



CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – WEEK COMMENCING SAT 29th APRIL 2023

Well, where did that week go?! Admittedly it was only a four day week, but it seemed to go by super-fast; there was a lot of activity at the Railway too.

Saturday

I was once again at the railway as Operating Supervisor. I travelled to E Grinstead on the first train and then back to Horsted Keynes where I spent some time in the C&W works. It was a little quiet for volunteers in there which is unusual for a Saturday. Then back to Sheffield Park and a quiet end to my day. The railway was busy though and our passengers all seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Sunday

It was a normal Sunday service at the railway, and it was quite busy for a bank holiday weekend, with plenty happening around the railway. Now we are (allegedly) coming into summer and the weather is slowly improving, let's hope this trend continues.

Monday

The first of three bank holidays this month! I was supposed to be at the railway, but Neil Glaskin had agreed to cover my Ops Supervisor turn, so I was having a day of relaxation with Mrs C. Again, the railway saw a good number of passengers. Unfortunately Camelot failed in the afternoon and we had to combine the Wealden Rambler with the service train – this is the third incident in a month where we have had to cancel train due to failure and shows how needed the 73 is for resilience.

Tuesday

I was working on the day job but, as ever, fielding Bluebell-related emails and phonecalls. There was not a lot for me to especially remark upon on, apart from the usual departmental activities of course - in Infrastructure, C&W, Loco, and Commercial.

Archie's boiler is now on a lowmac and work is now pushing ahead with that. We hope to see this Loco come into traffic by Christmas or early 2024.

Wednesday

This was now my fourth day of not visiting the railway, and I was starting to get withdrawal symptoms! The two-departure service was operating today, and it was nicely busy too.



Thursday

My usual Thursday visit to the C&W team didn't go quite as I had planned. Chris Knibbs had injured himself at home and Neil Glaskin was covering for him - but then Neil became ill, so I was now Ops Supervisor once again. I started my day at Sheffield Park, making sure we got the Wealden Rambler set attached to the 2.15 departure, before setting off to Horsted for a brief visit before I needed to get back to Sheffield Park to 'undo' the earlier shunt... to reassemble the service set and to restore the Wealden Rambler stock to the Dock.

It was a busy day, 'the Rambler' was three-quarters full, plus we had a couple of coach parties. Also, the pie in the Bessemer was amazingly good and seemed to be selling well too.

Friday

After my hectic Bluebell day yesterday, I was equally busy in the day job today - but all went well. James Young was holding the fort at the Railway, as unfortunately Chris Knibbs will be off work until next week (he is OK... but he is recovering from 'remodelling' himself slightly whilst using an angle grinder in his garage!).

And finally...

You will notice we are making changes to the food we serve. There will now be a homemade pie available in The Bessemer every day we are open, and this will vary week by week. We will also have four other options at weekends, one of them always being sausage, chips, and beans. We will also be progressively improving the catering offer at Horsted Keynes, Kingscote and E Grinstead. These changes are proving very popular, and our catering revenue is increasing - and with improved margin too - so, it's a 'win-win.'

And of course..... Don't forget AGM & Members Day on the 3rd of June. Gavin Bennett has ordered a marquee that will hold more people than we have had at an AGM for probably anytime since the sixties. So please do come along to see firstly what is going on at your railway, and perhaps there will be something you fancy getting involved in. Then come to the AGM - and enjoy the food and drink afterwards.

Paul Churchman
Chairman
7th May 2023