

Newsletter

September 2010

Is there a plan?

And where do we go from here? Both good questions, but of the sort usually only discussed at the AGM. However, Tuesday 24th. August saw an unusually high turnout of Members and prompted Steve to call an impromptu meeting to pose some of the questions that will require answers in the VERY near future. Here is a précis of the discussion...

The turntable is in position on its centre bearing. Next jobs are to weld the outboard wheel carriers (now done) and lay the concentric supporting ring of pavers.

The steaming bays need to be "joined" to the turntable. Angle-iron track seems to be the favoured option as this permits removable ash collectors between the rails and simplifies the locking arrangements to the turntable itself. The track ends to be supported on brick piers filled with concrete, which will give a welcome visual break from concrete alone.

The next major task is provision of access from the garage (or the carriage, loco and storage silo "CLASS", as it may become known!) to the turntable. Two tracks would avoid points, three would give extra capacity for the future.

Before using for storage in the afore-mentioned manner, the garage itself will need to be strengthened. Bricking-up the left-hand door and providing lockable steel shutters would be a good start, with a re-inforced "vault" if locos are to be stored. The right-hand door needs replacing with a higher-security version. Inside, the 2-level frame will be used for carriage storage with a ramp and an electric winch arrangement to access the upper level.

The unloading ramp will soon be finished with a flat section and ash pit, so it can double as a steaming bay.

Which leaves the thorny question of access to the right-hand garage door for the trailer. The two favourites are concrete or pavers. The former would have to be laid in one go, we could take a little longer with the latter, which would also be more aesthetically pleasing.

So YES, there is a plan. Things are coming on apace...



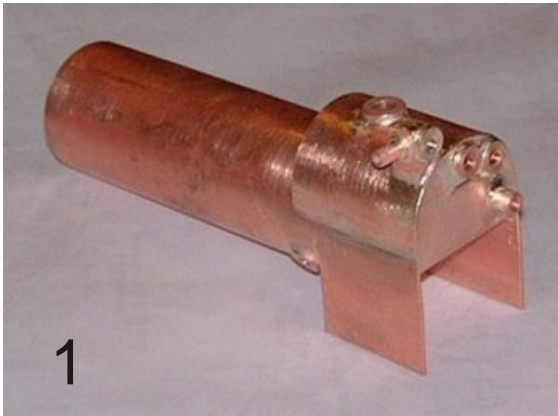
Why build a 16mm Kerr-Stuart?

by Glen Devey

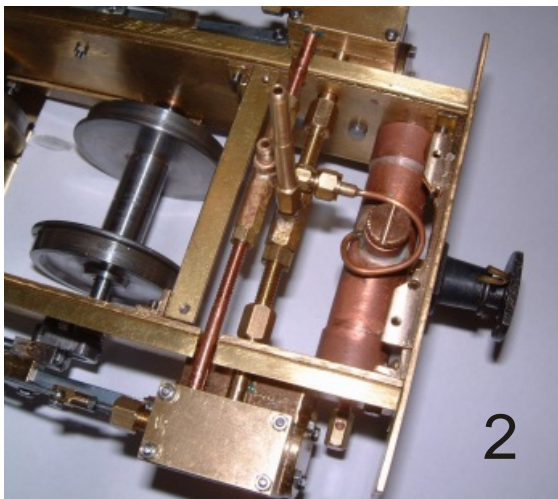
My lovely little 3" scale Burrell TE was turning out to be a long term labour of love so I needed an additional and more 'immediate' project to keep my interest going during those dark times when everything else seems to be taking a long time. I had seen several of our members scurrying around building track sections for this mysterious '16mm system' that they were all talking about and so I made some discreet enquiries. It seems that Keith Bucklitch of STM fame was to blame for a lot of the activity as several members had decided to build versions of his delightful 'Dennis' 0-6-0 engine. Talk of 'Chuff' pipes between other members added even more fuel to the fire (pun intended).

