



West Wiltshire Society of Model Engineers Newsletter

Issue No.39 October / November 2025

Calendar



October

- 4th – Members Family Day. 10am-4pm.
- 18th – Saturday Steam Up. 10am-4pm.
- 25th – Holt Live Steam Models & Train Show.

November

- 1st – Saturday Steam Up. 10am-4pm.
- 15th – Saturday Steam Up. 10am-4pm.

December

- 6th – Saturday Steam Up. 10am-4pm.
- 20th – Saturday Steam Up. 10am-4pm.



Do you have any articles or pictures for the next newsletter? If you can help, please send to:
secretary@wwsme.org.uk

News

16mm Landscaping Update

By Cliff Messent

A brief update on the 16mm landscaping.

Over the summer there has been little progress largely due to the hot dry weather and the state of the ground which has prevented progress on completing the gravelled areas and commencing any planting of hedges etc.



Now that the ground conditions have improved (with the rain) work can recommence with the aim of planting hedging etc. in November when conditions should be ideal!

Prior to then the priorities are as follows:

1. Complete gravelled areas to perimeter of new railway.
2. Install picket fence to 5inch raised track between station and new 16mm railway. The location is marked in yellow on the ground.
3. Prepare areas where hedging is to be installed ready for planting. The intention is to use bare root plants which are relatively inexpensive and ideally planted in November/December.
4. Continue with development of the infill in the far loop. Further tyres are required to progress this area, and we are aiming for these in late September / early October.



Work on the above will progress on Monday and Wednesday mornings and anyone wishing to get involved is welcome. We are however aware that not everyone is available in the week, and I therefore propose that the third Saturday of the month has a 16mm focus for those wishing to catch up on progress and assist with any ongoing activities. On these Saturday's, any works cannot impinge on wider running on the raised or ground level tracks. I shall be on site on these days between 10.00 and 12.00.



In addition, I am generally on site on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings if you wish to discuss any aspect of the 16mm landscaping.

For the loop nearest the station Oliver Walker has proposed some ideas for this area. I will distribute these under separate cover.

Please note that as we enter the winter season that the 16mm indoor layout will be erected in the clubhouse on the first Saturday of the month.



Tony Going Green

By Tony Lowe

Well, following reading an article several months ago and then following a conversation about the shortage of steam coal I thought let's give some of this green coal a go. And of course, unless Mr Miliband decides to re-open the British and Welsh coal mines it could be the only way in the future to enjoy our great hobby of running steam.



Following a trip to B&Q and purchasing three bags of Ecoal 50 (Green Bag) as per picture 30kg for £27.99 I thought if this doesn't work somebody, I thought would be using the reminder 29.5kg on their multi fuel stove. But wait, my Sweet Pea ran brilliantly on it, in fact 3hrs running and no or very little Ash and zero clinker, which on my Pea the clinker can and does very often fall over the front baffle and block up the air flow to the bottom set of boiler tubes causing the end of a running session.

So, from the beginning:

1) Preparation: Breaking the Ecoal lumps into a usable size, As they are they are compressed ovals, yes you can hit with a claw hammer but it breaks into so many sizes so I found a simple single tap worked to break the oval into two, I then found that you often have a straight side after breaking the oval so I then simply used an old wood chopper to split the ovals down, this method

you have less waste and a consistence size. (a bit like chopping a potato.)

2) Lighting up: Soaked wood in paraffin, then a sprinkling of Ecoal and it took light, a little more wood drawing the fire and away it went adding more coal as I built the fire, a good glow and more Ecoal added pressure came up nicely and both safety valves blew at the same time. Crack the blower to just on and onto the track I went.



3) Running: Loco light engine with myself on the driving truck on the ground level running both ways around our track. My Sweet Pea performed just like always, I found the only small aggravation was that when firing on the move, it does not sound like coal on the shovel, now what I mean is I know the sound of the shovel when coal is scooped up, you get a chinking sound but Ecoal being of a softer consistency has a rubbery sound so the chink of coal on metal is a more dulled sound, so I had to look to see if I had a shovel full on the shovel, I hope that made sense. But that aside firing on the move was no different.

4) What to look out for: It could be very easy to lose the fire, it gives a good golden - white glow, but this can also be the signs of a very thin fire. If you rake the fire you soon realise that the fire is thin and the Ecoal has a powdery consistency so can break down and drop through the grate, however if the fire is thin the hot fire soon ignites the new fuel when the fire is stoked. I also made sure that I had on the riding truck a few sticks of soaked wood just in case it needs a boost to draw the fire but never used it so that was put back onto the pot for the next running session.

5) Use of blower: I did not seem to use the blower any more than normal.

6) End of run cleaning down: I think I answered that earlier, less ash, in fact the ash is more of a light dust, no clinker, see pics.



Did having a loaded train make any difference?

