

The Stephenson Memorial Miniature Locomotive Association

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Report on 2012 Trials held at Curwen Park, Workington,
2nd September

The West Cumbria Guild of Model Engineers is always keen to host our trials event when the opportunity arises, and this year we were able to accept their offer as the previous two years had been held at sites where we could run 7 1/4" gauge engines, so there was no obligation to run other than 3 1/2" and 5" this year. WCGME had hosted the trials twice before so they were well versed in the organisation of the event and

their execution was without fault once again.

Whilst Workington is a long haul for those of us that live on the eastern side, it was gratifying to see that a number of Tyneside and South Durham members had made the trip, and we ultimately had a very good turn out.

Having driven through a bit of mist on the higher parts of the A69, we were looking forward to some reasonable weather on the West Coast, and so it proved to be, generally dry with the odd light shower during the day, but never bad enough to give any problem with the proceedings.

West Cumbria's railway has always been a little worrying for most visitors, the rails being self supporting on pillars with a clear view of the ground through them. Being of all welded construction it is difficult to adjust the alignment and the railway has unfortunately deteriorated over the years and has turned in to something of a roller coaster. Never the less the local competitors put up a good show and ran very well, but it was obvious from the speeds that the visitors (with one exception) were running somewhat cautiously.

Once again we had a number of advanced entries, my thanks to those who took the trouble to send them, and we were underway shortly after the advertised starting time with the first runner, Ian Cormac of West Cumbria with his dad's 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " BR standard pacific. Ian had needed to run early as he was on call with the local lifeboat and needed to be ready to rush off if there was a call-out. The load was quite heavy for a 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " loco, consisting of three passenger cars loading to a total of 1248lbs, but the locomotive handled it very well, lapping consistently for much of the twenty minute running period, except for a stop mid run to regain water and pressure. Ian covered 2220 yards and used just over 15 ounces of coal, a

performance that placed him second overall and the best 3 1/2" gauge locomotive, much to the delight of his dad who clearly didn't think it was possible.

Next up was seasoned competitor Joe Gibbons of TSMEE with his 3 1/2" GNR atlantic loaded much more moderately to around 600lbs on two cars. Once started Joe worked the loco hard until he was running at a very brisk pace. The atlantic with it's short coupled wheelbase is lively on good railway, and I have to say that I was a little worried at times as the engine bounced its way round. At about the halfway mark on the run, (over 2600 yds covered) there was disaster as the driving car suddenly and without warning derailed as the train entered the back straight. Fortunately the loco stayed on, although the tender was off the road, but the passenger car sustained damage to the supports for the footboards which could not be immediately rectified, so the run was abandoned. Joe was quite disappointed as everything was going so well.

Andy Lowes from South Durham was next with Wilf McHugh's 3 1/2" gauge Black 5, a previous winner of the Vest Shield. Andy took a smaller load than the previous competitor at 425lbs all up and started to lap steadily, but the locomotive's tender derailed on the north curve due to problems with the coupling to the driving car and it was necessary to terminate the run.

Don Scarrot of West Cumbria lit up his 0-6-0T Duke Pit and once he had sorted out his driving car came to the starting line with a challenging load for this little engine of 484lbs. Don quietly pursued the business of clocking up the laps, and at the end of his largely uneventful run had used 13 ounces of coal for 2047 yards, a commendable run which gave him 7th place.

Meanwhile Andy had dropped the fire on the Class 5 and was able to get it cooled down and steamed up again for a re-run. Sadly at about the same point in the run there was another derailment, this time of the rolling stock and the run had to be terminated due to the time it took to sort out the problem.

Another GN atlantic was next to the start. This was Peter Raybould's of South Durham who decided on a slightly lighter load than the other atlantic at 546 lbs. This engine took the load without complaint and settled to running very nicely but at a slower pace than Joe Gibbons and completed 2645 yards in the allotted time. Using 17.9 ounces of coal Peter was placed 6th in the final analysis.

