

July –Aug 2011

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STEAMING AHEAD



Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society

Birthday Party 9th Oct Help Please

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Events This Month-

Sun 04 September 2011	Steam Up	10am onwards
Sat 17 September 2011	Steam Up	1pm onwards
Sun 18 September 2011	Southern Fed Meeting	Off site
Tues 20 September 2011	Steam Up Fish & Chips	6pm steam 7pm food

Dates for Your Diary

Sun 02 October 2011	Steam Up	10am-2pm
Sun 09 October 2011	Birthday Party	2pm-4pm
Sat 15 October 2011	Steam Up	12 noon onwards
Tues 18 October 2011	Tues Eve meeting	7.30pm

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Copy Date is the last Tuesday of the month

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Chairman's Chunter

As far as the society is concerned, since the AGM, a fresh year begins. The AGM itself, I feel, was part of a very successful and social day. The meeting, and if you attended you will know, was a relatively short affair and I think it was obvious some of the director reports, particularly mine, were off the cuff and unscripted. That aside, all the required and relevant business was covered without disagreement. As stated at the meeting I wish to repeat my thanks to both David Moseley and Steve Whitson for their committed service to the society as directors over the last six years. Their seats will take some filling. One issue I need to put straight is that during the meeting I said I would need a new project leader for the high level extension plan as Steve was no longer a director. A total misunderstanding on my part and Steve, thankfully, is to continue as project leader. When all the official and serious business (was I at the same meeting?) was concluded and the meeting closed the day continued into the evening including an acceptable barbeque (I hope). Everyone appeared to have enjoyed themselves so I am putting the day down as a success. I thank all who organised and assisted in the running of such a good day, especially our regular volunteers. A few weeks before the date of the Garden party the event appeared to be doomed to failure. We had sold in the region of seventeen tickets, a worrying

situation. As time passed and with innovative advertising the 'fire began to glow' and on the day some fifty seven cars, excluding members, and over two hundred visitors were on site. Two hours before opening time the sun was shining and spirits were high. Thanks to good organisation and hard work by the time the gates opened we were ready for our guests even though, by now, the sky was a little overcast. After a short period of BR syndrome, wrong trains in wrong places, we were in full swing and serving a very pleasant public of all generations. Some guests set up camp as if the event was akin to Glastonbury but they were left to enjoy themselves. I think they have all gone home now. Operationally the day was not without incident. Two members locos developed problems, one a cracked gauge glass, eventually repaired and re-steamed and one, more seriously, with a blown gasket. The loco, not the driver. The railway itself showed a few problems which have been noted and will be addressed. Many people volunteered their help at the event to maintain our reputation for great days. Looking after a pool full of plastic ducks or balancing coconuts on a stick just for people to knock them off again needs patience and good will. Also the ladies who ran the catering side of the event did a great job keeping the staff and our visitors well watered. As far as I could tell all of these people went all day without much of a break

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and my gratitude goes to them all. It is a fact without their effort our events would suffer badly.

Feedback received so far has been 100% positive, I feel I can safely state our customers were satisfied.

The development of the site continues but I'll chunter about that next time.

Best wishes to all especially those who could feel better.

Allan

Let's have another chunter!

If you've been daft enough to read the chunter so far you will notice it is really quite out of date.

I apologise to you all for the delay in the publication.

Again, I must stress that those who do their best to produce a monthly Steaming Ahead also have livings to make and families to run.

All offers of help to achieve a monthly edition will be welcome.

The last event mentioned was the garden party early in July. Since then the events have been quite low key affairs.

We had a very enjoyable stationary engine evening which included an excellent buffet. Thanks to all who made the evening a social success. The traction engine night with grub proved to be just as pleasant but what is quite noticeable is that it is the same people attending and getting the benefit of these very sociable evenings. Those of you who are missing out should try one sometime,

they are well worth it.

Mid July we entertained the Barbershop Singers. The afternoon proved to be a very long affair producing a couple of minor misunderstandings. As ever, we coped well and our guests went away satisfied having had a pleasant day. The misunderstandings have been sorted out and we look forward to a booking in 2012.

As I say, we coped well but only because we are so good at what we do and I am grateful to everyone who worked very hard to make the event appear seamless, thank you.

