

Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

Issue No. 458
August 2022

BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

All the way from Essex: On a sunny and very warm August afternoon, James Swain from Chelmsford approaches the short tunnel with his BR 'B1' locomotive. The brown grass along the straight is now very green and quite long after the September rainfall...

Editor

Andrew Brock
189 The Welkin
Lindfield
RH16 2PW

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

I have held back this edition so I could include a report from the Maidstone visit to Beech Hurst last Saturday and to provide an outline jobs list for the forthcoming closed season. Even though trains have stopped running, there will be plenty of maintenance to undertake and hopefully enjoyment at the same time.

The past 6 months have flown by and our first full running season since 2019. There have been challenges along the way, but thanks to the efforts of many members we have operated our passenger service, welcomed visitors to our club and enjoyed a number of social events along the way. All-in-all a good season and with just 1 rained off running day we should count ourselves very lucky!

It is also great to see some of our younger members taking an interest in the engineering side of the hobby. Aside our commitment to run for the public, we should try to encourage and help as much as possible, so our younger members have the opportunity to learn the skills in much the same way we did years ago. We now live in a digital age, and far beyond what many of us grew up with, but nonetheless the desire by young people to create or repair using old school techniques does not seem to have diminished and long may that continue. An investment of time and effort now will hopefully pay dividends in the longer term.

Looking ahead to the closed season, and after the Chairman's Notes, I have produced a list of jobs that are either current or planned for the next 6 months. Where the job has a leader, I have included this detail, however if the job is 'vacant' and you would like to take ownership then please let me know by return or speak to one of the Committee members at the club and we will duly add your name to the list. Likewise, if there is a job you think needs doing or would like to do, again let us know – the list is by no means finite!

Aside the jobs listed, the Committee are also looking at social events throughout the winter and these will be communicated through the next newsletter in about 4-weeks time. For now though, the Committee have agreed 2 Christmas running days on Thursday 22nd & Friday 23rd December from 13:30 until dusk. These are planned to be a scaled back version of the previous Christmas runs but hopefully something to look forward to just before the holiday weekend. Further details can be found in the 'Forthcoming / Diary' section at the end of this newsletter.

To conclude my Notes, but with my Operations Manager hat on, I would like to say a big thank you to all those who have helped out over the past 6 months. Young or old, regular or occasional, every little helps and with 3 of our young members old enough to be more involved from the beginning of next season, I think the future looks very bright too...

Andrew B

Chairman's Notes

I write this having just returned from a much needed holiday on the Norfolk Broads. It was a shock of course, to hear that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had suddenly passed away. I am sure that most, if not all, of us would wish to send our condolences to His Majesty King Charles III and the rest of the Royal family, and wished to demonstrate our respect for Her late Majesty.

It is remarkable that she served us for so long and that she managed to bring people together and continued to do so. We should all think about her example. We all know those people who feel entitled to try to create division both on a worldwide level and much closer to our personal and professional lives, and slowing or preventing positive progress.

On a happier note, I can report that our Safety Manager, Steve Fenner, has been working on the Safety Management System which will be presented to the Committee in the coming weeks. As part of this work and using my professional expertise in training, competence assessment and incident analysis, I am writing documents (forms and standards) that will feed into this and adapting the work carried out on my request by Roy Preston's team. These documents will be passed to Steve to be compiled into our first Safety Management and Standards Manual to allow him to work on them to create the SMS manual. The aim will be a comprehensive but user friendly plan to ensure that all volunteers who undertake safety critical tasks can be shown to be competent and supported to be so in areas where they have suffered from skill fade. This will be carried out fairly, consistently and is not something to be feared. There will then be records to demonstrate who is competent to undertake which task, a process to report and investigate incidents, support and develop those who have been involved in an incident to avoid further incidents and document this. This is something that needs to be set up properly and is very labour intensive. We have never had a Safety Management System before, nor a Safety Manager (which needs to be a qualified person) or a proper method for reporting, recording and investigating incidents. After nearly 70 years of the SMLS we will finally have that. This is something I had discussed with several members and previous Committee members a couple of years before I was asked to join the Committee and asked to become Chairman.

