

March 2012

Steaming Ahead



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Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society

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President Neal Harrison 0121 378 3992
Chairman Allan Leary 01827 892503
Secretary Eric Davies 0121 308 6886
Treasurer Chris Greene 0121 351 3509

Directors

Bill Betts 01624 880372
Mike Brophy 0121 353 6233
Bill Colman
Ron Freeman 01922 632180
Stuart Harrison
Peter Robinson 01543 253343

Events This Month

Sun 04 March	Steam Up	10am onwards
Tues 06 March	Board Meeting	7.30pm
Tues 13 March	Tues Evening Meeting	7.30pm
Sat 17 March	Steam Up	12 noon onwards
Sun 25 March	Birthday Party	2pm - 4pm

Events Next Month

Sun 1 April	Steam Up	10am onwards
Monday 9 April	Easter Steam Up	10am onwards
Saturday 14 April	Steam Up	12 noon onwards
Sunday 22 April	Birthday Party (2BC)	2pm - 4pm
Saturday 28 April	SCRS Exhibition	All day
Sunday 29 April	SCRS Exhibition	All Day

Editor: Steve Kesterton
Mobile: 07946 025 151
Email: steamingahead@scmes.co.uk

Press Date is the first Tuesday of the month

Front Cover: Work has continued apace on the refurbishment of the high level track. Mike and Bill debate the next move ...

Birthday Party on 25 March - please help if you can!

Wot no Chunter ...

As the period between the February and March editions of Steaming Ahead was quite short, it has been agreed to give our Chairman a month off from writing his epistle. We all look forward to a bumper Chunter in April!

Steve Kesterton

Expenses

Would any members with outstanding claims for expenses please let me have them by 20 March at the latest. This is to allow time for any cheques issued to pass through the banking system before the end of our financial year on 31 March.

Any claims received after 20 March will be deferred until the start of the next accounting period on 1 April. And before you ask - no, this is not an April Fool spoof!

Chris Greene

The Club Signal System Update

This has been a more mundane month with a lot of tidying up of small issues as the main project is rounded off.

The beam detector in the station approach siding is now operational after fitting a heater wired to the maintained supply at both ends of the beam. Only time will tell if it survives all weathers. I would remind you that there remains a switch in the signal box that can set the system back to wheel counting if problems arise.

We have had a cleanup and sort out in the signal box and a cover is being made to enclose the wiring frame.

The birthday party on 26th February was a good test for the system. It was the first time we had operated on automatic, with the drivers setting their routes, at a formal meeting since we changed the switch box design, added the extra signals on the hill and with the beam detector working with four trains driving continuously. The flow of traffic seemed to be good at all times except when we had detector problems.

Birthday Party on 25 March - please help if you can!

We did experience three detector failures all related to the springs. Mike B. is looking at obtaining a more suitable type of spring. We also had an incident at the crossing merge that could have been serious. The software has been checked for bugs without finding any but it has been made safer by adding more interlocks. Hopefully this will make the system more robust.

I have completed the handbooks and distributed a copy to the electronics experts and placed one in the signal box. They are each setting up their own computers to study the software. When they have all had time to digest this information we will have a get together. Any other members will be welcome to attend but please let me know beforehand so you can be informed of the date.

In addition to this I want to hold one or more meetings with all members who would like to have a better understanding of the operation without getting deep into software. This will include a full explanation of the graphics display and how this should be used to locate faults. The correction of detector, point and beam faults will be covered. Please let me know if you would like to come.

I am going to suggest to the Board that on formal days, at least, the event organiser should appoint a signals supervisor to be present with responsibility for overseeing the system. This person could be drawn from this second group of members.

The main effort in the last two weeks has shifted to the raised track signals. Brian has removed all of the posts for refurbishment. All the cables are to be underground and a very active team is installing ducting right round the track. I am cleaning up the electronic boards out of the signal posts which will be reinstalled later. We are not making any other changes as it has worked well for many years.

Bill Colman

Grounds Maintenance Diary and Misc Notes

TUESDAY 7th

Very cold hard frost overnight but the weekend snow had gone. Unfortunately I didn't make it this morning because of a roof which started leaking as the snow melted and consequently having to wait for the roofers

Meanwhile Grenville, John, Dave & Roger cleared the last of the laurel cuttings and helped elsewhere.

