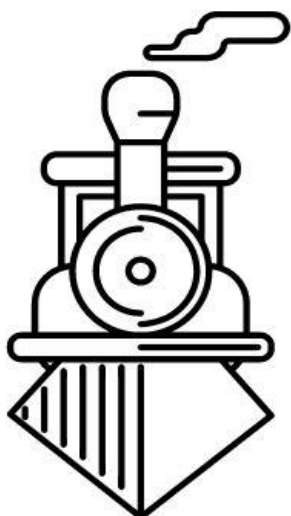


THE GARDEN WHISTLE

NEW ZEALAND LARGE SCALE NEWSLETTER



JULY 2025



THE GARDEN WHISTLE

NEW ZEALAND LARGE SCALE NEWSLETTER

July 2025

Contents

In This Issue

[24 Letter to the Editor](#)

[24 Readers Pictures](#)

[27 Classifieds](#)

[31 Coming Events](#)

[32 Advertisers](#)

[34 Club Meetings
& Contacts](#)

[35 Convention
Registration Form](#)

This Months Features

[3 Auckland Garden Railway Society Meeting](#)

[7 John Stepheson Obituary](#)

[11 Converting a 1:20.3 Climax
to a 1:13.7 Locomotive](#)

[21 New scenes on the Ore Valley](#)

[23 Putting long loads on short wagons](#)

[29 NZ Garden Railway Convention Update #3](#)

[Cover photo](#) — John's lawn meeting March 2006.

Photo supplied by - Michael Hilliar

The **Garden Whistle** is published monthly by the Christchurch Garden Railway Group and features news from various Large scale Groups in New Zealand.

Each club is a separate identity and the contact details may be found in club contacts.

Contributions of articles and/or photos are always welcome. Photos should be sent as separate jpg attachments.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor, Executive, or members of the Christchurch Garden Railway Group

Editor: Iain Collingwood, Email: gw.editor@outlook.com

Auckland Garden Railway Society Meeting

Report - Robert Graham, Photos - As Credited

Auckland Garden Railway Society June 2025 meeting

Although our June meeting was railway related it was a bit different from the usual meeting as for June we made a visit to the Manukau Live Steamers (MLS), Centre Park, Robertson Road, Mangere (<https://manukaulivesteamers.co.nz>).

MLS has two tracks, The Hill Track which opened in 1985. It's 850 metres long and is based upon the Raurimu Spiral. This track incorporates a balloon loop, horse shoe curves, a viaduct and a 20 metre long curved tunnel. This track supports 3 1/2 inch, 5 inch and 7 1/4 inch gauge locos and due to the grade all trains operating on this track must have brakes.

Their other track is the Park Track which opened in January 1990, just in time for an International Live Steamers Convention. This track is 1.2 kilometres long and consists of a prairie loop curving around the trees of Mangere's Centre Park. A 60 metre long bridge is a feature of this track where it crosses a very wet area of the park and this track can take 5 inch and 7 1/4 inch gauge locos.

The visit was hosted by one of our members Alan Burrows who volunteers at MLS. I was not able to attend due to other commitments but Simon Sharp has provided the report below.

For June Auckland Garden Railway Society did something different. By invitation we visited Manukau Live Steamers on their Sunday running day.

Several members arrived early and after speaking to Alan Burrows who was track manager for the day. I was introduced to the club president and given some free travel passes. John Reinecke, Jim Smith and Simon Sharp spent a happy hour being introduced to the art of firing up a live steam Shay and various other coal fired engines.

John Reinecke brought along his grandchildren and with Jim they were treated to several rides along the "Country" and "Mountain routes with both diesel engines and various steam engines. With a continuous queue all day the demands of the general public meant up 4 trains circulating at all times.

The AGRS would like to thank Alan Burrows and all the members of Manakau live steamers for their welcome and the time taken in answering our member's questions.

Simon and Alan have also provided the attached photos from the day. I would like to add my thanks to Alan for organising and hosting the visit. It was great to have an offer of an alternative activity for our group.

On a sadder note I regret to report the recent passing of John Stephenson. John was one of our longest serving members and Michael Hilliar has given the editor a brief obituary. On behalf of the society I would like to pass on my condolences to John's children Helen and Julian.

The next Auckland meeting will be at Simon Sharps house on Sunday 20th July from 1.00pm. Simon has an indoor and outdoor railway so the meeting will be on wet or fine. The indoor track is more suited to smaller locos. Please bring food to share for afternoon tea.

The August meeting will be at Grant Alexanders place in Te Kauwhata on the third Sunday in August being the 17th of August.

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Shay Locomotive being fired and train rides being had - Photos Simon Sharp.



Double head of steam and a DXR locomotive - Photos Simon Sharp.

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Enjoying the train rides - Photo Alan Burrows.



Preparing for departure - Photo Alan Burrows.

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Diesel train hauling, note the multi gauge track. Also the Shay in Steam - Photos Simon Sharp.



Enjoying train rides - Photos Alan Burrows.

John Stepheson Obituary

Story and Photos - Michael Hilliar, Auckland

John Stephenson, Auckland, 1945 - 2025

Sadly, I am reporting the passing of one of our earliest members John Stephenson who passed on Friday 6th June at the age of eighty.

As at all funerals, you learn a lot about the person you think you knew. I learnt John had other interests besides G scale railways. These interests included bridge, gardening, particularly roses, and singing. John never had a permanent G scale railway. We would look at his back garden in Remuera and think it would be very suitable for a garden railway, but maybe incorporating prized roses into it would have been difficult.

John was born in Bradford, England 6th February 1945. I understand he met his New Zealand-born wife Rosalie outside Albert Hall in London and that they came to New Zealand in the mid nineteen seventies. Eventually John and Rosalie moved to Remuera.

I cannot remember my first meeting with John, but it must have been over thirty years ago, probably at a MODEL X weekend in Henderson. John, with help from his daughter Helen, could be relied upon to display and discuss with the public John's LGB collection at MODEL X.

John was well known for his garden railway meetings at which John and Helen would lay track over John's well-manicured back lawn. John was our first member to have a live steamer in the form of a Merlin Locomotive Works. John attended most of our later meetings with a Roundhouse, Linda or Russell. In our younger days, John organized a couple of walks to visit the gold mining Bendigo Battery on Mt Te Aroha.

John leaves behind his daughter Helen and son Julian, to whom we offer our condolences. Sadly, John's wife Rosalie passed on six months ago.

John will leave a gap in many lives.