My curiosity aroused I spent a few evenings studying 16mm websites and in particular Keith's many designs. I decided that, just to be a little different and that it might also be 'quicker and easier' mmmmmmm...., I would tackle his Kerr-Stuart Brazil 0-4-2ST engine! Thus the die was cast and I duly sent off for the drawings.

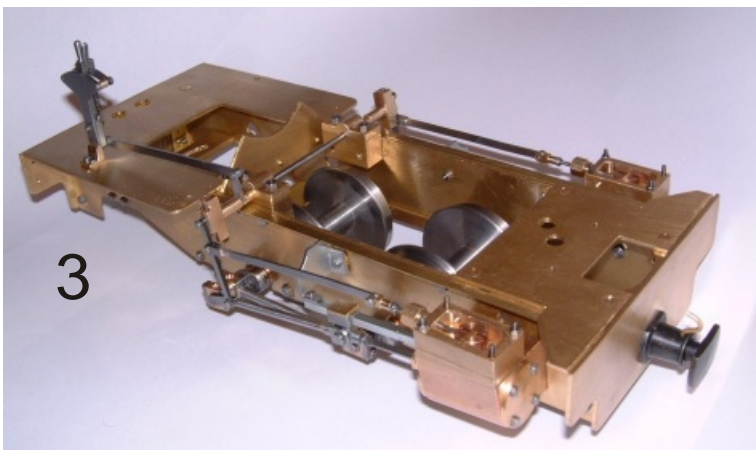
On starting the build, as usual, I couldn't resist modifying the design and decided to make the frames out of brass rather than steel (the fact that I had a large sheet of 1/16" brass may have swayed my decision process here!) One of the first things I discovered was how small some of the screws were and how large and sausage-like my fingers seemed to be! Still, onwards and upwards so to speak. As the build progressed I discovered the usefulness of tweezers and good lighting.



Assembling the boiler caused me a few headaches as there were so many awkwardly shaped parts. I had visions of the whole thing collapsing into a random pile of copper and silver solder resembling a mod art statue! I need not have worried however, as just like John had mentioned, it seems to take far more heat to de-solder than to solder and although I had to make several re-heats the boiler came together OK. See 1.

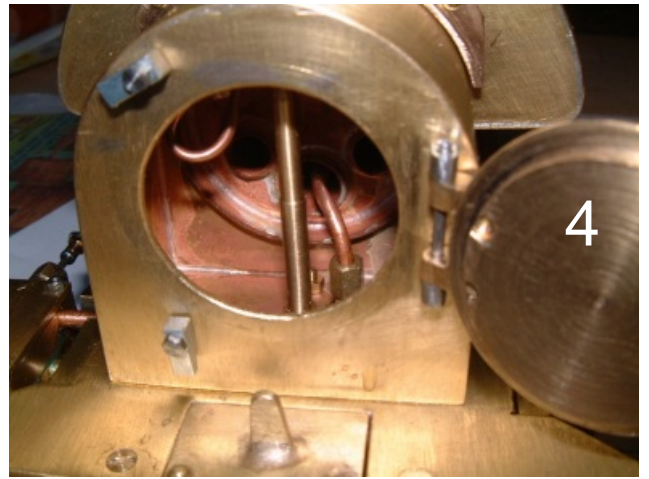


The wheels were yet another area I decided to modify i.e. I did not like the way Keith used angled holes for his grub screws as this meant that the grub screws would be visible externally. My solution was to turn a long boss on the inside of the driven wheels and put my grub screws in this boss (I contrived to make the bosses long enough so that each pair of wheels, when butted together, automatically set the wheel back to back distance at 28mm), see 2. Sadly when I decided to continue this theme with the pony truck wheels, things were not so straight forward and I had to modify the wheel bearing blocks accordingly! (The perils of modification are manifold).

