

Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

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BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

Burning Issue: This year's Bonfire creation is pictured above and with the flames starting to lick ever closer, our 'guys' watching TV are in an ever more precarious position as every minute ticks by! A report on the day and the construction is included inside...

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Editor's Notes

Well that is nearly all folks, 2008 is nearly consigned to history and we will soon be into 2009. As I sit here and write these notes and some of the news pages too it is a gloriously sunny winters day and thoughts will soon be turning to longer and warmer days that will surely follow! 2008 has in that respect been a year to forget and hopefully 2009 will prove more fruitful, with better weather than we have experienced of late. Mind you have over-read an article in a copy of The Times this morning they reckon that being an 'El Nino' winter the early months of 2009 in Europe will be particularly cold, so we'll have to wait and see!

A lot has happened since the October edition, that I had finished quite late on in the month in order to get all the latest news into before it went to press, and all that has been on going around the club is featured in this edition. As well as articles from Chris, Jack Pitt and Ray, there are all the regular features and of course your annual Christmas Quiz that any good December edition will never do without! I hope you will enjoy this edition, as many may also be tucking into their Nosh Night food as they read these pages, and from the newsletter I would like to wish all our members a Happy Christmas.

Andrew

Subscriptions

Yes it is that time of year again and subscriptions are now due! I will be at the club most if not all weekends over the Christmas and New Year period and I will gladly relieve you of your £10 (Full Members) or £5 (Over-60's and Under-18's) in return for a brand new 2009 membership card! If the club is not convenient then you are more than welcome to send them to my home address (on the front cover) and I will duly dispatch your membership card with the February newsletter. The cut off for subscription renewals will be the AGM night, which is planned to be 7th March 2009.

Andrew

Chairman's Notes

How time does fly... it seems only yesterday I was writing about the end of season's running and by the time you are reading this it will be mid-December and Christmas just around the corner!

As funds permit, we are continuing to try to upgrade our facilities – with a view to also cutting down on maintenance work. Last year we upgraded our station fence with a sturdy galvanised version requiring no painting and hopefully no attention for many years. This year we are continuing with some new PVC windows for our clubhouse. All the old style frames that have served us well for many years are now requiring a repaint. They are also very draughty and not very secure. With this in mind (and whilst we still have long lease period ahead of us) our major expense this year will be to replace them with low maintenance PVC frames, toughened glass and secure fittings. This will apply to the workshop also, where we have just upgraded our machinery with a new Bridgeport Mill, Smart & Brown lathe and surface grinder from Ron Harris' workshop.

We should then be warmer, safer, more vandal resistant (including magpie damage to putty work) and more energy efficient than before, not to mention saving days of work repainting every 3 or 4 years!

It has been a lengthy and frustrating business getting planning consent and I would like to thank Andrew B for helping me 'do battle' with the council bureaucracy throughout the year. At last, nearly nine months after I first approached them on this matter we have permission! John Gange has been able to help us with contacts in the industry and the firm we have settled on to do the work has a good track record, and we are only paying 10% up front (also covered by insurance) with 90% payable only on completion. We hope the result will be satisfactory and may even be finished by the time you are reading these notes. If all goes well, (and funds permit) next year we will finish off by replacing the rest of the clubhouse paintwork areas, such as fascia boards, gable ends etc...

There can be no doubt that next year will be difficult, economically speaking, for many families. It will be interesting, and remains to be seen, whether or not we will be affected. Undoubtedly the restaurant will see a bit of a downturn and as has been noted before, when the restaurant is full at lunchtime we see a good flow of passengers at about 3pm – especially on Sundays.

Fortunately, financially, our club is in a very good position to weather the storm, because, (unlike some governments) we did 'make hay whilst the sun shone' and put some savings into the kitty through the good years, (before 'Gordon' put tax back to 20% on any profit!) Anyway, we are in good order!

Reflecting on the year, – other than some indifferent weather, – it too has been good, and we have continued to attract new membership and interest, despite being in a 'computer age'!

Lastly, I'm sure I can speak for all, when I say how sad we were to hear of the death of John de Bank. Our thoughts go especially to Del, his wife. This club has had many happy visits to the Isle of Wight and they too have visited us many times in the past. John was always a cheerful, and entertaining, character and we and the model engineering world will miss him.

I'll sign off 2008 with a last big thank you to all who have contributed to the success of the club and put in such hard work during the year. Wishing you all a Happy Christmas, and Happy New Year.

Mike

Congratulations to Peter Marten!



I thought that a quick mention and picture in this newsletter was very appropriate for Peter Marten who won our efficiency competition during the year. There was one blank 'shield' left on our SMLS Efficiency Competition trophy and

since our last Fun Trial in 1998 we have not organised any such events, so Peter's name and locomotive now proudly adorn that last space. As reported in the October edition Peter was a worthy winner of this year's competition and I think his overall efficiency will be very hard to beat by any locomotive, except may be his!

