

Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

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BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

It Is With Sadness: That I report the passing of Peter Chapman on Friday 11th November 2016. Peter had been one of our most active and productive members over the past 15 years or so. Pictured above he is seen driving his 5" gauge scratch built Class 73.

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Editor's Notes

As I write these notes, it is the shortest day of the year and although there are the hard months of January and February to come, day-by-day the daylight itself is at least starting to get longer!

Since the last issue at the beginning of November, we have sadly lost an active member in Peter Chapman who passed away just over 4 weeks ago. His funeral at Worth Crematorium was well attended with nearly 20 from Beech Hurst among the near 50 strong congregation and without further elaboration is testament to how well liked Peter was. I have written a piece about Peter, which appears later. The run up to Christmas 2016 has been a little busier than normal with 2 weekends of Santa Specials having taken place. These can be said to have been fairly successful if a little low on numbers at times. An article and pictures from the 2 weekends also appear later in this edition.

With this newsletter being released on New Year's Day, it is worth looking back at 2016 and overall it has been a good year at Beech Hurst. We had a decent summer and coupled with the odd special day and social event here and there kept us busy throughout. Furthermore, Roy P and his team have also continued the good work well into the autumn with the long track renewals and these too have kept members busy. Development continues to envelope the park and I will touch on this again later in this edition. Looking forward into 2017 and perhaps it is time to think about development of our own. I mentioned this in the last edition when describing a conversation that John B, Roy P & I had at the Brooklands Show with the Chairman of Guildford MES, during which we talked about the merits of diversification within clubs in order to attract new members. When you lose very active members like Peter Chapman you begin to realise just how much certain members have done for us and therefore ask where the expertise will come from down the line? This single issue will ultimately define what our club becomes in future years and perhaps needs serious thought sooner rather than later before we do not have enough active members to function as we do now.

From the October edition, I would like to thank Chris, Dave M & Steve T for their respective articles and in this edition there is a special article about Peter Chapman, reports on Bonfire Night, Recent Committee Minutes, Santa Specials and Winter Work, as well as all the usual writings and an updated Diary too. So I wish you a belated Happy Christmas and a Happy & Healthy New Year...

Andrew

Chairman's Notes

So, 2016 draws to a close! Most of the winter track work is finished, a new power cable has been installed from the clubhouse to the station and steaming bays, and most of the winter leafs have been cleared. There are still a few outstanding maintenance jobs on trucks and club locos yet to be completed. The Santa Specials went well, as did the Bonfire Night back in November, and for the most part the weather was kind throughout the autumn and early winter.

Thanks to everyone who took part in any of the above activities, and also to those members who helped run the railway in 2016. All in all, a very successful and productive year.

It is with great sadness that I report that Peter Chapman died recently. Peter supported the club in so many ways and was a regular 'Sunday' member until earlier in the year when he became too ill.

I first met Peter back in the last century when we were both members of the Mid Sussex Model Engineering club. Peter joined us at Beech Hurst to run his locos and used to help me every winter with the track repairs, back in the days when I was Permanent Way manager. On summer Sundays he ran a loco or more often 'manned' the station for us, with his mini portable TV playing the Grand Prix motor racing inside the station hut!

After he joined Beech Hurst, we soon found out that Peter could turn his hand to many things, and every winter we could give him a job, or list of jobs, and he would just get on with them. He was a fast and capable worker who needed no supervision, whether welding, wood working, machining, or building something he would have a design in his head and a few figures scribbled on a note of paper and the finished product was always a good strong practical job. He made boxes for our small 5" gauge wagons, exhibition display track work, steel doors for sheds, lattice work for the footbridge, loft hatches, our Class 73 club electric, the aluminium swing bridge to the carriage shed, and many more things besides. Everywhere you look, there is evidence of Peter's handiwork... a tribute to his productiveness.

I will miss Peter very much. We used to have many laughs with him around the Sunday lunch table or down at the station. A great club member! Thanks for all you did for us Peter.

