

SOUTHERN RAILWAY COACH GROUP

BLUEBELL RAILWAY

Newsletter Issue 1: March 2024

Welcome to the first issue of the Southern Railway Coach Group Newsletter. We formally launched the Group in summer 2023 with the aim to restore, maintain and promote awareness of the Bluebell Railway's rolling stock designed and/or operated by the Southern Railway. Since then, we've been working behind the scenes to get the organisation in place as well as progressing our restoration projects in the works at Horsted Keynes. Thank you for your support for the Group: we hope you find this newsletter interesting. If there are features you would like to see in future issues, please do get in touch with your suggestions.

Keith Leppard, Editor

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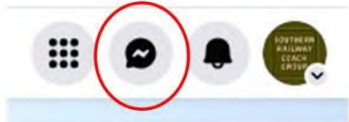
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Maunsell 'Hastings' Brake 3rd 3687



3687 briefly outside the works, Mar 2023 *Photo: Rowan Millard*

As this newsletter goes to press, we are eagerly awaiting the return to traffic of Maunsell Brake 3rd 3687 after a comprehensive restoration. SRCG members are now working on the last tasks to bring the project to completion so, even though work began on it long before the Group was formed, it seems right to celebrate this momentous event in our newsletter.

3687 came to the railway in 1992 to be broken up for spares, but its good condition prompted a group led by David Wigley to commence its restoration. David discusses the early years of the project in a separate article in this issue. Work progressed outdoors for 25 years in the Pump House siding behind Horsted Keynes signal box, but by 2018 progress had slowed as the original team dwindled with the passing of time. Latterly David was soldiering on alone.

At the same time, a team led by Tony Clements was coming to the end of its current project and was looking to smooth the path towards getting space in the works to restore the Maunsell Restaurant Car. With everyone feeling that various half-finished projects needed to be completed before anything else was started, they undertook to work with David to complete 3687. However, it still took until August 2019 for the coach to get a spot in A road where it became a familiar sight over the past few years.

The next few months were spent removing, stripping and re-bedding the steel panelling with fresh mastic to assure that the timber frame was still sound. At the same time, work progressed on the interior where much still needed to be done. The pandemic intervened in March 2020 but by the end of 2020, repainting of the exterior had begun.

After another Covid hiatus in early 2021, rapid progress was made both inside and out. By the end of the year, the roof had been recanvassed and painted and the sides were partly in topcoat. Inside, steam heaters had been installed in the remaining compartments, new linoleum laid to the floors, new ceiling panels fitted & painted in the compartments and corridor, and the varnished panels and mouldings had been added. A lot of attention was paid to reinstalling the plumbing and fittings in the lavatory.

The first half of 2022 saw the topcoats completed and all the fixed lights fitted with their characteristic varnished wood frames. Lining and lettering began in the summer and by early 2023, all of the body had two coats of varnish. The last area inside to be tackled was the brake area and this too was painted up by early 2023. At the start of April 2023, 3687 made a brief foray to the jacking area in E road so its bogies could be extracted for overhaul. A

comprehensive restoration of the bogie frames, brake gear and suspension took the rest of the year because of the need to source and refurbish a replacement frame and delays in manufacturing new parts.

At time of writing, the final elements of the restoration are still to be completed, waiting for space in the maintenance road to lift the coach. It needs to be replaced on its new bogies, brake gear and steam heat connected up and the gangway connectors completed. A final spruce

up of the solebar paintwork and fitting of the footboards is needed after which 3687 will be handed over to the maintenance staff for the door locks to be fitted and the coach commissioned for service.

You can look back on 3687's restoration via Alex Morley's photo collection on Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/admorley/albums/72157711393512197/with/52161129381>

Keith Leppard



3687 in Oct 2019. Photo: Alex Morley



3687 west side in Feb 2023. Photo: Alex Morley



3687 east side in Jan 2023 (above).

Completed compartment in Oct 2021 (left).

Internal sign-writing detail, Nov 2023 (right).