Andrew

The 2008 Passenger Season

Well, it's that time of the year again and the end of yet another season.

I must have been doing this number crunching for over 25 years now, having taken up where the late Alan Gettings left off. What I find amazing is how many members of the public still turn up on a weekend to ride our trains after so many years. The modern trend now is for 'seven days a week everything' and rushing about from place to place faster than ever. So it must make a pleasant change to have a sedate ride round our beautiful park on a sunny afternoon.

Now how did we do in our 55th season, what with the fare rise and the impending recession?

Following on from the record years when we carried the best part of 40,000 passengers, this year the prediction was that it was going to be a bit quieter.

The estimates from previous fare rise years suggested that we would probably carry about 60% of last year's numbers.

The final result was that we carried 23,983 passengers, just over 62% of last years (the estimates worked). This does not tally with the treasurer's numbers, as we had a number of specials and party bookings where the parties certainly had their money's worth! The all time grand tally now stands at 1,272,372 and that works out at an annual average of 23,134. On a personal note I think that not celebrating our 1-¼ millionth passenger earlier in the year was a mistake and a lost publicity opportunity. I do hope that a celebration will occur when we carry passenger 1,500,000.

The lighter traffic levels show up on the track lap counter, with only 7,345 this year. In recent years this total has been nearer 10,000 laps. I understand that the track wear is considerably lighter this year and will not require so much relaying as in recent winters.

Predicting on into the future, I am going to suggest that we will have 4 more quiet seasons followed by a bumper record breaker. My guess for that is over 50,000 passengers! If these predictions work out then we have some time to prepare the track, rolling stock and ourselves for 2013, watch this space!

No graph this year, but next year...

Chris Saunders

Winter Work

I think that it would be fair to say that we aim to get the majority of our outside work done before the Christmas break, partly to get a good head start on the jobs list before the New Year and also because the weather is generally kinder in October and November.

As you will have undoubtedly read in the October edition, we have upgraded our workshop facilities this autumn and this transformation of the workshop has now pretty much concluded, with a final tidy up last weekend, now the double-glazing has been installed.

As with several years past we generally have a big tidy up come mid-October, in readiness for a skip that is ordered around the time of bonfire night and this year was no exception. Thanks to some 'new' office cupboards from my 'old' office in Brighton we have upgraded our storage facilities for some of our workshop equipment and the stores cupboard. As a consequence we disposed of several old metal cupboards and along with bonfire ash, three concrete coal bunkers and a lot of superfluous metal we managed to fill our 'maxi' skip the other weekend and look very tidy both inside and out for it. Thanks must go to everyone over the 'Bonfire' weekend, who not only spent much of their time preparing on the Saturday, but also helped pretty much fill the skip on the Sunday!



The resultant 'clearout' mentioned above has allowed us to significantly tidy up the rear compound behind the flame store, move many of the heavy concrete blocks to the end of the head shunt and also create an 'access' way to the rear of the brick coal bunkers to allow easy maintenance of the bunkers and rogue vegetation behind! The plan is to make repairs to the brick coal bunkers and

then use them as 'originally intended', which will allow the storage of the two remaining concrete bunkers that will in turn allow us to build two new storage cupboards along the carriage shed wall to house the mowers, concrete mixer etc... which currently clutter our rear store cupboard! It is unlikely that all this work will be completed during the 'closed' season, but may well be tackled next summer when the weather is kinder and time permits. (**See picture above**).

As a side to the aforementioned additional storage, Peter Chapman has recently started making a new pair of steel framed and sheeted doors for our 'tool store', which now houses the 'larger' of our two compressors. The thinking is that once one pair have been successfully made, a second pair will be built for the carriage shed doors and then two further pairs later next year for our 'new' cupboards. These steel doors / frames will not only be stronger, but also require less long term maintenance, which is something we are really looking at doing wherever possible.

As of last Sunday (7th) the first of these door frames had been welded together ready for the sheet steel to be ordered and then subsequently welded to the door frame.

In addition to the building maintenance and new windows, which seem to have take precedence over everything else in the last few weeks, John Midderigh and the 'boys' have been busy on most Saturdays clearing the rapidly accumulating leaves. Ever since I have been at Beech Hurst, which is nearly 16 years now, the growth of the vegetation around the track has been quite phenomenal and what were saplings then are now half way to becoming fully grown trees, which of course have a tendency to produce and then subsequently drop their leaves! As of last Saturday (6th) the worst of the clearance had been made it is just a case of keeping abreast of further falls and then doing some general gardening and bramble clearance.

