



BLUEBELL RAILWAY

Newsletter Issue 3: March 2025

Just over a month ago, 24 Feb 2025, saw the first anniversary of us removing the tarpaulins from the Maunsell Restaurant Car and beginning work on it in earnest. Since then, the project seems to have caught the imagination of many on the railway and we've been pleased to welcome several new faces to the team working on the project. Starting on such a comprehensive rebuild, you never really know what you are going to find but so far, the doomsayers have been proved wrong and progress so far has been quicker than we had anticipated. That's not to say that the project overall will be done anytime soon – far from it. But with the dismantling of the body frame proceeding apace, we can at least see that the end of the first major phase of the restoration is in sight.

Keith Leppard, Editor

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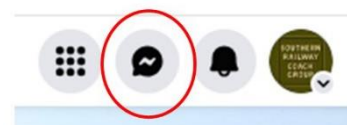
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Maunsell Restaurant Car No 7864: Progress Report #2

As I write, it's early spring: it's still chilly but the sun is shining, and the darkest and coldest days are definitely behind us for another year. We are now just over a year into our restoration of 7864 and a lot more progress has been made since my report in the previous newsletter. Here's a summary of what's been done in that time.

Dismantling the body frame The west and east side framing has been taken down from the coach in sections as far as the centre of the coach, pillars 22E/23W, numbering from the south end. These



The first section of west side framing to be taken off the vehicle. Pillars 2-12W plus rails A-E and cantrail pictured on 14 Sep 2024.

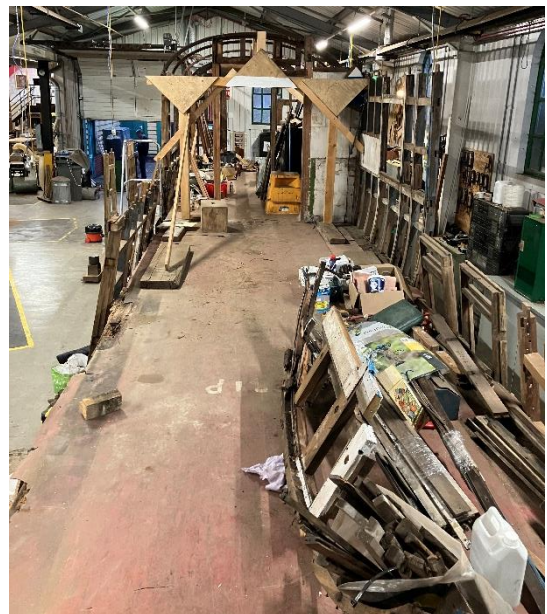
are the pillars that are rebated to take the partition that divides the dining saloon to the south from the pantry and side corridor to the north. As the framework south of this position is identical on each side, these two pillars should have the same number (22E/W) but an error by the author in assigning numbers to the missing pillars in the cut-away section on the west side means 21W will remain forever a figment of my imagination! Very recently, west side pillars 23-29 have also been removed, taking us up to the double doors on that side.

Although the southern half of the body frame was down, 7864 still appeared to have some substance because of the presence of the substantial temporary supporting frame that was put into the coach many years ago to save it from collapse. Over the past week (late March), this too has been



The fully dismantled southern end of 7864, pictured on 8 Feb 2025.

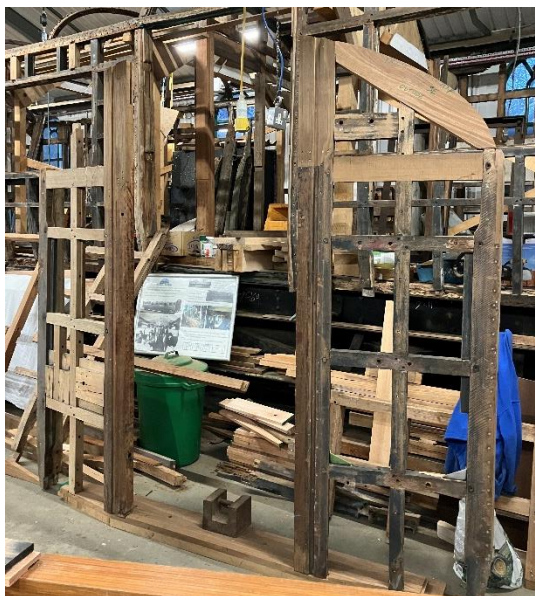
taken down so the coach now resembles a flat truck at its southern end.



