

BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

In View: Our first display at an exhibition for nearly 20 years was on show at the Bath & West showground at Shepton Mallet last weekend. It proved to be a very interesting and enjoyable weekend for those involved. A full report and more pictures appear inside.

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Editor's Notes

Welcome to the latest edition of the newsletter, it seems like an eternity since the February edition, although I suspect that has more to do with how busy we have been over the past couple of months with the AGM, finishing winter work, preparing for the new season, starting the new season and the recent show at Shepton Mallet. The new season has not exactly got off to a flyer either, with pretty poor weather so far, although we have avoided any total 'blowouts'! I had for many years hoped for snow at Easter and this year we did get some wintry weather, although with hindsight nice warm spring days would have been so much nicer for everyone!

Thanks go to everyone who contributed to the February edition of the newsletter and also to: Enid, Mike, Nick and Ray for contributing to this one too. Inside there are all the regular articles, plus a report on the ME show at Shepton Mallet, information about our efficiency competition, jokes and all the latest dates for the Diary of Events.

Finally, I would personally like to say thank you to Mark who has decided to step down from joint editorship of the newsletter after 5 years helping to produce these pages, his help with typing, collation and posting of the newsletters has been invaluable over that time. I will continue to produce the newsletter by myself, the first time I had have to do this since taking on the joint role 9 years ago!

Andrew

Chairman's Notes

With winter work and the AGM behind us, it's good to be back at the start of the running season, that's if the weather will allow us to make a start! Apart from Good Friday, the other Easter Days were hard going through the snow showers and heavy rain! Thanks to some hardy and tenacious members, (who delivered a service above and beyond the call of duty!) and not forgetting some equally stoic members of the public, some fares were taken! The rest of the season can only be better – we hope!

At Easter we also had a surprise visit by Geoff Gillett from the Leatherhead club, who came accompanied by his wife and Mavis Harriott, the lady who helped to look after the late 'L.B.S.C.' in his later years. There were many interesting reminiscences over a 'fish & chip' supper. She also kindly brought with her 'Ayesha', Curly's original little 2 ½" gauge Atlantic – made famous during the 'battle of the boilers' in the 1920's. It was in good original condition with Curly's own paintwork, but looked really diminutive against today's 5" gauge locos. She promised to visit us again and next time bring 'Sir Morris de Cowley' and the original 'Tich', which we will look forward to seeing.

During the open forum section of the AGM I proposed a competition for steam locos and drivers in the club, loosely based on the IMLEC style, but not a one day event, rather a competition to take place through the season. Andrew and I will attempt to coordinate and run this, starting in May when the first bank holiday is out of the way. I will draw up a calendar of available dates to operate the competition and if you'd like to have a go, just see me or Andrew and we'll be pleased to book you in. For those who weren't at the AGM night, I've written out a basic plan and rules and they can be found after these notes.

I hope it will provide some fun running and interest beyond that which we get from regular passenger service.

That's about it for these notes, except to wish you all a happy season on the track.

Mike

BEECH-LEC

1. The purpose of the competition is to provide a 'fun' interest throughout the season and is for members to compare their engine and their driving skills against fellow colleagues. The emphasis is to be on fun, but with measurable results and an ultimate end of season winner/s.
2. The competition is based on an old time scale run from London to Brighton (i.e. 10 laps of our track), stopping after one lap (Clapham Junction), restarting and stopping again after a further two laps (East Croydon), followed by (preferably) a non-stop run of 7 further laps to metaphorically arrive at Brighton!
3. One run, on any of the available dates we provide, can take place – before normal running times (i.e. to run and finish by 13:00).
4. Driver to choose his load of passengers (or pre-weighted concrete/wooden blocks) using the same set of long trucks each time. You have a choice of 1, 2, 3 or 4 trucks, but none to be over-loaded! The total weight of the train, including the trucks, will be calculated.
5. Loco to be presented with empty coal tender. Coal will be issued, and any unused, weighed and deducted to ascertain the exact quantity burned or dropped! The driver can return with a 'dead' fire, but must finish with at least ½ glass or more of water showing on the gauge.
6. Train to proceed to a set point at the station to start and finish the run. Only engines that complete 10 laps and fulfil the stops and restarts, totally unassisted, will qualify.
7. There will be an observer on the train behind the driver to see fair play and supply extra water if required on the run. Another observer will remain at the station to count off the laps, and these will be displayed to the driver on a blackboard.
8. Results will be recorded on a board in the clubhouse through the season. The winner at the end of the year will be the driver and engine who return the lowest coal consumption (in grams) per 100kg's of train weight, (for their 10 lap run).
9. A runner up will be chosen from the small engines (those weighing in under 100lbs in weight) for best performance.

