

# Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

Issue No. 429  
October 2017

## BEECH HURST NEWS



### Cover picture: -

*Finally Finished:* This year has seen a number of 'new' or reconditioned locomotives at Beech Hurst with one of the 'new' being Andrew S' 'Dougal'. It has run in a 'bare' fashion and now looks very nice in LNER 'Apple Green'. All that is left to do is the G.C.G.W. crest and lettering.

### Editor

Andrew Brock  
189 The Welkin  
Lindfield  
RH16 2PW

[andy.brock15@btinternet.com](mailto:andy.brock15@btinternet.com)

SMLS Ltd, The Clubhouse, Bolnore Road, Haywards Heath,  
West Sussex, RH16 4BX.

Opinions expressed in the News are not necessarily those of the Society for which it cannot be held responsible

Copyright is that of the author or the S.M.L.S

## **Editor's Notes**

As per the August edition, I have held this one back for a few extra days, so as to include a small report on the Bonfire & Fireworks Night too. Since August, our running season has finished and this culminated with a bumper last Sunday when the busiest normal day record for 2017 was broken at the very last. In addition, we also had a visiting locomotive during the month, ran Saturday direction and operated our goods train too. All of these were on separate days and meant a fun finish to the season and proof enough that we can do different things and operate our normal passenger service in between.

Since the running season finished, so winter work has started and various jobs at the club are underway with some finished too. I will elaborate on these later in this edition. Looking forward and we have once again been invited to display at the Alexandra Palace show in January. There have already been a number of offers of exhibits for the show, as well as help manning the stand, and again I will include a short piece in the 'Forthcoming Events' section later in this edition.

The August newsletter was mostly from my hand and I was pleased to include quite a number of photographs taken during the summer months, which compliment each article. I have managed to do likewise this time round and in addition to those I also have articles from Andrew S, Chris & Graham Miller, along with a report of the final few weeks of the running season, an update of Winter Work and a report on Bonfire & Fireworks Night, as well as all the usual writings, so as ever please read on and enjoy...

**Andrew**

## **Chairman's Notes**

The running season 2017 ended with a few busy days and despite an extended spell of wet weather in the summer, notably the loss of four Wednesdays to the rain, we ended up with average takings.

Now the winter work has begun and I should like to thank the small group of regulars who have already achieved a lot.

Roy Preston & Graham Miller have put in many hard hours on the track work, and along with a handful of us other track 'part-timers', have managed to get the main length of refurbishment (through the 'jungle') nearly finished. Good work before the clocks go back and the daylight disappears early! Graham Mundy & I have checked over and cleaned up the club electric locos, and the two Sam's have thoroughly cleaned up the two club 'steamers', with Nick's supervision. Dan & Geoff have been working on our three short trucks set, refurbishing and repainting them into 'blue / grey' livery, as seen at the end of the BR steam era. Steve T has been repairing some broken electric sockets and adding one in the station for 'Santa' to use for our Christmas event. He has also put some rubber bungs in the 'weeping holes' in the big tunnel. This appears to have considerably reduced the amount of slippery silt and water coming onto the tunnel floor. Graham Mundy & I have also cleaned off all the mould and algae from the outside benches, painted and sealed the wood. Water has been drained down, the carriage shed tidied and cleaned, along with the trucks, and the seats waxed.

Thanks to Dan, Nick & the Sam's for help with these jobs. I have continued power washing around the rear compound and rear clubhouse areas, and Graham Mundy, Sam Hope & I have already started clearing leaves but there are still plenty more to fall yet! Dan has produced our new 2018 timetable, and along with Ebony, they have Santa posters and leaflets on display, and we have cleared and cleaned the station building in readiness for Christmas.

In the kitchen, we have replaced our aging microwave and Val & John organised a new cooker, because the oven failed on our old one with Bonfire Night and baked potato time approaching! Please keep these items clean and wipe out the microwave if you use it.

As I write, this coming week, we are due to have our rotting wooden station windows replaced with new PVC ones. Dan & I have given the station building a coat of PVA for mould and algae protection in readiness for the new windows. Also, Mike W has been organising a local firm to come and fit better security lights around the outside of the clubhouse. This should be completed soon also.

Steve T has now recommenced work on the spare bogie sets for our passenger trucks, some of which will hopefully be in operation next season.

