

THE BALLENY BLAST



Stan Jones's New Locomotive

[Issue 57](#)

[Summer 2005](#)

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N.B. Should you require the services of a boiler inspector, please contact one beforehand. Please do not simply arrive at the ground and assume that there will be one available.

EDITORIAL

The last two editions of the Balleny Blast have concentrated on the need for improved communication and the uncertainty of the future of the Society. In this edition, a letter from Roger Timings not only details the problems facing us, but also, goes a long way to solving many of them. His suggestions are not 'pie in the sky', but realistic solutions to our problems. Indeed, one of his suggestions in connection with the ladies has already happened in that Carol Whiston has become our new Programme Secretary. However, for Carol to be successful in her new role, she needs **your support and input**.

Progress can take many different routes, and your editor has long been of the opinion that the Blast has not achieved its true potential due largely to lack of input from the membership, but also because it is too historic, being only produced 4 times per annum.

For these reasons, this will be the **last Balleny Blast**, and is being replaced by "**Steaming Ahead**", a monthly newsletter produced by Steve Whitson, which will be far more topical, and hopefully generate more participation by the members in the Society's events and projects. In order to keep costs to a minimum, we would request that all members who have access to e-mail, have their copy sent to them in this form.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to the Blast.

Garry Tyso.

TRACK REPLACEMENT

The ground level track is due to be OUT OF OPERATION from Tuesday 11th October 2005 until Sunday 30th October to allow replacement of the track from the entrance of the tunnel to a point near the convergence of the inner and outer loops.

YOUR HELP AT BALLENEY GREEN DURING THIS PERIOD WOULD BE APPRECIATED IN ORDER TO MINIMISE THE TIME THE TRACK IS OUT OF ACTION.

FOR SALE

2 x locomotive building/maintenance tables manufactured from 40 x 40 RHS and fitted with rubber tyred swivel castors. Tables are 1000mm long x 500mm wide x 940 to rail height and fitted with 6lbs/yd. rail which is adjustable to suit 3.1/2", 5", and 7.1/4" gauges.

PRICE: £25.00 EACH.

Contact: Garry Tyso

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

As one of the members that helped to dig the pond out, I now wish I hadn't. I do think we have been very lucky because I think the pond is a disaster waiting to happen. My opinion is that we should fill it in, because it has little or no maintenance and does nothing for us.

Jim Bayliss

The pond has now been significantly improved thanks to the efforts of Stan Jones, Dudley Saxton and MikeBrophy. Ed.

Dear Editor,

Where do we go from here – a reply.

The 56th issue of the Balleny Blast carried two articles under the headings of “Comment” and “Where do we go from here”. Whilst agreeing with most of the comments and suggestions made therein, I feel they do not go far enough. In my opinion there are three alternatives, namely:

Backwards;
Stay as we are;
Forwards.

There are some members who, looking back with fond nostalgic memories, would like to return to the days of Lea Marston where the rain never fell and the sun always shone. Such are the wonders of selective memories.

From the moment we invested in the present site at Little Hay this no longer remained an option.

Balleny Green is a valuable asset and cannot be compared with the “shoe string” operation of the early days of SC&NBMES at LeaMarston.

Like all societies with an ageing membership there are those who merely wish to maintain the status quo and stay as we are. Again this is not possible. We can't stop growing older and, unlike many clubs and societies in other walks of life, we have failed to encourage a steady recruitment of younger members as replacements for those of us who, like it or lump it, are coming to the end of our useful shelf life. Another five years or so and the number of members who will still be active and capable of physical and financial input to keep Balleny Green open as costs rise will be getting very thin on the ground. Some members may take the view that as long as the facilities last their lifetime, why bother about the future? To let the present facilities simply “wither on the vine” would be downright selfish and discourteous to those members who have laboured long and hard in fair weather and foul and have soldiered on, often in the face of adverse and unwarranted criticism, to build the Society that the members and visiting public so much enjoy today.

So we are left with the third choice, namely **to move forward**. I can offer no simple solutions as to how this may be achieved or how to avoid the problems that are beginning to stack up ahead of us if the Society is not to “run into the buffers” in the not too distant future. However, here are some thoughts that the Directors and Members might care to consider.

