

Beech Hurst News Sheet

Issue 6 – November 2023

Editor's Notes:

Track renewal between the end of the Court Straight and the entrance to the Court Tunnel has progressed very well on Saturdays thanks to the help of Sam P, Tom P, Ian, Sharon, Graham Mundy, Steve S, Graham Miller, Mike P, Dave M, Tim, Hamish, Cliff, John G, Sam H, Sam R and John R.

On Saturdays, the workshop has been buzzing with activity on steam and electric locomotive development, and systematic cleaning, lubricating and in some cases making modifications and enhancements to the fleet of electric locomotives, often the workhorses during public running. The next News Sheet will feature some of the work.

Following Steve S and myself running the LNER 2-8-0 on 2nd September for the first time in public service since the re-build, I have now reduced the cylinder oil delivery rate by another factor of two, added 8 BA locking screws to the safety valves and increased the strength of the rear two axle springs. With the help of Tim, we have now installed these changes and completed winterisation of the loco.

For your attention – Bits and Bobs evening cancellation

Unfortunately, the Bits and Bobs evening on 18th November has had to be cancelled due to illness of Norman Payne, the organiser. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Chris writes:

Beech Hurst Annual Passenger Figures 2023

Well, here we are at the end of our 70th season, and my 45th report.

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

Training for the newer members has been proceeding at a pace now with recorded grading and qualifications. Even though we are a miniature railway we still operate as if we were on the "big railway" essential for the safety of our fare paying passengers. This was specifically highlighted following a recorded accident in 2022 when the regulators got their first "hit" on a railway of our scale.

This year we carried 11,109 passengers just a bit less than half the number we carried in previous "normal" years when we ran on both Saturday and Sunday. The long-term average had been about 23,200 for some time and dropping a little each year, however this year it has understandably dropped now to 22,685. You never know, maybe at some time in the future it will be possible to get back to higher passenger numbers by operating on Saturdays and Sundays during the running season.

The best day was 543 passengers on the last running day of the year with a regular head count over 300 on many Saturdays, however the numbers have varied wildly with no apparent reason other than excessive heat or rain!

The grand total continues to increase now well past the milestone 1 ½ Million mark at 1,569,152 which is more than 10 times the population of Mid Sussex and over the total population of East and West Sussex combined, some achievement!

Oh, and the telephone numbers?

01569 xxxxx is in Stonehaven, up in North- East 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!

As I do each year, over the page is my long-term graph that clearly shows how we did from our very first year back in 1954!

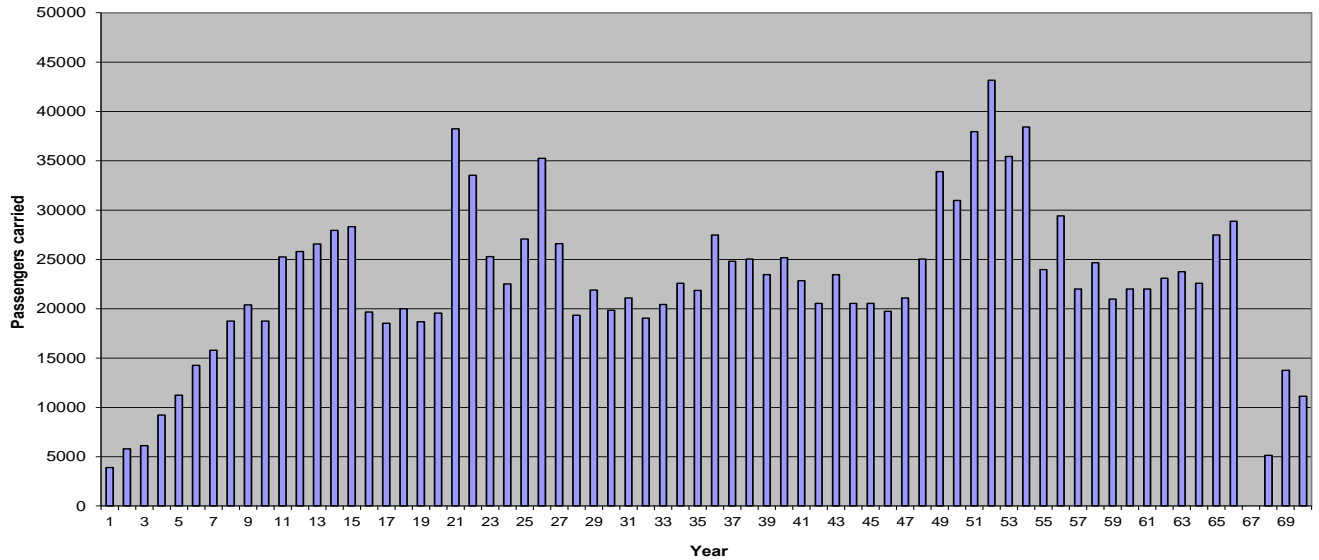
2024 will be an interesting year for us as more people get qualified and "promoted". A second year of offering the passengers the choice of card payment, and the presence or otherwise of the café. Time will tell.

