

# Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

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## BEECH HURST NEWS



### Cover picture: -

*Light Show:* Welcome to Christmas! In lieu of proper frost or snow, an inflatable snowman was as close as we got to the real deal during our Winter Extravaganza run in mid-December. A report and pictures of this hugely successful weekend appear inside this edition...

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## **Editor's Notes**

As I write these notes, it is only the second day of 2019 (a Happy New Year to those who read this) and 'detox' after all the Christmas and New Year excesses starts now!

In my last notes I rounded up the many highlights of 2018, to and including our bonfire / firework night. Since then, I think it is fair to say that we left the most successful highlight until last! The cover picture is a sneak preview of our Winter Extravaganza (a.k.a Festive Light Show) held over the weekend of December 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> and a full report, plus many pictures appear later in this edition.

Aside this special weekend event, the run up to Christmas has been a normal one of continued maintenance when the weather has allowed and fortunately we have not been subjected to anything exceptional so far this winter – well not yet anyway! Even yesterday (as I write this), New Year's Day, was decent too and in fact one of our best 1<sup>st</sup> January runs for many a year! Start as you mean to go on and hopefully this is a sign of good things to come during 2019!

From the October edition I would like to thank Chris for his article and Fraser for his picture contributions. Aside the usual writings this edition also includes a report on Winter Work and our New Year Fun Run and Lunch, plus an updated Diary to start 2019, so please read on and enjoy...

**Andrew**

## **Chairman's Notes**

By the time you are reading this, it will be 2019, can you believe it? We are living the future already!

Technology is all around us but steam engines are still a great attraction for young and old, as is riding on our small railway, which is a good thing for our club! This year at Christmas we took a huge leap into the commercial side of the festive season, namely a spectacular light display in the back field and at the station, giving rides from 16:00 into the early evening. This followed on from the success of a trial evening run at the end of the summer. Dan, Mike W & Steve S proposed the plan to the committee back in the autumn, we discussed all the implications and agreed to take the plunge and spend to finance the project. Thanks to Dan and the power of local Facebook (modern technology again!) there was a tremendous response to our event, with full trains and long queues. All praise goes to the three of them for putting in so much hard work and long days to set up and operate this special event. Also, thanks to everyone who supported it in any way, from setting up, to operating in the cold, and clearing and tidying up after. Once again, our young members proved to be a vital asset to our club and I thank you lads for sticking with it. Likewise, thanks to so many seniors for braving the cold as much as you were able. Our lowest hopes were that we should have enough good weather to at least recover the not inconsiderable costs of lights and cables. Apart from a more or less washed out Saturday, we were able to operate on 3 nights, including a hastily arranged Monday evening run. In the end we finished up more than doubling our investment, a tremendous success. Well done to all for an excellent team effort, time for a rest now!

Back in the workshop, Geoff has started the long job of painting the new set of trucks. Thanks too to Roy P, Graham Miller and gang for completing a good length of new track in time for the Christmas event. Likewise, we were fortunate that the council had managed to finish widening the station footpath and the path from station to clubhouse, a most helpful improvement.

We had a double entry in the recent 'Engineering in Miniature' magazine, namely Andrew S' article on construction of his 'Dougal' locomotive and a half page and photo covering our 1.5 millionth passenger. It was interesting to note that the article compared the fortunes of our club with that of the Bristol society. We have managed to cultivate a good working relationship with our council, with our regular 'steering group' meetings and with our Mayor coming to make our 1.5 million passenger award, plus we are fortunate to be 50% on trust land. Bristol on the other hand are fighting eviction from their site (their home for around 45 years), because the council wants more income from the area.

Whilst we have a supportive council, they too are under pressure for more income. I'm sure we will have to accept a much higher rent in the future. However, I believe this year has been especially good for us regarding publicity. We have been in the magazine, Nick got us a slot on ITV, Andrew's B & S organised the mayoral visit and now Dan, Mike W & Steve S, the Christmas event, which has received excellent feedback on the Facebook forum.

Times have changed, this is the future, we have to protect and promote our relevance to both the council and also to our wonderful public who support us every running day.

I am very pleased too that we ran another season without any significant accidents, just a couple of very minor spark burns from our old technology steam engines! In the past, we often had burns and blisters, I even remember when I was young, a miniature train I was on tipped everyone into a pile of stinging nettles (not at Beech Hurst I might add!). Now, even a tiny spark burn needs handling very professionally and tactfully, and we must continue to strive to be as safe as possible.