The southern end of 7864 after removal of the temporary support frame, 26 Mar 2025.

Rebuilding the body The frame sections from either side of the south end gangway, including the two corner pillars, have been refurbished. This involved some renewal of timber particularly to the tops of the central crash pillars; the curved top pieces from both sides have been also replaced. Replacements for the three pieces of timber that form the centre of the end structure over the gangways have also been made for both ends. All

of this is now stored away ready for reassembly when the time comes.



The south end side frames, trial fitted into the new bottom end timber, 22 Jan 2025

The existing west side frame has been repaired in three sections, pillars 2-8, 8-13 and 13-18. These sections join the newly made missing section (18-22) that was reported last time. All have been trial fitted into the new bottom side timbers and are now stored away.



Repaired/renewed frame section 13-22W trial fitted into the new bottom side. 19 Mar 2025

Following on from making the new west bottom side, reported in Issue 2, work has begun on making the equivalent east side timbers. The first two sections have been marked out, lap joints cut and the first of them has had the mortices put in.

The east side frame so far dismantled has required more replacement of pillars due to rot than the west side did, also all of the middle rail under the windows. However, these new pieces have all now been made. The sections under the four windows have been finished, also E2-3 beside the southeast door and the full height sections between the first three windows (6-8E, 11-13E); trial fitting of these to the bottom side has begun.

New and refurbished roof components The longitudinal roof boards are supported on 28 roof hoops that are bolted to the cantrail on both sides, all but two of which are now off the coach. Most of these hoops comprise a steel arc bolted to a curved timber, made in segments, and to the cantrail; further short steel arc brackets are bolted through from the other side of the curved timbers and to the cantrail at each side. Five of the hoops are more complex, as they are located where a partition is/was fixed below it. These hoops have three or four layers of wood bolted to the steel arc, one of which forms the top of the partition.



An example of a partition roof hoop; this one divides the north end vestibule from the kitchen. 16 Nov 2024

Each roof hoop has been taken apart and the steel components de-rusted and primed before putting into storage. Most of the timber arcs are useless except as patterns but a start has been made on making new ones in ash. So far there are probably enough new bits made to do four or five hoops, so still a long way to go!

Each of the three large monsoon vents from the kitchen end have been stripped of paint and rust,



Monsoon vent covers and chimneys in primer, 30 Oct 2024. The vent frames are stacked to the left.

treated and then primed before putting into store. Two small chimneys from the roof in the same area have had some soldering repairs to the metalwork before being painted up.

Work on the doors Repair of the east side external double door frames has been finished and these have been put away for now. Work continues on a third door from the set of six. One of the surviving internal doors has been restored by the addition of a missing layer of sycamore veneer.



Internal door from 7864 showing the newly applied sycamore veneer. 30 Oct 2024

Other woodwork Where original wood from the interior of the coach has survived, we are carefully cleaning this up to remove the layers of paint that have built up over the years since it ceased to be in passenger service. These components will then be ready to receive varnish when the time comes.

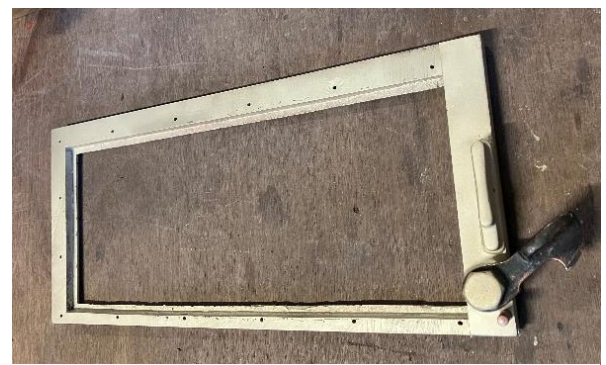
Other metalwork The footsteps, handrails and lamp irons from the two ends of the coach have been cleaned and painted in primer and, in several cases, to top coat. The same has also been done for the top and bottom gangway plunger gear components. The north end gangway faceplate has been dismantled to release the bottom casting. This will need reaming and re-bushing to



Surviving eastern section of the partition separating the pantry from the central vestibule (vestibule side shown). 30 Oct 2024



Bottom casting from the north end gangway faceplate. 26 Jan 2025



Example brass toplight frame, cleaned by bead blasting. 26 Mar 2025

remove wear where the pins link it to the bottom plungers. We've also made a start on cleaning the various brass components of the toplights.

