



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

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***Editorial***

This month's newsletter is devoted entirely to the Centurion Society of Model Engineers Fair held on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2019 and in particular the launch of the 45mm track.

***Trains and boats and planes – well helicopters anyway.***

By way of introduction, the Society can trace its roots back to 1961 and the formation of the Pretoria Live Steam Club/ Pretoria Stoomtrekkrakklub which basically operated from the garages of the members. 24 years later the then Verwoerdburg Municipality announced it was making available on lease a 13 hectare site to the club adjacent to the Hennops river so that the club could pursue its hobby and entertain the public. 8 years later the site was officially opened.

The club, now known as the Centurion Society of Model Engineers is located in beautiful, extensive park like grounds with prolific birdlife. Owing to the propensity of the Hennops to flood it is extremely unlikely the site could ever be developed for residential or business purposes which gives the club a degree of security in the face of relatively short term leases. This has encouraged the CSME to erect excellent facilities on the site. Not only are there 900 metres of 3½", 5" and 7¼" tracks for running locos through tunnels and over bridges and with a covered station, but a club uses the amenity to operate boats on the lake.

The radio controlled crew are also present with a dedicated area for operating their models of trucks and earth moving equipment. Finally there are excellent facilities in the 'station' building which provides catering, toilets and showers. While the setting of the Durban Society of Model Engineers is attractive and the Pietermaritzburg Model Engineers Society site is also set in park like grounds, arguably it is eclipsed by Centurion (sorry Martin!). Those interested in finding out more about CSME should consult the website: <http://www.centuriontrains.com/>



***A view of the 'pond' being crossed by the engineering scale tracks.  
Photo Hannes Paling***

### ***The Gauge 1/G scale track***

CSME started hosting an annual Model Engineering Fair in 2017. The high point this year was the opening of a gauge 1/G scale track. While the track base is permanent, to deter theft and vandalism the LGB track itself has to be lifted after each operating session.

The entire project was conceived and largely built by Carel Janse van Rensburg. Family members and other specialists assisted from time to time and an informal 'go fund me' scheme assisted with the financing. The result is outstanding. While not yet finished, the layout will do a lot to promote large scale (gauge 1 and G scale) modelling in South Africa. The other development over the weekend was the showcasing of correct scale to gauge models of Cape gauge (3'6") SAR diesels and coaches. The visionary for this project was Riekus van der Westhuizen who runs a local model train shop specialising in Marklin. The builder of the models was Jan Gouws of SARM who is based in Somerset West. I had no idea

that models of this quality could be constructed in South Africa and can only hope the enterprise of the two gentlemen concerned will be rewarded if not locally then in the export market.

In order to enable 16mm live steam equipment also to be exhibited, I brought my portable dual gauge layout – Umkhulu Modules up from Durban. Hopefully in view of the physical effort involved I will not have to do so again! Carel has undertaken to add a third rail on one of the circuits to create a 32mm track. That is something to look forward to! In the meantime let's have a look at some photos from the weekend.



***The new layout – two circuits of 75 metres (including the station) operational but still a lot of work to do. Photo Hannes Paling.***



***Class 34-200 diesel with a rake of Blue Train coaches. Trans Karoo consist behind the Blue Train. Photo Hanneljie Schoeman.***



**Another class 34-200 diesel with Trans Karoo rake. Umkhulu Modules in the background and exhibition of Minis right rear. Photo Hanneljie Schoeman.**



**View of the layout from the south and Carel's bridge building handiwork: modelled on the Fountain Valley bridge just south of Pretoria.**



***More bridges: this time based on the Irene arches at Centurion on the Gautrain line.***



***Carel also digs tunnels!***

### ***Cape Gauge 1***

The recent history of large scale modelling in South Africa is mainly restricted to the engineering gauges of 3½", 5" and 7¼" gauges although it is interesting that as long ago as the 1930s some SAR employees based at Kimberley built an operating layout to 1:24 scale running on 1¾" (44.45mm) track (source The Meccano Magazine). As an aside it is also interesting what emerges at events such as the Centurion Fair. This included two locos for 45mm track, one clockwork (extreme right of photo bottom page 3) and the other coal fired! But things are changing. As shown in the above photos there were two G scale, locally produced class 34-200 diesels on display, the EMD GT26C loco fitted with the venerable two stroke V16 at 2600hp. The background to the models as supplied by Riekus is worth recording.