I know that several members are keen to have this in place yesterday (despite no progress having been made for political reasons previously) but we will do so (with the support of the Committee ongoing) with the aim being to start assessing before next season so that we have a core group of listed competent volunteers. Work will then continue to assess everyone who drives trains, undertakes Traffic Controller and Station Master.

Clearly this will be a huge task. If you are a qualified Assessor I would love to hear from you. We will also need Instructors, so again please get in touch if you are interested. You will need to be someone who wants to quietly help people reach their potential while supporting and encouraging them. It is certainly not about hitting people with a metaphorical big stick as this discourages the reporting and investigation of incidents and issues that may lead to incidents if they aren't addressed.

I hope you enjoy what remains of the running season and I hope you will support Charlie Allen & Harry Shopland with their track repair plans. I know that several of you have already been involved. Well done and thank you.

Andrew E

Passenger Figures for 2022

Well, here we are at the end of our 69th season and my 44th report.

I did not produce a report last year as we only carried a token number of passengers while still under Covid precautions.

There were no passengers at all in 2020 and approximately 5,125 in 2021.

This year has seen us 'in recovery' after the pandemic, unfortunately there has been considerable disruption in our staffing numbers. We have lost some to Covid and a few are still (understandably) cautious to come up and get in contact with the public.

Missing two full years has also reflected on our recruitment of youngsters. Whereas we usually cope with three or four each year, this time we have had a rush to make up time. This has put a strain on our 'training' in the ways of safe railway operation. Even though we're a miniature railway we still operate as if we were on the 'big railway', essential for the safety of our fare paying passengers.

As a result of this the Committee took the cautious approach and decided not to run on Sundays, historically our busiest day of the week.

This year we fell just short of 13,000 passengers at 12,950, just a bit more than half we would have carried in a 'normal' year. All the averages have been disrupted but with the traditional running week of both Saturday and Sunday we should be back to normal next year. The long-term average had been about 23,201 for some time and dropping a little each year, however this year it has understandably dropped now to 22,844.

The best day was 656 passengers early in the year and with a regular head count over 300 most Saturdays.

The grand total continues to increase well passed the milestone 1 ½ Million mark at 1,557,260.

Oh, and the telephone numbers?

01557 260xxx is in Kirkcubright, up in Scotland.

For the newer members, this light-hearted bit has traced the phone number map around the country after a remark from some wit that all this stuff is just telephone numbers!