Photos: Alex Morley



A Chat with David Wigley

David Wigley has been a stalwart of the Bluebell Railway Carriage and Wagon Department for over 50 years. Restoring Hastings Brake 3rd 3687 is only the most recent of many projects he has been involved with. As well as his hands-on contribution, his in-depth knowledge of Southern Railway vehicles has been invaluable to many restorations over that time. As 3687 nears completion, he kindly agreed to contribute to our first SRCG newsletter.

Ed: David, tell me how you got started in railway preservation?

DW: I visited the Hawkhurst branch in its last weeks and I realized that all operations like this: the Terriers at Hayling Island, the Adams tanks at Lyme Regis and the Beattie tanks, were about to be lost for ever. Initially I joined the KESR, and the first project I ever worked on was their LNWR 4-wheel passenger brake. I was there for about two years but they became locked in a battle with the Ministry of Transport which seemed impossible to win. Looking for other locations to house the wagons etc that had been acquired we settled on the leased site at Droxford.

Soon after the move to Droxford I was at Andover Junction where I noticed the now withdrawn Maunsell coach 6686 so I created a fund to save it. It was acquired and delivered to Knowle Junction for £250. In 1966 steam was coming to an end so we looked for a small locomotive with a view to operating Droxford as a preserved railway. We would have liked this to have been an Ivatt 2-6-2 tank but there was already an appeal to buy one of these, so we went for a USA tank instead. By then the four mainline USA tanks had been moved to Salisbury for disposal. 30064 appeared to be in the best condition and it was purchased for £750. To work on our expanding fleet we also needed a base to act as a store and mess room. We searched for a suitable vehicle, a brake van, and eventually found some at the recently closed Oxfordshire Ironstone Company. The one we chose, a GWR 'Toad', was shipped to us by rail. Interestingly it 'ran hot' on its way to us but Eastleigh yard just lifted it replaced the wheelset and brasses and sent it on its way!

We actually steamed 30064 at Droxford on a few occasions in 1968 and ran it the length of the line to Knowle Junction with coach 6686. Then British

Railways announced their intention to remove the junction. With the ARPS promoting a railway museum complex at nearby Longmoor, which we could not compete with, we moved all the large artefacts, now plus the LSWR luggage van 5498, to the yard and goods shed at Fareham.

Longmoor did not happen, but we left Fareham to join the rump of the scheme at Liss with David Shepherd and other groups, including the Bulleid Society with Blackmoor Vale, that were trying to create a workable venture there. In the event Liss didn't take off, probably a good thing in retrospect. The final steaming there was for the filming of Young Winston; that's why 30064 has cowcatchers in early photos. We chose to move everything to the Bluebell, its advantage being it was the only secure option in the south having completed its line purchase a year or two earlier and undergone significant management change. We arrived, along with the Bulleid Society's stock, in 1971. Some years later, ownership of communal items was transferred to Bluebell.

Ed: Before 3687, what other projects were you involved with at the railway?

DW: The first thing we did was a restoration of 6686, so it could be put into traffic. The USA tank also went into traffic almost immediately. I worked on one of the SR 8 plank open wagons, with Dennis Burfoot, and then we completed the SR vacuum-braked van. Next we restored the SECR 'dance hall' brake. I also contributed to the restoration of 1309 and various Bulleid coaches, and did a lot of work on the infrastructure.

Ed: Tell me how the project to restore 3687 came about?

DW: Way back when I was at the KESR, I was involved in an ultimately unsuccessful plan to rescue a set of three 'Hastings line' Maunsell coaches. That was what started my interest in them. When 3687 was brought to Bluebell as

part of a group of three vehicles intended to be broken up for spares, I saw that the frame and roof appeared sound and much of the internal partitioning was intact. The railway had recently borrowed the Vintage Carriage Trust matchboard brake and that had been very successful in traffic, so I thought that 3687 could do the same job and obtained permission to start work on it (*Bluebell News Summer 1993 C&W report mentions work having begun*).

Ed: You were working outside on 3687 for all that time. What challenges did that present?

DW: We sealed up the sidelights and put tarpaulins over the roof. You hoped to find something to do inside the coach when it was pouring with rain and when it was freezing cold, you didn't bother! We worked through the winters as best we could.

