

Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

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BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

One of the Very Best. It is with great sadness that I start by reporting the passing of Ron Harris back in March. A hugely talented and prolific model engineer, his kindness and knowledge will also be greatly missed. Inside is an obituary and pictures that detail some of Ron's life...

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Editor's Notes

As I start this edition it is mid-April and we seem to be stuck in a rut of frosty nights but generally dry days, during some of which the sun may appear! Just occasionally it feels like spring but the coat and gloves cannot be hibernated yet! Covid-19 restrictions have also been eased a little bit and with that the feeling of having shorter hair once again and brighter days ahead. Hopefully by the time of the June news I shall be able to report on more normal club activities once more. Including the April edition of last year, it is very sad that 4 out of the last 7 news' have reported the loss of a SMLS member. Since February, Ron Harris has sadly passed away aged 93. Although not an attendee for several years, he was a regular during the 2000's and early 2010's, and contributed many driving turns during that period. His funeral was limited but broadcast via the Internet so those who wished to attend virtually could pay their respects. I will very much miss Ron, not only because you could sit and chat to him for hours but also because he was a wealth of knowledge and not afraid to share it. He was also very generous when reducing his workshop and a set of fine Swiss micrometers just one item of several he kindly gave to me and that I still use to this day. An obituary and pictures that detail some of his life appear later in this edition.

I would like to thank Roy P for his article in the February newsletter and in addition to the obituary for Ron, this edition has a brief round up of the latest gardening activities, a short piece about my latest workshop projects and a separate update from David Miles in Australia, so please read on and enjoy...

Andrew B

Chairman's Notes

Dear all, I hope you are all well and enjoying the new freedom to meet up outdoors. That light at the end of the tunnel is getting larger and it looks as though we are slowly getting back to being able to enjoy activities again.

Outdoor maintenance is well underway and I would like to thank Tom for organising leaf clearing and grass cutting sessions and would also like to thank Sam H, Alex, Josh & Harry for joining Tom for this activity. They have done a great job removing the large amount of leaves that had accumulated.

I would also like to thank Roy Preston, John Green & Dave Mattingly for inspecting the track with the good news it is basically in good shape but they have found one concrete support plinth cracked which will be replaced shortly. We still have work to do but we are in good shape as we move forward to opening up indoors after the government gives us clearance to meet 6 people inside hopefully in May.

We are always happy for more help so please let John Baldwin know if you are available.

We have started fixing dates for boiler testing and thanks to Mike Porter & John Richardson for agreeing to do this for us. For any test running of locomotives, signs are available to put up to inform the public that any trains seen running are for test purposes only and we will announce when we will re-open to the public.

Again, please arrange boiler tests and test runs through John Baldwin whom I thank for agreeing to organise this. A copy of the risk assessment is located in the kitchen window as the council require us to have this in place. Please read it and as we are in a public place please abide by government guidelines.

I am very grateful to Tom, Andrew B and Andrew S for continuing to carry out the security checks.

The crack in the long tunnel entrance is under review and thanks to Howard Strongitharm's efforts the committee has several quotes to review which they will be doing shortly.

Wharfedale News has now ceased but I would again like to thank all for their articles, it would not have been possible to keep it going for so long without them.

See you soon and stay safe...