We wish all his family well, especially his wife Ann, who nursed him so well when he became so poorly.

So, as 2016 draws to a close, I will send you belated Christmas Greetings and wish everyone a more timely 'Happy New year'... as you read this, the first club news of 2017.

Best wishes...

Mike

Peter Chapman

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the passing of Peter Chapman on Friday 11th November 2016. Peter had been a member at Beech Hurst for over 15 years and during that time was one of the most productive members I have ever known.

Peter was born on 3rd August 1934 to a railway family and was brought up a stones throw from the station at Effingham Junction in Surrey to the sights and sounds of both early electric and steam trains. Perhaps this is where his love of all things railway first started?

Having previously lived to the west of London, he moved to nearby Plumpton Green in East Sussex about 30 years ago and has lived there ever since.

Ironically, the bungalow in Plumpton Green also backs on to a railway, this being the line from Haywards Heath to Lewes. It is a superb location and ideal for watching the passing trains with views beyond to the South Downs National Park. As with previous residencies, Peter had carried out a huge amount of work on the bungalow and made it into a real family home, together with workshop facilities that would be the envy of many a model engineer! Over the years this workshop would turn out many models, including a 5" gauge Class 73, five 3 ½" gauge locomotives, two steam and three electric, a lovely 3 ½" gauge Pullman coach called 'Topaz', besides many other projects for the home and garden. It was this all round ability to turn his hand to most jobs that made him so special.

Peter initially joined the Mid Sussex Club at Beech Hurst, before becoming a member at SMLS too and therefore held joint allegiances! Over the years he became more involved with our club and was a very regular Sunday attendee. During the summer Peter would normally be our Station Master and if you consider a few numbers for a minute, I would hazard a pretty good guess that he collected in excess of £50,000 over the years! Once we entered the closed season, Peter's all round abilities came into their own and often working with Graham Mundy he completed many a project, the following list is by no means exhaustive: Carriage Shed Doors and Swing Bridge, Footbridge Lattice Work, Tool Store Doors, Rear Compressor House Doors, Long Tunnel Steps Handrail, Workshop Loft Hatch, Clubroom Cupboard Shelving & Doors, TV Cupboard Surround & Doors, Exhibition Display Track, Wagon Carry Boxes and finally, and probably the most obvious, our Class 73 locomotive. Add to this many other odd jobs and Peter's shoes are going to be hard to fill! Not only was he so capable, the kind of guy you would always pick to be part of your team, but he was also a true gentleman to go with it. Now ask yourself, how often do you find all those qualities in one person?

My personal memories of Peter are plentiful, many amusing summer Sunday afternoons spent at the station watching the world go by and if it was quiet then talking about his weekly trials and tribulations with the local Plumpton Green squirrel population! Also, some really interesting stories, including the one of what I think was Peter's first house in Slough, which was pretty much re-built from the ground up and of course it was Peter who introduced me to the music of Hank Marvin & The Shadows, for which I am forever grateful! One particular memory however will always be with me and that was when we were hanging the newly completed doors for the rear compressor house. It was a winter Sunday; a few other members were inside having lunch whilst Peter & I were outside trying the doors on the frame. It was cold and then it began to snow, and I mean really quite hard, and we both looked at each other and without saying a word must have wondered what on earth we were up to but we carried on regardless and after a few tweaks got both of those iron monsters just where they needed to be, before dusting ourselves off and retreating inside to warm up!

It goes without saying that Peter will be very much missed by all those who knew him, you could not help but like him, however his legacies live on wherever you look at our club and for all that work, and for the 15 or so years we all knew Peter, we must be forever grateful... **(Pictures next page)**



Picture Top: One of Peter's finest achievements, a 3 1/2" gauge Pullman car 'Topaz'
Picture Middle: One of the 3 1/2" gauge electric locomotives on test – which was fast too
Picture Bottom: A typical winter Sunday, working in the workshop with Graham Mundy

Recent Committee Minutes

Minutes in Brief for the 17th August 2016

Members Attending: - 8 Present + 1 Apology

This was a special meeting called to discuss the Big Boy visit to the SMLS

Roy Preston (Track Manager) was asked to attend the meeting.