From a personal perspective and reflecting on what Chris mentioned in his 'figures' article, the wear and tear incurred on our 'hardware' this year seems to have been considerably reduced. Over the past few weekends I have given all the trucks a thorough check for bearing / brake pad wear, loose axle box keeps and a 'general once over'. It is noticeable that the wear in the last couple of seasons has been considerably reduced, partly I think because Mark & I did a 'mass' bearing change about 5 years ago, which has led to a lot less bearings being changed each year, also the methods which we use to replace the bearings has meant that the bearings are not unduly strained during replacement. These reasons, coupled with about a 25% reduction in laps this year and I think we have a reasonable conclusion as to why. As a side to this and on the subject of the brake pads alone, I think these last much longer solely because we are using many more electric locomotives now, most of which have 'regenerative' braking which if used sensibly can bring a passenger train to a halt without the need to touch the carriage brake once. I for one am in favour of less maintenance and long may this continue!

The final piece I think is well worth a mention and that is the subject of the



windows! As you will have already read in the Chairman's Notes we have had our new windows installed (please also see rear cover pictures) after what has been a marathon 10 months. Having started this saga in February, Mike and I have been in and out of the MSDC offices a fair few times this year and finally at the October Planning Meeting our request was granted!

The firm that installed them, 'All Weather Exteriors', have been very patient and were extremely efficient at the close in getting them built and installed about 3 weeks ago. They will hopefully provide many years of comfort and low maintenance for us and save many an hour of stripping, re-puttying and painting – a job that no one really enjoyed anyway! They should also prove to be uninteresting to our resident magpies who have previous taken a liking to the linseed putty, but I think would find the PVC less appetising and somewhat hard work! Thanks to all those people who have fought for us over the last 10 months and also to John G, Daniel, Graham and Geoff who spent days at the club whilst they were being installed.

(Pictured previous page – the rear clubhouse windows in the process of being changed)

A further update of the winter work will appear in the February edition, by which time we will be thinking of our new running season!

Andrew

Jokes

Thanks to both Jack Pitt and Ray for the following two pieces. The first I think was definitely someone in Control with a sense of humour, just take a closer look at the two scans shown below!



Christmas Day, Friday, 25th December—continued

66—PARTIES (2nd Class).

NAME	Ref.	Adults	Children	FROM	TO	TRAINS		STATION TO RESERVE	
						Out	Home		
Mr. S. Claus' Party	...	SB	12 Rein- deer	North Pole Jn.	Dover Marine ...	00	01	—	North Pole Jn. (Parcels).

SB—Sleigh to be loaded in brake van. Mr. J. Frost to arrange assistance.



A Different Sort of Rail

Building a tram track in a city street is a rather more difficult undertaking than building a railway in the open. Not only must the rails be firmly mounted to ensure the gauge remains constant & joints allow for expansion as on railway and even Beech Hurst track, but then the road surface must be leveled off with the top of the tram rails.

So tram rails are made of a section as shown in the photograph of spare rails at Crich Tramway Museum. The rails are then laid on sleepers on concrete pads with tie bars to keep the gauge. Rail joints are made with conventional fish plates with a suitable expansion gap between the two lengths. Now comes the tram track installer's

additional problem.

The road surface has to be leveled up with the top of the tram rail in such a way that the leveling material can be removed reasonably easily to allow for rail or sleeper replacement & particularly easily around the fish plates at the rail joints to enable fish plate bolts to be accessible when gaps need resetting or bolts retightened.

The usual method of infill is using stone blocks, as in most cases being the nearest & therefore the most economical material, or in some places (Brighton being one example) tar impregnated wooden blocks. Some areas actually used loose infill just around the fishplate area.

So in view of all the extra work involved I would suggest we stick to running a railway & don't venture into tramways! (**See picture above for an example of tramway rail**).

Ray

Past Events

Since the October edition we have enjoyed two very entertaining evenings. Firstly on 1st November we held the annual Bonfire Night, which was another successful evening this year, with a very good attendance as ever. Our planned 'Route Master' bus had to be cancelled due to time and manpower constraints, but our resulting 'pile', complete with 3 'Guys', suite of chairs and TV set was the perfect substitute. We had already gathered a substantial collection of wood in the previous couple of weeks thanks to some generous donations and some slightly over zealous 'logging' the previous weekend (we are now several hawthorn trees less!) and this was added to on the morning of the bonfire with two trailer loads being collected by Ray & I from a furniture warehouse in Hove!

The forecast rain didn't put us off either and thanks to some very hard work the 'construction' was ready even before lunch, with Mike & I nearly killing ourselves trying to mount a TV set on the top (they are damned heavy!).