Mike W

Ron Harris

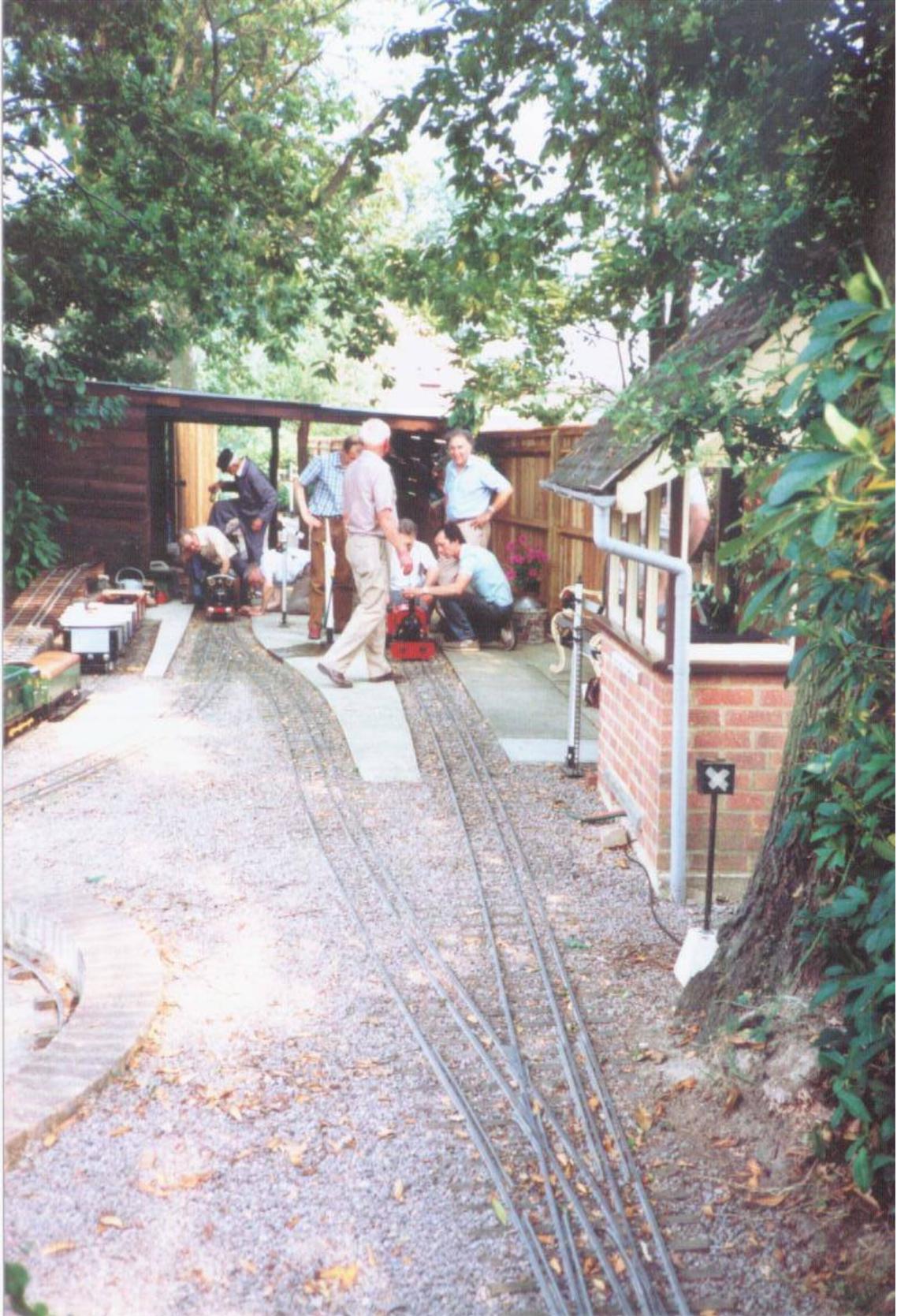
Ron was born on 3rd July 1927 and grew up in south east London near to Greenwich. He went to school at Streatham Grammar before moving on to Beckenham Technical College to undertake a 5-year engineering apprenticeship. The family had by this stage moved to West Wickham. Upon completion of his apprenticeship, Ron was called up for National Service and posted to Lubek in Germany to serve with 56 Squadron. Returning to England, he began his career as an engineer and tool maker.

He met Pat in 1951 and they were married on 16th February 1952, a marriage that was to last just shy of 70 years! The newly weds moved to live in Crawley and Pat gave birth to a daughter on 4th March 1958. The family engineering company had been set up in Horsham and this was to be Ron's career.

Aside his professional engineering, Ron had an interest in cars, motorcycles, planes and even built his own speedboat! Having taken flying lessons, he obtained a private pilot's licence and set about plans to build his own aircraft but Pat said no! Needless to say that project never got off the ground!

A further move meant leaving Crawley and setting up home a short distance away at The Crest on Paddockhurst Lane between Ardingly Reservoir and Worth School. Here, a substantial workshop was built and with the help of employee and friend John Green, the Crest Light Railway (**see picture next page**) was constructed in the garden. At 1,200 feet, this multi-gauge track was a substantial set up and the inaugural run on the full circuit took place on Boxing Day 1984. The workshop at The Crest was a place that Ron spent many thousands of hours constructing some of finest scale aero engines and railway steam locomotives you will ever see. 2 gold medals, 3 silver medals and 1 bronze medal from the Model Engineer Exhibitions are testament to Ron's ability to produce exceptional models, including a 9-cylinder radial aero engine, a V8 aero engine, a 14-cylinder double row radial aero engine and finally a 5" gauge GWR 'King' class locomotive to name but a few.