Keith Leppard

A Volunteer's Perspective: Paul Berry



Paul pictured recently with a section of 7864's frame that he had been working on.

When I became a volunteer in the Carriage & Wagon Works last year, I came with great enthusiasm but precious few qualifications. I was retired, had two days a week to spare and a desire to 'roll my sleeves up' and offer what help I could. Having been a member of the Preservation Society for many years, I now wanted to get more involved. I also saw it as an opportunity to acquire some practical skills that might make me more useful around the house. A working life sat at a desk in front of a computer screen had left me unable to tackle some of the most basic DIY tasks!

I divide my days between the Trim Shop (carriage upholstery) located in the Skills Centre at Horsted Keynes and the C&W Works. I immediately found great help, encouragement and patience from the

members of both teams. In both departments the exacting standards and attention to detail are quite remarkable. I always feel a sense of achievement when my efforts meet with the approval of the skilled people with whom I work.

The Trim Shop team keeps alive the traditional skills and techniques passed down from an earlier generation of volunteers. These were apprentice trained coach trimmers who had worked for SR and BR at the Lancing Works and they knew their trade. The work requires the use of a variety of moquette and other time-honoured materials such as horsehair, hessian and twine. The maintenance and refurbishment of seating from carriages, both compartment and open, also means dealing with a wide range of different features and fittings.

In the C&W Works most of my time has gone into helping with the restoration of SR Restaurant Car No. 7864. I've removed rusted brackets, stripped paint from pillars and cleaned and plugged holes in the wooden body frame. It's amazing how good much of the old timber, especially mahogany, still looks after paint and years of grime have been removed. I've also played a small part in getting the 'Hastings Brake' No. 3687 ready for service by painting some of the underside.

I've been a railway enthusiast since the 1960s, but just a year with the Bluebell has shown me just how much I never knew about the technology and materials that make it all work. From 'regulating' horsehair and wrestling with rusty nuts and bolts, to hearing the wit and wisdom of conversation in the C&W Works mess, it's all been rather enjoyable and rewarding. To anyone thinking of becoming a volunteer, I'd say: give it a go, you're bound to learn something.

Overhauling Bulleid Open 3rd No 1482: Progress Report #2

After a period in traffic during early autumn 2024 following completion of work to its windows and interior, 1482 returned to its spot in the dock of the carriage works in late October for further attention, specifically to reinstate the lavatories. This task is being done by the midweek staff and involves not just installing a complete set of pipework and sanitary fittings but also proper formica panelling for the two compartments as these were left as bare timber cupboards during the previous overhaul. So far all of the plumbing, and the new tank, are in while the panelling work is ongoing.



The west side of 1482's roof at the point where the southern half had been cleaned and sanded while the rest still needed attention. 7 Jan 2025

It was also clear that some attention was needed to the roof of the coach to correct some leaks. The cantrail strips were rotten in several areas and, having removed them, it became apparent that the canvas behind those strips had been damaged

at an earlier date, creating a route for water ingress. This accounted for the water damage to some of the interior varnished panels that were replaced last year. So the decision was made to recanvas the roof, since when a lot of effort has gone into cleaning the old bedding compound off the roof boards to leave a smooth surface for the new canvas to go onto, and cleaning up the roof furniture. After the new canvas goes on in the next few weeks, it will need painting up and the roof furniture putting back on. After that, it is planned that the coach will enjoy a visit to the paintshop; work to identify and remedy surface defects in the bodyside has already begun in preparation for this repaint.

Keith Leppard



The east side of 1482 showing progress in removing loose filler around screwheads. 26 Mar 2025

Support from the Bluebell Railway Carriage Shop



We are very grateful to Chris Wilson and the Bluebell Railway Carriage Shop for their generous ongoing support of SRCG. Since the group formed it has received several donations from the proceeds of the shop, including one in February 2025. Members of the 7864 restoration team who were present at the time (from left to right Steve, Richard S, Robert, David, Tony, Keith and Richard B) gathered for a publicity photo that was posted on the Carriage Shop Facebook page on 14 February. *Photo: Chris Wilson.*

Getting Hastings Brake No 3687 into traffic – an update

As covered in Issue 1 of this Newsletter, Maunsell Brake 3rd No 3687 has been nearly finished for over a year now! So, apart from over-optimism about how long things take to get done, why has it taken so long to get this project over the finishing line?