Well after a second running session this time pulling the train of green coaches – see pic. I found no difference to when using Signals fuel and when I actually got around to load hauling at the last open day the Sweet Pea ran without any real difference other than grip on the track due to the adverse weather conditions.

Have now just got to have a run hauling passengers in good dry conditions, sadly the last Open day I ran at in June I forgot to take the Ecoal 50 so ended up running on real coal.



If anyone would like to give this Ecoal a go, please just ask. I would be happy to leave a bag at the track for several members to use free of charge.

So, to conclude, yes it works, it works well both in my Polly 1 loco and my Sweet Pea. I have not seen a reduction in performance, and it seems easier due to the lack of ash to clean down. I am very happy to keep using it and I am sure I will as the months and years go on.



Steam Loco Preparation

By Peter Pearson

Steam Loco Preparation - It's granny egg sucking time!

Steam locomotives are a bit like racing cars in that they perform at their best with attention to lots of little details and careful preparation. To steam well and be able to haul a decent passenger load (e.g. when Public Running) it's important that the loco is in good tune and condition. In this article I will just cover my half a day cleaning and servicing regime that I carry out after every running session. Apologies to those of you who know it all, but there might just be something here that you hadn't thought of?



1. Hoover out all the char/ash/bits of unburnt coal from the smoke box N.B. wait until your loco is completely cold, ideally next day before doing this or you risk a fire in your hoover!!
2. Remove and clean the blower nozzle, exhaust blast nozzle and spark arrestor (if

fitted) – see photo. N.B. apply copper grease to all the threads in the smoke box to ease removal the next time.



3. Brush out the smoke tubes with a closely fitting flue brush.
4. Use a piece of straightened coat hanger wire (or similar) to push out any blockages in the tubes where the flue brush won't fit the small spaces e.g. around superheater elements. Then use a compressed air lance (I use a 2 foot length of 5/32" copper pipe attached to my air compressor – see photo) to blow through the narrow tube passages (I attach a vacuum cleaner to the firehole door and block up the grate while doing this so any dust is drawn through the smoke tubes and out, not blown back into your face!)



5. Clean inside the chimney and petticoat pipe. A good smoke box vacuum is essential for proper steaming. The blast nozzle, petticoat pipe and chimney form a carefully designed venturi system to create that vacuum. Provided your blast nozzle size and position are correct (possible subject for a future article?) it is essential that you remove the build-up of ash and oil that cakes the inside of the chimney after every run. Otherwise it will accumulate to the point where the loco becomes choked and is difficult to steam-up and very lethargic on track. It's a filthy job, so I wear my best Marigolds and get a piece of paraffin wetted kitchen roll on a finger up inside the petticoat pipe, and another down the chimney until the whole thing is shiny clean. Use a rag on your poker or pencil if your fingers aren't long enough to meet in the middle.
6. Remove and empty the ash pan and give the walls and roof of the firebox a good brush out with the wife's washing up brush.
7. Have a final hoover-out of the smoke box (not essential but then you can feel really smug)
8. Make sure the smoke box door shuts tightly. A slightly loose pivot pin might help if the door isn't quite in line – the cross bar and dart stand more chance of pulling the door shut to achieve a gas tight seal if they aren't fighting against a misaligned door pivot pin.
9. Remove the injector (if fitted), remove both cones (carefully as the tip of the steam cone is very thin and fragile. Use a collet to grip the flange of the cones if they are stuck). Give the cones and the injector an hour in citric acid, rinse, blow out residual water and replace. I run distilled water (de-humidifier condensate) through my injector, so I only clean it after every 5 or 6 runs.
10. Spray the loco body and motion work with a mixture of paraffin and car engine oil (any type) and wipe down with a rag or kitchen roll. Handling all the bits and linkages is a good way to spot anything coming loose (or even missing!). And the

oil residue helps stop things going rusty and makes your loco look nice and shiny.

11. Lastly wipe the wheel treads with a paraffin rag to ensure good traction next time. Put the rag in front of each wheel and push the loco backwards, or behind the wheel and push the loco forwards. If you do it the other way round, you'll run over your own fingers. Don't ask me how I know this.
12. For those with cast iron cylinders, pistons or piston rings the following is essential straight after a run to avoid rusty seizures (unless you have removable steam chest plugs and can squirt some oil in there instead):

Give a good squirt of lube oil directly down the exhaust blast pipe (steam oil is too thick for this trick to work when it's cold), open the cylinder drain cocks, put the loco in full forward gear and push it backwards smartly along the track a few metres. Then put it in full reverse gear and push it forwards along the track a few metres. Repeat a couple of times until nice gloopy noises are heard and ideally oil starts to appear at the cylinder drain cocks. Alternatively, a good squirt of WD40 up into each open cylinder drain cock as the piston moves away is a good trick, but it's a bit fiddly and I usually end up with WD40 in the eye when I do it.

So that's it. No secrets, just attention to detail and she'll run like a good-un next time!

Happy Steaming!

