

February 2013

Steaming Ahead



WWW.SCMES.CO.UK



Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society

Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society

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

Directors

David Smith
John Cope
Mike Bentley
Peter Robinson
Stuart Harrison
Bill Colman

Events This Month

TUESDAY	05-Feb	BOARD MEETING	7.30pm
SATURDAY	16-Feb	STEAM-UP	1pm onwards
TUESDAY	19-Feb	Tuesday Evening Meeting	5pm onwards

Events Next Month

SUNDAY	03-Mar	STEAM-UP	10am onwards
TUESDAY	05-Mar	BOARD MEETING	7.30pm
SATURDAY	16-Mar	STEAM-UP	1pm onwards
TUESDAY	19-Mar	Tuesday Evening Meeting	5pm onwards
SUNDAY	24-Mar	BIRTHDAY PARTY (AVAILABLE)	2pm-4pm
FRIDAY	29-Mar	GOOD FRIDAY BANK HOLIDAY	10am onwards

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

Press Date is the first Tuesday of the month

Front Cover: A very snowy scene at Little Hay on 20 January.

Please diarise our public events in 2013—all help welcome!

Chairman's Chunter

Firstly I have to report the unfortunate passing of Chris Perkins, a past active member of the society, also the tragic death of our neighbour Mrs Kathryn Neale of Little Hay. I wish to offer both families my sincere condolences

There are a few jobs in progress despite the weather, particularly the low temperatures. Some of the hardy outdoor types have braved the conditions and done the British thing 'kept calm and carried on'. Work has started on the ground works for the installation of the new high level loco shed. Part of the plan is to install a set of steps and a gate for staff only to the left hand side of the pedestrian bridge. This is progressing well.

Work continues on the waterfall and pond but is obviously dependant on the weather.

The great Northern Loco is undergoing a total rebuild/ service. This engine has served us so well for over thirteen years that it has only had attention when something has gone wrong. It certainly deserves the time and effort now being spent. The mechanics, electrics, hydraulics as well as bodywork are being thoroughly overhauled. Should all go to plan the finished loco will be a true asset. Thankfully the majority of the work is being carried out inside the workshop.

When the weather breaks and after the Great Northern rebuild the construction of the new pedestrian bridge near the level crossing will begin. After much debate at the Board meeting it was agreed the proposed installation of barriers to replace the existing level crossing gate will be reassessed when the pedestrian bridge is in operation.

Over the past few weeks a number of SM32 rolling stock kits have been built up giving the society a good variety of wagons and coaches for members use.

I'm afraid this offering is abridged but this time of year tends to be quite quiet.

Best wishes to all especially those not feeling too well at the moment.

Allan Leary

Subscriptions

The Committee has decided that, in the present economic climate, and due to the fact that we currently have a considerable amount of reserves, now is not the time to announce a rise in membership subscription rates.

I am aware however that several major projects have either recently started, or may commence within the next 12 months. It has therefore been agreed that subscription rates will be reviewed at the AGM in June.

Please diarise our public events in 2013—all help welcome!

If it is then found necessary to increase, it will not take effect until April 2014, so members will get plenty of notice beforehand.

Chris Greene

Bonfire Night Appraisal – a response

Having read Bill Colman's appraisal of the Firework Party in January's Steaming Ahead, I would make the following comments:

Carriages: It is true that there were a few issues with brakes on 2 of the 4 trains running - the writer's train had problems with brakes only just working, and with a full train, they were ineffective, and Roanoke suffered with brakes dragging. In the writer's case it did not affect the proceedings, and I believe that if the brake switch was held in the 'off' position on Roanoke's train, the brakes released. The cause of both problems was lack of maintenance of the brake trucks.

To say the system is 'complex' is, I feel, a gross exaggeration. Bill states that 'there has been a distinct move away from air systems'. Has he looked at the full size railway lately? A hydraulic system would be completely unworkable as you would need to bleed the whole system every time you used it, and I don't think passengers would enjoy being sprayed with hydraulic oil should a hose fail. Vacuum is simpler, but suffers from the fact that you cannot see it - leaks cannot be found with soapy water - and you cannot hear it.

In my experience, electrical problems causing the brake system to fail have been few. There are a lot of electrical connections, but of the 7 pins on each socket/pin, only 3 operate the control solenoids, the remainder are for indicator lights which have no bearing on the operation of the system. If the brake truck were next to the locomotive instead of at the other end of the train, only 1 electrical lead would be required. An alternative would be to fit all the brake truck operating gear into a passenger coach at the front of the train.

All slipping on the bank occurred during the first few circuits, and was cured by sanding, and was not caused by brakes. As far as I am aware, no carriages were removed from the trains.

