



Miniature Steam Engines Are Not Toys

by Michael Ragg

***Toy** – n - ‘a something that is a non-functioning replica of something else, an object designed to be played with, a small thing of little value’.*

A miniature steam engine is an investment in precision model engineering. Its functions are designed to replicate the real thing. As an authentic reproduction of engineering standards and practice of a bygone era it may have exposed and unprotected moving parts and sharp edges. As a miniature, it is made up of many small parts and as a piece of functioning machinery it requires the application of substances or coatings that may be toxic if ingested or may irritate sensitive skin.

A steam engine carries and uses volatile and flammable fuels that require careful and informed handling. When lit, the fire within it may ignite other materials or fuels and the surfaces of the model become hot to touch and can burn. It carries hot water and steam under pressure within its boiler that may exhaust or emit from various apertures both predictably and not. Steam by its very nature is hot and may cause injury by scolding. When under way the model may act erratically or unpredictably.

A miniature steam engine should only be handled or operated by an adult who is familiar with the model and its functioning, who fully appreciates all the Hazards associated with it and who has the knowledge and the ability to minimise the Risks involved in its operation.