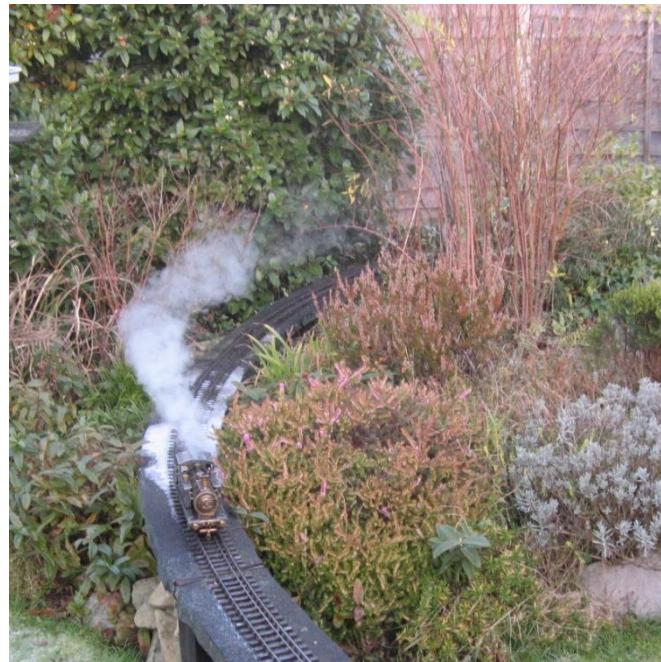


December 2014



Surrey Signal

An occasional newsletter
for the GIMRA Surrey Group



AGM debut for Oval

As everybody expected, the AGM was an extremely calm experience, with first class team work ensuring that everything ran very smoothly. There was a slight murmur from one of the side rooms mid-afternoon, but little else to disturb the clack of wheel on rail...



Rather than relying on cars, we had hired a van just large enough to take the whole layout without rattling around. The yellow webbing straps did their job (though some of them had been fully unlaced in the morning rather than just unbuckled, leading to some head scratching at knock down time).



We had a good slate of runners, with both tracks in use most of the day. Peter Howland came and ran the coal fired Atlantic with Elizabeth (see below). Dick Moger ran one of the ARM1G prototypes, seen here with Stan's electric ARM1G passing on the inside.

At close, several of the GMES G1MRA members helped us load up and tuck everything away that evening - just for future reference, we need to keep the door clear as shown here.



MEX makes six

The Oval had six outings altogether in 2014, culminating in three running days (and a fourth setup day) at Sandown Park for the 107th Model Engineer Exhibition.



I think it's fair to say that immediately afterwards quite a few of us were feeling like it would be nice to have a break for a little while over Christmas...

Peter's latest innovation is a set of plastic link chains which he used to ensure alignment during setup, avoiding the cumulative error (and mass lift-and-slide correction manoeuvre) that we experienced at the AGM.

Martin, Peter and Mike had been working hard on the turnouts, and we now had the points at the front connected so that the forward steaming bay was fully available with generous siding space. For the first time we were able to start developing operational experience of engine switchovers.



There was a very full involvement from across the Surrey Group (though a bug knocked out a couple of our volunteers). In particular, Christine and Mike Bland (wo-)manned the information desk throughout the three days with short breaks for Mike to run his engines. Christine also made us all cake, and generally kept everyone going. It's great to see Christine back to her sparkly self.

I do need to work on getting folk signed up in running sessions as we had some quite serious lacunae around Saturday lunchtime. Three full days is a lot of running time, but we did manage continuous action.



Elizabeth tested out the Sandown smoke detectors with some coal firing - the GMES 16mm crew had been put out in the lobby so as to keep the smoke out of the main hall, but we got away with it.

One of our most entertaining runs was engineered by Mike Hensor. He double headed his Jubilee *Galatea* and Black Five *Surrey Oval* (custom nameplates, of course), coupled up to no less than 15 of the new G1MCo Mark 1 coaches, and orbited at speed with tremendous sound effects from both the onboard sound generators and the clatter of 76 axles across our occasionally liberally spaced track joints. Peter Jackman has some fine videos, from which I extracted this frame.



A gift from Christopher Vine

Christopher Vine, well known author of *How (not) to paint a locomotive* and the *Peter's Railway* series (<http://www.petersrailway.com>) was in attendance at Sandown, complete with his 7 1/4" LNER B1 *Bongo* which was turning over on a low simmer.

He was chatting to Christine who mentioned that she keeps a couple of Peter's Railway booklets to interest younger visitors. The next day Chris came over and donated a complete set to us, which will be particularly useful at the Holloway Science Festival in March, where we expect to see around 5,000 visitors, mostly young families.

