NORTHERN VIEWS

Website: wmec.org.nz

ISSUE No 314 … … … … … … … … … June 2018

Clubrooms/Running Track at Heritage Park, SH14, Maunu, Whangarei.

Whangarei Model Engineering Club Incorporated

REMINDER

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, June 6, 2018, at 6 pm

CLUBROOMS OPEN AT 5.50 FOR COFFEE

CLUB NOTICES

Committee Meeting — Wednesday, June 13 @ 2 pm
3rd Sunday Running — June 17, 10 am - 3 pm

Mid-week Workdays — Mostly Every Wednesday.

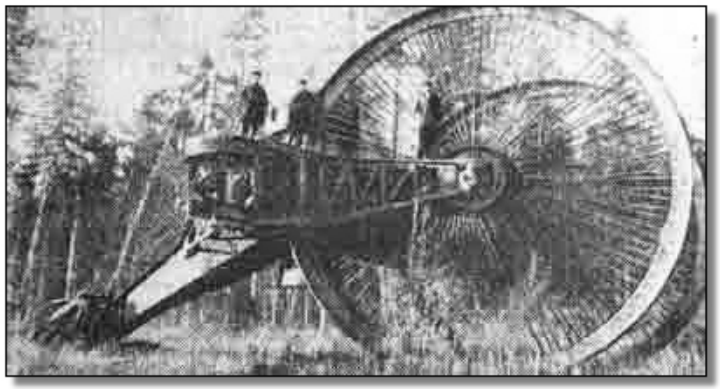
Extra Running Days This Month:

NOTHING ADVISED

THESE WORK IN WITH MUSEUM "LIVE" DAYS AND OTHER EVENTS WHEN HELD

QUIZ — What is it?

See Page 5.



Wednesday Workdays

By the Editor

Some great outdoor working weather of late. Work has continued on the replacement of part of main line down toward the tunnel.

As at 2/4/18 two of the already prefabricated sections of track have been laid — that leaves a further two more sections to install. Cutting discs sure run rings around the old hacksaw.

A new member in the form of a very keen high school boy has joined the ranks and as he was keen on drawing we gave him the job of drawing up what the proposed additions to the station covered area would look like, this was to be presented to the Museum for their approval. As yet we haven't heard what the verdict is. He is so keen that he now wants to build his own loco and I'm sure he will be given all the encouragement necessary to do this as the club desperately needs some younger blood in the ranks.

Tracklaying on the down track has been completed and the next step is to re-ballast the line and bring it up to level and insert some expansion gaps.

Now that John's locomotive is in service this has given our chief mechanic Rodney a chance to do some overdue maintenance on "Santa Fe". He has made some headway on this project and it shouldn't be too long before it is back in service.

Santa Fe is back in service and this has allowed Rodney to try to get 444's engine to run smoothly. He Rankin went down to the local Briggs & Stratton agent to see what they could learn about curing sick engines. They gleaned some information and are proceeding to implement this knowledge.

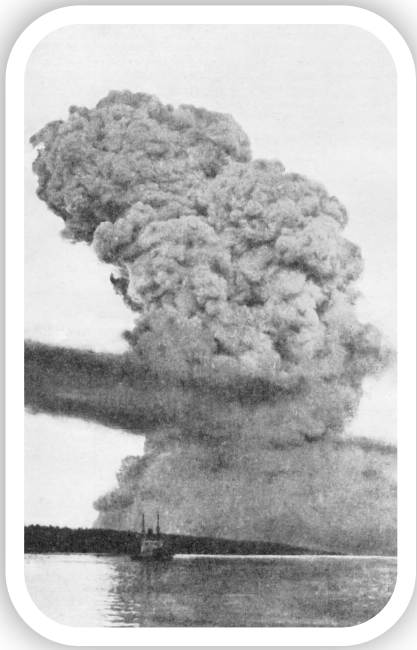
The drain across the bottom of the drive just in front of the tracks was noted to be full of dirt, stones, etc. This was cleaned out just before the heavy rain descended … hope it works better.

