

## The Chairman's Notes

I am pleased to report that with the Council having accepted the Fetes Section accounts, Tim has transferred the year 2000 income from the Building Society account to the Treasurer to be held within the Society's main account.

As many of you know the track was stolen, thus negating the many hours of hard work and effort that Tim and his team had put into constructing a very novel and successful track and running eight Fetes during 2000. This effort raised enough money to pay for all the costs incurred in building the track. So the Society has not lost financially in any way and indeed when the new welding kit is taken into account has shown a £900.00 return on our initial £800 outlay. There have been delays in settling this matter, but this has been due to Tim's very poor health over the last six months. I am glad to say that he is on the road to recovery and I hope that he will soon be well enough to take an active role in the Club again.

This year the Fete Section has been dormant but I do hope that this Club will continue to run fetes whether we organise it as a separate Section or as a part of the Loco Section. Although I use a small traction engine for fetes these days I have been involved in using the fete track since I joined the Society and I have derived much pleasure and met many interesting people during the course of these activities. It is also a good way of advertising the existence of our hobby to the young.

**The new design of track was a great success, taking the back-breaking work out of setting up and taking down the track and any move to rebuild this very clever portable track will have my fullest support.**

I would like to thank Brendan and Donal Corcoran for repairing the boiler of the club loco "Butch". Many of us thought that it was a write off. Brendan and Donal have spent a lot of time and effort on this and saved the Club a great deal of money. Les Brimson is giving the loco the mechanical once over and again I would like to thank this very busy member for finding the time to do this so that others might benefit. On Thursday the 5<sup>th</sup> of July a party of children from Childs Hill School who were on an activity holiday in Colney Heath spent an afternoon at our track. These kids attend a special unit within the School and this particular group are very fond of trains. I don't think that I have seen a bunch of kids enjoying themselves more and the afternoon was a great success. Thanks to all those members who supported this event.

On the same theme, Frank Hills has organised two very large party events at Colney Heath this month which both ran like clockwork although in one case, damp clockwork. I would also like to thank our younger members who have driven trains in the rain (but never too fast) for their untiring support of these events. Ian, Peter and Sam have grown up in this Club and I can't think of a better way for Club locos to be used than in the encouragement of young model engineers.

Continuing on the same theme, Stationery Steam again shifted lots of youngsters at Colney Heath School with Ron Todd and Dick Hesketh driving miniature traction engines. Dick joined this Club, due to his interest in American railways, to pursue one of his hobbies - HO railway modelling. He now spends a lot of time driving a half-ton

traction engine, sometimes in the rain! I think that we are lucky to have a Club that allows its members such a diversity of activities.

Our last General Meeting was an auction at Colney Heath. Mike Collingwood and Jack Edwards organised and divided Les Brook's generous gift into lots and Keith Hughes did the same with Dick Hook's effects. Honest Mike Chrisp, 'Auctioneer to the Gentry and Purveyor of Dodgey Goods' fooled us all into buying lots items to go under the workshop bench and in the process raised £389.55 for club funds while making us all laugh. Thanks to you all. Les Brooks donated all the proceeds of the sale of his workshop to our Club and I would like to express our thanks to him on behalf of the Club.

*John Squire*

## **From the Secretary**

At its recent meeting the Council approved the spending of up to £250 to improve the HQ kitchen area.

I must thank those members who responded to my cry for help over the *Landlord and Tenant Act 1954*. As a result the situation now appears hopeful as Barnet Council is required to offer us a new tenancy, unless they intend to redevelop the area which is thought unlikely. However nothing will happen until about six months before the end of the current lease.

We welcome Guy Ellerby of St Albans as a new member of the Society.

I have been most gratified at the number of comments regarding 70026 'Polar Star'. If you are contemplating starting an engine, remember that she is my first engine and when I started I didn't know that I couldn't do it. I therefore got on and did it!

*Tony Dunbar*

## **The L.B.S.C. BOWL**

### **Sunday, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2001**

### **At our Colney Heath Track**

#### **About the Curly Bowl.**

As many of you will know we are once again hosting the L.B.S.C. Memorial Challenge, better known as the 'Curly Bowl'.

The North London Society has a close association with the event, being the first Society to host it outside the Model Engineer Exhibition in the early seventies.

The competition is open to any L.B.S.C. (Curly Lawrence) designed locomotive and is judged in three sections:

- 1, The locomotive will be examined in a cold state and any variations to the original design discussed with the builder.

- 2, The locomotive to be steamed. (you don't have to be an expert driver as the locomotive is in competition not the operator).
- 3, The locomotive is to be driven around the Cuckoo Line by the operator and the judges.

