

Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

Issue No. 438
April 2019

BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

GWR Visitor. Easter Monday we welcomed our first visitor of the year, Mike Topham, who travelled the short distance from Tonbridge with his 5" gauge GWR 'Manor'. The locomotive performed faultlessly during the day and hopefully SMLS will gain two new members as a result!

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Editor's Notes

What a difference a week makes! Our first running weekend on the 13th / 14th April was cool and dry but fast forward a week to Easter and we are talking about record breaking temperatures for mid-April and almost unbroken sunshine throughout. It was certainly a nice weekend to be out and about, and for those of us in full-time employment a decent 4-day break too! Needless to say the park was busy and we enjoyed a bumper weekend as a result. In addition to our home fleet of locomotives we also welcomed Mike Topham from the Tonbridge club on Easter Monday. He brought along a very nice 5" gauge GWR 'Manor' locomotive (**see cover picture**) and enjoyed his day so much that he took away two membership forms and will hopefully join up, together with his father. Nothing ventured, nothing gained and proof enough that being a friendly and welcoming club to all those who visit us and use the park, you never know who might be attracted to apply for membership in the future. The same friendly welcome we would all expect if we were to visit another club or society ourselves.

From the February edition, I would like to thank Andrew S, Mike W & Stephen H for their respective articles and pictures.

In this edition, there are a couple of updates from the Committee, together with a summary of our Winter Work and a report plus pictures from the Easter weekend. In addition there are two Chairman's Notes and an updated Diary to take us through to late summer, so as ever please read on and enjoy...

Andrew

Outgoing Chairman's Notes

At the last AGM, both John Baldwin & I announced that we would not be seeking to be nominated as Chairman & Secretary for this year, 2019. Our decisions were not connected but I think we both felt after 13 years in the posts, it was time for a change. For me personally, I had come to the end of my 3 year term on the committee and felt it was only fair to be 'upfront' about my intentions and stand for re-election as a regular member. I would like to take this opportunity to thank John for all his support working alongside me through the years and for his hard work for the club. We are both proud to be handing the club over in good order, tidy and well maintained, record finances, a growing young active, keen membership, an excellent safety record and paperwork all in order. This latter point is ever more important these days! We will both be continuing to work for the best interests of the club, and will be giving full support to our new 'helmsmen', namely, Daniel Evans, who has taken on the Chairman's role, and Andrew Strongitharm who has accepted the Secretary ship. They are a young team but have both been with the club since they were in their early 'teens' and have complete knowledge of the operation of the railway. Both have previous committee experience and have both organised major events for the club in the past. Wisdom grows by taking on challenges and I ask everyone to give them their full support. It is tremendously gratifying to see our 'home grown' young members now maturing and taking up the strain from us older guys.

Of course the success of our railway could not have been achieved without the hard work of so many members, especially the dedicated core who come week in, week out, to keep everything running smoothly, and also to the hardworking committee who put in many hours of work behind the scenes. Thanks to you all.

At the AGM, Geoff West, Mike Wakeling & I were re-elected to the committee along with Andrew Strongitharm who took over the slot vacated by Laurie Anderson. I thank Laurie for his time on the Committee, Andrew Brock for also standing for election, and of course thank everyone who attended our meeting. Of late, our AGM's have been well attended with about 40 members being present each year.

A decision was taken at this meeting to serve notice to the public that we would be increasing our passenger fare to £1.50, starting next year, having held it at £1 for 12 years. This was done primarily to keep passenger numbers, and hence wear and tear, and operational aspects, manageable, as passenger numbers have shown signs of increasing as £1 becomes relatively cheap. Also, members agreed to keep annual subscriptions to £5 for juniors (under 18) and to charge £10 for everyone else, with no senior discount now. Our last main decision was to ratify the committee's nomination for President and Vice Presidents. For a long time we had had no one in these positions and I felt we did not sufficiently honour our very senior members who have put in so many years of active service. I put forward my ideas to the committee, who agreed, and we submitted our nominations to the AGM for ratification. So, Ray Parsons becomes our President and John West & Geoff West our Vice Presidents. Between them, they have around 150 year's active service, a tremendous achievement.

