



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

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Editorial

For various reasons August will be a bits and pieces month. First there is a report on progress with the dismantling and disposal of the Highway Model Railway Club layout. Next, impressions of the state of the hobby in the UK gained mainly from visits to the 16mm Exhibition at Peterborough will be relayed. Finally, impressions from a recent visit to Knysna are set out.

Highway Model Railway Club

As the Duke of Wellington is alleged to have said when describing the Battle of Waterloo, 'it was a close run thing' but homes have been found for both some of the club and all the no longer required modules.

Firstly, the new home of the club will be in Durban North. That means a bit of travelling for nearly all the current members but car pools will help. The new premises are spacious and will accommodate the old Durban Modular Railroaders straight modules built by the late Carl Pieters and John Everitt in the nineteen eighties. These modules will be integrated into a similar layout to the one just dismantled in Kloof but with the new Roving Rails straight modules replacing the ones from the Kloof layout which have been sold.

A further three modules ex Roving Rails will be rejoining their former colleagues. The final two 2 set modules will be relocating to the Cape along with two ex DMR corner modules. Danie Joubert's excellent handiwork in the form of Sally's Homestead on one of the corners will thus be preserved.



The HMRC room in 2021. 'Deconstruction' started with the 4 straight modules 'Grahamstown' and Pietersville' on the right. Beyond them on the extreme right is HOn3 layout. Two new straight Roving Rails modules plus a corner under construction top left.



Grahamstown (near) and Pietersville (rear), buildings removed, ready for dismantling.



Two and a half hours later Grahamstown and Pietersville ‘relocated’ to beneath the centre (ex DMR) modules.

What took a couple of years to build, took only a day to dismantle!

Visit to UK

By way of introduction, it is quite a long time since I travelled any distance by train in the UK and it is a considerably more pleasant experience than flying. The journey from London to Edinburgh took under 5 hours and enabled one to relax and enjoy the scenery.



Now we know where the money went! (Sorry, in joke(?) for South Africans). Hitachi built train at Waverley station.

At Edinburgh we hired a car, a most unpleasant experience. Car rental companies in the UK have a new trick of supplying hire cars without a spare tyre, tools or tyre inflator cannisters. If you have a puncture you have to call out someone to fix the problem. Now what if the repairer is busy on another job and you have a flight to catch???? In my view this is not the way to run a railroad, or a car hire company.

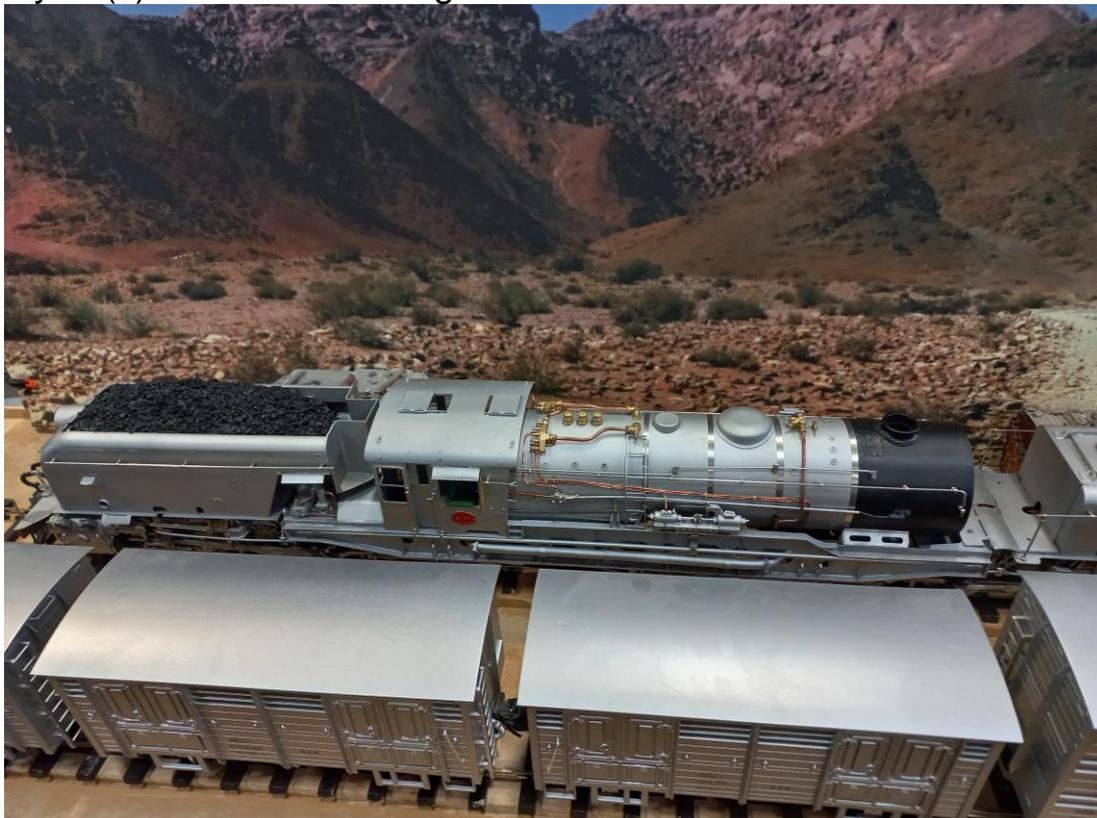
We drove from Edinburgh to the Lake District to attend to some family business and then on to Wales, stopping off in Thirsk at Rob and Marie-Claire Shirley, both looking well. Rob's layout, Cardigan Junction (NSC vol 7 nos 8 & 11) continues to develop, the latest addition being signals. Sadly, on this occasion there was no opportunity to visit any of the preserved railway lines in Wales.