Marks will be awarded for each of the sections and the eventual winner will be the locomotive attaining the most marks. The winner receives a rose bowl trophy and in the true tradition of the Model Engineer magazine a small cheque.

### **About the Day**

The competition itself is a rather relaxed and low key affair with entrants and judges using the Cuckoo Line for the competition.

Members of the Society and general public will be allowed to inspect the procedures from a distance but will not be able to inspect the judging at close quarters during the competition.

To enhance the event we hope to stage a small but exclusive exhibition of members work. Although this will be dominated by Loco Section exhibits we would appreciate all Sections to provide something to show.

### **Catering on the Day**

Catering facilities will be enhanced for this event moving from the coach to a marquee, kindly loaned by the 9<sup>th</sup> St Albans scout troop, we will serve teas, coffee, soft drinks, cakes and sandwiches along with our normal biscuits and crisps. If the weather forecast is good ice cream should also be on sale. Negotiations with the local hostelry to supply a licensed bar are well advanced.

### **Sales and Trade**

Although this is not a large event in the Model Engineering calendar it is one of the most important for the L.B.S.C. enthusiast, and many visitors are expected from other Societies. We have decided to invite only local engineering related traders as we did at the Barnet Exhibition. However we do intend to have our own stand selling anything members wish to donate.

### **Running of Trains on the Main Line and Ground Level.**

By tradition no charge is made for entry to this event. Although we will incur some costs, to recuperate these we intend to charge a modest fee for riding on the trains, it is proposed we sell tickets at 25p each or 5 for £1.

We will hold a raffle and a programme / facts sheet will be available at a reasonable cost.

### **Car Parking.**

As will become quite apparent on the day car that on-site parking for members and visitors is not an option; only the judges and competitors will be allowed to park on site. (A number of spaces for members with disabilities will also be reserved). I am however pleased to say **KATE REDDISH** has secured free car parking in the local Colney Heath school grounds.

### **Times of the Event**

The event will start in the morning of Sunday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September. The time depends on the number of entrants. The Competition runs throughout the day with a break for lunch at midday. The award presentation will take place at approximately 5 pm and the presentation party will be led by our own Mike Chrisp, Editor of the Model Engineer.

*Jim Macdonald.*

## **Tyttenhanger Gazette**

*By Roger Bell*

Despite the overcast sky and heavy showers in the area a small group gathered at the Track for the July evening Loco Meeting and barbecue. Jupiter was in steam supported by two electric locos whilst the smaller gauge engines of the garden railway completed the picture.

It was one of those evenings when we entertain ourselves and with all the interest and wealth of knowledge within the Club, one has only to strike up a conversation to learn something new. Much is to be learned from others who have built the same loco as oneself. I find it useful to carry a notebook and sketch the proven ideas of others for inclusion in my build.

In conversation I mentioned that while screwing in the boiler stays I found it near impossible to cut off the studding just proud of the outside of the firebox so I hack sawed through about 70% of the diameter and screwed the studding in assisted for grip by two nuts locked together on the studding. In torsion the studding is strong. When in place, I bent the studding and it sheared off at the saw-cut. The end was cleaned up with a file. I then learned that the aircraft industry use this principle with a hexagon screw that has a reduced diameter portion that shears off at a pre-determined torque, leaving a small round neat second head against the workface, the hexagon part having broken away. This fastener saves weight and is neat enough to be in the aircraft slipstream. It is a 'use-once' assembly so would not be suitable everywhere but it is an alternative technique to bear in mind.

## **Marine Mutterings**

*By Bernard Lambert*

I really am muttering this month as I am between summer holidays and have not been in regular attendance at Colney Heath. The Boating Lake has been reported well used in my absence, which is good news.

To make matters worse, for me that is, I will not be at Colney Heath for our first Open Day. By the time you read this John Morgan, the man of harbour fame, will have run the event and I hope that a day of mixed gentle competition and free sailing will have been enjoyed by all. My sincere thanks go to John for his willing efforts at organising the Lake.

Please try to support our second Summer Open Event – Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September. Also remember the August and September Meetings at Colney Heath.

Happy boating – *Bernard Lambert*

## Editorial

### Help!

One of the key requisites for an editor when producing any monthly publication is to have a stock of articles etc waiting for inclusion in future issues. It saves the awful panic feelings you can get every month. Happily this has been so for our News Sheet for almost two years. However, I have to tell you that the stock for the News Sheet is at present perilously low. Imagine my delight, then, if the postman brings a contribution from a member. It makes my day!

Please, if you can contribute something, not necessarily even written by yourself, which might be of interest to members please send it to me. I can assure you that every contribution I have received has been published in the News Sheet. Nothing has been rejected and poor spelling or poor English or even illegible writing can all be sorted out! Perhaps you have something to say about a recent holiday or some place you have recently visited. Perhaps you've built a model you're proud of or even had some disastrous failure in the workshop! In your studies of a prototype possibly you've found out something unusual. Don't forget if you recount a tale at Colney Heath or some other venue to your friends, almost certainly it will be of interest to all members.

