



Newsletter of THE PALMERSTON NORTH MODEL ENGINEERING CLUB INC

Managers of the "MARRINER RESERVE RAILWAY"

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PNMEC Home Page www.pnmeec.org.nz

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TRACK RUNNING

This is held on the FIRST and THIRD Sunday of each month, from 1 pm to 4 pm Summer and 1 pm to 3 pm during the Winter. All club members are welcome to attend and help out with loco coaling, watering and passenger marshalling - none of the tasks being at all onerous.

Visiting club members too, are always welcome at the track, at the monthly meeting, or if just visiting and wishing to make contact with members, please phone one of the above office bearers.

Sender:-
PNMEC
22b Haydon St,

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Coming Events

Monthly Meeting; This will be held on the 26th June at 7.30 pm in the Hearing Association Rooms, Church Street, Palmerston North. This will be a Bring, Buy, Sell or Exchange. Also the second of the Workshop Practice Talks by Richard Lockett.

Mid Week Run at Marriner Reserve Railway : 22nd July between 10 am and 2 pm. Please contact Doug Chambers beforehand.

Track running at Marriner Reserve Railway: 6th July 1- 3 pm
20th July 1- 3 pm

The closing date for the next issue of The Generator is Friday 11th July

REPORT of the MAY MEETING

A cold, wet night but a good turn out of members. Richard Lockett gave a brief talk on the sharpening of lathe tools. I think quite a few of us will be trying to improve our methods of sharpening lathe tools. There was a varied collection of items displayed among the "Bits and Pieces". Graeme Avery showed us a meths burner he had made. The unusual feature was that the flame could be controlled so that the unit could be used for a variety of different sized boilers. Fred Kent showed the progress he has made on the 'Competition Crane'. Brian Wiffin had some more components for his gear hobbing machine. Murray Bold had his Gauge 1 NZR 'D' class locomotive. Powered by an electric motor, Murray under the guidance of Bruce Geange is making some of the plate work. Barry Parker had the chassis for his "Rob Roy". Barry, with help from Chris Rogers, is making steady progress. Bruce Geange displayed the steam crane that he is building. The boiler Doug Chambers is putting together for Bruce's 3" scale 'Burrell' traction engine was reunited with the smoke box, front axle and wheels. This gave members a good idea of the size of a 3" scale traction engine. Maurice Brownell showed off a pair of wheels that will be used on his driving truck. Stuart Anderson had some of the panel work for his NZR Dh.

PALMERSTON NORTH MODEL ENGINEERS CLUB SHIRTS

There are three shirts left of the original order of twenty-five. All 'large' size. If you are interested please contact Cynthia Cooper or Richard Lockett.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2003-4 NOW DUE

Subs are due now. The good news is that once again there has been NO increase in the rate.

Members \$28 . 00

Country members and Juniors \$14 . 00

Pay direct to the Treasurer, Richard Lockett or post to him via the Society's address,
C/o 22 B Haydon Street,
Palmerston North.

FOR SALE

100 feet of 5 inch gauge track made up from 20 lengths each 5 feet long. May be set up as ground level track but stands are included to set the track up as a raised track.

Also, a twin-set passenger trolley. Suitable for raised track operation.

For price and further information Contact Les Fordyce 06 343 8565

JUNE MEETING

WINTER WORKSHOP CLEANOUT. Bring along all those things that you wish to dispose of, or haven't used in five years. Come prepared to purchase other members treasured items.

Also Richard Lockett will host Part 2 of the Workshop Practice Talks. Tonight ; sharpening drills.

WANTED TO BUY

Attachments for an Emco-Unimat Lathe , Model SL.

Live centre, fixed steady, mitre gauge assembly, milling table, fret/jigsaw, planeing attachment, circular saw, Raiser block, router, drive centre, and hand turning rests.

Reply to P.O. Box 26, Feilding or Email : paratronics@xtra.co.nz

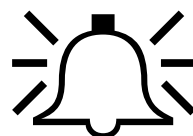
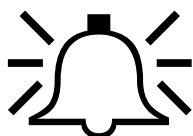
Toys Day Out

On Sunday the 8th June the club was invited to take part in the “Toys Day Out” fun day at “Te Manawa”. Bruce and his mate set up and operated a Meccano Exhibition while Richard and friends setup and ran “Robyn” on the portable track outside the front entrance to the Science Museum.