Regarding events, I'm going to finish on a high. We entertained a young chap, together with his family and friends, who was celebrating his birthday.

It was a particularly busy afternoon but the atmosphere was brilliant and both the kids and adults appeared to have had a good time.

This feeling was proved to be correct when a correspondence was received from the parents thanking us all for a truly great party. Well done and thanks to all who assisted.

Around about the site development continues. The station track is in the process of being replaced. One of the three tracks is all but finished as I write.

The raised steaming bays and turntable are progressing well and I believe the area will be fully functional soon.

Members who have used the available raised bays have given very positive

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feedback.

Signalling issues are being addressed and the system is proving, I believe, to be an asset we should be proud of.

Ted's toilet has been replaced with an admirable, fully fitted bed sit.

Regrettably, no en suite. I jest of course the building I am referring to is the new Pond Junction signal box. I understand there is to be a raffle to see who will be signal man on bonfire night.

Again I must thank the members and volunteers who regularly attend fund raising events. You know as well as I do without you the result would be bleak.

I believe I should close now being as you have all fallen asleep so best wishes to you all.

As always, my thoughts and good wishes go especially to you who are not as well as you could be.

Allan.

The Club Signal System Update

A great deal of experience has been gained since the system was installed in April and a number of improvements have already been implemented. A signal repeater at the exit to the station has been added and a small control panel installed in the signal box during July. Two

major changes have now been agreed by the Board.

The two driver's switchboxes SB1 and SB2 are to be moved one section nearer to Pond Junction. Preparations for this improvement have started. The ducts are in place and one of the cables has been pulled in. The software has been written but not tested. To check this and other software I intend to remove the PLC from site and plug it into the mimic at home.

While this is happening there will be no signal or electric point operation on site. A notice will be posted warning members.

Although the wheel count system used on the station siding works well, most of the time, it requires train detectors that are in pristine condition and trains with wheels within specification. To overcome the problems the Board have authorised the purchase of a photoelectric detector beam system that will hopefully be more reliable.

While I have the PLC at home I also hope to test various other changes to the software that

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should make the system safer. It will announce point faults better and ensure that approach signals handle point faults more safely. It will also lock routes selected at SB1 and SB2 more securely. We are also taking steps to improve the protection of point mechanisms so that faults are less likely to arise. Last Tuesday Eric arrived with the very smart new signal box he has made for Pond Junction. This was erected on a prepared plinth. This should be operational in a few days with SB3 mounted in it along with a light and power socket. I am sure I speak for all the members in thanking Eric for this significant contribution to the club.

Bill Colman

JULY 2011 - GROUNDS MAINTAINANCE DIARY AND MISC NOTES

FRIDAY 1ST

As usual the weeds manage to grow in spite of the dryish conditions, so with a calm and dry day I took my sprayer to Little Hay. I managed to do all the tracks, station area, banks and some of the weeds round

the perimeter hedges before leaving.

TUESDAY 5TH

Roger and I sat drinking coffee/tea and talking to other 'early workers' until about 9.15 when we went for the mowers. Because there are only two of us most weeks, for the moment, we concentrated on the front roadside grass, that in the two copses and between the high and ground level tracks.

TUESDAY 12TH

Another fine dry morning and with no real growth on the grass in the main areas, I decided it was only necessary to use the power mowers. I had just filled the larger of the two when John C arrived and said he would take the mower and go over the areas round the road side hedge.

I went back into the store, got the smaller of the two, filled it and had just started it when Roger appeared. He said he would take a pair of shears and deal with long and dangerous thorny brambles growing out from the hedges

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towards the tracks. I asked him to also pull out any of the weeds I had missed when I walked round. In spite of Grenville's weed killing the convolvulus it is still very invasive choking the hedges and a nuisance every year. One plant can produce 500 seeds which can lie dormant in the soil for 20 years.

Having got the mower started I did the Pool Junction areas between the tracks and on the bank between them and the high level track. A break for coffee and I heard about the events on Sunday with the 'singers'. After coffee I worked round the pool and banked areas – seems members 'loose' stones under the shrubbery/bushes because that's where the mower found a lot of them.

