

Sunday Tracks March 2011

Welcome to *Sunday Tracks*, a monthly update on the activities of the railway's Sunday Permanent Way Gang and permanent way activities on the Bluebell Railway.

Who are we? We are volunteers who meet every Sunday morning at Horsted Keynes and travel the length of line dealing with issues that need attention. If after reading this you would like to become a volunteer or join us on a Sunday or Wednesday then get in contact, via Mike Gibbard, the railway's Volunteer Recruitment Co-ordinator, by phone (01323 461352, before 9pm) or e-mail "mg @ michaelgibbard . demon . co . uk". If you are interested in volunteering and being out in the countryside then see this from Jon Bowers,

<http://www.bluebell-railway.co.uk/bluebell/personal/jon-bowers/pway/volunteer.htm>

If you have a permanent way question then feel free to ask and we will see if we can come up with an answer.

If you have any questions then please email Richard Salmon, our webmaster, at rasalmon @ btinternet . com

If you find that I'm talking about areas of the railway with which you are not familiar then either come and join us or perhaps have a look at this –

http://www.bluebell-railway.co.uk/bluebell/map_grad.html

I am pleased to say that this month we have a new contribution from the Wednesday Lineside Clearance Gang and also details of photographic locations, initially public ones. First the permanent way bit.

6th March was a day to keep your coat zipped up to keep the wind out, at least until the sun came out later on. I hand you over to Tony who joined us for the first time.

I have been doing various "little" jobs around the railway for a few years now, but this was my first time with the Sunday P-Way gang. After the welcome from the whole gang (some who I have met before through the railway and others I hadn't) and a quick agenda from Jon, we loaded up for the day and headed South on the Wickham Trolley to around Waterworks, to replace a couple of life expired sleepers. We then had a quick run down to Sheffield Park to allow the 11am departure to leave. There was also one cracked fishplate to be replaced and another life expired sleeper at Caseford Bridge. We then proceeded back to Horsted Keynes to drop off the equipment that would not be needed in the afternoon, and took lunch.

After lunch we carried on the fishplate greasing proceeding northwards towards the distant signal near Black Hut. This picture shows the 'P' class passing us en-route to Kingscote – even before it was out of sight the machinery was up and running!

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Tony Hayllar

After about 90 minutes of hard work, we caught the train back to Horsted Keynes. The tools were then cleaned and stored and then some odd jobs were done by various members.

Thanks for a great day – see you all soon! Tony.

The 13th, Branch Line Weekend, dawned damp and overcast. The intensive timetable didn't give us much room to manoeuvre and so we headed north to continue fishplate greasing. As we approached Horsted House crossing it became apparent that there was a horse on the crossing, but no sign of a rider! We stopped short and approached carefully; the horse appeared to be unhurt but was obviously anxious. We

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immediately contacted the signal box at Horsted Keynes and advised them of the problem. The horse had read the instructions and was waiting for us to pass before crossing!



Chris was dispatched to the nearby farmhouse., and with the help of the owners we returned the horse to its field, safe and sound. We continued north and dropped our lunch off at Black Hut and made a start on the greasing task, with the Wickham returning back to Horsted Keynes. We caught the train back in the afternoon.

The 20th was possibly the best day of the year so far, with signs of spring everywhere. We were a bit short on the ground, which limited our activities somewhat and so we continued with tidying-up jobs. A trip to Kingscote to collect more surplus items led us to discover that the once-well known-Ingwersons Nursery was a hive of activity with heavy equipment remodelling the terraces and substantial tree felling going on further north. After lunch we joined forces with S&T (Signal and Telegraph) department to assist them in converting the operation of signals at Horsted Keynes from electric operation back to wires. Signal Wires will be installed from the signal box to each signal.

With recently-restored coach 1520 (London & South Western Railway - Lavatory Brake 3rd - http://www.bluebell-railway.co.uk/bluebell/cw_news/1520.html) resplendent in the background we see the gang supervising Mick (S&T) digging a hole. How many gang members does it take to dig a hole?
... None - it wasn't our hole!