Chris has expressed an interest in running with us at the Festival, and I am in discussion with the organisers to see how that might best work.

Peter's coal fired Atlantic

Earlier this year Peter Howland decided to disperse his collection of engines. He mentioned this to me at Graham Colover's last summer and I told him that Elizabeth had always aspired to coal firing, and that she very much admired the coal fired Atlantic that Peter built from the Martin Evans *Southern Belle* design - Peter's version is a Great Northern Atlantic in LNER livery.



So now Elizabeth is the owner and custodian of this fine engine. At the AGM Peter gave Elizabeth a tutorial on running it, which turned into a master class in coal firing watched attentively by all. The engine ran well - I have a lovely video of the onlookers doing synchronised lighthouse impressions as the engine floats by (still, see above).

Similarly, I was inspired by Peter's Bonds' Tank when I saw him run it a few years ago, and now have one of my own with two others in various stages of construction. Peter has very kindly let me take on his Bonds' too, and it will be making appearances at GTG's from the Spring. As you probably know, these engines are very heavy and can pull enormous loads.

December at the Boormans'

Chez Boorman was thrown open to us for the traditional Christmas GTG the week before Sandown. Tony Cook and a few others ran: I flew. As sometimes happens with the crude meths burners on my old engines, I had a bit of a flare up. I moved the engine out of the way to extinguish the fire, but unfortunately I'd knocked the regulator open and the engine shot off round the track at well over scale Mallard velocity. She didn't even attempt to change direction at the far bend and simply carried on in a straight line until gravity left her sitting four-square in Bob's lawn, surrounded by smouldering leaves.

She seemed in good order after a cleanup, but when I tried to run on Friday at Sandown the water tank dumped its contents straight onto the tank - the landing impact had cracked the joints open.



All is now well though: I resoldered the tank that evening and she ran continuously for over an hour on Saturday.

Pioneer engines in the UK - Lionsmeet 2015 at GMES

The Surrey Group is home to at least 3½* Aster Lions. Here's Mike Bland's example at Peter Howland's track.



The Lion has its own society - the Old Locomotive Committee (<http://www.lionlocomotive.org.uk/>) which mounts an annual get together for Lion models of all sizes. The 2015 meeting is being organised by Andrew and David Neish at Guildford Model Engineering Society on Saturday August 8th 2015 from 10.00-teatime, and they would be very pleased to have a flock of G1 Lion's to run - David has one of his

own and was a driver for the real Lion in the 1980's when it last steamed.

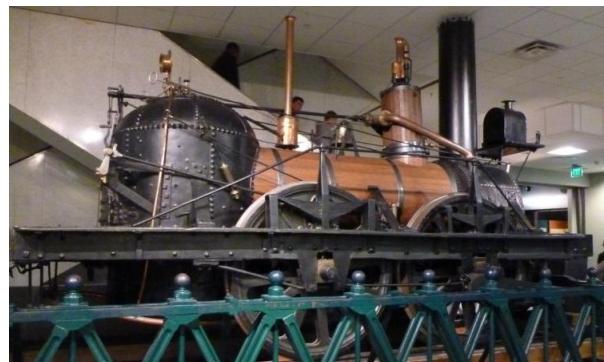
The permanent Guildford track should be ready by then, and if not we could put up the portable. It should be a fun event; you can see a Flickr photoset from the 2014 Lionsmeet at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/janfordsworld/sets/72157646863962031/detail/>



* The extra ½ Lion is this Aster Lion steam motor that I bought from a member in Australia some years ago.

Pioneer engines in the US

In November I had a trip to Washington, and visited the Smithsonian Museum to see *John Bull* which started off life as a Stephenson & Co 0-4-0 closely related to the Planet class, but which was quickly modified to a 4-2-0 with a cow catcher equipped leading bogie so as to cope with the lightly engineered American track.



The engine is now rather squashed in to an area by the main stairs, and quite hard to photograph: the Smithsonian lavishes much of its budget on aerospace exhibits these days, and the poor steam engines feel a little neglected to me. Still, it was wonderful to see this relic, and in fact in 1981 it was actually steamed (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxcdY2Cj5nQ>) so it is still in working order unlike most of our own pioneer engines. More detail on John Bull at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Bull_\(locomotive\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Bull_(locomotive)) and <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/videos/category/innovation/101-objects-john-bull-locomotive/?no-ist>

Having acquired a taste for antique Americana, we jumped on the Amtrack and headed for the Baltimore&Ohio museum at the site of the Mt Clare workshops (<http://www.borail.org/>). This site is essentially the American Shildon - it is where the first workshops for the first passenger railway in America were sited, and is now a museum with original

features and a large open air display section. The centrepiece is the roundhouse, originally built as a carriage workshop (not a steam shed). They have many original and reconstructed pioneer locos. Very highly recommended if you visit the East Coast.