In later life, the size and location of The Crest meant a further move was necessary to downsize and this next move, including most of the workshop, took Ron & Pat to Angmering Lane in East Preston and a stones throw from the sea.





Picture above: Ron demonstrating his 9-cylinder Pratt & Whitney aero engine during a club night on 7th September 2006 and yes it fired up perfectly!

Ron continued his model engineering at Angmering Lane until the time came to rationalise with 3 of his machines coming to Beech Hurst (**picture below**).



A final move followed, this time closer to the sea at the end of Angmering Lane. Ron passed away peacefully on 14th March 2021, aged 93.

He was without a doubt one of the finest engineers to have been a SMLS member and with it someone who would openly share his knowledge and whose judgment you knew to trust. Couple this with his kind and friendly nature, and he was the sort of person you would always be pleased to see. For these reasons and many more he will be greatly missed by all those who knew him and the model engineering world has lost another of the true great builders...



Picture above: Undoubtedly 2 of the finest model engineers to have been SMLS members and we can only guess just what Ron & Bob were discussing...

Andrew B

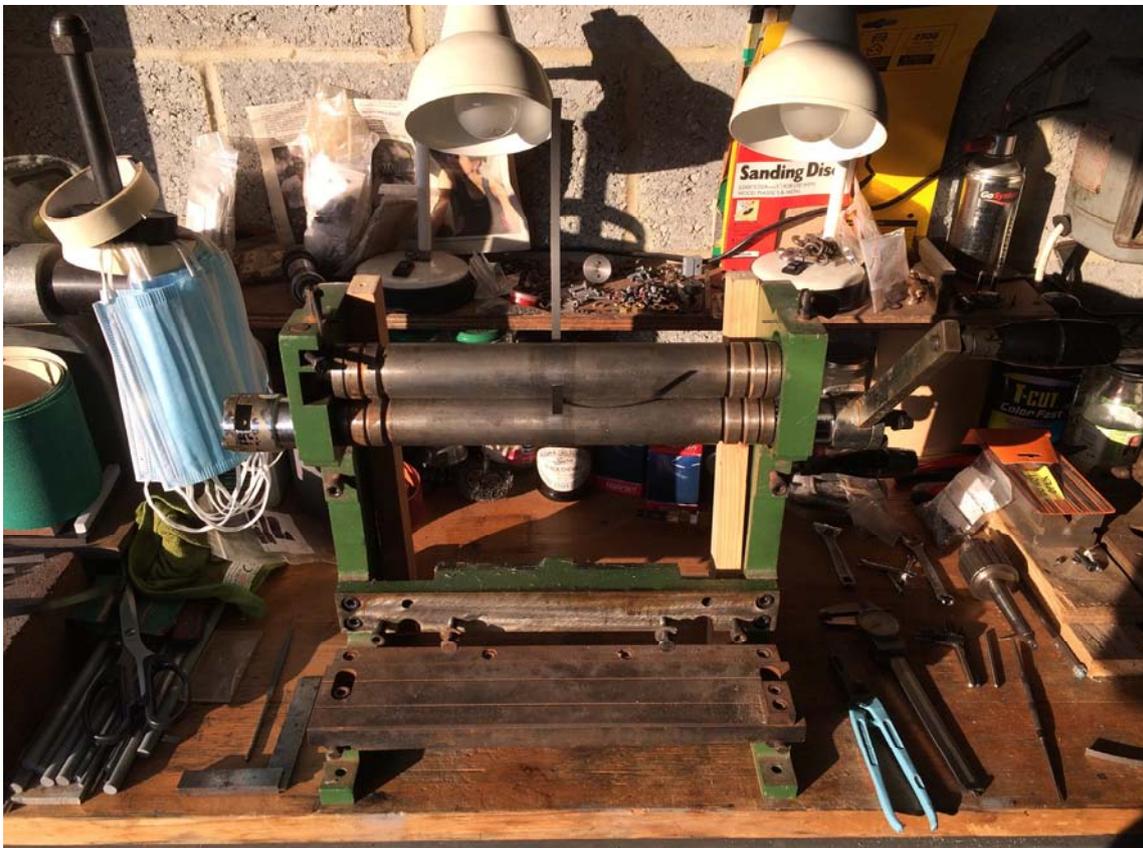
Gardening

Since the partial relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions, a couple of gardening sessions have been arranged by Tom to clear the winter debris and start the spring task of grass cutting. These sessions have been attended entirely by our younger members and as of last weekend the area to the rear of the clubhouse is looking very smart (**see pictures next page**). Thanks through these pages to Tom for organising these sessions with help from Alex, Harry, Josh & Sam H. In addition, I would like to add an extra thank you to Harry who took away our broken lawn mower and has since given her a full service. Until one of our 'virtual' committee meetings we had no idea Harry was a lawn mower connoisseur!



Work in Progress – 'Project 7s'

Since the February issue and in between some paid work, I have concentrated on a number of side projects that have been laid dormant for a while. In addition to locomotive projects I have been rebuilding a couple of 7-plank coal wagons which have been acquired over the years in various states of disrepair! Neither would I call 'exhibition quality' but then again the prices were not either! Both of the wagon bodies will suffice even if they are not 'grade A'! The chassis' on the other hand have required considerable reconstruction, including new wheels, axles, springs, as well as the modification of the buffer arrangement. One of the most time consuming of these modifications are the springs. To make a set of 4 working leaf springs, each with 6 leaves, takes about 3 hours per spring and therefore at least 1 day per wagon but more like 2 days in reality! Add the time to paint and set up the spring arrangement on each wagon and it is the best part of 2 weeks for both wagons