16mm Narrow Gauge Exhibition - Peterborough

It is difficult to believe three years have elapsed since the last time I attended Peterborough. Fortunately, most of my buddies, locals and ex South Africans were there and it was good to catch up with them and to meet some new people in person.

One notable feature for me was the smaller number of visitors compared to three years ago. The fact that there was a rail strike that day would not have helped.

As a South African resident perhaps the most striking feature of the exhibition was the proliferation of models of Southern African prototypes, mainly Garratts – SAR and Rhodesia Railways. One entire layout ('Out of Africa') was devoted to Cape Gauge (45mm and not 16mm but who cares). There were also three 16mm Garratts on the Modular Group's layout(s) at least one being coal fired.



Cape gauge GMA/M built by Andrew Giffen headed for SA



Better view to show the running gear



Nearly finished: Bruce Hope's Rhodesian Railways Class 20 Cape Gauge Garratt



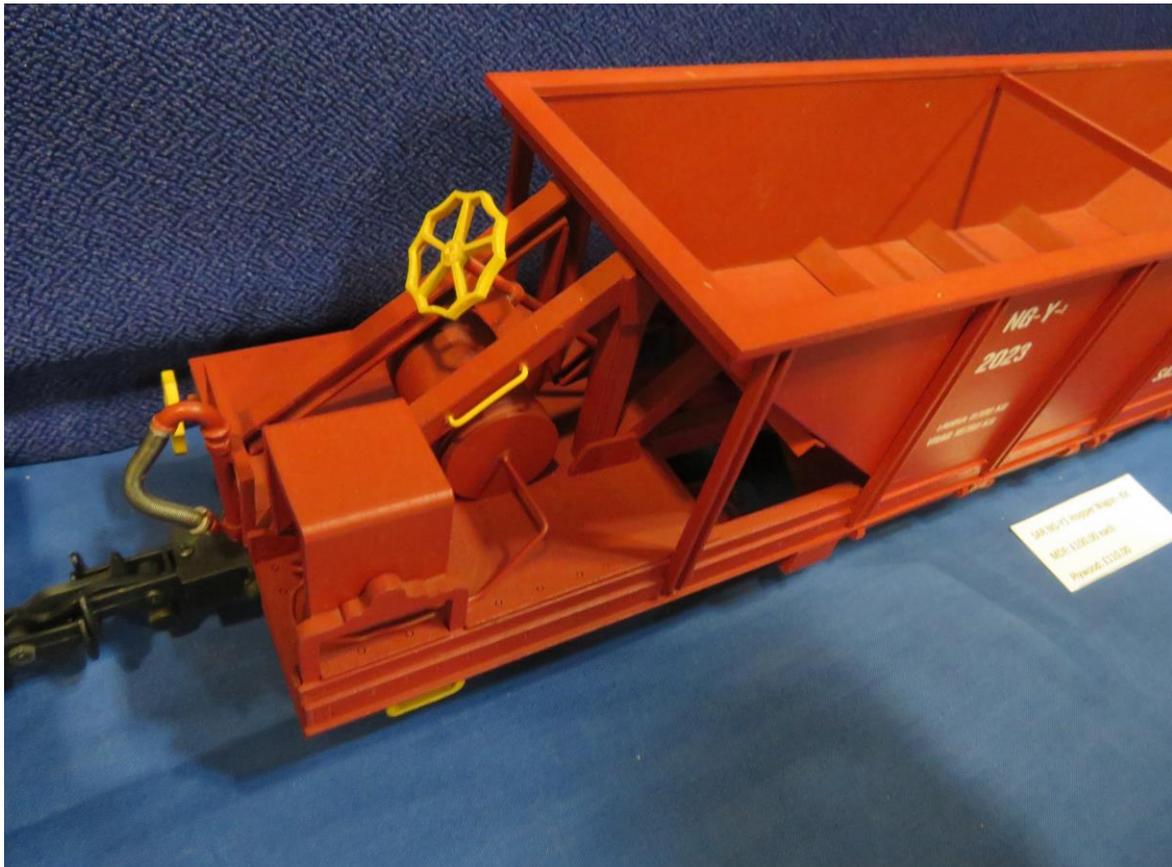
And one more: Andrew Giffen built RR Class 15A



