

Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society Ltd

Issue No. 442
December 2019

BEECH HURST NEWS



Cover picture: -

Narrow Gauge: Thanks to Sam Carragher for sending in the above photo, depicting Hamish with his 3 ½" gauge 'Conway' during the 2019 season. Hamish brought the same locomotive for a run on New Year's Day, a report + pictures from which appear later in this edition...

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Editor's Notes

Firstly, may I wish all readers a belated Happy New Year and the best for 2020! It seems a long time ago that I was writing my last Notes and quite a bit of water has passed under the bridge since the end of October. Well, not just under the bridge but in many other places too! Autumn 2019 will be remembered by many for the flooding that has occurred and although the south east has remained largely unscathed, the ground has been saturated for weeks and weeks. This led to what can only be described as 'quagmire' conditions during our preparations for the Winter Lights Event in mid-December! Despite this inconvenience, the event was a massive success, more so than 2018, and a full report + pictures + social media comments appear later in this edition.

With the lead up to the WLE taking up almost all of our time (and space) before Christmas there has been little activity elsewhere, except for the New Year's Day preparations. The latter was an enjoyable day, if dull and cloudy, and well attended too, particularly by a numerous youthful contingent!

Now into the New Year (and Decade) thoughts turn to the Alexandra Palace show next weekend and then to our AGM at the beginning of March. There is still some winter work to do in the meantime but at a slightly more relaxed pace than before Christmas!

From the October edition I would like to thank Roy P for his written contribution and to Fraser & Mike W for their pictures.

In this bumper offering, there is an extended piece about the Winter Lights Event and a report + pictures from New Year's Day. In addition, there are short articles about Lockers, a visit to Fawley Hill, Subscriptions, Passenger Numbers & Flooring, as well as an updated Diary to mid-2020 – enjoy...

Andrew B

Chairman's Notes

I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year and I hope 2020 brings you all the success that you wish for. I hope that everyone also had a great Christmas. Our Winter Lights Event was a huge success and we carried 3,307 passengers over the four evenings. We were incredibly lucky with the weather, with only Monday having rain, which made everything more challenging than normal. The queues on the Saturday and the Sunday evenings were the longest I've ever seen at our railway and with an hour and a bit average waiting time, it's staggering. I'd like to say a big thank you in particular to Steve S who gave up two weeks holiday and slept at the clubhouse to help set up and run this event for the club, that's a big commitment and one that should be merited. I was also heavily involved in setting up the lights and along with Steve; we were working 10-12 hour days from Monday until the Thursday in all weather conditions! In addition, thank you to Andrew B & Andrew S who also gave their time to help us set up and did most of the packing away, as well as to all the extra people we had pop in and do what they could to help create such a successful event. Thank you to everyone who came up and helped run the event and keep everything ticking over, running engines, guarding, station staff, TC's & refreshments etc...!

New Year's Day was successful and saw a number of engines being used throughout the day, Hamish with the 'Conway', Andrew S with the 'Minx', Marc with the 'Polly' & the 'Pump Trolley' all made an appearance. A big thank you to Mike P for cleaning and preparing the clubhouse for the New Year's Day Nosh, after the WLE it was in a sorry state and took several hours to clean and to prepare all the chairs and tables into the right position. Thank you also to Mike W & Lorema for going out and buying the food + drink, and arranging the spread in the clubhouse. The not so glamorous tend to go unnoticed!

Dan

Lockers at Beech Hurst

Further to the short piece regarding locker allocation in the October edition, can members please note that all enquiries regarding lockers should be directed through the Secretary, Andrew Strongitharm. Contact can be made in person at the club or via e-mail at: andrewstrongitharm10@gmail.com

Andrew S

Visit to Fawley Hill Railway & Museum – A Notice to all Members

Further to a visit to Fawley Hill on 6th July 2003, I have arranged for a similar club outing on Sunday 26th April 2020. Near Henley-on-Thames, Fawley Hill was the home of the late Sir William McAlpine and the location for the Channel 5 series 'The Great Model Railway Challenge' (pictures from 2003 below & next page).





25 entrance tickets have been secured at a cost of £10 per head with transport to the venue by vintage bus at an additional cost of £10 per head. To book your place, please e-mail me at: andrewstrongitharm10@gmail.com or for non internet members please call me on: 07919583164. Full upfront payment of £20 will be required to confirm and hold each booking, which are first-come first-served. Being a Sunday in April, the railway will be open as normal and therefore I also need to ensure we have sufficient members to staff a service. I would also be grateful to hear from anyone who is happy to stay behind to run the railway on this date please.

