

BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

Wet, wet, wet: May has been particularly unsettled and Sunday 13th was no exception. Pictured above is John Dalton from Chelmsford driving his immaculate 'Britannia' locomotive 'William Wordsworth' whilst visiting Beech Hurst with other Chelmsford members.

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Editor's Notes

Welcome to mid-summer! By the time that you receive the June edition we will be almost to the summer solstice and damn to near to the middle of the running season already. Having had a cracking April, May 'went to the dogs' so to speak and not only were there many wet or miserable days it was damn cold at times too, in fact the Whitsun Bank Holiday Monday was one of the coldest on record with temperatures at Charlwood, near Gatwick, only measuring 7 Celsius! June, however, has been pretty reasonable so far and long may that continue.

Thanks as ever go to the contributors to the last newsletter, namely: Chris and Ron, plus all the 'regular' features and extra articles added in for good measure.

In this edition we have all the regular features, plus articles on visits to/from Beech Hurst, a new club locomotive, the club t-shirts, website updates and jokes, as well as a short obituary by Ron Harris, following the sad passing of the clubs oldest member, Mr Reg Stephenson, who passed away a short time ago, after an innings of 99 years and 11 months.

Andrew & Mark

Website Updates

Our website counter is proving to be quite interesting, with 1300 hits registered on the homepage since the May newsletter came out, nearly two months ago. The figures for last year suggested that website views peaked in July and August, with each month registering about 1,000 separate views (hits). It will be interesting at the end of the year to see if the figures for 2007 are comparable with 2006 or if they differ significantly. Stephen has also added new pictures to the gallery section, as well as maintaining the members pages, which include an electronic copy of all the newsletters back to the beginning of 2003.

In addition to the SMLS website, Linda Chen has been a regular visitor to Beech Hurst over the last few weeks and her website has been frequently updated with new images from 2007, below are two of the latest pictures taken about 3 weeks ago.



Andrew & Mark

T-Shirts

The prototype embroidered SMLS t-shirt will be delivered shortly, the artwork has been prepared and the design and my name will be stitched to a t-shirt for display at the club before a bulk order can be placed for those interested.

Delivery is approximately 14 days from the time of order, although this may take a little longer in our case because individual names may have to be stitched to the garments, in addition to the club badge.

Andrew

Chairman's Notes

I begin these notes with the sad news that our oldest member has passed away. Reg Stephenson was just one month short of his 100th birthday – a remarkable age. He had already moved away when I joined the club, and I knew him only indirectly from photographs and regular reports from Ron Harris who kept in touch with him down in Devon and who had known him from his (Ron's) own boyhood. I also feel some connection to him as he started the chassis of the Class 33 electric locomotive that found its way indirectly to me, and which I finished about 5 years back. He also put in work on the '08' shunter that Peter Marten now owns. It's nice that some of his handiwork lives on.

On a lighter note, I'm pleased to report that the season is going well. Last month was a bit 'soggy' especially over the late May Bank Holiday, but generally passenger numbers have held their own.

Over the last few years we have lost some of our 4-car engines and gained more 2-car locomotives. This has actually served us very well because we have run more trains (albeit shorter ones) and many of our younger passengers like to 'ride 'em all', and I know that this has helped to increase our passenger numbers. However, on very busy days, Bank Holidays and summer Wednesday's it's essential to have one or two bigger trains to move high passenger volumes or just to accommodate the larger groups who arrive together on these days. With this in mind the committee agreed to go ahead and purchase a second 'Metropolitan Growler' to double head with our current one to take a 4-car train. Our original 'Growler' has proved very popular, with many members taking a turn with it in passenger service over the last 4 years, and it has proved itself reliable and enjoyable. We had to have a modified control box for our original 'Growler', but they can now be used together or separately, and I hope running them together will be fun and also prove popular with the passengers. So don't rush to get your eyes tested if you think you've developed double vision! We have also stayed politically correct and chosen the name of our second locomotive after a 'famous chap'. So we now have a 'him' and 'her' – 'Florence Nightingale' and 'Michael Faraday'.

