



Smokebox

The Newsletter of the **Bedfordshire Area Group** of the
Association of 16mm Scale Narrow Gauge Modellers

Ron Fincher

Martin Shrubsole has passed this on to me. Ron was a frequent attendee to our meetings and many of you will have seen him at the most recent Steam in Beds.

I am very sorry to have to tell you that, during one more spell in hospital, Ron died peacefully in the early hours of Christmas Eve. I had visited him the previous afternoon when he was still his natural positive self, but obviously very weak.

Ron and I had been friends for over 30 years and worked together initially with small jobs for our local church, and then building his successive 00 gauge layouts. He was the first helper in the construction and operation of Somesay Island Railway. Following his first serious illness in 2015 he was supported magnificently by his stepson Andrzej so that he was able to keep up his involvement with BAG and the 16mm NGM Association.

Martin Shrubsole

Ed: Garth has sent a condolence card on behalf of the group to Ron's stepson Andrzej.

From the Editor

Firstly an update on Ray Butler. I spoke to him this evening (29th December) and he's making good progress. He's being well supported by neighbours and will probably be eating Christmas food for the next two weeks! He's expecting that the next visit to the hospital will confirm that his prostate has returned to its condition prior to the operation, but he'll need a scan to verify that. Then he can concentrate on getting the most out of his new hip. Ray hopes to be at the February meeting.

I've been busy selling on the 16mm assets of the late Mick Blowfield as some you may know. A member travelled here from Gosport in Hampshire today to pick up Mick's Peter Angus "Penmaen" (those of you who take Throwback Modeller may have seen the advert). Kevin has a penchant for tram locos and was visibly extremely pleased to have secured it. It's very satisfying when a loco finds a new owner who will cherish it, especially for the family of the person who previously owned it. From my experience of dealing with the disposal of deceased members' assets, the family can be as keen that a loco finds the right home as they are to obtain fair market value. Which set me thinking.

I may struggle to unite some very desirable locos with new owners because the locos are incomplete. Mick had a TME W&L Beyer, but most of the tools, which are specific to the loco, needed to run it, are missing. It also has a couple of problems, which can be remediated, but it will be delicate work. It's otherwise unused as far as I can tell. He had a TME Quarry Hunslet with no coal firing grate or tools and no gas firing cassette. It cannot be used as it stands. They are both in good condition but are at present shelf queens at best. His widow doesn't know anything about the locos or, even, whether the Quarry Hunslet came with the means to fire it. As the sad news about Ron Fincher underlines, there is one certainty in life. When we shuffle off to the great engine shed in the sky, our loved ones will want to do the best they can with the models we leave and that they know we loved. They can't do that unless we prepare for the inevitable and provide them with

information on our models, like what goes with what and where everything is. Next year, as we prepare our locos for the new running season, maybe this is something we will think about.

As you'll read elsewhere in Smokebox, one of Mick's locos had a fundamental flaw which I've now addressed. If we have models that are incomplete, need something doing, don't work for whatever reason, knowing this in advance can avoid needless effort trying to prepare them for sale. I'm in the fortunate position where I could fix the problem on the loco and it was an interesting project doing so. Our families may not be so fortunate if we present them with the same challenge.

This is maybe a subject too sensitive for some, but the New Year is often a time for making resolutions. Guess what one of mine is.

See you at the meeting on Sunday 5th January.

Copy deadline for February 2025 issue of Smokebox: Friday 24 January 2025

Alan, Smokebox Editor

From the Chair

Happy New Year to you all. I trust you have had a relaxing Christmas break and that Santa made a productive visit!

It's always sad to start my words by reminiscing about a departed Beds member but I will remember Ron Fincher for his positive outlook at meetings, despite all that ill health could throw at him.

Chris and Garth have supplied analysis of SIB and both are well worth reading. Despite the weather the show was a great success and everyone I spoke to was very pleased with it - particularly the raffle winners who left before the draw!

I have very little to report on the narrow gauge front, my efforts have been concentrated on Christmas issues and the family but I did receive another pair of Brandbright sprung bogies so should have a pair of "skeleton" logging wagons in the near future. I hope to provide some evidence of progress next month!

Bob, Chairman

Steam in Beds Review 2024

Well, the weather was not kind to us, over the 18 odd years I have been organising Steam in Beds for the Group I can only think of one other year that we had weather problems. I say weather problems, we had a lot of snow Eaton Bray was almost cut off and several Traders could not get to the hall. Thankfully this year we just had the wind to contend with, there's no doubt that the gloomy weather forecast put a lot of people off traveling to the show. As a result, our visitor numbers were well down compared with previous years.

Putting that to one side, the show was a great success. Mainly because of the support of our Members. Every year we appeal for help with the setting up on the Friday and Saturday and support during the show itself. And every year we manage to put on a good show for our visitors. It was striking that this year we had tremendous response to our appeal for help. Members turned out in force for the Friday and Saturday's setup and during the show. The breakdown at the end of day went smoothly and in record time. A big thank you to everybody who helped make the show a success. With a special thank you to the Catering Team who kept both visitors, Traders and Members fed and watered throughout the show.

