

April 2012

Steaming Ahead



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Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society

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Events This 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

Events Next Month

Sunday 6 May	Steam Up	10am onwards
Monday 7 May	BH Steam Up	10am onwards
Sunday 13 May	Birthday Party	2pm - 4pm
Tuesday 15 May	Evening Steam Up	6pm
Saturday 19 May	Steam Up	1pm onwards
Saturday 26 May	Spring Steam Event	11am - 4pm

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Press Date is the first Tuesday of the month

Front Cover: The sun shone upon us on 25 March for James Lane's Birthday Party

Help needed at SCRS Exhibition 28//29 April!

Chairman's Chunter

I've recently been looking around the club web site and normally the initial browse starts at the 'what happened yesterday' page. Looking at the photographs from early January through February, particularly those relating to the high level track job, the sun is shining brightly and could easily have been taken in the height of summer.

Since then the country has been bathed in record high temperatures giving the impression of an early spring and certainly the end of winter. This ramble is due to me being sat here watching the snow outside, with the heating on and listening to the traffic warnings on the radio. Doesn't nature always have the last say?

Fortunately, thanks to the good weather, all the events so far have been blessed. The two birthday parties went off very well and messages of thanks from satisfied customers have been received.

The club steam up days over the period have been particularly well attended, I hope this continues throughout the year.

As always development and maintenance work continues. The pool experts are plodding on dredging away years of vegetation without complaint. I'm sure their effort will be rewarded and the society will end up with a striking feature.

I have received concerns regarding the safety of having a pool on site but I can reassure those concerned the team will be addressing all safety issues.

The high level track refurbishment is making good progress despite the limited number of people prepared to help the team doing the job. The track will no doubt become popular when it is re-opened.

The Hymek has returned from the works and, as I expected, a very smart locomotive it is. It rightfully bears the name plate 'George Weedon' and is a fitting memorial to the man himself.

The second loco in the works is the 0-4-0 shunter 'George'. This engine is coming along really well now that the design stage has been thrashed to death. Laser cut frames have been assembled, buffers and stocks turned, motor mounts, stretchers, spacers all fitted, the list goes on.

Help needed at SCRS Exhibition 28//29 April!

The most significant work has been done on the cab plate work. The original body of this loco was a little indifferent but after lots of very skilled sheet metalwork we have ended up with a very smart looking addition to our stable.

The finished job will be far better than I ever dreamed and I thank all the chaps who have helped in the process.

The Board has agreed with a proposal to build a 16mm scale track enhancing our facilities. The project is being well planned and evidence of its progress will soon be clear.

I feel I must mention the evening meeting Bill Coleman headed to explain the workings of the signal system. The meeting was very well attended and many of us gained some particularly useful information.

An issue raised at the Board meeting was the general tidiness of the clubhouse.

The main problem is works equipment, tools, oil etc, being left stored within the clubhouse for whatever reason. It was decided this practice will no longer continue and if such equipment needs to be stored somewhere temporarily the steaming bay shed is available.

The events diary looks fairly busy through the year. We have the exhibition at the Sutton Coldfield railway Society at the end of this month so exhibits and staff will be required. Please contact David Smith if you are prepared to help out.

Not all the birthday party dates have yet been booked so perhaps staffing will not be such an issue at the ones that are booked and one never knows some other than the regulars may help out.

Let's hope the cold snap is short lived and plenty of steam is raised over the next few weeks.

All the very best to all and as always good wishes to those who's health could be better.

Allan Leary

Help needed at SCRS Exhibition 28//29 April!

Club signalling system update

The month started badly when I accidentally disturbed some connections in the signal box on a Tuesday while building a cover for the wiring frame. This caused chaos in PJ the following Saturday and a number of senior drivers went grumpy. I am very sorry; I did the job in a hurry but had to leave early without testing it. A lesson learnt!!

A presentation was made on Tuesday 20th February to a full house on the operation of the signal system. Thank you everyone for coming. I will get together with those who could not make it but would have liked to attend. This was intended to be a 'low tech' evening where members could see how to locate faults and to take the appropriate action.

The Board has agreed that a Signal Supervisor should be appointed to oversee the system on Public Days. Following this presentation a number of members agreed to put their names forward to gain the experience to perform this function. John Cope and Peter Robinson tried it out last Sunday.

I am going to hold a further session for members that wish to know more about the PLC hardware and software but do not have experience in this field. This will be followed by a get together with these members and those experienced in electronics. If anyone who has not let me know and wants to join any of these sessions please contact me.

I was a bit disappointed with the performance of the signals at the second birthday party. One critical detector failed, the gate lock gave trouble and I witnessed a software problem at the track merge point.