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John steaming up his Merlin loco at Grant Alexanders June 2006 steam up



John Running his new Roundhouse Russell at Robert Grahams meeting march 2017

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Reflection in the mirror Simon Sharp, John and daughter Helen Model X June 2017



John Steaming up Linda at John Reinecke's. February 2018

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John on the Bendigo Battery on Mt Te Aroha walk he organized Dec 2009 Halfway up one of the many balanced incline planes

CONVERTING A 1:20.3 CLIMAX TO A 1:13.7 LOCOMOTIVE

Article and Photos - Dave Frediani, Sonora California

CONVERTING A 1:20.3 CLIMAX TO A 1:13.7 LOCOMOTIVE

Republished from the Bay Area Garden Railway Society Trellis and Trestle May 2025

About a month ago my good friend Bill Bivings, showed me a video of a Bachmann 1:20.3 Climax Locomotive that was converted to 7/8 scale, running around a track.

I've built many pieces of rolling stock in all the outdoor scales, from 1:32, 1:29, 1:24, 1:22.5 and 1:13.7 scale, but I've always enjoyed building 1:13.7 or 7/8 scale the most.

Once I saw the video of this 7/8 scale Climax running and knowing that I had a Bachmann Climax, that was converted to battery power, I thought, why not convert mine to 7/8 scale.

Here's the start of this project, with my 1:20.3 Bachmann Climax

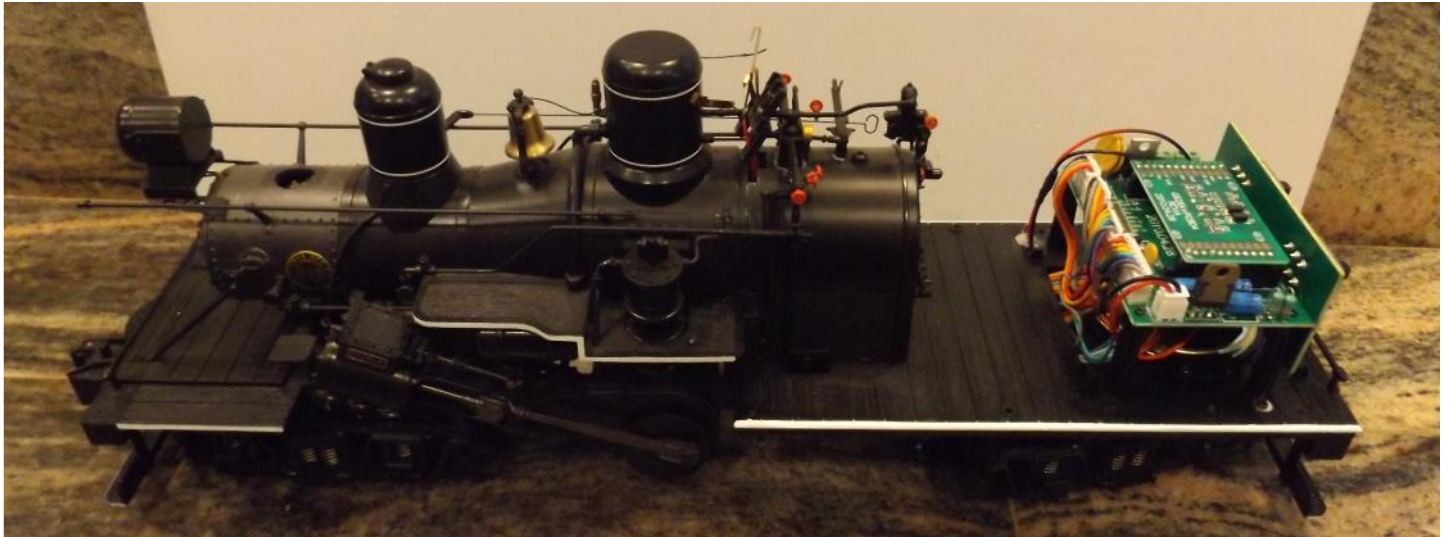


And so it started! This would be a fun project and most important, the only thing that it would cost me was time, since I already had the locomotive and all the styrene I needed to complete this freelance project.

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The only parts that needed to be removed from the locomotive was the cab, oil/water bunker, and smoke stack, and as always this conversion would be built of 1/8" and 1/16" styrene and some Evergreen plastic strips, other than that I don't see any other expense.

Here's the Climax with it's cab, bunker and smoke stack removed



After removing all the parts listed above and starting on the 7/8 scale cab, I decided to do away with some of the wiring and circuit boards that were under the bunker. I needed more room under the bunker to make room for the larger 7/8 scale cab.

I feel that I can build almost anything out of styrene, but when it comes to wiring, if there's more than two wires I'm lost! So I asked my friend Bill "he's my wiring guru", if he could remove all the wiring and circuit boards, that were no longer needed.

So Bill when to work. He installed a much smaller circuit board and left only enough wiring to power the two trucks, front and rear lighting, as well as a cab light, which left me more than enough room for the cab.

This wasn't an easy task, it took much more work than Bill or I had anticipated, tracing down some twenty or so wires and testing each one, but as always Bill came through. Thanks Bill!



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Now it's time to start on the 7/8 scale cab. I started construction of the new cab using 1/8" styrene. The cab will end up 3-3/4" long x 4" wide x 6 - 1/8" tall.

Below you can see two side sections of the cab. All four sections of the cab were built of 1/8" styrene. I cut the side windows out as one large window and then added a center section of Evergreen #189, which formed the two windows needed for each side, and trimmed the windows with Evergreen #295 angle pieces.