Having said all this, of course, I am extremely grateful to those members who have made contributions, in some cases every month. You have made the News Sheet what it is – many thanks to you all.

### 'Dates for Your Diary'

Recently I have not been able to give sufficient notice of certain events in 'Dates for Your Diary' because I have not received them in time or not received them at all and on one occasion confusion arose over a particular date. Please remember that unless you tell me about a date I will not be able to include it in the News Sheet because I am not super human (although I often pretend I am!) It is also important to look to the deadline which is printed in 'Dates for Your Diary' every month.

### The Duke of Gloucester and Shap

Last May several members reported on their steam outing 'Clan Line Farewell'. The article attracted so much interest and praise from Society members that I make no apologies for including this month another great story from the main author of 'Clan Line Farewell', Ian Murray. Now that Ian has retired I think that he could make a fantastic new living as a writer. His writing is inspired! Hopefully we can persuade him to write even more in the future for the News Sheet!

I too was on the train on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1995 when the Duke made her historic run although I didn't know Ian was there too. Indeed I had not even met Ian at that time. That day has been hailed as the greatest day in the history of main line steam preservation and I don't think anyone would disagree with that accolade. I was lucky enough to be on the train on all three days of the Shap Trials, as they were called, and I can tell you that Ian's account of 2<sup>nd</sup> of October is just as it was and conveys all the excitement that was felt throughout the train. (Incidentally, a real ale bar was included on the train and by the time we passed Tebay the excitement was at fever pitch in the bar!)

That day, Duke of Gloucester set an all time steam record that has never been beaten. Yes, Blue Peter's recent time up Shap (May 12<sup>th</sup>) with a load of 510 tons was a record for that load but Grayrigg and Shap banks come as a pair and the real test of a steam locomotive has to be measured against both banks because they come one after the other with only a few miles of the Lune Gorge in between. Performance up Grayrigg generally has a direct effect on the performance up Shap. I have made a particular study of the performance of steam on these banks and I can tell you that there are many locomotives which can and have gone up one of the two banks faster than the Duke but the Duke is the only loco I know of that has not been winded by a fast climb of Grayrigg and therefore has been able to subsequently climb Shap with a show of such outstanding power. And I suspect there will be better to come when 71000 comes out again. The question must be asked – Is the Duke the finest British steam locomotive ever built?

Below is set out the performance statistics published in the Railway Magazine of all three locos that took part in the Shap Trials in 1995. Any discrepancy between these figures and Ian's are due to differences in opinion as to where summits lie and to differences in the position in the train where timings were made.

*Grahame Ainge*

## **71000, Duke of Gloucester at the Shap Trials**

**by Ian Murray**

In the summer of 1995 I was approached by a friend who asked whether I would be interested in joining him on the Duke of Gloucester leg of the Shap Steam Trials arranged in conjunction with The Railway Magazine and organized by Mel Chamberlain of *Days Out*. These time trials, readers may recall, pitted 71000, Sir Nigel Gresley and Duchess of Hamilton against the famous north bound climb of Shap, the intention being to run each loco on the bank with as equal a load as possible, the trains in addition being restricted to 60mph at Tebay so that the ascent would begin with as much equality as possible. Obviously there would remain many variables (as events would later show) but the prospect of travelling was mouth watering and so I accepted the invitation immediately.

My friend David is known to the owner of 71000 (Ron) and we had met a couple of years previously when 71000 together with 70000 ran a number of shuttles between

Ely and Bishops Stortford. It was agreed that we would meet at the Crewe Hotel the night before the run (which was held on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1995) and after a meal the three of us went down to the Crewe Heritage centre where 71000, accompanied by its support coach, was lying in light steam. On arrival Ron asked if I would help him with something out of the back of the car, and on opening the tailgate I found myself looking at the tartan Royal Scot headboard. "I thought this would look good tomorrow", said Ron and trying hard to close my gaping mouth I helped Ron carry the headboard to the front of the loco where it was duly positioned on the top lamp bracket. 71000 glistened in the lights with wisps of steam rising lazily into the still night air. I found it hard to take in the fact that we were standing so close to 71000's old depot at Crewe North and that in just a few hours time we would be heading north to, hopefully, lay to rest some of the myths which had grown up around 71000 during the loco's short working life. To be fair, some of the criticism was justified and not merely myth arising out of 71000 being a one off and perhaps needing to be driven in a different manner to the "Big Lizzies" which the men were more used to. Certainly the modifications to the front end and the ashpan damper doors, undertaken during the loco's long and difficult restoration, seemed to have helped transform the loco, if all that I had heard and read was correct.

