The Chairman's Notes

We have been informed that the model-engineering exhibition at Sandown Park received well above the target level of visitors. It isn't to the same scale as the "Olympia" exhibition, but with support it will prosper and I hope that ours will be one of the societies to give continued support. Our stand as usual had some very interesting exhibits including two new locos and two locos under construction. Terry Hammer's wonderful liner "Queen Mary" took pride of place and was a fitting tribute to a fine craftsman.

Happy New Year.

John Squire

From The Secretary

Well now! Where were we when we were interrupted by Christmas and the New Year? To be honest, there's nothing new to report with a minimum of correspondence (one letter only, The Southern Fed Journal – now in the library) and a couple of phone calls!

Wearing my other (temporary) hat, I would like to thank those members who supplied the models for the stand at The Model Engineer Exhibition, others who collected and transported the actual stand and yet others who took time out to steward the stand. Our centrepiece was the late Terry Hammer's magnificent 'Queen Mary' which acted like a magnet to all those who entered the hall. The Society's grateful thanks have been expressed to Mrs Hammer for the loan of the ship.

The stand, whilst not winning the 'Best Club Stand' was very well received and the event enjoyed by all those who took part!

Tony Dunbar

Marine Mutterings

Winter work around the lake has been progressing well in my absence – shows how redundant the 'Section Leader' really is! The foundations for the shelter are in place, a new area beside the lifebelt post has been cleared and leveled ready for grassing, steps from the bridge to the launching pit have been built and the paving beyond the pit has been tidied up.

Well done workers!

We hope to have started building the shelter by the time you read this.

Happy boating ***Bernard Lambert***

How Do The New Pressure Equipment Regulations (PER) Affect You?

For over a year now there has been a worry amongst the model engineering fraternity that if individuals construct a steam locomotive they will not be able to sell it at a later date unless the boiler has been constructed in accordance with the new Pressure Equipment Regulations (PER) specifications. Modellers concerns have been heightened as we approach the date of 30 May 2002 – the day the regulations are due to come into force.

Mike Chrisp has prepared the following information (hot off the press!) which in plain language clarifies the situation and will allay modellers' worst fears.

A letter from Ian Stock on behalf of the newly founded Association of Professional Boiler Makers (ME) was recently published in Model Engineer Magazine (Volume 187 No.4160 December 2001 page 529). Beginning with the words "From 30 May 2002, all pressure equipment and assemblies placed on the market within the EEC must comply with the Pressure Equipment Regulations (PER)" this letter has rekindled concerns relating to boilers for model locomotives, traction engines and stationary engines.

Representatives of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) have been discussing the necessary requirements with representatives of the Southern Federation and Northern Association of Model Engineering Societies, and others. This discussion began some 18 months ago but for various reasons has lain fairly dormant since. By sheer coincidence, the latest Proposed Amendment issued by the DTI arrived with the parties involved in the discussion on the very morning these notes are being prepared.

In summary, and in simple terms, subject to two important provisions, individual private model engineers are exempt from the requirements relating to pressure vessels. The first provision is that the boiler must have been constructed and put into use by the builder for his/her own personal use. The term 'put into use' implies that the boiler must have been steamed at least once, which is a requirement for the purposes of testing and certification. The second important provision is that 'standard' materials and methods of construction must have been used for the boiler which if not built to a 'recognised design' must be supported with drawings and calculations to show that the boiler is safe and conforms with standard practice.

It is important to note that anyone who builds a boiler for anyone else, whether on a business footing or even as a friendly gesture falls outside the exemption and must therefore comply with the requirements of the PER. It is not for us to dictate policy to commercial organisations and the setting up of the APCBM(ME) seems to be a wise first move for such activities.

Study of the latest DTI Proposed Amendment reveals that whereas the previous amendment was based on the 'build/manufacture' element, the new amendment appears to be based on subsequent usage. Whatever the outcome, it will all have to be resolved before 29 May 2002.