With most of the work done and dirty, dusty, hot and sweaty from the mowing I put the mower away and headed for the club house. It was not long before I was joined by others; we started an earlier than usual lunch and sat watching Garry working on the

raised steaming bay tracks.

TUESDAY 19TH

Good morning and with Grenville there when I arrived followed shortly afterwards by Roger and Dave and then John later. Bill has a quiet spell on the signalling and brought his powerful petrol hedge trimmer to make a start on the hedges round the perimeter of the site.

It was agreed that he would start from the Oak tree near the maintenance store and work his way up the 'goat hedge' side. Roger and Dave joined him clearing along with John who drove the tractor and trailer dumping the collected cutting on the bonfire.

I brought Grenville up-to-date with what had been happening and he agreed that weeding was a priority. With the recent rain a whole lot more weeds and grass had appeared in the tracks since I sprayed at the beginning of the month.

Having walked round with him once I left him to continue on the outer track and the station

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and steaming bay areas. Some weeks ago I had said I would attempt to make a signal type box for the SB3 switch and today I brought down the shuttering frame for the concrete based and box base.

Brian, with Mark, have been doing a very job working on installing the new signals and switches around the site and had previously asked me about progress. Together we took the box base and shuttering and then worked out the best position for the box. With the new positions for SB1 & SB2 the box will be in an ideal position to see what's going on and talk to the drivers, advise the drivers.

Bill handed the hedge trimmer over to Dave after coffee and went to help Brian, Mark and Ossy working on the signalling. By lunch Dave, Roger and John had reached the SW corner and there was a growing pile of cuttings on the bonfire.

Graham has now completed the repair work to the signal box balcony and painting is

progressing well.

I'm away on holiday now for the next two Tuesdays so there is no report as I have to get this to Steve Whitson for Steaming Ahead by 26th July.

Finally in my Board Report. Since writing the preceding notes, at some time between the weekend of 16/7th July and Tuesday 19th July the big old Oak tree at the junction of the three properties, near the maintenance store, lost a large branch. I found this early on the Tuesday morning and pushed the branches, hanging over the fence, to the other side. Fortunately the large main branch fell into Mr Myatts property and caused no damage. It was due to the tree being rotten and it is likely that it will happen again, since further up the tree there are more rotten areas.

This type of incident has occurred sooner than I anticipated and the grounds maintenance have no equipment now with which to deal with such events. It was something I was planning to

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report on later in the year and I will discuss what course of action needs to be taken on my return from holiday. In the mean time the board should be prepared to have to spend a substantial sum of money and if possible identify whose property the tree is on/whose responsibility it is.

Eric Davies 21st July 2011

AUGUST 2011 --- GROUNDS MAINTENANCE DIARY AND MISC NOTES

TUESDAY 1ST WEEK

Whilst I was on holiday the team very worked well with Roger mowing, Dave on the hover mower clearing the top two thirds of the banks and John strimming down to the base and tracks reducing the amount of grass getting onto the tracks.

When I arrived on Sunday 7th the site looked quite different and tidy for the 2 ½" Rally and visit of the SCRS. A good day with the rain holding off until late in the afternoon and then only short sharp showers. For

a fuller report see elsewhere. Sunday also saw Brian and Mark putting the final touches to the base of the new signal box.

Unfortunately Bill's professional hedge trimmer had finally given up so the team were not able to progress the work started a couple of weeks ago. Consequently he's had to purchase a new one and although I, on behalf of the Society, suggested the Society make a contribution he would have none of it. So thank you Bill, your generosity bringing your trimmer and other equipment is a significant help without which the grounds work would not be as successful.

TUESDAY 9TH

I loaded the car with tools, glass and step ladder and when Steve W arrived about 10.30am, to take the signal box to Little Hay, we loaded his trailer with the sides, bracing and roof and it was off to Little Hay. On arrival Steve and I pushed the trailer down to the S/E corner, unloaded it and then after pushing it back

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up the field and re-attaching it to his vehicle, went for a well earned coffee. Thanks Steve.

Roger and John had arrived at the usual time and were busy installing additional new ducting to accommodate the new cabling for the move of the SB1 & 2 route switches to a position adjacent to the location of the new Pool Junction signal box.