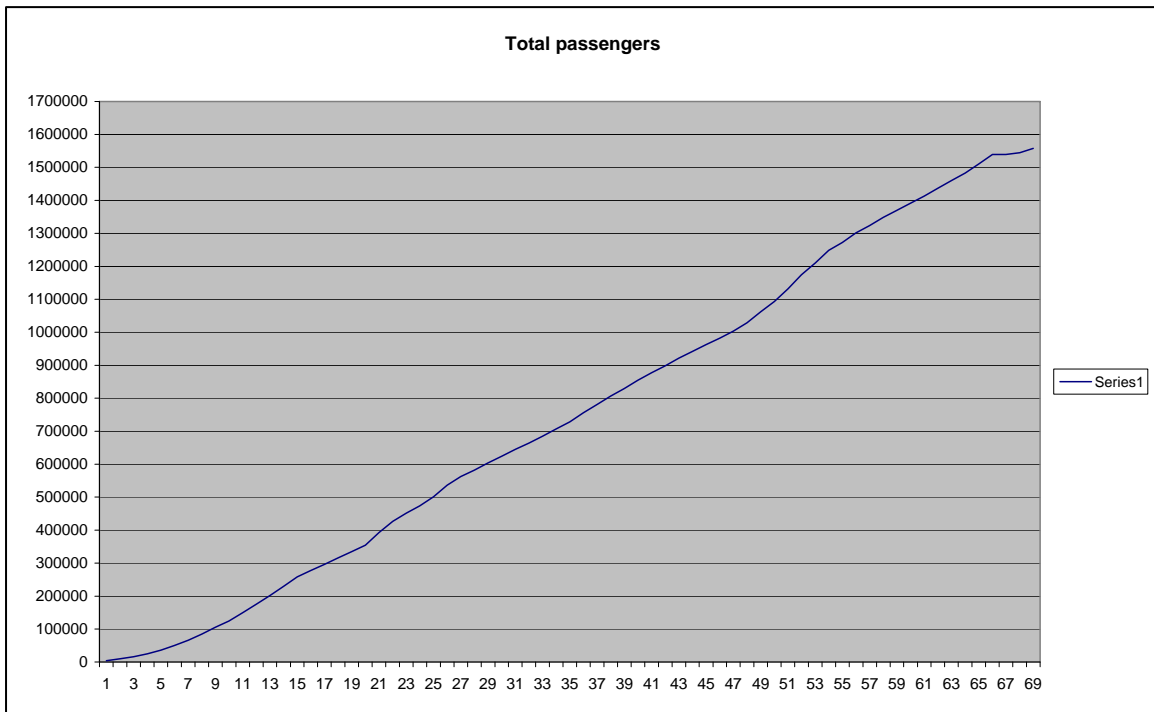
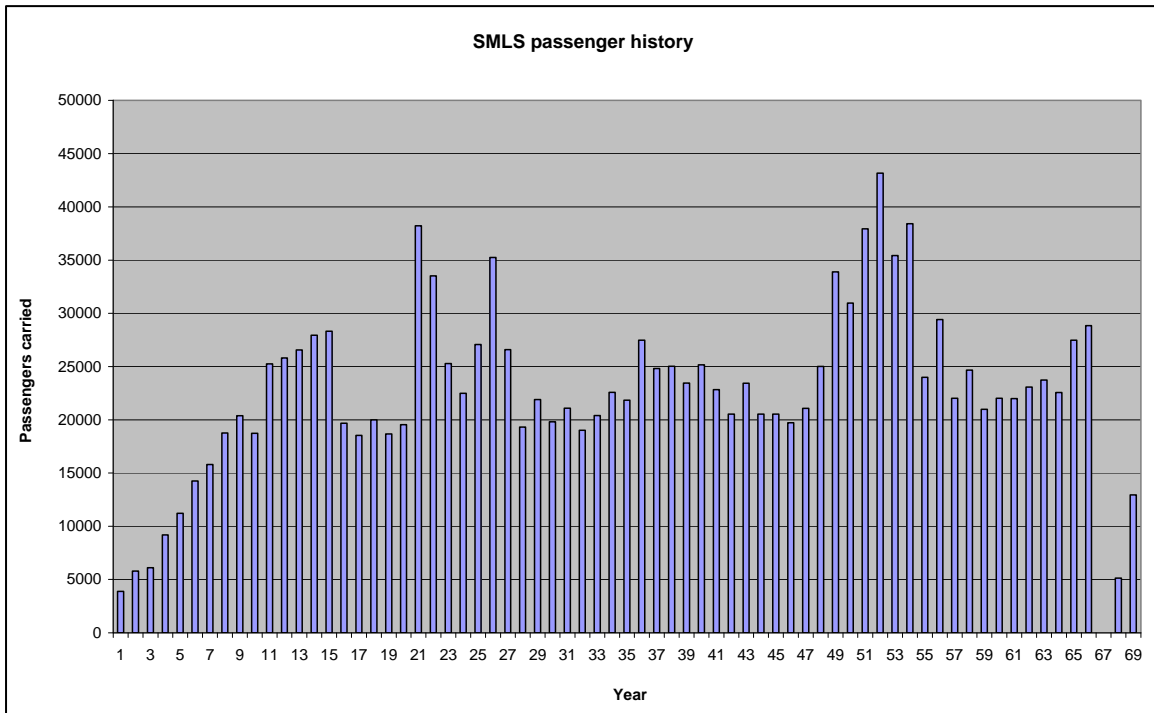
Attached to this article are my long-term graphs (**see next page**) that clearly show how we did from our very first year back in 1953!