Mike Chrisp

Tyttenhanger Gazette

By Roger Bell

The December Loco Meeting

The December Loco Meeting was a 'Work in Progress' and George C spoke of a rather unusual locomotive he had brought along. It was a meths fired 4-4-0 with slip-eccentric valve gear in 3 1/8" gauge. The maker was Stevens Model Dockyard of 22 Aldgate, London. It was built about 1898 and would have been a rich man's toy in those days, possibly costing a month's wages. The model was of strong construction. The wheels were brass and the side tanks were dummy. It carried the number plate 5443. The smokebox opened but the crossbar was not removable. A large meths container was positioned under the cab floor. This had two nearly flat tubes about seven inches long going forward under the boiler. Each one had three upright tubes complete with wicks at the end. On the backhead was a regulator and two water cocks, the higher one indicating that the boiler was full of water and the lower indicating low water. This was instead of a water gauge.

The loco was nicely finished. Four screws secured each of the buffers to the beam and the hook was well made. Its finish had deteriorated with age. The maroon paint and lining could just be seen. George has only cleaned it as to repaint it would lose some of its value. He would like to know something more about its history and it was suggested that Model Engineer magazines of that era may contain an advertisement for one.

Mike C then spoke of his mechanical lubricator off a ***Heilan Lassie***. The loco has three cylinders and the lubricator is the twin ram type. Before the advent of the spark arrestor over-lubrication was not a problem. It just meant that oil would form around the top of the chimney and on pulling away would blow out of the chimney all over one's face and goggles. The engine driver's grease top hat kept one's hair clean. Having adjusted the drive mechanism so that one turn of the wheels ratcheted the pawl through one tooth, nothing else could be done to reduce oil supply. When the spark arrestor was fitted the oil and ash would stick to and block up the arrestor, so correct lubrication became an important issue. This is where Mike's lubricator comes in. It has an adjustable delivery rate. The pawl still ratchets away at one tooth per rev of the wheels and inside the lubricator a disc is driven round. It has a pin in it which is the crank-pin which fits in a hole in the piston-rod and drives it back and forth, or rather that is how they work now. The modification is to elongate the hole in the piston-rod into a slot and fit a screw into the end of the slot which adjusts the amount of 'lost motion' or the amount that the crank-pin can move in its slot without moving the piston.

An alternative method was discussed where the lubricator is left as it is and a centrifuge is fitted to separate the oil from the exhaust. An article on the making of one of these was written in the Model Engineer magazine by Alan Bibby about a year ago.

The January Loco Meeting

Those that ventured out in the dark, cold, January evening had a particularly interesting evening in store for them. There were two topics. The first was from Dave Foster who spoke of his experiences as a cleaner, then fireman and driver on the East Coast Main Line, a career that spanned some 48 years from 1950 when he was 16 years of age until 1997.

It was on the 11th April 1950 that Dave started as a cleaner at Kings Cross and having a set of overalls and a can consisting of half paraffin and half a milky substance and some cotton cloth, reported to the foreman in the New Shed which housed the locos for local and pilot work. The other, the Long Shed, housed the mainline locos.

It would take all day for four men, two on top and two underneath, to clean one loco and one would be black from head to foot afterwards. After three months he started as a fireman and worked with three drivers, all real smashing blokes. One day the driver of his J13 suggested that he would start to teach him how to drive and all the other things one had to know like valve gears, signals, single line working and the like. Even though he had only been firing for five months and a driver's job could be 12 years away, it could not all be learned in a day.

Whilst firing on the Metropolitan line one day, the driver said to him, 'Don't put that lump of coal on, there is a fairy sitting on it. The lumps mounted up into a small pile. Dave then heard that this driver had once stopped in Ponsbourne tunnel for an unknown reason. A colleague was sent into the tunnel to investigate. The explanation was that he had seen a load of fairies coming from the upside to the downside so he had stopped for them! They took the driver off this run.

One morning, having prepared his engine for another local working his foreman asked him to change his roster as they were short of a fireman on The Yorkshire Pullman. His parents would be advised that he would be lodging in Leeds that night. 60033, ***Seagull,*** was polished up as he left Kings Cross for the 188 mile run, a daunting task as he had not been past Hitchin for three years. On the way back an inspector boarded at Grantham and asked Dave if he wanted a break. The driver said he was doing well so the driver went in the train. The inspector did the driving and Dave carried on with the firing.

