

BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

Special Occasion: With the season nearing it's end with the August Bank Holiday, a last special 2.00 all day fare and double-headed day was organised. Pictured is one of the three trains, headed by John West and Mike Porter, including the 'bear' as one of the passengers.

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Editors Notes

The end of 2004 is definitely nigh, the season is now over, the autumn squalls are with us and temperatures plummeting quicker than all the golden leaves falling from the trees. Looking back, the season has been very successful, albeit with a high number of 'dot' days (to use a cricketing phrase) where we took little or no money whatsoever. With only 5 months or so before Easter 2005 there is little time to continue with the winter work program that will start as of the weekend you receive this edition.

Thanks go to Enid Marten, Ray & 'Us', plus the 'regulars' for the August edition, another robust newsletter, we hope.

As of this edition we will, also, in the December, February & April editions be reporting on the continuing winter work that proceeds during the cold dark months of the year to keep all members up to date with progress of various projects & if you should feel either a tinge of guilt or enthusiasm then there is always plenty to be doing at the club at weekends during the winter and help is always required for even the smallest or menial of tasks. Also in this edition, there are articles on the running season, a 50th celebration of a kind, reports on BBQ night and Double Headed Day, an updated Diary Of Events, with a small reminder regarding Bonfire and Nosh Nights and a fresh joke (if you can them that) courtesy of Enid Marten. Hopefully this edition will be as good as ever, so please read on and enjoy...

Andrew & Mark

New Address

After a few years searching I (that is Andrew) have finally bought a flat in Lindfield. Anyone who lives in the area will appreciate the cost of houses and flats around here, particularly for first time buyers and trying to find affordable houses in a reasonable area is hard. We didn't have a chance to adjust the cover address, but my new address is:

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e-mail: andy.brock@btinternet.com - remains the same.

PS. Congratulations also to Dave and Claire for the purchase of their house in Burgess Hill too, just missed the August edition!!

Andrew

Chairman's Notes

Well that's it folks, the clocks will soon be going back and another running season is over and what a cracking season it has been. I do not have the final

figures but would think that it has been one of the best, if not the best, as regards the number of passengers carried and fares taken. Thank you to all members who have helped over the past season and I think that certain electric locos (and their owners) have covered quite a few miles.

The downside of our high passenger numbers is the wear on the track and the P-way chief has suggested that in future we run more in the Sunday direction to lessen the renewal work required. It will be difficult in the future if passenger numbers increase, or even stay at this year's level, to maintain the railhead on the gradients to an acceptable profile in both directions from the station and maintain the rest of the track, given the limited manpower available to the P-way gang. It has been suggested that we concentrate on the gradient through the jungle to maintain good adhesion and to relegate the track up to the steaming bays to a secondary route. This may be controversial to some but will be fully discussed by your committee. We are getting more passengers on Saturdays now, probably as a result of Brewster's, and running in the Sunday direction would make sense, as it is also the slightly easier gradient. Obviously when we have visiting clubs we will run in the Saturday direction to enable visiting drivers to chat, have a blow up or just stop at the steaming bay as they do now!!

Re-organisation continues in the workshop with the machines being moved to better and more convenient positions. The floor has received a further coat of paint. This is probably the time to remind all those who use the workshop to please work safely and tidy up after use.

Work continues on the braking system for the new trucks also the prototype replacement signal post.

I don't wish to speak too soon but the petty vandalism that we have experienced seems to have abated. It must all be down to the CCTV notices in the window?? Seriously though our society can do without the petty and mindless damage that some youngsters seem to think is fun. The time involved rectifying an evening's excesses is far more than that expended to create the situation.

We have had a couple of special running days for various groups of youngsters and I would like to thank the members who assisted, by either running or otherwise helping, on these days.

Nosh night this year is provisionally booked for December 4th, but please see blackboard.

Don

Running Season 2004

It seems hard to believe that this season has already finished! Certainly, it has been a busy & successful one for the club and as usual this time of year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have supported David and myself as your operations managers this year.

