



CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – 9th November 2023

There is slightly different format to the update this time. Since we aren't running any trains right now, I am not going to do the usual day by day account.

Despite there being no public service, there's a lot going on at the Railway and preparations for SteamLights and Santa are in full-swing.

The Carriage & Wagon team have been undertaking maintenance as well as dressing the set for SteamLights, and the Infrastructure teams along with C&W have been putting the generators out on the lineside, and shortly all the displays will be set up.

Work is progressing on the Bicester Mk1, the Hastings brake, Car 54 and the new 'BG' that will replace the 'BGZ' in the Golden Arrow set. 'BY' 419 has also been in the works to make it watertight as that will soon become a storage facility for the carriage shop as they move into the 'GBL' in the Dock next year. The existing carriage shop Mk1 is life-expired and will be stripped for spares, then scrapped. We also hope to return 4-wheeler 661 to traffic next Easter and the newly restored 949 around the same time, this will give us a fantastic rake of four wheeled carriages.

On the Christmas front, we have all the presents, we are now decorating trains and stations, and are assembling the on-train teams. The 9F club, as always, will be the elves. They do a fantastic job and I say a special thank you to these guys. It is a Bluebell tradition as a junior member to be an elf at Christmas – I did it when I was a teenager!

We do still have turns available on the Santa trains for stewards, so if you have some time then please *please please* send Keith Riggs an email at keith.riggs@bluebell-railway.com

Work is progressing well on 'Archie' and we are hopeful the final test runs will happen next week. 'Bluebell' and 178 have entered the workshop, already both have been stripped and the boiler swap is underway, as well as the other tasks we have to do. I have been amazed at how quickly this has been done – well done to everyone involved.

Neil Glaskin and myself attended the Heritage Railway Association Autumn conference in Newcastle on Tuesday and Wednesday, which was very informative with some good speakers and panel discussions. It was extremely interesting to see the number of heritage railways that are now following the same initiatives we started at the beginning of this year to recover their businesses. This is definitely a testament that our approach was right and we were leaders within the movement.



Finally, it wouldn't be an update without mentioning Mrs C or pie! Mrs C has not seen a lot of me lately thanks to Bluebell and the day job – thank goodness she is supportive. I am also looking forward to us restarting running trains as I am missing our fabulous pies!

Paul Churchman
Chairman
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