

Institute of Physics

LONDON AND SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH REMS SECTION The Bluebell Railway and Sheffield Park Gardens Thursday 8 July 2004

This visit has been organised by Tony Balchin

The Bluebell Railway is a Steam Railway Preservation Society with its headquarters at Sheffield Park Station in East Sussex. Before its closure in 1958 it formed part of the line between East Grinstead and Lewes. It now connects Sheffield Park Station with Horsted Keynes and Kingscote, a distance of some 20 miles, and it is planned to connect the line once again to the main line at East Grinstead.

To buy a ticket on the Bluebell Railway is to return to a steam age, when trains arrive and depart from the station with due ceremony, when passengers on the platform are welcomed by the smartly dressed Station-master, obtain refreshment in a well-appointed buffet or wait around a brightly burning coal fire in the Waiting Room, and trains run to time. At Sheffield Park Station there is an extensive collection of steam locomotives, either in working service or undergoing refurbishment, which may be viewed during a visit to the engine sheds. The carriage workshops are located at Horsted Keynes, where rolling stock is rebuilt or repaired. At Kingscote you can enjoy the sight, sound, and smell of smoke and steam as a coal-fired locomotive is shunted to make its return journey to Sheffield Park

Sheffield Park, once the countryseat of the Earl of Sheffield, is located in some of the most beautiful scenery in Sussex. About a mile north from Sheffield Park Station lies the National Trust property of Sheffield Park Gardens. Sheffield Park Station was specially extended in size to accommodate the large numbers of weekend guests and visitors to Sheffield Park, especially when W.G. Grace played cricket on the lawns. Statesmen and royalty were frequently entertained there. The gardens were designed with assistance from Capability Brown during the 18th century around three fine lakes. The gardens have a collection of rare trees and shrubs, tree-lined lakeside walks, wide lawns, and formal gardens decorated with classical statuary.

On July 8th. the railway timetable is as follows:

Sheffield Park depart	11.00	12.45	14.15	15.50
Horsted Keynes	11.17	13.02	14.32	16.07
Kingscote arrive	11.30	13.15	14.45	16.20
Kingscote depart	11.52	13.30	15.00	16.35
Horsted Keynes depart	12.07	13.47	15.18	16.50
Sheffield Park arrive	12.20	14.00	15.31	17.03

The programme suggested is to assemble at Sheffield Park Station at 10:45 in time to make the return journey to Kingscote arriving back at 12:20. This will allow time for a visit to the engine sheds and lunch at the Bessemer Arms on the station (if wet) or a picnic in the Gardens of Sheffield Park (if fine), followed by a visit to the Gardens between 2.00 and 4:00 p.m. A combined ticket for a return journey on the Bluebell Railway and a visit to Sheffield Park Gardens is offered at the concessionary rate of £10.50 each for parties of 20 or more. Note the cost for National Trust members will be £7. (Pay on the day)

Travel to Sheffield Park Station is easiest by car. There is no direct rail link as yet with East Grinstead. By car, Sheffield Park Station is reached on the A275 about 2 miles north of its junction with the A272. Brown tourist direction signs to Sheffield Park or to the Bluebell Railway give directions from the A23 and the A22 trunk roads (leave the A23T at its junction with the A272 at Bolney, follow the A272 through Haywards Heath to North Chailey, then turn left to take the A275 northwards, approaching Sheffield Park Station from the south in about 2 miles). There is a large car park at Sheffield Park Station. At Sheffield Park Station is the Bessemer Arms, with toilet facilities. At Sheffield Park Gardens there is a tea-room and car park adjacent to the entrance to the Gardens, and further facilities inside the garden itself. Note that there are no parking facilities at Kingscote Station.