Special thanks should go to those who have been the backbone of our services. Many of us enjoy a run with our engines now and again, but fewer have offered to take a turn at the Station Master or TC! In this respect, and on behalf of all drivers, I would especially like to thank John Midderigh and Bill (on Saturday's) and Peter Chapman (on Sunday's) for cleaning and manning the station so many times, between them, and doing so in such a cheerful

conscientious manner. Likewise, a special thank you from us all to Ian for cleaning our passengers trucks, many, many, times and at the end of season keeping them in tip-top condition. We sometimes take our presentation of station and passenger cars for granted and can forget the hard work behind these standards. Behind the scenes, I would like to thank Andrew for sharing the bulk of TC duties with me this year, especially on those busy days with visiting engines etc..., where youth is a blessing! Not least, I should also wish to thank Daniel and Josh for the enormous help they have given each and every running day this year in setting up and putting away and all those other duties they have taken part in, splendid effort and much appreciated by everyone.

On the running side, John Midderigh, Ray and Peter M have provided the majority of our steam services, while Norman and Ian have supplied the electric traction. In the book, about another 20 names appear topping up the staffing in various ways, all equally important, but forgive me if I just say a general thank you to you all.

I came in on the operations side in 2001, and made no apologies that I have always taken a commercial approach to the job. To me busy is fun; sitting in the station for a couple of passengers to turn up is boring! Back in 2001 following up on the 50th organising, I proposed a monthly event with publicity in the local papers, plus posters. From this, the "Little & Large" days and the "2.00 all day fare" materialised. This year combining the 2.00 fare with three large double headed trains was a spectacular success, with record passengers carried on the day! Changing our running time from 1400-1700, promoting more trains on the track, including variety of steam, electric and petrol, advertising on our station blackboards, making the station itself more interesting with signs and flower baskets etc..., have all influenced our finances and have made the railway more interesting to the public. Also, our new electric, the "Growler" has proved popular with many different people taking it out in service this year.

Last year, I proposed a change to our timetable presentation, to make it more interesting and user friendly. Thanks to James for the computer work, and Vince for the printing, we have distributed, mainly through our display stand in Brewster's restaurant, about 2500 copies! These, along with the restaurant facilities themselves, have had some influence on passenger numbers this year, mainly on Saturday's, - some of which were as busy or busier than Sunday's.

We have also run a couple of "Big Boy" days this year, with an extra twist, that at 1630, double laps for the usual fare were advertised. We also used this format on "Large" engine day with great success, making up special large trains on each occasion for something different!

Anyway, with prompt starts to running days, especially on our Wednesday's, one of which was spectacularly busy this year, we have coped with the loads well and where never overwhelmed, although it was all hands to the pumps (or rather all packers to the station!) on one or two days! Loco failures on the track this year were very few, once again and much more importantly our excellent safety record has been maintained and yet again the savlon and plasters have stayed where they belong – in the First Aid box! Well done all!!

I think it is a tribute to everyone involved that we have pushed up and generated increased passenger numbers over the last four years. I hope it has not seemed all hard work, but rather this has been more fun, - although it has meant changes to the old Beech Hurst format, but I think we have made the most of the engines and staff available.

Four years ago, we were having discussions at the AGM about the necessity of a fare increase to top up the coffers! Passenger numbers were stuck around the 20,000 per annum mark. 2001 brought us 25,000, 2002/2003 we raised our game to over 30,000 each year, (despite last years difficulty with construction chaos for the new restaurant at the front of the park!). This year, despite about 8/9 very wet days, we are within a whisker of the all time record (set following the opening of the track extension, in the early 70's). As far as takings go coffers are back up to a very respectable level once again, and we have been able to maintain our fare to the simple and quickly collected sum of 50p for a bit longer. We have a good format, simple fare and offer good value and good fun!

This year we too, we survived more human vandalism than before, and also nature's vandalism on the track, (in the form of a huge ash tree!). We were lucky no one was hurt as the tree came down overnight.

Looking ahead to next year, I see no reason for us not to achieve something similar, especially as Easter is early, and starting early always favours us – as come the summer, there are so many other activities and places for people to go and spend their money! Maybe too, the wet days will be fewer next year!

I have argued in favour of making changes to suit our circumstances, (probably easier for me because I do not have the privilege of claiming to be "old Beech Hurst") and I would like to propose another change, or partial change, to our operations, perhaps for discussion at the next AGM, prior to our running season.

All changes are controversial and compromise can be a solution to transition change, but I do believe in a pragmatic and flexible approach to the situation, - to make life easier, rather than "that's the way we have always done it," approach!