Following on from the AGM, we always have a Committee meeting to decide jobs and positions for the coming year. At that meeting, I was happy to welcome Andrew Strongitharm back to the council and my last role was to invite nominations and votes for Chairman. This done, I was able to hand over to Daniel Evans to take the chair.

Times, and the world, are changing rapidly. Technology and Artificial Intelligence are progressing at a rate never seen before. Facebook, social media, computer proficiency, websites, data protection, telephone payment apps etc..., are all necessary components of even steam railways now. We will need to be flexible and move with the times. For us to try to remain in a total time warp will send us the way of the dinosaurs. Whilst I'm not suggesting we will have robot drivers or driverless trains just yet, we have already begun the change by accepting electric locos in regular service. At the moment, we still enjoy a mixture of steam and electric, but coal is increasingly being squeezed out of everyday life and coal fired power stations will disappear by 2025. It may be only a matter of time until suitable coal supplies for our small engines become harder to obtain. Insurance claims for even minor spark burns from steam locomotives are now running into hundreds of pounds!

We will deal with change as it comes, but the most important thing is to remain pragmatic and keep our railway operating both as a centre of enjoyment for families at Beech Hurst and as a focus for our members to socialise and enjoy engineering, and the challenges of running a public service together.

With the future in mind, and following a meeting with Mid Sussex District Council, it seems we are able to surrender our lease early and set up a new 28 year lease on similar terms to those we have now. The council appreciates that we are a successful asset to Beech Hurst and wants us to succeed. What a difference from some council's who are pricing some clubs out of business and kicking them off premises they have occupied and developed for decades! Your committee intends to strike whilst the offer stands and we will start to progress this option, which will also give us the confidence to go ahead and spend on building repairs to set up our infrastructure for the next generation.

Thanks to everyone who has read my notes over the years. I will still hope to submit a few articles from time to time, to our editor, for inclusion in the newsletter.

I will close my notes with my usual words at this time of the season and wish everyone a happy 2019 out on the track.

Mike

Incoming Chairman's Notes

Starting off my first Chairman's Notes and I would like to welcome Andrew Strongitharm as Secretary. I feel having a fellow younger member in an officer role is very important and I look forward to working with Andrew. I would also like to say thank you to both Mike Porter & John Baldwin for their work as Chairman & Secretary respectively over the past 13 years or so. That is a long stint and I think it should be noted all the hard work both Mike & John have undertaken during that period of time, also the work behind the scenes that most of us would not be aware of.

Since the AGM, the operating season is now in full swing, our first weekend being cold and overcast but very busy. This was followed up by a fantastic Easter weekend. The weather was the best we've had at Easter for years and to have four warm sunny days is extremely lucky. Needless to say we were very busy and had great takings for this period of time. I believe the power of Facebook worked wonders once again and it certainly contributed to the first weekend when the weather was not so good. One of my aims is to bring more steam back to the railway by having suitable visitors to help operate our service and maybe gain useful members in the process. Mike Topham visited on Easter Monday with his GWR 'Manor', which ran very well. Mike is a member of 'GL5' and Tonbridge, and he will be joining us as a member in the next few weeks, all being well. Hopefully we'll have a few extra operating days with the 'Manor'. Passenger numbers are rising all the time so we need as much help as you can all offer. I thank you all who have helped operate the railway during the first four weekends and worked to make sure we were ready for passengers with various checks, rolling stock, signals etc... Regarding the speed signal, it is currently not working as I write this. It is hoped it will be fixed and working again in the next few weeks. In the meantime we will have speed restriction signs on that bend where the speed signal is normally sited. I ask all drivers to obey this restriction, drive carefully through that area and in the section around the clubhouse.

We hope that the Winter Extravaganza event for this year will be confirmed at the next committee meeting in May and anyone who wants to help with this event please let myself or Steve Steer know. We need to confirm how many people will be able to help to judge the number of days we plan to host the event on. I look forward to the coming few weeks and I hope to see you all during that time.

