



Smokebox

The Newsletter of the **Bedfordshire Area Group** of the
Association of 16mm Scale Narrow Gauge Modellers

From the Editor

You may not be surprised to find that there's been little time for modelling since the last issue of **Smokebox**. I have however been able to spend four days on the footplate on the W&L. It was an interesting visit for a number of reasons:

- I had my first trainee driver, David, a volunteer who I know well. Trainees drive under the passed driver's ticket, so besides supervising his activity, I need to make sure that he observes all relevant rules. He did a good job and my ticket remains intact!
- I had consecutive days on the number 10, 699.01, Sir Drefaldwyn, the loco I wrote about last month. This was great for consolidating what I'd learned in March. David was my fireman on the first day and Peter my fireman on the second. We were all three Association members too. It's a powerful loco and with a good fireman, maintaining time was not an issue.
- On the final day I drove number 17, the Diema, as a trainee diesel driver. It's difficult to drive down the Golfa, because the air brake and vacuum brake are not linked, but both are needed to control speed going down the bank. The controls are on the desk behind you when going backwards, so you have to operate them to a degree by feel. Going down Sylvaen Bank is much easier, because you're going forward and the controls are in front of you. I was safe going down the Golfa, but not as smooth as I'd have liked, so this will be something I need to refine before I pass out on the loco.

A very varied and interesting four days which maybe give you an insight into why volunteering on a working narrow gauge railway can be so rewarding.



Our loco on day 1, fresh from bottom-end repaint over winter



Sir Drefaldwyn, our loco for days 2 and 3



Final day, the Diema, ready for departure from Llanfair in the afternoon

All being well, see you at the meeting on Sunday 4th May.

Copy deadline for June 2025 issue of Smokebox: Friday 23 May 2025

Alan, Smokebox Editor

From the Chair

Our meeting on Sunday coincided with an excellent weather forecast, so I was a little concerned that attendance would be a little low but not so! In fact we had one of the best attended meetings for some time and I don't think members were disappointed because we had continuous running all day and there were some very interesting locos and stock to admire. Carol came with her track so

Ridgmont was erected and all in all it went up very smoothly, it looks as though our newer members are becoming familiar with its construction.

During the meeting several members commented that they didn't know about Statfold Barn/Country Park, a visit described last Smokebox. The suggestion was that events likely to be of interest be published in Smokebox so we have a challenge - let me or Alan know of such events and we will see what we can do.

As usual I took some photos of locomotives or stock which caught my eye for one reason or another and include 4 below:

Peter Elvys sugarcane loco and sugarcane wagons made an imposing sight. I really like a weathered locomotive, especially one doing mundane duties day in and day out.



Dave Thompson didn't disappoint, he ran an immaculate Roundhouse tram with a remarkable rake of bogie wagons loaded with girders (all plastic I understand but very convincing).



A very unusual loco next, A Regner Lumberjack, kit built by Ian Bagshaw and then wonderfully modified to give an Indian look. Pulling a rake of suitable coaches it ran very well.



Finally I spotted a Penrith "Bull Nose" tractor towing a rake of wagons. Owned by Ken Reade who carries a photograph of the real thing because many folk refuse to believe it is not a figment of his imagination! I noticed Ken was setting Mark Cresswell the challenge of suggesting a radio control