We walked down the side of the loco where Ron invited us up onto the footplate. Feeling somewhat of an intruder I climbed up, to be met by two or three of the support crew who were obviously in good spirits and we were made very welcome. There was much jocular banter going on and as the loco had only recently returned from a spell on the West Somerset Railway there were tales of how the loco had pulled prodigious loads and the grate area had caused consternation to loco men brought up on narrow fireboxes. At that point the firebox doors were opened to illustrate the point. The fire was covering no more than one third of the grate ( the loco having about 50psi on the clock) and the rest of the flat but sloping grate was well visible. One of the WSR's firemen , on first opening the fire doors, is alleged to have exclaimed "Blimey, that's not a grate - it's a dance floor!" Not for the first time I found myself marveling at the men who had spent their daily lives shoveling coal onto grates of all shapes and sizes to keep the railways moving. Truly everything rested on the willingness of one man to get a wet shirt.

I slid into the driver's seat and looked out along the well polished firebox and boiler cladding. The smoke deflectors seemed a very long way away indeed and with my hand resting on the regulator handle I tried and failed to imagine what it would be like the following day. I hoped the driver would not feel the burden of expectation and history to be weighing too heavily upon him. The cab was clean and comfortable and well painted with all the controls neatly labeled. I did not ask, but could not help but feel that the labeling was there to assist out of touch drivers! No doubt these feelings were horribly unfair , which is why they remained unspoken. The feeling of being part of a huge and very unforgiving piece of machinery was very strong, and the frailty of the human frame much evident by comparison.

We left the cab and repaired to the support coach where we were introduced to more of the support crew and were able to look around at the amount of tools and equipment stowed in the coach. This, more than anything, brought home the now alien nature of the railway on which steam has to run and how lonely and unfriendly this could be in the event of a failure. Again the fact that we were to run up the busy

West Coast mainline the following day seemed unreal. There was a tendency ( at least on my part ) to still visualise the various sets of troughs, the bankers at Oxenholme and Tebay, the signal box at Scout Green and the locos simmering in a number of sheds, ready to leap into action if a problem arose. The feeling of setting out into alien territory began to settle over me.

A number of the support crew, including ourselves, then moved off to a local hostelry where the talk was all about the prospects for a good run the following day. I kept quiet and reveled in all I was listening to. There was much discussion about Sir Nigel's performance on September 30<sup>th</sup> (the day before). Apparently Sir Nigel had not put up such a good showing on Shap as the loco was handicapped by a new feature, described as a "waterfall firebox" i.e. leaking tubes! There was much speculation as to which of the crews we would be allocated, and a recognition that much depended on the skill of the fireman. Finally there was the recognition that the Duchess, back on home ground, would run the day after and there was a clear desire to set a time which would stretch her. At that point we returned to the Crewe Hotel and retired to bed to try and sleep. I felt like a little boy awaiting Christmas morning but beneath the excitement was the anxiety that nothing should go wrong which would cause problems for the rest of the traffic on the West Coast line.

The following morning dawned cloudy but dry and after a "belt tightener" of an English breakfast the three of us left the hotel intending to stroll across the road to Crewe station but a plume of steam, obviously from the Duke's safety valves encouraged us to break into a run and we scampered down onto the platform to find the Duke and its support coach already coupled up to the main body of the train. We quickly found the support crew who again seemed to be in good spirits and I got my first sight of our driver for the day, Ray Hatton. "Panky", as he is known, was leaning from the cabside. He had the look of someone only interested in seeing that the Duke was properly "tied on" and getting away right time. The excitement of the people milling around was now palpable and when Ron motioned to us to follow him into the support coach my heart leapt. The support coach was a Mark 1 2<sup>nd</sup> brake so it had about four or five compartments - all full of people and equipment - with the guard's end set up as a workshop. The corridor was on the left hand side so, trying to make myself as inconspicuous as possible, I flattened myself against the curved side of the coach with my head between the opened sliding window vents.

With much whistling and escaping steam from open drain cocks we moved off and as we clanked and bounced our way over the points and crossings there was much grinning and wisecracking between everyone in the support coach but there was also the strong feeling that "This is it" and an undercurrent of anxiety that all would go well. Having drawn the whole train out onto the mainline the Duke was opened up and for the first time that day we heard the harsh sound of her exhaust. Acceleration was lively despite the 434 tons of the train which was made up to 11 coaches. All too soon the brakes went on for the crossover from the slow tracks to the fast lines and shortly thereafter there were other permanent way slowings. Eventually the Duke got a clear path and began to move.