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A close-up of the action from Martin Lawrence shows Paul working hard as usual and Dave wisely standing back!

This hole allows the installation of pulleys (in the foreground) to direct the signal wires from the signal box to the appropriate signals

On 27th we drove to West Hoathly station site to investigate fishplate problems reported from the track walk. Once sorted we returned to Horsted and spent the rest of the day organising ourselves ready for future tasks.

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Photo Locations

The Bluebell Railway offers some great photographic opportunities and we will start with one of the easiest to access – Leamland Bridge.

This spot is on a public footpath just north of Horsted Keynes Station. During the summer months the best time for a shot is in the afternoon when the sun is above the trees. In the afternoons of the winter months the low sun will shine through the bridge and it can be very effective taking pictures with a long lens.



From the Horsted Keynes parking field walk north to Leamland Bridge, turn RIGHT after crossing the bridge (do not turn left, these are private cottages). The footpath rounds away from the railway with a stile at the bottom. Cross the stile and turn right to another stile. Cross this stile and bear right; this will take you back to the railway with another stile. The gate is on your right and is the location for great photo opportunities.

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This location is on a public footpath and so there are no restrictions on photography; however if you want to take photographs between the railway's boundary fences then there are some restrictions to ensure everyone's safety. For more details see

<http://www.bluebell-railway.co.uk/bluebell/lineside.html>

DaveB

Permanent Way Lesson

Wickham Trolley



Waiting for the signal to access Kingscote Station

Ever since track was laid there was a need to go out and inspect and maintain it. Something other than a train was needed to perform this task and various small vehicles emerged. Early versions were human powered but soon internal combustion engines took over. D Wickham & Co. Ltd of Ware & Stevenage, Hertfordshire, captured this market and the Wickham Trolley was born (they are called speeders or inspection cars in the US).

Wickham produced nearly 12,000 vehicles, which went all over the world. Produced in various track gauges, they even found military applications and some had armoured plate added to create fighting vehicles –

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<http://zureuel.blogspot.com/2008/05/wickham-trolley-legacy-of-malaysian.html>

The one you see in our pictures is called a Type 18 and is powered by a Ford four cylinder diesel engine and fitted with air brakes. It was converted to a Material Handling Unit, number DXN 68001 at Ashford in the early nineties with a power car at each end. Unfortunately the other power car is now in the Down Yard at Horsted Keynes pending expensive transmission repairs.

We also have a Type 27, originally powered by a Ford side valve petrol engine (now ohv) using a duplex chain drive and wooden brake blocks, visible from the train as you ride past the the Ardingly Siding.

If you want to know more about Wickham Trolleys then *The Wickham Works List* by Keith Gunner/Mike Kennard and published by Dennis Duck Publications is an essential read.

I hope you have enjoyed this insight into our activities and I look forward to some questions to answer and hopefully some of you joining us soon on a Sunday. Thanks to my colleagues for their assistance in compiling this.

David Chappell

Wednesday Lineside Clearance Gang

The Sunday Permanent Way Gang is not the only one operating out and about on the track. On Wednesday, the Lineside Clearance Gang are out tending to our 18 miles of borders (the track is nine miles long). This from Ian Aitken, who oversees the gang.

We have a routine that has worked well recently: start just north of Horsted Keynes in the autumn and work south. We get to Three Arch Bridge around the turn of the year to clear the area in time for the spring flowers, and continue south. At the moment we are at Lindfield Wood. Last year we never reached Sheffield Park but I hope to this year. Meanwhile, of course, nasty nature will take over so at some point we will break off to tackle areas of fire risk like Horsted House Farm. The area a mile south of Kingscote is very ably tended by Mike and Eddie.

Existing volunteers are welcome to join us - at the moment usually 8am outside Carriage and Wagon Works at Horsted Keynes. New volunteers are also welcome.

Three pictures from David Mills show the gang busy working in Lindfield Wood on 23rd.

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