It is obvious to me, from some occasions this year that some Saturday's are not effectively run anymore in the Saturday direction. Firstly, when we are very busy, this direction is very difficult to move large numbers of people quickly, because of gradients and signalling. Also I have watched, and passengers frequently walk away after one ride, because it is easier in this direction, whereas in the Sunday arrangement they frequently join the line for "just one more ride!" When it is wet, there is no point in standing in the rain and wind at the end of the platform when there is a perfectly good station building and canopy at the other end! Now also, some Saturday's are busier than Sunday's.

Finally, with the loads we are now experiencing, I will not be able to maintain an "edge" on the track in both directions for maximum heavy load traction.

Thus in a nutshell, I suggest, and propose for discussion, the consideration that for next year we run Saturday direction only for, no. 1, visiting days (for safety) (and with our own four car service train in operation), no. 2, on days when we have pre-arranged big engines and hence bigger trains. No. 3, double heading days (but not including 2.00 fare) (to cope professionally with 2.00 days these should always be operated in the Sunday direction).

This would not be first time changes were made to the running direction to suit traffic loads, I understand the original track running came about because Sunday loads were heavier. We must move with the times or either appear unprofessional because we cannot cope with the traffic, or lose out financially, and whilst finance should not be “the be-all-end-all,” no one knows our future situation. We have an aging membership and “down the line” may have to make changes to our operations and be glad of the prudence and financial gains we can achieve now.

Anyway, no gloom and doom scenario this year! Well done and thanks again for your support this season.

Mike

Workshop Tips

I saw this on the Internet the other day and thought I was an excellent idea. Machining cast iron is filthy job - especially so because it's mostly machined dry and the dust gets everywhere, this dust is potentially damaging to your lathe's internals and bearings. A neat trick is to put a powerful magnet (salvaged from a scrap computer hard-disk or loudspeaker) into a plastic bag and attach this close to the cutting tool. Most of the chips and dust that are sprayed off the work piece will be captured by the magnetic field. To clean? Just take the whole lot to the rubbish container and remove the magnet from inside the bag - turn the latter inside out in the process and drop it into the container.

Bob Youldon

Fifty years ago: - By Bob Youldon

There are few members of the society today who were present at the track on May 22nd 1954, but on that day one of the significant events in the Society's history took place, in that the world's long distance record for miniature locomotives was broken with a run by one of Les Clarke's 5" gauge 4-6-0 locomotives. The event had started off as a bit of damp squib in as much as the main contender Austin-Walton's 4-6-0 locomotive "*Centaur*" only managed to complete 24 laps of the old circuit. "Nobby" Clarke together with a number of the Malden society's members, Ernie Widdowson, George Smith and Tom Snoxell as drivers went on to complete 276 laps of the old track, a distance of 60.218 miles in a time of 6hrs 5 min. Anyone wishing to read the full details of the day's events cannot do better than refer to the Model Engineer for 10th June 1954, Vol. 110, No. 2768 in the club's library, it contains a full report. It would have been interesting to see if such a distance could be replicated.

There have been mumblings that it could be attempted again on the current circuit or something like a 24hr run using a suitable engine like Wharfedale to try to complete a similar feat?

Ed's No. The idea of such an event has been discussed more recently, certainly in the last 10 years. As far as we are aware the record stood for only a short time and presently stands at over 100 miles, although the time for this to be completed is not known. It would be a good event to stage, for the membership, if a suitable engine, drivers etc... can be found to actually man such an attempt. If anyone out there knows what the current distance record is and what time was taken to achieve the distance, then we can publish the

results in the December edition and see if any attempt on the record could be mounted?

Andrew & Mark

Winter Work

As with the last couple of years, we, through these pages will endeavour to keep everyone abreast of the work carried out during the winter days. Not to say that you have to feel exempt from coming along and helping out for a few weekends if you don't already do so.

With regards to the track, the 3 ½" along by the bowling green straight has been lifted and the 5" will follow shortly as this is being written. The section through the short tunnel will follow in the New Year once the straight has been completed.

There is a plan to dig up and replace a large section of tree that has been slowly decaying by the steaming bays for a few years. With plans to replace the signal post and track box at the same location, it has been decided that the area will be dug up and re-levelled, with an altered fence and lamp post. This will help to stop subsidence, which currently occurs under the track at that point and with the lamp post in particularly poor condition a replacement post is essential. The new signal post will then be commissioned and used for the 2005 season hopefully in readiness for replacement of further posts the following winter.

