

Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

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BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

Santa Express: With the first morning under our belt, Santa (a.k.a. John B) is seen travelling down to the station for the Saturday afternoon session. The weather was still bright but it did not last much longer! A full report appears inside and thanks to Fraser for the above picture.

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Editor's Notes

As I write these notes, we are between Christmas and New Year, and it is bright and cold outside – a nice winter's day! That said, tomorrow it is forecast to be wet and windy but milder, so it is hard to know whether to wrap up, take an umbrella or just take a risk! Hopefully our New Year Run will be dry, although the current forecast suggests it might be showery!

As we end 2017 and move into 2018 there is time to reflect on a successful and productive year at Beech Hurst. A lot of work has been carried out; we have had a good year on the track and welcomed a couple of new young members too, so all in all a decent twelve months. Hopefully 2018 will be equally fruitful for the long term health of the club too. Looking ahead and there are plans in the pipeline for more development around the park and I will of course keep you posted through these pages with regards to progress on these in due course.

From the October edition, I would like to thank Chris, Graham Miller & Andrew S for their articles and pictures, and to Fraser for his pictorial contribution in this edition. Also in this newsletter there are articles on the recent Santa Special's and New Year's Day Run, an update on Winter Work, plus all the usual writings, so as ever please read on and enjoy...

Andrew

Chairman's Notes

So, here end'eth 2017! Generally, a good year, marred only by a fairly wet August!

We had a nice Bonfire Night and the Santa Special's were well attended. Thanks to all who helped throughout the year, both during the running season and with the winter work. We end the year in good condition, with much of the winter work well in hand.

At this time, we must start to look to 2018. Some of the changes I have been writing about for a year or two, namely the opening up of the rear area is drawing nearer. We are having initial consultations with council engineers as to how this may be achieved, but nothing is decided yet, so there is little to report except to 'watch this space'! Likewise, Roy P has received the go ahead from the trustees to progress his Learning Centre project. Again, it's too early to have anything to report. I'm sure by the time of the AGM we will have a little more information on these matters.

Our Secretary John B, and Mike W, have now re-evaluated and updated our risk assessments, and I would ask everyone who has completed maintenance work or repairs around the club, to please ensure our maintenance records are up to date. It is important that we start next year with our paperwork in order.

I would like to wish everyone a very happy, if belated, Christmas and New Year, and hope to see you at our big 'get together' on 1st January, to kick off the new 2018 season.

Best wishes...

Mike

2018 Subscriptions

A Happy New Year to all our members. Can you please ensure you have renewed your membership by 31st January, if it is not received by this date then you will have to re-apply. Subscription rates for 2018 are the same as 2017 at a £5'er for under-18's and over-60's, and £10 the rest in between. Cash or cheque (pay 'SMLS Ltd') at the club is fine or by BACS to the following account is fine too: Account No: 20688428 and Sort Code: 20-49-76 with your name as reference. Or by post to: Mr G Miller (SMLS), 128 Western Road, Sompting, BN15 9TY.

Graham Miller

Santa Special Weekend

Just over a fortnight ago we once again supported Joanna from 'Bella's Pantry' by running trains for her 'Santa Special' event. This is the third year we have done so and as per 2015 & 2016, 2017 was a successful year. Pre-bookings prior to the weekend totalled 185 out of a possible 200, so this was a very healthy start and kept us on our toes during the morning sessions on both the Saturday and Sunday. Saturday dawned bright and sunny, if a touch cold, and by 09:00 a good crew had arrived to put the final preparations in place. Aside the trains, there was the small matter of setting up the tunnel illumination and music, building the bowls club station (where families booked in), erecting our large tent at the main station, safely delivering Santa (a.k.a. John B) to his grotto in our station building and the consumption of bacon rolls before the scheduled start time of 11:00. With 'Wharfedale' and our Class 73 ready, only a couple of unforeseen problems with presents delayed us until nearer 11:15 and with that late start time came a backlog of early passengers to get through prior to lunch. We made it pretty much unscathed but the first hour or so was a little chaotic as we tried to play catch up! A lunch break of circa. 45 minutes was pencilled in from about 12:30 and this was welcome respite from the cold, before the afternoon session started thereafter. By this stage the clouds were gathering and with them the odd spot or two of rain too. Luckily this did not amount to very much but wintry flurries could be seen to the north and not that far away either! The afternoon session was a little bit quieter than the morning one but nonetheless very steady and the last passengers passed through at about 15:30. Thereafter, we had the task of getting as much as possible cleared away before dark – we therefore had less than an hour. Some of the hardware stayed out overnight but we did have to move the tent from the main station to the rear of the clubhouse for safe keeping. 8 people later (one on each leg) and we were able to carry it pretty much whole through the side gate to a position behind the carriage shed. With everything safely stowed, we reconvened in the clubhouse to warm up with a hot drink and to reflect on an eventful but nonetheless successful first day. All in all it had actually gone very smoothly and had it not been for the slightly late start and minor electrical problems in the tunnel, it would be fair to say nearly faultlessly! We were also very lucky with the weather, for although not completely dry it could also have been a great deal worse!