The loco chassis and bodies are built by Jan Gouws in Somerset West and then shipped to Riekus on the Reef who fits the motor blocks and

bogies for the locos which are sourced from American Trains as are the finer details including wipers, drawbar links and air horns.

The decoders are ESU V5.0 XL's and the smoker is a USA Trains, fan driven unit. The customization of the smoke and sound files is also done by Riekus.

These are the first available models in this scale. On the drawing board is a class 35-200 EMD as well as a 39-200. By the end of next year there should be a GE class 34 also running on USA Trains Bo-Bo motorblocks. A class 36 from another builder should be available shortly. Rolling stock is not being ignored as was evidenced at Centurion in the form of the Trans Karoo and the Blue Train rakes. Also present were the repainted Trans Karoo coaches in Shozolozza Meyl livery and new Trans Karoo livery.

Riekus and Jan are building every single coach style in both trains, from first and second class, through kitchen cars and generator cars to baggage vans. Shunting and brake vans and the first batch first batch of freight wagons, DZ's, U14's and so forth are already available. Soon there will be a Drakensberg and a White Train in 1/24. as well as PRASA and Spoornet liveries. Painting these is pretty much a what-the-customer-wants affair.

16mm models of narrow gauge SAR running on 32mm track in the form of the NGG16 and the NG15 have been commercially available (i.e. not just one offs) for a number of years. Rolling stock for such 2 foot gauge locos has also been available thanks to the efforts of people like Raif Copley and Philip Elwin. Latterly, a new UK based producer in the form of Resurgam has entered the market in SAR narrow gauge with an extensive range of freight and passenger rolling stock kits.

The point to be made here is that it must be clear from the foregoing that some serious work is being done locally to cater for those who wish to model SAR in Cape Gauge 1. This is thanks to the vision and drive of Riekus van der Westhuizen and Jan Gouws. The former may be contacted at [riekus@megabits.co.za](mailto:riekus@megabits.co.za) and the latter at [sarm@telkomsa.net](mailto:sarm@telkomsa.net).



***The Umkhulu Modules portable Gauge 1/G scale and SM32 layout***  
With temperatures reaching 35 degrees centigrade in the middle of the day, the gazebo was a vital piece of equipment. Thanks for the loan thereof Carel.



***Aster gas fired Alishan Shay. Two Shays, the one above and Accucraft's Mich Cal did the 'heavy lifting' over the weekend on the 45mm track. Photo Hannetjie Schoeman.***



***Another shot of the Alishan Shay from a more photogenic angle.  
Photo Hanneljie Schoeman.***



***Umkhulu Modules most recent acquisition, Accucraft UK's latest offering – Talyllyn "Dolgoch" pulling a rake of coaches built from Brandbright kits.***

It was appropriate that this loco had its first run at Centurion because between 1901 and 1904 "Dolgoch" carried the name "Pretoria" to mark the relief of that city during the Boer War/Second War of Independence, depending on your political persuasion. Centurion is effectively a suburb of Pretoria.

“Dolgoch” was not the only loco that debuted over the weekend. James Cunningham’s, Graham Duncan Smith built, model of the loco that sits in the Waterworks Museum on the northern side of the top of Table Mountain in Cape Town also made its first public appearance. The 2’6” gauge prototype, works no 826, was built in Scotland by Andrew Barclay, Sons & Co Ltd in 1898. The loco was dismantled and re-erected on Table Mountain to assist with the building of reservoirs. When the work was completed the loco was abandoned there.