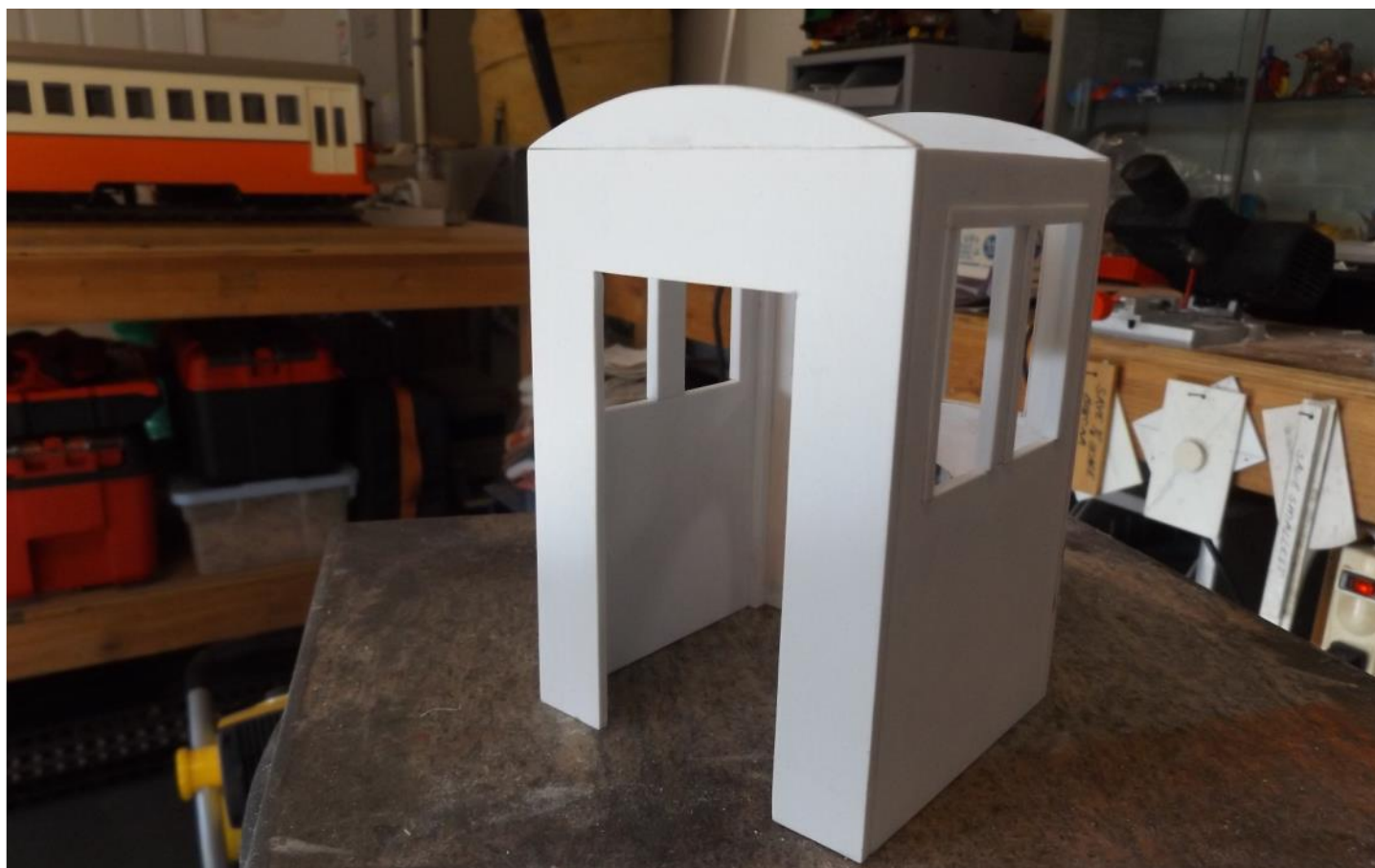


As for the front section, this would be a little more difficult than the side sections. The front section would be, 4" wide x 6" tall. The hard part was cutting the opening for the boiler, once that was done everything fell into place. The windows were cutout and trimmed to match the sides sections.

The views next show the front and rear sections.

On the front section, I used Evergreen #155 styrene strips to form the curve of the boiler. I also used #188 strips inside all four corners of the cab for extra strength. The next view shows the rear section installed.

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When forming the roof, I used two 1/8" curved roof ribs, one on the front section and the other on the rear section.

I covered the ribs with 1/16" styrene, leaving a 1/2" overhang to be trimmed out after the roof and the roof trim are installed. For the roof trim I used Evergreen #169 Evergreen on both sides where the roof meets the siding, then added #158 strips between the roof and all four sections of the cab.



Next the almost finished cab mounted on the Climax Locomotive.

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After finishing most of the trim work on the cab, decided to work on the smoke stack. The stack needed to be taller than the original, so I machined a 7/8" extension and added a 9/32" styrene tube #229 from evergreen that fit tightly inside the stack to hold everything together.

Below you can see the pieces of for the new stack. As well as the finished stack installed on the locomotive.





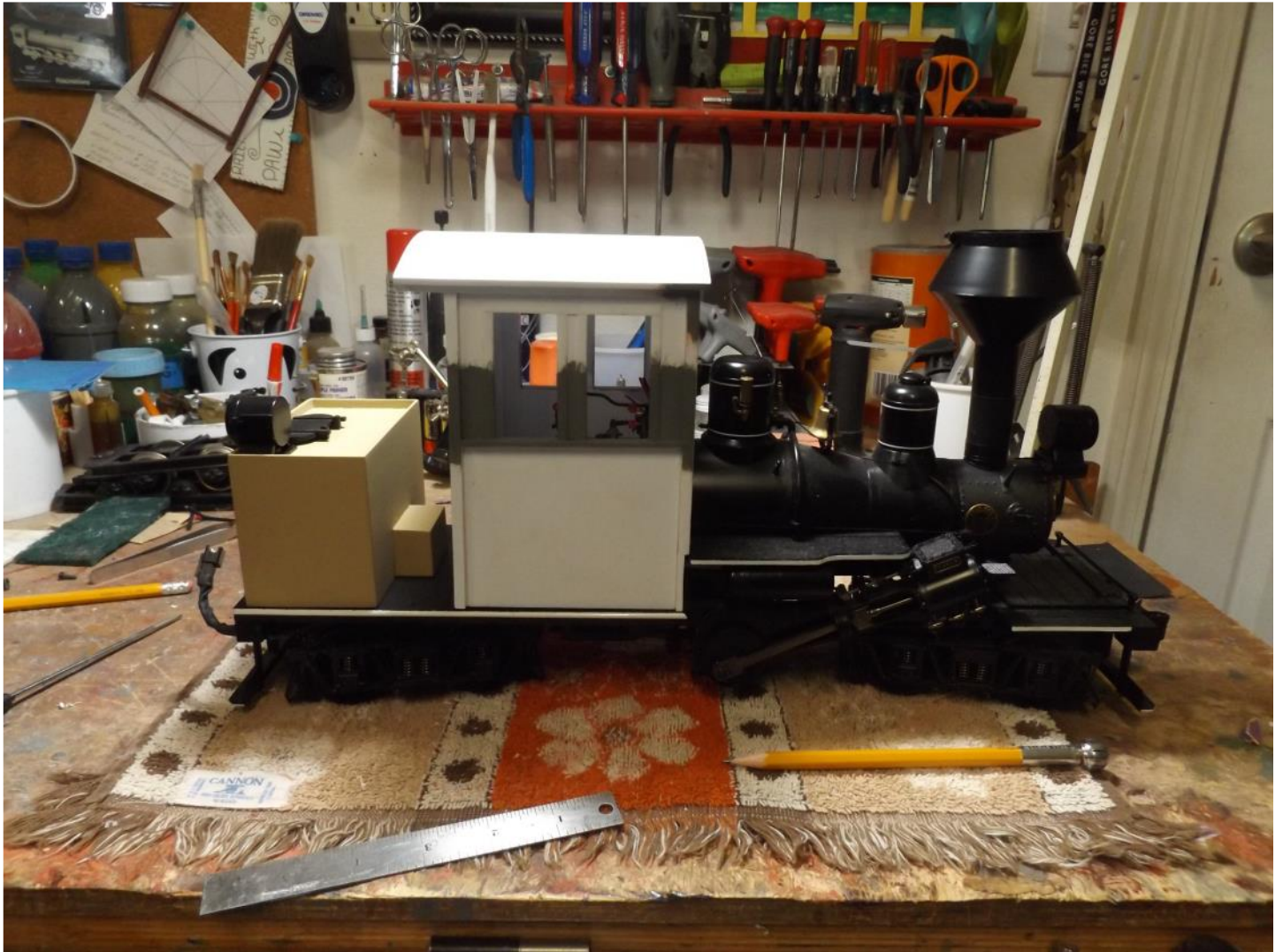
To construct the water bunker, I started with 1/16" styrene to build the outer walls. The measurements are 2-1/8" long x 4-1/16" wide x 2-11/16" tall.

