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Thoughts of Chairman Dell

The rally season is nearly upon us and when I attend rallies with my Wallace and Steevens roller its not long before a group of other drivers gather round, "Tell us Frank, how do you always keep such a wonderful fire in your roller?" (lying and modesty are two of my specialities but from here on it is the truth).

Well its all down to experience, I tell them. When I first got married I rented a basement flat in Lyonsdown Road in Barnet. I had to pay £250.00 key money but as the rent was only 19s 6p it didn't seem too bad. We moved into the flat in August. The house was mid Victorian and divided into flats. The rooms were enormous, like aircraft hangers, and as autumn approached we found the one-bar electric fire was not enough. We tried a three-bar - still no good.

At the time all-night burners were the "in thing". I'm not talking about all-night burners that fitted into your existing grate, but free standing vitreous enamel monsters with double doors with a handle with which you could riddle the fire bars. I thought this would be the answer to our problem. However, the going rate was £65.00 - way beyond my means. After much searching I found a firm in South London who sold reconditioned ones and I bought one for £11.00. My friend had an old Ford Thames van and we went over and picked it up. It must have weighed the best part of 3cwt but we managed to get it. It fitted in the fireplace opening very well and I sealed all round the outside with Pyruma fire cement.

The layout of the flat was like this: A lounge with a door leading into a long hall. Opposite the lounge door on the opposite side of the hall was what was at one time a wine cellar with brick floor, ideal for storing coal. The two doors lined up. This was a great asset as you will see.

Being a basement flat the chimney was over 75ft high so a good draft was assured. I had 5cwt of good coal delivered and lit up. After 15 mins the room was warm; after 30 mins the room was hot. After that all windows were fully opened. In between times I was shoveling coal like a stoker on the Titanic. I stripped off down to my vest. The position of the door to the room and the door to the coal cellar meant I had a clear run through to the fire. I became quite fit and muscular. The 5cwt of coal went within a week. Two shovels at the back, two each side and one at the front was my technique.

We sat there one night, me exhausted after a particularly heavy spell of stoking with the light off and I looked at the fire and it was glowing a dull red!

All the other flats above us remarked how much warmer it was after we had moved in. As the chimney ran through all the flats I was giving them a simple form of central heating.

I got through that winter, which was a very cold one, a much fitter but poorer man. The problem solved itself as the owner of the house was not supposed to sub-let and we were all thrown out.

So if you want to learn how to fire up, get yourself a free standing all-night burner and you'll become an expert

Back to sanity and Club business.

I am pleased to tell you that two brass plates are being prepared to be placed on two of the bench seats at Colney Heath, in memory of the late Bill Gilham who left the Society a sum of money several years ago and the late Graham Balcombe who was extremely generous to the Society.

We'll be holding an election at the June loco meeting, Friday 9th June, when we will elect the Loco Section Leader or Leaders and also the Colney Heath Track Committee. Jim and Derek have agreed to continue running things until the election. We have two candidates for joint Section Leaders. The reason we're holding the election in June is to give other candidates time to come forward and we don't want to rush things but do it in the proper way.

I feel confident in the future and feel that the Club will go forward to even greater achievements.

Frank Dell

Off the Cuff ~ April Council Meeting.

We certainly had winds in March and now the April showers are well in evidence and we've once more had to get our wellies and waterproofs out from the back of the cupboard just for the sheer pleasure of taking Basil for his walks - the wetter he is the better he likes it, and four paws heavily caked in mud are absolute bliss to him but hard work for us trying to clean him off! Martyrs for punishment, that's what we are!

The April Council meeting was a pleasant surprise with numbers "in attendance" well down on the past couple of months.

The Chairman reported that there are two members of the Loco Section prepared to stand jointly as Section Leaders and he wondered if there would be anyone else willing to stand in their own right. The election of a Section Leader/Leaders and of the next Track Committee will take place at the Loco Meeting on H.Q. on Friday June 9th.

We were pleased to learn from the Chairman that the vacant Safety Officer post has now been filled by Paul Lacey - a North American railway enthusiast and a recent recruit to

the pleasures of owning, driving and maintaining steam locomotives.

I found it sad to report the recent death of the Society's benefactor and honorary member Graham Balcombe, and you will find a brief tribute to him in this issue. A few more of his tools and bits & pieces - virtually all he kept for his own use - are again being given to the Society.

The Treasurer presented his monthly financial statement and then proceeded to give a break-down on his Annual Balance Sheet which will now be presented to members at the Annual General Meeting.

The newly formed HQ Committee reported on their first meeting and the various tasks which will now be undertaken during the next few months, which will include costing a possible refurbishment of the kitchen. Tim Joiner issued a report on his check of all electrical equipment at HQ (except the 00 Section to which he could not gain access) together with some recommendations.

Section reports were soon covered. For Fetes & Fairs the first events still to be confirmed are not due to take place until late June. The Loco Section's latest Track Committee meeting covered a lot of ground: Everything well on schedule for the start of the new season at Easter; a brief presentation on spark arresters was given - to be repeated at the Loco Section meeting - with a view to implementing a policy on their use when running at Colney Heath.

The 00 Section continue to "plod on". Slot Cars had "nothing special" to report. The Video Group have been watching other people's films when not discussing model boats which some members are now committed to! Nothing from Marine or North American or Stationary Steam & Traction Engines.