The first issue has been getting the coach into a space where it could be worked on. The hiatus which began in autumn 2023 lasted until 18 Sep 2024, when space in the maintenance road finally became available and 3687 was shunted into place in the jacking area. Even since then, that space has had to be given up a couple of times, once in early November for the SteamLights set to be dressed and again more recently when a minor crisis with a running vehicle meant the jacks had to be vacated in a hurry for a few days.

The second issue has been two significant expansions in the scope of work needed. Firstly, the brake system installed on the coach was deemed not to meet the necessary specification for braking efficiency: the vacuum cylinders were 21" diameter rather than 22" and had small integrated vacuum reservoirs (E type) rather than the coach having separate larger vacuum reservoirs. Secondly, once the various heavy items were back on the underframe and the coach put down on its bogies it was found to be riding too high, a problem traced to the use of round section coil springs rather than the originally fitted square section coil springs but without a compensating modification to the castings which are attached to the upper and lower bolster planks and which hold these springs in place. This configuration was as we inherited the coach from BR; we speculate that they may have been happy with it as it was because of additional weight in the vehicle during its latter departmental service brought its ride height down.

On the brake issue, since September 2024 replacement 22" cylinders have been refurbished along with the correct size brackets to hang them, and the new assemblies rehung on the underframe along with refurbished cross beams. Two new vacuum reservoirs have been fabricated to order, painted up and fitted too. We are a good



Installing the west side vacuum cylinder, 5 Mar 2025. One of the new reservoirs is on the left of the picture.

way through connecting these up to the existing pipework so provided it passes a vacuum test in due course, we should be nearly there on this aspect of the work.

On the suspension issue, Stuart and Brian from the permanent staff have been masterminding the dismantling of the bolster planks and machining of the castings for us. One of the two bogies is modified and back together and the other should be there within the next couple of days. Then the coach can be dropped back onto its bogies, hopefully for the final time.



A modified lower bolster plank back in the southern bogie, March 2025 (Stuart Pay). The thickness of the round castings at each end of the plank has been reduced by milling off ½" of metal.



South end gangway bellows connected to the faceplate by the row of machine screws and covered by newly installed cinder guard. 1 Mar 2025



Steam heat pipe south end, modified to increase projection beyond headstock for better clearance. 4 Jan 2025

Other than these bigger issues, over the past six months we have finished the steam heat system, fitted the stepboards, gangway bellows and cinder guards, covered off a longish list of minor snagging issues, and begun to get the coach clean and ready for service. We were also fortunate to get the



Guard's area cleared of accumulated materials and tools. 5 Feb 2025

services of Dave in the paintshop for a week in late February to tidy up and revarnish the exterior.

Writing at the end of March 2025, there really is very little left to do on 3687 unless a test run reveals further problems. Although we don't have a firm date for entry into traffic yet, the anticipated time line will see it in use by the end of May. Rest assured, as soon as we have a date, we will let you know. Hopefully, there will be the chance to make a bit of a splash of the event, though with some pressure on corridor brake coach availability on the railway at present, 3687 might just get pressed into service as soon as it's ready.



A lucky few got a preview of what to expect when 3687 enters traffic when it briefly sat outside the works on 5 Mar 2025 (Richard Salmon). Compared to the picture of the coach in Issue 1, there are a lot of detailed changes, including being on its restored bogies.

A Glimpse of Maunsell 'Long Brake' No 3724



Left: 3724 pictured on 20 Nov 2024, before it was shunted under cover.

Below: two views of the current state of the interior of 3724. 26 Mar 2025

One of the Bluebell's Maunsell carriages that has undeniably not had its fair share of care and attention over the years is No 3724. Built to diagram 2101 in 1930, it had just four third class compartments and a large guards/luggage area with two sets of double doors on each side, hence the nickname 'long brake'. It arrived with us in 1987 after serving in departmental use in a weed-killing train. Further details of the coach's history are available on the Bluebell website.

3724 was used for a time to house a static exhibition but it has been in open air storage for many years now, during which time it has deteriorated badly. Last autumn, an opportunity arose to bring it into the OP4 storage area so it could dry out, the expectation being we will fit tarpaulins to it to preserve it better before it goes outside again. The body has started to lean somewhat, so we also plan to try to install the supporting framework recently removed from the Restaurant Car to arrest this decline.

We see 3724 as an important vehicle for its potential to provide wheelchair-accessible accommodation within a set of Maunsell coaches. The interior is a blank canvas as all the partitioning has been removed, meaning that a number of arrangements of the interior are possible to maximise the utility of the vehicle to the railway.

Keith Leppard