As has been highlighted before, our effort to raise money by holding a Raffle has been disappointing. This year we tried something different with professional printed Raffle Tickets. We also encouraged the Traders to support us by providing more appropriate prizes of a value that reflected the value of the space they occupied. The final touch was to have a proper display of the prizes on offer with

somebody on hand to sell the tickets. I think the result speaks for itself, even with the reduced visitor numbers the income it generated for the group was 2½ times the previous year's figure.



A lovely image of Ridgmont showing how important station furniture is in bringing a layout to life

Another area we made some changes was in the Catering, for a number of years John Kitchenman has arranged for a baker near his home in Sandy to supply all the Filled Rolls, Savouries and Cakes. To ring the changes for this year Garth asked for quotes from two local independent bakers to supply a similar package of goodies. Of the two quotes received, one was notably more expensive. The second was much nearer what we paid in the past plus they were offering a 10% discount. This enabled us to maintain a similar price structure to previous years with a modest increase in some areas. The items all came individually wrapped with allergy advise shown where appropriate. The presentation of the whole range was very attractive and tasted as good as they looked. To all intents and purposes, we sold out of all the Sweet and Savoury items. However we were left with some of the Rolls which were either sold at half price or given to Traders for their journey home. Had we had the volume of visitors as in previous years I think likely we would have sold out.

We had our usual mix of Traders but with a couple of new faces, as you know Mike Darby of Chuffed 2 Bits and Graham Austin of Garden Railways have retired which left us two Traders short. Ray Butler had a good look around the Stoneleigh Show to look for suitable replacements to fill the vacant spaces, R C Trains (Phil Partridge) looked like a very good fit for the space vacated by Chuffed to Bits. We also came across RailPrint (Olive Price) at the Leighton Buzzard show. He was showing a range of 3D Printed wagons his range included some of the more unusual prototypes. They were both based in the church and seemed pleased with their days trading. We also made one other change to the Hall layout, as Garden Rail wasn't going to be there, we offered it to Chris Mackenzie of Timpdon who jumped at the chance. This enabled us to move Brandbright into the larger space vacated by Timpdon in the Church.

Some of you will be aware that Adrian Kempster along with his partner Chris have been coming to our show for the past 12 years. He makes and sells a unique range of Line Side items to raise Funds for the Macmillan Cancer Support charity. At this year's show they raised over £400 which brings the

total they have raised over the years to more than £3,000. I am pleased to report that Di Polley Coles the Chair of Adrian's local Macmillan support group in Huntingdon has written to the Beds Group to express thanks for our support over the years.

Overall, another successful show with Traders reporting healthy sales. Very good support from our members and a healthy profit to help the Groups funds.

Chris Pretty, Show Manager

Steam in Beds Financial Review

It was unfortunate that Storm Bert decided to make landfall at Eaton Bray on the day we were holding our annual show with the result that we had the lowest footfall ever. The press did not help by over egging it with the front page of the Daily Telegraph reporting British Gas as saying that people should stock up with enough food for three days.

Against all odds we actually had the highest income during the past four years of £2,666.84 and turned a profit of £736.10. If we had had the usual number of visitors, I feel sure we would have had a profit exceeding £1,000.

Chris put a lot of effort into talking to traders and revamping how we promote the Raffle with prizes on show in a dedicated area and printed raffle tickets replacing the cloakroom type. This resulted in an income of £346 a big increase on last year.

For the first time people wanted to buy M2M items on a credit card which took me by surprise. Three payments were accepted which resulted in BAGs paying the SumUp interest of £5.41. Next year we will introduce a credit card commission to cover any card transaction losses.

Our catering expenses were a little higher this year due price increases and as we were only able to get a 10% discount from our supplier. We also needed to buy cups and plates. However, the turnover was £1,111.54, another high.

This year I will be increasing our donation to St Mary's church to £175.

Garth Bridgwood - Treasurer

Memories of Steam in Beds 2024



Sir Topham Hatt keeps a stern eye on proceedings at Ridgmont from the footbridge



The porter now has a train to carry his suitcases to – another scene full of life



The organ dominates the stands in the church but doesn't it make a staggering backdrop!



Chris refers to the Grand Draw in his report – it certainly looks professional and inviting



Andrew Neal's Chalkwood showing what can be accomplished in a small space



The main hall during drawing the Grand Prize Draw – West Herts and Kent members hoping to win!

Meeting Dates

Here are all meeting dates until the end of 2025. We have access to the hall from 10.30 and need to have the layouts packed away and be out of the hall by 16.00.

- 5th January
- 2nd February
- 2nd March
- 6th April
- 4th May
- 1st June
- 6th July
- 3rd August
- 7th September
- 5th October
- 2nd November
- 7th December

The Annual General Meeting to be held during our meeting on 2 March at 12.00 midday.

If at the AGM members vote in favour of holding a **Steam in Beds** show, then the proposed date is 22nd November 2025, and the meeting on 7th December would be cancelled.

