



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

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Editorial

Following my observations in the February NSC about the disposal of model railway collections, the Spring edition, no 44, of the British magazine, *Miniature Railways*, contained an artist's impression, accompanying letter and editor's comment on AIMREC as follows:

A National Collection

I was interested in the letter by Bob Tebb (*MR43*) regarding a safe and secure place to exhibit our miniature railway treasures.

In Ashford we are going to have a museum of model railways on the site of the old Ashford Railway Works. The group has secured a 2½ acre site and the necessary funding for this project, which will include historic railway layouts in various gauges. They have already planned a multi-gauge live steam track outside the main building. The council are on board with this so it looks as if it will be going ahead shortly and I think it would make an ideal home for historic miniature locos.

The website for this project is www.aimrec.co.uk

Lawrence Dickens

Ashford, Kent

This is the Ashford International Model Railway Excellence Centre, a first class project utilising part of the old railway works next to Ashford Station to create a purpose-built model railway centre, preserving the best layouts from the past, which often get dismantled for lack of space, and creating some monumental new ones. AIMREC also intends to become a key centre for education about railways in general, and - crucially for our purposes - has indeed promised a 'multi-gauge live steam railway attraction'. The architects have rather vaguely suggested a miniature railway circuit, but it's not very inspiring, and unsuitable for anything over 7¼-inch. With a sceptical hat on, it looks as though the emphasis will be on a basic ride with an eye to emulating the commercial success of the miniature railway at the National Railway Museum's York site.

Nothing is certain until the paint dries, and at this fund-raising/planning stage, schemes tend to try and please everyone, with the non-core elements quietly dropping off the essentials list later on. The problem is that model railway enthusiasts are counted in millions, and miniature railway

enthusiasts in tens of thousands. Take into account the space requirements of even a static miniature locomotive collection, and the constricted 2 1/2 acre site (nearly everything outside the main building is car park) and it's clear that any miniature railway element will be very much secondary. More positively, the local authority is right behind it, and there is at least a promise of some sort of miniature railway input. We await developments with keen interest. (Ed)



Artists's impression of the AIMREC building

Gary Smith, editor of Rider Magazine, made the following observations about the AIMREC concept:

Extract "For those who do not want to see their collections broken up, AIMREC is endeavouring to establish an educational centre/museum at Ashover in Kent to preserve model railway layouts and collections." End extract.

"Usually the initial, and main, stumbling block to creating such an "educational centre/museum" place is of course premises, buildings, leases, rents, landlords, occupational continuity, and all those associated problems such as the cost of location and so on.

What would the hobby in South Africa say / interest be if I were to tell everyone that I already have an individual who is willing to donate 3 to 4 acres of unused land, in a residential area, with normal tar access, within 1km of a major freeway off-ramp, within 25kms of a major city centre; and another individual who owns and operates a concrete and brick factory plus a major construction business, who is willing to sponsor all the building of the necessary buildings: to create such a educational centre / museum in South Africa?

The only catch / small print that is required by both these individuals is that the entire operation be a fully correctly properly registered and operated business / charity / NPO / section 21 company / training facility (whatever the best option for such an operation is) with full accounting/legal procedures/constitution/ operating committee/continuity in perpetuity plan/etc happening before they will donate / sponsor the property and equipment to such a company / endeavour.

And yes, these are both individuals who have suffered the problems of government / city councils 50 year leases ending and forcing the demise of 45 years of hobby clubs work and efforts by losing premises, and of landlords selling buildings that they have had open-ended leases in for decades and new landlords either requiring them to move out or putting the rent up to unsustainable levels, again forcing 40 years of work to be thrown away.

So yes, significant land and buildings can be got for such a museum for free as long as it is a correctly operated organisation that will exist in perpetuity and will hold the property itself as such so that no event such as a death of an owner or emigration of a board member can in any way cause it to not exist anymore or force a demise of the operation.

One other requirement is that the museum must be open to working hand in glove with other modelling organisations such as the IPMS guys and radio control clubs.

There is also an architect working with these people who is donating his time and effort for free, who has already got all the cadastral maps and plans of the said piece of land and has a drawn plan map of it with the proper co-ordinates showing building restriction lines, watercourses (there is a small dam on the property), servitudes to be considered, etc. He has also created, to the same scale, a series of building sizes, 10mx10m, 20mx20m, 15mx30m, 50mx20m, etc, and a series of parking bay layouts, that can be photocopied and cut into pieces so that everyone can shuffle them around on the ground plan like jigsaw pieces until the perfect fit and design of buildings can be decided on. Once that is done he will then draw it all up in a proper architectural plan and he will take responsibility for getting it submitted to planning departments and doing whatever is necessary for getting it approved and passed ready for construction to start, so all that side of the project is taken care of as well.

So the biggest problem to creating such a place in SA is waiting to be solved by like minded individuals who are well off enough to afford to assist their chosen hobby in a necessary way, the registering of a business / charity / NPO / section 21 company / training facility (whatever the best option for such an operation is) and getting that side of the legal paperwork done.

