



This article is provided by FMES for your interest thanks to the kindness of the original publishers. FMES makes no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied about the completeness, accuracy or reliability with respect to this document and any sentiments expressed are not necessarily supported by FMES. Any reliance you place on this document is therefore strictly at your own risk

“Old Rube restoration part 22”

This document was written by Paul Naylor in spring 2026 and is the twenty second article in a restoration project. The articles were published more or less simultaneously in the Frimley and Ascot Locomotive Society newsletter.

The turnbuckle came and is as expected, a stainless steel well finished item with M8 left and right hand threads (and locking nuts, so that means a spanner to loosen it) and an odd sized pivot pin at each end... 8.9mm. Making the bracket to secure one end to the chassis was a matter of turning down and threading the ½” square steel M8 to fasten to the buffer beam with a nyloc nut, with a cross piece hanging down for the turnbuckle pivot. This fastens tightly to the buffer beam behind the decorative wood beam. The square is extended through the wood and ends in an 8mm diameter hole for any needs to pull the loco along (securing it in a trailer perhaps?). I would have preferred 10mm threads to be honest but I thought the then necessary 10mm diameter hole through the cross piece would leave too little material for strength. The bits were silver soldered together, but the main force is through unjointed steel. In normal operation, this contraption only has the job of holding the pilot to the front (and stopping it ‘drooping’ towards the track) on the two pins it has. The photo shows the unpainted bracket with the turnbuckle temporarily fastened to it (albeit, as I realised later, pointing in the wrong direction!). In making this, the old home-made turnbuckle arrangement ‘fell into place’, but I thought, looks apart, it had some weaknesses including a quite thin drop arm to fasten the inboard end to.



Next jobs include painting the bracket (not the turnbuckle), priming and painting the pilot and making the other end bracket to slip over the plain peg at the front of the pilot. I elected to make this from a turned and milled piece of round steel, then painted it. The original plain peg on the pilot was only pressed in with around 4mm of interference, and it came out when I was measuring up the new bits, so I drilled the hole out 7mm and tapped it M8 for a bolt as can be seen in the photo. This was straightforward and the dimensions (apart from the holes) quite relaxed. Here it is, mounted on the as yet unpainted pilot. I can now reassemble it all on the loco to see if it holds the pilot on and ‘up’ OK. I don’t think I will be leaving it there for the rest of the work though as I walked into the pilot sticking out across a gangway and that left me limping for a couple of days! It is surprising how you automatically move around avoiding well established obstacles, but this was not ‘well established’! As an aside, since the pilot is quite vulnerable to knocks, I wanted to use good primer here and have ordered some zinc phosphate high build primer to help this along.



I could not resist rebuilding the front end then and in doing this thought that the bolts holding the bogie side control on were a little too obvious, so I decided I would add a wooden box on the front. The cynic would argue that I did it only to hide the bolts, but in fact it is to hold essential loco tools. Every loco I have made has generated a few special tools specific to it alone. Things like safety valve adjusting spanners, a pin-based spanner to turn low profile side rod caps on one loco, funny shaped spanners to get at hidden nuts etc etc. These all get buried in a general tool box, so having a box to put them in on the loco seemed a good idea. Convinced yet? So far, I have made four such tools (no awards for finish here) for Old Rube: a small M8 spanner for turnbuckle nuts (actually I think a flat pack kitchen unit freebie or similar), a 4mm pin to turn the turnbuckle, and two C spanners to tighten/loosen the piston rod and valve rod glands. The box, made of beech and varnished, is conventional and hopefully strong enough to stand a little wear and tear.



The last items of the front end were the flag poles and their flags.



Not exactly essential, but I guess I am putting off the large task of starting the tender work proper. The flag poles just drop into their holes in the bases screwed to the buffer beam, and only needed cleaning up. The flags I thought were past it, being all stained brown and black. I also counted the stars in the stars and stripes – there were 50 – and so these flags are relatively modern representing the 50 states. When I made my US engine, I found some flags with 31 stars that were right for the time (c 1857), so I started looking for some 38 stars flags for 1881. Then I thought firstly that no one will count them, then asked am I representing the loco now or in 1881, and finally let's see if the old

flags will clean up. Well, using degreaser and an old toothbrush, they came remarkably clean so I cut off the ragged ends and put some glue on to stop these fraying again and added them to the flagpoles. At least it makes this bit look finished. Apologies for the background in the photos!



The pilot was also painted (as you can see) and the new securing device fitted. It seems to work well: the turnbuckle pivots came with circular clips to hold them in which are a little fiddly to remove, so I replaced them with a split pin at the front end where it will not need to come off to get the pilot off the loco, and a, 'R' clip at the rear. Removing the pilot is then about taking out the R clip, loosening the lock nuts and slackening the turnbuckle, removing the rear pivot pin and then it all pulls off the loco frontwards. The bits and pieces are a little bright and stand out: maybe I will have to paint them, time to sleep on that.

This really ends the loco chassis work that I can comfortably do without a boiler. I could renovate some boiler fittings I suppose, and even the cab, but it would be awkward if I then had to modify anything to fit the boiler, so maybe use these as odd fill ins in the future in case of boredom (at the time of writing – April 2026 - I am not expecting the boiler to be ready for a good few months or even a year).

The outstanding major job before arrival of the boiler is the tender, so that probably is next on the agenda...