Dan

Election of 'Officers' and 'Other' Positions for 2019 – Update

From the February news, the vacant position for '**Person of Significant Control**' has been filled as below:

Person of Significant Control (for Companies House): Andrew Strongitharm

Committee

Non-Members

Entry of non-members to the clubhouse should only happen if they are being escorted by a member and special attention should be given to young people under the age of 18 who are not members of the club to ensure they are under the supervision of their parent or guardian.

Committee

Locomotive Couplings

With the increasing number of electric locomotives at Beech Hurst, there has also been an increase in the use of bar couplings between the passenger carrying trucks and locomotive itself. Going forward, the Committee would like to encourage the use of bar couplings wherever practicable instead of the traditional chain couplings. However, locomotive owners who currently use chain couplings can still do so if they wish.

Committee

Winter Work

As we start our new running season, it is perhaps a good time to look back at the projects which have been undertaken during our closed season.

Roy P and his team completed a long section of track renewal along the 'Nursery Straight' adjacent to signal 5. The old track was lifted, the steel channel cleaned and repainted, before new sleepers and rail were laid. The vast majority of this work was completed by the beginning of November before the worst of the winter weather set in. Since then, final levelling and adjustments have been completed. The truck department has been busy with day-to-day maintenance as well as the construction of 3 new passenger cars. Andrew S & I worked our way through a list of repairs and renewals that were found when we and Graham Mundy looked at each of the existing fleet at the end of the last running season. These repairs were completed before our 2019 season commenced and I will continue to keep an eye on the day-to-day aspect of the rolling stock during this running season.

Steve T & Geoff have been working on the 3 new passenger cars and as I type, the braked truck is in a nearly complete state with final brake adjustments and transfers to finish once the paint has hardened off. Hopefully this new set will make an appearance later in 2019.

Inside, Mike W and Steve S have continued the comprehensive overhaul of the workshop. The old 'Rapidor' mechanical saw has been replaced with a modern horizontal bandsaw and in addition a number of old worn out hand tools have been replaced with new equivalents. Since the workshop has rarely looked so clean, it would be nice to keep it so and if you are unfortunate enough to break any of the tools then do please report it to Mike W or Steve S so they can be duly replaced and not forgotten!

Outside, there have been numerous days when a large group of volunteers helped with gardening duties, which included branch / leaf clearance and more recently the start of our summer grass cutting activities. It is surprising just how much clearance can be achieved with 6 or 8 willing helpers and a little at a time means that any build up of leaves and twigs is kept to a minimum. On a nice day and with a good team it can also be very good fun too! Volunteers for summer grass cutting are always most welcome and if you have an hour or so to spare on a Saturday or Sunday morning then do please speak with either Mike W, Roy P, Steve S or myself, who will gladly show you where to find the equipment and appropriate fuel for each!

Finally, I don't think any round up of winter 2018 would be complete without a mention of the hugely successful Christmas Lights Event. The pictures in the December newsletter speak volumes and hopefully we can organise something equally dramatic for 2019, at the same time as making sure we do not stretch ourselves too far. The current thinking is a weekend(s) early to mid December for several days, so if you can help in 2019 then do please let Dan or Steve S know and they can take this forward to the next committee meeting on May 25th.

Thank you to everyone who contributed during the 2018 / 2019 closed season, many hours of work were put in and it is fair to say a lot was achieved too. I will of course keep the membership up to date with any other projects as they continue during the summer of 2019...

Andrew

Easter 2019

Having enjoyed one of our best Easter weekends for many years I thought it would be nice to share some pictures from those 4 days. I took a few of my own, including the photo used on the cover, and I am also very grateful to Fraser & Linda Chen for supplying me with the remaining pictures on the following pages. Generally speaking it was warm and sunny but more importantly dry throughout. Compared to our opening weekend, third weekend and the recent May Day Bank Holiday weekend, Easter was perfect and perhaps we have used up all of our luck for the time being! Hopefully we will be fortunate to have dry days once our busy diary schedule begins in earnest at the start of June.