The evening was kind to us to, with the rain having all but abated by 18:00 when we lit up and at 18:17 John West also became £'s richer as the aforementioned TV collapsed from it's 15ft high podium, much to his delight at winning this years sweepstake! During the fireworks at about 20:00 it was perfectly dry, lucky really as not long after we had finished it rain heavily again – luck was on our side this time. As well as the pyrotechnic entertainment we also enjoyed the usual sumptuous food, for which I would like to thank Val and John very much, also to everyone who helped set up the day in the rain and without that help we could not continue these kinds of events.

Then a fortnight ago we enjoyed a very interesting and well-attended talk by Robert Harris, of the famous Harris Brothers funfair. Entitled 'A History of Fairgrounds' the talk started at the very beginning of the family business and included many very interesting recollections as well as some unknown social history from that era. The evening concluded at the time of WW2 and it is our intention to invite Mr. Harris back to conclude his talk sometime next year.

Andrew

Xmas Quiz

Having produced a photographic quiz for last year, I thought we would go back to a couple of tradition Q & A type quizzes, one on railway locomotives and the other on general UK geography that I think will test even the most travelled of you. Answers will be in the February edition and sorry no prizes for the winners!

Quiz 1 – Loco Names – All answers are either SR, GWR, LMS or LNER

1. Many companies named their engines after the gods. In 1948 who provided the 'Achilles'?
2. It was not only Greek and Roman mythology that was used as a source for names, but it could have been a bird that provided the name 'Merlin'. Which company had chosen this name?
3. History gives us the name 'Owain Glyndwr' but who built it?
4. After WWII some locos were built to honour those who took part, others were renamed. Which company provided the 'Fairey Battle'?
5. Nobility and royalty provided another theme that was used across various companies. In 1960, whose 'Lord of the Isles' was still on the stock list?
6. Saints were sometimes used for names, but was it the Saint, or is it the island for the 'St. Helena'?

7. Officers of state were also honoured. Which company had named the 'Earl Marischal'?
8. Which company provided the 'Lady of the Lake'?
9. This locomotive, the 'Repton', named after a Derbyshire boarding school, travelled to America but was repatriated. Who built it?

Quiz 2 – General UK Geography

1. How many traditional counties border Northamptonshire?
4, 5, 6, 7 or 8?
2. Douglas is the capital of the Isle of Man. But which nation is it nearest?
England, Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales?
3. Which of these English cities is the most northerly?
Norwich, Leicester or Birmingham?
4. How far apart are Edinburgh and Glasgow?
32 miles, 43 miles or 50 miles?
5. Which is officially Britain's second city?
Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh or None (there isn't one)?
6. Which is the UK's largest lake?
Lough Neagh (Northern Ireland), Lake Windermere or Loch Lomond?
7. What is the UK's smallest City?
St David's, St Andrew's or Rutland?
8. What links the River Dee and the River Severn?
The Pilgrim Way, Offa's Dyke or The M4 Motorway?
9. Which county has a rampant white horse as its emblem?
Kent, Sussex, Ceredigion or Cumbria?

Forthcoming Events

With a fairly hectic social calendar prior to Christmas there is little report for the first couple of months of the New Year. We will of course be holding the annual New Year's Day run on 1st January, which will also incorporate the club night (first Thursday of the month too!). Two further club nights will follow in February and March, then the AGM which I have tentatively penciled in for the first Saturday of March, subject to confirmation in early February as normal. I have also penciled in the first running weekend of the new season to be 28th/29th March, which is the closest to our traditional start at the beginning of April, also allowing a couple of weekends to 'get started' before the Easter weekend in mid-April.

I will as ever keep this page up to date for the February edition, with any further events or visits advertised once they have been firmed up. There is an outside chance that we will hold a talk or similar evening in mid-February, however this is subject to confirmation and will only be advertised on the blackboard in the clubhouse if it goes ahead.

Andrew

Diary of Events

1st January 2009 – New Years Day Run & Club Night – Will start from 1000.

5th February 2009 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900.

5th March 2009 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900.

7th March 2009 – Provisional date for SMLS AGM, details in the New Year.

28th/29th March 2009 – Provisional timetabled start to 2009 running season.

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

Andrew

Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd



Rear Cover picture: -

End of the Road: Finally after some 10 months in the waiting we finally have our new PVC windows and doors! The struggle with MSDC to obtain planning consent on a building that is theirs anyway has been a long one, but fortunately, and with the year drawing to a close, we managed to obtain planning permission and with it low maintenance and hopefully more efficient windows that will make our lives a lot easier, as well as being much warmer during these cold winter months! Furthermore, and depending on finance next season, we will look to replace more of the high maintenance wooden surrounds and apex's on the clubhouse during the course of 2009.