

Maunsell Locomotives Overhaul Update

By Steve Pilcher and Chris Hunford, Maunsell Locomotive Society

Q CLASS NO 541

Up to the end of 2025, work had largely focused on annealing, setting, fitting and heading over the copper stays. Work to caulk and nut the monel stays has also been largely completed. Work has commenced on some of the smaller and more fiddly jobs like repairing and fitting the mudhole doors, marking out and fitting the blowdown valve and reaming the foundation ring holes.

The boiler flue tubes have been non-destructively tested in preparation for the copper bottle shaped ends to be braised onto the steel tube. These can now be fitted, along with the smoke tubes, when ready.

With work on the boiler now very advanced, the final jobs to complete before it can be returned to

Sheffield Park include the fitting of the steel backhead, final stays, foundation ring rivets, flue and smoke tubes; retapping the washout plug holes, then refitting the smokebox, fire grate and testing the boiler.

Following the discovery of cracks in most of the horn blocks, work on the chassis had slowed over the past few months while the horn blocks were sent for specialist repair. These have now returned and are being machined ready for fitting. This has allowed work to start on the second main frame insert. Other jobs such as manufacturing the new axlebox crowns and refitting brake components is also in progress.

Once the main frame inserts are complete and the horn blocks fitted, the final reassembly of the



541's sandboxes in grey primer. Photo: Steve Pilcher

chassis can start. This includes optical alignment of the horn blocks and wedges, supply, machine and fit of new bronze plates to ensure axle centres are correct, white metal various liner faces, align the slide bars and the refitting of all wheel sets, axleboxes, spring gear and valve gear.

Back at Sheffield Park, work is progressing on the tender chassis, with more pipework being re-fitted and a spare wheelset that had been sent away to the South Devon Railway for tyre turning (to replace a flawed wheelset) has returned.

Dave Cox and Bob Butcher are continuing to progress the painting of the exterior of the tender tank and various components.

The MLS volunteers continue to progress repairing corroded sections of cladding. A couple of

volunteers also undertook a 'snagging' of the inside of the tender tank in December and have concluded painting the interior. They will now focus on painting the coal space area in January.

SCHOOLS CLASS NO 928 STOWE

In December 2025 East Coast Castings made good progress on the new pattern for the left-hand cylinder casting that is required for Stowe, as shown in the photo below.

Although we had the finance in place for the pattern and casting, we still need to conclude fundraising to machine the casting. We need to raise £15,000 and as at the end of December 2025 over £10,000 has been raised. Many thanks to all those who have been so generous with their donations thus far.

CAN YOU HELP PLEASE?

The [Maunsell Locomotive Society](#) still needs to raise the final £5,000 or so. All extra donations will be gratefully received, preferably via the Stowe appeal in the Bluebell Railway Trust – or contact the MLS Treasurer, Steve Pilcher, jstevepilcher@yahoo.co.uk for further details.



Part of the pattern for the new left-hand cylinder. Photo: East Coast Castings