Joe Gibbons now brought his loco back for a re-run with the original load as required by the rules. Once again he got stuck in and began to lap at a good pace, but with a certain amount of caution at the previous derailment point. At about half way through the run the loco's leading wheels derailed as it passed over the traverser. Quickly rerailed and back to speed Joe tried to keep his run going, but the bogie began to derail at the same point on each lap with consequent disruption, and efforts to sort the traverser joint seemed only to exacerbate the problem. Joe managed to complete the run despite at least six stops to re-rail the bogie, and completed 3265 yards by the end whistle. Having used 21 ounces of coal Joe's run was placed 5th overall and second of the 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " locos.

Andy Lowes was still determined to complete a run with the Class 5 and started again with his original load once the previous competitor had cleared the track, but early in the run as he came round to the traverser the locomotive came off the track all wheels and a very disappointed Andy decided to call it a day. The loco appeared undamaged at first sight

and I hope that that remained the situation when it was properly examined in the workshop.

The Hunslet tank engine belonging to Wilf McHugh from South Durham and to which he has added a front and back carrying axle to make it a 2-4-2 was our first 5" engine and our ninth run. Wilf set off with just over 600lbs load and ran steadily for the next 20 minutes. I'm not sure if he had to stop since I was busy steaming my own entry, but he covered 2639yards in the allotted time an average speed of 4.5mph which is not bad for a locomotive with quite small driving wheels. Burning 28.8 ounces of fuel this was the day's least economic run and put the ever smiling Wilf in last place at the round up.

There's not a lot I can say about the next starter, yours truly with my Adams Tank representing TSMEE. Compared to last year the run was pretty much a disaster. With 1229lbs in the train the loco started well enough after a bit of slipping, but the steam pressure dropped steadily until I eventually had to stop for a blow-up. That got the water level back but little else the pressure gauge remaining glued to 30psi, and I only completed a disappointing 2629 yards for 21.6 ounces of coal giving 3rd place in the trial. Later I discovered a leak in the superheater header which explained the problem. Next year.....

Last year John Harkness of West Cumbria drove a LNER B1 into 5th place and we had this loco as our next runner driven this time by its owner, fellow member Stuart Oliver, a first timer in the trials I believe. Stuart took a load of just over 1500lbs and settled at a steady pace of around 5 mph to complete a distance of 3002 yards in the twenty minute run. The loco's appetite for coal was the greatest of the day at 40 ounces, which is surprising as it only burnt a little over seven

ounces at Carlisle. Nevertheless the result was good enough to give Stuart 4th place and if he comes to next year's trials, my advice would be to bring a smaller shovel!

Tom Jones had brought his BR Class 2 to defend his title from last year, but as time was getting on having now run 11 trains, Tom elected to leave the loco in the car and let John Harkness be our final competitor. John must have enjoyed his first trials run last year, and he had brought his very nicely finished Simplex. The load was adjusted to 965 lbs and we were treated to a fine display of driving, John pushing on a bit to achieve the fastest average speed of the day at almost 7.5mph, covering 4376 yards and burning just 22.2 ounces of fuel and earning 1st place in the competition. For this John was awarded the Stephenson Trophy for the overall winner and the Rocket Trophy for the best 5" gauge entrant.

So that was the end of an interesting day. Tom Jones had arranged for a Member of the local council to come and award the trophies, and we were treated to a short speech telling us that the Council very much supported the West Cumbria Guild, and that it was pleasing to see so many visitors from the north east and other parts of Cumbria at the event.

Trophies were awarded as follows:

The Stephenson Trophy and the Rocket Trophy to John Harkness

The TSMEE Trophy and The Vest Shield to Ian Cormac

A clean sweep for West Cumbria.

As ever my thanks to the host society for taking on the event, and to all the members who did the many jobs that hosting the trials requires and without whom the event would

not happen. Last but not least a special thanks to the members and their partners who provided the food and drinks all day, especially given the lack of facilities that West Cumbria have suffered for as long as they have inhabited Curwen Park. When you see what some clubs have in the way of track and club house, the members of West Cumbria have to be congratulated for their determination to continue in the face of such poor facilities. Would that all the members of our clubs were so keen.

I understand there is the prospect of some improvement as a local engineering company has offered to rebuild West Cumbria's track as an apprentice training exercise. Hopefully this comes to fruition and that the next time we visit Workington there will be no recurrence of the incidents that marred some of our runs on this day.

