Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends with a theme of “The GO GO Thomas Tour” once again came to town in the spring.

A big attraction was a half-hour ride on a train led by a full-sized Thomas pulling a string of passenger cars. People lined up to board at their assigned time and nearly all the seats were full on every trip.

When the throttle was opened it puffed out LOTS of smoke as it is the only coal-fired boiler of the four units used for these shows.

For the seventh time in the past eight years, the Glancy Trains Modular Railroad Club of the Detroit Historical Society set up and ran a display at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan during all three weekends of the event.

To make it easy for folks to find us, this sign called out our location in one of the buildings on the grounds of the Village.

During the six days of the event many folks came to see the O-Gauge versions of Thomas pulling Annie and Clarabel passenger cars as well as James, Percy and Diesel heading up consists of all the freight cars Lionel offers with the Sodor markings.
Kids (of all ages) go crazy seeing trains from a TV show or at the movies right in front of their eyes, and many are repeat visitors. Photos above and below show some happy kids watching the trains during the show. I feel that Thomas the Tank Engine and his Friends have brought LOTS more attention and folks into our hobby.

Push buttons on our layout allow the kids to “touch” something and operate an accessory.

Many of the parents and grandparents asked how they could buy these trains, and when we told them that all the items were made by Lionel most told us of the trains they had as a child. Several kids brought their roll-around Thomas toys from home and some had on railroad-themed clothing.

In addition, a fenced-in area was filled with plenty of different pedal cars for the kids to drive.

Right next to us was Sir Topham Hatt and I got this photo of us together. Many folks had their photo taken with him for a neat souvenir.
By Don Carlson, DM 4735

Besides being a Member of LOTS and other national toy train organizations, I also belong to several clubs that are local to my home town. One of them is the Glancy Modular Trains group that is part of the Detroit Historical Society.

This group has their operating layout set up and displayed at many events in the area. As covered in Victor Bodek’s article on the previous pages, the busiest one is the annual “Day Out with Thomas” featuring Thomas the Tank Engine and his friends.

There are a total of six days of events over a three-weekend timeframe that attract huge crowds including LOTS of kids. The Glancy layout has three loops of O-Gauge tracks for Thomas, James, Percy, and Diesel. These locomotives head up consists that travel many times around the loops for up to 8 hours each day.

While some of the rolling stock has standard Lionel 4-wheel trucks, others feature the same 2-axle frame used on “bobber” style cabooses. The material used for these frames is a harder plastic than the 4-wheel trucks. All axles use the same “needle” bearing and during the extended running time at the Thomas event, the axle tips caused significant wear to their bearing surfaces on the 2-axle equipped pieces of rolling stock.

Replacement costs were high for the cars or the frames, so I came up with a “shade tree” repair to solve the wear problem using the rivet portion of 1/8” by 1/8” steel pop rivets. Separate the pieces by tapping on the pointed end of the mandrel while supporting the rivet’s flange.

First I drilled a 1/8” diameter hole centered over the bearing cap at all four locations.

Then the rivets were inserted through the hole. I used a soldering gun to heat the rivet enough to push it slightly down into the plastic, leaving enough width so the wheels turn freely.

The open end of the new “bearing” surface allows access for a drop of oil to prevent any metal-to-metal squeaking or wear. This repair should last for many more trips around the tracks for LOTS of events!