Good steaming

Beech Hurst News Sheet

Issue 6 – November 2023

SMLS passenger history



Dave M writes:

Firefly

Work has resumed in earnest on Firefly, a 5" gauge GWR 55XX Prairie Tank. I bought an almost complete chassis some 4 years ago, had a copper welded boiler made by Steam Technology and I had made most of the boiler fittings before a B1 came along, but that is another story. With the B1 complete, the next job on Firefly was the super heaters. I decided to go 'off piste' as I couldn't face bending 6 mm diameter stainless steel tubes to the configuration shown in the exert from the drawing set shown in Photo 1. Instead, I have opted for a standard configuration using a wet and dry header with the spears welded to them. As can be seen in Photo 2 the 'spears' are ready for welding, the headers are complete as is the connection to the regulator output. Hopefully, by the time of the next News Sheet all should be welded up and fitted to the boiler. Watch this space!!!!

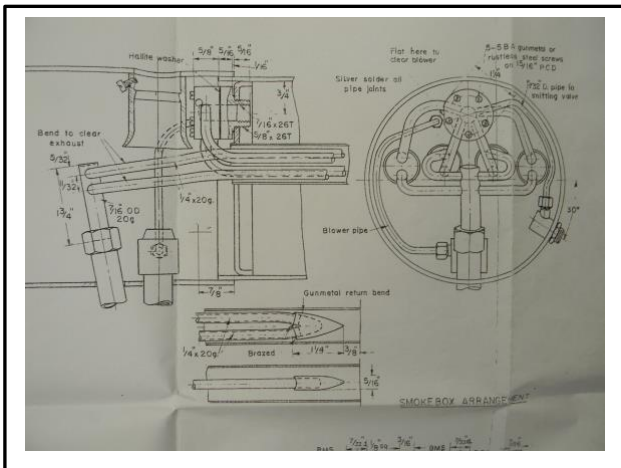


Photo 1

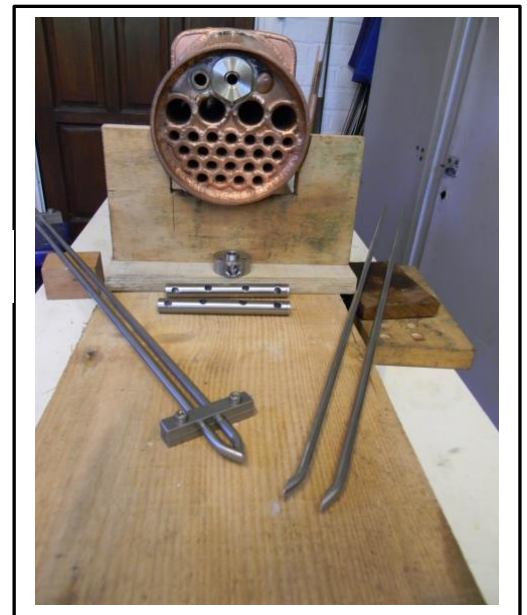


Photo 2