CRAMEC March 2023 happenings

Keeping members up to date with what is happening at CRAMEC

Friday club nights

The first club night was another seen on the table. In no particular order. Francis updated us on the progress with his Terrier engine that he is rebuilding. Work continues on the new smokebox. Francis showed us the inclinometer he was using to set various angles. This particular one was made in 1915 and used to set the angle of elevation for field guns in the first world war; it has now found a more peaceful use. Derek showed us the quick-change tool post he had made 40 odd years ago when he got his first lathe and has been using it ever since. Derek had

made 5 tool holders. Ken continued his saga with Jim's Simplex, correct a never-ending series of issues. We did remind Ken that this engine went round the track with no problems, other than the occasional bit falling off. John demonstrated an apprentice piece he had made that allowed a rod to be accurately cross drilled. Apparently as John worked his way round the various machine shops, turning, milling, shaping etc he completed another part of the piece. A lot was hand filed to a mirror finish. Altogether an exquisite piece of work.

At the other end of the spectrum Terry had his clock main spring winder, made in an afternoon of bits of wood screwed together and using bits from a ½ in socket set to wind up the spring. Bits of plastic pipe are used as sleeves to retain the spring. There is a lot of power in a clock spring and

being able to change one safely is vital. European mantle clocks usually have the springs in barrels. The barrel is held in the winder, the spring wound up, a sleeve is slid over it and the spring unwound into the sleeve. Now the sleeve with the spring safely in it can be removed from the barrel. The winder is then used to extract the spring from the sleeve. Fitting a new spring is a reversal of the procedure. It has been used a number of times to change clock springs.

The second club night was 'things you are interested in' when members were invited to come along with things they are interested in, not necessarily that they had made. We had Dereck and Pam with pictures of the dolls houses they had made with a selection of furniture. The first was assembled from a kit and furnished top to bottom with a mixture of Georgian and Victorian furniture. The second was a parade of three Tudor shops with residential accommodation above. This was made from scratch by Derek from pictures. One shop was set out as café complete with crockery. What was interesting was the techniques they had used to create curtains etc.

Terry showed a range of Triang Minic clockwork cars and commercial vehicles he had accumulated over the years. Triang started making these in 1935 and continued up to their closure in the 1970's. Made from steel sheet using tab and slot construction they blend in nicely with an 0-gauge tin plate railway.

A clockwork motor gives a range of 10 foot between refuelling.

The boat on the trailer is another Triang product from the range of clockwork plastic boats they made and sold under the Penguin label.

Derek then showed a few irons he had collected including a gas fired one. Apparently you fitted a rubber hose to your house gas supply and off you went. Sounds highly dangerous to me, Derek admitted that he had not tried it. He showed another travelling iron heated by naphtha tablets.

Carriage shed compressor fails

The compressor in the carriage shed failed. The starter capacitor decided to escape from its housing. Luckily it is a standard item readily available from ebay and available for quick delivery. A replacement has been sourced, fitted and the compressor is back up and working.

Raised track riding cars and station.

The wider foot rests on the raised track riding cars have been fitted and here John is treating them to a coat of paint. The white lines on the edge of the platform have been repainted.

The ballast under the raised track in the station has been removed, washed and put back. Here the team are hard at work washing the ballast. The station is now looking very smart.

The water leak

The valve has been replaced and the hole filled in.

If you look at the picture you can see a trickle of water continuing to enter the hole at the top. It turns out that there is a second leak filling up the hole. This is coming from the fire hydrant valve, six feet up the pipe. It was not evident that there were two leaks and it was only when one was fixed that the second became evident. Now we have to start the process again, who is responsible and who is going to fix it. Fortunately, it is nothing to do with us. The good news is that this leak is a lot less than the other one and the water is draining away naturally. This means that the water round the raised track is slowly going down.

In filling in the hole the contractor drove their tracked digger over the ground level track and put three dips in it sufficient to derail the C2C. A gang came the next day with Mike D's rail straightner and levelled the track up. We have complained to the contractor.

Ground level trucks

Steve and Ken have been beavering away painting and refurbishing the ground level trucks and guards vans. All looking very smart.

One truck has been finished and painted, Mike obtained the original paint. Steve has painted the foot resting areas with anti-slip paint. It all looks a lot better than it did.

Web site.

Kevin has revamped the club's web site and it is now on line at cramec.org or just google Canvey railway. It has nice pictures of the two tracks and the newsletters are now available.

The bridge

Do you realise that it was not that long ago we were able to walk under the bridge to paint the underneath? No chance now.

