



Picton Rail & Sail¹ on the Picton Foreshore



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NEWSLETTER May 2021

Brian Morris, Editor 021 192 2936

Winter is coming ...



But we are well prepared to have an excellent series of Sunday, public and school holiday rails and sails activity through to 25 July 2021 - weather permitting!

Charlotte has reacted well to having a battery transplant (the donor being Endeavour, which is currently undergoing the engineering necessary to have one of our new electric motors installed); Graham Ashford is reviewing the model trains and will be coming up with some solutions to keep them (literally!) on track; and our fire prevention



equipment (one CO₂ extinguisher and one dry powder extinguisher) received a big ✓ of approval from Alex the technician from Fire and Safety Systems.

With regard to our valued members, we farewelled the Remnants to their new home in Christchurch and expressed our appreciation of all the hard work done by former Committee members Brian Henstock (formerly Vice-President); Marlene Schroder (formerly Secretary) and Kerry Johnson (formerly Pools and Yachts guru). We are lucky that not only will they stay on as ordinary members, but also that their roles have been taken up by

¹ Picton Society of Model Engineers Incorporated

Quentin Doig (new Vice-President); Paul Van Der Werff (Pools and Yachts) and Graham Ashford (model trains). The Committee has invited the latter two to join the Committee until the next AGM in November 2021, at which time all Committee positions will be up for election. The phrase “going from strength to strength” is most applicable here!



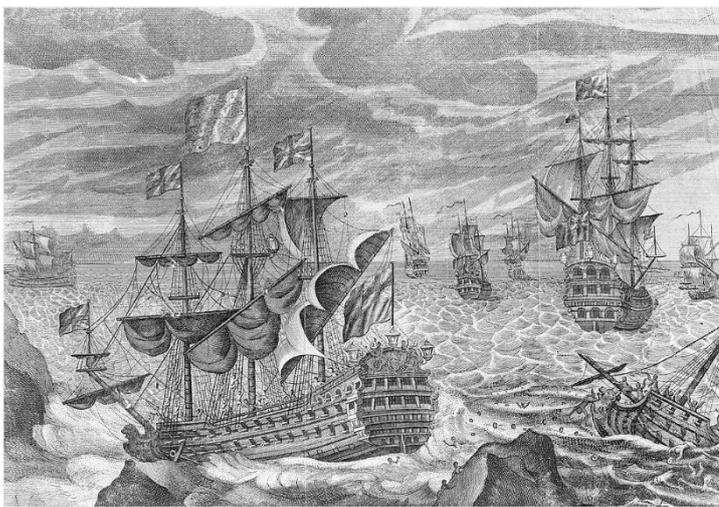
The farewell function mentioned above took place at the Picton RSA, and some members noted that it was either the first time *ever* – or the first time in a *long* time – that many members had spent social time together. The nature of our rosters and our shifts means

that too often, we are truly “trains passing in the night”. This got some folk to thinking that we should try to have one or two social functions during the year, just for the purpose of keeping in touch with each other. The RSA is happy to host us for free, and ideas shared included a mid-winter Christmas Dinner; a members’ Grandchildren’s Picnic at the station; a dedicated Rail and Sail Quiz Team competing at local quiz nights. **Please contact the Editor with any thoughts you might have!**

Editor’s pick

My last few items have focused exclusively on trains and railways – and fair enough, that’s what we are all about. But the Picton

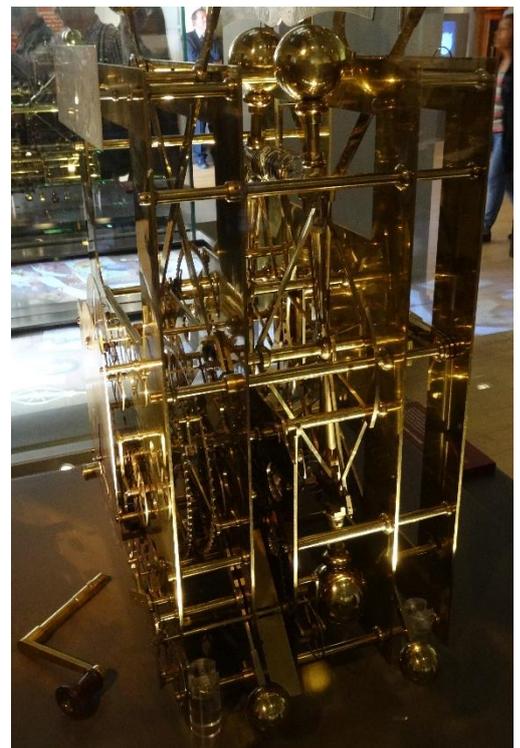
Society of Model Engineers Incorporated, thanks to its current and past members, Committees and generous sponsors, is also blessed with a beautiful sea-water pool, upon which our colourful model yachts can be sailed most days, taking advantage of our famous foreshore sea-breezes to give the local ducks and seagulls a bit of water-borne competition. Our craft don't need much more than an enthusiastic launcher and a steady wind to sail back and forth for hours - a much simpler way to go compared to real sailing ships - and somewhat safer, as this true story tells ...



In 1707 a fleet of 15 English sailing ships returning from a victorious battle against the French suffered a bad combination of unreliable timekeeping and inaccurate charts. Four ships crashed into the rocks at the Scilly Isles and 2000 sailors drowned. Victory turned to disaster!

The British Parliament offered a £20,000 prize (worth £15million today) to anyone who could make a clock that would keep accurate time at sea - timekeeping being the key to using longitude charts and saving ships from being lost and foundered.

Up stepped carpenter John Harrison, aged 19 in 1741. He designed and built a clock with wooden mechanisms which kept time so accurately that it lost only one second a month. Accordingly, he applied for the grand prize.



But an envious competitor, Nevil Maskelyne, controlled the British Admiralty and wanted the prize for himself. Using his influence at

the Admiralty, he employed delaying tactics that lasted for decades, cheating Harrison and later his son William out of the grand prize.

Fortunately for the Royal Navy and for the Harrisons, King George II lost patience with his Admiralty's chicanery, and although he could not over-rule the Admiralty Board, he did arrange for a generous sum to be paid to the Harrisons in recognition of their life-saving invention and decades-long suffering.

The full story of John Harrison, his incredible clocks and the skulduggery that denied him recognition as the greatest British clockmaker of all time is explained in the book [Longitude](#) by Dava Sobel. A great read, available in bookshops and libraries, and even made into a [TV series](#) (place your cursor on the highlighted words, go *control-click* and you will be able to read much more information and detail about this fascinating piece of history)

President's call

As always a busy month, a bit of sadness farewelling long-standing members but heartening to have such great colleagues to step up and help take us onwards. I really like the idea of more social get-togethers - on the occasions we have had them, we've found that members have far more in common than our mutual interest in trains and yachts! Although that's a pretty good interest to have ...

Next newsletter I hope to share some exciting news on the engineering front - that Endeavour will be very close to taking to the tracks with a **new** electric motor, promising years more of service to our locals, and increasing numbers of visitors.

Society contacts

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