



Mayflower's visit



On 23 March 2019 the Bluebell Railway was the destination for a Steam Dreams' raitour from Southend hauled by LNER BI No 61306 'Mayflower'



Julian Clark's photo shows 'Mayflower' leaving Horsted Keynes on its way to Kingscote, where it and its passengers would transfer to the raitour stock to return to Southend.



The remainder of this report covers the tour, using those photos submitted for use on the Blog, in chronological order through the day.

We therefore start with another of Julian's photos, showing 'Mayflower' approaching Betchworth on its way from Southend.



Two more from Julian. The other locomotive on the train, 33207 at the tailing end, is also seen passing through Betchworth on its way to South Croydon, where the train reversed to be headed by the 33 for the journey down to East Grinstead and Kingscote.



The Bluebell's S15 No.847 was on duty with a timetabled public service train on the Bluebell, and Brian Lacey was at Horsted Keynes to photograph its arrival with the 11.30am departure from Sheffield Park, formed of 7 Southern Railway Bulleid and Maunsell carriages. His second photo shows the same train on departure from Horsted Keynes a few minutes later.





33207 'Jim Martin' is only the second Crompton to run on the Bluebell. It is one of the "Slim Jims", built to the narrower profile required for operation on the line to Hastings. Julian Clark's photos shows it hauling the railtour into East Grinstead, and below, 'Mayflower' is seen on the back of the train, after it had passed through the mainline platforms.





Above - The raitour with 'Mayflower' on the back of the train is now on the Network Rail siding behind our platform at East Grinstead, just about to move onto Bluebell metals. (Julian Clark).



Left - Roy Watts was the Bluebell person responsible for admitting the train onto Bluebell property. He took this photo as 33207 'Jim Martin' was about to cross the gate threshold which marks the boundary.

The token enabling the train to enter the section to Kingscote had been issued for the first time from a token instrument recently installed at East Grinstead, rather than needing to be brought up by road from Kingscote. The token is released from the instrument remotely from Kingscote Signal Box, greatly simplifying movements on and off the national network.

SECR O1 No.65 and Maunsell Q-class No.30541 in the meantime had headed a 12.15 public service from Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes, formed of 7 coaches, as seen in Brian Lacey's photo below. His second photo shows the same train, now as an empty stock movement, on departure from Horsted Keynes at 12.35, heading for Kingscote where it would meet the raitour and take on its passengers.





Having arrived on Bluebell metals, there were crew changes to arrange. The train is seen on the viaduct in Roy Watts' photo, with 'Mayflower' on the back of the train. Now the key on the token was used to lock the Bluebell's main-line access points, and then the token walked the length of the viaduct to be given to the driver of the leading engine. Steve Lee's below shows the Bluebell train heading up to Kingscote to meet it, near Birchstone Bridge.





Julian Clark's photo shows 'Mayflower' on the rear as the railtour sets off from the viaduct towards Kingscote, whilst Roy Watts' shows 33207 leaving the viaduct.



On arrival at Kingscote, the passengers transferred onto the Bluebell's carriages (the LNWR Observation Car plus six Mk. 1s) whilst 61306 and its support coach shunted from the rear of the railtour set to the rear of our own, for a move down to Sheffield Park for servicing. The photos below, by Steve Lee and John Sandys show the train having just left Kingscote.



Steve Lee's photo shows the class 33 and the railtour stock stabled at Kingscote (the best place to accommodate such a long set of carriages).



Andrew Crampton was at West Hoathly station site, to catch the down train just before it entered the tunnel.



Julian Clark's photo above shows the special train arriving at Horsted Keynes with 'Mayflower' on the rear. It had to wait there for the S15 to arrive with the 2pm service train from Sheffield Park, captured below by Brian Lacey.



Brian then photographed the down special departing from Horsted Keynes, again with 'Mayflower' bringing up the rear as the train headed for Sheffield Park, below.



Julian Clark's portrait shows 'Mayflower' drifting down the line on the rear of the train, just past New Road Bridge, to the South of Horsted Keynes.





Two more of Julian Clark's photos, show 'Mayflower', having come off the rear of the train, passing through platform 2 at Sheffield Park, with the U-class No.31618 in the background, and below, on shed, alongside the pair of 0-6-0s which were running round their train in preparation for the next service train departure at 3.20.





Our Horsted Keynes correspondent, Brian Lacey, then photographed the OI and Q with the arrival of the 3.20pm service train from Sheffield Park, which was passing the 3.05 service from East Grinstead behind the S15. We see the latter making its departure from Horsted Keynes below, at 3.40pm.





Brian also recorded the departure of the OI and Q northwards from Horsted Keynes.

Julian Clark then photographed the arrival of the S15 and its train at Sheffield Park, as No.61306 'Mayflower' sat in platform 2, having been serviced and taken water ready for its return trip. The 2-hour layover at Sheffield Park allowed participants time to either visit the nearby National Trust gardens, or take refreshment, and explore our museum, loco shed and SteamWorks! Exhibition.





Peter Edwards caught the departure of 'Mayflower' from at Sheffield Park, with the S15 on the back of this 8-coach train of Southern Railway Bulleid and Maunsell carriages. At around the same time the service train was about to enter the tunnel at the former West Hoathly station site, where Brian Lacey was now in position.





The returning railtour passengers were now approaching Horsted Keynes, where their train would pass the OI and Q. Andrew Crampton's photo shows the train approaching New Road Bridge, whilst Julian Clark took the photo below as 'Mayflower' passed the inner home signal and the water tank in the down yard.





Julian Clark's photo records the departure from Horsted Keynes, whilst Andrew Crampton's below shows the Bluebell's resident S15 assisting at the rear, as the locomotives dig in for the 2 miles of continuous climb up and through the tunnel, which starts immediately out of the platforms at Horsted Keynes.





Steve Lee's photo above shows that all's going well at Vaux End, part-way up the bank, and Brian Lacey's below records the train breasting the summit at the former West Hoathly Station site.



On reaching Kingscote station, 'Mayflower', and the tour participants, transferred back to the raitour stock, for the return to Southend, after a memorable visit to the Bluebell, featuring three of our pre-war locomotives, and a selection of vintage carriage stock, dating back in one case to 1913 to add considerable variety to their trip.

Roy Watts' photo records the raitour on the viaduct at East Grinstead, about to regain Network Rail metals.