Is there anyone out there who has the knowledge / experience / inclination to assist with getting the legalities to enable it all to come into existence?

Let the hobby comment."

And then in a further e-mail:

"David, and just as we were talking about it, this news item pops up in a February magazine. A world renowned club layout that has been 40

years in the making is being forced to be torn down and destroyed again..... **BECAUSE THEY NEVER GOT AROUND TO OWNING THE PREMISES THEY EXISTED IN!**

Another 40 years' worth of work and history going down the drain again. The time has never been more appropriate for us (RSA) to ensure our hobby's future by acting on these other guys offer and establishing a club as a genuine stand-alone operating business that can exist for eternity that outright OWNS its own land and buildings that these guys are willing to donate.

Let us not live in a dreamland that the SA government will let the George museum exist forever.

NEB&W Forced to Move

The Rensselaer Model Railroad Society at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY is in need of a new home. Guided since 1989 by John Nehrich, the student club built the New England Berkshire & Western Railroad, a historically based, exceptionally well executed HO scale layout. In addition to introducing the hobby to the next generation, NEB&W has also presented both local and general history to non-modelers. The exposure throughout the past 30 years has been far reaching. More than 100 articles about the NEB&W have appeared in various hobby magazines. In 1989 Nehrich and the layout were featured on the NBC Today Show. The NEB&W layout was featured in an article in the Los Angeles Times that was syndicated to 600 other newspapers. The club appeared in Invention & Technology Magazine in 1995, and on several local PBS documentary programs. The layout and local historical research by the club was an important part of developing the 2008 film *Sittin' On A Million*. RPI has recently announced plans to renovate Davison Hall dormitory where the NEB&W layout has been housed for some 40 years. At press time, the future of NEB&W remained uncertain. For a virtual tour of NEB&W visit my.matterport.com/show/?m=e6d8iA5vGQ5.

We will probably use some of the Rensselaer Club's techniques on the Highway Model Railway Club's layout.

As we get older the disposal of model railway collections becomes an increasingly important issue in our lives. Of course the vast majority of modellers will follow the "recycling" route (as against Mike Leppan's Egyptian approach – bury everything with you!) to the disposal of their collection but there are also those who wish to see their layouts/collections preserved. With respect to the latter this is an opportunity for you to express your views which I will be happy to publish. Gary can be contacted at gary@ridermagazine.co.za.

Wayne Thompson's railway in the garden

By way of introduction I make two observations about this layout. Firstly it makes no pretensions about being a garden railway. The layout is designed to run Aster gauge 1 live steam locomotives. Secondly I write with a tinge of sadness as to the best of my knowledge this is one of only three railways in the garden in the Durban area and only one of two running live steam. The sadness derives from the fact that the layout is shortly to be dismantled as Wayne is semigrating to a property close to Willowmore in the Cape. Fortunately I have been able to visit the line to record it for posterity.

The layout is some 4 years old and although intended to have both 45mm and 32mm tracks only the former was actually laid. As will be seen from the photographs the setting is magnificent featuring a stream on bare granite. To accommodate an Aster Challenger (minimum radius 2m) the line is built with sweeping curves. Arguably the most striking scenic feature is the lower bridge crossing the stream.

First there are some photos of the layout and then the impressive motive power.



Looking downhill from the direction of the road



Looking upstream to the road



A simple oval with a passing loop



Old MacDonald had a farm? Or is it bridge over troubled water?



Bridge over the River Kwai?



Motive power: Aster's 1st loco 1975 SR Schools class. 3000 built



GWR Pannier 750 produced



B&O Grasshopper 1993 800 produced



Titfield Thunderbolt 2001 400 produced



DB BR 86 1987 620 made



DB BR 78 1978 770 produced



***UP Challenger 2012 100 made
2nd National Garden Railway Exhibition***

It is planned to hold the 2nd National Garden Railway Exhibition at Halley Park, Rudling Road, Pietermaritzburg, the home of the Pietermaritzburg Society of Model Engineers, during the first weekend in August this year. The exhibition will be held as part of the PMES Wings Wheels and Whistles event. This year PMES is also hosting the National Steam Meet over the same weekend i.e. Saturday and Sunday 3rd and 4th August. With respect to the garden railway exhibition, this will feature Carel Janse van Rensburg's portable layout (a different one to that which visited George in December) and my Umkhulu Modules. As in George this will provide facilities for running both steam and electrical powered locomotives on 45mm track and steam and battery powered locos on 32mm track. In addition it is planned to fit in one or two garden layout visits on the Friday i.e. the 2nd August.

I hope to see you there.

You may have noticed one small change to the format of the newsletter. At the request of a Groot Brak resident who shall be nameless, the descriptions of the contents of photographs have moved to the bottom from the top thereof.

Now one other requested change/addition:

THE END!