So, we finished a most successful year on a high note and with record takings. I can only once again thank everyone who helped in 2018 and hope you enjoyed your year at Beech Hurst.

I look forward to seeing you at our New Year's Day gathering and wish everyone a happy and healthy 2019. Best wishes...

**Mike**

## **2019 Subscriptions**

A Happy New Year to all our members. Can you please ensure you have renewed your membership by 31<sup>st</sup> January; otherwise you will need to re-apply. Subscription rates for 2019 are the same as 2018 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**

## Christmas Special Weekend

In previous years, the run up to Christmas has been fairly steady, save perhaps for the odd Santa Special run in conjunction with Joanna in the café. Although reasonably successful, these Santa days have never been spectacular and for 2018 new ideas were sought. The original concept of a 'Festive Light Show' came about from a conversation between Andrew S, Dan, Nick, Steve S & I as we sat and mulled over the success of our evening run back in September. It was clear that our passengers were enthused by Mike W's idea of riding round at dusk / in the dark, so if that could be taken to the next level with a Christmas theme then we might be on to a winner! In recent years, the development of LED lighting has also made this concept a viable reality for the masses with affordable and durable options becoming widely available to the average consumer. You only need go back a few years to the days when halogen, krypton and tungsten ruled the roost and quite frankly you could not contemplate such displays unless you had shares in the electric company and industrial wiring for all those amps! So, with the technology available and a large area (the back field) available for decoration the scene was set for a potentially spectacular display to be created for our run. In the next paragraph, Dan takes up the story...

**Andrew**

When we planned the Winter Extravaganza event back in October we had two months to prepare for something new for the club and after many hours of planning we got what we wanted to achieve done. The aim was to create something magical for the local community at an affordable price and to bring a huge amount of enjoyment for everyone including ourselves. Myself & Steve S worked very long days before and during the event to achieve this and we got a brilliant result which we can all be proud of. The public were amazed by the effort that was put into the event and we've received many positive comments of praise online (**see separate newsletter item**) and in person, which is incredible. We carried over 2,000 passengers in four nights and I believe these are the most successful numbers we've had since the 70's, according to a reliable source! The queue went round to the tennis courts which I've never seen in my 16 years at the club. I want to say a big thank you to everyone who has put in the time to help run this event, we appreciate not everyone can give up much time but every little helps and I want to give a special thanks to Steve Steer who deserves a huge amount of credit for all his hard work, climbing up trees to fit lights, running his loco in all weathers, buying all the electrical boxes, I could go on and on. Thanks also to Mike Wakeling for his guidance and help, and Andrew Strongitharm for obtaining the PA system and his general efforts. Nick, Graham Miller & Graham Mundy have put in the hours too. I'd like to thank Andrew Brock, Roy Preston & Fraser Hay for your station efforts as well as others that were involved, I could add so many more names who were involved in driving, guarding, making drinks etc..., you know who you all are. I want to finally say a big thank you to the younger lads, Alex, Fraser, Sam Hope & Sam Ridley.

They were all outstanding and I'm very proud of your efforts and maturity not just at this event but your efforts this season, which should be admired. It's been a fantastic event where everyone has worked well together as a team and that's incredibly important for the club with moving forward in the future. We will start to plan next year to make it even better and more fun for us all, the public, and to keep Beech Hurst a community attraction.

**Dan**

Thanks to Dan for the piece above and expanding a little, I think it is worth noting that operating our railway in December can be challenging. Originally, the plan was to run on Friday 14<sup>th</sup>, Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December, between 16:00 & 19:00. However, the weather on the Saturday was particularly rank and as such the decision was taken to operate on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> too – staff permitting. Friday was bright and cold with a frost predicted that evening and as such, there was no fear of getting wet but frequent breaks would be required in the clubhouse to keep warm. During the morning and early afternoon, final additions and adjustments took place in time for kick off at 16:00, and by this time we were pretty much ready to go. There was a small queue when we started but soon this was long (holding roughly level with the café) for the next couple of hours or so. Despite the cold, everything went smoothly, except for the need to swop our 'Growler' loco at about 18:00 and one or two lighting issues in the back field, so overall a good start to the weekend! **(Pictures below & next 5 pages: Friday)**



**Picture above:** Mike W making last minute adjustments to the sound system



**Picture above:** The scene looking towards the footbridge from the turntable



**Picture above:** A similar view to the top picture but taken after dark with the bridge and bank lit up by a plethora of lights and festive animals, together with Santa on the bridge!