Andrew S

Subscriptions – A Gentle Reminder

If you did not attend the AGM earlier last year you may not know that it was decided to increase the annual subscription for over-60 year olds from £5 to £10 in line with other adult subscribers. As such, all over-18 year olds are now due to pay £10 for their 2020 subscription with under-18 year olds remaining at £5. Cash or cheque (pay 'SMLS Ltd') at the club is fine or by BACS to the following account is fine too: Account No: 20688428 and Sort Code: 20-49-76, adding your name as a reference. My address for cheque payment postal subscriptions is: Mr G Miller (SMLS), 128 Western Road, Sompting, BN15 9TY.

Graham Miller

Winter Work

With preparations for the Winter Lights Event having taken up the lion's share of our efforts in the lead up to mid-December, Winter Work has been largely quiet during the past couple of months. From the October edition, the aforementioned work on the track and trucks was completed in good time for the WLE. Both assets performed near faultlessly during that weekend, save for a little water penetration that caused the signal 7 'call on' to intermittently fail. This was a minor problem and did not affect the operation of the service to any great extent. In addition, quite a lot of 'gardening' also took place prior to the WLE, in part to tidy up our surroundings but also to allow us to gain access to banks, structures and trees where lighting displays were located. MSDC then kindly 'mowed' the back field late in November! This was a completely unplanned bonus but it does look much neater and in turn also 'chewed up' many of the brush cuttings we had created during our 'gardening' activities!

Post-WLE, the focus has very much been on tidying, sorting and packing away. A small team comprising of: Andrew S, Josh E, Mike W, Sam H, Steve S & I spent much of the middle weekend between Christmas and New Year doing just that. All of the salvageable WLE equipment is now safely stowed ready for next time and as of last weekend Mike W has continued to tidy the workshop, which had become a bit of a WLE 'bomb site'! Normal service can now be resumed!

I shall report on further Winter Work in the February edition, due out on or around the AGM, by which time our thoughts will be turning to running trains once more!

Andrew B

Winter Lights Event

Turn back time by 12 months and you will recall a positive report on the first WLE in the December 2018 edition of this newsletter. Fast forward to 2019 and as I type this, we are still recollecting those 4 days just before Christmas 2019 when Beech Hurst welcomed a sea of visitors once more!

Set Up

Preparations for the WLE began some 8 weeks before kick off. As the tidying up of leaves and other debris got underway, so the task of preparing the pads for the net light scaffolding started. Mike W, Steve S & I spent most of one weekend marking out and then scraping out foot square sections of the bank between the clubhouse and signal 4 for the scaffolding posts to rest on. Days later and the 60 foot long structure had been erected and we had the 'entrance' to WLE 2019! The purpose of the scaffolding was to support a 'tunnel of lights' that trains would pass through as they first entered the back field area. With the structure in place, the net lights were then hung from the scaffolding and cable tied in place. Out of the original 5 nets that were erected, only 1 made it to the first night and given that each one takes a couple of hours to hang, that was a lot of time! 4 just didn't work well and a 5th suffered from what can only be described as 'feline incursion'! I joke about this now but having spent 2 hours hanging, it was no joke at the time!

The only conclusion was our resident 'Friesian' coloured cat that can be seen prowling the back field most weekends got caught in it one lunchtime and pulled a lot of the wires out! Said cat was now in our sights but had become very illusive having been spotted that morning! 2 hours were then spent hanging a new net...! With the scaffolding now finished, various members including: Andrew S, Dan, Mike W, Nick & Steve S then set about decorating the rest of the back field area. This included in and around the long tunnel, numerous trees, along the siding, footbridge, gardening store and clubhouse rear. Many of the displays were similar to 2018 with some 'extras' acquired for 2019! One of the 'extras' included a large conical shaped 'tree' for the back lawn. The idea was to create a finale as trains ran past the clubhouse before sinking back into the darkness past the steaming bays. The 'tree' was made of canes and then wrapped with several hundred white lights. Once illuminated it was quite a sight and well worth the additional effort. Ideas to create a similar, but simplified, structure for the future are already in the pipeline! In addition to the fixed lights there were also those moving ones attached to each set of trucks! Andrew S, Graham Mundy, Josh E, Ray, Sam R & I decorated the truck sides with lights as per 2018 and they did look very good going round! They also serve a secondary, but not so obvious, purpose when you're a driver! Being side on, you cannot easily see the taillight of the train in front, but the coloured lights are perfect for this and particularly when heading up towards signal 2, the train in front (normally by this stage approaching signal 3) is very visible side on! With everything decorated, we're getting there...