The train detectors are fairly reliable now but there are 36 of them in service and a fault with one only represents 2.7 %. We are trying hard to improve the performance. Mike B. and Ossi are working on a better treadle unit and a new solid state design.

The two solid state detectors fitted vertically in the tracks have proved the most reliable of all the designs we have tried. They are difficult to mount in the track but we may have to face this if an alternative cannot be found.

We are pressing on with improvements with the gate mechanism starting with a better gate positioning arrangement before refurbishing the lock.

Last month in Pictures ...



Work on renovating the pond continues at a rapid pace

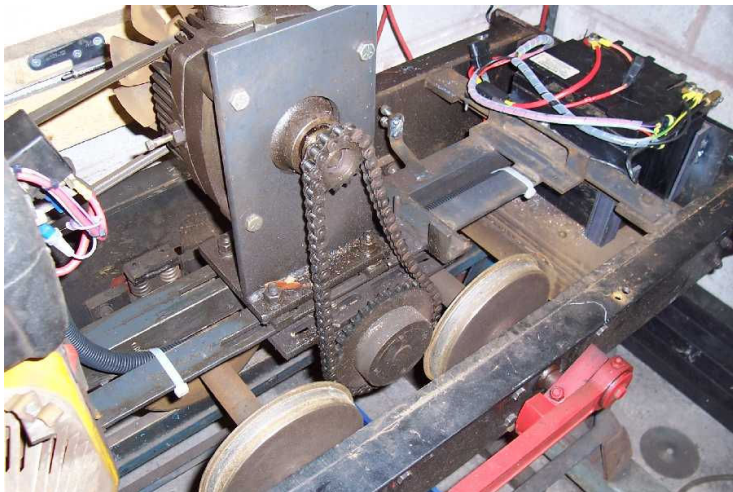


The Hymek returns after a superb restoration by Garry Tyso

Last month in Pictures ...



New signals appear in position around the refurbished high level track



Wiring has been replaced on Roanoake

Help needed at SCRS Exhibition 28//29 April!

I tried out new software for the merge approach at the second birthday party but clearly this did not work well. My most urgent job is to solve this problem. As I have said before testing these situations in practice is quite difficult.

Progress on the raised track signals is being made and several refurbished posts have been planted.

Bill Colman

Motive Power Update

During March, routine examination of Roanoke 'JUBILEE' revealed a flat battery. After all attempts to re-charge the battery failed, a replacement was found, but on attempting to fit it into a very cramped area, Mark D and Brian inadvertently caused a short circuit resulting in the wiring loom becoming burned and unusable.

This precipitated a long overdue re-wire by Mark B. Whilst in stripped down condition, the cab was removed from site to Garry's workshop where the brake circuitry was installed into a separate box for easy future removal.

A removable panel was cut into the back of the cab to give easier access to the re-located battery. The locomotive returned to service on 20th March.

The Hymek diesel also returned from Garry's workshop on the same day, resplendent in BR green livery with correct logos and displaying GEORGE WEEDON nameplates.

See website for more details and pictures of both locomotives.

Rolling Stock Dept.

Mark Dale has carried out a full inspection of all rolling stock and brake trucks and made adjustments/replacements as necessary. He has also rotated the stock in the carriage shed in an attempt to give all stock equal running time.

Driver Certification

Anyone wishing to drive trains, either steam or diesel, at public functions, must have a Driving Certificate which is issued on completion of an aural and practical test. New question and answer sheets will be available from any of the following examiners: **Garry Tyso, Mark Bradley, Mark Dale.** at the end of April.

Help needed at SCRS Exhibition 28//29 April!

Anyone wishing to take a test should contact any of the foregoing to arrange a mutually convenient time and date.

If you are already a licence holder and have not had the new ground level signalling system explained and demonstrated to you, and proved that you understand it, you are not eligible to haul members of the public. Any of the following members can give you the necessary instruction: David Moseley, Mark Bradley, Mark Dale, Bill Colman, Allan Leary, Chris Greene, Garry Tyso.

Warley Model Railway Exhibition 23-25 November 2012

The Society has been invited, and accepted, an invitation to exhibit at the above exhibition. Your Board saw it as an ideal opportunity to advertise our Society to a large audience of like minded people, and also publicise our new SM32 layout. Garry Tyso has been asked to co-ordinate our exhibit and will no doubt be twisting a few arms for exhibits nearer the date.

At present, Mark Dale, Mark Bradley and Eric Davies had been coerced to assist in the organisation.

It is currently envisaged that the exhibit will be incorporate a working SM32 railway, all aspects of model engineering – with obviously an emphasis on railways – and will have a 5 minute video presentation on a continuous loop displayed on a large screen TV. It is also hoped to produce a new, colour brochure for the event. More details will be published as soon as they are finalised.