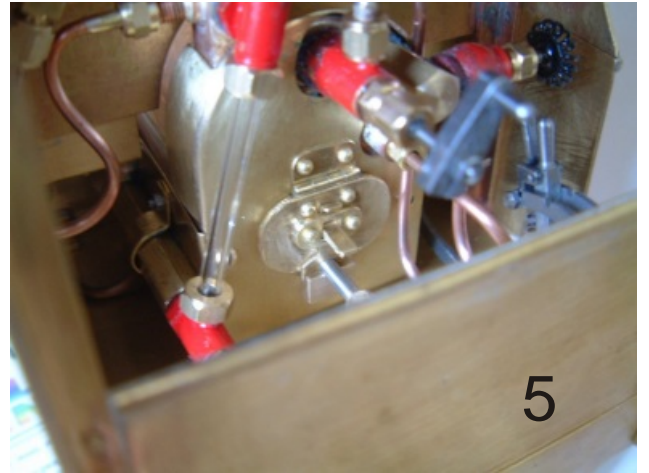


Well, a lot of hard and fiddly work later and the little Kerr Stuart was ready for air test! I resisted the temptation to modify the motion work too much and lo and behold 'PAULA' (as she is going to be named) ran first time. After a short while of running, however, I decided that the valves were opening and closing a little too early and so I swallowed hard and made two new slide valves ever so slightly larger in diameter. The new slide valves appear to have cured this minor problem, see 3.

On final assembly of the boiler to the frames I needed some fireclay or something similar to seal any air gaps. There were some gaps around the steam fittings in the smokebox and a few slight gaps around the firebox and boiler. I was unable to obtain any fireclay but then had a brainwave, well more of a blast from the past really! Do you remember those blowing silencers and the infamous 'Gun Gum' – problem solved! 4 shows the smokebox and steam fittings.



A further modification became necessary when I came to fit the fire door. As shown on Keith's drawings the fire door was a simple swing shut affair but when I tried to construct a suitable version I discovered that there was insufficient space to open a swing version. After some head scratching I constructed a 'flap' type door instead and this enabled opening satisfactorily see 5.