Friday

Day one and there was still work to do. Dan & Steve S had put in some long hours during the days before our 'first night' and as dawn broke on the Friday there was a fair size list to complete before mid-afternoon. In between watching the unfolding election drama, we had the task of hanging another net through the 'tunnel of lights', placing all the animals + inflatable's around the back field and testing to make sure everything worked as nature intended. It was a busy morning but by lunchtime most of the work was done and we could then relax a little before the set up of the railway commenced. The weather on the Friday was about as good as it gets in December, dry and relatively mild with only a small % chance of rain. We ran the 5 planned trains (2 steam + 3 electric) and by kick off time at 16:00 there was a moderate but not overwhelming queue at the station. This queue continued during the whole of Friday evening but never went much beyond the café, so about 30 or 40 long at any given time. With the exception of Steve S as SM & myself as TC, everybody helped out and swapped around, which meant that no one had to be out in the cold for too long! As 19:00 approached we had run a faultless service and carried a little under 700 passengers, which for a normal operating day would be exceptional! Once some of the toys were back in the box, we all relaxed in the clubhouse and tucked into our fish & chip supper. This was just reward for the many who had worked tirelessly that day to pull off a really good start to our WLE weekend...

Pictures during *Set Up* and the *Friday* evening appear on the next 5 pages



Picture above: Looking towards signal 4 with the 'Tunnel of Lights' beyond



Picture above: The same view as above but taken on the Friday after dark



Picture above: Looking towards signal 5 with 'bamboo trees' to the right



Picture above: A similar view as above with the light show fully illuminated



Picture above: Looking towards the footbridge, gardening store & siding



Picture above: Again a similar view as above taken during the Friday evening



Picture above: Tea break time with the conical 'tree' under construction



Picture above: Taken from the footbridge, with the clubhouse, store & 'tree' lit



Picture above: Ready for the off on the Friday, including Marc as a reindeer



Picture above: Sam R & Alex arrive back with the station tree on the Friday

Saturday

One down and three to go! Saturday started a lot less pressured with much of the preparation already complete and most of the assets still working! Another good day was forecast with possible rain in the evening but likely after we had finished. Really positive social media feedback was already being received from the Friday night and as such a decision was taken to re-arrange a couple of the truck sets to create a 6th train. Saturday saw Nick as TC & myself as SM, along with 2 steam + 4 electric trains booked for operation. As 16:00 neared, the queue was already building up and at the start it was already half-way from the café to the mill stone by the entrance to the pergola. Helped in no small way by Andrew E & Sam R, we just kept moving trains and once in the swing of things they were dispatched every minute or so. At its height the queue reached the patio outside the Harvester, a wait time of circa. 1 hour 15 minutes, and was at least 50% longer than 2018! The wait time for food in the Harvester peaked at 2 hours! So long was our queue that trains finally ceased at 19:30, a full half hour beyond the advertised time. We carried more than 1,150 passengers (nearer 1,200 if you count a few family members), which pro-rata equated to nigh on 1,000 if within the normal 3 hours! Saturday night was pizza night and there was a definite 'high' atmosphere in the clubhouse as we tried to take in what had just been achieved! I don't know about anybody else but that night will be one that I will never forget!

Sunday

Our penultimate day was a much slower start and as a small group of us ate breakfast in the Harvester we could chew over the emotions of the night before, whilst chewing on some well deserved bacon & eggs ++! If Sunday were to match the Saturday we needed to be ready for it and as such a late swop meant Steve S as SM together with Andrew S as rostered TC. This allowed a larger steam locomotive to be run and hopefully keep a check on the queues! Little preparation was required with most of the infrastructure good for another night. Feedback from the Saturday night was overwhelmingly positive with a few people mentioning the queues but almost all in a positive way. It was simply a case of 'we did our best'! Despite an unsettled and showery start, another fine evening was forecast and as such we anticipated a good number of passengers, and we were surely not to be disappointed! Once again a moderate queue had formed by the time 16:00 came round but soon grew and exceeded that of Saturday night! This time however, the queue went up through the pergola and peaked on top of the short tunnel! A secondary queue then started towards the Harvester, meeting in a 'Y' formation by the mill stone! Was my Saturday night record in danger? Aside a couple of small hiccups with electric locomotives, it would have been had the queue not receded by 19:15. In the end, the passenger total was just a handful shy of 1,000 – another impressive evening's work!

