



THE NORTH STAR CHRONICLES – a newsletter primarily for the model railway fraternity

Volume 2 no 7, July 2014

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Editorial

This month a break with the ‘Training in Retirement’ theme is taken to report on the June meeting of the Hornby Railway Collectors Association of South Africa (HRCASA) KZN chapter. But before doing so some feedback is presented on last month’s article on Sandstone Heritage Trust within the context of railway preservation.

Firstly a response from Chris Webster in the UK about the situation there:

“Interesting what you’ve said about the younger generation not coming forward and having an interest in “practical” activities/hobbies.

I think it’s been noticeable that in the UK, the preserved lines, having sat back and relied on the old guard of volunteers for many years, suddenly had a dawning realisation 5-10 years ago that very shortly they were going to be in big trouble if they didn’t do something to attract a younger volunteer base. Most lines now have various initiatives to encourage this and a visit to most preserved lines nowadays will reveal quite a

respectable complement of younger individuals, (I'm classifying "young" as up to age 30!) including on the Narrow Gauge lines in particular, quite a lot of the train crews.

The railways themselves have made the effort to recognise the economic difficulties that may be faced by volunteers and many now offer very reasonably priced on-site hostel type accommodation of a good standard for their volunteers. Gone (or at least much rarer now) are the days of bunking down in the compartment of a part restored coach with a leaky roof!

"Skills transfer" is also high on the agenda's of a lot of lines with either volunteer or paid apprentices becoming more commonplace.

Most of the commercially run workshops which service the preservation movement have very full order books, especially for more specialist activities, so those skills are in great demand if you take the trouble to learn them.

Volunteering in a practical capacity or where interfacing with members of the public is also now seen by individuals (and potential employers) as being a good thing to have on your CV when hunting for a job in even unrelated sectors. It's also a good social activity and a lot seem to be realising that its actually quite a satisfying activity to do something where you can either interact with other people or see physical results rather than just sitting in your bedroom pressing buttons on a games console.

Although there is still very much an "old guard" bias within the membership at the GMES, (Guildford Model Engineering Society –ed) we do have some very active younger members including some who are actively building locos etc. in the larger scales as well as a few within the 16mm section. You inevitably lose a few teenage members when they discover beer, women, cars and motor bikes (*Delete as applicable), but we've also had a few return to the hobby in their 30's when they have settled down to family life and got that lot out of their system! (OK, maybe not the beer bit, most of us still enjoy a good pint!)*

So whilst the UK preservation/model engineering etc movement still has challenges to meet, its future is probably a bit more rosy than it was 5-10 years ago".

It would be interesting to hear Umgeni Steam's views on this issue – Ashley, please may I prevail upon you to comment?

Then some feedback from Sandstone on the Stars of Sandstone event

held in April. The following is a link to a pdf prepared by a visitor to Stars of Sandstone 2014 which contains some stunning photographs

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2ep7fsi910102kl/AAC4GIercQX2LvK9F3fgT32oa/Stars%20of%20Sandstone.pdf>.

Also a link to Hannes Paling's photos of the event on Flickr

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alfav8/sets/72157644098155905/>

Newsletter 1 for next year's Stars of Sandstone event (2nd – 12th April) has been published and can be accessed via the Sandstone website

www.Sandstone-estates.com.

June Meeting of HRCASA (KZN chapter)

The KZN chapter of the HRCASA holds meetings every two months or so which in addition to the buy/sell/swop activities have a theme or the meeting is addressed by a guest speaker. The June meeting comprised a "Steam Day" and the following is a report thereon.

Sunday June 15th was a warm and sunny Father's Day – how appropriate that about 15 HRCASA members (and one patient wife) should meet to 'play trains'.

The layout used was Umkhulu Modules featured in NSC Volume 1 no 8.

Photos of the modules erection on Saturday 14th are shown below.

The scene just after 10h00.



10 mins later nearly in position



Half an hour later – tea break



I forgot to take a photo of the completed set up which in total (including a tea break for the erectors – well the average age thereof was around 74!) took around two and a half hours. But this included sliding the fishplates to join the rails and then levelling the layout. Given that the base was an uneven lawn, levelling the layout took some time. Dismantling on Monday went a lot quicker – taken down and packed away in only half an hour!