Some negotiations took place during the day and Peter Raybould agreed to take a proposal back to his home club to host our trials next year as no other club had made an offer. I was called later in the week by chairman Ronald Stevenson who kindly offered South Durham as the host either in June or October. All the members were advised and as no one objected or made a counter offer I was able to advise Ronald that his offer is accepted for 13th October 2013 for our 58th Trials Event, and he has reported that his members are looking forward to the event.

So the venue for our 58th Trials is **Hurworth Grange nr Darlington**. Our hosts are the **South Durham Society of Model Engineers** and The date is **13th October 2013** which I'm sure will be lucky for someone. Entries for 3 1/2", 5" and 7 1/4" gauge steam locomotives will be accepted. Please make a note in your club calendar and keep it free and give South Durham all the support that makes the effort of hosting the

competition worthwhile.

And now for the pictures taken by John Harkness, Eddie and Joe Gibbons

Run No 1 - Ian Cormac with the Britannia starts the proceedings



Run No 2 - Joe Gibbons watches for slipping as he accelerates his train



Run No 3 - Andy Lowes and the Black 5 top the bank in fine style



Run No 4 - Don Scarrot and Duke Pit in the sunshine



Run No 5 - Andy Lowes again - determined.



Run No 6 - Peter Raybould and his Atlantic looking relaxed.



Run No 7 - Joe Gibbons again, regulator wide open



Run No 8 - Andy prepares 5304 for the ill fated third

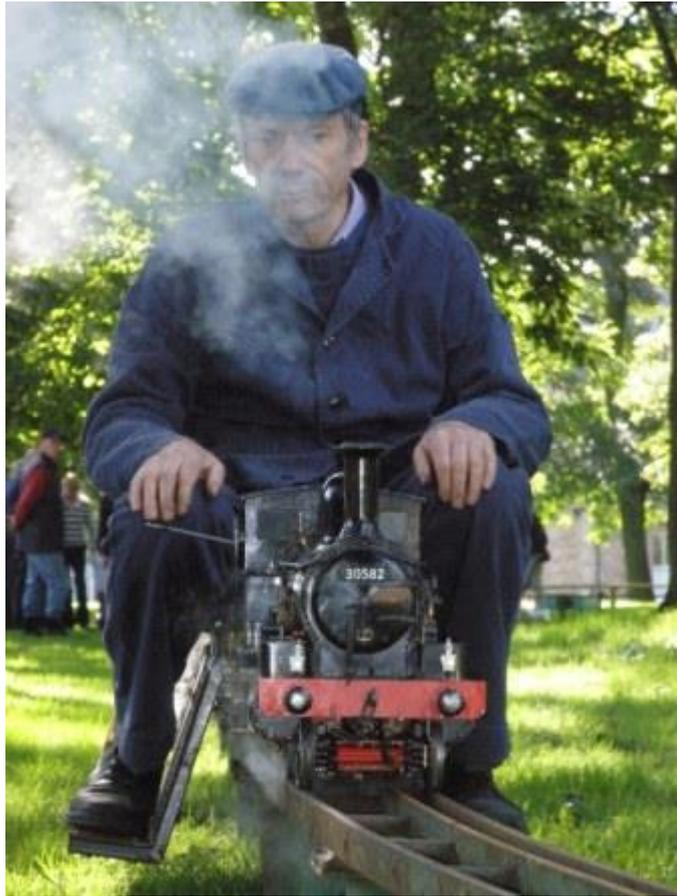
attempt.



Run No 9 - Wilf McHugh with his Hunslet ready for the off



Run No 10 - Eddie Gibbons and the Adams Tank - Short of steam



Run No 11 - Stuart Oliver and his B1 61264 -shovelling coal



Run No 12 - John Harkness and Simplex - a worthy winner.



John collects the Stephenson trophy as overall winner



Unfortunately we don't have a picture of John Cormic receiving the Vest Shield on Ian's behalf.

Our lap counter and record keeper takes time out for sustenance.



Caught on camera



Waiting for a train



Deep in discussion



Shed bashing