An atmospheric picture from Sunday morning appears on the next page.



Picture above: Sunday started very showery but luckily by 16:00 it was dry again

Monday

The last day and the most uncertain in terms of the weather, with rain forecast from mid-evening onwards. The decision was taken to start at 16:00 but only with an electric service of 5 trains. That still meant pulling out most of the locomotives at our disposal and in the hope that not quite so many passengers would turn up! By 16:00 the clouds were gathering but only the odd spot of rain was in the air. Andrew S was warmed up and ready to go as SM with myself as TC – umbrella at the ready! We started with the queue largely the same length as the other nights but this time it never grew that long. The forecast rain arrived by 17:00 and although this did not deter the passengers it was too much for some of our electric locomotives with water ingress stalling two of them mid-journey and requiring 'human rescue' (**picture next page bottom**)! This 15 minute or so delay was unfortunate but was taken in good spirits by those who were on the trains or waiting to have a ride. As it turned out, we ran pretty much until 19:00 with a slow but steady stream of passenger's right to the very end! Clearing away in the rain is never much fun and a bit of a damp end to what was an extremely successful weekend. Monday saw us carry just short of 500 rides, taking the total for the 4 days over the 3,300 mark and a lot higher than in 2018! As we dried out in the warmth of the clubhouse we were treated to a lovely homemade pasta bake meal created by Tom's Mum, Gaynor. After a tiring weekend and with the heavy and persistent rain falling outside, it was 'just what the doctor ordered'! Thank you to Gaynor for baking this meal, which I am sure was enjoyed by all!



Picture above: A view at the station, note the wet ground and umbrellas up



Picture above: The rescue mission is underway after two consecutive failures

In Conclusion

If you are in any doubt as to the appreciation and success of the WLE then take a look at the following 3 pages, which hopefully summarise the strength of local opinion. To say everything is positive would be a lie and amongst the positive comments are a handful of constructive / negative ones too. These are few and far between but serve as a reminder that in running an event such as this you will never satisfy everyone. All we can do is to hold our heads up high and to confidently say 'we did our best!' Is it a lot of work? Definitely so. Do we enjoy it? I very much hope we do. Should we do it again? I for one very much hope we do. We have created something very special which is enjoyed by thousands of visitors. In doing so we have also created something very special in our calendar that brings members to the club and galvanises a work together ethic, which cannot be a bad thing? At a time of year when you might expect 12 members each weekend day, we had close to 100 over the 4 days with many more before and after. Yes the whole concept has to be carefully managed to make sure we all do our fair share but if there are enough of us doing our fair share then no one person has to shoulder too much of the burden. We do very well at running trains normally and maintaining our facilities but these 'specials' are surely what many of us will remember. The memory of that Saturday night as SM will always be etched into my memory in the same way as the Queen's Jubilee Day and Anniversary's have before. Thank you again to everyone who played a part in something that as a club we should all be truly proud of...

Andrew B

Winter Lights Event – Feedback

Nurcin Hopkins – We've just returned from this. Thank you for all the hard work you put into making this an amazingly magical experience! Our children loved it, great Christmassy fun!

Linsey Tree Sim – Thank you all for your hard work, kindness and understanding. We all had an amazing time.

Kerrie Smith – Beautiful.

Lydia Prentice – We went yesterday and it was wonderful! Definitely recommend.

Lisa Scarratt – It shows how wonderful it was with so many cars gridlocked in the car park, a long wait in the cold & not one person upset about it. The chocolates down the line were a nice gesture too. Next year you need to open on more nights, have more staff in the café & even some little Xmas stalls! We are already hoping you repeat it. Well done to all involved, it was TOTALLY magical!

Jaci Dungate – It was great fun, thank you and well done to all! Merry Christmas to all at the club.