Warrington and Wigan North Western stations flew by and as we went through Wigan I was able to look down onto the old Lancashire and Yorkshire station at Wigan Wallgate and reflect on the times that I had stood on its platforms and watched

Duchesses, Scot's and, on one memorable occasion, Princess Elizabeth, the only time I saw a Princess in BR days. Soon the brakes went on again as we approached Preston. We rolled under the overall roof at about 15mph whereupon the driver opened up and sounded the whistle. At the same time the loco blew off and unsuspecting platform bystanders were treated to the marvellous sight and sound of the Duke stamping through the station making the maximum noise and fuss, all of which echoed and reverberated under the glass canopy. People stopped in their tracks, children put hands over ears but the smiles and waves, both on train and off, spoke volumes. We swung left out of the station and passed the site of the old L&Y sheds and as we began to pick up speed I looked up at the spire of St. Walburgh's church which overlooks the scene and thought for a moment or two about all the locos and trains ( not to mention the two world wars ) which that spire had witnessed.

All too soon the brakes went on again, and we pulled into the loop at Barton to take on water. No sooner had we stopped than the support crew sprang into action to assist with the watering, a waiting road tanker having parked close to the loop. Hoses were rolled out and connected up and soon the water began to flow. A small group of bystanders with sundry children had come to witness the watering and there were a number of police to ensure that this crowd of about twelve people did not either riot or rush the train! At last the watering was finished and the hoses were rolled up and stowed away again in the support coach. With a wave to the road tanker driver and a blast on the whistle for the benefit of the onlookers the Duke moved off, gained the main line once again and began to accelerate. There was now a definite sense of purpose and feeling that all the preliminaries had been put to bed and that the main show was about to begin. The engine accelerated hard, heading north across the flat Lancashire plain and the farther north we went the more the weather began to close in. By the time we reached Lancaster the rain was falling and as we swept through on one of the middle roads the steam was beating down. It was as if the Gods of the Fell country had decided to join in the fun by providing a typical wet Autumn day, and wet rail to boot, to test to the fullest the claim that the restoration crew had solved the problems of Mr Riddles' Pacific. It was shaping up to be an interesting climb.

We swept through the sad remains of Carnforth station at 75mph with the rain now falling with a vengeance. A phrase from one of O S Nock's books sprang to mind - " with 250 miles in the fireman's arms and legs, the hills of Lakeland were looming in the cab spectacle glasses" - and I stuck my head out into the wind, rain and steam to look forward to where those same hills were now looming for us. The start of the long climb to Grayrigg was reached and the driver lengthened the cut off and opened the Duke out to some effect, the staccato roar from the chimney top being so loud as to render conversation in the support coach impossible. It was necessary to cup hands around ears and shout to make oneself heard and I looked at a number of the support crew and marvelled at the obstacles which they had overcome to make this day possible and wondered how many times they must have felt that a day such as this would be no more than a dream. Mentally I took my hat off to all who had doggedly followed their dream for so long.

I put my head partly out of the window again. Rain and cinders beat against my glasses as I watched the Duke following the sinuous curves of the track. The rain was falling heavily now, but there was no suggestion of the loco loosing its feet. Where there were rock cuttings the rain was cascading down in torrents and the loco's

exhaust would batter back with even greater intensity. Small occupation overbridges would snatch away the sound for a second or so until the support coach dived through the lingering steam whereupon the exhaust roar would return with seemingly greater intensity. I thought back to all the events that I had read about over so many years which had taken place along this very track where once again steam was pitting itself against the gradient and the weather. The next 13 miles, apart from a permanent way slack of 59mph just before Milnthorpe, were covered with speed not falling below the late 60's. Oxenholme sheds, or rather the site thereof, flew past and we then hammered through the curving platform of the station, a few stalwarts standing in the dry under the short platform canopy. The sight and sound of the Duke emerging out of the rain and mist must have been dramatic, but I'm sure that they would have been aware of our impending arrival for some time, as no amount of rain would have muffled the continuous, machine-gun like, noise from the chimney top.

Oxenholme! What that name conjures up for me. I remembered the number of photographs I had seen over the years taken at that location, particularly streamlined pacifics sweeping down the incline with that famous backdrop of trees, the small signal cabin and the skyscraper LNWR lower quadrant - all now long gone. Also, the story told by O S Nock of how, as a boy on his way home to Barrow in Furness, he was changing trains at Oxenholme when he realised that the down 2pm Corridor was due and he decided to wait and see it pass. He could hear it coming for many minutes and when it finally charged through the station it was double headed by a Precursor and a Claughton. The name of the Precursor is given as Sirocco and as OSN himself said, "hot wind from the south indeed!" The ghosts of the past were riding with us!