Ed: Could you take me through the work that you were able to do to 3687 while it was outside?

DW: We realized that we needed to clean all the muck and rust from the underframe. So an early task was to jack the body from the underframe and sit it on trestles, while we rolled out the underframe to be grit-blasted and painted. Then we lowered the body back onto it.



3687 coach body in the pump house siding at Horsted Keynes while its underframe is being carefully put back under it, 1996. *Photo: John Arkell*

Although the timber frame was generally sound, patching was required where rusting bolts had split the timber. We also had to replace some frame pieces on the corridor side, including where an extra set of double doors had been inserted opposite the first compartment. The floor was broken out as it already had many holes punched in it, and replaced with timber.

As it turned out, the partitioning was not useable. Every part had been altered during the coach's adaptation for control train use. The compartment partitions had been replaced with heavy ply, which saw re-use in the floor, and all the corridor partitioning had been cut about. So we had to replace all of it: Frank Ferris masterminded that. We used a joinery company based in Edenbridge. They were really enthusiastic about the project and did a very good job of it for us. Another major task was to replace the external steel panelling. The sheet was supplied by a company cut to size and all screw holes, laps and countersinking was done by the Alf Brown gang. We also had to plug all the myriad of old holes in the timber frame before we could screw the sheets into place.

Numerous people have contributed to this project with me. Frank Ferris was a project co-leader. He did the interior partitioning with Bob Searles. Ian Johnson worked restoring the vacuum brake, and Ian de Maid & George Woods did a lot of component recovery. As mentioned, the Alf Brown Gang did the external sheeting; they also did the underframe. Tony Silcock has rewired the coach completely. The KESR helped us with body components and external doors, and the Severn Valley provided some vital internal components. Finally of course the SRCG members have joined in over the past four years.

Ed: Last question. I know you feel it's very important to get things historically correct in a restoration. What aspects of the finished 3687 make you particularly pleased?

DW: One thing is that the components in the compartments are almost all original, not to this coach necessarily but obtained from other similar vehicles and adapted. So it doesn't look brand new. My aim was always to get the coach looking and feeling like it was fresh from an overhaul rather than having been re-created and I think that has been achieved.

A Volunteer's Perspective: Richard Smith



As a long term member of the C&W I joined the Southern Coach Group when it was formed. I have no special skill but am happy to help out as and where needed. On recent visits I have helped to make battery boxes from scratch and then finishing them up to final top coat paint. These will be fitted to 1482 in due course.

Previously there has been a variety of work from fitting ceilings in the Hastings Brake (3687) to stripping paint on the outside and inside of van 419. There has also been work on making and fitting the inner door panels for the Bulleid open 3rd (1482) and corridor composite (5768). This

required making some panels from new and mixing and matching with parts already in stock. Both of these vehicles are operational and it is very pleasing to see them back in traffic. Quite often there are “could you just” jobs which add to the variety of the work. My last visit involved removing the doors from 100 seater 917 (see picture, left). This is an ongoing job which is causing much head scratching (and tea drinking) as they have probably not been removed before.

A typical day, if there is such a thing, starts with a catch up with the rest of the team (and tea) and a decision on what is to be done that day. Even on long term projects its likely something new has occurred so you are never quite sure what will be required. It is very satisfying to see a restored vehicle rolled out for the first time or keeping something that is in traffic running again after an overhaul.

If you have read this and thought “I couldn’t do that”, don’t be put off: there is always work for an extra pair of hands no matter what level of skill you may possess. So why not join us and help to restore, repair and keep the railway’s coaching stock running.

Richard Smith

SR Van C 419

Since October 2023, along with various other members of the Carriage and Wagon Department, members of SRCG have been contributing to the overhaul of van 419. The finished van was outshopped during February; the signwriting was done by Matt Lander from the Goods Division. It’s an ‘above solebar’ rebuild rather than full overhaul, but getting it done in 4 months was still good going! It is now in the dock at Horsted Keynes, to be used as store for the new Carriage Shop, opening soon.

Photo: Keith Leppard



Maunsell Restaurant Car 7864: Project Underway!