Class 36(?) being controlled by former Cape Town resident and brass loco builder Graham Duncan Smith



16mm this time: Nigel Town's gaggle of Garratts with fruit vans built from OZ kits supplied by Raif Copley.



What can be achieved with plywood kits supplied by Resurgam. NG Y wagon



And last but by no means least, Accucraft's prototype model of a Falcon Lawley (SAR NG6). This model has had a long gemination time mainly because of Covid but hopefully should be available later this year.

Another notable feature of the show was the 16mm modular layout. This group started about 10 years ago with modest beginnings but under the stewardship of Gareth Jones has grown into quite a force. I may be exaggerating slightly but it seemed to me that the modular layout(s) took up about a quarter of the hall.

Given the cost of building a layout these days it would appear that in the bigger scales, modular, as part of a club, is the way to go.

The 16mm modular layout(s) can be viewed at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXPL978J8hM>;
<https://www.nationalgardenrailwayshow.org.uk/2022/06/26/2022-show-videos/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDVy-hMAVcs>



This photo gives an idea of second hand LGB prices in the UK. I doubt if any of the locos were chipped. Not pretty at over R20 = £1. And then there is freight and import duty etc.



The first of three photos of what I thought was the star of the show -Hadley, Stonybrook and Swale. Not 16mm, (O-16.5) but nice modelling especially if you consider this is a portable layout.



Middle section



Left hand section

The Model Railway situation in Knysna

In a word, it is vibrant. While in Knysna I attended a meeting of 13 modellers and despite of or maybe because of the average age being probably north of 70 years they are an enthusiastic group of people. The word group is used because the people concerned recognise that as in so many walks of life when clubs are involved, the risk is that politics intrudes. Knysna modellers are determined that this will not happen in their area.

Earlier this year Mike Georgiou bravely (under the prevailing economic circumstances) opened a model train shop in Knysna – *My Hobbies Unlimited*. This will undoubtedly act as cement that holds the MR community in the area together in the same way as the Late Carl Pieters did with Track and Trestle all those years ago in Durban The shop acted

not only as a materials supply point but also a meeting place for hobbyists. In addition, unlike Carl who elected not to become involved with second hand material, Mike has chosen to sell 'previously loved' items. Bearing in mind the state of the economy and the Rand in particular, anything that reduces the cost of becoming involved with the hobby is to be welcomed.

Several years have passed since the model railway fraternity had a national get together, the last convention being held some 10 years ago. Since then the challenges of holding such an event have increased and several MR organising stalwarts have died. One of the biggest hurdles is financial. However, with a bit of ingenuity and adopting compromises, it should be possible to make such an event self financing (apart from food if it is decided to hold a braai).

The problem is the cost of travel to and accomodation during the event. Thoughts have turned to the Garden Route (George/Knysna area) as a possible location for some sort of MR get together. There are plenty of layouts to visit. Accomodation from campsites to B&Bs is available. The area is not too distant from the population centres of PE (sorry - old habits die hard) and Cape Town. Finally there is plenty to do from a tourist perspective e.g. visit the Outeniqua Transport Museum and take the Powervan up the Montagu Pass.

The crucial issue is when (i.e. the time of year when such an event should be held).

Anyone who has any thoughts about a national get together and the timing thereof is welcome to convey his or her thoughts to me.



Latest edition to the North Star roster – Andrew Giffen built 16mm model of Walmer Branch Bagnall (CGR NG 4-6-2T nos 42 and 43; SAR NG 4-6-2T nos 33 and 34). 7kg of hand luggage.....

Photo Andrew Giffen

The end