Other Club's Events:

Manukau Live Steamers: Open Weekend. Queens Birthday, June 2nd — 4th, 2018.
Havelock North Live Steamers: (Keirunga Park) Open Weekend. Labour Day Weekend, October 19th — 22nd, 2018.
Rail X Model Train Show: Palmerston North, July 7th and 8th, 2018.

LIST OF MAIN CLUB OFFICERS

President: Rodney White. Telephone (09) 436 1185. E-mail; rtw@slingshot.co.nz
Vice President: Rankin Kennedy. Telephone (09) 430 8328. E-mail; jenandrankin@gmail.com
Secretary: Brian Mould. Telephone (09) 438 7600. E-mail; bripdo@ gmail.com
Treasurer: Bruno Petersen. Telephone (09) 438 7600. E-mail; brunopetersen@xtra.co.nz
Committee Members — Colin Smith, Ian Mison, Tony Tanner, Lloyd Cross.
Newsletter Editor — Ian Mison. Telephone (09) 434 3125. E-mail; julianm@xtra.co.nz
Charters and Bookings — Rodney White. Telephone (09) 436 1185.
Postal Address: Whangarei Model Engineering Club (Inc), P.O. Box 10233, Te Mai, Whangarei 0143.
Club Telephone: (09) 438 9520 (Available Work and Running Days Only).



I don't know about you but I had never heard of this event … until now.

THE HALIFAX EXPLOSION

On December 6, 1917, the largest non-nuclear explosion ever seen obliterated the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The death toll was very close to 2000 people plus 9000 injured and caused a huge amount of damage to the surrounding area covering approximately two square miles.

The explosion was caused by the collision of two ships in the narrow channel at the entrance to Halifax Harbour. This entrance had seen other collisions over the years but not near as great as this one.

Shortly before 9 am the SS *Imo*, a Norwegian steamship carrying supplies for the Belgian Relief Commission (a World War 1 era relief organisation), headed out of Halifax Harbour and found itself on a collision course with the French steamship SS *Mont-Blanc*. Unbeknown to others in the Harbour, the *Mont-Blanc* was carrying 2925 metric tons (about 3224 short tons) of explosives — including 62 metric tons (about 68 short tons) of guncotton, 246 metric tons (about 271 short tons) of benzol, 250 metric tons (about 276 short tons) of trinitrotolulene (TNT), and 2367 metric tons (about 2609 short tons) of picric acid — destined for the French war effort. After exchanging warning signals, both vessels initiated evasion manoeuvres but ultimately collided.

The French ship caught fire after several drums of benzol — a highly combustible motor fuel derived from coke-oven gases — tipped over on the deck, spilling their contents, which ignited, and the vessel drifted into a pier. As crowds gathered, drawn in by the rising pall of smoke, emergency personnel tried to control the damage. However, just after 9:04 am, the *Mont-Blanc* exploded. The blast and the resulting tsunami, which surged approximately 60 feet (18 metres) above the high-water mark, pressed some three blocks into the city. More than 1600 buildings were destroyed by the wave, and debris was scattered for several miles. The force of the wave heaved the *Imo* toward the shore where it became grounded. In the aftermath of the explosion, hospitals were inundated with the wounded, and morgues struggled to identify and document the dead. News of the disaster spread quickly, and aid soon arrived from within Canada as well as from the United States.

