

Going great on a small scale

A hobby to set senses reeling

THEIR ages vary from twenty to eighty, the scent of steam and hot oil has their senses reeling, and they regularly meet to celebrate the golden days of the alliance between man and machine.

They are members of the North Wales Model Engineering Society who have a multi-gauge track in the grounds of Ysgol Gogarth, Llandudno, where they regularly have afternoon and evening running sessions and show their latest creations.

"The steam engine in its many forms represented the perfect partner for man. With it he made the industrial revolution, travelled at over 100 mph, built roads and farmed the land," says Mr. Harold Barton, of Upper Promenade, Colwyn Bay, the society's lively secretary.

Mr. Barton, a retired engineer, is one of many in the 40-strong society with a fully fully equipped workshop capable of constructing finely detailed models of railway or road locomotives, tractors and stationary engines.

Making the models often takes their creators several years. And when the models are finished and photographed and presented alongside pictures of the full-scale originals it would be almost impossible to detect the difference.

"Twenty years ago it used to be something of a novelty to make something up and have it operated. But now the work has been so refined and is so demanding that models are accurate down to

the last bolt, and must pass efficiency trials," says Mr. Barton.

He quotes the case of a member of his society who made a one-twelfth size steam traction engine and spent long hours fashioning a little fingernail-size padlock for a tool box.

Not only that, but the lock actually operated, using a minute key.

"That's what we are talking about these days," Mr. Barton points out.

The members of the North Wales society include a doctor, a former airline pilot,

schoolmasters, an ex-librarian and a former Customs and Excise officer as well as retired full-scale engineers and ex-railwaymen.

"The world is divided into two types of people; the engineers and the rest. Many people not involved in engineering for a living come to it later as a hobby," Mr. Barton says.

And scaling down adds to the fascination, he maintains.

Mr. John Sykes, the society's vice-chairman, who lives in Mochdre, Colwyn Bay, is over 80 and one



Mr. John Sykes with one of his models.

By Alan Twelves

of the society's most active members. He recently bought himself a new set of castings and started on a new model.

Mr. Barton has been engaged on and off for many years building a 3½ in. gauge model of an ex-L.M.S. Patriot Class locomotive which he hopes to have completed for running in the Autumn.

Highly detailed and brilliantly efficient models can be worth upwards of £2,000.

Buy one from a specialist supplier and it could cost you £5,000.

But the model engineer hobbyists usually make their own, going to great pains to secure top working drawings and operating in their lavishly equipped workshops to manufacture small replicas of their favourite locomotives or other machines.

The linking factor is steam.

The society stems from the inspiration of the late Brigadier John Richards, of Llanddulas, some thirty years ago. He built his own engines and rolling stock and used to drive his trains around the grounds of his home.

He spread the word and others began to take to the hobby, but there will never be a membership explosion in societies such as the North Wales group.

"It's largely a matter of economics, but there's the space factor as well," says Mr. Barton.

What he means is that it could cost over £1,000 for the initial tooling up of the workshop, for which, in turn, there has to be plenty of space. Some members have tracks running round their gardens.

Dalton Gang are all set to hit town

By Frank Thomas

THE Dalton Gang will be hittin' town at Betws-y-Coed this Saturday to rob a bank, but the marshal and his deputies will shoot it out with them.

The raid by the notorious western outlaws on a bank at Coffyville in 1892 will be re-enacted, as will gunfights with a killer and unruly poker players.

These exciting incidents will be part of a Wild West show staged at the village's annual gala. It will be presented by the TJ Corral Westerners, a group from the Manchester area which has been giving cowboy entertainments for 16 years.

Another thrilling act will be the escapologist Shahid Malik, who combines escapes from chains, handcuffs and ropes with daring stunts while he is suspended in mid-air or surrounded by flames.

The packed gala programme, arranged by St. Mary's Church, is costing over £1,500 to stage.

The Rev. Michael Pritchard, vicar, said

that they hoped the extra attractions would bring in a record attendance at the gala which drew a crowd of nearly 5,000 last year.

St. Mary's Church will hand over the proceeds towards buying an electro-cardiograph machine for the village medical centre, as their thank-you to the community for help with the new church hall scheme.

The programme also includes a fell race to the mountain lake of Llyn Elsi, a fancy dress competition, karate demonstration, 'fun' dog show, and turns by Conwy Town Band and Conwy Morris Men.

For the first time for many years a local carnival queen will be crowned. She will be 10-year-old Sarah Mason, who will become gala queen, while Rachel Riley (8) and Alison Williams (5) will also be crowned as fairy queen and rosebud queen respectively.

The gala will start at 1 pm with a procession to Cae Llan field and events will continue into the early evening.