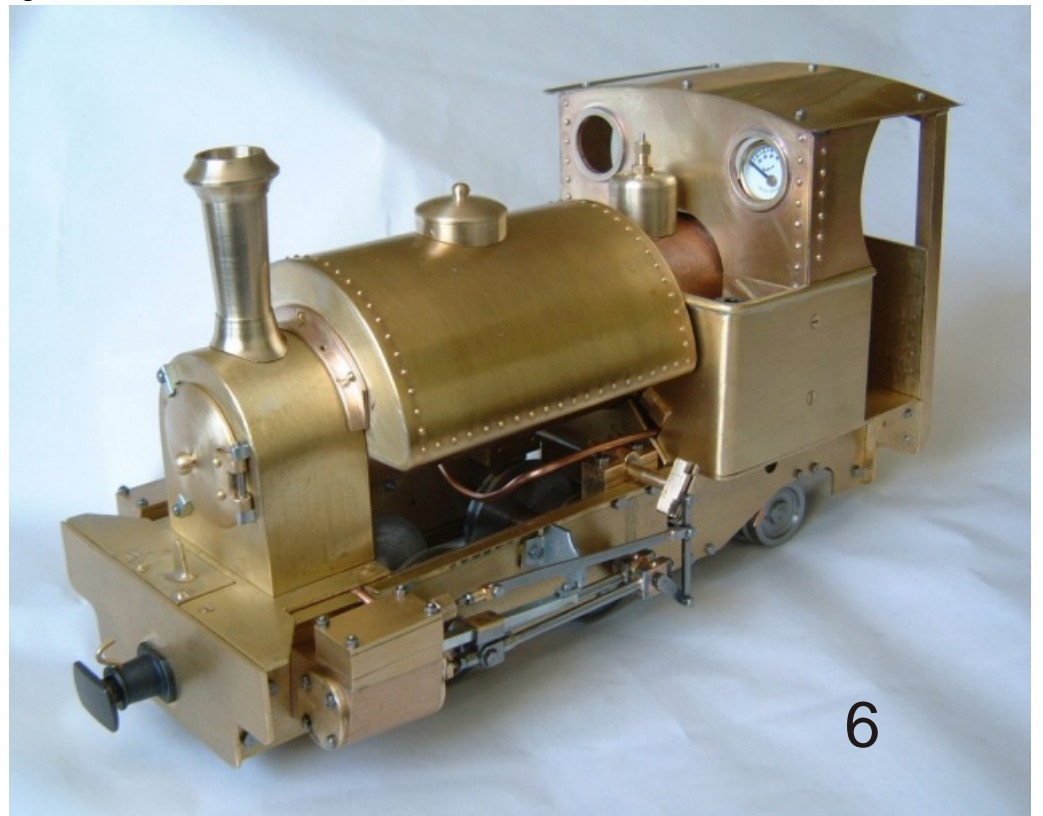


So, with a three wick burner manufactured, fitted and a Meths tank constructed, but modified to sit perched on the external face of the rear cab wall (I felt that there was insufficient space within the already crowded cab) All that remained was to try her out on steam! 6 shows the finished???

After quite a lot of fiddling about trying to balance the forced draught and keep the Meths dripping through at just the right rate, we finally sputtered into life – for all of 30 seconds!!! The wick burner was unable to keep the pressure up high enough to allow extended running.

I had several more attempts to run on meths but with two impromptu fires and only limited running times I decided that I was going to convert to butane firing. Not possessing the other type of boiler which has a single large flue enabling the use of a 'poker' type burner, and the fact that I liked the boiler I already have, necessitates the use of a different type of burner? There is also the little problem of where to store the gas!!!

So, here I am, about to convert to a ceramic burner to emulate coal firing in the existing firebox and possibly using a similar gas storage method to that employed with 'Eric', I will keep you posted of the results ...



Editor's note. Had it not been for my lack of organisation, this article would have appeared in a less complete form last time. I think you'll all agree the delay has been worthwhile, as the result is simply stunning.

New Zealand update.

Losing a part of a country's steam heritage is sad, whether here or on the other side of the world. Alas, the Kingston Flyer (mentioned in my first New Zealand article) is no longer running, having been overwhelmed by debt and the prospect of expensive repairs.

Fortunately, at club level, things are somewhat different, with a wealth of talent and some seriously impressive (and effective) kit which is a source of "good ideas" regardless of whether it is copied verbatim.

Starting in the South Island, Canterbury Society of Model & Experimental Engineers must be one of the larger Clubs in New Zealand. The infrastructure is recently built within a public park and the membership is large. Facilities include an extensive 7¼" ground level track and a 5" gauge raised one. The clever stuff includes an electric loco handling facility which not only lifts but traverses (at the same time, if needed), combining the two layouts with no need for manual antics. Flexi points are used at ground level - these are hydraulically operated by mains water pressure. Fast, totally silent and astonishing to watch. There is one standard pattern of braked bogies used throughout, and the Club sell advertising space on each side of the passenger carriages to augment funds. Peter Smith, who winters in NZ but actually lives in Cornwall has very kindly provided us with CAD drawings for both bogies and flexi-points. As an aside, he has built a 7¼" gauge railway up the side of a Cornish valley - absolutely amazing with real (i.e. necessary) tunnels and viaducts, and a 1 in 33 branch line up which I recently had the pleasure of driving his Romulus. Getting it down again was another matter... But I digress.



The "garage"



Water-operated signal box!



Loco handling made easy



20 horsepower petrol-hydraulic and rolling stock with adverts.

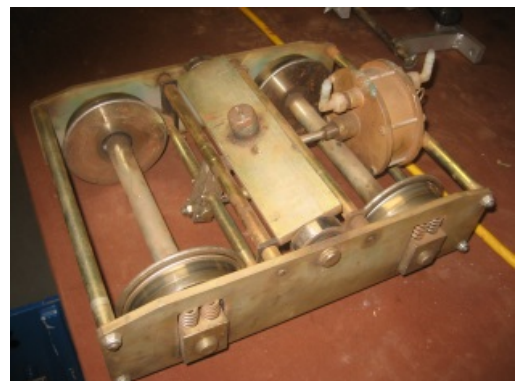


Flexi-points abound

The builder's next loco is a 7¼" version with Caprotti valve gear!