On the runs to York, Leeds and Hull, one would lodge overnight. Dave could remember the names of all the hotels. Many firemen had girlfriends at these places and occasionally one would be off 'sick' for the return run.

Eventually Dave was promoted into the top link. A link was a group of 40 men who worked the same shift. One driver's own engine was 60028, which he knew well. On some engines the reversing lever graduations were not reliable and Dave would notch the engine up whilst the driver listened, and a chalk mark was put on the scale to indicate the optimum position.

On one run into London, the first three attempts to pick up water from the troughs failed. This they could not understand. Having reached Grantham they stopped and filled up. They had covered 168 miles on a tank of water, in the winter, with steam

heating for the carriages on, which was quite an achievement. Eventually it was found that there was no lead-screw fitted to the water scoop mechanism. At six o'clock one morning they left Newcastle bound for London with 60022. The engine was noisy and 'red robins' were flying out of the chimney. Dave did not stop firing all the way and shovelled ten tons of coal. In London the engine was taken off duty and they found in the sheds, worn pistons and piston valves. Dave described the procedure of applying the brake, opening the regulator and by moving the reverser back and forth one could tell where the leak was coming from.

Whilst pulling out of the shed at the start of one duty a lot of banging could be heard which Dave remarked upon. The driver said that the noise was not that bad and suggested Dave take an aspirin to settle his nerves. Dave drove the loco slowly whilst the driver walked along the running board looking at the motion. A big end had cracked right through the flange. The loco's previous run had been the Finsbury Park to Hatfield Fast for the aero workmen and it was fortunate that it had held together.

The driving test was difficult as there was a lot to learn. He was told that the examiner would not directly say, 'You have passed', but would give you some money to get him some cigarettes from the canteen. After endless questions on valve events and single line working he put his hand in his pocket and said, 'Get me 20 players from the canteen.' This had taken ten years and Dave was 26 years of age.

If one started making the fire up on an A4 one hour before the run, it need not be touched for miles, having got about one ton of coal in the firebox at Kings Cross. Once, the inspector became suspicious of the black smoke. He came over and threw a lump of coal in which hit the brick arch, as the firebox was full up. But he didn't let on it was Dave's fire. They managed to get to Peterborough and part way back before having to fire again. Dave was well known for making fires up. It did go wrong once, as an injector packed up, so the fire had to be dropped. Each time it came into the shed it was too hot to touch and it was not until three shifts later that that it was cool enough to drop.

We thanked Dave for his talk. I really enjoyed it, as he is such a good storyteller.

Brendan Corcoran was next to speak and had only had since the preceding Wednesday to prepare his slide presentation. He described how his interest in model engineering and traction engines had developed into a passion for the full size.

His full size 8-ton Aveling Showman's road locomotive was bought from John Atkinson in Cornwall. The Dean family who also restore fairground organs had superbly restored it. Two weeks after buying the engine Brendan went to Cornwall to assist with its transport home by low loader. We saw photos of it being winched on up the slope onto the trailer. Whilst it's an 8-ton engine, this is the weight on the rear wheels: The overall weight is 11 ½ tons. John Atkinson had changed the drive gear ratio from the ratio of 3:2 to 1:1 so it can go faster.

Whilst at a rally a bolt had come off and passed through the gear train causing a shaft to bend 5/16" out of true. The shaft at 3 ½" diameter and 3ft 6ins long was replaced by BMC Gears, a firm in Amesbury, Wiltshire. While in steam again, one of the

replaced bearings ran hot, so after a few phone calls for assistance a special mustard-like substance was bought to lubricate and lap the bearing in.

Working on an engine of this size is heavy and access to the gear train was achieved by removing the one-ton road wheel using an engine lift hoist. But first the engine had to be jacked up using a 20-ton tank jack bought from Anchor Supplies of Nottingham. They supply all sorts of things like second-hand jet engines!

The pictures of the engine at rallies and at night with the lights on looked good and I felt that the passion for these road locomotives is quite widespread. We thanked Brendan for his presentation.

I remember a rally I went to at York and can almost hear now the soul-stirring melody of one of those French fairground organs. I could have listened to it for hours!

Workshop in Progress

By Mike Hodgson

I am impressed that so many of you have come to these meetings. I just hope you have gone home thinking the evening was worthwhile. Something like a dozen of you have said that you are working on 'Project'. Please bring your work in progress and tell us 'how you did it.'

