



News Update

Issue 4 Spring 2020



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Work on 4253 suspended - but hopefully not for too long

JUST as you thought it couldn't get any worse after Brexit – along comes Covid-19!

Without doubt, these are exceptional times, even by Brexit standards, and obviously 4253 has not been immune to the social upheaval, changes and nationwide lockdown since the outbreak.

Although some of the 'younger' volunteers soldiered on into the middle of March, it soon became apparent that it would be unwise to continue with the restoration, not least because of the virus risk but combined with the higher-than-average age of our mainly retired workforce it wasn't a good mix and it could have been a potential disaster. *Not only that, we can't afford to lose any of our skilled workforce!*

The last working day for just one or two of our volunteers was on Sunday 22 March, the day before the UK lockdown. For us, it also marked an historic day because not since the project began in 2011 has a week been missed when restoration of some sort hasn't been done to the loco.

Before the last couple of volunteers left the site, we placed all our valuable

items and equipment in off-site secure storage – and hopefully it will be there when we eventually go to collect it!

We will obviously continue with the restoration as soon as it is safe to do so and will then be able to get the project back on track. We will keep you posted in the coming weeks.

Recently, because the boiler is away in Liverpool and a lot of remaining work cannot be done until it returns, most of our



1961 - 4253 at Ebbw Junction Shed.



2011 - arriving at Rolvenden.



2020 – awaiting its boiler with your help.

volunteers have been working on the construction of the water tanks for 5668 – the next project in line! These tanks are not urgent and were used as a fill-in for our volunteers' idle hands, so the actual lost working hours on 4253 will not be as great as it might first appear. It's fortunate that the boiler went away when it did otherwise there could have been a serious delay to the restoration given the current circumstances.

HBSS have already done a great deal of work on the boiler so it will now depend on their revised schedule in the light of current events. We will keep you up to date as things develop.

You will find a second pdf sent with this News Update of Kelvin's history of the 'Bunko Booth'. It gives shareholders that have not had the pleasure of visiting us at Rolvenden, a look at where all the work is done and how this apparently ramshackle building has evolved and changed as our needs have increased over the past nine years.

At least we've now got you as a captive audience with everyone sitting at home twiddling their thumbs, thinking: "I wish I had another 4253 Newsletter

to read". Well, we hope you enjoy this latest update.

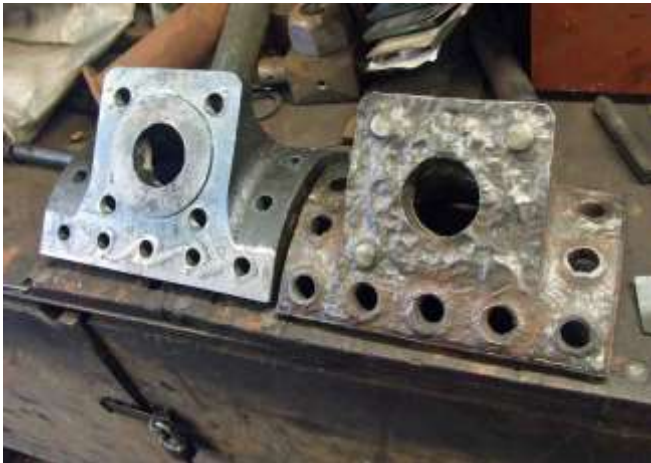
The Directors thank you all for your continued support in these difficult times. We wish all shareholders, together with their family and friends, a safe, secure and healthy time ahead. Let's all hope that things quickly start getting back towards some sort of normality.

Dave Farnham

Boiler Update

WITH the lockdown in place, HBSS are in the same boat as the rest of the country and work on boilers from locos 7200, 1014 and 2623 as well as 4253, has ground to a halt. Let's all keep our fingers crossed for a delay of weeks, rather than months and not only for the HBSS schedules but obviously for a safe and healthy outcome for all involved, including the boilerSmiths in Liverpool and all shareholders and volunteers involved with the project.

When the boiler left Rolvenden on 21 January we also sent along the new back head sections, a doubling plate, all the longitudinal stays, a new tube plate and both firebox outer side wrappers.



Before and after. The new and old back head manifold mounting pads - can you spot the new one?
Please send your answer to us on the back of a £20 note.

Just before the lockdown, we also sent a brand-new back head manifold mounting pad to Liverpool which Dick Weekes had cast to the original Swindon specifications, and which has since arrived at HBSS.

It was critical they had the manifold mounting pad so that it could be riveted on before final fitting of the back head, when work resumes. The new manifold pad



The 4253 steam manifold built by John Hancock.

was machined by Henry and our 'Surgeon in Steel' Graham Adams. Graham also marked it out for finishing by Kelvin and Dick who drilled the

necessary holes and tapped the threads. The manifold pad bolts centrally on to the top curve of the boiler back head and supplies steam through



Well done Dick - it fits! We never doubted your abilities. The new mounting pad trial fitted to the back head, ready to be riveted. The steam take-off can be seen at the top.

the manifold to the oilers, controls and gauges in the cab. As you can see from the 'before and after' picture, it certainly needed renewing! Large areas of metal had rusted and wasted away over time and now that its role as a pattern has been completed, it will be assigned to the Swindon scrap heap, along with all the other unusable parts.

The upper back head plate has been drilled with the 'doubling' plate temporarily bolted together for a trial fit. Because of the number of holes necessary in the plate, a second plate is used to give the area additional strength, as can be seen in the photo below. So, with the trial fit and drilling completed



This is the upper section of the boiler back head with the doubling plate, temporarily bolted together for trial fitting.

the whole plate can then be fitted to the boiler. Obviously, before all this could happen, the guys in Liverpool have had to do a great deal of work to get the old back head off the boiler. This has entailed cutting round old stays and removing rivets.



The picture above, in the HBSS workshop, shows Rob guiding the whole thing away from the fire box. With the back head removed, all the remaining old stays could be taken out and the fire box end prepared to trial fit the first section of the new back head together with its doubling plate.

Let's hope this fantastic progress by HBSS can be resumed quickly.



The old back head lying on the floor of the HBSS workshop.



Bearing in mind the boiler is upside down, this is the top section of the back head being trial fitted to the boiler. It certainly looks a good fit from here.

The Final Push Appeal

Regardless of Covid-19

Our aim remains the same . . . to get YOUR loco boiler finished by the end of the year!

We still need your help.

Please buy another share - either a one-off payment of £250 per share or by standing order of £25 per month.

Your help will make all the difference!

Please go to this address for more information and how to pay:

www.4253.co.uk/Become_A_Shareholder

or contact Charlie: 07747 545720 email: fog49@live.co.uk