I lined the inside of the bunker with Evergreen #188 styrene strips for extra strength, added a water hatch and a step to hide the wiring.



THE GARDEN WHISTLE

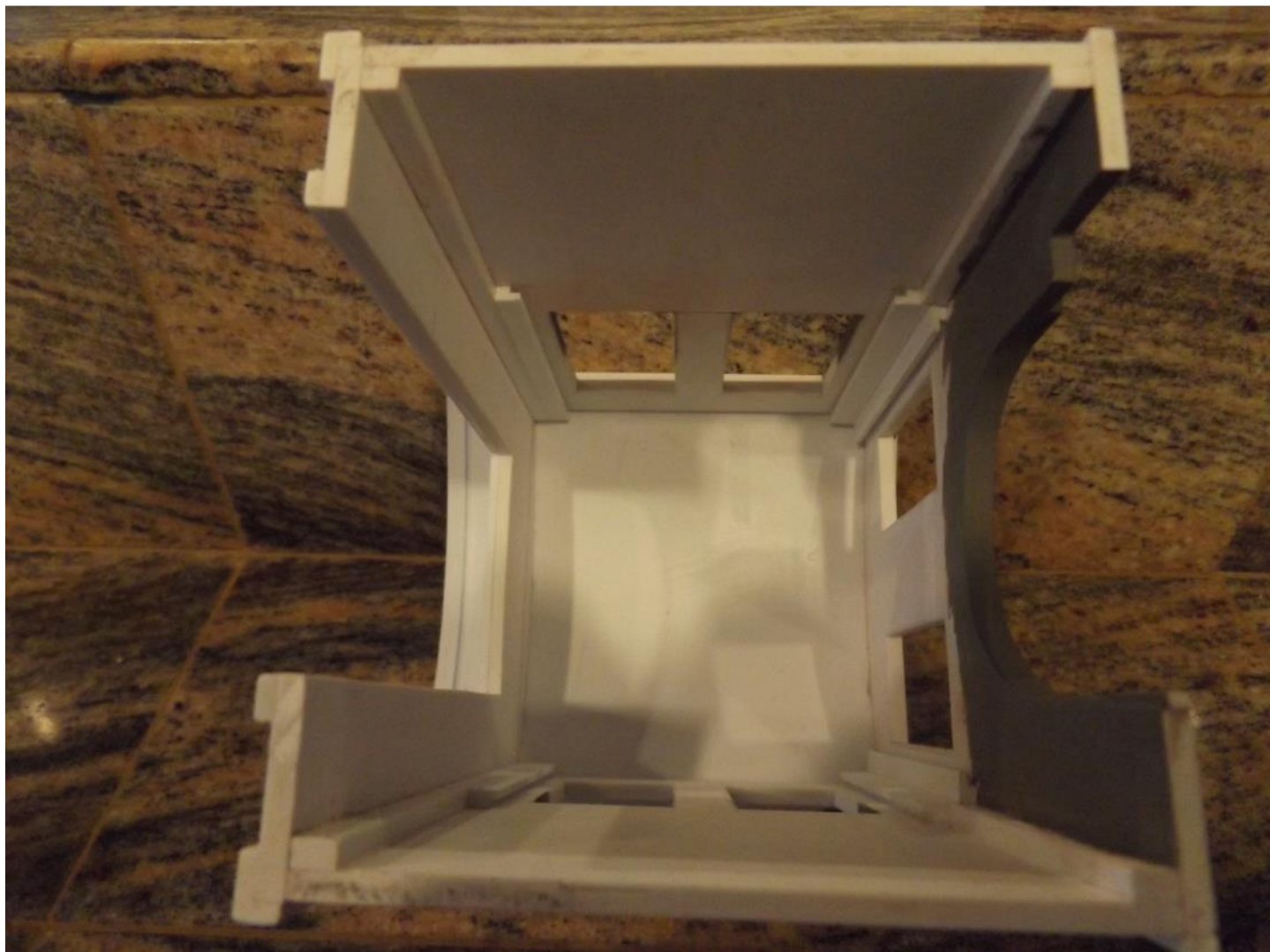
Below is a view of the almost finished locomotive