I hope that like me you see these evenings as General Workshop meetings where any procedures, methods or tooling is of interest. One of the things I enjoy is taking a technique used in one craft and using it with an entirely different skill. There is such a spread of experience in the Society, this should be an easy thing for one to contribute to.

Slot Car News

By Steve Francis

It was 30 years ago today (as I write) that North London taught the rest to play….team races. Towards the end of last year the original NLSME team had a reunion with themselves and the F1 car that took them to victory in 1971. From this first historic win, NLSME teams have had an unparalleled success at long distance team races. The racers that day in 1971 were Ian Fischer, Tony Condon, Dick Smith, Rob and John Dominy. Ian and Tony are still at it and took Paul Harwood with them to Brussels for the 24hr race in September. Unfortunately they could not find a fourth driver at very short notice so they set off for a very long race. They eventually won by 99 laps,

being the only team in history to win a 24hr race with only three drivers. Our Walmington on Sea team came in third.

The New season has started in earnest and the calendar has been arranged in blocks of six races. So if and when we go ahead with the much-discussed track alterations, possibly after the National Finals in May, we can remove one or two blocks without disrupting the Club championships.

We are now running a scalextic sports car class on F1 nights to try to encourage some new members as scalextric racing is very popular at the moment. Now over to Paul Harwood's report on the recent scalextric team race held at our track:

Retro Scalextric Team Race Series – Round One

The idea to bring competitive scalextric-type racing to North London has always been a subject of much mickey taking and non-commitment in the past, but things were about to change. The Spanish manufacturer, Fly and the subsidiary GB Track make a wonderful range of pre-1975 sports cars such as the Porsche 917 and 908, Ferrari 512 and Lola and Chevron models. With interest in retro-racing growing in the last couple of seasons it seemed sensible to combine these two elements. So with the help of Steve Carter of the Wood Green club and Mick Kerr from Wellingborough, John Secchi and I set about creating and starting this new series.

Wednesday 5th December came and eight teams to our wonderment took the start. The format run was easy. One car per team, two drivers per team and equal track time divided into the one hour duration.

Two teams arrived from Wellingborough, three from Wood Green and from North London. Right from the start, Mick Kerr from Wellingborough got the flying start they wanted, making it a 1-2 for the new boys on their first visit to North London, closely followed by the top Wood Green team of Steve Carter and Terry Riley. North London's lack of racing these type of cars on a regular basis showed as the top North London team of Ian and Tony could only manage fourth place. The other teams had a variety of problems throughout the race ranging from falling off to the cars bouncing around like Skippy the Kangaroo.

The results were:
1) Mick Kerr/ Adam Lematray (Well).
2) Andy Dunmore/ David Farrow (Well).
3) Steve Carter/ Terry Riley (WG)
4) Ian Fisher/ Tony Condon (NL).
5) Nigel Williams/ Herve Ferrou (WG).
6) John Secchi/ Greg Harwood (NL).
7) Paul Harwood/ Steve Francis (NL)
8) John Ovens/ Mick Ovens (WG)

So onwards and upwards to the next round at Wood Green. See you there.

Calendar for February.
7th 1/32 Team Race.
14th Saloon.
21st F1 and Scalextric.
28th Sports.

Paul Harwood

Loco Section News

From John Caldwell

Winter work parties are in full swing at Colney Heath on Sunday mornings. Easter is early this year, Easter Sunday being 30th of March, so by the time you read this there will only be about 8 weeks of winter season left. Projects under way include:

- Keith Bartlam and his team are progressing the concrete track base from the upper station down towards the level crossing. While it won't be completed this winter, every effort will be made to ensure that there is an operational track for the summer season.
- Jack Edwards is building a second set of points for the upper passing loop.
- Mike Avery and his team are improving the unloading ramp for ground level track.
- Points by lower station - remedial work is in hand to correct the gauge with Jim MacDonald and his team.
- George Case's team are making a splendid effort cleaning up the site and unearthing rubbish from various corners. The non-burnable rubbish is accumulating by the gate. We will get a skip shortly.
- Mike Foreman and his team are replacing the roof of the coach and the signalling hut.
- The anti tip rails have been completed on the bottom curve by the steaming bays. Mike Collingwood and his team are tackling the tunnel next.
- The garden railway now has a gravel path around the inside of the track, thanks to John Squire and his team.
- Bernard Lambert and his team are working away on several projects around the pond.
- As ever Peter Shewry provides us with tea and coffee. Much appreciated.