Sunday dawned even colder than Saturday, frosty and foggy, and with a beautiful sunrise too. Don't be fooled though, for the clouds were already gathering from the north with the forecast of rain before the afternoon was out! Setting up was a good deal quicker than Saturday, so apart from the bowls club station and the tent at the main station, there was not too much left to do. A full house of bookings for the morning meant a prompt start was essential to avoid the queues experienced the previous morning. Only the pneumatic point proved to be a problem and had to be operated manually but otherwise we were fed (bacon rolls again), watered and ready and waiting by a quarter to eleven. The Sunday morning went smoothly and fairly quickly too, although by lunchtime there were already spots of rain in the air! As we started the afternoon session, so the spots of rain had turned to a more persistent light rain, which accompanied us for most of the next couple of hours. The inclement weather aside, the afternoon operation was very slick with the tent at the main station proving invaluable as a shelter whilst families waited their turn to see Santa (a.k.a. Mike W). Both 'Wharfedale' and our Class 73 also coped well on the slippery rails with some pretty weighty loads! As per Saturday, the last bookings were at 15:30 and these passengers must have cursed their luck to be the few over the whole weekend to get quite wet! As the last train departed, and with Santa aboard, so the job of clearing away in the drizzle and increasing gloom started. It did not take that long to pack up but much of the hardware was by now quite wet, and cold too, and had to be stored in the workshop to dry out during the following week. We were pretty much done by 17:00 and again there was time to warm up with a hot drink and to have a chat in the clubhouse after a second very successful day. The general feeling was that a repeat weekend in 2018 would be good but perhaps with some subtle changes to the organisation. As with any large event like this, there will be some things that work well and others where improvement would be desirable, so hopefully we can take some ideas forward to next year. There are a lot of people to thank for their time spent before, during and after the weekend, so I will do my best to ensure I capture everybody in the list below and apologies in advance if I mistakenly omit anybody:

Initial Organisation and Bookings: Dan & Mike W

Santa's: John B (Saturday) & Mike W (Sunday)

Drivers of 'Wharfedale': Andrew S, Laurie, Nick & Tom

Drivers of Class 73: Graham Miller, Graham Mundy & Sam H (Sam no.1)

Bowls Station: Alex, Fraser, Graham Miller, Lorema & Roy P

Main Station: Andrew B, Andrew S, George, Linda, Sam R (Sam no.2) & Sharon

Bacon Rolls (a very important task): Lorema

Here's to 2018...

(More pictures from 2017 appear on the next page but one)

