

5 Year Anniversary for Bluebell Railway Goods Division

By Matt Lander, Wagon Group volunteer

If you are reading this on publication day, believe it or not (we can't!) it will be the eve of the 5-year anniversary of the Goods Division's first working party, which took place on 13 January 2019. Since then, we have worked on at least nine wagons in some way or another. Looking back now it makes us think what we have achieved and how much we have learnt since that first day. Here is just a brief look at what we have done over the last five years.

We first started in 2019 looking at the chassis of [Bulleid 5 Plank Open wagon No. 12058](#). We first had to remove enough components so it could be lifted off its wheels and grit blasted to get back to clean metal after years of outside storage hadn't been kind to the paint. We spent a lot of time cleaning up. Most of the year was spent de-rusting and painting the smaller components.

The railway shut down due to Covid in 2020 and we had to pause working briefly. However, research continued to find drawings and historical information so we could make components to rebuild the body. We discovered it was part of an order that used English hardwood and wasn't painted due to post WW2 materials shortages. In October of 2020, we spent a few weeks giving [SR Milk Tanker No. 4430](#) some TLC. It was given a long overdue wash and painted some areas of the chassis. In December we started dismantling [SR Engineer's Department 5 plank No. 62002](#) for an intermediate overhaul.

From the end of 2020, we had another pause in our work until March 2021 because of another lockdown. By June 2021 we had enough information that we were confident to start making new parts for No. 12058. We fitted the curb rails, to which the door hinges bolt, and the side stanchions, which support the planks either side of the door.

In July we gave the [Queen Mary Brake Van No. 56290](#) some attention prior to the "60+1"



Top to bottom: Bulleid 5-plank No. 12058; SR Milk tanker No. 4430; a short goods rake mostly comprising recent projects, including SR Engineer's Department 5 plank No. 62002.

anniversary events in August. In a little under a month, we managed to replace two doors and several floor planks and repaint the outside of the brake van. After that we gave [SECR 7 Plank 16194](#) a quick repaint to smarten it up. To end the year, we fitted the floor to the Bulleid Wagon which was the first time it had had timber for decades.

In 2022 we started by fitting a new wagon sheet to [LBSC 5 Plank No. 3346](#) after its previous one was shredded by a winter storm. In spring we purchased oak boards from English Woodland Timber in Midhurst to machine into the body planks for No. 12058. We then could start building the body, even with only one corner assembled so far, we could see it resembled a wagon for the first time!

We closed the year with a big push on No. 62002, All the planks were test-fitted, drilled, painted up and fitted before the end of the year. Work on No. 12058 continued steadily outside. Both sides were assembled and the hinges, modified from ex-LMS ones, were fitted then both doors were built.

By mid-January 2023, we had completed the final topcoat, signwriting and varnish on No. 62002 and it was considered finished. Over February half term week No. 62002 was outshopped and swapped with No. 12058 and [SR 8 Plank No. 37786](#). The latter had a few rotten planks replaced and a repaint – using recycled planks it cost us nothing! No. 12058 was structurally finished and painting and signwriting done.

In March we were shortlisted for the Heritage Railway Association Morgan Award for rolling stock preservation. Although we were a little disappointed to come runner-up, it was great to be recognised in this way. About eight weeks was spent doing some repairs to [BR\(M\) 3 Plank No. M480222](#). Some rotten areas on the doors were repaired and the wagon was given a fresh coat of BR Bauxite.

'Road Meets Rail' in May 2023 featured Fenchurch, which was also shortlisted for an HRA award, and a rake of wagons, all but one of which that we had worked on up till then which allowed us to enjoy our work and showed it off to the public. The weekend featured shunting and loading



Top to bottom: SE&CR 7 plank No. 16194; demonstrating the end result – loading the goods into Bulleid wagon No. 12058 at "Road Meets Rail".

demonstrations including M480222 being loaded with a Fordson tractor before the train went for a trip up the line.

In June we started the heavy overhaul of [LMS 3 Plank No. 474558](#). Initial inspection suggested it only needed a few light repairs, but we ended up replacing sections of the top web on the solebars and the south headstock! We are on the home straight with this wagon and it should be finished soon. To bring things up to date, New Year's Day 2024 saw the O1 take charge of 12 wagons plus brake van.

If the amount of people taking pictures of the train didn't prove how popular goods trains are then I don't know what does, proving all the work we do is worth it!