Main Rules

1. The driver need not be the owner, but only one completed run per engine (except 'Wharfedale', which as the club engine may be entered more than once if the member has no engine of their own and is deemed capable of driving the club engine).
2. Only members' engines may take part.
3. No speeding will be allowed, especially through the station. Drivers must slow down if requested to do so by the train observer or may be disqualified.

4. Unfinished runs do not count and any manual assistance of any kind will result in disqualification. In the event of a loco failure – one further booking is allowed. A second failure will result in disqualification.
5. Water and lubricators may be topped up on the run if necessary.
6. Safety valves may only occasionally be lightly seated as on any normal running. Excessive tapping, or any attempt to hold them down, will result in disqualification.
7. No 'leaning' on the engine, for extra traction, is allowed.
8. If it's too wet or the rails are greasy, the driver and/or officials can postpone the run and rebook.
9. Drivers who set off with too heavier load may elect to unload passengers at any time, and the train must be stopped for this purpose! Passengers and/or blocks removed will be deducted and only the weight behind the engine as it finishes the run will count. Drivers may set back if it becomes necessary to restart.
10. Drivers may finish the run with no fire, but must have ½ glass of water showing at the end of the run. 'Hand Pumping' during or at the end of the run will also lead to disqualification, so only injectors or axle pumps are permissible. The fire must be re-built to apply the injector if the water is below ½ glass at the end of the run.

11. Judges decision is final!

I hope you will have a go sometime during the season, and take part with good old fashioned sportsmanship and a sense of fair play. Run with honour and see how your loco really compares – or how good a judge or driver you are of your engine. There may be some surprises and I hope a lot of fun!

Mike

Snow & The Season So Far



This season has not got off to quite the start we experienced last year, although we were spoilt in 2007! Easter was one of the coldest for many years, with frequent, snow, sleet or hail showers and a biting northerly wind. The two weekends that followed were none too good either, culminating in 3-4 inches of snow falling on the morning of Sunday 6th April and

leaving the park under a carpet of frozen water! For entertainment value it was hard to beat, with the Pump Trolley being used as a make-shift snow plough to clear the track, but despite all the snow it was very quiet again and even last weekend was not brilliant either – definitely a case of April showers!



All we can hope for is that May/June are better than last year and when the new Harvester restaurant opens this week it will bring a boost to the number of passengers at the weekend, it is certainly a well known brand and speaking to Dominic and Jo they are very optimistic about the prospects for

their pub and the new look it will bring. **(Pictures from the 6th shown above).** Whilst on the subject of running a quick reminder that the use of the track outside of passenger hours is at the discretion of the Operations Managers and must always involve a minimum of two members of the club. There are occasions where track maintenance is taking place during year and the track may be incomplete even during the summer months. Also, if you are running, the minimum requirement for signalling for 1 train is either Signal 6 (Sunday direction) or Signal 7 (Saturday direction) to protect the area around the clubhouse and if more than one train is operating then all signals must be in operation at all times. Running outside passenger hours is not normally a problem as long as it can be done safely and by prior arrangement.

Andrew, Geoff and Mike

Election Of Officers

Annually, after the AGM, the news always reports on the 'comings' and 'goings' of the Officers and those who hold positions within the club. The following is the revised list of who holds which position within the club:

Chairman: M.J. Porter

Vice-Chairman: G.A. West

Secretary: J. Baldwin

Treasurer: A.P. Brock

Minutes Secretary: A.P. Brock

Operations Managers: M.J. Porter, G.A. West & A.P. Brock

Signals Engineer: S. Turner

Consultant Signals Engineer: A.J. Killick

Workshop Managers: S. Turner & N.S.E. Payne

House Manager: J. West

Materials Manager: A.P. Brock

Assistant Materials Manager: P.C. Marten

Social Secretary: V. West

News Editor: A.P. Brock

Librarian: R. Parsons

Assistant Librarians: A.P. Brock, G.A. West & D. Evans

Boiler Inspector: G.A. West

Consultant Boiler Inspector: F. Bailey
Assistant Boiler Inspectors: J. West & S. Turner
Custodian of Wharfedale: A.P. Brock
Assistant Custodian of Wharfedale: D. Evans
Carriage Valeter: I. Thompson
Web Master: S. Hutton
Custodians of 'Growlers': N. Edwards & A. Strongitharm

Thanks go to Fred Bailey who wished to step down as a regular Boiler Inspector, but who has agreed to remain as a Consultant Boiler Inspector. Also thanks to Mark for his help with the newsletter over the past 5 years, it has been very much appreciated. Also, junior member Nick Edwards will now assist 'young' Andrew to look after the 'Growlers' on a day to day basis, prepare them for running and cleaning etc...