Access to the high level track was closed some 20 minutes before the fireworks were due to begin, but the member instructed to 'man' the gate deserted his post, resulting in the public opening the gate and gaining access.

In my estimation, we have got the logistics right. We did have 1000+ people on the ground to a Bonfire Night some years ago. It was frightening and an accident waiting to happen. The area is just not big enough for that volume of people, and the wait for trains on the ground level with 4 trains running, was in excess of 50 minutes. The public were not happy! The wait time for the raised level track is already excessive, but unfortunately, there is nothing we can do to reduce this. 1000 people would exacerbate this.

Please diarise our public events in 2013—all help welcome!

Another £2800.00 would be useful, but we are not 'cash strapped' and if we need more funds, all we need to do (where have I heard that phrase before?) is create another public event.

Sorry Bill, I think some of your comments/suggestions are ill founded.

Garry Tyso

A loco driver's response to Bill Colman's view of Bonfire Night

Were there 2 ghost trains running on the ground level track? I only saw 3 locos other than the one I was driving. What sort of engineer makes 1 plus 3 equal 6?

Bill, being the gentleman that he is, mentioned no names, nor did he point a finger in any specific direction, but I am not afraid to admit responsibility for driving the loco that ran out of fuel. At this time I could offer 2 explanations for the mishap and now that we have started to strip down Great Northern, a 3rd contributing factor has emerged.

Firstly during October, the locos throttle setting was adjusted to achieve smoother running. This resulted in higher rpm when the loco was in motion thus greater fuel consumption. Secondly, the 20 minute delay before the start of the firework display meant that the loco ran continuously for much longer than intended before its scheduled refuelling stop.

Great Northern is now in the workshop undergoing its 10 year heavy overhaul. We have found that the gearbox on the rearmost axle is defunct, as the gear teeth have completely worn away. We have therefore only been getting drive (and tractive effort) to 3 of the 4 axles. In other words, the loco was working at less than 75% efficiency causing unwanted slippage on the wet track, hence a further increase to fuel consumption.

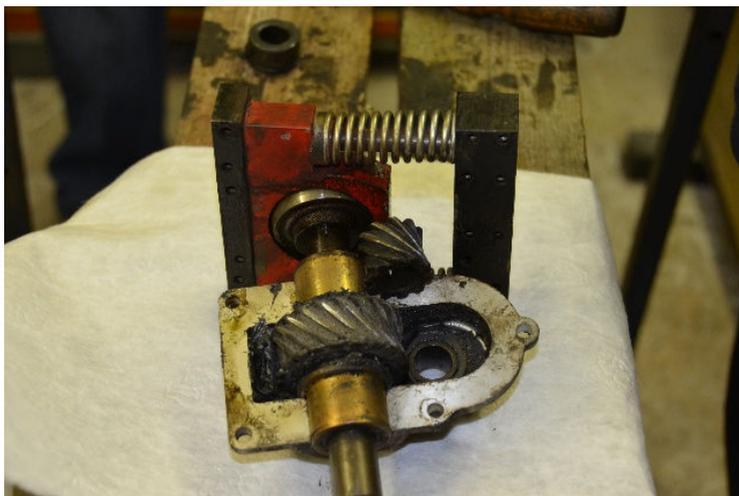
Throughout the entire evening I had no problems with the train braking system. As Great Northern has its own built in compressor I never need to rely on an auxiliary system as provided by the club guard/brake trucks. Neither was I unduly troubled by the signalling system.

One aspect of the event remains a mystery. During the 1st half, prior to the fireworks, each time I approached the station to unload passengers, there was never more than 1 train standing at a platform ahead of me, so I was never delayed in the manoeuvre to unload and then move forward. However when trains resumed running after the display, each of the times I approached the station, there was always a train, still being unloaded, immediately ahead of me. As it moved forward, all 3 platforms became occupied as the other 3 trains were still being unloaded. Did something change during the display period, in the way that the passengers were being moved forward in the queue? Did it cause or contribute to unnecessary passenger queuing times? From my point of view, it certainly lengthened the 'pit stop' times!

Last month in Pictures ...



The "2 Mike's" busy dismantling 'Great Northerns' gearbox



Worn components from 'Great Northern'

Last month in Pictures ...



Dave busy working on the new loco levelling device



Allan's very impressive SM32 Garrett

Please diarise our public events in 2013—all help welcome!