Behind the scenes, John B & Mike W are starting to get to grips with updating our risk assessment and Health & Safety files. It is obvious from recent articles in both Northern and Southern federation newsletters that we must tighten up on our procedures and paperwork. Likewise, we must take care to ensure everybody uses the safety equipment, such as goggles etc... that we have in the workshop. Also, next year we will be ensuring that no one drives too fast with passengers, as it is obvious that more and more people are making claims of many thousands of pounds for minor scrapes, tiny burns etc..., for what might in the past have been dismissed as a bump or a bruise! We just have to be as safe as we can to sensibly make our small railway and travelling gently is a key factor.

All the small trucks and wagons from our 'goods train' rake have been removed from the carriage shed where they are not only getting dirty and rusty, but have been damaged also. These are expensive items and Nick and Alex have offered to clean and repair them through the winter. In light of this, the committee has agreed that they are not suited to be kept in the carriage shed and must be returned to their correct boxes after use. If we wish to keep them, we need to look after them. They are an interesting addition to our club, but are not of the same sturdy construction as many of our other rolling stock, and are easily damaged. Peter Chapman worked hard to make protective boxes for them, so please return them to their boxes after use. Thank you for your cooperation.

If you would like to help or exhibit at the Alexandra Palace show in January, please sign up, or list anything you would like to offer for display on the club notice board or contact Andrew B, Andrew S, John B or Mike W if you cannot get to the club. We need to know if we have sufficient support to operate our stand.

I look forward to seeing you at the bonfire party, and looking ahead, wish everyone a good winter!

**Mike**

## **2018 Subscriptions**

Could all members please make sure they renew their membership before 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018. Payment after this date will no longer be acceptable and reminder letters will not be sent. Subscription rates for 2018 and 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**

## **Beech Hurst Annual Passenger Figures for 2017**

Another season passes, this is the 41<sup>st</sup> report I have done, and anyone else fancy a go?

The beginning of this year saw a brilliant start and it looked like we were on target to meet last year's computer prediction of 25,000ish passengers, however the weather gods had other ideas.

The season was on track till the end of July when 'it' started. The following school holiday weeks saw 5 days of 'rain stopped play', and 4 complete 'washouts', 9 of our best days lost. We also suffered with 10 days of the funfair that this year visibly creamed off the best of the sunny weekends.

The good news is that we only ran 4,080 train laps against the usual 6,000 odd so a lot less maintenance will be needed. The down side of this is the noticeable increase in size of some of our passengers. Quite how the truck bearings stand the weight amazes me, however the increased hammer blow on the track joints is really visible (and audible) near the transporters. My guess is that if we don't replace some or all of the small diameter wheels soon, and return to the larger diameter, this will generate serious track problems. It's that or start to refuse rides to the 'biggies'.

And so to the numbers, last year we carried nearly 24,000 but this year only 22,576. This does include the extras and the booked parties that we carry from time to time.

The grand total now sits at an amazing 1,482,863. We only have some 17,137 to go to hit the one and a half million – time for a party? I estimate we should make this sometime in July or August next year.

The average yearly figure continues to drop, but stays at a healthy 23,169, down from last year's 23,180. This is over all 64 seasons since we started.

Oh, and finally the telephone numbers? Up from Somerset last year now it's Hull's turn (01482 863XXX) this one is not even BT; Hull is run by a private company Kingston Communications!

Good Steaming

**Chris**

## September Running Days

After the last edition we had 4 weekends to go until the end of our 2017 season and time enough to do a few different things before the close of running for 2017. Firstly, on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed Stephen Harrison & David Lewis to Beech Hurst. David, a former SMLS member, visited with his 'B1' earlier in the season but this was Stephen's first trip to Beech Hurst. The day dawned bright and sunny but with a showery forecast in prospect! The plan was to have a run before our passenger service and then give the locomotive a quick clean through in time for another run between 14:00 – 17:00 also. After a quick chat and a cup of tea, the locomotive was unloaded and prepared for the run, and by 11:00 it was on the track. As I mentioned in the June edition, this was one of the first locomotives I had the chance to drive at Beech Hurst, some 25 years ago, so it was good to see her at our track once again. Both David & Stephen, along with numerous SMLS members, had a drive during the course of the day and the locomotive performed as well as ever she once did – one of those which you look forward to having a go on! As 17:00 approached so our guests retired to the steaming bays to get cleaned down, ready for their journey back to the Midlands. It had been another very good day (albeit a bit hit and miss with the showers during the afternoon) and it was good to see David again, and to meet Stephen too. Thanks through these pages to all those who made our guests very welcome and of course to both David & Stephen for helping with our 14:00 – 17:00 service.