Andrew

Shepton Mallet ME Exhibition



The idea of exhibiting at a national show has been mooted several times in recent years and after the problems experienced in the latter years at Brighton we as a club have not contributed to such an exhibition for the best part of 2 decades. The South West ME show was first suggested last summer, a new exhibition based at the Royal Bath and West showground near Shepton Mallet in Somerset and with the promise of spacious surroundings at the brand new event we decided to have a bash. Unlike many other shows this was purely a two day affair on Saturday and Sunday last weekend.

We set off early Friday morning and via a 'Little Chef' on the A303 we were setting up by late morning, with plenty of space to drive into the hall and park right next to our stand to off-load. **(Picture top).**

We had been given a 16sq ft pitch which we utilised to its full to exhibit 6x 5" gauge loco's, 5x 3 ½" gauge loco's, 1x track cleaning wagon, 1x part-built tender and 1x V8 aero engine. We also took along a DVD/TV to show various recordings from Beech Hurst members as well as the Meridian production called 'Small World' and an array pictures taken around the club to form a small 'rogues gallery'! Having set up we then went our separate ways with Geoff and John staying with family or friends and myself, Nick and Norman in a B&B pub down the road!

We were joined by Peter Marten and Stephen Hutton on Saturday morning and although it was not ridiculously busy it was quite steady from about 10:00 right through until 15:00 when visitor numbers started to thin out.

Being only 1 of 2 ME clubs exhibiting, our stand received quite a lot of attention and we all had time to chat and answer questions along the way. In fact I would quite honestly say that we put out a very good spread of exhibits on a very well laid out stand – better than most – if not the best. There were a few ME trade stands and several boat clubs too, but none of the mainstream suppliers unfortunately. It was also very interesting that despite being 120 miles from home the number of people who knew who we were and who had ridden on our track before. There was even a stand just across the aisle from us that sold adhesives who came from Scaynes Hill – small world!



Saturday evening also brought the added bonus of a run on the track of the Bath and West Railway, a 5" and 7 ¼" set up that meanders its way through parts of the showground to cover a total distance of nearly ½ mile in length. We had previously been invited to run a steamer, but with no boiler certificates and the obviously mucky job of cleaning down an exhibit afterwards we quickly wired up Norman's Class 47, wheeled it through the two halls and across the car park on a trolley and then enjoyed several circuits of the track, whilst dodging the menacing rain clouds!



The track is quite scenic and the bottom loop was only finished a couple of weeks before the show, interesting though they charge £1.50 per ride for a ½ mile trip and on days when the Bath and West show is held can carry up to 2000 rides per day! **(See 3 pictures above – car park/station & bridge!)**

Sunday I gather was a much quieter day with Steve Steer and John Harwood joining Geoff, John and Norman on the stand and hosting a smaller number of visitors than on Saturday. The stand was already being dismantled before closing time, with Steve and John ready to return home by the time doors closed.

Overall I think all of us who attended the show would say it was an enjoyable event and one that we'd seriously contemplate contributing to again. Personally I still think the show to beat is Harrogate and to exhibit there, although hard work and a long journey, would be extremely enjoyable – possibly one for the future.

Thanks through these pages to all those who helped with the weekend, namely: Steve Steer and John Harwood for providing the bulk of the transport, John Baldwin for initiating and organising the event, also Myself, Geoff, Nick, Norman, Peter Marten and Stephen Hutton for manning the stand and everyone who let us borrow their 'machines' to exhibit. Next year's show has already been confirmed for Saturday 18th/Sunday 19th April 2009.

Andrew

The Return Of The 'Simplex'



After lying dormant for 10 years, Brian's old 'Simplex' has returned for another spell at Beech Hurst, under my ownership. All my life I've always wanted a steam engine of my own and after joining the club, soon after Nosh Night Andrew explained that maybe an engine would be available in the form of a 'Simplex' which had run at the club for a while before going home after the completion of 'Big Boy'. I have done a lot of work to raise the money to purchase the engine and then the time came when the loco made a welcome appearance back to the club in the company of myself and Andrew **(picture top)**.