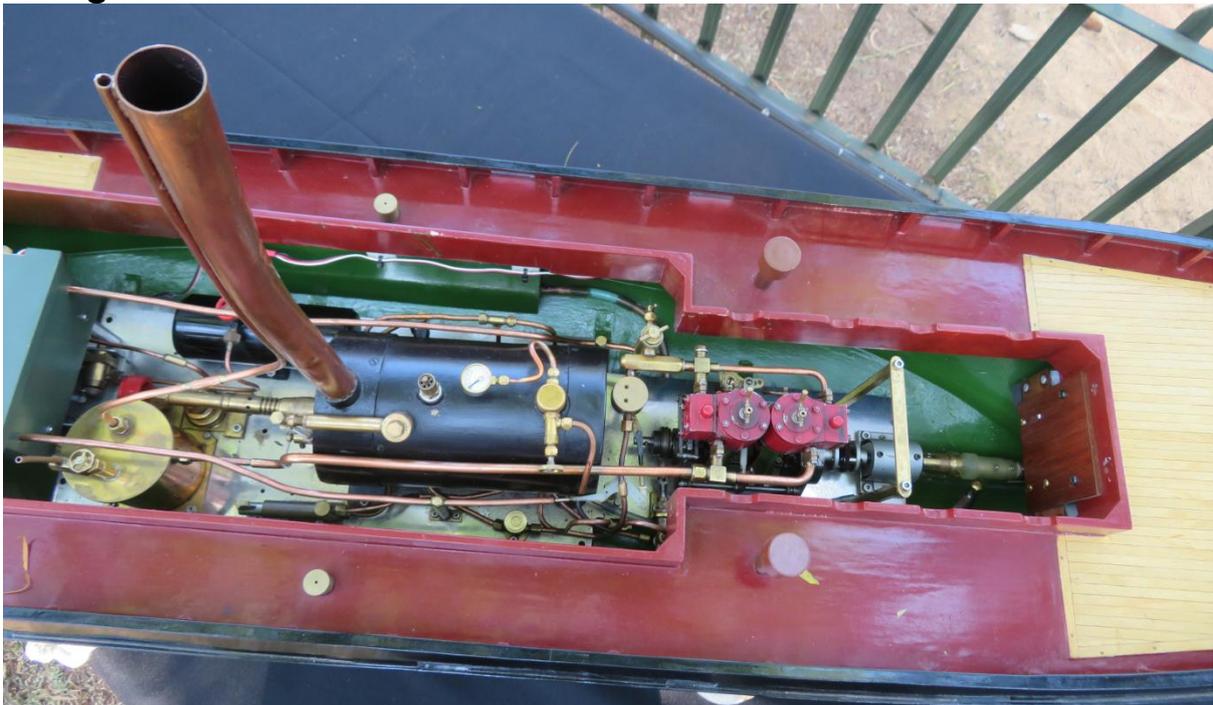
***Model of Andrew Barclay loco with Mini collection at rear.***

While the primary focus of this newsletter is railways and in particular model railways, it is also appropriate to record the other hobbies which were on show at the event (and what you missed if you were not there!).

An excellent overview of the event can be obtained from Hannes Paling's flickr album:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alfav8/albums/72157711028957031>.  
One of the exhibits which I covet is Willie Fourie's radio controlled steam tug. This was built by George and Ken Boss and is powered by two vertical Stuart engines.



