

Beds Area Group Association of 16 mm Narrow Gauge Modellers

Annual General Meeting 2 March 2025

Committee Reports

Chairman

Our monthly meetings have continued without interruptions this year and attendance has been very good. We were pleased to see Carol and Graham with their track on numerous occasions.

Thanks to the organisational skills of Chris, we were able to present our highly regarded show “Steam in Beds”. Prior to the show, he was ably assisted by Ray who organised the traders and Garth who sorted out advertising and finances. Most other members helped either on the day or in the immediate lead up to the show. Not forgetting the non-member ladies who did a sterling job providing food and drinks during the show. Without the members’ support the show could not have taken place.

It was not just the show that requires dedicated input from members. Our regular routine relies on members taking on identified tasks. In particular I would like to make a special note of those members who have undertaken particular roles: Alan Regan, who continues to present copy after copy of our excellent Smokebox. I also thank the members who have contributed articles, they have ensured the success of Smokebox although I must make a plea for more material. Unfortunately, Bob Carter, our Bulletin contact, was unable to continue in this role due to illness and his place was taken by Garth and latterly by Mark, both of whom continued the standard set by Bob with lively and interesting content. We hope Bob will soon be well enough to resume this duty. Like Smokebox the Bulletin needs content, particularly photos (with description) so get your cameras out! Michael Walton our Webmaster is a bit of an unsung hero. I know Michael is very busy, but he keeps the web up to date in a seamless fashion so many thanks. I have received a number of enquiries about visits and membership via the web page. Ray Butler, who sends a hard copy of Smokebox to those without internet access. He also keeps in contact with prospective SIB traders and of course, continues the development of Ridgmont scenery. Pete Newman, who, though no longer a member, maintains a valuable Facebook presence.

Mark Cresswell took on the Membership Secretary’s role at the 2024 AGM and I am pleased to report that membership details are now fully organised, and Mark has proved an invaluable member of the committee. Also, committee members Ted Robinson, for overseeing Eaton Downs and Ridgmont maintenance, and Garth Bridgwood for Treasurer and Secretary duties, my thanks to you. These committee members are the backbone of your group.

Easton Downs is finally proving a viable track, and most teething problems have been sorted. Ridgmont continues to give great service and with the maintenance provided by Ted, work to a platform area by Alan and ballasting by Ray it looks even better in its later years – but aren't we all?

Bob Gamble

Secretary

2023-24 proved to be a quite year with nothing of significance to report. We have retained our membership of the Federation of Model Engineering Societies and renewed our insurance with Walker Midgley for Ridgmont and Eaton Downs. The annual premium increased again from £152.62 to £162.16. Next year I will have a look at other insurers.

Garth Bridgwood

Treasurer

During the year a second SumUp card reader was purchased in order to have one for Ticket Sales and one for Catering during Steam in Beds 2023. Both proved to be very useful except the wi-fi connection was lost on a couple of occasions.

The mandate approved at the last AGM was accepted by Metro Bank and Bob Gamble is now the authorised second signature on the account.

The balance sheet for the year is included in the pack and shows we made a profit of £300.67, which was a substantial increase on the previous year. Cash in the bank stands at £4788.57.

My thanks to Gordon Gill who audited the accounts again this year.

Garth Bridgwood

Membership Secretary

Membership has once again grown in 2023/24 with Membership at the end of August 2024 standing at a total of 40 including 4 honorary Members. There were 5 new or returning members during the year and 3 that did not renew. This represents an overall increase of 2 member on the previous year and sets us back to our Pre-Covid-19 with the year 2019/20 level of 40 members including 4 Honorary.

The membership fee for the Year 2023/24 was £40. However, despite continued inflationary pressures, the committee, having looked at our financial standing, had agreed to reduce the Membership Fee to £25 for the year 2024/25.

We are still looking at ways to increase the membership, particularly the next generation of 16mm modelers. To this end we have advertised the club in both Railway Modeller and Narrow Gauge World along with our regular entries in the Bulletin. If you have any other Ideas with regards to recruiting new members then please forward your suggestions to me.

Mark Cresswell

Layout Manager

Both Ridgmont and Eaton Downs have been used for running on our Sunday meetings without much track trouble and only the occasional need for maintenance.

The biggest success was to fit the up stands to the straight boards, and stiffening braces underneath the curved boards on Eaton Downs. Bob Gamble and I completed this in the late summer and since then the whole layout has performed well.

Some safety concerns were raised a couple of years ago about running two trains simultaneously on the 45mm circuit on Eaton Downs, as there is the potential for a head-on collision between two trains. After discussion with members who run 45mm gauge locos, and with Committee approval, it has been decided the best solution is to have one running circuit plus a loop on the outside at one end for steaming and train formation, and a siding on the inside for storage at the other end. Additional track is not required and is intended to commence work in the spring. A track plan will be available to view after the meeting.

A lift-up section to ease access into the centre of the layout was a feature of the original layout and it hasn't been forgotten. Bob and I will formulate a means of achieving this on the 'last-up, first-down' board, hopefully, by the end of the year.

Mark Cresswell has undertaken some preliminary design work on the electronics to provide an automated signal system using wireless technology, with sensors between the rails but mounted under the baseboards. The main criterion is that there shall be no wiring between boards although there is still some way to go before there is a proposal to put to the members.

With Ray Butler's detailed scenery for Ridgmont not being available for last November's Steam in Beds Show, Dave Thompson volunteered to spruce up some of the original buildings and the smaller scenic boards. Many thanks for doing this.

Ted Robinson

Boiler Tester

Once again testing of pressure vessels has continued remarkably like past years. I tested boilers and gas tanks for members of this group or for members who have recently joined the Association but have not yet joined a local group. I am always willing to test pressure vessels as long as the owners belong to the Association. As usual there was a steady stream of members' purchases which came without paperwork, usually as a result of an estate clearance, one hopes(!) At one time Roundhouse would issue duplicate certificates for relatively new locomotives but I understand they have not been so helpful of late, but it is always worth trying them if you mislay the certificates.

The annual steam test still worries some members, it is a simple thing to do and self-certification is perfectly acceptable although most members like to have a third party observe the process. One thing worth mentioning is the soapy water test to the gas supply line - look for the bad news which are bubbles!

Bob Gamble