For a little while time was spent in the workshop mostly making new pipe work for an injector and whistle valve. After discovering that the top feed clacks will not work properly at the angle on which they are on the boiler, I decided to have the injectors working off the back head clacks instead, as this would mean that the balls in the clacks would sit vertically, instead of at an angle.

One of the most challenging things I have had to do to the engine was to wash out the side tanks with caustic soda as they had a lot of dirt and flaking paint in them. It was also necessary to refit the regulator as on its first test run I closed the regulator handle and the regulator stayed open(!) so that had to be sorted out too. Fortunately it was fairly simple to fix, with the regulator rod becoming unscrewed from the body of the screw down valve. The boiler had its hydraulic test and despite a decade without use, it passed – bone dry! More time was spent on the various hurdles that needed to be over come and soon the steam test approached, the engine was ready, safety valves lifted and worked very well. The Simplex first graced the rails a few weeks before the start of the 2008 season and she ran without a hitch (**picture bottom**). Now she is ready for the 2008 running season and beyond. I would like to thank Andrew, Geoff, John W, Chris, etc... for helping me with the engine and making it possible for it to come back to steam.

Nick

Jokes 1

Zero Tolerance Speed Cameras

It has been reported that new "Zero Tolerance" speed cameras will be introduced on UK motorways commencing in February 2008.

Other UK 'A' class roads are expected to quickly follow. The new cameras look different to the normal cameras, so I have included a photo so that you are familiar with them and are able to make sure not to speed when approaching them.

You have been warned.



Enid

Jokes 2

The Paradox Of Our Times

- Today we have bigger houses yet smaller families,
- More convenience, but less time,
- We have more degrees, but less common sense,
- More knowledge, but less judgement,
- We have more experts, but more problems,
- More medicine, but less good health,
- We spend too recklessly,
- Laugh too little,
- Drive too fast,
- Get too angry too quickly,
- Stay up too late,
- Read too little,
- We have multiplied our possessions, but have reduced our values,
- We talk too much, love too little and lie too often,
- We have learned how to make a living, but not a life,
- We spend more and have less, buy more and enjoy it less,
- We have learned to rush and not to wait,
- Two incomes but more divorce, nicer houses but broken homes

Do not delay anything that adds laughter and joy to your life as every day, every hour and every minute is special as you don't know if they'll be your last!

Ray

Forthcoming Events

Beyond April, SMLS members John Dalton, Melvyn Bright and Bob Frost will be visiting on 18th May to have a fun run and provide traction for our Sunday afternoon service, together with other members from the Chelmsford club and a number of guest locomotives.

The first of our 'Bring Your Own' BBQ evenings will take place on Saturday 14th June with onions and puddings provided – just hope for dry weather!

Maidstone MES will then be visiting on 28th June with a variety of locomotives and they may stay on for a special BBQ in the evening, however this is still subject to confirmation.

We will be holding a special weekend in August to celebrate 40 years after the last regular steam services left the mainline. The Saturday will hopefully consist of a large variety of steam locomotives running during the afternoon, with a mostly electric service operating on the Sunday. Details will be confirmed in the June newsletter.

The final BBQ of the year will be held on the August Bank Holiday Saturday and will comprise the normal format of 'Bring Your Own' for the BBQ, with onions and puddings provided.

Beyond August we have a provisional invitation to visit the Malden club, the same as we did last year and details will be published in the August news.

Also we hope to be able to arrange a talk by the Harris Brothers in October or November about the history of fairgrounds, details to follow when we know more.

Diary of Events

1st May 2008 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900

18th May 2008 – Chelmsford MES to visit Beech Hurst from approx. 1000

5th June 2008 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900

14th June 2008 – Mid-summer 'Bring Your Own' BBQ from approx. 1800

28th June 2008 – Maidstone MES to visit Beech Hurst from approx. 1000

3rd July 2008 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900

2nd & 3rd August 2008 – Special running weekend – 40 years after steam

7th August 2008 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900

16th August 2008 – SMLS to visit Maidstone MES – details TBC

23rd August 2008 – End of summer 'Bring Your Own' BBQ from approx. 1800

30th August 2008 – Special running day TBC – details in June/August news

4th September 2008 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900

2nd October 2008 – Club Night – Will start at approx. 1900

11th or 12th October 2008 – SMLS to visit Malden DSME – details TBC

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