Garth, Secretary

Committee members

The members of the BAG committee are as follows:

Bob Gamble	Chairman	chairman@bag16mm.org.uk
Garth Bridgwood	Secretary/Treasurer	secretary@bag16mm.org.uk
Mark Cresswell	Membership	membership@bag16mm.org.uk
Ted Robinson	Track Manager	trackmanager@bag16mm.org.uk

Garden Meetings

Dave Thompson has issued this early invitation for next year. The **Chells Valley Railway** open day is 14th June 2025. Dave will provide hot dogs (sausages in rolls), tea, coffee and soft drinks.

There are normally no issues with parking.

Please contact Dave in advance if you're attending, either by email at david.thompson25@btinternet.com or by text to 07903390045. Dave's address is:

12 Stanley Road
Chells
Stevenage
SG2 0EF

This is a 32mm line.

Modelling Matters

WATER TOP-UP FOR A DARJ B

I am in the process of offering for sale the 16mm scale assets of the late Mick Blowfield. Amongst these is a Darj B, but not the Roundhouse variant, in fact, I don't know who built it! The cylinders and valve gear are definitely Roundhouse and I assume that so is the chassis, but the boiler is scratch built and includes a steam turret, gauge glass, whistle and pop safety valve. The cab and bunkers

have separately applied rivet detail. I don't think they're Roundhouse as the coal space extension is separate whereas I believe the Roundhouse etch integrates this with the rest of the bunker. It's number 779, the oldest of the Darg B class still running. Here's the prototype taking water.



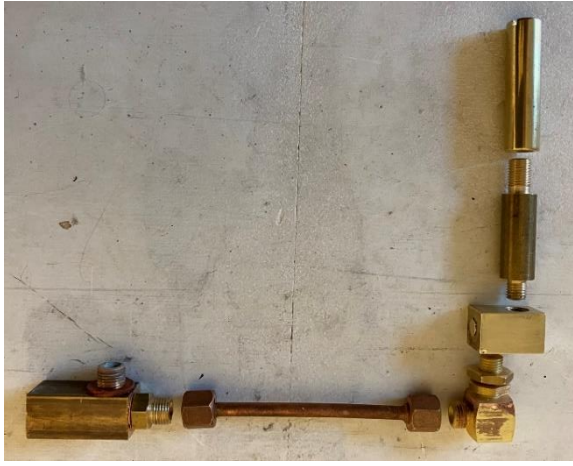
The loco, as I picked it up, had a fundamental flaw – there was no way to put water into the boiler when it was in steam and only by removing a steam-tight fitting, i.e. not intended for frequent removal, could water be added when the loco was cold. However, it had a gauge glass which spans the boiler from a steam turret at the top and a coupling in a bush at the bottom. It would be possible to connect to the back of the coupling at the bottom of the boiler and join this to a filling



point. I chose the fitting that Roundhouse use, mounted vertically so that attachment of the filler pipe would be downwards rather than across.

I used a Roundhouse 2½ inch gas pipe (other lengths available) and made an offset coupling to keep the bends the pipework under the boiler in the same plane. The offset was needed because the connection under the boiler was inside the frames, whereas the filler valve needed to sit outside the frames, to clear the boiler. I put two locknuts on the offset coupling, one to lock the coupling to the footplate under the boiler and the other to lock the extension needed to bring the filler valve to the top of the coal space. A lot more work than I first envisaged but it does mean that the boiler can be

removed from the loco without removing the filler valve from the footplate.



Here are the various components. The offset is bottom right. The lower picture shows the items above the footplate assembled and in place. Also visible another discovery – the lack of effective primer. The cab body passes over the boiler and is a snug fit at the point that paint has been lost. This isn't visible when the cab is on the loco, but highlights a wider issue.

You may notice the discharge from the gauge glass and its small valve and handle bottom right. I fitting a tiny O-ring to the valve nose to get it to seat properly (I turned a groove to retain the O-

ring). A little PTFE packing around the valve thread was also needed to stop water passing by the thread when the valve was opened. Made but not shown – an extension to the handle to make it easier to open and close the valve.

Forming the Roundhouse gas pipe was a challenge. It needed annealing several times because the copper quickly hardened as I tried to achieve smooth bends without resorting to pliers. I added cutouts either side of the nut that secures the pipe to the coupling at the bottom of the boiler, so that I could get an 8mm spanner on to tighten it in position. I also added a cutout into the frame on the fireman's side, so that I could attach a proper drain instead of letting water



splash onto the frames.

The final change, not shown, was fitting a Roundhouse manual regulator instead of the globe valve and wheel originally used. It's much easier to control with a conventional regulator.



The result is that the boiler can be filled and replenished either when cold or in steam. The fact that water comes into the system at the bottom of the boiler tends to leave a reliable level in the gauge glass. The gauge glass drain can also be used to drain the boiler, though this can take up to half an hour as the drain pipe is less than 1mm internal diameter (I might make another of greater diameter). The loco, which due to the lack of a ready means to refill water had seen little or no use, runs very nicely. I haven't found any part of the loco that was

etch primed so the whole lot will need stripping and repainting it's offered for sale either in Bulletin or at the National Show in April. Some say that you can never practice painting enough! It's been an interested exercise though.

Sales & Wants

A table will as usual be placed at the back of the hall for members to place any items they have for sale.