Mariners' and Garden Railwaymen's Times

from John Morgan

The evening once again started with Mike Collingwood giving us some more tales from the canals.

In 1972 Mike was a keen boater on the Thames but wanted more adventure, the prospect of which beckoned when he discovered canals, with their locks and bridges that had no lock keeper to do the work, he had to get out his boat and do-it-yourself - it was much more interesting than the Thames! Being made redundant, the temptation to spend the money on a canal boat was resisted until a new job had been secured, then it was off to purchase a copy of Waterways World and look at the For Sale ads. Only a small number of boats were available, and it has to be said most were terrible.

The first to catch the eye was a 20 footer. Now its a fact that all boats have headroom in cabins around 6 feet regardless of whether the length is 20 or 60 feet and that this leads to the shorter ones just not looking right. The next, a narrow cruiser made "of solid oak" was long in the tooth and had that sweet smell of rotting wood.

A visit to Harefield Lock produced a converted lifeboat that definitely did not look right! Which was the front? It was currently owned by an Australian schoolteacher and was solid with books - a floating library. There was not a clear walkway from bow to stern as the wall-to-wall seats that held the crew of rowers were still in place and had to be climbed over to get anywhere! The engine was in good order (too good!) and Mike was offered a trip, through the lock at the speed of light and this was the slowest speed!!

Mike now decided to post a "wanted" ad. His ideal would be a boat 40 feet long. His six initial replies came from those wishing to sell 20 or 70 footers. However, in the next post was a reply from the owner of a boat of the correct length but moored way up in Derbyshire. Because of this, it was ignored until its owner placed his own "for sale" ad in the magazine and Mike finally decided to go and have a look at it.

The boat was shabby and unfitted but had a good engine; it also "felt right". His wife agreed and their new boat was to be collected in December / January time, a story that will be told on another occasion. There is a hierarchy of boats, both value wise and in the name of the boatyard that built it. Mike's purchase was built by Les Allen of Oldbury, the name meant nothing to Mike, but having found out that previous owners were the founder of the Waterways World magazine and a chairman of the Midlands Inland Waterways association he thought that the boatyard may well be worth a visit, a big well, known company. Among other things Mike needed to know how to paint the bottom of a boat and not ruin it putting it back into the water.

It came to pass that an invite to a wedding in Birmingham gave the opportunity for a visit, but finding an address proved difficult. There were no adverts for Less Allen boats, Directory Enquiries did not have them listed and their local library had not heard of them.

On the day of the wedding, an early start left time to ask the locals for directions to the boat yard. Though the name meant nothing to them, Mike was told how to find a nearby boatyard. It was through a derelict tunnel, then a hole in a fence then over an old bridge which led to a hole in the ground which was the dry dock. All this while they were dressed up for a wedding!

On arrival at the site, the men with an “elves in the garden look” confirmed this indeed was Less Allen’s boat yard. The pair remembered building the boat, now owned by the chap in a smart suit standing on the mud, so now was the time to ask that all important question, how to paint the bottom of the boat without damaging it at launch time. The two men just laughed as they never paint the bottom of boats, there being no point as its launching and any subsequent grounding would just scrape it all off again! At last Mike had at last the answer of how to finish painting his new boat, don’t bother…

I then gave a talk on my model of the Dutch Harbour Tender Chistiaan Brunings.

The full size boat was built in 1900 by Jan Meursing as a waterways inspection vessel; harbour tender and pilot boat to the Dutch icebreaker fleet. To this end she was fitted out as a coastal icebreaker.

A supply ship during the First World War, but laid up at the start the second she was replaced in her original role by new motorboats. She survived pre war after conversion to a pleasure boat and was used in the lower courses of the rivers, but was left to rot once this trade had also declined.

A group of enthusiasts found and restored her. Now moored as part of the Dutch Historic Steamship Museum, she takes visitors through the harbours of Amsterdam.