1. Membership. First and foremost we require a larger and expanding membership base to provide the finance and labour to keep the Society open and provide the active members we need for our public running days – guards, stewards, drivers, kitchen staff etc. This would result in sharing the work between more members so that we would not have to keep calling on the same willing horses all the time. What is the normal means by which companies and societies expand their customer and membership base? **Advertise.** We already have a database of some 250 punters who we regularly contact for our public running events and it would cost no more in postage to include an invitation to join in the next mail shot. **I would be willing to draft a suitable letter for the Board to consider.** Since all these people are known to us there would be a negligible security risk. We could start by offering driver instruction. Look at the opportunities we miss every birthday party. Let the ground level track be used for passenger hauling and the raised level track be used for driver instruction for mums, dads and nippers. Let’s harness children’s “pester power”. I quote from the Model Engineer: *‘Mike Casey of the Isle of Man reports that there is plenty of interest amongst youngsters at the local club with about half of new members being teenagers. They have about a dozen new members and at 14 they are very good drivers. They do not forget things like the older members. They pay £1.00 for membership and help out with a variety of jobs’.* In another article it is stated that: *‘at the Gilling main line facility children as young as eight years of age can easily manage the complex skills needed for the working of complex signalling systems and that they are*

attracting plenty of 50 year olds for their driver weekends'. Our neighbours at Illshaw Heath, Birmingham SME, report that: '*they are training new drivers on the club Simplex to broaden the available driver base*'. If they can do it, so can we. New members do not have to be engineers, locomotive owners, or locomotive builders. If they join, we teach them! That is why sports clubs have extensive coaching facilities.

2. Development and diversification. We need to look beyond steam locomotives in the 21st century. The number of people with the time, money, skills, facilities and desire to build a complicated 71/4" gauge locomotive from scratch are few indeed. Your editor suggested kit building and this does partly answer the problem. However, kits for passenger hauling steam locomotives from the more reliable suppliers are still expensive. Diesel outline battery electric locomotives suitable for extended passenger hauling can now be bought ready to run or in flat-pack kit form at low cost from Compass House Ltd., in both 5" gauge and 71/4" gauge. These are well detailed models with an assortment of optional extras available if required. Why do we keep harping on about locomotives? In this IT age, many youngsters are interested in electronics, radio control and computer control. Radio controlled boats come to mind. If these are steam or electrically driven, there is no problem of noise pollution to upset the neighbours. What about a boating pool in the middle of the raised track? NOT A HOLE IN THE GROUND but a prefabricated pool above ground so that the toddlers cannot fall in and the old men would not have to get down on their knees! For example, the sort of temporary pool that appears at every model exhibition these days. I understand these are hired for the occasion. Since they are not a permanent structure, presumably, no planning permission is required. Could Barry Wincott and his friends from the Kingsbury Water Park offer advice? Lets try it out at a future Garden Party as an added attraction with the chance for the visitors to try their hand at driving a boat round an obstacle course. More simple would be battery

electric radio controlled cars to drive round an obstacle course, again as an added attraction at first. Computer controlled robots, good old fashioned Meccano and whatever happened to steam road vehicles? The alternative interests are limitless.

3. The Ladies. A wasted (waisted) asset in every sense of the word. Why are we so chauvinistic and banish the ladies to the kitchen? Many ladies these days are professionally qualified engineers, solicitors or legal assistants, chartered accountants, graduate business managers, etc. In other societies and clubs with which I have contact, they are the company secretaries, treasurers, and head up the organisational sub-committees. Instead of hiding their lights under a tea towel, let's see them driving trains and on the Board.

4. Mentors. One complaint I have heard from many new (and some old) members is our unfriendliness to new members. Members who were virtually ignored for the first few weeks and even months of their membership. If we are to have new members, then an established member (or members) should be allocated to induct them into the Society and guide them for the first few weeks whilst they find their feet – in other words, a 'buddy system'.