Out onto the curve at Hay Fell we went, the Duke holding 61mph, the exhaust startling animals and birds alike, and still the rain fell relentlessly. Onwards and upwards we went, speed being maintained for the remainder of the climb to Grayrigg summit after which this rose to 67mph before the loco was throttled back for the run through the Lune gorge. The climb from Carnforth to the summit had taken about 19 minutes for the 20 miles during which time the loco had averaged about 63mph, on 60% cut off, boiler pressure dropping to about 200psi by Grayrigg. Twenty minutes of the loudest, best syncopated music I could ever remember.

Speed was allowed to fall off as we ran past Lowgill and on towards Dillicar, it being a requirement, as mentioned above, that locos participating in this event pass Tebay at no more than 60mph. The remains of Tebay station, with the expanse of open ground behind where the bankers for Shap used to snooze between outings, came into view but there was little time for reminiscing now - Shap was ahead, the rain was falling with even greater determination, visibility was deteriorating and my face and bald head stung due to the combined assault of cold, rain and cinders. I clung grimly to the window vent. Nothing, absolutely nothing would shift me for the next five to ten minutes as I peered through my rain and oil spattered glasses determined to etch every second onto my memory. The feeling that history was about to be made was so palpable I could almost taste it.

The Duke was opened up with a vengeance as the foot of the incline was reached and once more the characteristic rasping chatter sang out as the engine took the long, rising left curve, past the Tebay Relay room and on towards the M6 overbridge and the cutting immediately beyond. The driver looked back at the full length of the train

and all the grinning faces. Suddenly out came his left arm and , gripping an imaginary riding crop, he began to beat the cabside as if a jockey. I found myself laughing out loud at the absurdity of the whole thing--- a train full of Peter Pans, willing an obsolete primemover, pulling obsolete rolling stock, to put up a performance better than that achieved over 40 years ago, but infinitely inferior to that achieved day in and day out by today's motive power. That said however, 185mph on Eurostar had not raised my pulse or my spirits like this, and yes, there could be no doubt as to the romance of steam power and the spirit of teamwork necessary to achieve what we all hoped lay ahead. Truly, nothing would be achieved unless the firemen were willing to get wet shirts.

Smoke and steam flattened out on the concrete underside of the motorway bridge and we were then in the narrow rock cutting. The noise from the loco was tremendous, battering back from the black rain sodden rock. Steam and cinders swirled back making visibility almost impossible and the heat and smell of hot oil filled my nose and mouth. The cutting gave way to an embankment as the track took the long right hand curve towards the overbridge at Greenholme. The rain was swirling across the low fell country in great sheets and the clouds seemed lower than ever. It was getting darker the higher we climbed but even on this exposed stretch of line the Duke remained sure footed and was still holding 57mph. A large and sodden gallery of photographers came into view as the roadbridge drew near and multiple flash guns erupted into action, although what impression they would make on the rain and mist would be dubious in the extreme I felt. We dived under the bridge and on through the short cutting beyond before the track began to swing left again and the loco came back into my view. The gradient was now making its presence felt but I suspect that the driver was feeding the reverser forward bit by bit to counteract the effects as, although there was clearly some slowing of our progress, this was only slight but the noise from the loco was increasing, the exhaust shooting ever higher and there was a real feeling of defiance in the face of both gradient and weather.

I was now looking out for the site of Scout Green signal box, that lonely outpost half way up Shap bank. We hammered up the exposed embankment and suddenly there was the roadway, the space which the box had occupied for so many years and the small grassy bank beyond. Again, but only briefly, my thoughts turned to the many locos and crews which had toiled past that spot, particularly Hardwicke on her epic Race to the North.

We were now on to the upper section of the bank but the Duke was still holding 51mph and showing the white feather from the safety valve that was in my view on the boiler side. The noise by now was incredible as the loco literally charged it's way towards the summit showing complete mastery over it's task. There was no doubt that the massed ranks of cold and wet photographers would be forgetting their discomfort at the sight, sound and fury emerging from the worst that Shap could throw at us.

Remarkably, over the last half mile to the summit, in the shelter of the rock cutting the Duke actually INCREASED speed from the 51mph held from Scout Green box to 55mph at the summit! The train leant to the right hand curve past the site of the summit box and on closing the regulator the loco immediately blew off from both safety valves. What a marvellous vindication of the soundness of Riddles basic design and a triumph for the changes made by the restoration team which corrected the small

errors which had blighted the Duke's short career under BR. What a triumph also for the footplate crew who themselves had shown complete mastery of their steed. That such skills are still with us is wonderful.