I could not test whether the signal box fitted together before taking it to Little Hay so it was fingers crossed. Brian and Mark arrived and we set about assembling the signal box which went very well. Having removed a couple of small branches we had the roof fixed and in position and the whole thing screwed down onto the based board. Having successfully assembled it I breathed a sigh of relief and we went for a coffee. With the base drip also strips attached front and back to the box it only needs a few final touches to complete it. Thanks Brian and Mark and to Stuart and John

for installing the electric supply.

While we were doing this Roger and John had completed installing the new ducting and with a bit of help a junction box. Brian and Mark went to help, mixed concrete to go into the junction box hole and form its base after which Roger, John, Bill and Mike got the whole thing installed.

Can't help noticing the growing pile of rail panels and activity in the station area as David's team progress the preparations for replacing/renewing the tracks. This is a very important job and will, when complete, see David's team and helpers reach the end of a fantastic job for the society. A prize for the first person to correctly identify the number of rails, rail sections, sleepers, fish plates, screws and nuts, tons of ballast and not least welds when complete???

TUESDAY 16TH

The day was dull but dry other than for a spot or two of rain until after lunch when it

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became nice and sunny. First thing was a couple of pounds worth of diesel to get rid of the pile of hedge cuttings while they were dry – worked like a dream and by coffee time all that was left was a pile of ash.

While I was standing watching the bonfire Grenville walked up and asked what there was to do. Having had a quick look round he decided to take the spray round to tackle the weeds which appear to grow better than the grass in this weather. I would like point out the weed killer we use is diluted and eco friendly and the only thing it affects, other than the weeds, are Gold fish. It is neutralised when it hits the soil and is not a risk to animals – if it was we would have a lot of dead rabbits on the site.

That said does anyone have a ferret that requires exercise and can deal with the rabbits on site which are causing problems. Bob B is continuing to do a very good job with the moles – Grenville found one today that had even given itself up, lying on its back with

feet in the air by the goat hedge!!!!

Having helped get Grenville started I got my box of tools, door stay, paint and took them together with drip strips and guttering down to the SB3 Pool Junction signal box. Three drip strips cut and fitted, the door stay fixed in place, the guttering and down pipe fitted and then the inside of the window frame and all the drip strips painted, including those round the base given a second coat.

Just after I started Bill asked about carrying on with the hedge trimming, seems having brought his new petrol hedge trimmer he wanted it run in. Fortunately Dave B arrived and said he would take it for a test run up the other side of the 'goat hedge'. While Dave was getting ready John C also arrived and said he would get the tractor and trailer and collect up the cuttings. Dave does a very good job and takes a lot of keeping up with but John did very well. Just before lunch a very hot Dave came to say he had finished up

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to the road side corner and was away and told me John was not far behind clearing up.

Stuart, John W, Bill, Brian, Mark and I had discussed what was required in terms of internal fittings and their positions – now once the lighting, heating sockets are in we can lay the carpet!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
That said and contrary to



rumour, tucked away in the south east corner, there are no toilet facilities, heating or red light over the door although it's very cosy with two people inside -- if you don't believe me!!!!!!

For those who have not been down and seen it, here it is:-

Basic construction is 3" sq corner posts, 12mm shuttering ply on which the facing shiplap timber is mounted, the windows are 6mm safety glass mounted behind the front window, the whole box rests on two thicknesses of 12mm ply base board on four 3' 0" 2"sq lengths of plastic (sleeper) wood as a damp course and finally a 6" inch concrete base with four locating rods.

With only the lock and door handles remaining to be fitted I headed to the club house for lunch but could not fail to notice the splendid new seat produced by Dave Osbourne – it looks very good. Also, the new concrete posts at the bottom of the ramp, up to the top of the tunnels, as part of the new fencing and safety provisions being worked on by Stuart and John.

After lunch I cleared up all the rubbish from around the new signal box and moved

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'Ted's Hut', made by Stuart, with help from John C to the maintenance area. With that done, I loaded the tool box and drill box into the car and dumped the final ply off cuts on the bonfire before going for a cup of coffee while watching the activity in the steaming bay – but see elsewhere for that report.

