

Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

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BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

Back in Black: Another recent addition to our fleet at Beech Hurst is this Class 08, which has been built and then kindly donated to us by member Jack Pitt. Thanks to Jack's generosity we now have another useful loco for passenger hauling as well as shunting and training duties.

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Editor's Notes

As I write these notes, we have now passed the longest day and with it the middle of our 2017 running season too. So far so good for this year and hopefully the remaining 3 months will be likewise. The first couple of months of the year have been pretty mundane in terms of extras; however with the start of June came resurgence with visits by 1st Haywards Heath Cubs and Chelmsford club too. As recently as last weekend we have also held our first BBQ of the year and this week we welcomed a new club to Beech Hurst in the form of Northolt MES. This was their first visit to SMLS and they really enjoyed their day with us. The visit was all the more unusual because it was not on a public running day and therefore our guests had the track to themselves for as long as they wished! Looking forward and there are several more diary commitments to take us through to the end of August, so all in all it should be a good summer.

From the April edition I must thank Dave Mattingley for his article and pictures in what was a fairly slim line edition.

This edition is anything but slim and I have intentionally kept it back for an extra week so I can incorporate the BBQ and Northolt visit into one issue. Together with a number of other articles from recent social events, summer work and an invitation to a talk by Chris, plus an updated Diary through to November and all the usual writings, I hope you will enjoy this bumper edition...

Andrew

Chairman's Notes

We are already half way through our running season 2017. The weather has been kind to us for most of the last 3 months and our income from fares has been excellent to date. The recent extremely hot spell of 30+ degree daytime temperatures (the hottest June spell for 40 years and the hottest day of 34 degrees since 1976!) reduced passenger numbers but more normal unsettled weather has now returned. The high temperatures of a fortnight ago put considerable strain on the track which buckled sideways alarmingly on the straights but held together and stayed nailed down! Severe speed restrictions enabled us to continue a service, locomotives and trucks zig zagging along the track! The cooler weather has sorted matters and a little tapping with a wooden mallet has straightened up the worst of the distortion.

I would like to thank Roy P, Graham Miller and Roy Le Masurier for helping me with some outdoor painting, restoring our front and rear doors with Buckingham green and also the steaming bays with mid grey. Steve S enjoyed himself power washing the bays and transporters free of grease and algae, ready for us to prepare and paint. We have edged around the bay area and it begins to look quite smart again at the front of the club, a good team effort. At the back, the usual small team of gardeners have kept the lawns and track areas attended to.

A few weeks back, we had some problems with children getting in the laurels around the 'jungle' section of track.

This resulted in a major derailment of Graham Mundy's Class '33' loco, due to sticks wedged in the sleepers and track, causing significant damage to the engine, which has taken Graham (with a little help) nearly 6 weeks to repair!

Roy P, Geoff and I met with David Terry and Steve Witchell from the council landscaping department and agreed some action. Primarily, the council has erected some chestnut paling fencing around the outside of the laurels, preventing easy access to this area. This has, it seems, proved successful in keeping children out of the places where they can hide and get up to mischief. The committee will discuss other possibilities of fencing in this area.

There has currently been no further progress to the council's wish to 'open up' the back field to the public, but as the above derailment incident shows, it will not be safe to open this area without substantial fencing off of the railway line. The long tunnel and quiet area around the portals and cuttings would be a prime location for mischievous children (or adults!) to hide and either be at risk to themselves or cause problems for the railway out of sight of others.

Back in the workshop, Geoff has been beavering away drilling mountains of sleepers in preparation for the winter track work and Steve T has been doing a few modifications to the height of the body shell of the new club '08' to enable us to put some standard batteries inside. Hopefully, this will be able to take to the track soon and be a useful addition to the club motive power, relieving the load on our two hard working electric locomotives, the 'Growler' and Class '73', which are often out earning money for the club both days of the weekend!

We welcome a new young member Sam Ridley to our club. At 12 years old, he is our youngest member for a long time but is sensible and helpful. As a club, we are lucky to have a considerable group of younger members. I like to think we encourage and help them as much as time and energy permits. The 'under 30's' group consists of Dan, Nick, Andrew S, Adam, Tom, Laurie, Josh, Alex, Sam H and Sam R. Nice lads who I hope will stay with us and ultimately inherit and continue running our railway into the future.

