

Bluebell Railway Steam Crane Project from 1981 to going into store.



Bluebell Railway's Steam Crane seen in its former home at Sheffield Park pumphouse siding where it was based during the 1980's and early 1990's. This location is no longer available due to clear track required as head shunt for new carriage shed. The staff / tool van has been sold while crane was in store, the equipment and wood packing removed for use elsewhere on the railway.

From this siding the crane was shunted into place to re-rail the GBL (Gangway Bogie Luggage van) derailed blocking the yard throat on the Saturday evening of a May Bank Holiday in the mid-eighties. All but one service loco was blocked in the yard with two days of enhanced timetable ahead, representing potential lost income. As we re-railed it that evening, and at no cost, nothing was lost.

At that time it was possible to request prompt assistance in turn from BR Brighton to do this service, now it may be necessary to wait days or more, and that assistance come from the Midlands or the North-West. Consider this.

As you will see in the photos that follow the crane can and did do a great deal of useful work for all Departments on the Railway, much of this out of sight or the awareness of many as little or any of it appeared in "Bluebell News". I hope you find these of interest and may consider donating to our crane fund, click below:

<http://www.justgiving.com/SteamCrane>

Thank you for your help, it is all appreciated and put to good use.

Part 1 :The road move from Manchester to Sheffield Park, photos by P. Francis



Left to right : Neil Cameron, George Nickson, Steve Smith, Norman Payne, Paul Lewis, Peter Gribble.

Bill Brown, Bruce (Bluebell's regular road crane driver), Michael the former Wynn's trilerman, Robert Price of Beckenham Heavy Haulage arranged the transport and it went smoothly as an escorted load as was usual at that time.



Hoist rope and jib ropes are removed from the jib, which will be craned off for separate movement, the jib runner and the jib travelled to Sussex in that order using the same flatbed lorry over 2 round trips.

Wynns of Newport provided a 64 wheel Nicolas trailer that loaded by ramp and conveyed the main crane carriage and the 2 disconnected relieving bogies, hauled by a mighty Scammell Contractor drawbar tractor.



Bruce and Norman freeing the jib foot, Paul ties back the wire ropes, George checks out the cab with Peter, Michael sorts out packing to stand the jib on.



Crane Driver Bert Horrridge (left and below) and Newton Heath Breakdown Gang, December 1981. I was very fortunate to meet and go round the crane with Bert Horrridge, retired crane driver who had worked with this crane for 35 years since supervising its move from Ransomes & Rapier's Waterside Works, Ipswich, to its first depot at Gorton (Manchester) in 1943 and retired at Newton Heath in 1978. His photo below shows the Gorton breakdown crew after a Gorton Works repaint proudly posing with their crimson lake crane, lined out too, rare for a breakdown crane.





"Musketeer" backs onto the load, suitably decorated for the journey.



See colour photos by Gerry Butler (click link below) of the arrival at Sheffield Park, and a December 1981 view of the crane at Horsted Keynes.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/67438684@N07/sets/72157629127106743/show/>



Chris Suitters took this the first view, re-railed and re-roped at Sheffield Park, November 1981.

End of Part 1