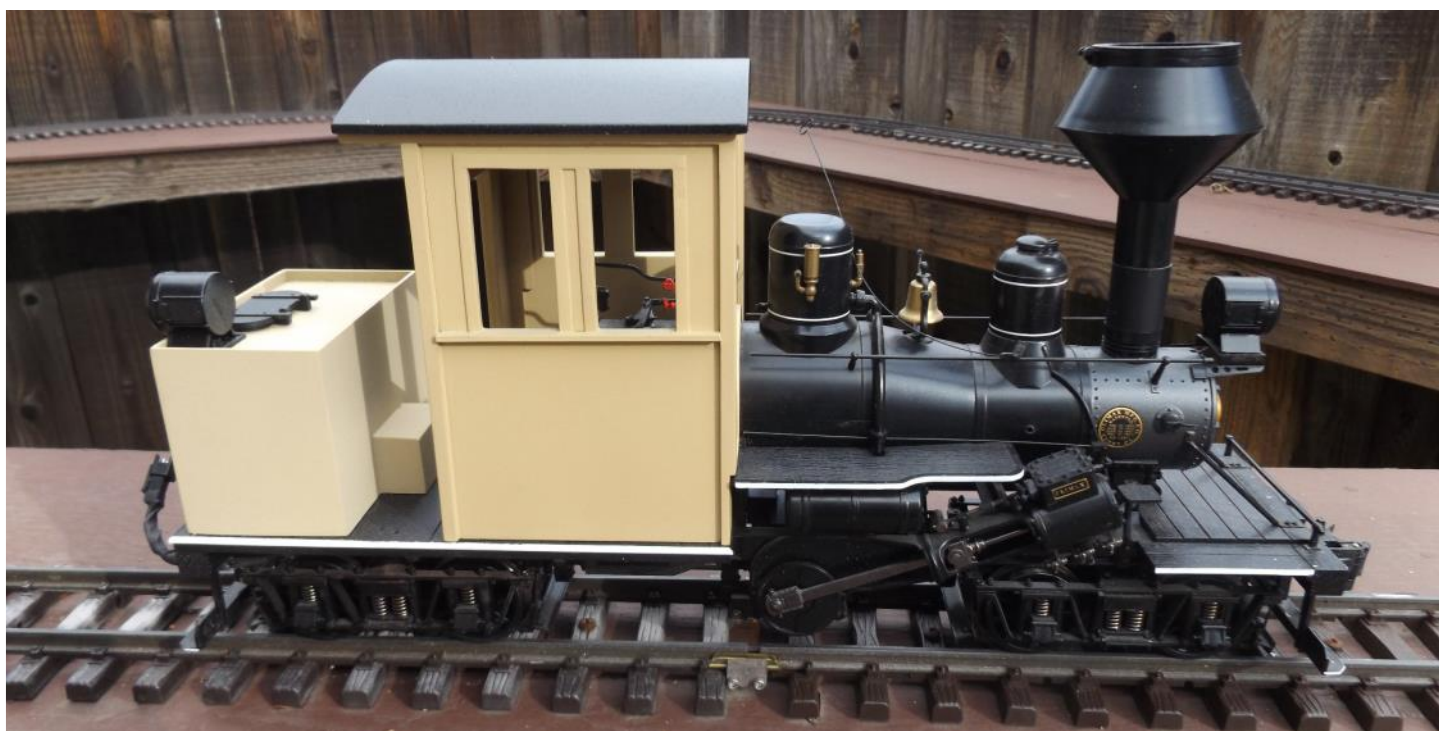
With most of the outside work finished, I started on the inside of the cab. I had to add window tracks inside the cab to slide the windows in place.

I started the window tracks by first laying Evergreen #155 strips in all four corners of the inside of the cab, then laying #158 strips over the top of the #155 strips, which formed a track for the windows to slide in to, I don't like gluing the windows in place.

After installing the windows the only thing left was to paint the cab, inside and out. The view below shows the tracks in the corners. They may be a little difficult to see, they're just below the bottom of the window openings.



The finished Climax Locomotive.



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All that's left is to install the handrails and a few odds and ends



**15TH NZ GARDEN RAILWAY CONVENTION
CHRISTCHURCH GARDEN RAILWAY GROUP
WAITANGI WEEKEND FEBUARY 6TH, 7TH & 8TH 2026**

New scenes on the Ore Valley

Photos and Article - Simon Sharp (AGRS)

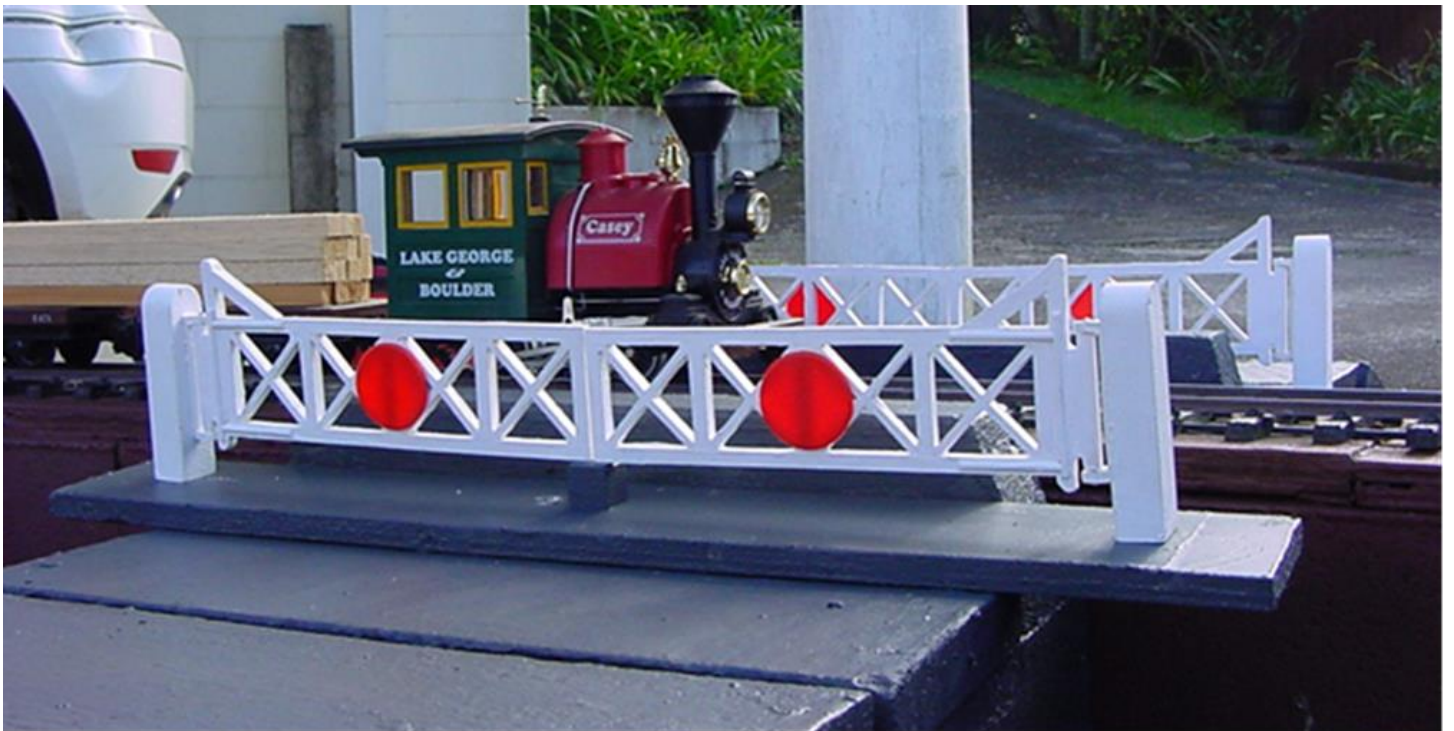
I have recently added two new scenes to the Ore Valley outdoor extension.