I would like to conclude by figuratively wearing my other (treasurers) hat. I commend you Bill for your comments regarding the profitability of the event, but increased visitor numbers (ticket sales) is not the answer. I always think of it as our own way of providing the neighbourhood (and our own membership) with a jolly good evening's entertainment and not just as a way of generating funds. Any profit we make comes as a bonus; I was there on some of the occasions when we had 1000 visitors or more onsite. The complaints about overcrowding and train queue length and the dangers of bumping into or tripping over other visitors far outweighed the enjoyment factor.

The whole day was hard work, but judging by the feedback I have heard since, everyone enjoyed the event so it was well worth it. Thank you to all who contributed.

Chris Greene.

A Grand Day out

To All Members of the Southern Federation of Model Engineers:
from The Isle of Wight Model Engineering Society

You are invited to visit our Pond and Track Site in Cowes on the Isle of Wight at any time you are on the island Please ring me - Andy Cole (Hon Sec IWMEs) if and when you wish to visit 07957 927129 or leave a text.

Our Annual Rally is on Saturday April 20th 2013 Where we often get other societies making a special day visit. Our Club operating days are: 1st Saturday of each month for 'Public Running' (2-4pm) And the 3rd Saturday for Members and their Guests (10-2pm) other days could be arranged to suit your visit.

You would be most welcome to bring your loco/s etc. *Subject to insurance and boiler certification*

For those of you who may not know:

The Isle of Wight is the diamond shaped isle below Southampton
Ferries can be accessed from Lymington, Southampton and Portsmouth.
For the Rally we are trying to get ferry discounts for the day

Other information on our Society and site can be obtained via
www.iwmes.org.uk

Andy Cole (Hon Secretary of The Isle of Wight Model Engineering Society)

Please diarise our public events in 2013—all help welcome!

The Club Signal System Update

I have spent the last month preparing a proposition to replace the crossing gate with two automatic lifting barriers, British Rail style, either side of the track. This was not accepted by the Board principally because two senior members wrote to the chairman criticising the idea along with other members that apparently spoke to him about it.

As far as I know none of these critics made any constructive alternative suggestions that addressed the three reasons for the proposal which were:-

To improve both car and train traffic flow.

To protect both sides of the train track from pedestrians and cars.

To eliminate the worn out gate and interlock mechanism.

For the sake of the club I sincerely hope that these critics will now get together and refurbish the existing gate and interlock system. This would at least help keep the trains running even if it did not improve traffic flow or safety.

The signal system has worked well during the last month except for one proximity sensor failure. This is unexplained and the unit is being returned to the manufacturer for examination.

Ossy and Mark have been working on a new design of raised track signal control board. The existing ones are old and starting to prove unreliable. A prototype is to be tested before a larger investment is made.

Bill Colman

January 2013 Grounds Maintenance Diary

TUESDAY 1ST

New Years Day – A fine cold sunny day and so a good start to the new year after the wettest year since records began. The site has a couple of bad soft muddy patches, the main one being adjacent to the loading/off loading bays. The pool level is high with the Duck House front base still in the water, even though the level has dropped around 4-6”inches.

Only four ‘stalwarts’ there when I arrived but Peter Mc and Bob B arrived with their loco’s to join the Hymec which Chris G had got out by then. A few more members had arrived by the time I left around 11.30 and with a few others in the drive waiting for the crossing gate to be opened to get in.

TUESDAY 8TH

John W opened up while I went down to get the tractor, trailer and tools to clear the two dead/dying small horse chestnut trees. Grenville, Rob and I made a start and were then joined by Steve.

Please diarise our public events in 2013—all help welcome!

Since we don't have access to a chain saw we are severely restricted in the work we can do. However, by digging round the base and by chopping/sawing through the roots it was possible to push the trees over and then cut them up.

The SW copse is now nice and tidy and we then moved on to the copse by the SM32 track. Here we cleared a couple other poor small trees, root shoots and low branches likely to cause injury to members and potential to affect passenger on trains on the high level track.

There is still work to be done, for example the laurels at the north east end of the tunnels and conifer branches in that area. However, the site is now looking good and I'm pleased with what has been achieved in spite of the very wet year we had; so to 'the team' my sincere thanks. Also, I must not forget the work that Roger and Rod have done on the pool and waterfall. Currently they are having to wait for Spring and a good period of dry weather to apply the sealer and plant up the rockery.

TUESDAY 15TH

The snow over the last couple of days had cleared but the day started very cold with a hard frost overnight. The pool was still frozen from the weekend but the fish were fine waiting to be feed by Roger or Rod – not a chance unless a hole is made.

In an effort to get rid of some of the rubbish on the bonfire pile I use about a gallon of diesel, but whilst it got rid of some small branches and leaves the bulk remained just smouldering. That done it was back to the club house for a hot coffee and talk to Ron, Steve and Rod.