Birthday Party on 25 March - please help if you can!

TUESDAY 14th

Got to Little Hay around 12.15pm and only then to show grandson round and have a bit of lunch. Discussed a few bits about the SCRS Exhibition at Bishop Walsh and the invitation to the Warley Exhibition at the NEC in November.

However, Grenville, John, Roger & Rod were very busy putting in some more ducting for Bill and also did a great job of levelling and tidying the lower copse. It's now getting to the stage where we are going to have to clear the remaining stored 'stuff', namely old steel rail, lamp posts, a large number of fibreglass sheets and paving slabs and assorted pieces of concrete.

TUESDAY 21st

Bill and the high level project team had asked for ducting to be installed for the refurbishment of the signalling system. Currently the wires trail below and between the horizontal beams and have been damaged from time to time over the years when strimming the grass. Grenville and I stopped this by weed killing the area directly under the beams and there have not been any further problems. However, with the refurbishment the opportunity is being taken to put the wires in ducting underground for safety and to improve the appearance – no trailing bundles of wire.

Having laid the 160 feet that Bill had brought with him the team split up. Grenville helping Bill pull cable for the station approach train detection equipment and Roger and Rod doing some work on the pool netting support wires. John C spent the day assisting Peter R working on poisoning and packing the high level beams of the high level track.

Over the last couple of weeks I've discussed with Roger and Grenville the approach to maintenance this year. We have agreed that the three copse and mounds in the top half of the site will be left un-mown until July or until they become a problem/fire risk. Equally, the hedges have been seeded and with an un-mown margin of about 18", will be left to grow. We normally leave the three copse and mounds un-mown during the birds nesting period and, because the nesting period appeared longer last year, we will delay mowing longer this year.

SUNDAY 26TH ---- BIRTHDAY PARTY

The first birthday party of the year and what a lovely day for the end of February. With the high level out of action we had four trains running on the ground level and, other than a couple of detector problems, everything went off very well. George, the birthday boy, had a great time with all his friends and ended with him driving Jubilee under Allan's supervision for last rides.

Last month in Pictures ...



Dave M. machining new buffers for the George Weedon Diesel



Completed new point mechanism at the station exit

Last month in Pictures ...



Spring is on its way—Mike B services the ride on mower



The first Birthday Party of the year brought the sun out

Birthday Party on 25 March - please help if you can!

A good start for the year but only four more parties booked out of the ten possible. Twenty members signed the book but I think there may have been one or two who missed doing so. However, thank you all for making this another successful party and making George's day special.

Next party is Sunday 25th March so please make a note in your diary. The birthday planning/manning schedule is on the board and even if your name is not on it I will be pleased to see you and have your help.

TUESDAY 28th

A dry if dull day with temperature around 10 degrees – ideal for the task ahead this morning. Bill had organised two 200 feet lengths of cable ducting to continue round the high level track, from where the first lot ran out last week.

Grenville and I went for the narrow spades, rake, pick and thumper from the maintenance store. By the time we had got these sorted out we had been joined by Rod, Dave and Roger. A full team this morning except for John working on the high level. 5 of us working from the point where we finished last week, we had the channel dug, ducting laid and channel filled in and out of the way even before the high level team were ready to start.

Being 10.30 it was good time to call a break, get our breath back (old un's like me) and have the usual refreshment. Some discussion took place with Rod and Roger over the plans for the pool and arrangements for construction of the rockery, waterfall and pump to be used. The pump is required to power the waterfall but before that will be used to lower the pool water level enabling access to reduce the mass of lilies, other pond plants and accumulated rubbish in the bottom.

After the break we continued laying the ducting all the way round, anti-clockwise, to the signal at the east end of the tunnel. By then it was time for lunch, so after clearing up and putting the tools away we went for a well earned lunch. Afterwards Roger and Rod worked repositioning the pool wire support posts closer to the pool to improve the look and make keeping it tidy easier. The wires support the netting to stop Mr Heron getting at the fish, which with the warmer weather are becoming more active.

Eric Davies