The following Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup>, we chose to operate the railway in reverse direction (Saturday direction) for those members old enough to remember! This was a pleasant change from the normal anti-clockwise circuit and it certainly gives both the drivers and station master something more to think about! Although not a particularly busy day, all of the trains coped admirably with the passenger loadings and young Alex did a grand job as station master too. It is certainly possible to operate a very efficient service in this direction and with good adhesion on the track it was not a particular problem either – another fun day!

The final weekend of the 2017 season saw us operate a goods train on the Saturday, followed by a double-headed steam service on the Sunday. The goods train consisted of all the available SMLS wagons, together with 4 of mine to create a long train of 13 vehicles, which included 2 guard's vans. This train made periodic appearances on the main circuit during the afternoon and in between times was shunted in the main siding to give the travelling public something extra to look at on the way round. The train and shunting operations were performed by the 'Black 5' and again it made a pleasant change to light a locomotive up for something other than passenger hauling! Then on the Sunday, a double-headed steam service using the 'K' class and 'Wharfedale' supplemented the electrically hauled trains. Pulling 6 coaches both locomotives had to work for their living as we carried a season record 627 passengers during the 3 hours. From 14:00 there was no break in the flow of passengers until gone 16:15! If we are unlucky on some occasions, that Sunday we were very lucky because everything seemed to come together to give us the perfect last day and even the rain held off until dusk! **(Pictures from some of the above days appear on the next 2 pages)**



**Picture Top:** Stephen Harrison at the controls of the 'B1' in the early morning sunshine  
**Picture Middle:** David nears the short tunnel with the 'B1' but under threatening skies  
**Picture Bottom:** The threatening skies mostly missed us but produced wonderful colour



**Picture Top:** Andrew S at the top of the 'tennis court straight' with the '5' & goods train  
**Picture Middle:** Nick & Dan coast by the steaming bays on the last day with a full load  
**Picture Bottom:** Pictured together for the first time, the '4-CEP' & 'MLV' on the last day

## Winter Work

As our 2017 running season drew to a close in spectacular fashion, so the winter jobs began for the coming 6 months of our closed season.

Outside on the track, Roy P, Graham Miller and many others have replaced the section from signal 1, through the 'jungle' to a point adjacent to the brick wall along the tennis court straight. The iron work has been stripped back and painted, new rail and sleepers placed on top and the piers / bases reset for level. New stainless steel tie bolts have also been added and these should make future renewals that much easier. As I write this, the section is finished all bar some levelling, which Roy plans to do once the piers / bases have had time to settle.

On the trucks, the 3 'shorts' came straight into the workshop after the last Sunday with Dan & Nick rubbing down the paint the following weekend. Since then all 3 vehicles have been rubbed back, primed and as I write the top coats are being applied to make this set BR 'blue / grey' with much of this work being done by Dan & Geoff during the week. I look forward to seeing this set once complete.

Also on the trucks, Andrew S & I have been through our entire fleet and noted down bearings that require replacement and wheels that require the treads to be skimmed. This will be an ongoing job throughout the winter season and we are also hopeful, with the help of Steve T, to be able to start putting some 'new' bogies under certain trucks in time for next season. It is noticeable once again that the 'new' style of bogie seems to create far fewer (just one axle this year) bearing replacements than the older style. Hopefully working with more of these bogies in the future will mean less year-to-year bearing replacements than now.

Outside, the normal round of path cleaning and leaf collection has started in earnest and with many of the trees still in good leaf, the latter will likely continue well towards Christmas this year if not into the New Year itself. We have yet to experience prolonged frosts and many of the leaves, particularly on the oak trees are definitely hanging on, if you will excuse the pun! As of last weekend, Mike P has pressure washed most of the paths in the vicinity of the clubhouse and the area around the pneumatic point too.

Also outside, Mike W has organised the installation of new LED floodlights around the clubhouse, which are operated by PIR sensors. They worked very well during the Bonfire & Fireworks Night last weekend and of course consume far less energy than their Halogen predecessors! In order for them to work properly, please do not turn off all the switches in the engine shed because in doing so you will also extinguish the lights that will help guide you upon exit!

Inside, the club locomotives, both electric and steam have been given end of season 'birthdays', with thanks to Graham Mundy, Mike P, Nick, Sam H & Sam R for their help with these (often) dirty but essential maintenance jobs!

Also inside, a new cooker and microwave have been purchased to replace previously life-expired 'white goods', so if you are cooking at the club please help to keep these items in 'new' condition for as long as possible.