Guess what, Steve?



The standard 7¼" braked bogie





A big little 'un



Off we go...



Scenic, or what?



It's a Kerr Stuart, Jim, but not as we know it

The shunting yard version of Brett's flexi-points needs no switching mechanism



Waimarie is the sole surviving steam-powered river paddle steamer in New Zealand...

...and it looks like she's just got a new skipper...



Club-owned motive power is largely American-outline petrol hydraulics of 20 horsepower or so, with smaller petrol-hydraulics (including a charming class 08) for lighter duties. For extended running - either time or distance - it's the way to go. One of the nicest things about NZ is the complete lack of ceremony - and if offered a drive, the offer is expected to be accepted!

Moving North, we chanced upon Rotorua, best known for its thermal activity. And on the day we visited The Rotorua Society of Model Engineers, there was thermal activity a-plenty. The largest 7¼" loco I have ever seen was having its boiler test - an American narrow-gauge 2-8-2 with bogie tender. This two-ton, twenty foot long monster turned out to be a real pussy-cat to drive - it really is true that the bigger they are, the more forgiving of mistakes! RSME is an old established Club in the grounds of a heritage museum, with a ground-level track (7¼", 5" & 3½" gauge) which features bridges, viaducts and sub-tropical undergrowth that defies description. It is the nearest in concept to W&DMES we encountered.

Last but not least, we visited Brett Lilley at Whakatane to thank him for all the info. on flexi points. He showed me his latest development, which is a simplified version for marshalling yard use. Totally manual with no point lever or mechanism. Just lift and click. Just what we need between the turntable and garage?

Finally - I couldn't resist a picture of the coal-fired river paddle steamer Waimarie. When you see who's driving, I can't understand why the passengers aren't scrambling for the lifeboats. Just imagine getting that past the 'elf & safety police in the UK...

Building the Overcombe Light Railway by Mike Jackson

My absence from mud moving at Budmouth College over the past 18 months has been because of the activities at Budmouth Avenue. In April last year I started to build a 16mm railway layout in my back garden. As a number of you will know, my back garden is geomorphically challenged so how to get a level area at a 'reasonable' cost and without having to call in a major construction company was a major issue to start with. Quotes for brick or stone walls or even one made of concrete block meant back to the drawing board. Wood was the cheapest option but what to use and how to construct the retaining wall.

The answer came to me in a flash one evening whilst taking my son to A&E at Dorchester. The wall alongside the footpath leading to A&E Department from their expensive car park was made of a modular construction technique that I had seen on retaining walls in cuttings in urban areas. These are usually made out of concrete sections but wood would do equally well. (Photo of retaining wall build) By building a retaining wall and dragging soil (the word 'soil' is used very loosely as it is really clay) from the higher ground to the front, I would be able to get my level ground without importing several tonnes of expensive top soil. Whilst this was going on, there was a lot of reading and phone calls to Chris Bird going on.



had drawn up a possible design to fit the area. The inner loop was going to be problematic because of the radius of the curve which I needed to get as big as possible within the scenery. The initial template was achieved by laying newspaper on the ground and spraying the proposed layout. The template was then transferred to the sheets of ply with ample width for alignment adjustments. The 12mm shuttering ply was strengthened by screwing off-cuts to the underside to double the thickness. Once the 'road' had been trialled with 'Edrig' then the shuttering was replaced by concrete blocks in the same way as used on the outer loop. The laying of the concrete blocks involved compacting the soil with a sledgehammer and then pummelling the area with the concrete block itself before levelling the ground off with a floor trowel and finally a thin layer of sand. A long steel bar ensured that the blocks were as level as possible along their length. Hollow concrete rocks from Rogers Garden stone (Wareham) were then placed on the layout to give the appearance of valleys.