Loco batteries

Terry has been testing the batteries and recording their capacity. We have purchased another set of AGM batteries for the Warship. This gives us a good set of batteries in the Warship, C2C and the Metropolitan.

AGM

The AGM was held on 26th and the existing committee re-elected with the exception of Kevin who wished to step down and the post of vice chairperson has been taken by Ken. The chairperson wishes to thank the effort put in by the committee but particularly by the members because without that we would not have the facilities we enjoy today. Hopefully these newsletters give some idea of the work members put in.

The cost of rides will remain at £1, or 6 rides for £5 or 12 rides for £9, and membership remains at £30. As always this is under constant review.

After the AGM the condition of the workshop came under discussion. It was decided that we will have a good clear out. Anything that 'might come in handy' but never does will be disposed of; a lot of it can be purchased cheaply if we need it. We will start by finishing off the metal fencing. When we evaluated the fencing after the vandalism we intended to include the fencing either side of the entrance to the field and purchased enough material to do that bit. However, we repaired it using salvaged bits from the damaged fencing. That material has been languishing in the workshop ever since. It makes sense to finish the project and that will also clear out some items that are in the way. One length of fencing is already assembled, the top and bottom rails for the second bit have been drilled, the rods are stacked up ready for nine to be bent into hoops and the four stanchions are ready to be planted.

Here is a view of some of the clear up.

Articles

I am sure that members who do not come to our Friday night 'seen on the table' meetings would be more than interested in reading about members' activities. Here we have Phill's experience with Vic's stretched Simplex.

Email Terry your articles and I will include them in future newsletters,

Alice

By Phill Lambert

For the Last ten years I have been a Gauge 1 builder and have enjoyed the whole aspect of the hobby. But I had always fancied since a young engineer, the opportunity to drive an engine that was pulling me. Last year I was fortunate enough to acquire the Alice Locomotive built by Vic Huggett. This engine design was first serialised in May 1997 in the Model Engineer. The Locomotive is based on the Martin Evans designed Simplex, however it deviates by being an 0-6-2 wheel configuration.

The modified plans were originally conceived, by Jim Wilson, a member of the Guildford MES. Basically, the loco chassis has been extended by around six inches with the addition of a pony truck under the rear. It was stated at the time that the addition made the model more comfortable to drive for extended periods. The extension has the added advantage of allowing the rear bunker water tank to be made larger, increasing the total water capacity from 1 gallon in the standard model, to almost 1 ½ gallons. This is beneficial during passenger hauling. The additional space from the boiler backplate to the front of bunker tank leaves ample room for firing.

Alice was named after the vice president of the above club, however there is a plan that this particular engine will have a different name sometime soon.

The engine had its first Hydraulic test in 2006, and its last steam test expired in 2013. It's unclear how much running it has done during this time, but all indications show very little.

Towards the end of last year, with thoughts of the fine weather to come, preparations began to get ready for the new season. The loco had not been run for nearly ten years, so the certification had all expired. These musings, are about what has been achieved so far, and some of the modifications to date.

The engine is a credit to Vic's workmanship, really well made and fitted. A reflection of a real craftsman, but like anything left for a considerable time, things needed attention. After an exploratory home hydraulic test, it was evident that there were a number of issues to be addressed. Glands needed lubricating and adjusting, the smoke box needed some minor cleaning, both boiler blowdown valves were jammed in the closed position, and the balls corroded, and needing replacement. There were some other issues but not really worth mentioning here, again, showing that good craftsmanship pays dividends.

The first challenge became obvious. How do I get to the underside to keep things in good condition?

I needed a rotisserie, and not for cooking! A club member was good enough to give me his old Simplex rotary stand, but sadly, this engine is as explained an extended Simplex, and his stand was just too small for my engine to fit between the frame ends.

So, challenge number one. Modify the gift to suit my needs.

To enable moving the engine within the workshop and then to the car, I Purchased a Hydraulic lifting table, and set to modifying the rotisserie to my needs.

The frame I acquired consisted of a pair of 'A' Frames mounted onto a four wheeled trolley, held together with diagonal cross bracing. This meant that to use the trolley as is, then your engine would have to be lowered into the framework using a hoist of some description. Well my workshop roof wouldn't support a string of onions let alone a 90KG engine.

So looking at my new Hydraulic table set me thinking. If I modified the 'A' frames to be mounted on the base of my trolley, once the table was raised to its maximum height, with the engine in place, the 'A' frame rotating index mounting supports could be fitted through the buffer stocks (buffers

removed) connecting both frames via the engine, then when the table was lowered the framework would support the engine and allow rotation, and indexing via a set of indexing holes in one of the 'A' frames

From scratch, the installation of the engine into the rotisserie including the removal of the buffers, takes around twenty minutes. It works a treat. A screen shot from a video of it in operation. (Sorry not to sharp).