I will publish an updated Winter Work article in the December edition.

**(Pictures from some of the above jobs appear on the next page)**

**Andrew**



**Picture Top:** The new track at the bottom of the 'tennis court straight'  
**Picture Middle:** The other end of the track renewal adjacent to signal post no.1  
**Picture Bottom:** The 3 short trucks in the process of receiving their 'blue' top coat

## Building a W&L 'Dougal'

I ended my last article by saying that 'Dougal' would 'reappear in the spring completely finished and ready to visit new places'. What I should say at this point is that was written in October 2013 - so I am only 4 years late!

I'm going to start my excuses by saying that painting a loco, and more importantly getting a paint finish I was happy with, is much harder than it looks. However I have also been delayed by other distractions during the last 4 years such as overhauling a 'Black 5' and the biggest of all, a proper full time job.

Whilst the loco was stripped down for painting, I have taken the opportunity to make some modifications including fitting a new larger axle pump and adding a steam chest drain cock to try and prevent some of the 'volcanic eruption' which the loco was prone to when initially setting off. I have also installed version 3 of the regulator as the previous 2 'screw down' attempts required the regulator handle to be unwound as much as 180 degrees to produce full opening. The latest one is a quarter turn type beneath the dome made out of PTFE and cross drilled to connect to a central hole in the middle of a PTFE block. Having steamed the loco a couple of times now I am pleased to say that the new and improved regulator design is a success. At first there was a slight leak by the regulator, however once the PTFE has warmed up it appears to seal pretty well and the opening and closing action is nice and smooth. As a finishing touch, I have also made a proper quadrant for the regulator handle to run across and painted the handle itself red.

I spent a lot of time experimenting with different mixes and consistencies of paint as I found that applying paint neat from the tin dried far too quickly to achieve a suitable finish. I also tried 3 or 4 different brands of 'LNER Apple Green' to see if there was any drying time difference between them but concluded that they were all pretty much the same as each other! I found that the thinning compound 'Owatrol' was very good at extending the drying time and that if mixed in with the paint by a ratio of 1:4 worked quite well. This however still didn't produce a perfect finish and therefore I have rubbed everything back with 800/1000 grit sand paper and 'grey' Scotchbrite to remove 99% of the brush lines. I then applied a little lubricating oil to bring back the shine on the paintwork. I found this combination produced the best finish.

I set a target to have 'Dougal' finished and running in passenger service on the club's 'Little Engine Day' on the Saturday of the August bank holiday. However unfortunately the week leading up to this day was mainly spent adapting the coal / water carrying wagon to run behind 'Dougal' and therefore the opportunity to test run the loco was reduced to the 2 hours immediately before passenger service began. I would be lying if I said that preparing the loco for this day wasn't a little rushed, so you can imagine how I felt when after two (very successful I must point out) laps Andrew B pointed at the lubricator which was gradually emptying itself onto the running plate having blown back! I should mention this had never happened before while the loco was running unpainted in 2012 / 13.

So the rest of my 'testing' time was spent cleaning out and refilling said lubricator, before lighting the fire again ready for passenger service the same afternoon.

Within a lap or two of hauling passengers it was clear that the lubricator was now behaving itself however I began to notice that the loco was intermittently losing beats. This continued for the next 4 or 5 laps, gradually getting worse until Andrew & I realised that the right hand eccentric was slipping off its stop collar and thus the valve movement ceased. I had already made the decision to call it a day at this point (any further running could cause damage to the loco) but as one final twist 'Dougal' completely locked up solid, barely 10 yards from the steaming bays, and had to rather dramatically be physically lifted off the track! A pair of split spacers were made and fitted the next day, which solved the problem, although like the lubricator the eccentrics had never made any attempt to move during previous runs!

Since that third test run I have remade the by-pass valve for the axle pump which leaked badly when in the open position (the threads may have been a little sloppy) and made a curved overflow pipe for the injector to prevent the right hand connecting rod from taking the brunt of any excess water from the injector! Following these and other adaptations made to the coal / water wagon, I ran 'Dougal' for one more time in September to confirm everything was satisfactory. So after 8 years and 2500 hours (give or take a couple) I am now proud to say that project 'Dougal' is complete. I have learnt an enormous amount during that time, not just engineering skills but also ones that are useful in life as well. I cannot stress how grateful I am to Andrew B for showing me everything that goes into building a locomotive, even though there were one or two arguments when we disagreed about his strict quality control at times!