Chris S

Editor Note: A big thank you to Chris for his annual update, which I am always grateful to receive at this time of the year and it is interesting to see how we have fared when compared to a historical 'normal' year.

Chris has also asked me to put a note with this edition to see if there are any members who wish to keep this statistical history going in the future. Regular attendance is not necessarily required, as long as you can keep a record of our passenger figures throughout the season and any extra groups in between times. If there is anyone interested then do let me know through the newsletter or speak with Chris who is at the club on most Saturday afternoons...

Andrew B



Winter Work – By Andrew B

As I conclude this newsletter during the first week of October, we have quietly entered our closed season and winter maintenance begins. The table on the next page is a list of jobs that are ongoing or could be started in the coming weeks.

If you would like to help with any of these tasks then please speak to the PICOW or if you wish to take ownership where they are vacant, please let one of the Committee know and we will duly update the list accordingly...

Job	Person(s) in Charge of Work
Track maintenance	Charlie Allen or Harry Shopland
Truck maintenance	Andrew Brock
New SMLS truck set commissioning	Steve Turner
Gardening / Leaf clearance	Vacant
Steaming bay fence / floodlight renewal	Steve Turner
Engine locker door repairs / repaint	Vacant
Fence treatment (car park / flamestore)	Vacant
Gardening store door frame repairs	Vacant
Engine shed tidy	Andrew Brock
Station tidy and truck seat cleaning	Vacant
Christmas run preparations	Andrew Ellis or Andrew Brock

Track Work – By Andrew B (pictures by Charlie Allen / Harry Shopland)

Further to the last newsletter, and during the past few weeks, Charlie & Harry have continued with running repairs around the track, including rail turning in the 'jungle' area (**see picture below**). Then most recently they have commenced the refurbishment of the 'Big Boy' siding, which as of last weekend was devoid of track and with steel work cleaning well underway. Also underway is the cleaning and refurbishment of the carriage shed bridge (**see picture next page top**).



If you would like to assist Charlie & Harry with the ongoing track work, they will be at the club on most Saturdays and occasionally during the week when time permits. Please feel free to liaise directly with them regarding dates and times when track work will be undertaken. This is their first year looking after the track, so I am sure all help will be gratefully received!



Visit to Beech Hurst by Chelmsford Club

Saturdays 6th & 13th August had been pencilled in for a number of Chelmsford members to visit Beech Hurst. The 6th went ahead with James Swain coming to Beech Hurst with his 'B1' (**see cover picture**) but the 13th was postponed due to the dry weather and fire risk. The latter visitors could not be re-arranged after the steam ban was lifted, so it is hoped to organise more days during 2023. James' visit on the 6th was very successful and like most of August it was a dry and warm day. His 'B1' ran well before and during passenger hours...

Andrew B

End of Summer BBQ Evening – By Andrew B

Our third evening social for 2022 was a 'bring your own' BBQ during the evening of Saturday 27th August. Following the afternoon passenger service, the BBQ was readied for an 18:00ish start and continued on into the evening, along with several trains (**see pictures on the next 2 pages**). About 12 members attended and like the June BBQ, not a hot evening, but it was nonetheless dry & bright. Through these pages I would like to thank Val for the preparation of the onions and puddings, which accompanied our food of choice, and to all those who stayed on to enjoy the BBQ and wind down after another day running the railway.





Visit to Fawley Hill – By Andrew B

Sunday 4th September saw our planned visit to Fawley Hill go ahead, having been postponed from 2020 and 2021 due to Covid. 18 members and guests travelled aboard a Leyland Leopard vintage bus from Beech Hurst and this was very reminiscent of our last trip in 2003.

A seamless journey of 2 hours brought us to the Buckinghamshire home of the late Sir William McAlpine, most well known for his work in the construction industry, but as the estate demonstrates, also a lifelong collector of transport memorabilia! Aside the ½ mile or so of standard gauge railway, which also features a 1:13 gradient, the museum is a treasure trove of automabilia and railwayana, the latter collection of which can only be described as immense! Simply 1000's of individual exhibits, ranging from the well known enamel station and information signs, right through to very unique railway artefacts which I assume have only been saved because they were rescued during McAlpine construction work. In addition there are numerous live steam models, which range from Gauge 1 through to 9 ½" gauge.