The first is purely scenic and involves an accumulation of items, which put together made a campground



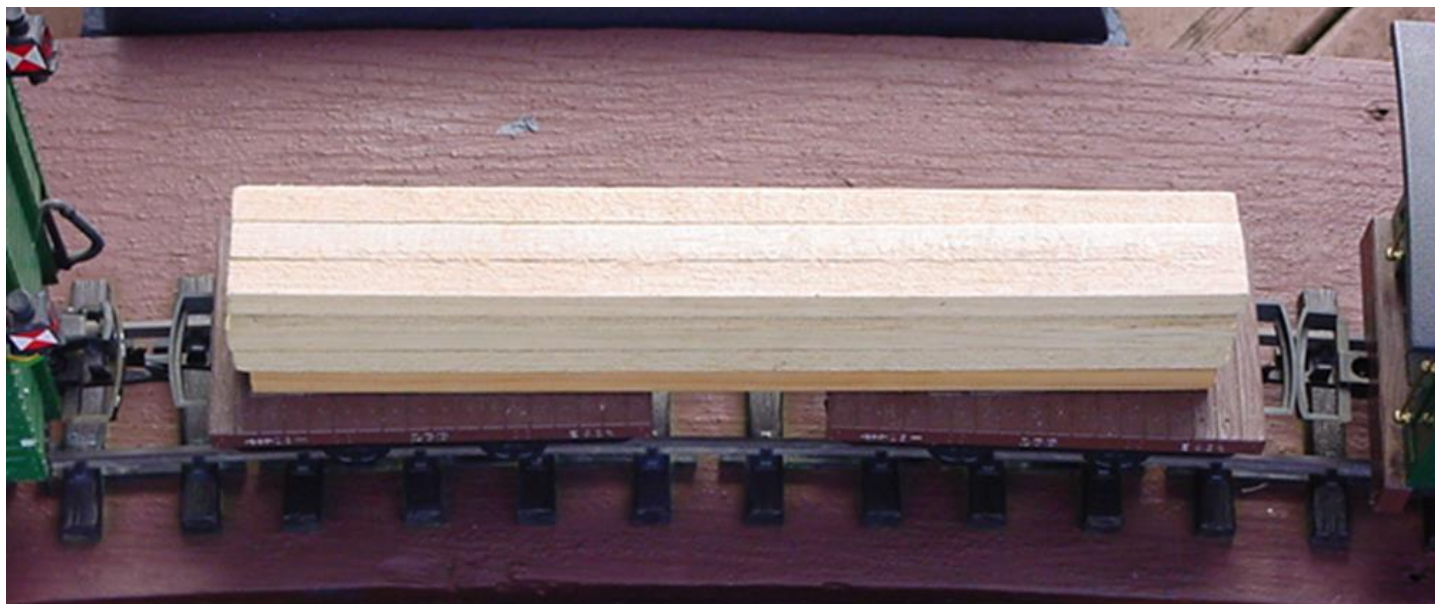
The second has involved more work, ensuring access to the inside of the circle. It involved making two ramps, of the type used for home mechanics to get under their cars safely. Made from wood and painted I then constructed level crossing gates attached them on a basic subsurface and place them outside of the tracks on running days.

THE GARDEN WHISTLE



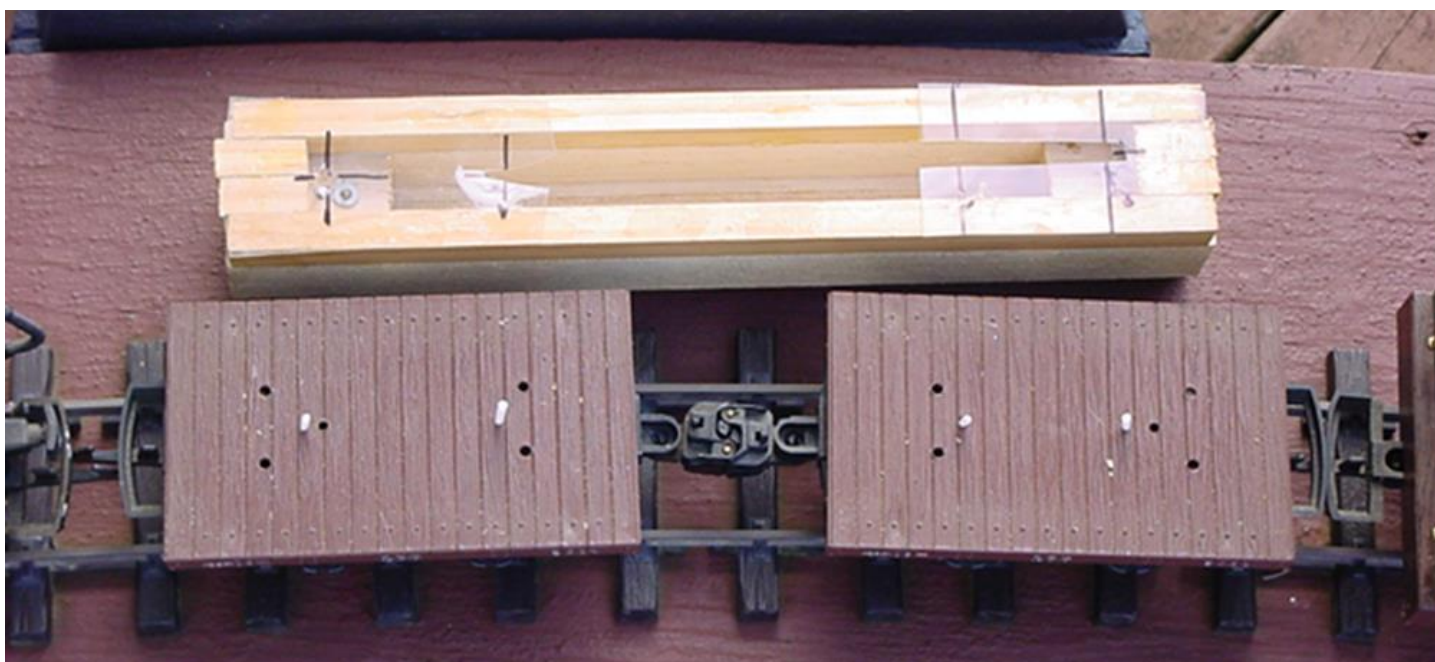
Putting long loads on short wagons

Photos and Article - Simon Sharp (AGRS)



This simple tip is to allow long loads to remain on a wagon when turning. Although this is shown on the outdoor extension this trick will work on LGB number 1 curves.

The solution is simple. You make your load hollow – this has the added advantage of reducing weight. Then adding a length of clear plastic at each end you add 2 slots . . . 4 Small tubes or nails are then fixed to the wagons and this allows the load to slide. The load is attached loose over the nails. As the wagon goes around the curve the outside pair hold the wagon in place while the inside guides slide in the slot , allowing the wagon to traverse the corner without losing its load, and centering the load when it straightens up.



Letter to the Editor

I have just finished reading "Steam Inclined; memories of ex-coaster Bryon Marinan" written by Stephen Wright. It is a good read about railway operations on the west coast of the South Island from the 1930's to the 1960's. It is well illustrated and very readable.

Robert Graham, Auckland

Readers Pictures

My Pennsylvania Railroad G scale display in my basement. Maybe your friends down under would enjoy see it.