The track settled well on the concrete blocks and having made a track gauge device, I was able to get the curves running reasonably well. Where two lengths of flexi-track meet does tend to give a short straight unless you apply a gentle (and permanent) bend to the track ends. Over the summer the clay in the centre of the track area has shrunk but the blocks have stayed put much to my relief.



The next issue was one of scenery, how much and how lifelike. I decided that resin or plastic buildings were not on and that I would go for the Cain Howley paint-yourself concrete buildings and try to make them slate coloured and blend into the scenery and not stand out like sore thumbs. Having obtained the necessary building, I set my nephew to work with the paint brush. He did a grand job and the building sits nicely alongside the track - see opposite.



The management of the OLR was thrown into panic when a phone call was received from Summerlands Steam. We were informed that their outside broadcast unit planned to visit to make a video of the OLR. In the 16mm world this is like saying that the FIFA technical team is visiting to check your facilities for the Football World Cup or that President Jacques Rogge from the IOC is popping down for a visiting. The trackside gang hurriedly set to weeding and tidying up. The Unit duly arrived and filming started despite the threat of rain. The video was put on U-tube and had over 400 hits! These can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMgfNMzrd3o>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8aEko2uCZo>

Finally, a big thanks to Chris Bird for all his advice and support. My only regret now is that Gordon can no longer visit.

Editor's note. Thank you, Mike, especially for that last sentiment. It would be a pity if, between us, we couldn't get something organised.



From the archive.

Eagle-eyed Danny spotted the following in the Model Engineer of 12th. June 1952:

“A letter from Mr. H.W.G. Swindell, hon. sec. of the Weymouth W&DMES tells us that, at the society's third annual general meeting, a very satisfactory condition of affairs was disclosed; the balance sheet showed a sound financial position.”

Other highlights of the letter were that a second exhibition was to be held at Melcombe Regis Boys' School between August 20th. - 23rd (1952). Club meetings were held every Thursday at Cromwell Road Boys' School 7 - 9pm. The president was a Mr. J. Moor Ward. More details, anyone?



Mike Parker, a past member of W&DMES, kindly donated some pictures of Juliet performing on Weymouth sea front. She was wearing her blue coat with red trimmings and getting lots of attention.

Tail light...

A message from our resident Head Gardener. “Many thanks for the plants & bulbs. Please, no more as we are more or less filled, but I would like about six more winter heathers. If you would like to donate a bob or two I can get the right sort for our soil. Thanking you in anticipation - the site & track are looking good. Best wishes, Ralph”.

Neil has asked me to look into the possibility of garments embroidered with the Club logo (see cover), either directly embroidered or as a patch which can be applied to overalls etc. Asking around, favourites seem to be sweatshirts and polo shirts in a dark colour (e.g. navy or black). The origination cost would probably be around £50, which would have to be amortised within the initial order. So, would be interested in one (or more) polo or sweatshirt if the cost were (say) around £12? Please let me know ASAP (i.e. early September).

Scientists at NASA have developed a gun built specifically to launch dead chickens at the windscreens of aircraft, military jets and the space shuttle, all travelling at maximum velocity. The idea is to simulate the frequent incidents of collisions with airborne fowl to test the strength of the windscreens.

British engineers heard about the gun and were eager to test it on the windscreens of their new high speed trains. Arrangements were made. But when the gun was fired, the engineers stood shocked as the chicken hurtled out of the barrel, crashed into the shatterproof windscreen, smashed it to smithereens, crashed through the control console, snapped the driver's backrest in two and embedded itself in the back wall of the cab.

Horrified, the British engineers sent NASA the disastrous results of the experiment, along with the designs of the windscreen, and begged the US scientists for suggestions.

NASA's response was just three words, "Thaw the chicken".

Why is the track gauge 4' 8½" ?

Because it's the average distance between the neck and ankles of a damsel in distress. Thanks to Neil for those two “groaners”.



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