

November 2011

Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society

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STEAMING AHEAD



Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society

Your support is needed at the Santa Specials—4 & 11 December!

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Bill Colman	
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Stuart Harrison	
Peter Robinson	01543-253343
David Smith	0121-351-7876

Events This Month-

November

Sunday	6th	Steam Up	10:00
Saturday	12th	Bonfire Night	18:00
Tuesday	15th	Evening Meeting	19:30

Dates for Your Diary

December

Sunday	4th	Santa Specials	11:00
Sunday	11th	Santa Specials	11:00
Friday	16th	Members Xmas Party	19:30
Monday	26th	Boxing Day Steam Up	10:00

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Copy Date is the last Tuesday of the month

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Raised Level Steaming Bay Project Update

The civil engineering side of the above project is now complete with the installation of the last steaming bay on Tuesday November 1st. There are now 7 steaming bays in total - 2 x 7.25" full height steaming bays, 1 x 7.25" half height steaming bay, 1 x 7.25"/5" half height steaming bay and transfer road, 3 x 7.25"/5" ground level steaming bays. All of the floor area was completed on Wednesday 2nd November. Alan Leary and David Smith have now completed the decking.

There now remain buffer stops to be fitted to 3 bays, a sliding location plate at each end of the turntable, and a spigot to be fitted to both ends of the turntable which will locate in a vertical channel section on all raised steaming bays to prevent turntable rotation whilst in the rising/raised position.

Once the above is complete, electrical sensors to determine the height to which the turntable will rise, a push button mounted on the control frame, and 12/24 volt supply to all steaming bays will complete the project, hopefully within the next 4/5 weeks.

Garry Tyso

Email Check-up

It has been drawn to my attention that a number of the email addresses held for our membership are wrong or out of date. Rather than chasing up individuals I thought it would be easier to ask Steve publish a full list of the current details (its on your separate address sheet which came with this Magazine! - Ed). I would ask members to check that the email address held for them is correct, if not please send an email using the email identity that you would like used to Eric Davies and myself at:-

Eric - janded@blueyonder.co.uk
Mark - mark@mybradley.me.uk

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If you are not on the list then no email address is held for you, if you want one added then please send me the details.

If members could please let me have the corrections by 25 November, then I will publish a corrected list in the December issue of 'Steaming Ahead'.

Mark Bradley

A message from the box office

Some members have asked me to hold Bonfire and Santa tickets in reserve on behalf of their friends. I consider this to be an unfair practice, as our website and the mail shot newsletter both state that tickets are limited and will be issued on a first come, first served basis.

As long as the tickets are available, I am happy to allocate tickets to your friends, but I can only deal with them on production of a completed application form accompanied by the appropriate payment.

Chris Greene.

Prizes Wanted ...

We will be having our usual Tombola at the two Santa Specials. Can we ask please for donations of any suitable Tombola gifts, especially for the adult age range.

They can be left in the club house labelled "tombola" or given to Val or Bill Betts

Many thanks in anticipation

Val Betts

Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society Report to Midland Fed- May-October'11

It has been another busy summer season of events which are now drawing to a close. As well as several enjoyable Tuesday night meetings at Balleny Green, during the period May to the end of September we have held a Spring Steam Event, Garden Party, and Barber's Shop event.

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We have also hosted the National 2½" Gauge Society Midlands rally and visits from the Erewash Valley and Wolverhampton model engineering societies. All the above events have become annual fixtures in our calendar. In addition, we have hosted three birthday parties, and are due to host the final one of this year this weekend. All events have passed off successfully and without incident. The final events for this year will be the forthcoming Bonfire Night and two Santa Special events.

Several of us attended the Midland Federation Rally at Rugeley and really enjoyed the excellent hospitality and facilities they shared with us.

In spite of the busy calendar mentioned above, work on the track and infrastructure has continued apace with virtually all of the existing running lines having now been replaced with new flat-bottomed rail.