During our visit the standard gauge railway was diesel hauled due to the ongoing fire risk but the ride aboard the open wagon or guards van was just as enjoyable! A big thank you to Ade Carter (Edward's Dad) for taking our group on the bus and it was a nice alternative way to travel. Thanks also to all those members who supported a great day out (**pictures of our visit on the next 3 pages**)...







Visit to Beech Hurst by Maidstone Club

Last Saturday, 1st October, we wrapped up our 2022 operating season by welcoming friends from Maidstone for a run at Beech Hurst. 6 members brought along 5 locomotives including three 3 ½" gauge, which was great to see. After a wet Friday evening and a forecast wet Sunday morning, last Saturday was dry and mostly bright all day, so we should count ourselves very fortunate. Our guests arrived shortly after 10:00 and by 11:00 the first trains were on the track. The 5 visiting locomotives in size order (from largest to smallest) were as follows: 5" gauge 'Duchess', 5" gauge 'Ajax', 3 ½" gauge 'A3', 3 ½" gauge 'Britannia' and finally a 3 ½" gauge 'Juliet' (**see picture below and on the next 2 pages**).

It had been decided not to advertise passenger rides, so the day was all about a fun run, and most importantly to have fun. All the visiting locomotives ran very well and in addition my 'Railmotor' was steamed twice for our young members to drive, once before our guests arrived and then again when they started to retire after their runs.

Through these pages I would like to thank everyone who was present for our last operating day and for their help and support. 6 locomotives in action, all steam, the sun was shining, plenty of tea flowed and biscuits consumed, so a really nice way to round off the operational year. At the end, our Class 73 took round the cleaning train to give the track a spit and polish before the winter season, and our next operational requirements which are planned to be our Christmas special runs in mid-December...







Andrew B

Work in Progress – 'Project 75' – A 'North London Railway' 0-6-0T

Since the last edition, the construction of 'NLT 75' has progressed well and at the time of writing I am now making boiler fittings and associated pipework. With the boiler mounted in the chassis, the lubricator finished and the buffer beams painted / re-attached, I have concentrated on finishing the smokebox / chimney and most recently making and fitting the regulator. Finishing the latter will in theory mean I can run the locomotive on air via the boiler for the first time. Progress has been slowed a little by paid work but in between times I have made as much hay as possible and not just when the sun shines! The smokebox / chimney occupied me for the second half of August and all of September, and now into October I am glad to be working on boiler fittings for a change! The regulator has now been fitted and I am currently fabricating the steam pipe, which connects the steam header to the inlet 'T' and each steam chest. The regulator is the original 'Stroudley' type from 'Railmotor' but with PTFE enhancements – watch this space! I will next make the other fittings in the order I feel enthused to do so! I had hoped to be a little further forward with the project but national rail strike action has meant fewer hours than planned but nonetheless, a largely complete if not painted locomotive this side of Christmas is a really distinct possibility (picture just over a week ago next page top)...



Andrew B

Forthcoming & Diary of Events

I will summarise further social events in the next newsletter at the end of the month, but in the meantime the Committee have pencilled in 2 Christmas running days which fall immediately before the Christmas holiday weekend. They are Thursday 22nd & Friday 23rd December and we plan to run from 13:30 until dusk. Festive lighting and music will be in the long tunnel, with festive decorations at the clubhouse and main station. It is not our intention to have the same 'lights' show that we did in previous years but just to offer a winter's train ride with festive theme. This should offer plenty of fun but without the same level of input as previously. With the evenings largely clear there will hopefully be the opportunity for socialising and perhaps some food to get the Christmas weekend festivities off and running.

We will require assistance to get things set up and I will advertise this in the next edition but in the meantime please feel free to add your name to the running book if you would like to help out...

22nd / 23rd December 2022 – Christmas Running (see above) – From 13:30

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 B