If you have any ideas or suggestions regarding the exhibit, please contact the writer.

Garry Tyso

Repositioning of the Carriage Shed

Following the completion of the steaming bay area, it has been found that the ground level steaming bay is causing a possible tripping hazard when trying to remove carriage bodies etc. from the shed. The shed is also occupying valuable space under the canopy, and so it is to be re-sited the other side of the footbridge. Recent visitors to Balleny Green will have noticed that part of the bank between the raised level and ground level tracks has already been removed.

Help needed at SCRS Exhibition 28//29 April!

It is envisaged that all of the banking will have been taken away within the next few weeks. Once levelled, some of the slabs currently being used as a retaining wall will be re-used as a base on which to stand the shed. The soil will all be transported to the north end of the pool where a waterfall is to be constructed.

Balleny Green 32mm Layout

For some considerable time before I joined the Society, an outdoor SM32 railway had been discussed, but no one had ever put up a proposal or costs. Having had some dealing with such a project in a friend's garden our chairman approached me and I worked out a basic layout for the club. Thus in February 2012 a proposal for a railway was put to the Board, and after discussion at the March meeting, approval was given.

The railway will be sited at the southern end of the pool, with a covered steaming area adjacent to the pool this will lead into a triangle to connect to the main layout which will be basically a circular track which will run through a cutting towards the raised level track, then follow parallel to it running round the bend towards the station area, before curving away to a number of storage/passing loops.

The track will run on top of a new wall to be built replacing the existing retaining wall along side the raised level track area. The new wall being 0.5 metres back from the existing retaining wall line. It will then run on a raised section looping back towards the pond and steaming area. All raised areas will utilise weatherproof marine ply, supported on adjustable steel legs.

The total circuit of track should be around 160 feet giving us a reasonable run. Track has already been sourced, and civil work is expected to commence shortly, with projected completion around the end of Summer dependant on the amount of help that is forthcoming.

If you are interested in digging, concreting, building or helping out in any way, please contact me.

Mark Dale

(P.S. For those confused by SM32 and 16mm, 32mm is the track gauge, 16mm is the scale, i.e. 2' 0" gauge in full size)

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Grounds Maintenance Diary

Work continues on the pool which has to be taken slowly because of the uncertainty of the depth and risk of damaging the liner. Many years of more or less unchecked growth and accumulated cleared leaves and dirt are/is being piled round the sides of the pool and allowed to drain before being moved to the lower copse. Next month we start moving the lilies and weeds taken out of the pool and dumping them in the lower copse.

This month the warm weather resulted in having to mow in order to have the site looking good for the birthday party on the 25th March.

In the early part of the month the team laid around 300-350 feet of new cable ducting for the high level track, leaving some 150 feet to complete through the tunnel to the station. However, as there is time and the weather good the tunnel has been left – that can be done on a wet Tuesday.

The Hort Team is currently stronger than for a long time and I would like to put on record my appreciation for all the work they do. They are making a significant difference, keeping and improving the look of the whole site.

Next month will see the changes planned for the pool taking shape – the steam has already been filled in and rocks are on site ready to make the waterfall.

Eric Davies

Pond Restoration /Waterfall Project – Progress Report.

Prior to starting work on the pond, David (M) with his 'staff' assistant Alan(D) kindly measured the height from the pond water level (which has remained fairly constant throughout the winter) to the top of the stones above the old stream to give us a reference height.

Over the past couple of weeks using pumps loaned by Bill (C) and David (B) the water level has been slowly lowered. Clearing the pond of lilies and reeds took place over two Tuesdays with roughly half of the pond area being cleared. In places lily roots and silt up to a foot deep were dug out. The amount of material piled up on the banks being a testament to the efforts of David(B) and Rod(G).

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The cleared material being left on the banks to drain, allow any 'little creatures' to return to the pond and also dry out before removal to the lower copse. The old stream has been removed, any useful rocks being put to one side and the area partly filled in and grassed over.

The posts supporting the netting wires have been repositioned or replaced and the wooden fencing moved roughly to its new position to allow soil tipping, which has already started, to form the new waterfall. One and a quarter tons of rocks have been delivered, having been obtained and collected, thanks to the efforts of Garry (T).

Now that the pond has areas of lily/ weed free water, 25 to 30 approx. goldfish have been seen swimming about, 8 being goldfish, the rest being a mixture of gold/black and all black goldfish.

No further lily/reed removal will be carried out and over the coming weeks the pond will be allowed to slowly refill either with rain water or the limited use of the hose pipe.

Roger Addenbrooke

Ps There isn't a prize for counting the highest number of fish spotted!!!