Good progress has also been made towards replacing all the wooden sleepers with plastic ones. In the last few weeks the station area has been re-laid thus. This had become urgent as the wooden sleepers had deteriorated to the extent whereby the rail was sinking into the ground. This became apparent when we observed that our large diesel was starting to "walk" through the station on its outside fly-cranks!

Major modifications to the ground level steaming-bays are also nearing completion. The turntable pit has been excavated and an elevating turntable has been installed.

To match this, the old ground level steaming bays have been replaced with elevated ones – this makes oiling round and access to ash-pans much easier.

Work on the signalling system continues with further modifications being made in the light of operational experience gained over the last few months.

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A new permanent signal box has been installed at the bottom of Pond Junction to replace the old “Ted’s Cabin”.

The new locomotive loading/unloading lift for the elevated track has also been completed.

We have had two incidents requiring investigation. The first was a derailment caused by a point re-setting to its default position whilst a train was passing over it.

This resulted in a damaged driving car including a broken flange. This was due to a faulty switch on the point motor, and steps have been taken to avoid this situation recurring. The second incident involved a large branch breaking off an oak tree at the bottom of the field. Fortunately the branch fell within our neighbours’ boundary and no-one was injured. Although the tree was known to be deteriorating, work to attend to it was scheduled for later in the year. It has raised the issues of ownership of trees on boundaries, and also the safety assessments required.

In a separate development to this, the committee decided that all tree cutting should henceforth be done by contractors in the interests of the health and safety of our members.

Peter McMillan

Club Signal System Update

During September the switch box (SB3) in the new signal box has been upgraded. It is now much more informative and it is fitted with a “PJ reset” button. This resets the points to default and all the memory latches in or near PJ. The greatest care must be taken when it is used as points could be moved under trains and because the track section memory is cleared which means that the positions of all local trains are lost and approach signals go to green. The operator of this button must use hand signals to stop trains.

Upgrading of the two driver operated switch boxes SB1 and SB2 is to follow.

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These will have a new more representative mimic, the switches will be replaced with push buttons and the route light system will be improved.

The “PJ Busy” LEDs will be removed and the green route lights will be replaced with blue LEDs so there is no confusion with signal greens.

The route lights will indicate three situations each. When a LED is off it means that this route cannot be selected now.

When a LED is flashing that route can be selected now.

When a LED is on that route is selected.

If there are no other trains near PJ the default “straight route” LED will be on and the other two will be flashing, meaning that the driver can use the default route without touching the switch box or either of the other two routes can be selected by pushing the appropriate button. The selected route LED will then go on and the others out.

The driver can then proceed only if the main signals permit. The feathers will then be a guide.

I held a signal update evening recently on a Tuesday evening where I explained the operation of SB3 and obtained support for the changes to SB1 and SB2. Many thanks to all who came we had a full house.

We then discussed the traffic bottleneck that occurs before to PJ. I explained that on both lines there were sections which average 112ft followed by one of 328ft on the outer track and a badly positioned signal on the inner.

This means that two trains following each other round the outer track at the same speed would be able to keep going one section apart until the second train reaches the start of PJ when it would have to wait while the first travelled a further 216 ft. This would also hold up a train on the inner track.

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The obvious solution is to install an additional signal half way up the hill on the outer track.

The original objections were discounted because the track is improved, the gradient is even and in any case a driver who is concerned about restarting on the hill can wait at the start of PJ until the hill is clear.

The meeting of over twenty members voted unanimously in favour of this idea and I am proposing to ask the board to approve it. We did not discuss the details of moving the signal in PJ on the inner track but I will make a proposal on that as well.

Bill Colman

Grounds maintenance and Misc Notes

TUESDAY 4TH

The good weather carried on over the weekend and I was able to clear the bonfire early with little smoke well before most members arrived.