The proceedings began on the Sunday with a few words from Ian Sutherland covering relevant matters and how the sales of items originating from an elderly collector were to be conducted (we have derived a set of rules to ensure equity when particularly desirable items are being sold. These may be of interest to other similar clubs and should perhaps be published at a later date). Then the wheeling and dealing commenced.

Get out your cheque books..... Rummaging. Photo Leon Nel



Decisions decisions.....

Interesting French Hornby items?



Ian informed me after the meeting that the sales had realized approximately R7000 so clearly the fathers were quite generous to themselves!

***A fine body of men.....
and an O gauge Mamod with Lima coaches***



Umkhulu Modules

For those who have not read the earlier article, a house move forced the dismantling of a 45mm gauge layout in the garden. This created a problem of having nowhere to run my live steam locos. Pending the building of a permanent garden layout the modules were a “temporary” (now 11 years!) solution.

That is not to say there has been no progress in the meantime. A gauge 1 (45mm) layout was acquired from a gentleman in Knysna. This was dismantled and the baseboards were transported back to Durban in a trailer (2 journeys). The sleepers were oak but for various reasons a decision was made to replace them with uv treated styrene sleepers. The rail is (Bonds?) code 200 bullhead brass, but it does mean the dual gauge 32mm/45mm track has to be assembled from scratch. A jig has been constructed for this purpose and thus the track building process goes quite quickly. The challenge is building dual gauge points but GMES has shown how this can be done.

One of the problems of modelling in larger scales is a relative scarcity (although the situation is improving) of ready built rolling stock. There are a few exceptions to this observation particularly if you model the Isle of Man, Welshpool and Llanfair, Lynton and Barnstaple and Vale of Rheidol prototypes. Accucraft and Perfect World are two suppliers in this field but generally if you want to run the “right” coaches and wagons behind your locos you are in for many happy hours either scratchbuilding or building kits. In my case the latter approach has been adopted but this has been a slow process. A few of the results are shown later.

So to sum up, the game plan is empty my cupboards of rolling stock kits and build dual gauge track, probably with a role for recycled plastic as battens, so that when I do eventually retire, apart from the dual gauge points building the garden railway will be a relatively simple (?) exercise and the locos and prototypical rolling stock will be ready to run.

The Locos (and some rolling stock)



This splendid model of a SAR NG15 is one of 50 built in China for Accucraft UK. A few went to Germany and Holland, a few to the USA, a few to Australia and a couple to South Africa. The rest were sold in the UK. This version is manual but the loco can be fitted with radio control.

Photo Leon Nel



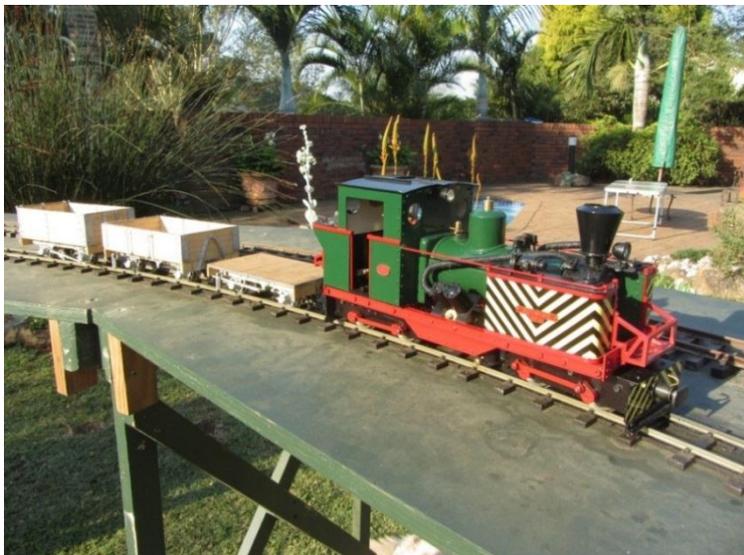
Another shot of the NG15 with a rake of prototypical wagons. The loco is butane fired and has twin burners. Nevertheless in contrast to the gas guzzling NGG16 Garratt from the same Accucraft stable the NG15 is a model of fuel frugality. Fill up the gas and water tanks and off it goes for half an hour or so, the axle pump replenishing the water supply to the boiler.