Tuesday Running Day

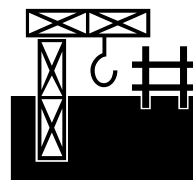
Six members came to the May Tuesday run and three locomotives were on the track. Roy Hood steamed his “Tich” loco. which passed a steam test and then ran for a while on a section of the track. Maurice Brownell ran his “Jubilee” and Bruce’s “Abagaile” had a run as well.



Congratulations to

Jim Curtis

on being made a Life Member
of the Dannevirke Model Railway Club
on the occasion of their Fiftieth Anniversary



LETTER FROM ENGLAND

By Stan Compton

As a child in the 'thirties' our Sunday roast was sometimes flavoured with a bottle of Bulmers Woodpecker Cider, naturally we children only had a small juice-glass each.

Many years later when I returned to the Hereford area, home of Bulmers Cider, I presented a locomotive boiler for its hydrostatic test to Pete, our boiler inspector. He produced a massive twelve-inch diameter pressure gauge, which he assured me came off one of Bulmers steam boilers. It was of solid brass and was very heavy. I asked when it was certified last. "Well, I checked it twenty years ago, against the Government Boiler Inspector's gauge and it was alright then."

Years have slipped by and now we find our Federation Rules demand that our test pressure gauges have to be certified annually. To this end I contacted an instrument firm in Evesham, a small historic market town not far away on the River Avon, south of Stratford.

On making an appointment for a test of our club's pressure gauge, a pleasant young woman on the phone gave me very clear directions to find their location. "From Pershore go straight along the 'Waterside', turn right at the traffic lights into Port Street, carry on up the hill past the 'Regal Cinema', still in use incidentally, (though a bit run down), left at the top etc etc.

Pershore, by the way was where the most delicious plums were bred, now alas a lot of the plum trees have been grubbed-out. Very few families eat plums and custard anymore and as a grower ruefully remarked, "Supermarkets demand fruit like billiard balls that are perfect. What do we do with the imperfect fruit?". The result is Spanish growers who are happy to spray heavily and supply the U.K. market.

We had to leave the gauge for certification, so it being 18 degrees on an April day we parked the car and walked in to the town of Evesham. Bridge Street is quite a steep climb up from the River Avon and halfway up on the left is an old coaching inn, "The Crown". The archway into the yard is still there and I could visualise the tired horses having to make that extra effort to drag a laden coach up the last steep climb into the archway.

Coach-horses had a hard life and it was known for them to drop dead out on the highway.

We walked on up into the town past the old half timbered town hall, (now a bank,) where as a child I recall having afternoon tea on a school outing, after a trip on the River Steamer.

A pity it was closing day for the covered market on the high street, but while window shopping Anne spotted a needlework shop to browse around while I examined all the external wiring to various buildings from fuse boxes on the wall in the alley. These are very old buildings and are very difficult to bring power supplies into.

A pity the craft shop in Port Street had closed down, a sign of the times, even the one model shop I found had only complete models or plastic kits for sale.

After a nice lunch, and with still time to spare we crossed over the main street to walk up a cobblestone path towards the old 16th century bell tower, the only major remaining building from the once great Abbey. Under the archway leads into the Abbey gardens with a memorial to the soldiers who died in the First World War, it looks out over the valley and is very impressive, no fibreglass statue here!! But not far away is the small town of Upton-on-Severn, they built a Memorial Hall at the same time. Such a useful building with a small stage etc. even a kitchen with a serving hatch used for so many functions even now.

We found a bench to sit on in the shade, it was a lovely sunny day and the office girls were sitting on the grass eating their lunch. Anne got up to investigate the ancient archway just behind us and found a descriptive sign that explained we were sitting on the site of a Chapter House, built by monks from the Abbey. The old archway had a padlocked gate leading to vegetable plots on the site of what had been the cloisters where the monks took their exercise under cover.

