

NARROW GAUGE MODEL LOCOMOTIVE EFFICIENCY COMPETITION

23/24th June 2007 at Oswestry

Various Northern Association clubs have hosted this annual competition since its inception in 1998 at Oswestry. This year the competition returned to its birthplace at Oswestry in glorious weather despite an extremely dire forecast for the whole weekend.

Originally the brainchild of Joe Holdsworth of the nearby Wrexham Society of Model Engineers, the idea was to give the little engines of the narrow gauge railways a chance to show their paces on their own turf, without being overshadowed by the big stuff, as they tend to be at the long established International Model Locomotive Efficiency Competition. The competition rules have evolved over the years and are now pretty much in line with the mainstream IMLEC rules. The main difference is that the load comprises the driver's choice of loaded loose-coupled slate trucks, rather than the more usual passenger trucks, and the speed limit is 5mph, both making for some challenging driving. This must be hauled around the track by the competing locomotive for half an hour, as in IMLEC. The work done, or 'output', is measured by a dynamometer car, and the coal used is measured and converted into potential energy 'input'. The efficiency of the engine is then calculated by dividing 'output' by 'input' and converting to a percentage. The result rarely exceeds 2 or 3 percent!

This year we had 20 entries featuring 18 locomotives including no less than eight Sweet Pea variants, 3 Conways, two Polly's, a couple of Hunslets, and a rather unusual DeWinton. We were sorry not to see John Hartup's remarkable 3½" gauge Beyer Garret K1, or the very fine 0-6-2 Venezuelan Beyer Peacocks from Urmston this year, all regular attendees in the past. We hope their owners are well, and have not taken their bats home following the change of rules!

This year a separate class was created for previous winners and overseas engines, with a separate trophy, a shield, thus levelling the playing field a little for the smaller UK quarry and works engines, and for new entrants. This new class was won by Brian Remnant from Romney with his Sweet Pea look-alike. He has won the event three times previously. We say 'look-alike' because the engine has so many improvements on the original Sweet Pea design that it is almost in a class of its own, though it does look remarkably like a Sweet Pea! Winner of the 'others' class, and second overall, was Neil Mortimer of Ickenham, Middx, who went home with the original slate wagon trophy. Second and third of the 'others' were Marcus Peel of Southport and James Tilbury of Urmston. The winners and runners up each received also a year's subscription to Engineering in Miniature magazine from our sponsors of recent years, Tee Publishing, and we thank them for their support.



The group photo shows from left to right, Marcus Peel, James Tilbury, Brian Remnant, Neil Mortimer, Fred Newall (Chairman of the host club), and Chris Rayward (Technical Editor of Engineering in Miniature).



Brian Remnant with his yellow Sweet Pea 'Lady Margaret', steaming to go.



Brian's train. He started in fine style with 28 trucks, but ended with rather less!



*Marcus Peel and his blue Sweet Pea 'Janine'
(pic by Chris Farnhill)*



Keith Tilbury's blue Polly 3, the engine was driven to third place by son James.



*Neil Mortimer's green Polly 3 'Endeavour'
(pic by Chris Farnhill)*



Alan Bibby's Hunslet 'Charles' scraped into fifth place overall, and was best 3½" gauge engine



Mr M Byatt's De Winton achieved a creditable 8th place overall (pic by Chris Farnhill)

Pictures are by web editor Alan Bibby except where individually credited.

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