

The Brighton Bogie First: “Is it a Stroudley?”

Before moving to Derbyshire about six years ago, I volunteered in the Carriage & Wagon Department at Horsted Keynes. I must have had several conversations with Trevor Rapley about the restoration of the Brighton Bogie First, a project that Trevor had led. On one occasion, he recounted a visit to the carriage by a well-known but now long-departed LB&SCR carriage expert, who uttered an unexpected and seemingly odd question: “Is it a Stroudley?”

Trevor and I agreed that it was an odd question from somebody who must have known that it was *not* a Stroudley carriage. LB&SCR No. 142 (SR No. 7598) was built in 1903 to LB&SCR diagram 64 and allocated in a later diagram series to D49. The earliest examples of D64/49 were built in 1894 when Robert Billinton oversaw rolling stock production (1890-1904), so we traditionally describe it as a “Billinton carriage”.

William Stroudley managed locomotive and carriage production from 1870, and the first bogie carriage to run on Brighton metals was a Pullman called “Mars”, imported from America and assembled in Derby in 1875. Its exact appearance is unknown, but we may assume it was identical to “Alexandra” (top drawing, see below). Despite the difficulty of constructing long carriages on wooden underframes, Stroudley commissioned a few LB&SCR bogie and other eight-wheeled carriages.

In 1880, 12 49 ft, 4½ in-long, seven compartment Firsts were ordered from contractors, six on bogies (D35/42, centre drawing) and the other six on an eight-wheeled Cleminson system (D35/-), the details of which remain an enigma. These carriages had the same low roof height as the Stroudley four- and six-wheeled carriages (11 ft 2½ in, rail to rooftop), such as the Bluebell Railway’s Stroudley First and the Thirds now being restored at Horsted Keynes.

More bogie carriages followed in 1889, and they ran on compensating bar bogies, better known as American or Pullman bogies. One was an Examining Carriage that had narrow end vestibules and balconies, no doubt modelled on a new Pullman design introduced in 1888. A wonderful 1920s photograph in the Bluebell Railway Museum of a 54 ft, ex-LB&SCR carriage being cleaned at Lancing Works depicts the end of the Examining Carriage to the left of its main subject (Photo 1, see below).

Six first class, six-compartment, 48 ft-long bogie carriages were also constructed (D36/43) in 1889. They differed from all previous Stroudley carriages by having a much higher roof (11 ft 9½ in, rail to rooftop), and the Bluebell Railway Museum has a marvellous photograph of one at Brighton in about 1903, coupled to three 1870s Pullmans (Photo 2, by G.B. Spencer

Johnstone). Stroudley died at the end of 1889 and would have seen little of his design innovation introduced that year.

Stroudley was replaced by Robert Billinton from the Midland Railway at Derby. In 1892 Billinton produced plans for 48 ft-long bogie Firsts, Thirds, and Composites. None were built until 1894, and revised drawings produced that year show steel underframes, a new technology at the time.

Billinton used plate bogies with Mansell wheels instead of American bogies with spoked wheels. However, these Billinton designs had the same roof height as the Stroudley 1889 First, and the body of the First was identical to that of Stroudley's, save for the choice of gas instead of electric lighting, the addition of a rainstrip along the roof, and the fixing method used for the quarterlights.

The two diagrams are so alike that when compiling my recent book on the bogie carriages of the LB&SCR, I saved half a page by combining them into a single drawing (the bottom drawing!) For those unfamiliar with the details of carriage construction, I should explain that Stroudley fitted fixed lights, such as quarterlights, from the inside, while Billinton followed a practice long established at Derby by fitting them from the outside and covering the edges with moulding strips called bolection.

Bluebell Railway volunteers have no hesitation in calling four-wheeled Third No. 328 a "Stroudley" Third, although it was built in 1890 and has Billinton's bolection mouldings, so why not give Stroudley some of the credit for the design of our 1903 First? In short, the gentleman who asked "Is it a Stroudley?!" asked a legitimate question after all!

By Ian White

The LB&SCR Carriages Series

All royalties from the sales of these books go to the Bluebell Stroudley Coach Fund. They are available from the publishers, as well as from the Bluebell Railway Shop at Sheffield Park and the Carriage Shop at Horsted Keynes.

Details of bogie carriages designed by Stroudley and Billinton can be found in [Volume 3 of *LB&SCR Carriages*](#) (Photo 3) by Ian White, published by the Historical Model Railway Society. The cover features the Bluebell Railway's Stroudley-Billinton first class bogie carriage discussed above.

[Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#), co-authored with Simon Turner and Sheina Foulkes (of the Bluebell Carriage and Wagon Works), covered the 4- and 6-wheeled carriages, and were published in 2014 and 2016 by Kestrel Books.

Volume 4 is scheduled for publication by HMRS in 2021. It will include the Pullmans operated by the LB&SCR and our 1914 Directors' Saloon.