I was not sensible to continue with the work started last week clearing low branches and areas so, assuming the weather is OK, we will carry on next week.

Over lunch Bill passed me a copy of the RFS, Quarterly Journal of Forestry, for January 2013 because of an article on CHALARA or DIEBACK OF ASH trees. Whilst I checked with the Forestry on Cannock Chase last year and they assured me our three trees were not affected we will have to wait until the spring before checking the new growth again. Whatever, it's almost certain they will have to be cut them down and burnt at some stage. It's quite depressing reading the RFS Journal because of the number of varieties affected in one way or another, Beech, Ash, Horse Chestnut, etc all good old English woodland species.

TUESDAY 22ND

A beautiful sunrise but very cold, still and clear morning and luckily no more overnight snow. When I got to Little Hay Bill C's car was parked in the entrance facing the road so I had to park in the road. I had to check the post box and had some members post to leave in the club house, so walked in and found Bill taking measurements from the level crossing.

Please diarise our public events in 2013—all help welcome!

Having chatted and both agreeing that as there was no one else we would not stop. When I got back to the gate Bill had gone but as I was closing the gate Neal arrived and said he was staying for a while. I decided to stay with Neal and we were joined over the next hour by Mike Bentley, Chris, Allan L, Mike Brophy and then Mark Dale who had only come to pick up the SM32 kits to check.

Allan, both Mikes and Chris went down to the maintenance store to carry on work on Great Northern and Neal and I decided it was time to get the camera's out. (See photos on the front cover, on page 6 and on our web site).

TUESDAY 29TH

In view of the snow and rain there was little that the three of us could do other than reset the mole traps and clear dead wood. Mr Mole has been very active and Rod and Roger appreciate his efforts, if not me, as they needed the good soil he'd piled up for the waterfall.

Eric Davies

New Rallies—a request for help

Following an appeal from our Chairman at the last AGM requesting ideas for new events to encourage fellow model engineers to make more use of our fabulous facilities, I have arranged 2 rallies to take place in June and July this year.

On 22 June, we will play host to Ride on Railways and Station Road Steam. For those of you who are not aware, Ride on Railways are manufacturers of very sturdy battery locos, rolling stock and accessories for 5" gauge and latterly 7 1/4". The Tram and diesel loco that Lewis and I run at Balleny Green are both built by Ride on Railways. They will be bringing along a selection of their stock and are inviting all owners of their products along too! Station Road Steam deal in 2nd hand miniature models and hope to bring one of their new 'Stafford' steam locos for us to run.

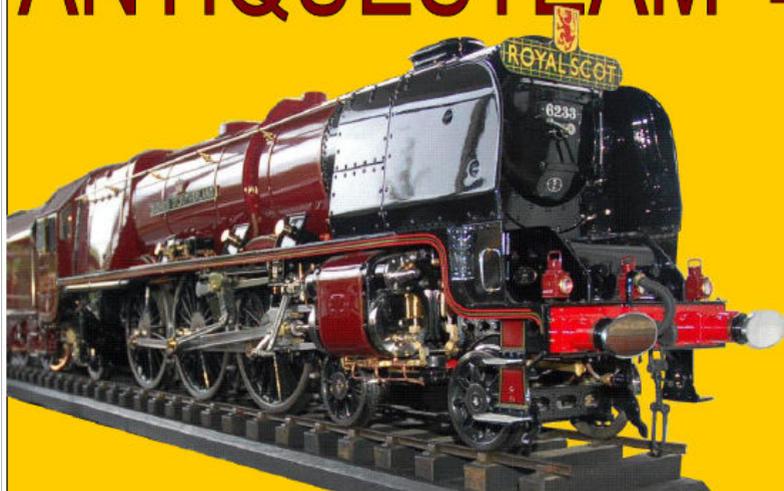
13 July sees the Maxitrak Owners club visiting us for the day. Maxitrak produce a number of steam and battery locos in both 5" and 7 1/4" gauges so hopefully we will see plenty of variety on our rails that day!

I am looking for help at these events and will put up lists on the notice board for the various jobs that need doing. Please assist me to make these events as successful as they can be to further enhance the reputation of our Society and give our visitors a grand day out!

Steve Kesterton

Please diarise our public events in 2013—all help welcome!

ANTIQUESTEAM Buy



All live steam coal burning model locomotives in gauges 3½", 5" & 7¼"

Also model traction engines from 1" to 4" scale.

Completed and part-built models bought and especially Exhibition Quality models and collections.

Complete and part workshops purchased

For a friendly professional "nationwide" service please telephone:

Graham Jones M.Sc. 0121 358 4320

You will find my models for sale on

www.antiqusteam.com