One important point to note is that when connecting the batteries, connectors and hand controllers to these engines, it is essential to do so in the correct sequence to avoid 'blowing' the sensitive control boxes. A set of clear instructions will be left with the locos. If you are not sure, please ask the TC before attempting a connection.

To offset some of the cost of the new engine we may look to sell our blue '08' to a good home, because it is a little slow in passenger service and I think it will get very limited use now.

The committee has also changed one more detail on our 'vulnerable persons' policy. That is, that in the unlikely event that an incident should be reported, it should be to a committee member and not to the TC of the day (unless they are a committee member too). Wishing everyone a pleasant summer.

Mike

REGINALD STEPHENSON – 5th JUNE 1907 to 8th MAY 2007

Beech Hurst member, Reg, known to most as Steve, died just twenty seven days short of his 100th birthday, in his sleep, in a Nursing Home in Sidmouth, Devon.

Steve was born in Chobham, Surrey, the youngest of three boys and eventually joined the family business, a Sawmill, sited on the river Thames at Deptford. This fired his enthusiasm to build a boat, and a 17ft motor launch he named "Genesta" was soon lowered into the Thames for the family to spend many happy hours.

The business succeeded and he was able to retire in the sixties to concentrate on his other loves, winemaking, photography, gardening and model engineering. His most celebrated model was the 1/8th scale model of a compound condensing marine engine, awarded Bronze and Silver medals. This was later sold through Christie's and now resides in America. In his later engineering years he built a 5-inch gauge '08' electric locomotive and part-built a class 33, but his eyesight was failing and he was unable to finish it. Both these are still running at the club to this day.

He moved to Devon 11 years ago, in his 89th year, and although only partially sighted, kept his bungalow and very large garden in perfect order, insisting on weeding and growing vegetables until only two years ago.

He was cremated in Exeter to a Humanitarian service, which he would have thoroughly enjoyed. He will be sadly missed by his family and friends.

Ron Harris

A New Member – With a difference...!



Following the success of one of the club locomotives over the last few seasons, a decision was taken a few weeks ago that we would invest in another 'Growler' locomotive for the railway. We have had 'Florence Nightingale' for the best part of 4 years and the locomotive has proven herself very capable, fast and powerful, however, a single 'Growler' lacks the capability to haul more than 2 Pullman sized cars for the afternoon and there are occasions when we lack the

steam engines and/or drivers and require an electric(s) that could pull a 4-car train for the 3 hours. A chance enquiry with Dan Jeavons in Kidderminster proved very interesting as he had one 'Growler', the last of a batch of 3 available for almost immediate purchase. What we also wanted was the option to have 2 separate locomotives, or 2 double heading, so Andrew took our existing locomotive to Kidderminster for re-wiring, so that she and the new locomotive, no. 18 'Michael Faraday' (he) could run together. The pair were collected last Sunday and after a few checks were ready to run later that afternoon.

Together they will hopefully prove to be very reliable and it now gives us a great deal of flexibility in our choice of motive power, depending on the day, drivers available and indeed the weather forecast!

Also, we think they will prove to be popular with the passengers too, not only do they look very good, but also being a double headed combination are much more unusual too.

Andrew

For Sale

Following a chance letter that was sent to Beech Hurst a few weeks ago, we have recently acquired a new 'Super 7' lathe for the workshop.

The machine is a pre-1982 'blue' model, with Norton QC Gearbox and many accessories, some of which have been transferred from our existing lathe to make a better equipped machine, that is generally in very good condition and also has a working suds pump.

As a result of this our existing lathe is being offered for sale, firstly to any member who is interested and can make a good home for the machine or if not via an internet sale. We are looking to dispose of the lathe in the next couple of weeks and anybody who has an interest should speak to Andrew at the club during the next couple of weekends. If after this time it has not been taken then the lathe will go for sale privately outside the club.