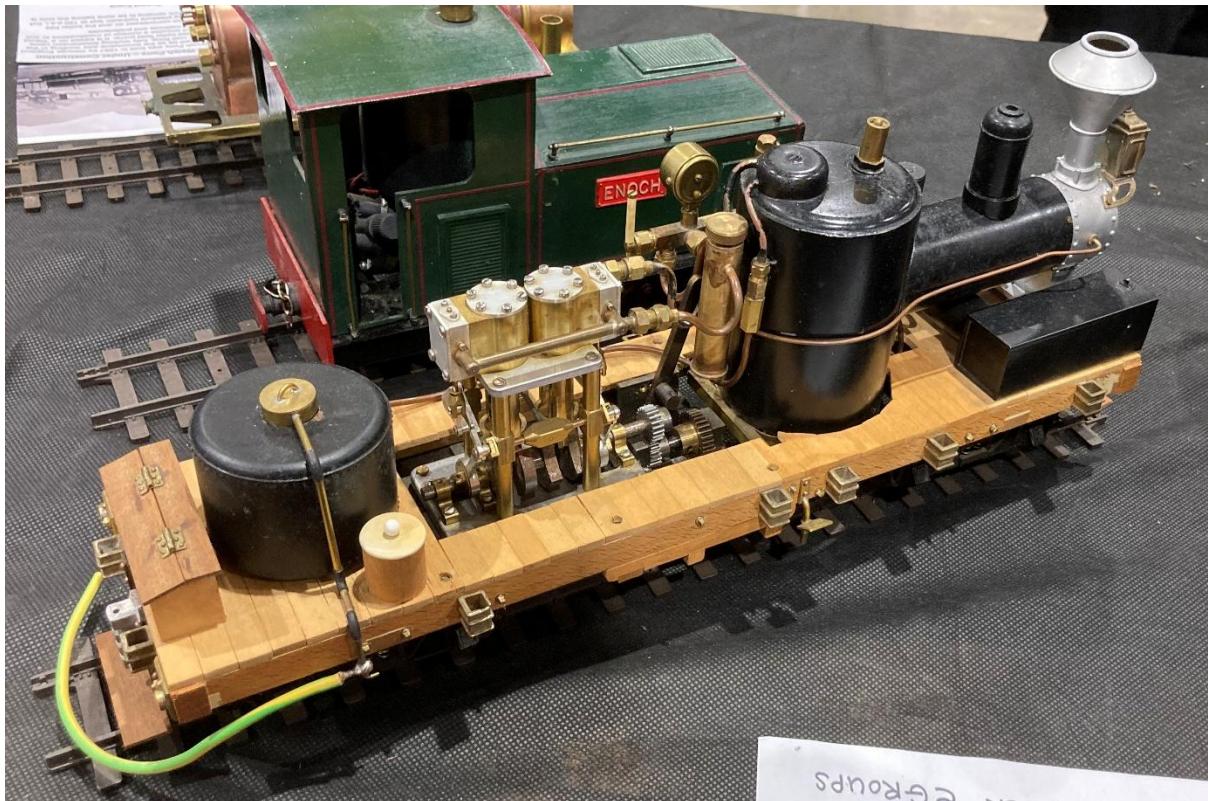
system that would fit inside this diminutive loco! A brief description of the model and its manufacture can be found on the Associations web site as "Model of the Month for June 2019".



A week later and it was the National Show. As usual a great tribute to Alan and his team. I really enjoyed it and for once actually managed to fill my shopping list - nothing expensive just additions and components, mainly to complete the logging wagons. It was good to see so many familiar faces from the Beds Group and I also met a surprising number of Gauge 1 contacts many of whom I had not seen for many years. Also good to see were the small layouts run by our members, all of which attracted considerable attention.

I spent some time at one particular stand - Y39 - the "SteamModel Loco and Modelstock eGroups" Perhaps it's my model engineering bias but I am always heartened to see examples of the scratch building process and the truly outstanding outcomes. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do it, some of the best live steam scratch builders I have ever come across are a librarian, a bank manager and a telephone engineer, all self-taught!

As usual I have to add a photo from stand Y39, great engineering but I am not sure what it might depict in full size:



Bob, Chairman

Meeting Dates

Here are all meeting dates until the end of 2025. We have access to the hall from 10.30 and need to have the layouts packed away and be out of the hall be 16.00.

- 4th May
- 1st June
- 6th July
- 3rd August
- 7th September
- 5th October
- 2nd November

Garth, Secretary

Sales & Wants

A table will as usual be placed at the back of the hall for members to place any items they have for sale.

Committee members

The members of the BAG committee are as follows:

Bob Gamble	Chairman	chairman@bag16mm.org.uk
Garth Bridgwood	Secretary/Treasurer	secretary@bag16mm.org.uk
Mark Cresswell	Membership	membership@bag16mm.org.uk
Ted Robinson	Track Manager	trackmanager@bag16mm.org.uk

The National Garden Railway Show

I've been asked by lots of members whether the show was a "success". It depends on your definition of "success". It drew copious amounts of praise from those who attended, more so perhaps than any recent show. However, there were too few visitors, leading again to the show recording a deficit. To put the reduction in footfall in perspective, at Peterborough, we regularly saw more than 2,000 visitors. In our first year at Stoneleigh Park we saw just over 1,500. This year we had around 1,250. The deficit is much smaller than in previous years, partly because I had cut costs by a significant margin, but it means that all shows since the pandemic have run at a loss.