After a long & sometimes heated discussion a list of terms & conditions for the proposed visit were agreed.

Alex Widdowson (14) was elected as a new junior member of the SMLS.

Roy Preston (Track Manager) asked if he could lift the 3 ½" gauge rail prior to the visit of Basingstoke. This was agreed and contact to be made with Basingstoke to see if they intended to bring any 3 ½" gauge locomotives.

Next Committee Meeting:- 3rd September 2016.

Minutes in Brief for the 3rd September 2016

Members Attending: - 7 Present + 2 Apologies

16/064 Secretary's Report:-

Basingstoke have replied to say they will not be bringing any 3 ½" gauge locos with them. It was agreed that Roy could start on the removal of the 3 ½" gauge rail if he wished.

It was agreed for Clive Williams to have a private visit sometime during the middle of September 2016.

There has been no reply to the letter sent to Simon Hudson regarding his visit with Big Boy to the SMLS track.

Chelmsford Society have agreed to purchase the SMLS Track Cleaning Truck at a price of £150.

16/067 Operations Report:-

The Santa Specials in conjunction with Joanna (café), arrangements are in hand.

16/068 Technical Report:-

It was agreed to purchase an ash vacuum cleaner for use on the steaming bays. The use of Silicone Plugs to fill the holes in the long tunnel was discussed and it was agreed to get a surveyors report on the state of the tunnel first.

Andy Brock agreed to carry on with the Truck Maintenance.

16/070 News Report:-

It was suggested that a list of all committee members e-mail addresses be printed in the newsletter (to be looked in to).

16/072 Next Committee Meeting:- 22nd October 2016.

Workshop Training

The Workshop Training will start up again on Sunday 15th January 2017 at 14:00. Please contact me directly at the e-mail address below if you would like to attend:
stevet50@btopenworld.com

Steve T

Committee Members E-mail Addresses

Mike Porter (Chairman): mikeporter1553@yahoo.co.uk
John Baldwin (Secretary): johnbaldwin241@btinternet.com
Graham Miller (Treasurer): graham.miller101@hotmail.co.uk
Steve Turner: stevet50@btopenworld.com
Stephen Steer: stephen.steer.smls@gmail.com
Dan Evans: dan.1989@hotmail.co.uk
Mike Wakeling: mike.wakeling@btinternet.com
Nick Edwards: TBC
Geoff West: TBC

Recent Social Events – Bonfire Night & Santa Specials

Bonfire Night 2016 dawned bright and sunny as I loaded pallet after pallet into my car in readiness for building our 2016 fire. A recent job at work had proved fruitful in terms of pallet collection and over the past few months I had managed to acquire over a dozen of these beauties with November 5th firmly in mind! After 3 trips to / from Lindfield I had brought my stocks from home to add to the 4 that had been stored at the club. This year's effort was not so much about building anything in particular, or sheer square footage for that matter, but solely about how high we could go! With 13 pallets, mostly in good condition, we could easily build a square by 3 pallets high, which would give a structure just over 10 feet tall! So, we set to and by lunchtime this was pretty much achieved. However, with time still on our side we had aspirations to go a little bit higher! A small mission across 'no mans land' into the neighbouring building site proved useful and we met a kind security guard who said he had plenty of pallets by the main road if we wanted them! A quick drive round the corner and another 5 in the back of the car, thank you very much! Add to those, 3 more up by our long tunnel and we had more than enough to be going on with. So, with a bit more hard work, some out and out bodging, and a gross or more of nails and we managed to go up another level, whilst bracing the whole structure too! The tower was hollow inside with two hinged flaps (ex. airing cupboard doors in fact) at the base to act as dampers! We partially filled the inside with the remaining pallet and tree debris as well as a couple of pints of accelerant! 18:00 soon came and we lit our 2016 bonfire. As predicted it went up very well with the chimney behaving as we hoped! In fact by the time the potatoes, beans and cheese were served, circa. 30 minutes later, the whole structure had been reduced to a fairly neat cone shaped pile! As the food was devoured, so the fireworks were set up and soon enough we were able to set these off in amongst the small forest that had started to grow up above the long tunnel! Even our friendly security guard came through to watch the fireworks, which capped off another excellent day!