A man was working on his plot and I struck up a conversation. "Your beans are coming on well". He said as he walked over, "Yes you can grow anything in this soil, look at the rhubarb." It was a massive clump. "No frost here sheltered by the old wall, I've just retired and taken on this plot, it will suit me".

Here was a man content with his life.

On the way back to the car workmen were planting the flowerbeds for the summer, the new paddling pool had no water in it yet but all was neat and tidy.

Back to collect the pressure gauge, still accurate, and the on to visit Anne's brother and his wife before returning home.

ONE SAPPER'S WAR

By Bren Campbell

Following the horrendous bombardment from allied artillery by night and aerial bombing by day the enemy was routed from El Alamein and as the railway track was repaired we followed up with supply trains, first with a field workshop train to which I was attached for two weeks. We eventually arrived in Tobruk, the final twelve miles over German built track, which they had achieved by pulling up some of our sidings and balloon loops and transferring the rails and sleepers etc. Over the entire 350 miles from El Alamein to Tobruk the war wreckage presented vivid evidence of a great long running battle. Burned out tanks, especially Italian tanks all-pointing West were still smouldering. There was destroyed road transport vehicles, half track troop carriers and everywhere temporary graves with wooden crosses and Italian and German helmets marking them. There were intact munitions supply dumps and airfields littered with self destroyed fighter aircraft. We passed through a rear guard action site at Fort Capuzzo where the defence emplacement consisted of nothing more than a metre high wall of rocks and stones. The sight and stench of the shredded Italian clothing and equipment was appalling.

The final railhead established by the Germans was on top of the escarpment overlooking Tobruk. A winding road then led down to the port. Our construction units built several widely spaced railway spurs or curved back shunts onto which we pushed the supply trains, then disconnected the locomotives and parked them out about a quarter mile while Indian Labour gangs performed the unloading which took about three and a half hours. We then backed up, coupled up and cleared out hopefully before any enemy air attack. About sixteen miles short of Tobruk a large airfield was established at Gambut from where Liberator bombers attacked targets in Italy. The sight of twenty-one of these heavyweights taking off simultaneously was awe inspiring indeed. The dust from the surface would hang in the air for an hour or more.

The field had its own railway siding over which we delivered 650 net tons a day of aviation fuel and bombs. From the approaches to Gambut and Tobruk we were to watch these places come under air attack, especially the Tobruk Port where the harbour was jammed with sunken British, German and Italian ships.

During their occupation the Germans had brought over about twelve diesel mechanical locomotives to work the main line. There were three sizes, 500, 350 and 250 horsepower. Most of them were rendered unserviceable by having had explosive charges detonated in vital parts of their engines. The few that were serviceable soon became inoperable through rough handling and lack of spare parts. All were pushed to the ends of spurs and back shunts to act as end of track stop blocks. The Italians had contributed about an equal number of ingeniously designed yard shunting locomotives which had tall centre cabs with the engines mounted beneath. They were built onto a low slung chassis the ends of which carried traversing jacks which in the retracted position passed beneath the wagon headstocks. Evidently Italian railway working methods called for much preoccupation with the rerailing of vehicles. None of these were found to be serviceable and joined war wreckage pushed clear of the tracks.

A great gift to the allies was the large number of Italian Fiat and Lancia heavy road transport diesel trucks. These were extremely durable and were seen in constant use. By contrast the German trucks, especially those powered with air cooled engines soon joined the junk piles. Highly prized were the Lancia and Alce motorcycles. These were the first sprung rear frame machines we had seen. They had big single cylinder beautifully balanced motors with quite large external flywheels. The finely engineered German BMW motorcycles that came into our hands did not last long in the desert conditions.

As the war zone retreated westwards and the North African ports became operable, the desert railway ran out of work as a supply line but continued in use to bring out the vast quantity of wreckage. Our 16th and 17th operating companies were relieved from what had been a long and arduous term of duty and withdrawn to the New Zealand Base Camp at Maadi.