Stuart had opened up by the time I arrived so with the bonfire going well I went down to the store, got the lawn tractor out and started mowing the main area and copses. Grenville arrived and we agreed that he would carry on the hedging cutting from the store up to the level crossing and then round to the gate. Bill let Grenville have his hedge cutter and I promised to send the team to assist clearing up as they arrived.

Roger arrived and went for the tractor, trailer, rakes and 'large hands' for getting up all the cuttings. Dave and John also arrived and went to assist Roger clearing up – yes it takes three to keep up with Grenville. We all made excellent progress and I'd mowed the main area, copses and the area inside the high level track by coffee break time. Quickly joined by Grenville, Roger, Dave and then John for a coffee/tea break before getting back to work.

To help clear the small bits of debris and large amount of leaves in the wake of the team I got the leaf blower.

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The blower works quite well and I'd soon caught up with the others and so went to assist clearing up with Grenville who, by that time, had reached the entrance gate and end of our hedge. Around twelve most of the work was finished and we had a pile of cuttings bigger than I'd burnt off, but which could not be burnt because of being green and consequently the amount of smoke it would have created.

Peter and Mike Brophy, and with the tractor being driven by Mike (Bentley), had made a good start clearing the pool and its edges, dumping wet vegetation in the lower copse and dry grass on the bonfire but see elsewhere for their report. Ron F is much improved and has restarted work on the benches that so desperately need a good cleaning and coat of paint before the winter.

A good day's work and the site is looking ready for the Birthday Party on Sunday. However, next week, weather permitting, we have to make a start on the shrubbery and Beech Hedge before tackling the

very high branches on the 'Myatt' side of the site – subject to Bills high reach cutter. My thanks to the team and Bill for the loan of his equipment again.

TUESDAY 11TH

At the board meeting last Tuesday evening I requested permission to purchase a hedge cutter for the society; it's unfair to rely totally on any member's goodwill and Bill has been extremely generous. The board agreed to the purchase of a hedge cutter – Stihl HS86 the same as Bills -- which I purchased at a good discount from Seddon's where the two mowers came from.

Today we started running it in – cutting the conifer hedge by the level crossing, bushes between the tracks just beyond the station, the beech hedge and laurel hedge behind the high level station and then the lilacs and photina by the Goat Hedge crossing.

Grenville, Roger, John and I had a break mid morning and enjoyed watching the activity of Allan and Dave's teams working

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on the turn table and station platform 1 track. The pile of green cuttings for burning is now getting very large and could not be burnt today for two reasons, first the wind direction blowing down the field and second the amount of green which would have created too much smoke.

Brian and Mark arrived, still braving it with the cars hood down. Brian brought parts for the light sensor arrangement on the station approach he had produced for Bill and they disappeared to sort that out. Mark D put up the bird nesting boxes he and his wife had repaired. They will provide some protection for the birds in the cold weather and hopefully a new brood in the spring.

Ron Bates arrived later on and with Mike B we sorted out what was to be done to brick up the window at the level crossing end of the club house. Once this is done and the building secure the recess inside will have shelving installed to take the library, giving a bit more space for the meeting area.

TUESDAY 18TH

Fist a thank to Stuart for making a special journey and opening up for St Giles Hospice to drop of more chairs and bonfire material last Thursday.

An early start today; after picking up diesel to light the bonfire I arrived at Little Hay about 7.50am (yes 7.50) because Ron, our new member and builder, had agreed to brick in the club house window that has been waiting to be done for a long time. He was waiting in his van when I arrived and quickly got started once we had opened up the club house and cleared all the books from the window ledge.

Wind direction wrong direction for the bonfire today so off to open up the maintenance store and get the tractor, trailer, rakes and saws to make a start on the shrubbery adjacent to the pool. Grenville arrived and got the hedge cutter fuelled up and made a start --- long over due to be cut back hard. Roger arrived and asked if he could have the tractor and trailer to work with the Garry, Dave, Allan D,

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team clearing the scrap and loading it into Garry's van and trailer.