Jim Vecheck
Severn, Maryland USA



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CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale

Bulk Used G Scale Track

Surplus to requirements after building new railway, this is what is left over from the Ashburton Forks Railway in Tinwald. The rail is in good order after being outside on a railway for a number of years. There is the odd sleeper & fish plate missing, have a box of unused NZ sleepers to go with the purchase. Also included (free) are quite a few off cuts shorter than 300mm, 2 x NZR girder bridge spans (one with walk-way).

51.3 metres of NZ Track. - \$1000 the lot!!!!

Lengths as follows..... 350mm x 1 400mm x 1 450mm x 6 650mm x 2 750mm x 3 800mm x 1 900mm x 1 1050mm x 1 1100mm x 1 1200mm x 3 1250mm x 1 1350mm x 2 1450mm x 2 1500mm x 20

The following items are for sale pick up is preferred, can bring up to Christchurch & meet up next time I'm up there. Can send at buyers expense through NZ Couriers, will pack carefully with bubble wrap etc.

Please contact Kerry via email for either the wagons or the track: nzr1in24@xtra.co.nz



Aristo-Craft, White Pass Reefer, no box good condition \$80.00



Aristo-Craft, White Pass Cable Drum Car, no box good condition. Have 3 to sell. \$80.00 each

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USA Trains, White Pass Piggy Back Car, In box good condition. \$100.00



LGB, White Pass Cattle Car, no box good condition. Have 2 to sell. \$80.00 each.



LGB, White Pass Box Car, no box good condition. \$80.00



15th NZ Garden Railway Convention, Christchurch 6th – 8th February 2026

Update #3

As the months are counting down towards the convention date it is now time for another update. We have our Venue booked, this being the Prebbleton Hall, 617 Springs Road, Prebbleton. We have the Hall booked for Friday and Saturday, Prebbleton does not offer a lot of accommodation as it is located on the outskirts of Christchurch but accommodation is located nearby and a list of accommodation options will be included in this update which may help for booking. We have railways confirmed for layout tours so we are finalising the convention programme currently, both evening meals are booked. Remember convention Tee Shirt design is the graphic shown above and sizing guide is located at the bottom of this update, these are available to order with your registration. A full range of unisex sizes are available at \$25.00 each, to give us time for ordering and printing. **(Tee shirts must be ordered and paid in full by 1st December 2025).**

As we are receiving some interest we are also looking at doing collared shirts, these will be more expensive but anyone wishing to purchase a collared shirt or change to a collared shirt **please get in touch asap for us to confirm interest for us to proceed.**

- Currently we have 13 Layouts to view, 5 layouts that are new or weren't on the previous convention and 5 layouts which have had changes since the last convention in 2021.
- We will have sales tables and trade stands available at the venue Friday / Saturday. (If you wish to have a trade stand, please contact myself on nzgrc2026@gmail.com).
- We have 2 inhouse clinics booked, but if you have a new clinic you wish to present, please contact myself asap before we finalise the programme on nzgrc2026@gmail.com.
- Currently our programme starts at 8.30am on Friday 6th (We are planning to do pre-registration with a Layout Visit from Thursday 5th 5.00pm) For those from out of town also allow for 4pm finish on the Sunday (For those booking flights aim for 5.30pm or later)

As mentioned Prebbleton doesn't offer much accommodation but that being said Hornby and Wigram are close by, followed by Sockburn and Russley for those that want to be closer to the airport. These suggestions are just purely by geographical proximity, if you are looking for something in particular please reach out and we may be able to assist you.

<https://www.wigramhotel.co.nz>

<https://www.dentonpark.co.nz>

<https://airwaysmotel.co.nz>

<http://racecoursehotel.co.nz>

<https://www.amalfimotorlodge.co.nz>

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The 2026 Convention early registration is now closed and thank you to all those that have registered for the convention, we still have 3 registration prices left including a junior registrant which are on the registration form and are the following:

Junior Registration Fee is \$125.00 per registrant 12 years of age or under with accompanying full registrant and covers all activities including the Friday evening buffet meal and Saturday evening buffet meal.

Full Registration Fee is \$180.00 per registrant if paid by 1st December 2025, and covers all activities including the Friday evening buffet meal and Saturday evening buffet meal.

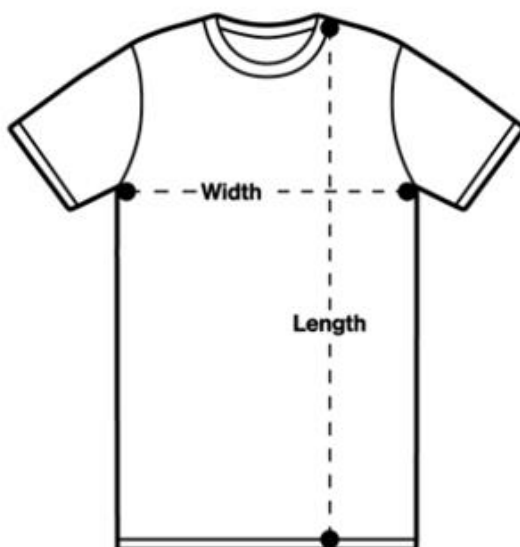
Late Registration Fee is \$200.00 if paid after 1st December 2025, and covers all activities including the Saturday evening Friday evening buffet meal and Saturday evening buffet meal.
(Late registration will be closing 20th January 2026)

If you're interested in attending the Convention, please register your interest or return a completed registration form by email to: nzgrc2026@gmail.com

Convention Convenor

Below is sizing for the convention tee - shirt, **remember if anyone is interested in a collared shirt please get in touch asap.**

Staple Tee



MEASUREMENT	XSM	SML	MED	LRG	XLG	2XL	3XL	4XL	5XL
Body Width (cm)	43	47	52	56.5	61	64	68	75	80
Body Length (cm)	68	71	75	78.5	82	83.5	85	87	89

Please note measurements can vary within 2.5cm, this is within our tolerance.

ascolour.