Nurcin Hopkins – Thank you for all your hard work, what a magical event!

Bee Jayne – It was beautiful, thank you all so much! We loved speaking to other parents and letting our kids play whilst we excitedly waited for our ride. Merry Christmas to you all.

JoJo Harris – Wonderful effort by everyone. A lot of hard work I'm sure. Loads of smiling, happy faces and that's just the parents! Thank you all.

Maggie Hong – Thank you all for this Xmas event we enjoyed very much tonight. Fantastic experience. Hope you all have a good Xmas.

Sally-Ann Lilley – It brought back so many memories for me last night. It's done beautifully; really appreciate all your hard work.

Alison Newnham – My little boy loved it, as did his grandparents. Thank you and Happy Christmas.

Lucy Ambrose – Well worth the wait and such a lovely sight, thank you!

Marie-Louise Davies – It was lovely, I took my 3 year old and 9 year old sons, they loved it, well done to all that made it happen.

Heather Orry – We queued for ages in the cold – it was well worth it. Our little boy said he loved it. Thanks to all involved.

Deanna Wendy – Totally worth the wait! So lovely and thank you for all your efforts :)

Lana Malét – It was great!! Well done.

Jamie Cormack – Full car park, full queue, but full fun.

Luke Holman Williams – Defo was worth the wait last night. It was great that no one was complaining, everyone was talking to each other and the kids were playing with each other – it was a fab time and the lights where amazing.

Tim Knott – Was a fab night.

Kirsty Pennicard-Wood – We had an amazing time last night. Thank you all so much – it was magical for children and adults (big kids) alike!

Rachael Overton – We had a great visit last night, my 3 year old in particular loved it. He wanted to go on at least twice (queue a little long for that) to ride a diesel and a steam train... he couldn't believe it as we ended up on a diesel that stopped, so shunted around by a steam (both whistles going), then to separate again, watch an engine change and finish the circuit... on top of the amazing light show he was totally chuffed! Thank you!

Mike Lock – Amazing work guys. Well done to you all for an awesome event.

Lucy Ambrose – Highly recommended!

Jessica Collins – Please can you add some more days? Pretty please? Will bring you chocolates!!

Katie MacFarlane – Thank you to all the volunteers, my boys loved it. Happy Christmas

Caz Ottery – My kids loved it, thank you.

Pauline Beresford – It was a great show. My little one loved it and was worth the long wait. Nice to see it so popular.

Andrea Coles – Thank you all it was fantastic. Please do it again next year.

Pauline Phillips – The grandparents loved it too, the hour wait was worth it, well done to you all.

Ellie Bugden – Really feel for you guys, we came tonight and was the broken down train, you dealt with it really well, it was very pretty and can't wait for 2020.

Natalie Geal – Thank you to all of you for making such a great event. We were luckily there and on the train just after 4. Sad to hear you couldn't carry on, let's all have our fingers crossed next year's weather will be better. It was beautifully done and was so lovely for children of all ages and disabilities. Merry Christmas!

Anna Watkins – Thank you, we thought it was lovely; clearly a lot of effort has gone into the event.

Rosemary Jones – Thank you for all your hard work, it gave so much pleasure to so many people – well done.

Nurcin Hopkins – Thank you to all the volunteers again, what a magical Christmassy experience!

Emma Collard – We absolutely loved it! What a magical event. Please do it again next year!

Abi Birch – Wonderful lights and thank you to all involved in making this happen. Our children loved it... as did mum, dad, nanny and granddad too!

Laura Clark – It was lovely. Thank you for staying open in the rain tonight.

Fiona Clark – It was great, even in the rain.

Jo Millard – Fully recommend this with the children or even without the children. Such an effort from this small organisation – thank you!

Lianne Harris – We loved our train ride last night. We went on at 4 and couldn't believe the queue was all the way to the Harvester by 4.30! Well done to all the volunteers involved!

Anisa Field – It was absolutely beautiful. So glad we came again and even bumped into friends from school to ride with!

Sarah Peacock – Thank you for a lovely evening, brought back loads of memories as a child. I took my Son, Daughter, Son-in-Law and Grandson here for the first time and they loved it! Can't believe the trains have been running for over 60 years! Thank you to all the volunteers for using up their free time in the cold and rain just to keep us, the public, happy!

Lynsey Chester – Thank you all so much, we all had a brilliant time, even the teenagers enjoyed it!