My problem was finding the right model as I always intended to fit a steam plant and did not want a design that would just bury it below decks. Retailers stock was very limited and one catalogue I sent away for was not even in English! A visit to Deans Marine in Peterborough to see what was there and I had found my boat. It was ideal with a large deck hatch just over the engine.

The detailed hull and superstructure base are fibreglass; deck is marine ply; davits, deck fittings are white metal and everything else is plasticard. The port lights are glazed (not Deans original) and behind each are yellow LED’s. Other lighting is provided by the new type of white LED. These cost £3.50 each, so it will be a while before the 22 yellow types are replaced! The only conventional bulb is the green navigation light as I have yet to find a green LED bright enough to do the task.

My original idea of buying the boat, building it while saving for the propulsion unit, had to be quickly abandoned as it was soon clear that not much could be done until I knew how the plant was to be fitted below decks. There then followed a “Dear Dad” letter…

The steam plant was supplied by Marten, Howes & Baylis, marine model makers, of Gillingham, Kent. The engine: 3/8" bore by 1/2" stroke is a 2 cylinder double acting slide valve with displacement lubricators. The crankshaft bearings have oil cups. A

steam regulator and the reversing lever, which operates slip eccentrics on a separate shaft which drives the valves, are both controllable by radio.

The boiler: horizontal centre flue, 6" long by 3" diameter with cross tubes and water feed heater. Fired to 40 psi by gas stored in a refillable gas tank and delivered via a radio-controlled valve.

The “well used” look given to the paintwork and accessories is deliberate; I think it more realistic. Extra detail has been added (and part of the kit not used) by using old photographs of how she looked prior to preservation. The Deans model reflects her current role, complete with a (awful) canopy so the day-trippers do not get wet! It was started in 1993, launched in 1994 and took another three winters of work on the detail to reach its current state - nearly finished! She will run for 40 minutes (at scale speeds!).

Frank Dell and the story of the Leek and Manifold Valley Light Railway followed a pause for refreshments. Models of the entire fleet are now becoming available (its only a small Railway).

The LMVR ran through the delightful Derbyshire countryside between Hulme and Thor cave, which was a cave in the hillside, from 1904 to 1934. If the Company could have survived a while longer the line would have surely been preserved and kept alive by visitors to the cave as well as enthusiasts, as the line would have connected two tourist attractions.

The eight-mile route was a mixture of single and double track of 2’ 6” gauge.

Two locomotives were used, the ***ER Calthrop*** and ***JB Earle***, both 2-6-4 outside framed tank engines. Built by Kitsons of Leeds, who supplied Indian railways, so these had that oriental look about them and came complete with a large headlamp, which though kept cleaned were, being a British railway, never used!

The rest of the stock can quickly be listed. 1 milk van; 1 transporter; 4 flat wagons and 4 passenger coaches. The flats were used to carry standard gauge wagons. The passenger coaches had shed type roofs and veranda ends. At busy times four station seats from the platform were placed on the transporter to transform it into another passenger vehicle. The livery was an attractive primrose yellow and brown until the late 1920’s when the LMS purchased the railway and painted everything in their famous maroon.

The line was reliant on the transport of the ingredients to, and produce from, a cheese factory, that was half way along the route. Only the summer months would produce the passenger traffic, so when in 1932 the factory closed, the line was deemed uneconomic.

Today the track bed has been tarmaced by the local authority for walkers, which, has saved the actual route from extinction.

Now to the models, which are semi-scale at, gauge one. Built by David Pearse the loco can be fully radio controlled and is in the original livery prior to the LMS take

over. The motion is fully geared with a reverser. The whistle can be sounded by use of the regulator handle, which has three positions - centre closed, one way open for traction and the other open to the whistle. Today, both locomotives are only available in LMS maroon. It is second hand to Frank. The owner never steamed it as he gave up before he had completed the track needed to run it.

Frank has the milk van - the original had 1200 rivets, so has his model! Also a flat wagon and the transporter, all ready to roll. A kit is/will be available for the passenger coaches.

