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# THE DESERT WIND

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## 15" Gauge End of Season Report

- From Ken Eells

We are quickly coming to the end of another exciting and successful season on the Grand Scale Railway at the Joshua Tree and Southern Railroad Museum. This seasons achievements would be the construction of the turntable pit for the 15" Gauge Turntable. Where there was only talk and dreams of such an amazing structure, it is now a physical and very imposing piece of the total engine facility puzzle.

More than 21 feet in diameter, the turntable project demonstrates both the scale and scope of just what it is we have set out to achieve. And thanks to the dedicated and driven crew of the 15" gauge railroad, this dream of ours is now reality. There is still work to do in order to get it up and running as well as "aging and graining" (A fifty dollar term meaning to create a distressed finish). But make no mistake about it, size does apparently matter. And folks, it is just plain big!

The other major accomplishment was the installation of water/electricity/air throughout the yard area. This addition has proved to be the most helpful for accomplishing just about every project, large or small. Also, it will prove vital once the tracks are in and we are in full operation. Infrastructure is a great thing!

So what is next for the 15" gauge engine facility? We

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## The 2008 Joshua Tree Narrow Gauge Meet.

- From Brian Ratliff

The weather outside was delightful and the people and equipment were from all the corners of the Southwestern United States. We had visitors from five different states represented; Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico.

Things started early with arrivals starting on Wednesday and Thursday, and a lot more arriving Friday. Some old dependable engines and owners, one engine that hadn't been out for a long time and even a few that have never been out to JT.

Bill Shepherd had been down for almost two weeks; Mary arrived sometime during this week. Bill has finished up the entry steps to the engine house and has also been up on the 15 inch working on the turntable ring and support wall, busy guy, thank you Bill for your diligent work. Tom Arnold has been trying to paint the station between helping Bill out. Al and Lynn Ratliff arrived Wednesday and brought out the GE and his string off flats. From Farmington NM, Bob Clark arrived and in tow was his 'mistress' an interesting narrow gauge 2-8-0 which he is working out the bugs he admits, but she was doing quite well on Sunday afternoon before he packed it up for MLS next weekend. Thursday saw Paul Westover come in from Tehachapi or where ever 'Uncle Pete' has their track crew this month. Brendon hauled out Kim Zipke's #10, a Buzz Sutch 2-4-2 that in earlier days was quite a regular when I'd borrow it from Jerry Nichols and run the tires off of it back before we had even finished the loop on the lower end. Greg stumbled into town late Thursday and I arrived even later to round out the day.

Friday morning I unloaded the Heisler and my string of flats and Greg unveiled the newly rebuilt

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## Narrow Gauge Meet, *continued from page 1.*

Yankee Girl Mining dump car. The Burns family drove up the road after breakfast in their bus, though the tow car didn't have any rolling stock in it, it did have a load of ties for future track and Ken has also stumbled upon a cornucopian source of five gallon buckets. Tom Artzberger and his wife made the trip from Pagosa Springs, CO and with him was his RGS #20, a string of cars and a delivery for Gary and Margret Stites, a brand new GE 47 tonner. Mike and Nathan Thompson cruised in Friday morning as well with their string of Westside equipment and C&S #13 too. Bruce made it in about noon to round out the family. The Tolan Family arrived Kevin, Lori and Jeff; all packed around their Chloe and D&RGW 50 plus riding cars. All in a mini van and trailer, Lori knows how to keep the bell on Chloe from ringing in her ear all the way up. She puts her old chewing gum around the clapper.

Friday was quite the day to run and each took advantage of it. Around the fire that evening after dinner the count of people was twenty two with at least ten different conversations to enjoy.

Saturday was again the Chamber of Commerce day, and each in their own way used the beautiful weather to their best. Trains ran early and up till dinner time. Gary was putting his new GE through the paces, the full face grin stayed on all weekend but was ear to ear Saturday. Mike Polinsky kept the Heisler going all weekend and #13 was working the entire time as well. Jeff would run which ever engine out of the stable he chose, and was seen on a few others as well, talented kid. Zipke ran his engine around with a string of cars in tow most of the afternoon, the track was getting quite a polishing. About mid-day we put the Yankee Girl Mining car through its paces and started hauling dirt to the end of track west of the Palmer Bridge. The ten foot track extension was brought down off of the High Line and rigged up at end of track towards Joshua Tree. By the time we stopped as the sun slipped over the hill there was twenty feet of fill finished and there is almost forty feet of track beyond the bridge now. This sure helps out the far side of the bridge, it doesn't look like the tail of a Wye anymore. The entire fill used for this project came from the 'Panama Canal' end of the Wye; they found fifteen feet of track under sand that had sloughed off the side of the cut and allowed us to add twenty feet of track to the tail of that end too, thanks to all that participated.

Saturday saw a few visitors out as well. Dave Parrott



*A diesel out for a run.*



*Dave Parrott on the northern extension.*

came out and ran his Mich-Cal Shay around the place; he pulled Mike Thompson's string of Westside cars which he built to pull behind the identical engine that is nearing completion. Ron Atkinson and two others came up from Chula Vista and they had a box cab that I only saw briefly as I was down it the far end of the wye moving dirt, sorry I didn't get to see more of it. Bill Shepherd's little putter kept his grandkids occupied most of the afternoon as well.

There was by my count twelve engines of all types out for the weekend, and I didn't even think about counting people or equipment that was out for the show. The procession of cars that went up and down the road while we were out past the bridge seemed non-stop so word must get around about this place, glad you enjoy it and come on back. ☀

plan to begin final construction on the roundhouse in October. What will that take? The roundhouse will take somewhere between \$15,000 and \$20,000 worth of construction materials. And where might you ask is this money coming from? Donations.

Of the seven stalls being constructed, two are museum stalls where five are museum member stalls. About \$10,000 is coming from the various members who are opting to buy in initially. The balance will come from other sources. Hence, a new fund raiser program is being put together and there will be more information regarding that in the next few weeks on the museum's website.

For now, we invite all to come up and see what is soon become a world class miniature railroading icon and hopefully pass along some of the inspirational fire that we feel when working and sweating together on these spectacular projects. ☀



*Ring rail is finally placed under the turntable bridge.*



## Calendar of Events 2008

*May 3rd & 4th - 15" Spring Meet*

*May 31st - 15" Workday (Season Wrap)*

*September 13th - 15" Workday*

*October 11th- 15" Workday*

*October 24, 25, 26 - 7 1/2" Work Weekend*

***November 6, 7, 8, 9 - Fall Meet***

*Annual Dinner - Saturday Night - details TBA*

*7 1/2" gauge 'Rudy Run'*

*November 28, 29, 30 - 7 1/2" Work Weekend*

Email [tomamailbox-jts@yahoo.com](mailto:tomamailbox-jts@yahoo.com) for more info and member camping reservations.

***Logon at [www.jtsrr.org](http://www.jtsrr.org) for all the latest!***



*Bill Shepherd placing bolts in the 15" gauge turntable pit wall he constructed.*



*Greg Ratliff takes care of some ballasting chores during the Easter work weekend..*



*Joseph, Dick and Mike bolt together the framework for the new shelter at the Pullman.*



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