A regret I do have is that my mum never saw 'Dougal' in steam. Having originally paid for the drawings from Reeves she watched and supported the build as it progressed (although the level of support varied depending on its impact on homework) but sadly she passed away just 11 weeks before the first fire was lit.

I am pleased that I decided to build a loco when I did however I do regret not building a slightly larger one, on the other hand choosing one with slip eccentric valve gear helped to simplify the build considerably, especially as I absolutely hate rounding the ends of rods. I have enjoyed the challenge although I am pleased and slightly relieved that it has now come to an end. Looking back there were no major disasters that occurred during the course of the build, however the most amusing was when Andrew & I Loctited the driving wheel set together, taking great care to make sure the quartering was just right, only to realise a few hours later that we hadn't put the axle boxes on the axle first! Thank goodness we used very old Loctite, which had only partially set!

Time to start the next loco – yes and no – the drawings and some specific materials have been bought for an SR 'U' class, however having recently moved into my own flat, my workshop is now spread between two locations since I don't have anywhere to house a milling machine (or the enthusiasm to move it!). This alone should not be an excuse to stop me and I am not going to rule it out in the future but for now I'm going to see what happens over the next few years – watch this space. **(Pictures during the build appear on the next page)**

**Andrew S**



**Picture Top:** The first milestone was the completed boiler, successfully tested to 160psi  
**Picture Middle:** Next was the boiler sitting in the successfully tested air running chassis  
**Picture Bottom:** Then New Year's Day 2011, the first steaming with a few bits left to do

## **Recent Social Event – Bonfire & Fireworks Night**

Last Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> November, saw our annual Bonfire & Fireworks Night at Beech Hurst. Because of recent development work adjacent to the back field, the 'Bonfire' consisted of a brazier on the back lawn and was a far cry from some of our more ambitious constructions of the past! That said, I for one made sure it was as heavily loaded as possible and did provide a focal point before the food and during the firework display too. About 20 members and family enjoyed the evening and aside the bonfire itself, we also enjoyed some lovely food prepared by Val & John, and then a 15 or so minute firework display to round off the evening. Thanks through these pages to Val & John for the food preparation, to Andrew S & I for the firework preparation and ignition, and of course to all those members and family who made the effort to come up that evening. Hopefully we can repeat this again in 2018 and perhaps with a bigger and better 'Bonfire' setup, after all where there's a will, there's a way...!

**Andrew**

## **Work in Progress**

Since the last edition, work on projects in my workshop have taken something of a hiatus as I have a workshop move around before the winter really kicks in. Once I am sorted out, and this will be very soon, work on my 5" gauge 'Royal Scot' and 5" gauge wagons will commence in earnest once again.

With 'Work in Progress' in mind, the winter months are generally those where hours spent on projects are at their maximum and although I am more than happy to keep this column running with my own engineering exploits, I would also be more than happy to receive short articles and / or photographs from any member who has an ongoing project they would like to share through this publication...

**Andrew**

## **Forthcoming Events**

Because this edition is about a week later than normal, we are now but 6 weeks or so until Christmas and then New Year's Day. With the latter in mind, our annual Fun Run & Lunch has been pencilled in for another year and as per 2017, if you would like to attend, and more importantly be fed, then please add your name to the whiteboard at the club so your needs can be catered for! The Fun Run side of the day (weather permitting of course) will start from 10:00ish and lunch will be served around midday. The last couple of years have been somewhat hampered by rain, so with a bit of luck 2018 will provide for better 'fun running' conditions!

Thereafter, the aforementioned exhibition at Alexandra Palace has been pencilled in for 2018 and we are now looking for volunteers to man the stand and to loan models for this show. As of last weekend, we have had 6 offers of models and several volunteers to man the stand, so that is a very good start. For 2018, we plan to exhibit only smaller 5" gauge locomotives / rolling stock or 3 ½" gauge locomotives / rolling stock, partly to display variety from previous exhibitions.

Looking at the current offers, we would like another half a dozen pieces to fill the stand and make for an interesting and varied display. All models are insured from the point of collection until delivery back after the show and we will of course take good care of them too. If you would like to help out then please add your name to the list on the whiteboard or contact Andrew S, John B, Mike W or I, who are responsible for organising such displays.

Looking further into 2018 and our AGM will be coming around very soon, so your notice and minutes will be delivered in the New Year advising of the date and time for this meeting.

### **Diary of Events**

1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 – New Year's Day Fun Run & Lunch – Will start at approx. 1000

18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> 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**