To finish the evening, Dick Hesketh produced from a box, being only just delivered by the Royal Mail, his 2-6-2 Welsh Highland, 16mm, O gauge "Russell" produced by Roundhouse, Doncaster: A model of the 1902/03 Hunslet built loco for the Porthmadog Narrow Gauge Railway. Upon closure, she transferred to the Ffestiniog Railway but even with the cabs cut down as much as they could be, she was still out-of-gauge for the tunnels. Languishing during the 50s and 60s somewhere on the south coast, she has now reappeared in Wales on the Welsh Highland line, which is being rebuilt.

Dick also has 2 Craftsman Kit coaches. Although called kits, Dick reckons they will be closer to scratch building!

So our second meeting ended, another success. But we now need volunteers to give a little talk about their hobby or interesting anecdotes a la Mike C, for the remaining three winter evenings at HQ. Having given it a go myself I can say the thought is worse than the deed, I spent time on my script before the day. How about YOU?

Radio Control Equipment
Changes to 27MHz. Band Frequencies.

From Bernard Lambert

Following last year's warning of proposed changes to the 27MHz Band I now have some positive information on the subject.

Sets with 10kHz channel spacing on the 27MHz. Band are becoming available this year. They will require black channel numbers on white flags to identify them in use.

The new system will not replace the current colour flag system and existing colour coded sets can still be used alongside the new sets.

To accommodate these changes we now have a new 27MHz 'pegboard'. This has 32 pegs marked with channel numbers and frequencies for channels 1 (26.965 MHz.) to 32 (27.275 MHz.). The appropriate pegs also carry the existing colour coding.

When using your current colour coded set you take the relevant coloured peg just as

you did with the old ‘pegboard’.

When using a new number coded set you take the relevant numbered peg.

Nothing complicated!

Note: There is a risk that colour coded sets on 20kHz spacing might interfere with the number coded sets operating on the adjacent 10 kHz. spaced frequencies. We must await practical experience to discover whether this is a real problem.

Letters Page

Thank You from Bernard Lambert

My sincere thanks to all of you who visited, sent cards and get well messages during my recent incarceration in hospital.

They were very much appreciated and spoke wonders for the good fellowship of the Society.

Thanks to you all – Bernard Lambert

The following note from Cyril Drayson’s daughter was received by Geoff Wren.

Just a note to let you know that Cyril is well and was 93 in October. Physically he is fine but very vague now. He is in a nursing home and being well looked after.

Best wishes

Lesley and family

The Slate Shunt

By Clive Winter

Clive, Leader of the North American Section, and his brothers spent a Saturday last autumn driving on the Ffestiniog Railway……..

Those of you who listen to ‘***Home Truths’ with John Peel*** on Radio 4 on Saturday mornings may well have heard the piece about the Slate Shunt on the Ffestiniog Railway in which my mother disclosed that by the age of two I’d worked out when the Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway’s trains were stopping at Littlestone. Dad’s home movies in black and white Scratchoscope taught me that there’s a 21 year time lag between being recorded on film and being able to laugh at myself as a child. But

radio? Since I was executing a particularly complicated right turn in my car at Woodhouse Lane one Saturday just as I heard this facet of my life history broadcast to the universe there was no hiding my embarrassment. By the time I reached the next set of lights I'd regained my composure.

At Maddison's Holiday Camp in Littlestone there was only ever one place to look for an escaped two year old Clive - go beyond the paddling pool to where the trains stop. Anyway when you're two, the quarter scale RHDR trains are about the right size. Not surprisingly I don't actually recall that year. However, I do know that when I was seven and we went there again I was enthralled by No.9 'Winston Churchill' and No.10 'Doctor Syn' – the two Canadian style locomotives. They had each had an extra dome for sand, and a cowcatcher, though now I know better to call it a pilot. At that time they had Vanderbilt tenders with the circular water tank. And No.10 had a bell, just like the streamlined No.60010 'Dominion of Canada' which I'd seen in Kings Cross. They were different. They looked like workhorses who meant business, particularly when they were alongside the smooth British elegance of 'Green Goddess' or 'Southern Maid'. Maybe that level crossing where the R H D R trains stopped at Littlestone was where my interest in Canadian railways began. Subliminally, perhaps, the seed was sown in the mind of the escaped two year old even earlier.