A close up of a nearly complete SAR NG fruit wagon. The kit was designed by Raif Copley and produced by Mike Johnson of Jurassic Models in the UK. I have 6 to build, the first one taking a year to near completion. A 3mm metal plate has to be added for greater mass and the whitmetal bearings have been replaced with self lubricating Vesconite.



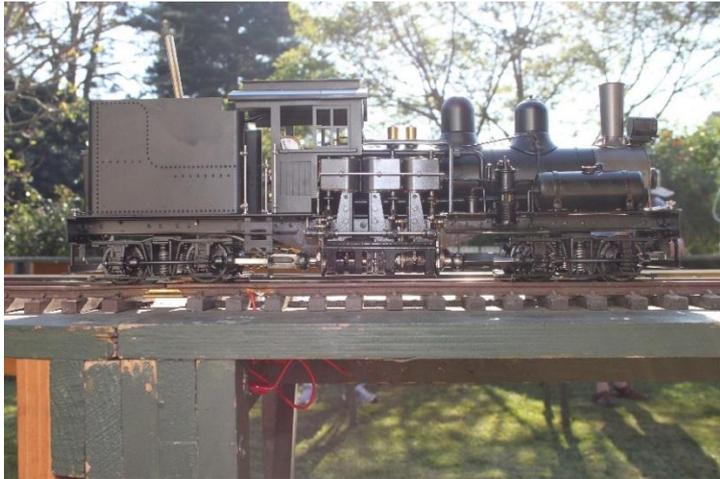
This is a Finescale Engineering model of Quarry Hunslet 'George Sholto'. The prototype operated at the Penrhyn slate quarry and the wagons in the photo are Coopercraft models of Festiniog slate wagons – not correct but near enough. I was fortunate to acquire this superb slip eccentric gas fired loco which will amble along for 40 mins without attention.



A 'South African' Heisler pulling Vale of Rheidol wagons? Not so unlikely as it may seem initially. Renishaw no 4 was bought by Peter Rampton when the mill went off tramline in the late sixties and shipped to the UK. A trust with which Peter Rampton is associated owns the VOR and the word is restoration of the loco is to be prioritised. So maybe we will see Renishaw no 4 operating between Aberystwyth and Devil's Bridge soon? Model by Peter Angus.



If I am lucky to own a Finescale Engineering Hunslet, I am extremely lucky to own two! 'Winifred' is a Penrhyn Port class Hunslet having originally operated at Port Penrhyn but latterly at the slate quarry. How I managed to acquire two Finescale Hunslets is a long story but a tip if you want to obtain one is make friends with the wife of the builder – Tony Sant! Here 'Winifred' is shown pulling a rake of Dinorwic slate wagons supplied by Binnie Engineering.



Obviously a class B – 2 truck Shay but an interesting one. This is an Aster model of an Alishan Shay which operated in the forests of Taiwan (previously known as Formosa). This loco was kindly built for me from a kit by John Messenger on the Isle of Man. Like most of my locos it is gas fired (an earlier version of this model was meths fired) **Photo Leon Nel**



What is a diesel doing at a “Steam Meet”? The answer is I wanted to test it post a major modification – namely fitting sound. This is an Accucraft model of a Baguley Drewry, Vale of Rheidol no 10. It is battery powered and radio controlled. Suffice it to say that after recharging the batteries following its appearance at the 16mm Garden Railway Exhibition at Peterborough in April it passed its test with flying colours.



Monday was work day on the 45mm track where mainly electric locos are run. Initially nothing would operate but cleaning the track, and soldering the jumper leads which had become detached worked wonders. Here a LGB Mogul retrofitted with a Massoth sound decoder (thanks to Mike Leppan in Cape Town but I still have to learn how to operate all the functions!) trundles round.

For the final run of the day (a LGB Mallet also fitted with a Massoth decoder) refer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1E5yNqQDcc>
 All things considered this was an enjoyable and successful weekend. Next outing for the layout – Wings Wheels and Whistles at the Pietermaritzburg Model Engineering Society, first weekend in August.