Through these pages I would like to thank, Andrew S, Graham Mundy & I who almost singlehandedly built the fire, assisted by cameo appearances from Josh (early morning) and Mike W (late afternoon)!

Also to Val & John for the lovely food and of course to just over 30 members and family who came up to enjoy. Here's to 2017...

A month later and the weekends of the 3rd / 4th and 10th / 11th December had been pencilled in for our Santa Specials. These are primarily organised by Jake and Joanna from the café with proceeds going to charity. We provide the train rides and station building, which is transformed into Santa's Grotto. Oh yes and we provide the Santa's too! Additionally from 2015, we had lights / music through the long tunnel and rides were given round the whole circuit too. A planned maximum of 48 families could be catered for on any given day and as it turned out we never exceeded this amount. There were, however, a steady flow of families across both weekends and in addition to those who had pre-booked, we also carried quite a number more who simply came up and paid on the day. The Bowls Club acted as a reception area and inside the children could also do colouring and drawing whilst they waited their turn for a train ride to see Santa. The steam hauled ('Wharfedale') train then started from the Bowls Club and deposited passengers at our normal station therein with was Santa! Thereafter, it was down the slope to the café where there was cake decorating for the children and mulled wine / mince pies for the adults. The final part of the trip was a train ride from the main station back to the Bowls Club and there ended their journey. Generally speaking everything worked out ok and there were definitely peaks and troughs in terms of how busy we were but all in all it was a smooth operation, once again helped by having pretty much 4 dry days. At times it was cold but for those working up by the Bowls Club, a few minutes inside gave light relief and at the main station a brazier had been set up, which was combusting logs from the back field, which Andrew S, Steve S & I had all gathered and helped to cut up on our resident bandsaw! In addition, Mike W had also bought a 'party tent' as an insurance policy against rain for use at the main station. A test set up took place during the last weekend of November and proved that erection and dismantling could be done in less than hour each. As it turned out, this item was only required on the second Saturday and rather than dismantle it fully in the dark, 4 of us carried it (bearing in mind that it measures nearly 20ft x 6ft) back and tethered it down to the back lawn overnight into the Sunday!

If we repeat in 2017 I think it prudent to ensure timely advertisements towards the latter end of the season so passengers know to look out for it. Of course there are also the necessary staffing requirements and the need for Winter Work to fit in around this, which should otherwise take precedent at that time of year. Anyway, that is for another day and for now thanks must go to Mike W & Roy P for the hours of liaison & preparation, to the Santa's, Howard, John B & Mike W, to Dan, Laurie, Nick & Tom who turned out 'Wharfedale' for the 4 days, as well as everyone else who helped to support this event (**pictures next page**).

Andrew

Winter Work

Since the October edition, Roy P has finished off the two sections of track and these were completed in time for our Santa Special runs at the beginning of December. Final checking of the levels will take place before our 2017 season, once the track has settled and the whole job, over 400ft, looks very, very good. Thanks of course to Roy, Graham Miller and the rest of the team for a superb job. (**Picture next page and Winter Work report continues next page but one**).