Lana Malet – Loved it, thank you very much!

Peter Brothwell – It was ace, you all did a great job & should be proud! Both my kids loved it & having taken many trips on the railway myself as a child; it was nice for me to join them too. With the c.250 mile round trip and a timely pre-Christmas visit to my folks!

Andrew S

New Year's Day

With the WLE and our personal Christmas festivities behind us, New Year's Day marked the beginning of the end for those of us in education or employment! Back to college / school or work usually follows soon after and this is always a nice way to end the Christmas holiday period.

2020 dawned cool and cloudy, and that way it stayed throughout the first day of the year. Never did it rain but nor did the sun put his hat on either – quite uneventful by all accounts. Trains were on the track by 09:00 with our 'Growler', Andrew S' 'Minx' and Marc's 'Polly' the first to surface. These were later joined by Hamish's 'Conway', the 'Pump Trolley' and a cameo appearance by our '08'! Hamish's 'Conway' was the only steam to survive the course with the 'Minx' having 3 false starts and the 'Polly' a broken crank pin in between times!

The best part of 30 members came up during the day with a salad buffet lunch, drinks & puddings provided by Mike W & Lorema, along with 'bonus' after lunch sweet treats made by Tom's Mum, Gaynor, & by Roy Preston's wife Olina! The whole spread was lovely and enjoyed by all those present!

We continued to operate until after dark with the younger members keen to keep things moving for as long as possible or until frozen out! 19:00 had passed before everything was packed away and it had been another excellent start to a year. Like the WLE before, this diary event brings many members together not only to run trains but to socialise too. It was very pleasing to see so many younger members present who largely operated the railway during the day. These are the very members who are the envy of many other clubs and who will hopefully keep our railway running for many more decades to come!

Through these pages, a big thank you to Mike W & Lorema for the catering, to Gaynor & Olina for the lovely puddings and to Mike P for the clubhouse preparations. In addition, to Sam H & Steve S who helped to set up and pack away outside, and of course to everyone else who turned up to support another excellent social event and to start 2020 on a really positive note. Here's to a successful 2020 all round...

Pictures from New Year's Day 2020 appear on the next 3 pages...

Andrew B



Picture above: The 'Minx' after it's final, but equally unsuccessful, third run



Picture above: John R receives some instruction for driving 'Polly' from Marc



Picture above: Nick at the controls of Hamish's 'Conway'



Picture above: Harry & Fraser try to burn off those Christmas calories



Picture above: Adam's latest acquisition, a 'Mark 1' coach, creates discussion



Picture above: Josh driving the 'Growler' and with some boisterous passengers

Passenger Numbers for 2019

As you might have noticed, this year's report has been held back for a couple of months. Usually I report on the running season up to September, however with the Christmas sessions becoming significant I waited to include them in the annual report.

The 2019 summer season, our 66th, was generally a quiet one with no significant events and best of all not a single washout, even if we had to cut some afternoons short! The weather was kind to us and we did not suffer any distractions from the 'funfair' that had affected previous years. So how did we do? Our public were very loyal to us again and we carried 25,551 of them during the season, well over the average of 23,321 (I will add the Christmas total later).

And so to Christmas! Last year gave us the experience of queues round the café and along the path by the 'Jungle', so we had an idea of what to expect but not this year. Friday saw the queue rapidly extend towards the Harvester with waiting times over ½ hour. Luckily the passengers were very happy with the display we put on, so very few, if any, complaints were heard, apparently an hour's wait is the norm at most theme parks! Saturday went manic again with the queue up to the patio by the Harvester and a waiting time of about an hour or a little bit more. This looks like our maximum capacity! But then along came Sunday. I was not present but did experience some traffic congestion in Haywards Heath (nothing to do with us 'Guv', honest). All our passengers arrived in a rush, the queue split into two, one to the Harvester and a second branch along the pergola, over the short tunnel & towards the car park!

The crazy numbers? Friday 676, Saturday 1165, Sunday 996 and the final very wet Monday 470, making a grand total of 3,307 (excluding 'freebies') for the weekend. That represents 13% of our annual total of 28,858, which is the highest for 11 years. I'm not sure if we have ever carried these numbers even over the bank holidays of the early Millennium.

I think the hard work by the core group of members involved was well worth it and much appreciated by our public, some of whom came a long way to ride.