I started raking up the cuttings into piles and trying to keep up with Grenville; to my relief Dave B arrived shortly followed by Rod, another new member, and all three of us worked making the cuttings into large piles ready to take to the bonfire. Because the shrubbery had grown so much Grenville and Dave had to use loppers and saws to bring it back to a reasonable height. It will benefit from cutting and grow back more thickly but at a manageable height.

I had to leave for about an hour and was pleased when I got back to see they had completed the cutting and were taking the cuttings to the bonfire. Fortunately Garry's and Dave's team's had finished with the tractor and trailer and I was able to use it to move the large remaining pile of shrubbery to the bonfire along with Dave on the Muck Truck. Consequently the bonfire has more than doubled in size but will have to

wait until next week when hopefully I will be able to burn it off.

Most of the others were having their lunch by the time I finished and put away the tractor, trailer and tools and joined them. I checked to see how Ron had got on with bricking up the window; he was just putting the finishing touches to the mornings work and all that remained was for him to bring a line of bricks cut in half to complete the top line. On his next visit he will complete the brickwork and put in the insulation, plaster board and finish off the plastering.

We joined the others for lunch under the patio as the meeting room tables were covered in piles of books and other items moved away from the window, were Ron had been working. After lunch I walked down to the maintenance store area to see how it looked after the clear up. With the steel, cable, stainless and other scrap gone Dave and Allan D have made a good start tidying the area up.

A lot of hard work again today by everyone, but worth it for the benefits and even a boost to club funds – but see elsewhere for more about that.

TUESDAY 25TH

Another early start today, as with last week Ron wanted to get on with finishing the bricking up of the end window. Again Ron was waiting in his van for me to unlock at 7.50am. Like last week I was hoping to get rid of the great pile of hedge and shrubbery cuttings, so while Ron got started on the window I checked which way the wind was blowing. Fortunately it was from the south/south east so a pile of newspaper, some dry wood and bingo with the magic ingredient, a gallon of diesel and the bonfire was burning very well.

Then back to see how Ron was getting on; he had cut the insulation which comes bonded to the plaster board and was busy fixing it in place. It was now about quarter to nine and, good to his trade, he

responded with an immediate yes to the offer of a cup of tea. As I was making it the first of the others arrived and we sat talking for a few minutes.

Grenville, Rod and I agreed the priority today was getting the grass cut and to leave cutting back the shrubbery because there would not be enough time to get it cleared and burnt before bonfire night. With that we got the mowers and made a start; Roger arrived and took over the lawn tractor while I saw to the bonfire and checked on Ron's progress.

Ron had finished fixing the insulation and plaster board to the inside of the bricks and had gone outside to complete the top row of half bricks and clean it all down.

The finished plaster inside is now drying off after which it will be painted and shelving installed to take the library books and other society items, notices etc. Ron's done a very good job – thanks Ron.

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The morning went quickly with a lot of work done and the site nice and tidy. Even better after Allan D went round clearing all the odd bits of slab, stones and bricks left around the site and in the hedges over the past twelve months or so. Grenville, Roger, Rod finished mowing but left John C doing the banks, by the level crossing with the hover mower. Quite difficult and tiring as the mower is takes a bit of handling – looks good John.

Hammering and banging were emanating from the gate area -- Brian and Mark installing a sliding ticket window in the new ticket shed and making it secure with a shutter covering both windows. There you go --- no the window was not broken!!! Meanwhile Stuart and John have been busy working on the fencing alongside the track leading to the tunnel from the station – part of the work to allow visitors to use the route over the tunnels to reach the pick-nick area. Looking very good.

Dave Marchant arrived around lunch time to look at making repairs to the lawn tractor bonnet where the other tractors ball hitch has damaged it.

Eric Davies

Found ...