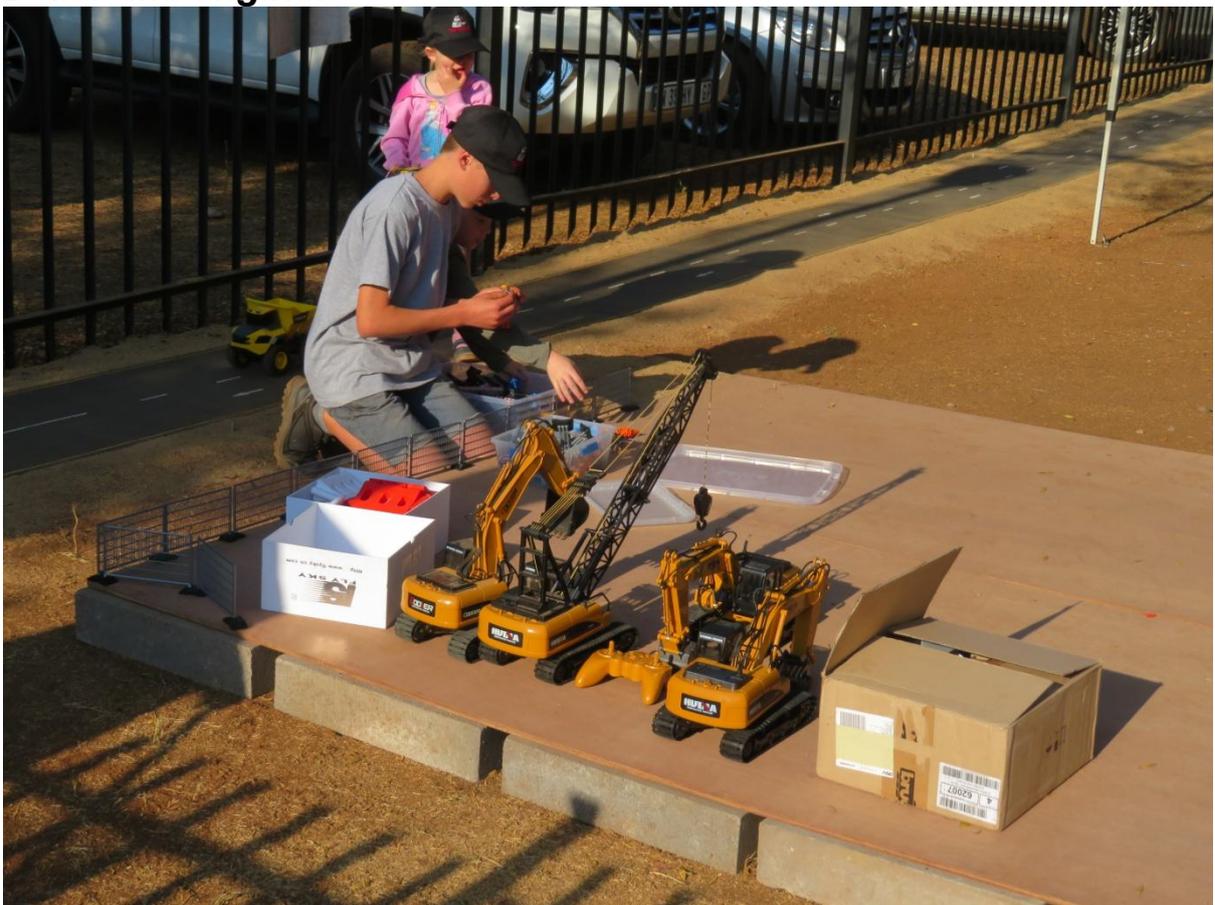
***George Edward***



***Deck and superstructure removed.***



***Boiler and engines***



***Keep on trucking***



***Stuart stationery and other model engines built by Colin Baytoff on display. The station for the engineering scales behind.***



***And to close - double headed Roundhouse live steam: Carel's Lady Carlia and Willie's Billy.***

### ***Conclusion***

Events like the Centurion Fair do a lot to promote the model railroading hobby (and indeed many other hobbies). Now with a semi permanent gauge 1 track located in South Africa's major population centre and 1:24 scale models of South African prototypes becoming available in that gauge, there is an even brighter future for local large scale modellers. The end