The all-time total has now reached 1,539,204. Those that are daft enough to follow my ramblings each year will know the 'Telephone Number' is now near Ambleside in the Lake District!

Look out for a second dose of 'number crunching' in the February edition and prior to the fare rise.

Chris S

Clubhouse Floor – By Andrew B

Before the WLE got underway, the old tiled clubhouse floor was stripped, levelled and a new industrial covering laid in its place. Those of you who use the clubhouse will know of the crack that has slowly appeared where the front and rear sections of the building meet. This has worsened to the point where the committee felt that remedial action should be taken and thus a new floor laid. Hopefully the rubberised screed will take up future movement and the top surface will be good for many years to come (**picture next page – nearing completion**).



Work in Progress

With the WLE and paid work taking up a lot of time prior to Christmas, progress on a number of projects has been slower than planned (now where have I heard that before). Neither the Euro nor National lotteries are doing much to help either! That said, progress on the guards van project continues with the step board stanchions now in place and the step boards themselves being prepared for fitting. The wheels on the van required re-turning so I attempted this on my ML7. No problem for 3 out of the 4, but 1 of the wheels slipped on the axle during turning! Knowing the old axles were made without shoulders I took a chance and proceeded to turn them anyway. Given that 1 had now slipped, I changed tack and turned up 2 new axles, 1/8" bigger in diameter, so a shoulder could be accommodated. The remaining 3 wheels were then pushed off the old axles, cleaned and then pushed + Loctited to the new axles. The wheel treads have now been finished to remove any machine marks and both axles are now ready for re-fitting to the chassis. Once the step boards have been completed, a 'quick' re-paint will then be undertaken to complete this moderate overhaul...

Andrew B

Forthcoming & Diary of Events – By Andrew B

Alexandra Palace LMEE is next weekend and we are now pretty much ready for our display stand. The proposed line-up of 'BR Standard' locomotives is still taking place but in a slightly reduced form to the previous plan. As such, the proposed turntable arrangement has been withdrawn for this year but we still plan to have 6 'BR Standard' locomotives and 2 BR 'Mark 1' carriages on display.

Our position is slightly altered too and we are now located at the end of our previous aisle adjacent to the Rose Window (south end of the main hall). As recently as last weekend, John B has designed a banner for us to display in lieu of the cast aluminium sign we have used in previous years. The banners will allow us to display 'Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society' to two sides of the stand and in a more prominent raised position. A report + pictures from Alexandra Palace will appear in the February edition.

The AGM has now been confirmed as Saturday 7th March at 14:00. An Agenda + Minutes from 2019 will be sent towards the end of January.

Good Friday, 10th April, marks the official start to our 2020 running season, although some testing and unadvertised running may commence during the weekends prior to this, weather permitting!

Looking further ahead and the aforementioned outing to Fawley Hill will take place on Sunday 26th April. Unless, like some newspaper readers, you start from the back of this edition, you will have seen the details for this on pages 3 & 4!

Friday 8th May is VE Day Anniversary Bank Holiday and we plan to run a service on this day. Details of any special arrangements will be in the next edition.

Into mid-summer and our Open Day will take place on Saturday 20th June. Details for the Open Day will appear in the February or April editions.

The following weekend and a 24-hour run has been pencilled in for Friday 26th into Saturday 27th. This will start Friday afternoon with continuous running until 24 hours later on the Saturday. Details are to be confirmed with Steve S in the lead.

Finally for now, and hot off the press, the Focus Model Engineers will visit us on Wednesday 29th July. An earlier visit during the season is being planned too.

I shall keep the Diary updated in the next edition with more to follow for 2020...

16th – 19th January 2020 – SMLS to exhibit at Alexandra Palace – See above

7th March 2020 – SMLS AGM at Beech Hurst – Will start from 14:00

10th April 2020 – Good Friday – Official 2020 running season commences

26th April 2020 – SMLS to visit Fawley Hill – See separate article on pages 3 & 4

8th May 2020 – VE Day Anniversary Bank Holiday – Details of the service TBC

20th June 2020 – SMLS Open Day – Will start from 14:00

26th / 27th June 2020 – 24 hour run – See details above

29th July 2020 – Focus Model Engineers to visit Beech Hurst – From 10:00

26th / 27th September 2020 – Last weekend of 2020 running season

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.