and that is before you make mistakes of which there are likely to be some! **Picture below:** Rolling the spring steel to form the radii. Before rolling the springs, I also had to re-bush my Warco Rolls because the supplied bushes at the end of each roller were quite frankly far too sloppy! This made setting the correct radii very hit and miss. Therefore 6 steel bushes were turned, bored and reamed to suit the stubs on the end of the rollers and the cut outs in the frame, which has removed both the horizontal and vertical 'play'. Although a little bit tighter to rotate, I can now obtain a consistent radii and without the top front roller and back roller moving when they feel fit!



As I write this newsletter, the chassis of the second wagon is now ready to be fitted in place and hopefully by the end of the May Day bank holiday weekend this will be finished. Back to a bit of locomotive construction after that I think. **Picture below:** 4 of the 8 springs recently finished and painted.



Andrew B

Forthcoming & Diary of Events – By Andrew B

With the ongoing Covid-19 'restrictions' **our club activities remain very limited** and the committee will keep members abreast of developments bearing in mind the likelihood of further 'lockdown' easements in the coming weeks.

Looking ahead, an in-person AGM has been planned for Saturday 26th June. This is subject to 'lockdown' easements on 21st June and in the event these are not eased sufficiently for large in-person meetings then we will hold a 'Virtual AGM' with details to follow.

Further Diary dates will be published in the next newsletters as government guidelines allow...

26th June 2021 – Provisional Date for the SMLS AGM – 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.

Wharfedale News – By Andrew B

To close this edition, I would like to extend my thanks to Mike W who produced 52 editions of the weekly 'Wharfedale News' to keep members up to date during the Covid-19 'lockdowns'. The cover of the final edition, issue 52, is **pictured** overleaf and fingers crossed further such 'lockdowns' will not be required...

Final Issue.



Final Issue.



Issue 52

1st April 2021

Dear all,

Welcome to the final edition of Wharfedale. Little did I know when I suggested doing a weekly newsletter did I think we would do 52 issues!

Well, as I have said this is the last issue and I would like to thank again everyone who has contributed articles to the "Wharfedale News" over the past twelve months.

Thanks to David "Down Under" for keeping us in the picture of what's been going on over there in Australia as it has added an extra dimension to Wharfedale.

Hopefully you are all well and those of you in the upper age group have had, or will have soon, their second Covid injection.

I sign Wharfedale off this week with the benefit of having had my second Covid jab today so hopefully in three weeks, if I do fall foul of Covid, the life threatening element of Covid has been greatly reduced.

Hope you enjoy the 52nd and last edition.

Hope to see you all soon up the club.

Keep safe everyone.

Mike W