Andrew

Speeding...

Whilst on the subject of operations, it has been noted that there are still some drivers who are driving too fast at club. Out of hours and when the park is quiet, this is a different matter, however excessive speed whilst the park is busy and with passengers aboard is dangerous and puts the Traffic Controller in a difficult position should he have to ask a driver to ease off. We have an excellent safety record at Beech Hurst and given a little common sense, this will remain so.

The Operations Managers

On The Road



Not having visited the track at Maidstone for several years, a few of us accepted an invitation this year to go for a spin around the 2,200 feet of raised track at Mote Park in Maidstone. We took 'Wharfedale' and 'Butch', two very different locomotives that were to have two very different days!

(Pictured Left: Maidstone member Tom Parham at the controls of 'Wharfedale').

Although not quite the first there, I was determined to get on to the track before it became too busy and had 'Wharfedale' in steam as quickly as possible. We got on at about 11:00 and despite a little light rain as we arrived the day proved to be quite bright and mild, certainly the best of the Bank Holiday weekend! By this time, 'Butch' had arrived and it too was being hastily prepared for action and soon after was on the track. Only trouble was it was no sooner on the track as off it again, having struggled around for 1 lap. This occurred a couple of times and it was obvious that something was wrong, the locomotive would not steam, I tried it for one lap, gave the locomotive an almighty thrash and yet it limped back in with virtually nothing left! Further examination on the steaming bays and a chance meeting with one of the Maidstone members led us to believe that the draughting in the smokebox was not right. The petticoat pipe, what there was of one, was extremely high in the smokebox and with a relatively short blast pipe the blast was not going straight up the chimney, but causing turbulence in the smokebox and not drawing the fire properly. By coincidence an article was found in Engineering in Miniature from the Maidstone club's library that talked about draughting problems in steam locomotives and luckily contained information on the 'Butch' design. The drawings showed that the petticoat pipe was indeed way too short and demonstrated how a gentleman had overcome the problems before. 'Butch' was retired to the car, pending further investigation back at HQ!

'Wharfedale' on the other hand had now been running for nearly 5 hours and showed no sign of becoming tired, however with time ticking away, she too was brought off at about 16:00, with afternoon tea and cakes being served, before we set off for home. It had been an extremely enjoyable day, with Stephen Hutton coming up from Andover by train; myself with 'Wharfedale', plus Howard and Andrew with 'Butch' from Haywards Heath by car. There were about another 8 or so engines there, 'Wharfedale' being by far the biggest, right down to a GNR 'Single' from the Canvey Island club that had visited Beech Hurst with the Chelmsford society just a couple of weeks beforehand. In fact given the locomotives that were present, only 'Wharfedale' and the 'Single' stayed on for the duration without problems, several times engines were seen being 'frog-legged' back to the steaming bays for resuscitation! On one such occasion the two aforementioned locomotives combined to push a stalled 'Simplex' back home that had made all but a few yards from the station before grinding to halt with a queue forming behind, with no chance of going back it was a trip right round to get back to base!

Through these pages I would like to thank the Maidstone club for their excellent hospitality and great company throughout the day. It is always a pleasure to visit the track in Mote Park and this year was no exception. We also look forward to inviting the Maidstone society for a return visit to Beech Hurst in September.

Andrew

At Home

On 13th May, we welcomed the Chelmsford society to Beech Hurst for one of their regular visits down south. Although the weather had been forecast as being somewhat inclement, the Sunday started dry, if a bit cloudy, with rain due later on.