The revised braking system for the 'new' stock will continue to progress until it has been fitted and thoroughly tested, before any further components are made and any decision on new or re-conditioned carriages is made. The existing stock will be checked for bearings and brakes and renewed/replaced accordingly.

Other smaller projects also in the pipeline are also being considered, including a concrete pad for our extra bench, alterations to the internal wall of the carriage shed, to allow for an extra 9ft of track to be laid on the top & bottom left hand rows, sacrificing a small amount of space in the old tool store, a new paved pathway from the point towards the steaming bays and extending the existing pathway alongside the head shunt right to the end. There are always lots of other small jobs to be done as well and progress, as we say, will be printed every other month in the newsletter.

Andrew & Mark

Social Scene



The August BBQ night usually signifies the beginning of the end as regards the summer season, as it introduces autumn, the kids are back at school and the nights are surprisingly long after 4 months of warm light days. This years event was again well attended and finished off a good day, which started with a visit by the Basingstoke club. They have not visited Beech Hurst for a

few years and their small posse enjoyed themselves, bringing three battery operated locomotives, (**see picture above**) which provided the main stay of the afternoon passenger hauling. One of the locomotives was a modified 'Dan Jeavons' 'Growler' which was hauling two beautifully made 'Dreadnought' coaches from the Metropolitan Railway, which were silver medal winners at an ME exhibition (**see picture below**).



The BBQ kicked off about 1830, with a monster fire prepared, complimented by a couple of engines also in steam. The evening was cool, but dry and if anything it got warmer as it got later. As we finally cleared the signals away at near 2300, you could reflect on another successful social event, held a couple of times a year, the BBQ evenings provide a great club social event, as well as competition to see who will turn up with the most

ridiculous piece of meat possible, either in size or make up!!

Andrew & Mark

Forthcoming Social Event

With Christmas really not that far away, the Nosh Night is fast approaching and as it always falls in early December, then it will miss the December edition of the newsletter. The date for the Nosh Night is 4th December; it normally starts from around 1800 and is full of laughs. Nosh is cooked there and then by Val West and is very tasty. The after dinner games have been prepared by Ray for this year and are usually very interesting, with great rivalry between the teams!! A list will appear in the clubroom shortly, please add your name if you are interested, you will be asked for your preferred starter nearer the day. The cost will be around 4.00 per head and is really top value for great cuisine on offer!!

Andrew & Mark

Bonfire Night

Also, there will be our annual bonfire and firework evening on 6th November, with beans and spuds provided.

As ever the 'Pyrotechnic' department requests any burnable material (and we do mean everything too, anything will burn given enough encouragement!!). This can be brought to the club any weekend from now until the day itself and will be appropriately stored ready for use. A donation tin will also be in the clubroom for a couple of weeks beforehand and anyone wishing to donate to our firework fund is welcome to do so (cash and cheques, no problem, no credit given!!) the more we get the better display we can give. Last years was a very good display lasting a good ½ hour and with a good variety of ground and aerial fireworks. All we can hope for after that is good weather!! The fire will be lit around 1800, with the fireworks to follow around 1900.

Andrew & Mark

Double Headed Special Day

As a last blast before we started to wind down for the winter a 2.00 all day fare day was arranged for 4th September, with all double headed steam trains from 1400-1700. Previous 2.00 all day fare days have proven very popular and this one was no exception. The afternoon started a little sluggishly, but after about 15 minutes or so the circulation of 2.00 ticket holders and new riders made for full trains for the next 3 hours, in fact there were virtually no spare seats on any train from then on and made the loads more challenging for the drivers, with the two L1's hauling 6 'Pullmans', 'Wharfedale' and 'Martlet' with four 'new' trucks and two 'Pullmans' and finally 'City Of Truro' and Mike's 'B1' hauling the remaining 5 'shorts', every available passenger car was mustered for the afternoon's running and were all needed too. By the end of the afternoon it was thought we had done very well, but how well? A couple of weeks before we had a new record of 510.00 taken during a Wednesday afternoon and on the basis of the day's passenger numbers, we weren't going to be far short of that. In fact we took 503.00, just 7.00 short of a new record and the second time we had passed 500.00 this season. Of that 250.00 was for the 2.00 day tickets and another 250.00+ in normal fares. It is fair to say that that level of money taken is exceptional and in doing that we are running near to or at capacity (up to 1200 passengers in the 3 hour period), to do this twice in one year is very good and could happen more often in the future if we are as successful next year as we have been this year. In fact 20,000.00 in a season could well be within reach, given good weather and a variety of motive power. It is the sort of day that everybody enjoys, drivers, on-lookers and passengers alike and one that is likely to be repeated again next year. Thanks must go to everyone involved and there are many hands required to put on a day like that too. With a good result though it makes it all well worth it and even the weather was kind!!