**Picture above:** The view looking towards the turntable from the Nursery Straight



**Picture above:** Taken from the field on the opposite side of the track to the top picture and looking up the Nursery Straight towards the long tunnel with net LED's and tree lights lining the track



**Picture above:** The decorated north portal of Wick Tunnel



**Picture above:** Looking towards the clubhouse by signal 4 with net LED's above



**Picture above:** Graham Miller & Steve S manoeuvre our Xmas tree to the station



**Picture above:** And the finished product lit up later that evening



**Picture above:** And finally, most of the Friday 'team' pictured in the clubhouse

The forecast for Saturday had always looked ropery and therefore we waited until mid-afternoon to see how things would pan out. With all volunteers ready to go, and despite the rain, it was eventually decided to run and see how things went. A skeleton service comprising of one electric locomotive ran for the best part of two hours and even with the inclement weather, 50-odd passengers took a ride with families travelling from as far as Leatherhead and Shoreham-by-Sea – they must have been mad! It was cold and just after 18:00 we decided that enough was enough. Not a washout but disappointing for what we hoped would be our best day. Perhaps the lure of 'Strictly...' was more appealing on a cold and wet night! After the soaking on the Saturday, Sunday was looking a bit better but with showers later on. After a little TLC to some of the lights, which had taken punishment on the Saturday evening, we were ready to roll again at 16:00 on the Sunday afternoon. Showers were coming but we hoped they would hold off until 18:00 at the earliest. It was at least a touch milder than either the Friday or Saturday evenings. The queue at 16:00 was already quite long and despite a steady flow of trains, it continued to grow before peaking close to the tennis courts at about 17:00. At this point there were approximately 150 people waiting with a queue time of circa. 30 minutes. The rain held until about 17:45 when it started to increase in intensity and by 18:00 it was raining steadily. Despite this, most of those already queuing waited their turn and as such we all got pretty wet! We closed early at about 18:30 and with many hands meant a speedy clear up before we retreated to the dry and warm clubhouse – the end of day 3 and another successful day, despite another soaking!

Like the previous Friday, Monday 17<sup>th</sup> was dry and bright, and fortunately it was milder too. This extra day had been added because of the washout on the Saturday and luckily, enough volunteers were available to staff it. The plan was to run 5 trains as before and see how things went, which as it turned out very well! A small number of passengers had arrived for the slightly later start time of 16:30 and between then and 19:30 we were to carry over 900 more! The queue never really got that long (like the Friday it held adjacent to café for a couple of hours or so) but was a continuous stream nonetheless. The milder temperature certainly made working outdoors more comfortable and apart from the failure of Mike W's Class 73 (unceremoniously lifted from the track and left at the station – **see picture below**) we got through unscathed!



As a summary, these 4 days were an excellent example of great team effort and working towards a common goal. Christmas events are likely to prove popular and as demonstrated we were more than up to the challenge. Yes a few things went wrong and the weather was not always on our side but after all you cannot expect too much in mid-December! Special thanks to Dan, Mike W & Steve S for all their efforts with the majority of the setting up but also to all those members who braved the cold and covered the best part of 50 turns during the course of the weekend. It wasn't always easy but there's the challenge and hopefully we can do something similar (and better) this coming Christmas.

**Pictures next page:** Two further images from our Monday evening run...

**Andrew**



**Picture above:** Dan at the station with the '01' & Graham Miller as guard



**Picture above:** Andrew S, Fraser, Nick (driving the 'V3') & Sam R at the station

## Facebook Feedback

Following on from the article about the Christmas Run, we thought it would be nice to share the feedback we have received through Facebook about the weekend. In addition to the many positive face-to-face comments received during the event, these highlight just how successful we were and the high regard with which people considered not only this event but our railway in general:

**Helen Manners** - My little one loved it, hoping to make it back again

**Holly Miller** - We had a lovely time xxx

**Stacey Leigh** - Lawrence loved it! Thanks for braving the cold so we could enjoy your lovely trains, xxx

**Jan Sheret** - A brilliant ride and looking forward to next year

**Emma Watkins-Nobbs** - It was wonderful. Thank you so much for organising it, my little boy loved it

**Anna Simpson** - Loved it and going to try to come back Sunday too

**Wendy Rees** - It was lovely and well done to you all xxx

**Tracey Clements** - Fabulous evening, thank you

**Sammy Jo Best** - Was amazing and the kids loved it

**Wendy Rees** - It was fab and well done everyone xxx

**Marie Suna** - How fabulous, festive night ride to see the lights. Fantastic and would come again

**Brian Reynolds** - Our Grandsons very much enjoyed our trip on Friday! Well done to all involved with organising

**Alison Willows** - Thanks Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society, you went above and beyond this evening. We turned up fully expecting you to have already shut down but you were all still going in such awful rain and wind. Thanks and we had a great time, it looked amazing all lit up. Hope you're all warm and dry now

**Claire Morton** - We were freezing and soaked after our ride this evening but had the best time ever. It was brilliant, the lights were magical but the singing tunnel was the best! Thanks for staying open in the awful weather, you made our day

**Lynn Wilson** - I was with Claire - we were cold and wet but happy and loved your lights - thank you

**Rosie Wells** - We had a great time tonight thanks for coming out

**Keveta Jay** - Our soggy ride was the last of the evening and though the rain was falling down hard on us, we loved it! Thank you xxx

**Jenny Schofield** - Yes we had a great time, thank you

**Abi Jordan** - Was brilliant despite the rain, in fact it made it more fun! My boys loved it - thank you

**Grace Nyangoma** - Gr8 fun. The queue was long but well worth it in the end. I think I enjoyed it more than my son

**Rachel Hall** - Great fun!!! As always

**Katie Thompson** - Loved it, thank you so much

**Rosemary Jones** - The family really enjoyed it despite the rain

**Caroline Wellen** - It was fantastic, you did such a good job with the beautiful decorations and made it a really special experience. Thank you very much. It would be great if you made it a yearly occurrence

**Sally Cummins** - We took my grandsons and we had a lovely time. A lot of trouble went into making it a great experience for everyone

**Carly Hunt** - Thank you so much for a wonderful time. The family thoroughly enjoyed it xxx

**Jane Razzell** - It was brilliant, loved it

**Kerrie Marsland** - Was great thank you, the kids and I loved it

**Alison Jennings** - Highly recommended, did two nights with friends and family

**James Dempsey** - Very impressed with the amount of lights, thank you for putting it on

**Andy Clark** - Absolutely fantastic and thank you all for making it a wonderful experience, you should all be very proud

**Crystal Edwards** - Such a lovely experience! We loved it so much we did 2 nights! Thank you xxx

**Kerrie Louise Niblett** - Well done to all involved, it was magical. So much effort put in, our family thoroughly enjoyed it last night

**Lorna Sandford** - It was really great! Thank you to all involved, well done. Brought back happy memories of when I used to take my now teenagers on the trains there when they were little (and they enjoyed it just as much this evening) made extra magical by all the Christmas lights xxx

**Wendy Rees** - It was lovely. Well done to all those involved xxx

**Helen Manners** - Just wanted to say a big thank you for the effort put in. Our little boy who is 1 ½ years absolutely loved it and we managed to come two nights. Look forward to next year and if you put any more dates on this year

**Sue Moran** - A great Christmas treat, my 3 year old grandson loved it

**Esme Amey** - We really enjoyed the Christmas train experience. Thank you so much. The boys 4, 2 and 2 week old really enjoyed the lights, snowman and so happy to have been able to get on the train ride

**Jo Bevan** - Just to say thanks for hosting this lovely event, sadly my family missed out as the queues were so big when they came along, but I'm glad that it was so well supported. Will keep an eye on FB in case any additional dates are posted and in any event, thanks to all the volunteers and Happy Christmas

**Floristry By Lynne** - Been there twice to walk my doggie and it has been packed with happy children. Well done Beech Hurst Miniature Railway

**Jan Thomas** - Took my grandsons to here on Friday evening, it was so lovely, all the lights and preparation that went into it. My grandsons loved it. Thank you

**Andrew Burchill wrote his own post on the Haywards Heath Gossip Facebook page (which has 17,000 members):**

If you are wondering what to do with your young ones tomorrow evening, pop down to Beech Hurst railway winter wonderland, took the youngest there tonight and she loved it. And it's only £2 per person

Replies following Andrew's post:

**Abi Hortin** - Really keen to do this but the weather put us off this evening. Hoping to make it tomorrow

**Jo Machin** - We went earlier today and although it was very wet and windy, it was really nice

**Pat Childs** - Went today and my grandchildren loved it

**Rebecca Hope Wingate** - We went this evening with our 21 month old and we all loved it! Beware the queues were very long (but worth it)

**Andrew S & Dan**

### **Footpath Work**

Further to the last newsletter, MSDC contractors have now completed the footpath work up to our steaming bays (**see picture below**). Hopefully this will make walking alongside the track less tight, particularly close to signal 7.



