



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

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Editorial

As this was being written I heard with sadness that the Hobbytech store in Westville closed in June – another sign of the times.

The Guildford MES is featured for a second time this month with the focus on this occasion on their 32mm and 45mm gauge tracks.

But first some further thoughts on the cancellation of the convention. (I realise this is of little interest to overseas readers of NSC but it is important to the local model railway community).

The first comment I received on the convention issue is from someone who prefers to remain anonymous.

“I am especially saddened that the Natal Convention has been cancelled as I missed the last one and will now probably never get to see some of the incredible layouts that the Durban Pietermaritzburg fraternity are famous for. I accept that travelling and accommodation would have kept some people away but would a smaller Convention have been such a bad thing?”

In my view Conventions are all about layout visits, the swopmeet, an optional train related excursion and the lectures. Over the last few years there has been much greater and unnecessary emphasis on expensive opening and closing functions when simple bring and braai type events would have been quite adequate. Over organisation, personal agendas, ballooning budgets, the inability to rescale and lack of dynamic management enthusiasm probably killed this one and it is to the detriment of the small but dedicated band of railway enthusiasts nationally. At the very least the Organizers should have rescaled the event or offered it to Johannesburg or Pretoria. They are next in line to host it anyway and regularly hold great model railway events and could probably easily have accommodated the Convention at short notice. If they did and it was then turned down, we should have been informed of this. As this didn't happen I assume that they did not do this and through their lack of action have let the South African model railway enthusiast down badly"

Then there is Robin Kerr's e-mail on the subject:

"Hello 2015 Convention Organising Committee,

This is an unmitigated disaster!

As far as I can ascertain, no individual in CT was canvassed, nor was Model Railroad Specialists (Mike Trow) one of the country's major train shops! Mike Trow and I have organised all 5 CT conventions since 1989.

Attached find a schedule of information, which indicates.....

- we have never had the luxury of a single delegate 6 months prior to the convention - you have cancelled at this time! ;*
- in 1999 we only had 4 delegates 4 months before the convention! ;*
- most delegates registered 2/3 months before the convention;*
- we ran an "early bird" discount (10%) up to 3 months before the our convention to encourage early registrations;*
- all previous delegates, to all previous conventions (1 to X), were e-mailed invitations to the convention, where we had an email address (200) - response was 32% but it yielded 63 delegates;*
- we posted 350 personal invitations to previous delegates who were not on email - response was only 6% and yielded 20 delegates - maybe not worth it? ;*

- approximately 40% of your delegates should be local (Durban and environs), approximately 40% from Gauteng, and the balance from elsewhere.

Further, you have done very little marketing/publishing of information about the convention - the website www.samodelrailway.hot.co.za was specifically set up a number of years ago to advise forthcoming conventions, and publish information concerning them, has not been utilised? Those locally who know about the convention have only stumbled upon the information, as did I. Also the convention is not in school holidays, as has normally been the historic case, allowing the convention to double up as a holiday for the family.

As to the economic situation, it has been worse, and delegates came to the past conventions. I believe that the high delegate cost of R 1,440 has been off putting, and I mentioned this to Johnny some months ago. It is about 50% higher than that of the last convention in PE in September 2013. This is the initial hurdle to get delegates over. Accommodation, travel and meals can be pitched at many levels, from rock bottom to luxury, and accommodation and travel can be shared to reduce costs.

A handful of delegates, plus your committee, represents about 17% of the delegates to the last Durban convention (66 delegates). Surely you could have waited a bit longer, before pulling the plug

On a positive vein

- why not look "detuning" the convention from 4 days to 2/3 days;
- scrap the Pietermaritzburg leg, and make the layouts available on Sunday to delegates who wished to travel there;
- the above should lower the cost considerably;
- hire a Scout hall, or school premises in the afternoon (and perhaps the evening/s) for clinics, etc. Again the costs should be lowered;
- get the news of the convention out - OUT!

The value of the conventions is not the clinics, nor the layouts, nor the prototype tour/s - it is in the continued meeting of likeminded individuals to share our unique hobby and make great friends - to CANCEL is unthinkable!"

To be fair, the organizing committee tried hard and did not receive the support required. However alienating certain members of the local model railway community did not help. Lessons need to be learned and a

different kind of convention and leadership style is required to prevent a similar debacle occurring in the future. It is unclear who is going to run with the ball now but whoever it is, there is plenty of food for thought in the foregoing.

Guildford Model Engineering Society – Part 2

Part of the 32mm/gauge1 layout with the new Gauge 1 layout in the background. Photo courtesy Chris Webster



Overview of 32mm/gauge 1 layout as it was in April 2010





Dual gauge track and a South African connection. The model is a gas fired 16mm 4 cylinder Heisler incorrectly numbered as Renishaw no 2. The only Heisler Crookes Bros owned was a 2 cylinder - no 4. The loco was built by Peter Angus.



And for those who relish challenges how would you like to build one of these? Lots are required for my garden layout. I can provide you with a copy of the GMES manual how to build dual gauge 32mm/45mm points.....



Coal firing anyone?
Chris Webster firing a John Shawe/ Roundhouse Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes no 24 – a 2-6-2 Baldwin with a rather unprototypical but prize winning model of a South African narrow gauge guard's van in tow. April 2010.

Gas(?) fired SAR NGG11 Garratt. April 2010



3 South African connections in one shot: 3½" gauge 15F in the background, NGG11 and SAR NG guards van on left. April 2010



Below is an Mpeg taken in April 2010 of a 16mm Roundhouse Fowler converted to coal firing running on dual gauge track. Including this is an experiment as it makes for a big file. Double click on the icon to open.



357.MOV

Gauge 1 track in business. Cliff Barker track. Wide curves and fast running, the essence of this gauge. Photos courtesy Chris Webster



Summer in England – never!



Must be summer – more sunhats, gazebos and Thomas



SR Bulleid Pacific Battle of Britain Class no 21C151 “Sir Winston Churchill” (BR 34051) irreverently referred to as a “Spam Can”! The prototype was built in Brighton Works in 1946 and is preserved in the National Railway Museum in York. This loco pulled the funeral train of Sir Winston Churchill on the 24th January 1965. The model is an alcohol fired Aster built in 2006



Take the train!