

## Smokebox – January 2008

### *The Chairman Rambles – again!*

I am afraid to report that yet another year has flown by and I have been prevailed upon to bore you good people once more, for which my deepest apologies.

As I (begin to) write this piece there are still three weeks to go before Christmas, but I guess you will not see it until after New Year. Therefore, a belated "Merry Christmas & Happy New Year" to you all, and I trust that Santa obliged with some nice 16mm goodies that you were hoping for – or perhaps you made sure by treating yourself at SIB-2007!

2007 has proved to be a more "normal" year for the club than of recent, there being no untoward events casting a shadow over our year.

In April our Secretary and Exhibition Manager, Mark, stood down from the post after the successful visit of Ridgmont to the Stoneleigh show – our thanks go to Mark and Mandy for the great efforts they put in to make this and other events such a success.

Soon after, with only the slightest persuasion, Chris Pretty volunteered to take over the role of club secretary, with the idea that any future events would be organised by committee. Little did he know, but almost immediately after, discussion led to decision and we were embarking on what was supposed to be an extended Christmas party for 2007. This turned into, and was billed as, an "Association Running Day" but by the time we had finished became in reality "Steam In Beds 2007". The only significant difference being no end-to-end exhibition layouts just more running tracks!

### SIB-2007

Our first paying customers were in the door before ten and then the flow increased enormously to a steady trickle! Around an hour later, although the car park was full and we had a dozen of our own vehicles stashed next door, there seemed to be a lot less folk present inside than last year. I was worried that some of our traders were not seeing any custom but later checks with each revealed they were all happy with business.

In the end we had about 60 guests through the door - including author Cliff Thomas and his wife Carrie who we had invited as our guests.

Our e-group friend from Manchester who had been looking for a lift turned up and there were a good number from 40 - 50 or more miles away - including apparently one guy visiting from France (although not exclusively for our little event) and the ex-SMT editor Dudley Hubbard and pals from down Merstham way.

Brandbright delivered six new Accucraft Baldwins including one each to our men Bruce and Kevin - Kevin giving his a running in turn on Ridgmont and being as happy as a pig in \*\*\*\* with his acquisition - it certainly ran very nicely with a lovely chuff.

Despite the offer of free tea/coffee and whatever, a lot of the punters when told of this requested to make a donation, so a cup was placed on the counter - and we made more

money than if we'd been charging. Similarly, the raffle did well, although for some reason no-one seemed to want the magnum of champagne until John Kitchenman's number came up and he didn't get left with much choice! (I hope it went down well John). Our traders all contributed prizes to the raffle.

At the end of the day a chat with all traders revealed that they were all very satisfied with the days business and yet again a great deal of enthusiasm to be invited again next time was voiced.

So, overall a good time was had by all and SIB-2008 is now eagerly awaited.

A big "Thank You" must go to all involved, but particularly to our aforementioned secretary Chris who, despite the earlier suggestions about an organising committee, bore the brunt of the work and did an absolutely Sterling job – thank you Chris. Also to Emma who not only set to in the catering operation, and the raffle, and helped out in other places when needed, but also took all the decidedly filthy towels from the hall home on Saturday, washed and dried them overnight so that they were hygienic and presentable for the day – many thanks Emma!

Last but by no means least, special thanks go to Graham & Carol and Andrew & Joy for making their respective layouts available for the event – running space would have been in very short supply without them.

#### Alan & John

As many of you will be aware Alan Pettitt is soon to move away from the area. Alan along with John Hodges is a long serving member of the Group.

Over the years Alan and John have been heavily involved in the creation and development of the fundamental "infrastructure" of the Beds Area Group – namely our layout "Ridgmont". Without their input we would not have a layout worthy of attending such events as the AGM.

Both of these gentlemen (and they are that) have also been regular "contestants" over the years in our own, generally somewhat under subscribed, MOTY style competition. Their contribution thus helping to keep the contest afloat.

I am pleased therefore, to announce that, in recognition of their significant contribution to the club, your committee has decided to award Honorary Membership to both Alan and John.

It is now between Christmas and New Year, I have recently spoken to Alan and John who both expressed their thanks for their Honorary Member status and also their hope to be able to visit us when circumstances permit. Alan did, in fact move just prior to Christmas and is now firmly ensconced in the wilds of Suffolk.

Our best wishes to Alan and his family in their new home.

And finally.....

As I said, the new year is now just a couple of days away now, the days will soon be lengthening and, hopefully, the weather improving, so giving opportunities for some 16mm in the great outdoors again. And if the weather doesn't want to play ball then we can always look forward to some indoor running at least once a month at LB!

I will close by re-iterating my wishes to you all for a happy and prosperous new year, and I look forward to seeing you at a club meeting soon. In the meantime, in parody of a certain TV program that I am not allowed to turn off ----- Keeeeeep Steaming!!

Brian Walton - Chairman

### *Members Running Day - 2007*

Thanks to everyone for helping to make the day a big success, particular thanks go to those who helped out setting up the Hall on the Saturday, everyone involved with the Raffle, Member to Member sales, the catering team and last but by no means least those members who stayed behind to clear-up at the end of the day.

### *Looking Forward – 2008*

#### Exhibitions

We have been asked to take Ridgmont to the Large Scale Exhibition to be held at the Warwickshire Exhibition Centre on the 12 & 13 April 2008. I don't have any further details at present. Please let me know A.S.A.P. if you would be interested in helping out with the layout and of course running trains. Unless we can put a team together to support this show we will have to decline the invitation which would be a great pity.

#### Scout Hall

I have received a request from the operators of the hall to remind members that no parking is allowed on the field at the back of the hall. This is not normally a problem, if we do need extra space we have found plenty of room just a few yards up the road. They have promised to do something about the state of the toilets and the towels. Please let me know if things don't improve.

Wishing you all a very Happy New Year.

Chris Pretty