There was quite a selection of motive power on offer, with John Dalton, also a Beech Hurst member bringing his superb 'Britannia' class locomotive 'William Wordsworth', Bob Frost, also a Beech Hurst member bringing two locomotives, namely a 'Baby Deltic' (pictured Left) electric and also his excellent 'Merchant Navy' class locomotive 'Cunard White Star Line' (pictured Bottom Left). In addition a GNR 'Single' that we also saw on our visit to Maidstone (pictured Centre Left) and a 3 ½" gauge 'Black 5'. Although we managed to get away with most of the morning being dry, a downpour at about 13:00 soon put pay to that and also to our chances of getting many passengers during the afternoon. Bob Frost's Deltic also came to grief, possibly as a result of waterlogged electrics, although the cause had not been established at the club and the locomotive was retired to the car. With just Ian added to traffic for the afternoon, the Chelmsford guys pretty much ran the service trains for us, although they weren't terribly busy, even when the sun did finally come out later in the day. At least we managed to get most of the packing away done before further showers encroached upon us in the evening.

I hope that our guests enjoyed their day, even if the weather spoiled the surroundings somewhat and also thanks to everyone who turned out to help with all the jobs and tea making etc..., there is always a lot of work in organising visiting days and although I for one find it very interesting and very rewarding, help is always much appreciated.

Andrew

Jokes

'The Guard'

In a terrible accident late one evening at a railway crossing, a train smashed into a car and pushed it nearly four hundred yards down the track. Though no one was killed, the car driver took the train company to Court.

At the trial, the guard insisted that he had given the car driver ample warning by waving his signal lantern back and forth for nearly a minute. He even stood and convincingly demonstrated how he had done it. The Court believed his story and the case was dismissed.

'Congratulations' the lawyer said to the guard when it was over. 'You did superbly under cross-examination'.

'Thanks' he said, 'but he sure had me worried'.

'How's that?' the lawyer asked.

'I was afraid he was going to ask if the damned lantern was lit!'

Ray

Vast Engineering!



Even after you see it, it is still hard to believe!

Water Bridge in Germany... What a feat!

Six years, 500 million euros, 918 meters long... serious engineering!

This is a channel-bridge over the River Elbe and joins the former East and West Germany as part of the unification project. It is located in the city of Magdeburg, near Berlin. The photo was taken on the day of inauguration.

Enid Marten

Forthcoming Events

First things first, the BBQ that had been advertised for the 23rd June has now been put back to the following Saturday 30th June to allow more people to attend. The BBQ itself will be the normal 'Bring Your Own' arrangement, however onions and puddings will be provided on the day.

The visit to the Didcot Railway Centre is still not known, however it is likely to be a weekday Wednesday in July or August. Since we run on Wednesday's from the 25th July it is most likely to be early July, before the kids break up, but this was not confirmed before the newsletter went to print.

Following the 'BYO' BBQ in June, there will be the regular BBQ in late August too, almost certainly on the Saturday of the Bank Holiday weekend, details to follow in the August edition.

Three visiting clubs will then be at Beech Hurst over two weekends in late September and early October. Firstly Maidstone pay us a return visit on 29th September, together with the Isle Of Wight and following on from that the Harlington Society will pay us an inaugural visit on 6th October, before SMLS will visit the Malden track on either the 13th or 14th October, further details will follow in the August edition.

Andrew & Mark

Diary Of Events

30th June 2007 – Mid-summer 'Bring Your Own' BBQ – will be lit from 1800 till late.

5th July 2007 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900.

2nd August 2007 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900.

25th August 2007 – End of summer 'Bring Your Own' BBQ – TBC.

6th September 2007 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900.

29th September 2007 – Maidstone DMES & IoW MES visit Beech Hurst, from 1000.

4th October 2007 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900.

6th October 2007 – Harlington Society visit Beech Hurst, from 1000 – details TBC.

13th/14th October 2007 – Malden DMES Open weekend invitation – details TBC.

Summer 2007 – Visit to Didcot Railway Centre, provisional and details TBC.

N.B. Other events are not always shown in the diary of events because they have been arranged at short notice; check black/notice board at the clubhouse for more details.

Andrew & Mark