Halifax Harbour explosion aftermath

Unable to travel with its scheduled convoy across the Atlantic, the *Mont Blanc* went to Halifax so it could travel with a new group. It arrived the night before and had to wait outside the anti-submarine net that protected the harbour. At dawn, it began to move into the harbour. Normally a munitions ship would fly a red flag to warn others of the dangerous cargo, but the *Mont Blanc* did not raise its warning flag. Meanwhile, the SS *Imo*, a Norwegian ship carrying Belgian relief supplies that had been held up in the harbour for several days, began to move down the harbour toward the Atlantic. The *Imo*'s captain was angry because he had been delayed and so he put to sea without the harbour master's permission. The two ships were manoeuvring for position as they met in the Narrows between Halifax on the southern shore and Dartmouth on the northern shore. Initially, the *Imo* refused to give way. Once it began to turn out of the *Mont Blanc*'s path, it could not move fast enough to avoid a collision. Barrels on deck broke loose with the impact, and sparks from the scraping metal ignited the benzol that had spilled across the deck. The *Mont Blanc*'s captain recognized the terrible danger of these fires and abandoned ship, rowing with the crew to the Dartmouth shore. The damaged and burning *Mont Blanc* drifted to shore in the heavily populated wharf area of Halifax. Crowds gathered on the shore and at windows to watch the burning ship run aground. Barrels of benzol began to shoot into the air like fireworks and explode. More people gathered to watch. Approximately 20 minutes after the collision — at **9:04 a.m.** — the fires ignited the 2925 tons of munitions on the *Mont Blanc* and exploded. The ship was vaporized instantly, a huge area of Halifax was destroyed, and an enormous debris cloud rose over the city. ►

SS Imo after explosion

Third Sunday Running

Third Sunday Running in April fell on Anzac Day. Most of the members thought that this being the case things would be a bit slow.

How wrong we were!! The initial rush was quite spectacular but it died away much too soon and that left the rest of the day to drag a bit.

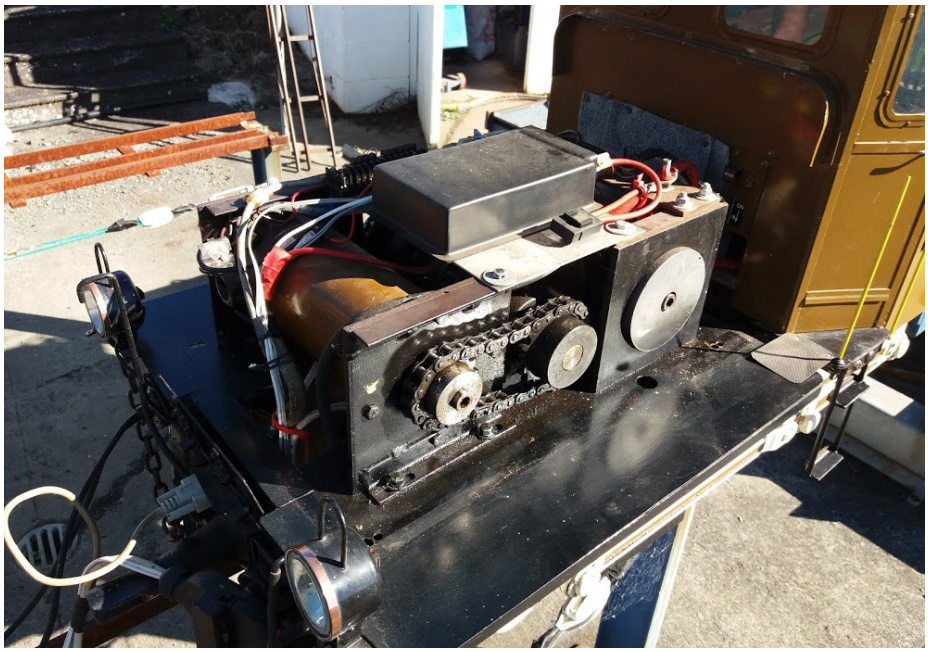
The highlight of the day was the appearance of John Wright's Swiss Railways "Crocodile". This machine has been conspicuous by its absence the past few years. However, with the help of John's son, it was brought to the club for the day for display purposes and perhaps a spin or two around the track. Unfortunately the latter didn't happen because the batteries died a short while after.

But none-the-less its presence generated an interest for the public and other club members who may never have seen this amazing machine before.

I never got to see it this time around because I was busy driving the ticket box.

The name "crocodile" was given these machines because of the way they appeared to move along the track because of their steam locomotive-style drive with rods, etc. The wheels were inside the frame and not visible.