Andrew



Picture above: Norman & his 'MLV' with the Bluebell's out in full on Sunday 14th



Picture above: Dan passes signal 2 with 'Wharfedale' on Good Friday



Picture above: Dave M driving 'Pansy' approaches signal 2 on Easter Saturday



Picture above: Adrian coasts past signal 7 with his 'Manor' on Easter Saturday



Picture above: Mike P passes over the point with his 'Atlantic' on Easter Sunday



Picture above: Nick's 'Jinty', plus goods wagons, on Easter Sunday evening

Mid Sussex Marathon

As per 2018, the Mid Sussex Marathon passed through Beech Hurst on the Sunday morning of the May Day Bank Holiday weekend 2019 and created quite a spectacle with over 400 entrants completing the 10 mile course. Starting in Victoria Park, the course winds its way through Beech Hurst, entering via the gate at the bottom of our driveway before exiting above the short tunnel and through the new Hurst Place development. The runners then continue towards Bolnore Village. Unlike 2018 however, 2019 was cool and mostly cloudy, and a world away from the near 30 degree temperatures of 2018. Although as a club we are not involved with this event, it is nice to see the park used in this way and something completely different to the usual dog walkers and families.

Andrew

4014 – Big Boy

As I am sure some of you will be aware, one of the eight preserved Union Pacific 'Big Boy' locomotives has recently returned to steam in the USA and as of early last week moved under its own power for the first time in 60 years. Those of you who have been members long enough will remember Brian Taylor's 'Big Boy' locomotive which ran at Beech Hurst for several years in the early 2000's after a 20 year build. Sadly the locomotive no longer resides at the club but photographs and videos of that special time will mean the model 4023 will not be forgotten. For those of you who are interested, there are numerous videos now on YouTube and social media channels which show 4014 moving from Cheyenne, Wyoming to Ogden, Utah, where she is due to arrive tomorrow. Even if you are not a fan of Union Pacific locomotives, it is hard not to be in awe of this giant of the steam world and the fantastic restoration job that has been achieved. Below is a link to one video and to be honest just the last minute alone is worth watching!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhZ0o8jNd0A>

Andrew

Work in Progress – 'Royal Scot' & Wagons

Since the last newsletter the 'Royal Scot' has remained largely untouched due to a number of work commitments and a concerted effort to get the oil / petrol tankers finished. Most recently I have been trial fitting the brake gear to the two tanker wagons with one modification required to allow the brake shoes to sit roughly at the centre height of the axles. With this height adjustment complete I have been able to fabricate the pivot arms which take the rotary motion from the brake lever shaft and transpose it to the push / pull action required to apply and release the brake shoes from the wheel treads. At the time of writing the 4 pivot arms (2 for each wagon) are largely complete and nearly ready to be pinned to the brake lever shaft. There are still a number of small but essential components left to make but both wagons are now firmly in the home straight with (hopefully) just a few hours left to finish (bar painting!).

Andrew

Forthcoming & Diary of Events

Since the February edition, quite a number of dates have been added to the diary for 2019 and below is the most recent list, which I shall detail one item in turn.

Starting this coming Saturday and SMLS will have a small display stand at the Haywards Heath Model Railway Exhibition. This event is being held at the Dolphin Leisure Centre between 10:00 & 17:00, and will feature a large number of model railway layouts from 'N' gauge up to 'Garden' gauge. Also at the exhibition are numerous other societies and traders, and all proceeds over and above expenditure will be donated to Chailey Heritage. The exhibition is being co-organised by 5 like minded railway enthusiasts, including SMLS members John Ely, Andrew S & myself.

Our first club visit of 2019 has been pencilled in for Saturday 1st June when we are due to welcome our friends from Chelmsford to Beech Hurst. Hopefully this will be another good day, similar to 2018, and will start at approximately 10:00.