The Completed assembly. (Apologies for the untidy workshop)

That sorted, the engine underwent a good clean and lubrication all over, and now that I could rotate it, this made life easier.

The next thing that I wanted to modify was the ash pan. I felt the addition of an opening door would aid cleaning, and facilitate better steaming, as the ashpan itself is really quite small and very confined where it passes over the axle it very quickly, during a trial running at home, became full and restricted the airflow through to the fire.

So, a quick thumbnail sketch and the build was away! The original ash pan as constructed by Vic, had columns supporting the grate and bolted through the pan floor. This also created a chance of ash build up in the grate. The act of cutting the door into the bottom meant that this had to be reworked by installing a new cross bar from stainless steel which would support the grate and bring back stiffness lost during door cutting.

To be able to get a second ash pan operating lever within the cab area meant that the cylinder drain cock lever also had to be modified to allow the new operating lever to sit alongside without interference. This sounds like a small job, but the original lever was partially covered by the removable cab floor and made operating awkward. Also, to enable two levers side by side, one of them would have to have an offset. So two new levers were milled and shaped and extended over the original by half an inch. This allows both levers to show over the cab floor when fitted, and allow my fat fingers to operate them. The ashpan lever has an indent machined in the brass guide bar to hold the door in the closed position and hopefully prevent the door opening during running. On a safety note, the operating of the door will hit the track sleepers. So, to prevent an accident should the lever be operated whilst running, the mechanism hinge is towards the front so should the door hit a sleeper, it will knock it closed (providing you are travelling forwards!) The door in the open position.

The two cab levers.

Ashpan door on the left and draincocks on the right.

The pictures show better than words how the mechanism was fitted in, amongst the existing pipework and levers.

Good progress has been made. But what next?

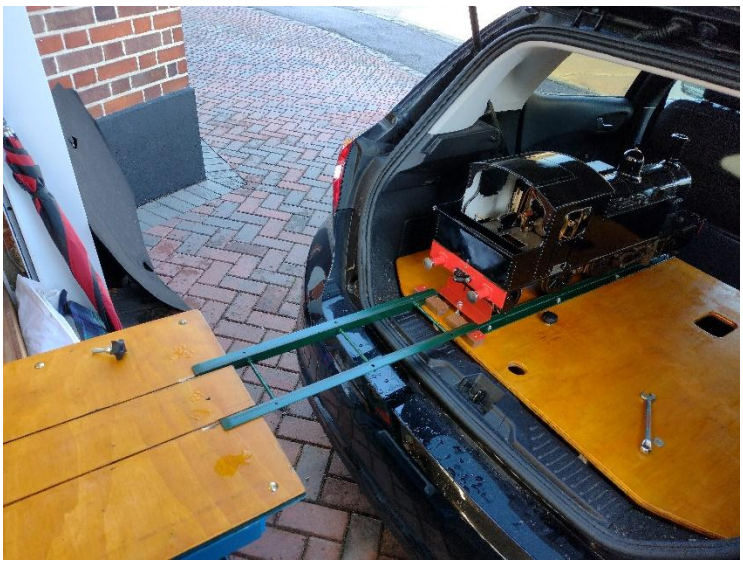
How to get it to the club for testing?

Well of course a method of transporting and tying everything down in the car would be needed.

A sub floor made, together with under framing to support the shocks of travelling. Ten D rings have been added, to the floor to enable Ratchet straps to secure the engine on the left and the riding trolley on the right. The cut outs towards the front are to attach the straps to the secure fixings of the seat mechanism, together with a fixing through the spare wheel to the floor pan below.

The D Rings

All that and I still haven't run the engine, but on the upside, it's kept me fully occupied during the winter months



Transfer track from table to car

Ready for transport.

Towards the end of February, the engine went to the club for its Hydraulic test. Mike and Terry cast their experienced eyes over the loco and I am pleased to say, they passed it fit for the next stage.

Three days later it was back at the club for the steam test, with all the necessary parts of the engine reattached.

The inspector and witness checking all is well.

Well, all was successful, and the engine has a clean bill of health, so ready to run.

All that and I still haven't run the engine, but on the upside, it's kept me fully occupied during the winter months. I hope this was of interest to people.

Update.

With regard to the ashpan door modification outlined above, Well the best laid plans etc, didn't take into account the 3 ½" rail! When the door is operated, it comes down onto the rail head. Never gave it a thought during the design stage. Oh well, and as Fagin Said "I'm Reviewing the situation"