They are probably best described as an electric Garratt without a huge boiler in between.



The drive unit (1 of 2) of the crocodile

ANSWER TO QUIZ ON PAGE 2:

Tsarist Tank

In early 1915, Russian Army engineer Lieutenant Nikolai Lebedenko created a machine that could feasibly breach barbed wire and enemy trenches. The “Tsar Tank”, as it was called, was named after Lebedenko’s unswerving belief that these machines could “break the entire German front in one night, and Russia will win the war,” as he told the emperor at a personal audience.

A special design feature was the chassis consisting of two large driving wheels and a rotating rail trolley. Overall, the design resembled an oversized artillery gun carriage, driven by two 240-horsepower Maybach engines.

Construction of the prototype was completed in 1917, and it was immediately clear that the vehicle was underpowered when it got stuck fast in the first ditch during trials.

But while unsuccessful, the Tsar Tank project saw the involvement of such future stars of Soviet engineering science as Zhukovsky, Stechkin and Mikulin.

Another 1915 prototype also came from the Rybinsk plant, which mainly reproduced French designs.

Crewed by four men and weighing 20 tons, the tank’s 200-horsepower engine allowed sufficient manoeuvrability despite its heavy cloak of 10-12mm armour.

The tank carried a rear-firing 107-mm gun inside the housing, while a heavy-machine gun was placed in the front beside the driver. But despite its practical design features, the design did not impress the country’s military-technical chiefs and received no support.

Another contender was the concurrent project by Vasily Mendeleev, son of the famous chemist and inventor Dmitry Mendeleev, which was presented to the Ministry of War in August 1916.

Developed since 1911 on Mendeleev’s personal initiative, the tank was equipped with anti-shell armour and other technical innovations that would find application in later years.

Mendeleev proposed pneumatic suspension units for the chassis, while the vehicle was steered with a servo motor. Since the main gun was a 120 mm cannon, he wanted to build a body that could be lowered during firing in order to reduce the load on the chassis and also protect the caterpillar tracks from enemy fire.

The tank was supposed to be transported on railway platforms, thereby increasing mobility and ensuring swift delivery to the front.

But the cost of the various innovations was its 170-ton weight, as well as the production demands for such an “armoured vehicle”, as Mendeleev himself called it. This all deterred the ministry from pursuing the design.

Ultimately, Russian tanks did not fight on the battlefields of the First World War. Despite the best efforts of engineers to equip the army with modern weapons, these attempts mostly failed to get beyond the test phase.

Nevertheless, many of the proposed ideas found later application, with many becoming embodied in the tank battlefield’s combatants of the future.

THIRD SUNDAY RUNNING

By The Editor

The weather was brilliantly fine, the people came and rode our railway. Considering the time of year temperatures were quite high.

We had five engines in service (three steamers and two petrol) and all performed well. There was talk about getting the DG out for a trot but in the end it wasn’t necessary.

There was a great turnout of members, 13 to be precise, dare I say a record for a running Sunday.

Also there were a few male admirers of the motive power with at least two saying “they should get involved” when they move to Whangarei from various points south. But somehow I don’t think it will happen, although I would like to be proved wrong.

Our newest young member, Jayden, was blooded into crowd control and I think he enjoyed it (hopefully it didn’t scare him off), and thanks must also go to Gail Smith (Colin’s wife) for her sterling efforts in manning the ticket box.

One hundred and fifty sausages also were devoured. It’s funny how people’s tastes vary. (Me, the cook) had a wee mishap in that about six snags ended up rather black, however there was one member of the public who came and bought all the burnt ones as he reckoned they tasted better with a charcoal overcoat. Apparently charcoal is very good for the gut.

STOP PRESS

The Museum has granted us permission to add an extra covered area to the station. I think that the drawing young Jayden made helped with the decision and the work is already underway.

IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO:—

Whangarei Model Engineering Club Inc,
P.O. Box 10233, Te Mai, Whangarei 0143.

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