There was jubilation in the support coach, a clear recognition that the run the previous Saturday by Sir Nigel Gresley had been bettered and that a real gauntlet had been thrown down for the Duchess, which had yet to run. Everyone wanted to know the speed at the summit and wild figures flew round from 50mph up to as high as 60mph. No one really cared that much however as the experience of the whole climb from Carnforth onwards was something that we all felt privileged to have participated in and the memory would be unlikely to fade with time. (the Duchess, incidentally, failed next day to beat the Duke's feat, allegedly due to one of the safety valves blowing off light, although she bettered the time set by the A4)

Speed picked up rapidly now that the summit was behind us, but no-one was really taking much notice. Delighted conversations accompanied by much laughter and comment on the climbs to both Shap and Grayrigg saw us all down the hill to the sidings at Penrith where more water was taken. I leant out of the window and continued to reflect and although we were stationary and the loco silent (apart from the odd hiss and gurgle) my head remained filled with the continuous roar of the climbs.

Having left Penrith we duly reached Carlisle without further drama and on alighting all the support crew went forward to the loco to speak with the crew but I held back and looked at the loco over the heads of all the people who were now crowding around. The top of the boiler was dirty, the smokebox and chimney dull and there were various streaks of dirt, rainwater and oil across what had been pristine paintwork. Steam was slowly rising from under the cab, weaving around the loco and the platform throng and although I might have been mistaken I could have sworn that there was just a trace of smugness showing around the lip of the double chimney.

My pal David, Ron and myself left the throng and found ourselves a warm and dry hostelry about a half a mile from Citadel station where the morning's fun and games were re-lived and each of us added our own perspective over the odd pie and libation. Although there was the afternoon's run south over the Long Drag to look forward to, from my own viewpoint the main excitement of the day was over as the Settle-Carlisle does not have the same raw edge to it, nor the loco tales and sheer magic of Grayrigg and Shap.

In due course we set off again for the south but I made my way out of the support coach and into the first public coach where, strangely, I was able to find a table to myself. I felt that I did not want to impose any further on the generosity of my host and in any event I simply felt I needed some time alone to really let the events of the morning sink in, accompanied once again by the familiar sounds of the Duke working hard uphill. The rain had ceased by now and the sky was brightening and as I watched the hillsides slipping by I almost felt as if I had been transported back and that I was riding a normal everyday express train. The sounds of a high speed slip broke the spell and then David arrived and persuaded me to return to the support coach where, once again everyone was being deafened by the noise of the loco's exhaust which would have been wafting across the fells and telling the world that we were coming.

Ray Hatton, our driver from the morning, was in the brake portion of the coach and I took the opportunity to ask him if he had enjoyed the run. "No different from helping me mother every washday with that bl\*\*dy mangle." I took this to be a reference to the sideways on reversing lever and from the look in his eyes I could see that he thought I had asked a bl\*\*dy silly question! I slunk away.

It emerged later that we topped Ais Gill at around 54mph and, probably due to the bout of slipping, only missed out on the "Blue Riband" by a matter of 12 seconds.

The climb to Wilpshire summit on the old L&Y route to Blackburn was again carried out in fine style, but by this time we were all getting rather blase about the high (and maintained) level of performance. The Duke came off at Blackburn and after saying our thanks and farewells to people and loco we set off back towards Crewe diesel hauled and thereafter I drove home to Harpenden in something of a haze, rather proud of the collection of smuts and cinders adhering to my head and beard.

Thinking back to these events for the purposes of this article it seems to me to have been no more than fitting that, on the day, the Duke should have out performed both the A4 and the Duchess given that Riddles, Cox and the rest of the team were trying to bring together in the Duke all that was best about UK loco performance and the legacies of Stanier, Gresley and Bulleid were freely drawn upon. The GWR contribution to the Duke when built included smokebox draughting where I believe Swindon based the double blastpipe on the blastpipe of a Dean goods! No wonder that steaming was a problem, but then GW design stagnated after the introduction of the Kings. However, it could probably be argued that Stanier, headhunted by the LMS, represented the GW's contribution to the Duke, after all it was under Stanier that Riddles, Cox and others flourished. Finally, I believe that the Duke will be back in action soon with re-profiled cams, a coal-pusher fitted tender and possibly also a second tender to greatly increase the loco's range between water stops. Given that Duchess of Sutherland and Union of South Africa will also be in action it promises to be an interesting few years (Railtrack etc. permitting!).

## **That Mobile, Model, Floating Harbour...**

**by John Morgan**

Bored with just sailing round an empty lake, when there was no steering course set out, I thought of building a floating harbour to play with. I knew it had to be on the large side to be of any practical use but it also must be capable of being carried in the car.

Planning therefore started by looking at the sizes of marine ply available through the local builders merchant and with the internal dimensions of the car. My boat is 1/24<sup>th</sup> scale, so obviously that should be continued, but in truth the harbour is "semi-scale" as all the detail has to be accommodated inside each box for transit.

