *Dad's Army* 1968-77) as the 'Railway Superintendent'.

Also used for filming was ex-LSWR T9 30310 based at Eastleigh Shed (71A), again with BR identifiers removed or obscured and running as No 10. Pictures of this engine and its two ex-LSWR coaches can also be found in the Archive Collection.

The series was shown weekly from Sunday 3 March 1957. It appears that none of the episodes have survived, nor have any from the earlier 1951 version.

Baynards station featured in at least nine other productions between 1942 – Will Hay in 'The Black Sheep of Whitehall' – and early 1965, when it appeared in 'Rotten to the Core' and 'Monster of Terror'. The line closed from Monday 14 June 1965 and the track was subsequently removed.

Photographer: Colin Hogg [048546]



On a dull and snowy 21 February 1955, K Class 2-6-0 32350 based at Three Bridges Shed (75E) bursts out of the 535-yard Cliftonville Tunnel on a freight train. The line between Hove and Preston Park was opened on 1 July 1879 allowing trains from the coastal stations west of Brighton direct access to the Brighton Main Line and London, without having to reverse at Brighton. This resulted not only in a time saving, but allowed longer trains, as previously the length of trains able to reverse was strictly limited by the cramped layout on the west side of Brighton Station.

It has proved difficult to positively identify the freight train in the picture, but research provided two clues which put together enables a reasonably positive identification. The first clue is Duty number 684 on the headcode disc. At the time Three Bridges Duty 684 worked a lengthy day on freight working round Sussex starting at Three Bridges Yard at 5.50am via Horsham and Steyning to Hove arriving at 10.42am. The beginning of the return working was the 12.55pm freight from Hove to Preston Park and on to Brighton. The second clue is it would have passed the rear of Preston

Park Pullman Car Works around lunchtime where Joe Kent worked. Duty 684 eventually arrived back at Three Bridges at 5.52pm.

The K Class 2-6-0 was designed by Lawson Billinton and built at Brighton Works over a period between 1913 and 1921; the first two in 1913 and three more in 1914. Adjudged a success, five more were ordered, but building was delayed by shortages of materials and they didn't enter service until late December 1916. Having proved very useful in the First World War, a further seven were built in 1920-1921. All seventeen became part of the Southern Region in 1948 and were used on both passenger and freight until the whole Class was withdrawn *en bloc* in November/December 1962, including 32350, still allocated to Three Bridges.

Photographer : Joe Kent [154858]



June 1962 would see the official completion of Phase 2 of the Kent Coast Electrification Scheme although, in reality, by the spring of that year there were very few steam workings in Kent with the exception of local services around Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells West. What few remained would be swept away by the introduction of additional Type 3 diesels, the narrow version of which would eliminate the last steam workings on the Hastings line.

A steam ban through various South Eastern Division tunnels, following the introduction of colour light signalling, no doubt prompted the LCGB to run The Kentish Venturer Rail Tour (Farewell to Steam) on 25 February 1962 rather than wait until June. The weather responded with snow falling in East Kent!

The tour started at Victoria, as shown in the photograph, with ex-SR N15 (King Arthur class) 4-6-0 30782 Sir Brian of Bournemouth shed (71B) on nine coaches. It would run down the former LCDR main line to Ramsgate, continuing via Deal, Dover

Priory and Folkestone Central to Ashford. After a visit to Ashford Works the tour continued to New Romney and back to Appledore behind ex-SECR H 0-4-4T 31263 and ex-SECR C 0-6-0 31690, both based at Ashford (73F). Waiting there, to take the train back to Charing Cross was ex-SR V (Schools class) 30926 Repton of Bricklayers Arms (73B). The tour ran late for much of the journey, arrival time at the London terminus being 6.17pm rather than the scheduled 5.26pm.

Only two of the four locomotives used that day were scrapped. 31690 was withdrawn in June 1962 whilst 30782 followed in September 1962, being cut up at Ashford and Eastleigh Works respectively. 30926, after withdrawal in December 1962, was used both in the USA and Canada before returning to the UK and the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. 31263 was withdrawn in January 1964 and after a spell at Robertsbridge and the Ashford Steam Centre is now resident on the Bluebell Railway.

Photographer: JJ Smith [046100]



Volunteer Vacancy

Applications are invited for the post of

FINANCE DIRECTOR

As a PLC Board member, the Finance Director has the professional responsibility for the management of the company's trading and to oversee the work of the Finance Manager and to assist the other departments where financial advice is required. This involves the management of the budgets together with provision of the year-end financial statements, to liaise with the auditors and to produce the annual cashflow budget for Board approval.

You would be required to attend Board meetings and to provide monthly board reports incorporating comparisons with budgets and recommend actions required to ensure the company's cashflow remains on budget; profit and loss accounts on special events and products; and oversee the company's insurance and banking relationships.

The applicant would be expected to have a current knowledge of UKGAAP and VAT legislation and will be required to correspond with outside governing bodies.

This is a volunteer post that carries no remuneration or specific hours of duty. However, the successful applicant will require sufficient time and flexibility to effectively undertake this role and have the appropriate accounting competences to meet the professional requirements of the position.

If you believe you have the right qualifications and experience for this job, please send your CV to lisa.boyle@bluebell-railway.com



Photo: David Cable

The Bluebell Times

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

*The Bluebell Times is published
monthly on the second Friday
of each month. The next issue
is scheduled to be available
on 13 March 2026 from
bluebell-railway.com/bluebell-times*

*If you have any comments or
feedback about this issue or
suggestions for future articles
or features, contact:*

*The Bluebell Times editor
Tom James*

bluebelltimes@bluebell-railway.com

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](#).

Contributors to this issue:

- ➔ Sarah Amos
- ➔ David Cable
- ➔ John Creed
- ➔ John Deane
- ➔ Peter Edwards
- ➔ Martin Elms
- ➔ Julian Hinemann
- ➔ Tony Hillman
- ➔ Rob Howard
- ➔ Chris Hunford
- ➔ John Hutchins
- ➔ Tom James
- ➔ Malcolm Johnson
- ➔ Roger Merry-Price
- ➔ Richard Peirce
- ➔ Steve Pilcher
- ➔ Roger Price
- ➔ Peter Sulsh
- ➔ Chris Sutton
- ➔ Roy Watts
- ➔ Chris Wilson