Because of exams, holidays, work and girlfriends, it's not often they are at the club at the same time. It's my proposal that we try to get them all together one day to run the railway on their own as a team. It looks like we should aim for a Sunday towards the end of July / early August, when it seems most of them will be available. They have enough knowledge and experience to do it now. We of the older age bracket will be around in case of any emergency, but we would expect to receive plenty of tea and coffee at the appropriate times, whilst relaxing and watching the world go by for the day! We would advertise the fact to the public and I would like to get a group photo taken for the newsletter, perhaps before running started on the day. Tom already said he was 'up for the challenge'! Will you join him chaps? I am happy to try to organise a day but would one of the older 'youngsters' take on the planning from there and make use of your group according to age and capabilities?

Joanne from Bella's Pantry has been in touch with me concerning Xmas Santa arrangements for this year. She would like to do only one weekend 16th/17th December but longer days. This maybe easier for us to staff for one weekend.

We will discuss this at the next committee but I mention it here to receive any comments you might like to make before our meeting.

We had a good visit from the Chelmsford club in early June, as well as entertaining a 'cubs' group one evening. Thanks to those who helped with these. Nick's 'Jinty', (in naked form), has taken to the track for the first time, along with Andrew S' 'Dougal' after painting, likewise Dave Mattingley's 'Pansy', which, to use LBSC's words, has been receiving 'the monkey gland' treatment! They all were seen running beautifully! Well done.

On Wednesday 5th July we had a day for those who like to see some different faces at the track. A fun day with a visit from Northolt club who were doing a tour of some southern tracks.

Thanks to all those who have worked hard to make the first half of 2017 so successful and enjoy the rest of the season. See you at our mid summer BBQ!

Mike

Electricity



With more and more people owning and using electric locomotives, it seems a good time to run a short course on basic 'electrics'.

It also seems that fewer of us know too much about the stuff.



I am proposing a short hour or so illustrated talk, with handouts, to explain the absolute basics through to some useful hints and tips, and of course some safety stuff as well.



If anyone is interested in attending please let me know.

I will also want to know when is most for convenient for you as well.

If enough of you want to come I'll check with the committee and fix a date.

Just leave a note on the officers' clip by the clubhouse door or let me know when you see me next.

Chris

Workshop Donations

Whilst donations of metal stock or tooling can be appreciated, please consult with Mike Wakeling (Workshop Manager) or the committee before bringing such items to the clubhouse. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Mike W

An Evening at Beech Hurst with the 1st Haywards Heath Cubs

Tuesday 6th June was showery and so it continued as we set up for a visit by 1st Haywards Heath Cubs. Around two dozen 7 – 9 year olds were expected for this evening of education and fun. With Andrew S, John B, Mike W, Roy P & I in attendance we split ourselves up to take 5 or 6 children + a helper and in turn look at different aspects of the railway, the workshop and our steam locomotives. There were also the customary train rides too! Whilst Andrew S prepared the 'King Arthur' for the live steam demonstration part, we also prepared some static locomotives on the steaming bays, some 'work in progress' in the workshop and a short train hauled by our club electric Class '73' to provide the train rides. As soon as 18:30 came, so the shrill voices of many young children could be heard approaching and then we were inundated! Even split into small groups you have to keep this age group interested and that was hard work! We had about 10 minutes in each section before moving on (which worked out almost seamlessly!) and that was plenty enough for most of the children. At the end we then laid on a special steam treat with the 'King Arthur' hauling one long mega train with all the children and helpers we could cram aboard – 27 if memory serves me rightly (see picture below if you would like to confirm for yourself)!



Needless to say a very good load for what was really a cold engine but she made it back and this rounded off a really pleasant evening. Even a short shower midway through couldn't dampen our spirits and looking further ahead, it is this age group who could next be interested in helping at our railway. Young they might be and there were a few wild ones in the pack but also some who were genuinely interested and pretty damn clever for their age too. You only need one or two from a visit such as this and we will hopefully begin to close the gap we have in our ageing membership. Food for thought if the club wishes to encourage the next generation? Anyway, thanks through these pages to those below who helped out during the evening session and additionally to John B for liaising with the pack leaders in the first instance...

(Picture below: 'The Team' and our display of locomotives...)



Andrew

Recent Social Events – Chelmsford, BBQ & Northolt

Following on from the successful visit of the Cubs the week before, we then welcomed Chelmsford club to Beech Hurst for their annual visit on 10th June. Earlier that week, the forecast had not looked great for the Saturday but come the weekend it was dry, sunny and really rather warm too! A bumper number of visitors were expected and with this in mind we set to, to make sure the railway was ready in good time for our guest's arrival. Among the Chelmsford gang were some familiar faces but also some new ones too, along with no less than 5 locomotives not previously run on our track. In no particular order the locomotives were: 5" 'Britannia', 2x 5" 'B1's, 2x 5" 'Simplex's, 2x 5" 'Maxitrak' 'Planet Electrics' 5" 'Polly' 'Orenstein & Koppel' 0-6-0 & 3 ½" ScR Narrow Gauge 0-4-0.

