

Left Hand Running

The November 2008 Newsletter of The British Train Society
www.britishtrainsociety.org

A View From The Footplate

Since the last issue we have had a busy month. On October 18th we had our annual swap meet at my place; the meeting was well attended with 15 present in total including a prospective new member, Tobias Giles, an experienced modeler, and Ken Ford who paid his first visit to my house and was able to view my layout. Lots of enthusiasm and many left gleefully clutching their new possessions. This event is always lots of fun.

A week later some of us girded up our loins and headed south to Oak Lawn for the Southland Model Railroad Show on Oct 25th and 26th. Harry Raynis and Robin Ross set up 2 modules on Friday night and I joined on Saturday morning with a third module. Martin Venn and John Derler joined later with John providing his traditional supply of doughnuts. The display showed very well and there was clear evidence that our members wanted to put on a professional display which we did judging from the interest and complements received from the visiting public. A new feature this year was a reversing circuit on the outer track on which we shuttled a couple of tank engines. It was a bit balky on the first morning until we fixed a few weak rail joiners and established continuity for the current. Some locos performed better than others but Martin's vintage Hornby ex-Southern E2 ran without a fault and was joined the next day by John's LNER Bachmann J72. It was popular with the kids who watched intently expecting the engines to run off the end but they faithfully stopped in time although a couple of us never did get used to it. All in all it was a very successful event and as always prompted thoughts and improvements for next year. It was a good

project for the club to take on; we did get more exposure for our activities and did stimulate interest in some enthusiasts that may result in new memberships. I would like to express special thanks to Martin Venn, John Derler, Robin Ross and Will Buligh in their help in transportation, set up and manning the display. Also the project was spear headed by Harry Raynis who organized everything, took care of many of the details in addition to set up, manning and logistics and to whom we all owe a special vote of thanks.

Hope to see you at the next meeting and do not forget the Friday running events at Harry's house.

Until then Happy Modelling

Don Buchanan

Calendar of Coming Events

November 8th – 9th,
Trainfest
Milwaukee (Wisconsin State Fair Park)

November 9th, 9:30 am – 3:00 pm
Great Midwest Train Show
Wheaton (DuPage County Fairgrounds)

November 15th, 1:30 pm
BTS Regular Meeting
Naperville (Harry Raynis)

December 14th, 9:30 am – 3:00 pm
Great Midwest Train Show
Wheaton (DuPage County Fairgrounds)

Famous British Locomotives

Wren

Enthusiasts of British trains and railways are undoubtedly acquainted with their Kings and Princesses; Castles and Coronations; Mallards and Merchant Navies of which much has been written. However, the British railway industry produced gazillions of other less well known locomotives, the workings of which we shall explore in this occasional series.

You say that you know all about your 3F's and your Dean's Goods; your Y7's and Q1's, but do you know about the diminutive *Wren*? Production lasted from 1903 until 1941 during which time some 168 *Wren* chicks left the nest. Not bad, you say, but why have I never heard of *Wren*!

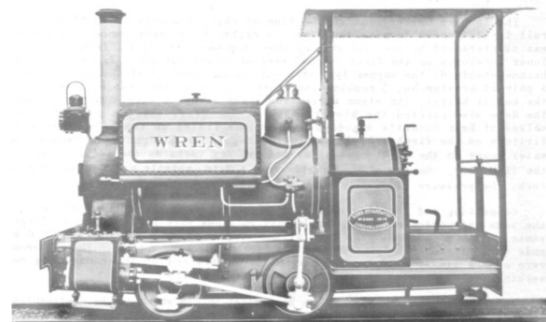
Well, perhaps because *Wren* was not a main line engine; not even a lowly works shunter but rather a narrow gauge contractor's locomotive [we railway enthusiasts tend to overlook things of less than 56½" gauge (except in Colorado)]. Built by Kerr, Stuart & Co., *Wren* weighed a mere 4 tons 3 cwts in working order. It was the smallest of Kerr, Stuart's standard locomotives. But don't be fooled by *Wren*'s small stature. *Wren* traveled farther and wider than most British locomotives. *Wren* found employment for the Admiralty in the dockyards of London, in mines and quarries in England, Spain, Africa, South America and the Far East, and for contractors throughout the British Empire helping to build everything from military bases to, well, other railways.

Wren rolled on 20 inch wheels and had 6 x 9 inch cylinders controlled by inside Stephenson motion; later outside Hackworth gear was used. *Wren* was very adaptable and would fit track gauges ranging from 1'8" to 3'6". And as befitting a world traveler, *Wren* was not a fussy eater but would happily digest whatever combustible

found its way through the firebox door. *Wren*'s boiler was pressed to 140 psi; tractive effort was variously rated at between 1,700 lbs and 2,000 lbs.

The last *Wren* fledged by Kerr, Stuart was sent to Brazil in 1929 and the last *Wren* of all flew the coop of Hunslet Engine Co., successor to Kerr Stuart, in 1941 for the National Smelting Co. in Avonmouth.

So, is *Wren* still around? Of course! Several of the *Wren* flock have retired to some of the narrower preserved railways of Great Britain. So, on your next UK trip, don't forget to pay *Wren* a visit. *Wren* will be most happy to entertain you!



The Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the British Train Society will be at Harry Raynis' home in Naperville on November 15th. The program will be a presentation titled "A Salute to Things Past and Present". Don't miss it!

November Fun and Run Session

Friday November 7th and 21st are the dates for this month's operating sessions at Harry Raynis' in Naperville. These will be the last Fun & Run Sessions on the Raynis Railway for the year. So bring trains or just come and hang out; 6:30 to 9:30 pm.