The lads generally felt like letting down from the prolonged service tensions and resented newly imposed petty disciplines and 'square bashing'. Within a few days discontent boiled over into a rebellion led by a hard core group of 'stirrers' against some officers. A confrontation occurred during the closing of the camp canteen and developed into a punch-up. This was duly quelled and the following court martial sentenced the identified perpetrators to prison terms. Camp security and discipline were tightened up by placing a sergeant in every ordinary rankers tent and forbidding any man to man conversation after 2200 hours. Officers prowled the tent lines to discover any breaches of the order. Any lapses caused all the occupants

of the tent to be penalised. The sergeants did not like being forced into being pimps any more than we did and camp morale took on a very low order. Leave was reduced and drill and training programs were extended.

At this time my own stress reaction set in and my stomach ceased to accept food. I was admitted to the nearby base hospital for tests and trials with bland foods. After two weeks I was discharged to the transit camp to await recall to my unit which being up to strength left me in limbo. Life in the transit camp adjacent to my unit was very agreeable. Only a morning roll call parade and tent inspection and issue of generous leave passes. We took in the wonderful variety concerts provided by touring British stage artists. From this relaxed position we noted the personnel of my unit going through their arms drill, being instructed in defusing 'booby-trapped' buildings and placing white painted stones in borders around their tent lines.

After two weeks in the transit camp a small detachment consisting of a corporal, myself and one other O.R. was detailed to join the base hospital to guard a patient who was serving a military prison sentence. We were domiciled in a tent erected for our use. The corporal who turned out to be a personal friend of the patient and knew the ropes told us that he would personally watch over the prisoner and in his words we were told "Get lost and don't get into trouble." Who were we to argue. We enjoyed this liberty for three weeks and then on meeting the corporal I enquired after the patient's health. It transpired that he had been discharged from hospital a week before. Finally our NCO reported that our services as guards were no longer required and we were returned to the transit camp.

The following day I was ordered to present myself to the orderly room where I was told to join a detachment of eight men to be transported to El Kantara on the Suez Canal to pick up a fleet of diesel electric locomotives and deliver them to Beruit in Lebanon. Once there we were to establish train-running schedules over the routes from Beruit to Haifa in Palestine and Beruit to Tripoli in Northern Lebanon near the Syrian border. We also had to train South African enginemmen to operate these locos which were displacing steam locomotives that were being sent on to Turkey.

To be continued.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

My late father, W.J.O. Chambers served in the NZ Army 21st Mechanical Division. He drove heavy earthmoving machinery, forming railway line track bed, airfields, roads and port facilities.

I remember that his unit was involved in Tobruk. At that time he was driving a Caterpillar RD 8 and was involved in demolishing buildings near the port facilities. There was a slipway that was covered in debris and it was decided to make the slipway operational as soon as possible so that MTB, MGB and similar light vessels could be repaired near their operational area instead of a long run along the coast to Alexandria. The RD 8 could 'wade' in water about five feet deep as the bulldozer blade was used to clear the approaches to the slipway.

My father remembered the harbour being full of sunken ships, and at the time was greatly interested in the method employed to clear the harbour to allow the waiting ships in to discharge their cargo.

A team of divers operating from a tender, (large launch) would lay charges all around the hull of one of the wrecks. The resulting explosion blew off the ship's superstructure but various frames and steel plates would be left ready to open up the hull of any unsuspecting ship.

To deal with this problem a LCT (Landing Craft Tank) was filled up with old worn out tanks and concrete. At low tide the LCT would charge across the remains of the ship and all the frames would be bent over by the strong LCT's hull. At high tide there was enough depth over the wreck for ships to enter the port safely. There was no chance of raising the wrecks, as even those that had been sunk by bombing had also been further 'blown apart' to ensure the port remained closed.

In 1965 my father began to correspond with his cousin Captain G.C. Damant RN retd. with whom he had lost contact with after my father left England. During the course of their letters it turned out that Guy Damant was the Naval Officer in charge of Salvage Operations in the Mediterranean and he was in charge of the diving team in Tobruk Harbour. He told my father that he had been amazed at the power of the RD 8 that he was watching as it flattened buildings and cleared the slipway. For both of them to have been so close but not close enough to recognize each other, a pity as they never got the chance to meet again.