Andrew & Mark

More Jokes

We think this would be more taking the mickey than anything else, the awards and reasoning can only be described as obscene and you wonder why insurance premiums are on the increase in the UK too!!

Andrew & Mark

Only In America!!

Time once again to review the winners of the annual Stella Awards. The Stella's are named after 81-year-old Stella Liebeck, who spilled coffee on herself and successfully sued McDonald's. That case inspired the Stella awards for the most frivolous successful lawsuits in the United States.

Here are this year's winners:

5th Place (tie):

Kathleen Robertson of Austin, Texas, was awarded \$780,000 by a jury of her peers after breaking her ankle tripping over a toddler who was running inside a furniture store. The owners of the store were understandably surprised at the verdict, considering the misbehaving little Toddler was Ms. Robertson's son.

5th Place (tie):

19-year-old Carl Truman of Los Angeles won \$74,000 and medical expenses when his neighbour ran over his hand with a Honda Accord. Mr. Truman apparently didn't notice there was someone at the wheel of the car while he was trying to steal his neighbour's hubcaps.

5th Place (tie):

Terrence Dickson of Bristol, Pennsylvania, was leaving a house he had just finished robbing by way of the garage. He was not able to get the garage door to go up since the automatic door opener was malfunctioning. He couldn't re-enter the house because the door connecting the house and garage locked when he pulled it shut. The family was on vacation, and Mr. Dickson found himself locked in the garage for eight days. He subsisted on a case of Pepsi he found, and a large bag of dry dog food. He sued the homeowner's insurance claiming the situation caused him undue mental anguish. The jury agreed to the tune of \$500,000

4th Place:

Jerry Williams of Little Rock, Arkansas, was awarded \$14,500 and medical expenses after being bitten on the rear end by his next door neighbour's beagle. The beagle was on a chain in its owner's fenced yard. The award was less than sought because the jury felt the dog might have been just a little provoked at the time by Mr. Williams, who had climbed over the fence into the yard and was shooting it repeatedly with a pellet gun.

3rd Place:

A Philadelphia restaurant was ordered to pay Amber Carson, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, \$113,500 after she slipped on a soft drink and broke her

coccyx (tailbone). The beverage was on the floor because Ms. Carson had thrown it at her boyfriend 30 seconds earlier during an argument.

2nd Place:

Kara Walton of Claymont, Delaware, successfully sued the owner of a nightclub in a neighbouring city when she fell from the bathroom window to the floor and knocked out her two front teeth. This occurred while Ms. Walton was trying to sneak through the window in the ladies room to avoid paying the \$3.50 cover charge. She was awarded \$12,000 and dental expenses.

1st Place:

This year's runaway winner was Mrs. Merv Grazinski of Oklahoma City, OK. Mrs. Grazinski purchased a brand new 32-foot Winnebago motor home. On her first trip home (from an OU football game), having driven onto the freeway, she set the cruise control at 70 mph and calmly left the drivers seat to go into the back & make herself a sandwich. Not surprisingly, the RV left the freeway, crashed and overturned. Mrs. Grazinski sued Winnebago for not explaining in the owner's manual that cruise control isn't automatic pilot. The jury awarded her \$1,750,000 plus a new motor home.

Enid Marten

Diary of Events

4th November 2004 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900.

6th November 2004 – Bonfire and Firework Spectacular. (See article inside).

2nd December 2004 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900.

4th December 2004 – Christmas Nosh Night – (See article inside).

1st January 2005 – New Years Day Run – Times etc...**TBC**.

6th January 2005 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900.

It is hoped that one or two talks and other possible social events may be organised during the winter season. These will, where possible, be advertised prior to their date in this newsletter, but in the event that these are organised within the two months between news' then the information for such events will only be displayed on the website and in the clubhouse at Beech Hurst.

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

Andrew & Mark