**Andrew**

### **Winter Work**

Since the October edition the vast majority of time and effort has gone into preparing for our Christmas Run. From the decoration of the back field, station, trucks and tunnel to testing and repairing electrical issues to name but a few jobs. In addition, Roy P completed the levelling of the section of track from the south end of the long tunnel and along the length of the Nursery Straight in time for our Christmas Run. The stainless steel tie bolts, cut and chamfered by Steve S, and then welded by Andrew S & I, were inserted before final tightening and checking. This section performed faultlessly during the Christmas Run with the old dipped joints making way for a smooth almost Continuously Welded Rail like feel!

Also outside, and also in preparation for the Christmas Run, regular leaf clearing has been undertaken to ensure the areas close to the track as well as adjacent to the clubhouse and sidings have been kept as free as possible from leaves and debris. Thanks to the many members who have helped during one of these sessions with this essential winter task.

Inside, Geoff is progressing the painting of the 3 new trucks. These will be out shopped in a mid-blue and as of New Year's Day are coming on very well. Thanks to Geoff for his efforts with these and they will surely look very nice once complete and a useful addition to our current fleet.

In the next edition I shall round up most of the jobs which have already been completed or that will be undertaken during the next couple of months and before our 2019 running season commences.

**Andrew**

### **New Year's Day**

After several poor New Year runs, I think it is fair to say that 2019 was one of the best for a long time. Dry, bright at times and positively mild for the first day of January, the weather was certainly on our side. 38 members and family were present during the day with at least 30 of those taking lunch too. Trains commenced a little before 11:00 with Mike P driving his petrol locomotive and Sam H running our '08' together with a short freight train. Before lunchtime, Andrew S with the 'King Arthur' and John R with his 'Britannia' joined the track and it was nice to see steam trains running once again. The fine weather also brought out a lot of dog walkers and families, and it was nice to see a busy park. Beech Hurst can be quiet during the closed season and colder winter months. Lunch was served just after 12:30 and soon the sound of cutlery on crockery filled the clubhouse as members sat and chatted whilst enjoying the salad buffet, followed by cheesecakes and gateaux's for pudding! By now, Mike P & John R had retired their respective locomotives to the steaming bays, however the '08' and 'King Arthur' continued to clock up the miles before both came off at dusk.

It was certainly another very successful New Year run, helped in no small part by the dry and mild weather, which hopefully enticed more members to come out on the track for a ride. Ok, it wasn't sunny all day and certainly chilled off later on but a small price to pay for an otherwise enjoyable day. Many thanks of course to Val & John for the procurement and preparation of the lunch, which was excellent as ever, and to all the members and family who came along and helped out to make this such a pleasant day. Hopefully 2020 will be just as good a day as 2019...  
**(Pictures from 2019 on the next page)**

**Andrew**



**Picture Top:** Mike P approaching the short tunnel with his petrol locomotive  
**Picture Middle:** Sam H crests the summit along the Bowling Green Straight with the '08'  
**Picture Bottom:** Nick coasting past the clubhouse with the 'King Arthur' and a full load

## Work in Progress – 'Royal Scot' & Wagons

Having set a target deadline of New Year's Day to see both oil tankers on the track and more or less mechanically finished, they have taken precedent over all other workshop activities during the past couple of months. It is often said that the little things in life matter and when it comes to model engineering they often take the most time! After completely burning the candles, both wagons were ready for a run on 1<sup>st</sup> January, albeit devoid of brake gear and tank top detailing. Having travelled nearly 15 miles, I can conclude the 'running in' to be a success and (**pictured below**) in between some other wagons they looked very good too.



**Andrew**

## Forthcoming & Diary of Events

Below is an updated Diary, which takes us through to the next edition, due to be released on or just after the AGM at the beginning of March. With New Year's Day done and dusted, there is just one Diary item and that is our upcoming stand at the Alexandra Palace exhibition. We now have a varied display of models available for the show, along with some smaller model engineering related items, so hopefully we will enjoy another good weekend and support this exhibition.

17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> January 2019 – SMLS to display at Alexandra Palace – see 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**