Final comment --- Ron had done a very good job clearing up the club house after all of us --- thanks Ron.

TUESDAY 23RD

Although all the forecast said rain there was none this morning. However, to avoid the hedge clippings getting soaked the first thing was to get rid of the bonfire. It went very well and the shed from by the gate ensured there was a good blaze and everything got burnt.

I was resetting the dolly wheels on the tractor cutter housing when Grenville arrived and we talked about what needed doing. Agreed that areas of the grass needed mowing and Grenville

got the larger of the self propelled mowers but the XXX thing would not start irrespective of what we tried. In the 6 years since I got them they have never not started at the first or second pull, even after being laid up over winter. So he took the smaller of the two and said he would sort the other out later.

We both worked well but by ten o'clock the tractor cutter drive belt had come off twice and I decided it was time for coffee the third time.

Grenville joined Bill and I and shortly after John C and Allan L came for coffee. Grenville, Bill and John went to sort out the problem with the mower. Success finally and John started mowing but not for to long; he came up to the club house to tell me the mower cutter housing had come adrift and the blade had done some damage.

Allan L replaced the cutter belt on the tractor while I went down to the bottom to have a look at John's mower. The cutter housing had got

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signs of the tin mites and some ware and tear resulting in breaking away and the cutter hitting it adding to the damage. All it needed was straightening out and a patch welded over it – Allan L did this and tack welded the other minor damage due to 6 years hard use. We all finished mowing about lunch time and joined the rest.

Not many of the stalwarts today but two of those who did turn up were Brian and Mark who have finished the SB3 support and installed it, a shelf for the cups of coffee – sorry Bills computer – and for me installed the rim lock and handles – thanks chaps. Stuart and John have made good progress installing the power supply, fuses, switches and conduit to all the fittings – bit more to go but looking good.

Ron F has been working on cleaning up the benches and giving them a fresh coat of paint. Mark B having done work with Bill on the signalling system has done a good job again cleaning up

after the weekend and us today.

TUESDAY 30TH

Little bit of background. On Sunday one of the trains caused chaos because one of his wheels failed to be registered by the wheel counter/not record correctly thereby indicating that the train was not completely clear of the section, although in fact it had and entered the station. Consequently the following signal remained at red and the whole system locked up. To complicate it further another driver then ran through a red signal – the system is fine it's the drivers!!!

To sort this out it was necessary to use SB3 in the new signal box and change the system to manual. When we came to unlock the box Mike B and myself spent a long time trying to get the key in and turned to open the door but failed miserably. The lock was fitted last Tuesday and had been use with no apparent problems by Stuart and John installing the

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electrics.

While we were discussing what to do Clive Burrows, who had been waiting by the box with his diesel, came across and also tried the key. Initially without success but then he tried it upside down and guess what --- were are in and the signal problem is cleared. I left Mike taking the lock off to clear to problem – won't bore you with more details – but we finally got it working OK.

Now today, my team are nowhere to be seen, Grenville at the Dorset Steam Show, Roger and Dave away and John cleaning the club loco they were working on yesterday. On the long list of jobs is one to clear up the tiny weeds and moss around the station and in particular the steaming bay and high level loading area. Peter Mc beat me to it (see Steve's Web Pages) clearing a large slabbed area to the right, looking from the club house, of the transverser. So I settled on carrying on the good work and cleared the

transverser area from the ground level track to the edge of the high level track between the Dyno car activities – see below.

I'd asked Neal and Peter Mc about getting the dyno car out and checking the new track measurements. Peter had checked it and installed a new battery so Neal, having got a group of willing able members, got the Dyno onto the tracks while I brought the Hymec, carriage and brake truck up. After a bit of adjustment we carried out several runs, the results of which were:-

3 inner loops – station-inner-station
1st. 1630 feet, 2nd 1655 feet and 3rd 1661 feet.

2 inner & outer – station-inner-outer-station
1st. 2748 feet and 2nd 2752 feet.

2 station loop – station-station
1st abandoned and 2nd 595 feet.