Picture Top: Santa (and you'll have to guess which one) on his way to the 'Grotto'

Picture Middle: Nick driving one of the busier Santa trains on the first Sunday

Picture Bottom: Tom with an ECS move back to the Bowls Club on the newly laid track

Linked to the track is the aforementioned power cable from the clubhouse to the station, which has been renewed. Steve T has spent quite a bit of time planning and then helping to carry out this replacement along with a qualified electrician. This took place in November and involved running a new length of armoured cable along the tops of the track piers from the steaming bays to the station. It was then duly connected at both ends and certified too – a good job done.

A separate smaller electrical job has been the installation of a heater around the cold water pipe in the loft, which feeds the toilet and sink. This has been prone to freezing during cold weather in the past and hopefully this addition will keep the pipe warm enough during the coldest of the winter months.

Aside the above jobs there have also been preparations for the Santa Specials, which took some time during the month of November. A lot of the necessary hardware was carried forward from 2015 but there have also been some new additions for 2016 and thanks to those who prepared these items and to Mike W for overseeing the progress. The same thank you is extended to all those who helped to clear the leaves and twig debris in time for the Santa weekends too.

Perhaps not a job you would normally associate with Winter Work has been the checking of our past membership records. Steve T has drawn up a long XL sheet of most, if not all, of our past members and along with Bob Youldon to name but a few, has been checking these for accuracy and making changes as applicable. I will update the Winter Work progress again in the February edition.

Andrew

Subscriptions

These are now due for 2017 and are the same as 2016 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

Development around Beech Hurst

As reported previously, development around the park has been busy during the past couple of years and we are now overlooked from nearly all sides! Since my last pictorial interlude, some of the aforementioned developments have been completed; whilst others are now well on their way. On the bright side, the residential development adjacent to the Mid Sussex clubhouse has been scaled back, however with the foundations for the new Bupa nursing home now in-situ (adjacent to signal 3), it will not be long before this grows from the earth and the residents of Downlands nursing home (behind the long tunnel) are being moved. This paves the way for the redevelopment of what is currently Downlands into residential dwellings and so we will also be overlooked from behind the long tunnel too! This is probably a couple of years away but with perceived pressure on housing, and the value of local land, it is likely sooner rather than later! Going forward and I will keep you all updated with regards to the above and of course the ever changing landscape around our park! (**Pictures next page**)

Andrew



Picture Top: The new flats at the front of Beech Hurst, in place of the Magistrates Court
Picture Middle: An early morning view of the development to the west of the park
Picture Bottom: An evening view towards the Harvester and the recently topped trees

Work in Progress

Since the October edition it has been all about wagons. I now have 2 running and 1 on the bench undergoing a medium overhaul. The latter is a 7-plank open wagon acquired a few years ago as a 'project'! I am re-building the chassis but utilising as many of the original parts as is possible. As I write, the cast 'W' irons (**see picture below**), new steel channelling and cast 'V' irons are receiving final attention prior to fitting and also work has started on machining the axle boxes. The target to complete this project was New Year's Day but I am about a month behind, so definitely for the beginning of the running season if not a bit before. I will conclude this project in the next edition and if any other members would like to contribute a small piece for this section then all items are gratefully received!



Andrew

Congratulations

Before I conclude this edition, I would like to extend my congratulations to Mike & Lorema Wakeling on reaching their Golden Wedding Anniversary just before Christmas. On Sunday 18th December they kindly brought up a few lunchtime nibbles for us to enjoy and share their milestone achievement!

Andrew

Forthcoming Events

With this edition out on New Year's Day, the only future event in the Diary is our stand at the London Model Engineering Exhibition at Alexandra Palace over the weekend of 20th – 22nd January 2017. Confirmation of exhibits has now been sent to the organisers and this year we are hiring a van to take the models to / fro. Volunteers to man the stand are on the board and with a bit of luck it will be a decent weekend. A full report will appear in the February edition.

At press the date for our AGM had yet to be confirmed, however the agenda and minutes will be sent at the end of January, together with a confirmed date.

Andrew

Diary of Events

20th – 22nd January 2017 – SMLS to display at Alexandra Palace – Details 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