Of the 9 above, one of the 'Simplex's, the 'Orenstein & Koppel' & the 3 ½" 0-4-0 all ran before 14:00, whilst the other 6 carried on through our passenger session during the afternoon. By 11:00 there were 7 trains traversing the track, which did cause a little congestion as some of the new visitors got to grips with our circuit. This carried on for about an hour when John Dalton suggested bringing 3 or 4 off in order to relieve the congestion and allow continuous running. During lunchtime our visitors took it in turns to have a spin and apart from a minor mechanical problem with the 3 ½" 0-4-0 (we did find the Cotter Pin and one half of the Big End bearing in the grass but unfortunately not the other half!), everybody had a good run to take us through to 14:00. The afternoon session was uneventful and started quite slowly but did build up a bit towards the close. The Chelmsford visit normally coincides with the South of England Show and therefore perhaps not quite as steady on passengers as would be normally. Of the 6 locomotives that started the passenger service, just one of the 5" 'Planet Electrics' had to retire due to a low battery but the other 'Planet' quite remarkably carried on until just before 17:00, having run for the best part of 5 hours on a single 12v battery! Likewise, one of the 'Simplex's also ran for at least 5 hours and even by the end of the passenger session the locomotive showed no signs of faltering! As our guests came off and began to pack away there was time to have one final chat and to reflect on another very good day – almost perfect in fact. Through these pages I must thank the guys and girls from Chelmsford for coming down to visit and for singlehandedly operating our afternoon service too. Also to all those members at our end for helping out with unloading and loading, particularly to Roy P, and for making our guests feel very much at home. I daresay we will meet many of the Chelmsford crew again at Alexandra Palace after Christmas and hopefully we can arrange another visit in 2018... **(Pictures next page...)**

The mid-summer BBQ was a touch later this year, falling as it did, last Saturday 1st July. A pleasant, dry and partly sunny evening allowed for more than 20 members, family and friends to enjoy this event, together with a number of trains fun running either with passengers or freight. One of these trains also saw a debut outing for our new Class '08' locomotive, which was built and then kindly donated to the club by Jack Pitt. As can be seen by the cover picture the locomotive went well enough whilst hauling our goods train, 3 wagons and the guards van of which were also built by Jack and previously donated to the club. If it were not for Jack's generosity then images such as the cover would surely not exist and nor might the enthusiasm for building wagons of our own! Although not present myself, I am reliably informed that the BBQ itself went off ok, although both a gas torch and compressed air gun were seen in the vicinity of the BBQ on more than one occasion during the evening!

As darkness began to fall, so the railway was packed away for another day and for another successful evening. Thanks of course to Val & John for much of the catering but also to all the members, their family and friends who came along to enjoy the BBQ and make it what it was. There will be one further BBQ evening on August Bank Holiday Saturday 26th... **(More pictures next page but one...)**



Picture Top: One of the Chelmsford 'B1's starts the climb up the Tennis Court straight
Picture Middle: The second 'Simplex' from Chelmsford, which ran really well for 5 hours
Picture Bottom: One of the two visiting 'Planet Electrics', which also ran for 5 hours



Picture Top: One of our younger members, Alex, driving Dan's '08' during the BBQ
Picture Middle: Dave M rounds the corner opposite the point with 'Bantam Cock'
Picture Bottom: Norman driving Graham Mundy's '33' on its first outing since repair