Roll forward to September 2001, I'm bigger, greyer, but proportionally less rotund - yes I was a somewhat fat little boy.

Ho hum, it's been another thrilling week in the annals of Clive Winter aged 55 and 7/16ths. Worrying about volatile currency markets and what will our cash flow look like and just how many passengers are cancelling and now the family's cottage sale is complete can I have back the money that I've been funding the whole operation with since the beginning of the year, etc., etc.

It's a Friday evening; my brother Kim and I are stuck in traffic on the M6 north of Stoke en route to a Saturday driving trains in the exchange goods yard between the Ffestiniog Railway and the G W R. at Minffordd. My brother Dylan is maintaining a studied indifference in the back seat savouring an uninterrupted read of several newspapers, he can't understand why anyone would like trains when there's horses to ride, but he's the radio journalist to record a day's ferroequinological escape for John Peel's programme. Not many people go from London to Penrhyndeudraeth via Derby but when you're avoiding the Birmingham branch meeting of the Friends of the M6 on Friday nights it make sense. It makes sense until you encounter the North Staffs branch meeting of the Friends of the M6.

The slate shunt has been organised as a means of funding a replacement boiler for 'Lilla', a slate quarry Hunslet when that becomes due. It's explained on the FR website. The Welsh Highland Railway website http://www.bangor.ac.uk/ml/whr/ has a link into the FR's site, and for the civil engineers among you the WHR site explains in some detail the progress of construction through Snowdonia National Park.

It is well organised with safety to the forefront – "If anyone raises both hands over their head - STOP". The website reported that Lilla was to be on The Welsh Highland that week-end, so what were we to drive?

When I first saw 'Palmerston' in 1959 he was a 96 year old pile of rust on the scrap road. A seriously devoted band eventually restored him to working order retaining his coal firing (the Ffestiniog is principally oil fired for insurance reasons). And we had 'Palmerston' to play with, only 138 years old, and "about the size of two Transit vans" – have these horse fans no respect?

It was my turn to drive. Away we go - open drain cocks, put it in forward gear, vacuum brake off, open regulator. Watch everything in front of 'Palmerston' disappear in clouds of steam. Nothing moves… Try again…. Close regulator, close drain cocks, open regulator, a gentle chuff sound, and 'Palmerston' moves. Can this really be the rusting heap I saw all those years ago? Power. Excitement. All at 1 and1/2 miles per hour!

The Slate Shunt itself is something of an initiative test, and we were getting through it surprisingly quickly. Moving wagons around the yard some loaded with 2 or 3 tons of slate, some empty. Some with brakes some without. 'Where's your instruction sheet?' we were asked. That explained why were getting on so well - we were working with the solution! We're not supposed to move more than 4 wagons at a time so how come cleverclogs managed to move 15 at once? Well there's a very old three-way stub point into part of the yard where we're told not to go and it's certainly not going to take the weight of a locomotive any more. You too remember your bedtime story with the pictures of an embarrassed looking Thomas down a hole? The real thing would mean a seriously red face. They wanted the last wagon out from the back of the shed for a pre-restoration test run so I got it out. Could it be run down to Boston Lodge in a train, or would it have to go by road? It was full of scrap which had to be lifted out under the crane gantry. After some considerable to-ing and fro-ing and taking up slack it was under the gantry for the first part to be lifted. Move along so we can put the scrap in another wagon. Then back for the next bit. There's a lot of slack in loose couplings bang bang bang on starting, biff biff biff as the gaps close when you stop. Didn't actually hear 'Oh! Oh! Oh! screamed the trucks', did I?

Kim got the easy bit, running all around the yard with the wagon trying to make its bearings run hot. They didn't.

Dylan. Well he did admit that he'd had a very visual presentation of why the railway locomotive was such a massive leap forward from his beloved horses. But put his hand near the regulator? No way, he might enjoy it. Either you like trains or you don't.

Good dirty fun. I even forgot about money, volatile foreign exchanges, rescheduled flights, and passengers who cancel. But then I forget such things when racing small yachts – good wet fun. Or when being the world's finest conductor of Beethoven in my own front room – good noisy fun. Or when trying to sort out HO scale Canadian Pacific locomotives – good infuriating . . fun?

Would I do it again? Of course I would.