As I'm sure I don't need you to tell me the consistency is lacking. So it will have to be done again having checked and cleaned all appropriate

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parts. However, it is a good indication of the new track length – full run approximately half a mile. We had to keep asking Dave's team to move out of the way; they were doing a good job relaying and resleepering the point to the steaming bay from station track three. Sorry Dave.

Well that's it for this month – sorry if it's a bit long but will try to do better next month—only four Tuesdays!!!!

Eric Davies
Grounds Maintenance
30th August 2011

BIRTHDAY PARTY –
SUNDAY 14TH AUGUST
2011

I've already thanked those who helped but thought you all should see a typical e-mail we receive from the organisers after the event.

From: [Riches Alistair](#)

To: [Eric Davies](#)

Sent: Tuesday, August 16, 2011 10:02AM

Subject: Birthday Party

Eric,

Just a quick note to say a huge thank you for the event laid on by SCMES on Sun 14 Aug 11 for our son Adam's birthday party.

We all enjoyed it immensely and we were very grateful for the friendliness of the Soc members. You won't be surprised to hear that at least 3 children were heard to say 'this is the best party ever!'

Thanks again.

Alistair (A S RICHES)

That says it all.

[Date for your diaries – Birthday Party Sunday 9th October 2011](#)

Eric Davies
30th August 2011

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A Week-end Away – Bill Hall

With a steam-up in the diary for the 16th July and an event on the 17th, we decided to make a long weekend family visit. The ladies were only too pleased for me to be dropped off at Balleny Green with our 5" class 37 "Monmouth". Balleny Green is beautifully cared for and hort notes in these pages have kept me up to date as seasons came and went. New track work and associated signalling were eagerly anticipated. Mike Brophy kindly walked the track with me explaining route selection.

I had brought along a 5" well wagon as a riding truck. Nice to know the old knees would let me get down ok. Getting straight afterwards is another matter, as are water stops. Yes I know it's a diesel but there are still washers involved. Mine! The 7¼" Hymek and Graham Jones 7¼" American 4-4-0 were also operational. We let each other know intentions and tribulations as they arose. I did a discrete learning run over all lines and found three turnouts to treat with respect.

Where outer and inner routes meet approaching the level crossing, well wagon wheels found the frog gap very noticeable. Leaving outer into station had to be taken gently. Outer/inner points felt lumpy. Inner to station points had to be at extreme caution as loco and well wagon were dancing. As a passenger it felt flanges were rising over something and then wheels dropping back onto railhead. Elsewhere normal operating speed with the customary staccato. Magnificent! What an enjoyable day.

To demonstrate how good Balleny Green track is, a full mug of tea was placed in the well wagon on a couple of occasions and circuits of all routes carried out at normal operating speeds with appropriate restrictions for locations mentioned above. Not a drop was spilt until cramp struck. What a superb sound when crossing the traction engine tarmac road by goat hedge.

What goes up comes down so when a water stop became necessary the station route

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was selected but "P.J. Busy was shown. After a further pre-set three Positive action was necessary. Mike Brophy was hastily summoned over the club house back fence and came to the rescue with P.J. manual override. A rather interesting exercise then ensued to find why my wheels were not being correctly counted on track sensors. Other trains were also monitored at various locations, and on both route selectors. On Sunday morning, for old time's sake, I went on the elevated track and disillusioned one member who thought it couldn't be run anticlockwise. It was designed to run that way but as Fred Palmers Pannier was prone to wheel slip pulling away up the bank we tended to run the other way and signals were installed accordingly. Increasing power in the tunnel at lowest point sounded superb for that climb up into the station area or driving through. Having either end driving option on the 37, it was easy to run both ways. Sobering to realise it was through circumstance 21 years since I last drove on the

elevated track with my own loco. We lifted the 37 onto ground level and ran a few more circuits before light rain sent a scurry for cover to protect the loco's electrics. Proposed automatic hoisting facility between GL and elevated would be very useful. It would also offer better inspection and fiddle options. After a family lunch at the Holly Bush little running was possible because of weather and as the event had been called off in previous week we had a very pleasant afternoon chatting. I'm looking forward to next time, especially when I get a steamer back in working order. Well done everyone who has done or continues to do various jobs at Balleny Green.

Bill Hall

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Some people have
to many toys



Photos—SJH