Andrew

Recent Social Event – New Year's Day Fun Run & Lunch

Our New Year Run has been plagued by rain over the past couple of years and 2018 was no exception, although at least this year we did get a couple of hours of mid-afternoon sunshine to brighten our spirits towards the end of the day! Dawn was quite clear in Haywards Heath; however thickening cloud was soon rolling in and with it rain by 09:00! As we stood in the clubhouse it was quite apparent the rain would stop play for much of the morning at least and as it turned out till just after lunch too. Members gradually arrived in their ones and twos during the morning and by midday there were 35 in the clubhouse for lunch! Val had prepared a very nice spread of meat, cheese, quiches, coleslaw, salad and crisps, along with warm mini rolls too – a feast if ever there was one. With everyone under 'starter's orders', lunch began in earnest at around 12:30 and soon the sound of conversation was largely replaced by the sound of cutlery on crockery! Even by this point the rain continued to fall but there were signs it was abating and with that the promised clearance to 'brighter skies later' from the weather forecast that morning! After the main course, there were a plethora of puddings to choose from and it was very hard to make a judgment as to which to go for because all were sweet and very inviting too! As the puddings were being devoured, so I made the first move and lit up the 'Black 5', which was 'one I had prepared earlier!' And no sooner than the first smoke had started to rise, so Fraser and Sam H (Sam no.1) were extracting the 'Growler' from its locker for a run too! Nothing like a bit of youthful enthusiasm, although I cannot really class myself in the youthful category anymore, perhaps just at heart! As the trucks were brought round, so the first glimpses of blue appeared on the western skyline and soon enough we were running round in beautiful winter sunshine. Breezy it was, cool definitely, but a whole lot better than the morning rain! A short while later there were no less than 4 trains on the track, those being the 'Black 5', our own '08' and 'Growler', and a 5" 'King' too. There were also cameo appearances from some of my goods wagons and Mike P's petrol locomotive later on too. It turned out to be a very nice afternoon with several members driving round and many more taking rides on each train too. It was just a pity it did not brighten up a couple of hours earlier but we should be very thankful that we managed to run for the 2 ½ hours or so we did. As the sun began to set, so both of the steam locomotives came off to be cleaned down and the signals and trucks were put to bed after another (very successful) day. If you count Tom's parents, and mine too, then 42 members and family attended during the day, which is a very good turn out indeed. Thanks of course to Val for preparing the food, which is a lot of work but is also greatly enjoyed by all those present! Thanks too, to everyone who helped out on the day with preparation and disposal, and to those who made the effort to come out on the track and make that side of things a success too. It is sometimes hard to get enthused when the weather is cold and wet but hey it is 3 months since we last ran and another 3 months until we shall do so again, so any opportunity in between times must be grasped with both hands! Here's to 2019... **(Pictures from 2018 appear on the next 2 pages)**

Andrew



Picture Top: Graham Miller approaching the short tunnel with a full Santa train
Picture Middle: Nick coasting past the clubhouse with 'Wharfedale' and a Santa train
Picture Bottom: Fraser driving our 'Growler' in the New Year mid-afternoon sunshine



Picture Top: Andrew S driving the 'Black 5' with John G, Sam H (Sam no.1) & Dave M
Picture Middle: Visitor Stan driving our '08' under the guidance of SMLS member Alex
Picture Bottom: Adam coasting past signal 2 with the 'King', 'King Henry VIII'

Winter Work

Since the October edition, winter work has continued on a number of fronts, leading up to our Santa Special weekend.

At the time of the last newsletter, the track through the 'jungle' was all but complete and since then has been finished with final levelling and tie bolt tightening the last jobs to do. This section was commissioned in time for the Santa weekend and is extremely smooth.

Inside, work on re-painting the 3 short trucks has continued with the refurbished 'blue / grey' set now in the final stages of painting prior to re-assembly in the New Year. Dan, and in particular Geoff, have spent quite a few hours over the past few weeks finishing the top coats and the lining which runs between the upper grey and lower blue is complete bar varnishing too.

Also on trucks, Andrew S & I have been renewing bearings and skimming wheels on 'B' set over the past few weeks. Trucks B1 – B4 (a.k.a. Pearl, Amber, Ruby & Opal) all required attention to bearings and a light skim (generally about 15 thou') on the wheel treads to bring back the tread angle and root radius. Most of the wheel sets are now 40 years old, if not more in some cases, and given that most are now about 2.5" diameter, having started out life at 2.812" diameter, they are doing very well. Over the years, and now with almost continuous use in one direction, it is noticeable the ridging that appears on the treads and this generally requires attention every 5 years or so to limit further damage and subsequent vibration through the truck. There are a couple more trucks on 'A' set to see to in the New Year and then all 18 will be ready for 2018...