As recently as Wednesday this week, we welcomed our third visitors of the year to Beech Hurst, namely Northolt club. On Tuesday they had been on a visit to a track in Wimborne, Dorset and then stayed overnight before heading east to Beech Hurst. A warm and sunny morning greeted the first arrivals and soon we were unloading a number of locomotives to the steaming bays, none of which had been round our track before. Again, in no particular order the locomotives were: 5" 'Britannia', 2x 5" 'Sweet Pea's, 5" 'Polly IV', 5" 'Halton Tank', 5" Class 37 and a 5" 'Bo-Bo' electric. The latter was first on and enjoyed a number of unbroken laps before being joined by the 'Britannia', 'Polly IV' and one of the 'Sweet Peas', which was hauling our recently repainted maroon trucks and that combination did look very nice! Unfortunately, the Class 37 required some TLC to one of its bogies before it could run but Geoff was on hand to help one of the visitors fabricate a repair to allow the locomotive to run after lunch. Of the remaining locomotives, the second 'Sweet Pea' did manage a few laps but was continuously struggling for steam and the 'Halton Tank' had to retire after only ¼ lap when the right hand side expansion link became detached from the motion bracket and with an immediate repair not possible! Because Wednesday was a non-passenger day, our visitors were able to enjoy the track for as long as they wished and at their own pace too! That said, by the time we reached mid-afternoon, and by now the temperature was nudging towards 30 degrees, all the locomotives bar the Class 37 had been retired to the cars or steaming bays in readiness for their journeys back to North London. As we chatted before our visitors departed, it was clear they were very impressed by our facilities and that all had enjoyed their visit too, even if some of the runs were somewhat shorter than perhaps they would have liked! This visit, like one or two others in the past, was born from a chance meeting and had we not been exhibiting at Alexandra Palace this year it may not have happened at all. I for one am pleased it did and it gave us another chance to demonstrate that we do have one of, if not, the finest raised tracks in the country. I know of no others at present that beat us on this score! Our visitors were also impressed by the clubhouse, workshop and park in general, and we should be very thankful for the facilities and outlook we do enjoy. Although we are being hemmed in by development, many other clubs are still somewhat less fortunate! Thanks through these pages to John B and Mike P who helped me as TC for this visit and to all the other Beech Hurst members who came up during the course of the day too. Yes it got a bit hot and yes it was quite a tiring day too but I'd sooner be out and about welcoming visitors to Beech Hurst and enjoying the sunshine than sat in front of a PC at my desk! And, most importantly of all our guests hopefully went away with happy memories of their time with us and the facilities we have to share...

(See pictures on the next 2 pages).

Andrew



Picture Top: One of the Northolt 'Sweet Pea's hauling the recently repainted trucks

Picture Middle: The 'Polly IV' from Northolt, which ran remarkably well for 4 hours

Picture Bottom: The 'Britannia' from Northolt is seen climbing towards the short tunnel



Picture Top: The Class 37 from Northolt seen after lunch following a temporary repair
Picture Middle: The other 'Sweet Pea' from Northolt on the steaming bays after its run
Picture Bottom: And finally..., anyone for a caption competition? Perhaps '3 Wise Men'

Summer Work – A Spot of Painting

As recently as the week before last, Mike P organised a small group of volunteers who, over the course of a couple of days, repainted most of our external green surfaces around the main building as well as a coat of grey for the steaming bay pillars too. With the windows and doors now in plastic this chore is greatly reduced but the remaining surfaces are still big in area! Needless to say those refreshed surfaces now look much better and good for a year or so again. Thanks through these pages to Roy P, Graham Miller, Roy Le Masurier & Steve S for assisting with these tasks. **(Picture below: The refreshed front doors to the workshop & engine shed, telephone box & pole, and steaming bays).**



Work in Progress – 'Black 5'

Since the last edition, the locomotive has run (very successfully) and is now back receiving minor TLC prior to coming back to the club. This first run proved to be satisfactory with no real evidence of sediment in the boiler and certainly a good deal less priming than we had before. It did, however, reveal one or two other small jobs that will be better sorted out now, namely the safety valves not shutting off quickly enough and the need to look at the fire hole doors, which have become quite worn over the many years. This particular job is nearly complete and with a run now pencilled in for mid-July all the other outstanding jobs must be finalised by then. As a side note, the first run with the '5' was on Saturday 27th May and that was a very good day for steam at the club with no fewer than 10 steam locomotives in action or undergoing maintenance.

In fact only 1, John Harwood's 'Polly', was not actually steamed. There was no call for electric traction at all and it is proof enough that our railway can still operate solely by way of steam locomotives on a normal timetabled afternoon (see picture below depicting 6 of the 10 locomotives).



Andrew

Forthcoming Events & Diary of Events

As well as those dates listed below, it is hoped to include one or two special running days before the end of the season (24-Hour Run, Little & Large Day etc...) and at the time of publication, dates for these extra events have yet to be confirmed, so please see the white / notice boards in the clubhouse for details of these in due course. For those interested in the Pentanque Match, it will be useful to have your name on the whiteboard in the clubhouse at some point during the next couple or three weeks to help with the planning. If you have any questions then please speak with Mike W who is jointly organising this event.

3rd August 2017 – Club Night + Petanque Match – Will start at approx. 1730

26th August 2017 – End of Summer BBQ Evening – Will start at approx. 1800

7th September 2017 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900

4th November 2017 – Bonfire & Firework Night – Will start at approx. 1800

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