The following Saturday, 8th June, we have pencilled in our 'Open Day' at Beech Hurst. Details are still to be finalised but, weather permitting, we hope to have the workshop and rear lawn open for the public to walk round, a display of locomotives and projects, and a 'Garden' gauge layout operating too. Volunteers to help on this day would be much appreciated as there will be a number of extra jobs to do over and above staffing the normal passenger service. Please speak with Mike W if you can help out or have items for display.

Our first BBQ of the year has been pencilled in for Saturday 22nd and will be the usual 'Bring Your Own' format with onions and puddings provided. This will start at roughly 18:00 and fingers crossed for a nice evening!

The last Sunday in June, 30th, has been chosen for our Under 30's Day. This will follow the same format as previous years with all the tasks on the day undertaken by our 'younger' membership, of which we are lucky to have so many.

July sees 3 visits to SMLS by different groups starting with 10th Haywards Heath Beavers on Tuesday 16th at 17:30. Their visit will feature a tour of our railway, a demonstration of how locomotives / machinery work and of course a train ride. The Beaver group are children aged 6-8 years old, so they need to be kept busy and entertained but are potential future junior members, so definitely worthwhile. We have volunteer guide's already in place but other helpers will be most useful. If you are interested then please see Andrew S or Mike W for more details.

The following Thursday, 24th, we are due to welcome another local group but this time at the other end of the age spectrum. The U3A Railway Studies Group have pencilled in a visit to Beech Hurst to look at our facilities and in addition to ride on the railway. The U3A Group are mainly retired folk but who all have an interest or passion for railways. Hopefully they will enjoy their visit to SMLS and once again if you can volunteer for the evening, all help will be much appreciated. The planned start time is 17:00 and please see Andrew S or Roy P for further details.

Finally for July is a visit by the Focus Model Engineers on Wednesday 31st from circa. 10:00. For their visit in 2018 they brought along 4 very nice locomotives and pretty much operated our service during the day. It was hot and sunny if memory serves me right and hopefully 2019 will be an equally good day.

Looking further ahead into August and we have a Double-Heading £3 All Afternoon Day on Saturday 10th, which in practise will feature 3 long trains hauled by 2 locomotives each. Running times will be the same as per normal, however extra volunteer drivers, guards and station staff will be required, so if you are available then please add your name to the list in the running book.

Our second BBQ of the year has been pencilled in for Saturday 24th August and like the June BBQ will be a 'Bring Your Own' affair with onions and puddings provided. The BBQ will start at 18:00 or thereabouts after our passenger service. Finally for now, and on our last day of the season, we will run additional hours from 14:00 until 20:00, a.k.a our 'Dusk Run'. If we get an evening similar to 2018 then we will hopefully do very well and it was great fun for ourselves and for the passengers. It was this run that really spawned the idea for the Christmas event that was hugely popular. Although a little way off yet, another date for your diary and of course extra volunteers will be required for the evening shift. Names in the running book will be most welcome, so we know the extra hours can be covered. I will of course keep the Diary updated during the course of the season and between now and the June newsletter there may well be one or two more items to add, so please keep a check on the whiteboard in the clubhouse for details...

11th May 2019 – SMLS to display at Haywards Heath Model Railway Exhibition

1st June 2019 – Chelmsford to visit SMLS – Will start from 10:00

8th June 2019 – SMLS Open Day – Will start from 14:00 – See details above

22nd June 2019 – Mid Summer BBQ – Will start from 18:00

30th June 2019 – Under 30's Day – Will start from 14:00

16th July 2019 – 10th Haywards Heath Beavers to visit SMLS – See details above

24th July 2019 – U3A Railway Studies Group to visit SMLS – See details above

31st July 2019 – Focus Model Engineers to visit SMLS – Will start from 10:00

10th August 2019 – Double-Heading £3 All Afternoon Day – Will start from 14:00

24th August 2019 – End of Summer BBQ – Will start from 18:00

28th September 2019 – Afternoon / Dusk Run – From 14:00 to 20:00

NB. Certain events may be organised at short notice and will not therefore appear in the newsletter. Please check white / notice boards in the clubhouse for details of such events.

Andrew