The Board therefore has some tough decisions to make about future show. To inform its decision making, it's asking members to fill in an on-line questionnaire. Here's a link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/HkUiEYmzDM>

If you're not able to complete the survey on-line, please email your responses to the questions below to me at smokebox@bag16mm.org.uk:

1. Did you attend the National Garden Railway Show/AGM 2025?
2. If yes, how would you rate the NGRS 2025?
3. Are there any parts of the show that, if removed, would stop you from attending? i.e. Member to Member, the diverse list of traders, MOTY, etc.
4. If no (Q1), please could you share your reason for not attending?
5. Is there anything you'd like to see the association offering at the show that would incline you to attend in the future?

I will anonymise the responses and make a consolidated submission to the Association.

The survey will close on the **21st May 2025**.

Thanks in advance, Alan, **Smokebox** Editor

Garden Meetings

Dave Thompson has issued this early invitation for next year. The **Chells Valley Railway** open day is 14th June 2025. Dave will provide hot dogs (sausages in rolls), tea, coffee and soft drinks.

There are normally no issues with parking.

Please contact Dave in advance if you're attending, either by email at david.thompson25@btinternet.com or by text to 07903390045. Dave's address is:

11 Stanley Road
Chells
Stevenage
SG2 0EF

This is a 32mm line.

Modelling Matters

MY GARDEN RAILWAY

My garden railway was built in 2002, and last year it began to show its age with a large section being held in place with bottle jacks and repair could not be put off any longer. The weather at the end of March seemed to be set fair for a few days, which fortunately lasted for two weeks, as the job was bigger than envisaged. Instead of replacing a few rotten posts, it became a complete rebuild, and with last piece of felt torched in place it rained.

Bob Gamble and I tested the track on 22 April, with some high speed G1 engines and more sedately some 16mm locos and we both had very good runs. Bob ran his Shay with a limestone train, and I ran my Leek & Manifold pulling my NWNG stock.



Under repair



The completed repair



Garth's Leak & Manifold



Bob's Shay

Garth Bridgwood

THE LOGGING WAGON SAGA

I noticed a rake of logging wagons on a track at the Stoneleigh Show, but only in a video a couple of days later, unfortunately. They looked like possible Accucraft America products but what intrigued me was that the couplings were fitted directly to the bogies, much like small scale model railways. Presumably this enables tight radii to be negotiated but does look a little odd to my eye. I hope my “prototypical” approach works on the track I intend to use!

As far as progress on the wagons is concerned, the theme this month is repetition, repetition. I needed a number of strips of metal to represent the stays and rubbing strips on the upper surfaces of the wooden skeleton and cross pieces. I was unable to purchase suitable strips commercially, and those “close” to size were very expensive. Luckily a solution presented itself whilst idly thumbing through an old G1 magazine. A slitting saw, climb cutting into brass plate, supported by an MDF

block. Luckily ArcEuro had a sale of saw blades and mandrels so within a couple of days I was set to go. I have had bad experiences with slitting saws before, probably because I used home-made mandrels (without drive keys) and second hand saw blades - not a winning combination.

See photo below, I lowered the Z axis a set amount each pass and soon had a pile of strips.



The next problem was multiple holes, accurately spaced and on a decent centre line on the strips, I have to confess not one of my strengths. I blame age. After some deliberation I came up with a two part jig made from pre-used material, the base slotted to width and strip thickness in the mill and the top then screwed to the base retaining the centre lines of the slot and drilled for holes. After machining, the jig was transferred to the drill press and the strips inserted into their grooves, the top screwed down and drilling commenced. Much to my relief it seemed to work well. Initially I dropped a close fitting rivet into the first hole to stop possible sideways movement, but the soft nature of the brass ensured that a burr was thrown into the jig which locked the strip.



A quick clean up to de-burr and I could mark out and start bending the brace strips.



There are other repetitive jobs including stud production, 48 so far of various lengths and thread, square backing plates for the studs holding the spine lengths together and the timber uprights which slot into the ends of the cross beams still to do. Then its finishing - do I go for "as shopped" or "had a hard life" or somewhere in between? Watch this space....

Bob G