Gathering Winter fuel

It is Winter, and the young engineer's fancy turns to fuel performance. We all know the difficulties with DIY-barn meths with its high water content. A year or two ago Ken Lowes put me on to so-called bioethanol from B&Q which is great, if you can find it... It goes in and out of stock very rapidly. In the last few years a whole range of flame-effect fires with real flame have come on the market. They run on ethanol, and to be acceptable in the home the ethanol needs to be colourless and not smell bad when combusted. On the other hand, to avoid duty, it has to be de-natured, i.e. made toxic for humans. The open-fire vendors have come up with a suitable formulation and called it 'bioethanol' rather than meths to avoid unpleasant associations, I assume. Of course, it is all 'bio-' since the ethanol in meths is formed by fermentation, but still...

B&Q sells it at £5 for 2l which is cheaper than most meths. It seems to be purer too, in the sense that it has less water in it to start with. One has to be careful because meths (and bioethanol) are a bit hydroscopic, and so will pull moisture out of the air. The issue with water in meths is a double problem. Firstly, the more water, the less flammable alcohol there must be per

litre, but probably more importantly the water has to be boiled away during combustion. This needs energy, and a surprising amount, because the latent heat of vapourisation of water is high: in fact it takes about as much energy to get water at 100 degrees C to turn into steam as it does to get water from 20 degrees up to 100 degrees; i.e. when the water has been heated from ambient to boiling point, you're still only halfway to steam in energy terms, and so quite a lot of the alcohol's combustion energy is thrown away getting the water out of the mix. The B&Q stuff, when they have it, is sometimes loaded on a pallet somewhere in a dark corner - best to ask at the desk when you get there.

2015 programme

You'll find the initial programme for 2015 on the back page. I don't yet know the timing of the AGM or MEX, or whether we will be invited to run the Oval.

There won't be a Holloway summer fete in 2015 because the College is hosting the Magna Carta 800th anniversary celebrations, and I couldn't figure out how to get steam locomotives into a thirteenth century event. However, the Science Fair will be bigger and better, with a much easier venue. We have also been invited to feature at the Association of Larger Scale Railway Modellers show at Reading in May, which is a very jolly one day event.

Endnote



Above: Details of the gracefully decaying shell of the last remaining Chesapeake & Ohio 4-6-4 Hudson
Below: The roundhouse in Baltimore



Frontpiece

Adrian's Chingford in the Boormans' winter garden



SURREY G1MRA GROUP

2015 fixture list



Surrey group meets second Tuesday afternoons
Please refer to your membership list for venues

Tue 13 Jan	Sutton MEC	13.00	
Fri 16 Jan - Sun 18 Jan London Model Engineer Show - Invicta Track - Alexandra Palace			
Tue 10 Feb	Ken Lowes	13.00	
Sat 21 Feb Bacon Butty Bash, Durrington; Salisbury and Stonehenge Group			
Sat 7 Mar	Royal Holloway Science Festival	All day; setup Friday evening	
Tue 10 Mar	Mike Bland	13.00	
Sat 28 Mar - Sun 29 Mar Festival of Model Railways - Anglia Roads - Alexandra Palace			
Tue 14 Apr	Martin Hulse	13.00	
Sat 25 Apr	G1MRA spring meeting, Shepshed near Loughborough		
Sat 9 May	ALSRM show, Reading	All day; setup Friday evening or Saturday	
Tue 12 May	Michael Wrottesley	13.00	
Tue 9 Jun	Ken Lowes	13.00	
Sat 28 Jun	Stonehenge Summer Solstice Sausage Sizzle, Andover		
Sat 5 Jul - Sun 6 Jul GMES rally Guildford - running on new permanent track			
Tue 7 Jul	Mike Bland	13.00	Note: first Tuesday
Sat 8 Aug	Lionsmeet 2015 at GMES rally - running on new permanent track		
Tue 11 Aug	Bob Boorman	13.00	
Tue 8 Sep	Peter Jackman	13.00	
Tue 13 Oct	Guildford MES	13.00	
Oct	G1MRA AGM Woking?		
Tue 10 Nov	Sutton MEC	13.00	
Tue 8 Dec	Bob Boorman	13.00	
Dec	Model Engineer Exhibition Esher?		

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