The picture below shows a miniature Castle class locomotive name plate, it was found among some Model Engineer magazines left in the carriage shed. It is not clear if it has been donated to the Society or was mixed up in the magazines unknown to whoever left them there.

If the name plate is yours, can you please contact Mark Bradley in the first instance.



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Thank you!

I just want to say a very big thank you to everyone who goes to Balleny Green for helping me to continue enjoying my time there. Barry and I have always loved it there, as driving his locos was one of his passions. In fact he did offer to swap me for a 7 ¼" Black Five if ever one came up for sale (that being his favourite loco to work on in his days as a fireman on the big railway). He did however have one or two conditions on the swap – I had to be there to cook his dinner of an evening and to make his bed in the morning.

I still love and look forward to the birthday parties that we have at our track site and the other events such as the garden party and Santa specials – be it being station master(ess) for the elevated track or (best of all) driving our loco. The children and some of the dad's think it a little odd for a lady to be driving.

It is mainly due to our Chairman for our being able to get to Balleny Green as he collects me and takes me home; also on occasions Alan P – they both know just how much I appreciate it. Mind you, it gives the neighbours something to talk about – especially when Allan L turns up in his Lomax 3 wheeler!

My son and daughter are also pleased that I am able to get to Balleny Green, knowing that I have something to look forward to. My 2 grown-up grandsons call me their 'Loco Nan' – they say "how many more 78 year old great grandma's do you know who drive locomotives and really love doing it."

To those who do not go to Balleny Green, why not give it a go, come and help at some of the birthday parties – the children absolutely love it (and their parents!) and all say it has been the best party they have ever been to. Santa Specials are great too, even in the snow.

Just wrap up warm, look at the faces of ALL the visitors – that says it all. My own 2 great grandchildren are coming from Luton for this year's Santa's – they think our Train Santa is the best and the train rides are glorious.

So as I said, come along, join in the fun and enjoy yourself at the same time. A huge thank you to everyone who helps me have fun and a happy time at Ballney Green. It really helps keep me going.

Betty Wincott.

An eventful day at Ballney Green

Saturday 15 October dawned bright and Jeana decided to drop me early at Ballney Green so the girls could have a real good get together. There were already 2 cars at the gateway and several concerned faces – No keys! Eventually one was found, carried aloft and the gate secured open.

Jeana headed into the clubhouse to ensure that the tea urn was topped up and that the elixir of model engineers would not be lacking. But there appeared to be no milk! Jeana duly went to Shenstone to collect some – at this point our Treasurer innocently came round the corner and saw Jeana clutching 2 large milk cartons, only to be told she had just purchased them so we would not be without tea. A look of panic “Can I reimburse you for the milk?” was heard to pass his lips. Jeana appreciating his state of shock reassured him that she was donating the milk and hoped we all had a lovely day.

Gary had started pre-running preparations and was explaining some of the steaming bay facilities while I set off to walk the track clearing odd piles of leaves and twigs.

Even so, a twig dropped after my checks, but was spotted in ample time on the first run at modest speed.

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I was soon joined by Graham with his American 4-4-0 and then the Roanoke. It came off shed in front of me and after a couple of uneventful laps the 37 suddenly made horrible noises and derailed just after Pool Junction signal box. Duty signalman rushed over to see what was amiss. Something was obviously wrong with the rear bogie and the front was derailed. The culprit was very hot and wedged underneath. Unbeknown to its driver, Roanoke had shed its silencer and I had found it. General opinion it was noisy anyway and didn't seem to have made much difference. Next lap, one of our junior members waved at me to stop at a red signal – “we are out of fuel” I was advised. As Guard, he was protecting his train. Dave Moseley duly arrived with a can containing enough to reach NE corner.

Some junior lady members were driving very commendably under supervision on the Roanoke and another junior on a

steamer equally competently. During the day, I also found 2 pricklers but lost an axle box cover.

All in all, another very enjoyable day.

Bill Hall.