After over a decade of fundraising by a dedicated band and donations from many supporters, permission was granted to commence work on 7864 back in 2019. However, it took until February 2024 for all the stars to align so that it could actually be brought into the works. The morning of Monday 5th Feb finally saw D road being emptied so that this unique vehicle could be moved into the northern-most spot there. Since then, no time has been lost in getting started, with first tasks being to treat the timbers, remove the tarpaulins, clear the interior of stored items and debris, and photograph and catalogue the bodyside timbers and panelling.



Maunsell Restaurant Car 7864 on the day the tarpaulins were removed, 24 Feb 2024.

Photos: Keith Leppard (top right), Alex Morley (middle, 3); Richard Salmon (bottom)



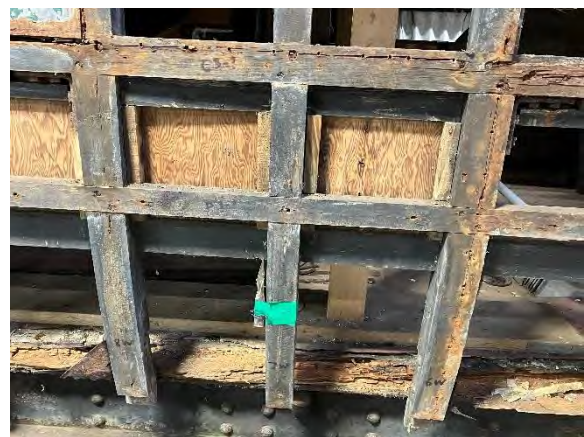
The focus over the first couple of weeks of the project has been to strip the south-west corner and southern-most quarter of the west side of the coach so that repair of the timber frame can begin. The steel panelling in this area has been removed along with two top lights and the passenger door. This then allowed the removal of the residual (rotten) bottom side timber from the first 12' or so of that side, also the highly corroded steel brackets that link this timber to the pillars, and the dismantling of the SW corner pillar. This pillar is a substantial piece of teak and is in generally good condition; it is being repaired to be re-used. A start has also been made on preparing the new bottom side, with the first lap-joints between the new segments being cut and fettled to a good fit.



The SW corner pillar under repair, using hardwood plugs to fill cored-out holes where steelwork has been removed (top), and the first new bottom side lap joint before fettling (bottom), March 2024. *Photos: Keith Leppard*

With the end sheeting removed, it's possible to see the bottom timber at the end has substantial splits in it, caused by the usual problem of corroded bolts expanding. To fix this, which needs to be done before the new bottom side can be inserted, we will first need to dismantle the gangway.

There will be in-depth articles about the Restaurant Car project in the next issue of the newsletter.



The SW corner of 7864 stripped down, with work proceeding to remove the top lights (top). The lower half of the bodyside framing, showing the rotten residual bottom side (middle). The area on the right once the rotten timber had been cleared out (bottom). March 2024. *Photos: Keith Leppard*

A Summary of Maunsell's Hastings Line Steam-Hauled Stock

Richard Maunsell built 102 new vehicles for the Southern Railway to the restricted loading gauge of the route between Tunbridge Wells and Hastings, in four batches between 1929 and 1934. Because of the reduced width (8ft 0¾in, Restriction 0), 3rd class compartments seated three rather than four each side and 1st class only two each side. The 1934 batch were the final steam-hauled coaches built for the route; 6-car DEMU sets to the same loading gauge were delivered to replace steam haulage in 1957-8.

The Restriction 0 coaches were flat-sided, lacking the tumblehome on the lower panels of normal 9ft width Restriction 4 coaches; they also lacked the characteristic guard's lookout ductet. They were harder to distinguish from the 8ft 6" versions Maunsell built for the SR Central and Eastern sections as both widths of vehicle lacked these features. However, the doors of the Hastings line carriages uniquely did not extend the full depth of the bodyside, instead closing over the bottom side.