5. Branding. Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society Ltd., - when we have few if any connections with Sutton Coldfield and are sited in the midst of Lichfield District Council? Perhaps the local council would feel more friendly towards future planning applications if we re-branded the Society and became the Lichfield and District Model Engineering Society Ltd. Further, my experience of dealing with local authorities for planning applications indicates that however expert we are at drawing up plans, and however closely we abide by the building and planning regulations, such applications are nowadays rarely given serious consideration if the plans are not drawn up and

the application is not made by a professional architect on the council register. Wheels within wheels!

Summing up, we are now in a new millennium so don't let us emulate the TV programme and become known as the society of "Grumpy Old Men" but let's open up the Society to new members young and old and not only teach them how to enjoy our present interests of "playing trains" but also cater for their new interests if that is what they would prefer. In the short term it will mean hard work but in the long term we will be able to sit back in the sure knowledge that what we have laboured to build up will pass into the safe hands of the next generation and continue to give pleasure to many. It will then have been all worthwhile.

Roger Timings 29/06/05

TREASURER'S COLUMN

There has been a fair amount of adverse comment relating to the recent increase in Full and Senior membership subscriptions, so I have a proposal which may appease some of the protesters.

I have suggested to the Board that we could offer a discount to those Full and Senior members who are prepared to help at fund raising events. Details of the scheme are yet to be ratified, but my own thoughts are as follows:

We would offer a reduction of up to £10.00 in next year's subscription renewal at the rate of £1.00 per event attended. In order to avoid a situation where all members turn out for one birthday party, and then none are available for the next, interested members should liaise with the Birthday Party Co-ordinator, currently Terry Dell, to indicate their availability.

If sufficient interest is shown in favour of this scheme, we could draw up a rota of available helpers, which would in turn enable us to accept

more requests to hold parties, thus generating revenue to replace the reduction in subscription income.

As Associate and Junior subscriptions are already subsidised by the Society, I regret that this scheme will be limited to Full and Senior members only.

For those of you who may be tempted to dismiss this idea out of hand, may I remind you that you did agree to help with fund raising events when you joined the Society.

Before implementing this scheme, feedback would be welcomed, either through the Editor, Party Co-ordinator, Membership Secretary, or directly to myself.

Chris Greene
Treasurer

What a Difference a Direction Makes

Having been in the club since Jan 1986, there has never been much call for opposite direction running at BG. I have always just missed some one doing it or heard of there tales about their run. Very recently I was invited by Gary Tyso and Chris Greene to run the other way and **wow!!** What a difference. So watch this space as we are trying to get a Sunday steam day running the other way, it can be done with out to much trouble, but we will need some flag persons and point operators.

S J Hodgetts

Ed,
August Bank Holiday Monday is an opposite direction running day at BG.





Please note that any opinions expressed in this edition of the Blast are solely those of the Editor, or the contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Board.

Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society Ltd

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS & EVENTS FOR 2005

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject / Title</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Venue</u>
Sun 21st Aug 2005	Garden Party		BG
Sun 28th Aug 2005	Bank Holiday Steam Up		BG
Mon 29th Aug 2005	Bank Holiday Steam Up		BG
Sun 4th Sept 2005	Party Kids West Midlands		BG
Sun 18th Sept 2005	Birthday Party		BG
Sun 25th Sept 2005	Birthday Party		BG
Sun 2nd Oct 2005	1st Sunday of the Month Steam-Up		BG
Sun 9th Oct 2005	Birthday Party		BG

Sun 16th Oct 2005	Track Work – All Members.		BG
Sun 23rd Oct 2005	Track Work – All Members.		BG
Sun 30th Oct 2005	Track Work – All Members.		BG
Sun 6th Nov 2005	Working Party for Bonfire Party		BG
Sat 12th Nov 2005	Bonfire Party (helpers required)		BG
Sun 13th Nov 2005	Working Party Clean UP		BG
Sun 20th Nov 2005	Track Work – All Members.		BG
Sun 27th Nov 2005	Track Work – All Members.		BG
Sun 4th Dec 2005	Santa Special ONE		BG
Sun 11th Dec 2005	Santa Special TWO		BG
Sun 25th Dec 2005	Christmas Day		
Sun 26th Dec 2005	Bank Holiday		
Sun 27th Dec 2005	Bank Holiday		

Key to Venues

WGL = Wylde Green Community Hall
BG = Balleny Green