The wood could be purchased in 4 ft widths, a size that could be carried across the car when the rear seats were folded down, so that became the length of each section. I calculated that I could take 5 sections if they were about 12 inches high and still have enough room for the boat.

Having seen others struggle with the weight of their large, ballasted boats, I thought of using the water itself, which would drain out when back on dry land. The shape of the first section and the size of the ballast tanks required was really guess work and I expected it not to float too well and have to be discarded. If the side view was an “H” with the ballast tanks below the floor of the box I hoped it would prove to be more stable than just having a flat bottom.

Much to my joy the prototype was perfect, with the water level less than half way up the sidewall and looking OK. However, I then regretted not making a better job of the construction – in spite of my subsequent efforts it still leaks, until the wood expands and then seals itself.

The other 4 sections were then built and placed in the car to see if they would actually go in. There was space to spare, so a half size section was built, just 2 feet long, that could be used to make a more acceptable looking entrance to the harbour once on the water.

While taking breaks from the wood working, which took the whole of Easter 1998 plus another few weeks, I thought about how to stop the thing floating off down river. It was thought that car brake drums resting on the river bottom attached to ropes at each of the 5 corners would do the trick. Ropes from the bank would not be acceptable due to the danger of tripping up a colleague!

I used to work on the Severn Valley Railway PW Dept, and had kept 2 X 3 inch sections of rail surplus after a re-railing job, on the grounds that they “might come in handy one day”, here was that day and so only three drums were required, purchased from a breakers yard.

No ropes were to be on view, so “eyes” were placed at the end of each section to guide them underneath, from the corners to the section by the bank, where they were to be secured out of sight, being within the harbour itself, under the “road”.

All that is seen of the ropes is a small length as it comes up from under the bank section to go under the roadway. I was very pleased with this method and it works very well provided I ensure that the rope is not trapped when bolting each of the sections together! (Yes I’ve been there...).

The seaward side on the harbour is painted with stone coloured external masonry paint mixed with sawdust to give it a mortar looking finish. The rest is black preservative.

The roadway is 1/8<sup>th</sup> plasticard, which was a mistake. The (considerable) expansion on hot days has proved to be a big problem, so on cold ones there are gaps visible if one looks for them. The railway members will know all about this! One day I may replace the plasticard with wood.

So that is how it looked on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1998 when it was launched on the River Lea in Wardown Park, Luton, just the five and a half sections with a flat road. A bit bland I thought. The first obvious omission was the walls on the seaward side. They had to be detachable for transport, so slide on walls in plywood were made and painted using this time one of those sample pots of external masonry paint, which are thinner than the real stuff, now sealed with varnish to keep them clean. I was surprised how dirty one’s hands can become when immersed in river water and without protection the walls quickly became covered with out-of-scale finger- prints.

In order for the internal dimensions to be of a reasonable size and enable a number of boats to be inside at any one time, the right hand section is positioned way out, but that gave what I thought was an unrealistic harbour entrance, so those breakwater “rocks” were devised to fill in the gap. They are just carved and painted polystyrene blocks mounted on a wooden

platform and varnished to give them some chance against wayward skippers with the latest water based polyurethane. Traditional varnish just dissolves them. Again the design had to ensure they could be stored within one of the sections.

We were getting there, but there was still a large expanse of empty road. Over the years the shelters and buildings appeared, all built using plasticard and fitted with internal illumination from white LED's (red and green ones for the navigation lights). Then came the figures, cars and bollards which were made from plastic golf T's, but it was the recent addition of the harbour road lights that has made the biggest difference to the appearance. Plastic again, the lights are held in place using miniature jack plugs screwed into the bottom of the main post, which are then used to supply the white LED's.

Power is from two batteries of four rechargeable "D" cells, one for each of the two wings of the harbour. They will keep going for about 2 hours.

The assembly, from car to water, takes just less than an hour if I remember all the steps in the right order AND take everything out of each section before the launch (I've done that too – twice at Colney Heath after the winter break). To help there is a five page instruction manual!

The harbour has also proved useful in static shows, as a back drop to the models. Using a car type battery, the lights last for days!

Please use the harbour - there are no mooring fees - that is what it's there for...

## **Thanks from Kate (the Gardener).**

Firstly I would like to say thank you to all those members who helped make my daughter Laura's birthday party back in May a great success. All had a good time.

Secondly thanks to those members who emptied their flowerpots of daffodil bulbs etc after flowering and left them on the station at Tyttenhanger. There should be a cheerful display round the pond next Spring.

Kate Reddish

The views expressed in this News Sheet are not necessarily those of the Chairman or Council of the NLSME