Outside, and when the weather has been fair, Dave M, Fraser, Graham Miller, Roy P, Sam H (Sam no.1) and Sam R (Sam no.2) have continued with the gardening and leaf clearance. This has been a particularly dirty job of late with rain and the subsequent muddy conditions hampering leaf collection. Most have now fallen, so future leaf collections should be that much easier.

Inside, John B & Mike W have been continuing to check through our maintenance records and risk assessments to ensure we are fully up to date. There is a white folder at the front of the third drawer of the filing cabinet by the signing-in book which contains all our maintenance records. If you complete a task at the club, please ensure a record is kept, along with any associated paperwork which pertains to it.

Also inside, we recently received a donation of a miniature Cowell's lathe from a gentleman who lived in town. It is a lovely little machine but needed a few repairs to make it work once again. Thanks to the efforts of Chris (electrical), Mike W (mechanical) and Sam R (Sam no.2) (cleaning and polishing), the machine lives again and is currently stored in the carriage shed workshop. It is pretty small for normal use but will be ideal for small components and for showing youngsters the principals of lathe work before they try their hand on the Myford or Colchester!

Having quietly arrived at Christmas, we are half way through our closed season. My next report will appear at the beginning of March by which time most or all of the above will have been completed in time for our 2018 running season.

Andrew

Steam on the Brighton Main Line

The run up to Christmas normally presents one if not two opportunities to see mainline steam running through Haywards Heath. Such instances are somewhat scarce down this way due to the already congested network; however we were treated to one such pass on Tuesday 12th December when 'Britannia' class locomotive 'Oliver Cromwell' passed through whilst hauling 'The Christmas Sussex Belle' from London Victoria to Eastbourne. The train then returns via Hastings and Tunbridge Wells, so we only see one pass through town but nonetheless several Beech Hurst members came out to see her either at Haywards Heath or between there and just the other side of Lewes. Unfortunately, a visit by '60009' 'Union of South Africa' a couple of weeks prior to that of 'Oliver Cromwell' was cancelled but the 'Brit' certainly made up for it!



Picture Above: 'Oliver Cromwell' on the approach to Glynde, east of Lewes.

Andrew

Work in Progress

Since the last edition, I have started work re-building a 5" 'Fowler' 'Royal Scot', which first ran at Beech Hurst back in 2009. The original build is a bit of an enigma, being of a normal Martin Evans design but having seemingly been constructed by at least two or three different pairs of hands. One thing I do know is that the locomotive originated from the Birmingham area during the late 1970's. The tender chassis is very good but the tender body was stainless steel, leaked and as such was sold on a well known Internet auction site! I will make a new brass body in the fullness of time but at present the locomotive is my first priority. The chassis of the locomotive is mixed with good cylinders, good front bogie / driving wheels and decent framing. However, that is where most superlatives end! The remaining motion work is very mixed with perhaps the inside crank being the best of the lot. Thereafter, it is a question of going through each component piece by piece and working out what might be salvageable! As I write, the chassis is bare from the cylinder slide bars backwards and I am currently degreasing ready to start painting. The original paint is pretty sound, so a thorough clean up and overcoat should suffice and will save a great deal of time too. Hopefully by the next edition I will have made significant inroads on tidying up the motion work and with a bit of luck I will be starting to put these components back on to the locomotive too. I have a target date of the end of the June for steaming, so we'll see how things go...!

Andrew

Forthcoming Events

Now that we are in first week of 2018, the Alexandra Palace show is all but a fortnight away. John B has submitted our varied model list, which contains many smaller items this year and these will make a nice change to taking larger 5" gauge models. The van is booked to take the models to the show and we also have sufficient volunteers for each day, so it is full steam ahead with final preparations during the next two weeks. Hopefully the show will be successful again this year and I shall provide a full report in the next edition.

Looking further into 2018 and our AGM will be coming round very soon, so your notice and minutes will be delivered in the coming weeks advising of the date and time for this meeting. There are also numerous events in the pipeline for the 2018 running season and I shall add these to the Diary in time for the next edition of this newsletter...

Diary of Events

18th – 21st January 2018 – SMLS to display at Alexandra Palace – See above

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