Type	Diagram	Date	Numbers
TK	2004	1929	1115-6
BTK	2105	1929	3672-83
CK	2304	1929	5592-7
FK	2503	1929	7400-3
TK	2004	1931	1117-8
BTK	2105	1931	3684-91
CK	2304	1931	5598-5601
FK	2503	1931	7404-5; 7415-6
TK	2004	1932	1119-20
BTK	2105	1932	3234-7
CK	2304	1932	5578-9
FK	2503	1932	7414; 7418
TK	2004	1934	1019-1040
BCK	2402	1934	6881-6904
FK	2503	1934	7419-22



A Schools class 4-4-0 at West St Leonards with a rake of Maunsell Restriction 0 carriages forming the 6.55 pm Hastings to Cannon Street service on 31 July 1955. *Photo: Bluebell Museum Archive – John J Smith collection.*

Maunsell changed his corridor window design from 'low pattern' to 'high pattern' (extending up to the cantrail, as in 3687) for orders placed from mid-1928. All but two of the Hastings line carriages were built with high pattern corridor lights, the exceptions being the first two TKs built, 1115/6.

When delivered, most vehicles were formed into 3-coach sets, intended to run in pairs flanking two or three loose coaches possibly including a Pullman. Three coach sets formed 1929 – 1932 were BTK-FK/CK-BTK. Those formed in 1934 were BCK-TK-BCK. Carriages not allocated to sets

Set #	Dates	Initial Formation
213	1931 -	3684; 7404; 3685
214	1931 -	3686; 7405; 3687
215	1931 - 59	3688; 7416; 3689
216	1931 -	3690; 7415; 3691
475	1929 - 59	3672; 5592; 3673
476	1929 -	3674; 5593; 3675
477	1929 - 59	3676; 5594; 3677
478	1929 -	3678; 5595; 3679
479	1929 -	3680; 5596; 3681
480	1929 -	3682; 5597; 3682
939	1932 - 59	3236; 1119; 5579; 7418; 5578; 1120; 3237
940	1932 - 59	3234; 7414; 3235
941	1934 - 59	6881; 1038; 6882
942	1934 -	6883; 1028; 6884
943	1934 - 59	6903; 1033; 6904
944	1934 - 59	6889; 1037; 6890
945	1934 - 59	6891; 1036; 6892
946	1934 - 59	6893; 1039; 6894
947	1934 - 59	6895; 1040; 6896
948	1934 - 59	6897; 1032; 6898
949	1934 - 59	6899; 1035; 6900
950	1934 - 59	6901; 1034; 6902
951	1934 -	6885; 1031; 1030; 7419; 1029; 1027; 6886

were used as loose vehicles. The CK's in some of the sets formed in 1929 were swapped at some point soon after with FK's from the loose pool.

The entry into service of the 6 coach 'Hastings' diesel electric units in 1958 signalled the end for most of the Maunsell restriction 0 steam-hauled stock. All of the TKs and BCKs were withdrawn by the end of 1959 (one, 6884, was lost much earlier to enemy action in 1944). Several of the FKs, 7400 – 4, 7414/5/8 remained in service to mid-1961, as did three CKs, 5592, 5599 and 5601, which were withdrawn later in 1961; one, 5598, lasted until September 1962. Eight BTKs also survived beyond 1959, including 3680/1/6/7/90/1 withdrawn in the second half of 1961 and 3684/5 withdrawn in September 1962.

Not all of the withdrawn stock was scrapped immediately: some vehicles went into departmental service, including our own 3687. It and three other BTKs, plus two CKs, were formed into two three-coach 'Emergency Control' trains that were intended to be used in the event of nuclear attack. These sets were retained until 1981, with the coaches then going on to other departmental functions. This eventually allowed 3687 to survive into preservation, with one of its sister vehicles from the sets providing spare parts for its overhaul. Another coach, 3690, also survived and is at the Rother Valley Railway, Robertsbridge.

Keith Leppard

Information collated from *Maunsell's SR Steam Carriage Stock* by David Gould, Oakwood Press.

Key to Carriage Type codes:

- BCK – Corridor Brake Composite
- BTK – Corridor Brake Third
- CK – Corridor Composite
- FK – Corridor First
- TK – Corridor Third