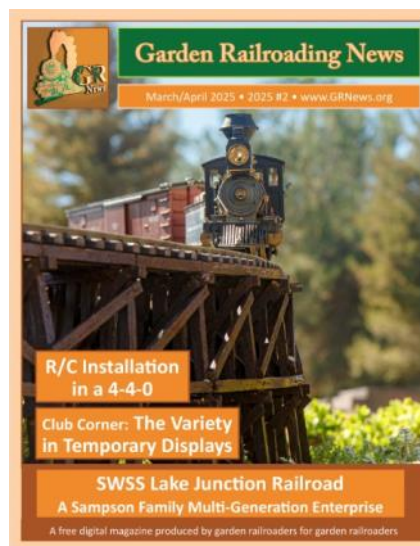
COMING EVENTS

June 4-7 2025	Midwest Garden Railroad Gathering, Oklahoma, USA
June 18-21 2025	40 th Garden Railway Convention, Sacramento CA, USA
July 5-6 2025	Taupo Hobby Expo, Taupo
July 13-18 2025	National Big Train Operators Club Convention, Georgia, USA
July 5-6 2025	Alpine Model Railway Expo, Timaru
October 4-5 2025	The Big Train Show, Christchurch
October 8-12 2025	National Steamup Symposium, California, USA
October 25-26 2025	Great Little Train Show, Invercargill
November 15-16 2025	RailEx, Taita, Lower Hutt
January 17-18 2026	Tauranga Model Train Show, Tauranga
February 5-7 2026	15th NZ Garden Railway Convention, Christchurch
March 21-22 2026	Model Train and Lego Show, Wanaka
May 2-3 2026	Dunedin Model Train Show, Dunedin
May 15-16 2026	2026 Great Lakes Large Scale Train Expo, Ohio
June 13-14 2026	Hastings Train Show, Hastings
July 2026	Ashburton Model Train Show, Tinwald
September 5-6	Nelson Model Railway Show, Stoke
May 31-5 2027	2027 National Garden Railway Convention, Nashville, USA

Do you know of an event?
Contact the Editor to include in the next
Garden Whistle newsletter
gw.editor@outlook.com

The March / April Garden Railroading
News is available to read online, this can
be found at www.GRNews.org or

[Click here to view the current issue.](#)



Quayle Rail track now available in three metre lengths
It is available from Auckland, Masterton and Rangiora
Mike Hilliar, Auckland

mhilliar@orcon.net.nz

Henrik Dorbeck, Masterton

dorbeck@xtra.co.nz

Ian Galbraith, Rangiora

cfgrms@culcreuchfold.org.nz

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[www.youtube.com/
@PIRFICSTATION](http://www.youtube.com/@PIRFICSTATION)

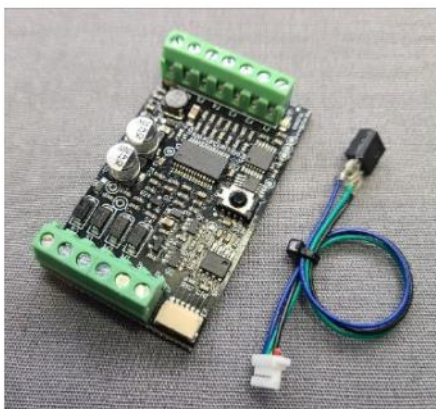
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You can also change from Diesel to Steam,
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Servo trigger Lyn & 3Chime Whistle modules



Contact Chris cdrowley@xtra.co.nz

Club Meeting	Club Contact
<p>July 20th (Sunday) 1.00pm</p> <p>Simon Sharps Layouts 226 Glamorgan Drive, Northcross Indoor and outdoor railway (so wet or fine). The indoor track suits small locos. Please bring food to share for afternoon tea.</p> <p>The August meeting will be at Grant Alexanders place in Te Kauwhata on Sunday 17th August.</p>	<p>Auckland:</p> <p>Auckland Garden Railway Society Inc Club Contact: Email: grahamclannz@xtra.co.nz Robert Graham, Ph: 09 836 0900</p>
<p>Running Days/Meetings cancelled until further notice</p>	<p>Waikato:</p> <p>GROW: Garden Railway Operators of Waikato. Club Contact: Email: sandnlipsey@gmail.com Stefan Lipsey, PO Box 612, Waikato Mail Centre, Hamilton, 3240, Ph: 07 859 3650</p>
<p>July 20th (Sunday) Setup from 8.30am</p> <p>Anzac Hall Bell Street Featherston</p>	<p>Wairarapa:</p> <p>Wairarapa Garden Railway Group. Club Contact: Email: Lloyd.dickens@wise.net.nz C/- Lloyd Dickens, 55 Titoki Street, Masterton. Ph: 06 370 3790.</p>
<p>July TBA</p>	<p>Wellington:</p> <p>Wellington Garden Railway Group. Club Contact: Email: bilthompson@xtra.co.nz Coordinator: Brent Thompson, 6 Bodmin Terrace, Camborne, Ph: 022 619 4006</p>
<p>July 5th - 6th (Saturday & Sunday)</p> <p>Timaru Train Show</p> <p>Group U-Drive Layout at show. Contact Dave Day if you wish to assist over the weekend.</p>	<p>Christchurch:</p> <p>Christchurch Garden Railway Group: Club Contact: Email: 2days61@gmail.com Secretary: David Day, 61 Carnarvon Street, Linwood, Christchurch. Ph: 03 981 4424 President: Bill Stanley, Ph: 027 282 4244</p>

CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM



15th NZ Garden Railway Convention, Christchurch 6th – 8th February 2026

Personal Details

Name: _____ Name on ID Tag: _____
 Partners Name: _____ Name on ID Tag: _____
 Railway Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ Country: _____
 Contact Phone / Mobile: _____
 Email Address: _____

Junior Registration Fee is \$125.00 per registrant 12 years of age or under with accompanying full registrant and covers all activities including the Friday evening buffet meal and Saturday evening buffet meal.

Full Registration Fee is \$180.00 per registrant if paid by 1st December 2025, and covers all activities including the Friday evening buffet meal and Saturday evening buffet meal.

Late Registration Fee is \$200.00 if paid after 1st December 2025, and covers all activities including the Saturday evening Friday evening buffet meal and Saturday evening buffet meal.

For **Partners / Friends** attending only the Friday evening Meal the cost is \$45.00 per person.

For **Partners / Friends** attending only the Saturday evening Buffet Meal the cost is \$45.00 per person.

Drinks for Friday evening meal is BYO and Saturday evening meal is at your own cost.

A **Convention Tee Shirt** is available to order with your registration. A full range of unisex sizes are available. To give us time for ordering and printing please order and pay for your shirts in full by 1st December 2025.

Costs

Junior Registration	\$125.00	No Attending	_____	\$ _____
Full Registration	\$180.00	No Attending	_____	\$ _____
Late Registration	\$200.00	No Attending	_____	\$ _____
Friday Buffet Meal only	\$45.00	No Attending	_____	\$ _____
Saturday Buffet Meal only	\$45.00	No Attending	_____	\$ _____
Tee - Shirt(s)	\$25.00 ea.	No Required	_____	\$ _____
#1 Unisex	Size _____			
#2 Unisex	Size _____			

TOTAL \$ _____

Notes (e.g. Dietary / Mobility requirements): _____

Please return your completed registration forms by email to: nzgrc2026@gmail.com

Please make Direct Credit payments to "Christchurch Garden Railway Group" - CGRG Convention account
 BNZ 02-0820-0432546-02 with your **Full Name** in the reference field.