

Infrastructure Report: Smoothing Out the Kinks

By John Goff

Work has restarted on the next stage of the Horsted Keynes down yard upgrade and OP4 trackwork. There is one old point left to be replaced: A road point.

The photo shows the last bit of old trackwork and the clear necessity to replace it. The pointwork in the foreground is on a new alignment of only nine inches to the west of the old alignment but is slewed across to the old A road point giving a horrible kink to the running-in line from the station.

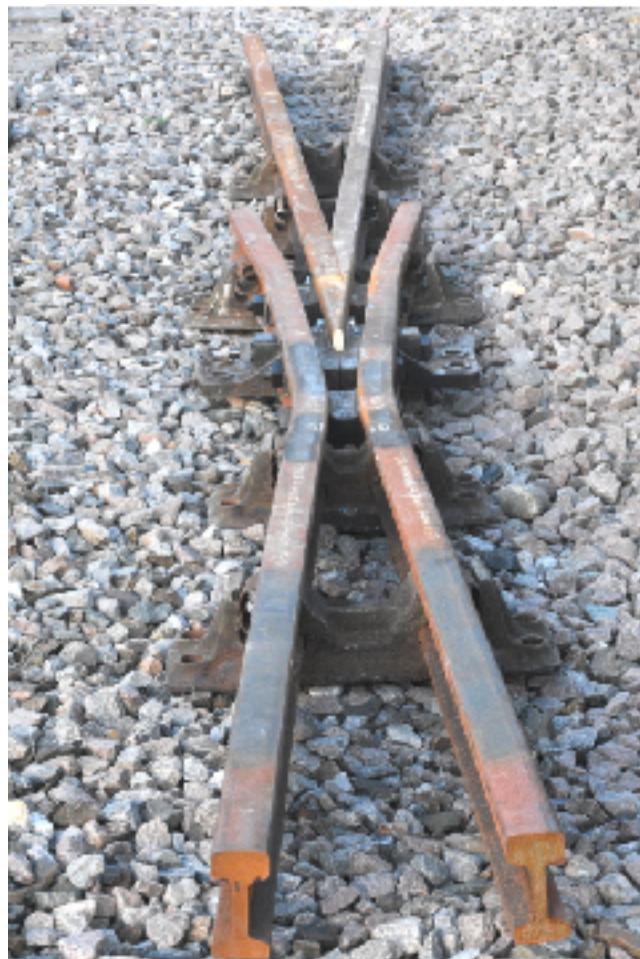
In addition, the old point is a hotchpotch of different age parts, with the short blades and closure rails casting being Brighton-made in 1907! As it is all past its “sell-by” date this is one of the main reasons that large engines have been banned from entering the yard for some years now.



Life expired A road points and kinked running in road.



1907 Brighton chair.



New A road crossing nose freshly assembled.

We have just taken delivery of the preformed rails required to make up a new set of A road points. We already had a good condition second hand left half-set (the left-hand point blade and its matching stock rail) but no right half-set.

However, as we had enough castings and ancillaries in stock, we only needed to purchase the two half-set rails to complete the whole turn-out section of the points. The next picture below shows Richard and Ian drilling and screwing down the left half-set to finish off the section.

With the inclement weather, this work has been carried out on the stub of H road just inside OP4 in front of the Observation coach and next to the newly acquired Pullman Car 36. However, as there is as yet no door, the strong winds blowing straight in still made this a very wet job.



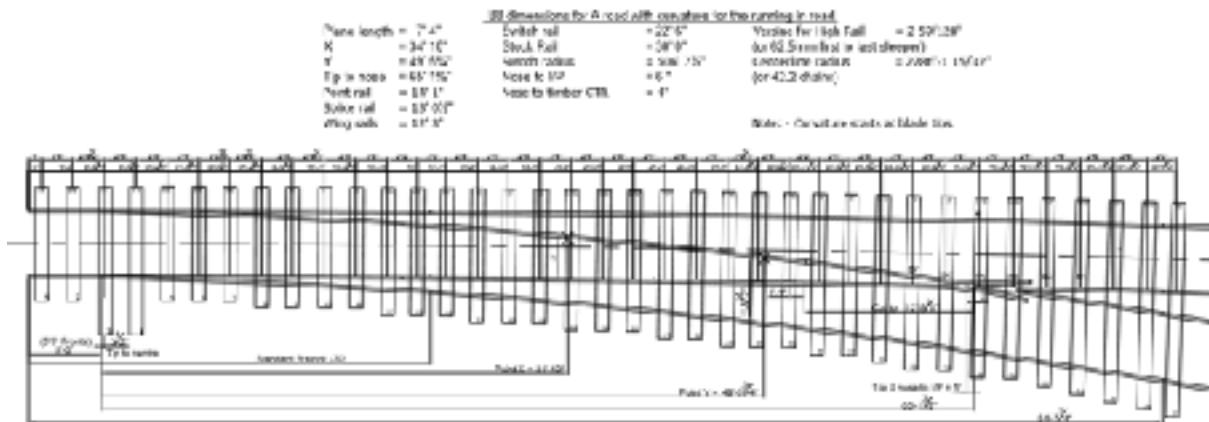
Building the switch blade section of the A road points.

The other section of the points requiring the new preformed rails is the crossing nose. Again, we had enough second-hand castings and other items in good condition, so there was no need to purchase any other parts other than the four timbers plus fresh bolts.

However, at the last moment, a decision was made to use the casting from a seldom-used point in the up (west) yard. Therefore a “raiding party” was sent to pull up the crossing nose and dismantle it. These castings are in a better condition than the ones originally intended for use. The robbed point will be replaced in due course with the more worn parts. The raided rail-chair castings were cleaned up and the new rails fitted producing an excellent crossing that will last for very many years.

The use of these second-hand castings has saved us hundreds of pounds each. With reuse of good parts and Matt Crawford’s “wheeling and dealing” via his many contacts, the price of this set of points is costing the Railway something like one tenth of the nominal £25,000 price of a normal all new set!

The other “nonstandard” feature of these points is that they will have a slight curve through them. This curve will have a radius of 42.25 chains, which is over half a mile! The curve will continue through the following short panel to the dummy signal next to the bay platform points. This new alignment should give a very smooth entry into the yard enabling any engine to come in. In fact, when finished, any engine will be able to access any road. The following diagram is the newly finished plan of the curved “B8 right” A road points. The rail chairs, switch anchors, and other details have been left off for clarity.



To finish off the trackwork in the yard, apart from H and J roads in OP4, B road also requires another one and a half panels of plain track to be replaced to get right up to the shed. This, the A road, and the running in road require approximately 70 bullhead concrete sleepers to finish completely. These will be taken from the bottom of Freshfield Bank when the next re-lay is carried out there. This job will also have to tie in with the replacement of Palmers Bridge for which the deck plate and sill formers are required and are as seen in the last issue of *Bluebell News*.

Work is also proceeding concurrently with the major reinforcement steelwork going into these sections. H girders are being used instead of the usual rebar reinforcement, which makes this a very heavy task and will form a very strong bridge. Andy Palmer is leading the construction work on the bridge sections, coincidentally having the same name as the bridge. The actual bridge replacement is expected to take place in November.