With the News Sheet continuing to go from strength to strength pagewise, the stapling machine is proving inadequate for the task in hand and it was agreed a new electric stapler should be bought. Enquiries are also to be made into the cost of buying a collator - new or second hand - as the team of willing helpers who put it all together are beginning to suffer from leg muscle fatigue.

Members who regularly - or irregularly - visit Headquarters are by now aware that the British Legion building was badly damaged recently when it caught fire, one end result being that the Fire Brigade have for safety reasons collapsed the roof into the remaining structure. Cause - seemingly a television set left switched "on hold" which burst into flames several hours after it was left in that mode. Hopefully they are going to rebuild. In the meantime however their Chairman has approached our Chairman to ask if they could please hold their monthly Committee Meeting in our building which, of course, your Council is only too pleased to agree to. They will be offered the choice of either a Thursday evening (when our Slot Car members are usually on site) or a Monday evening. Date and time still to be arranged - but if you see a lot of strange faces sitting in the main room, you'll know they're our neighbours from the British Legion so do make them welcome.

Finally we think some illegal "fly tipping" has taken place on site at Headquarters which I shall be phoning Barnet Council about. If any of you see this sort of thing happening and you can get a vehicle number and/or a name off a vehicle, let me have it and I can then pass it on. The site has been reasonably clean for about two years now and it would be a great pity to see it deteriorate.

The Annual General Meeting approaches when I plan to step down after some 9+ years, so this is my last "Off The Cuff" offering to you all. I've had an ongoing winter cold for several weeks now, I'm beginning to get a wee bit breathless, and like the rest of you I'm not getting any younger. When I first started it was a "minutes and correspondence" task which - like Topsy - just grew and grew, with fete bookings - birthday party bookings - speaker bookings etc., but I've shed virtually all these so it is back to minutes and correspondence, and some very interesting phone calls from some very nice gentlemen. Michael & I have also tidied up another task - we have now done our last Meals on Wheels stint in London Colney - 12 years for me, 9 years for Michael - and we have seen it decrease very considerably over the last couple of years.

All the best to all of you - cheers.

Beryl Collingwood

Editorial

Looking back over previous Editorials I recognise I've spent a lot of time asking people to help me in some way, yet the one thing I've done very little of is thanking members. So its time to put the record straight.

Firstly I'd like to thank Beryl Collingwood for her "Off the Cuff". Every month it arrives on time, is word perfect and is in electronic form. The detail it contains and the clear informative way it is written has for 9 years set a very high standard in reporting and has certainly been appreciated by all our members. If you stand down from the job, Beryl, your hard work will be missed but you certainly deserve a well earned rest.

Since becoming Editor I have received many positive comments on the News Sheet. Of course the contents of the News Sheet are not, in many ways, under my control and therefore I'd like to pass on the thanks to all those who have sent in contributions. The standard is very high. (In some cases they would not look out of place in a national journal). Its also pleasing to see that we have the occasional contribution from outside the Society.

A club news sheet is made by the contributions it receives and I know today there are similar clubs to ours where the editor despairs of ever getting anything to publish. In fact I believe the first Editor of our own News Sheet, Mr MM Holt, back in 1946 resigned from the job because of the lack of contributions from members.

So thank you very much for all your efforts. May they long continue. I am basking in your glory!

Grahame Ainge

Slot Car News

We are well into the new season and already it is clouded with controversy, disagreements, accusations of illegal equipment and stage managing the championships.

No, I am not talking about Thursday nights but the soap opera that is the Grand Prix season. At least Michael Schumacher is showing what motor racing is supposed to be about when the flag drops or should I say when the computer controlled lights go out.

On the subject of computers, it does seem incredible in the age of very sophisticated and obscenely expensive technology McClaren are incapable of finding someone who can read a ruler. I do not buy the excuse that damage from the bumpy track surface cased the wing to drop. If that was the case who in their right mind would allow a car to take to the race track if it was going to fall to bits over a few bumps? Peter Sauber had the sense to withdraw his cars from the Interlagos race when his own wings started to fail. No, I think it is a case of too much reliance on technology and not enough on the human element. This is not just confined to motor racing but is seen in almost all walks of life. Engineering skills are sadly being lost because it is easier to press a few buttons than to get your hands dirty.

On a lighter note, its great to see an old British marque returning to international honours recently. Lister, who have not won a major race for over 40 years won the opening round of the FIAGT series in Spain, even if they are sponsored by a football team from t'north who keep losing every time they go to Wembley.

Club nights are seeing a healthy number of racers turning up and as a result the racing seems to be starting earlier, which caught me out last week. So if you want to practise as well as race, turn up earlier. The pub will not change its closing time for our benefit. Good luck to those who are off to the Isle of Man for the nationals. I don't know exactly who's going but good luck anyway and let me know of your successes so I can inform the whole Society through this column.

Thanks to Tony Condon for his new Trivia slot which he informs me will be a regular feature.

Steve Francis

[Tyttenhanger Gazette ~ Raymond Goss' Marine Steam Engine](#)

At the April Loco Section meeting Raymond Goss came along with a marine engine he had designed and built himself. The full size engine to power a boat stood on the table; one man could just lift it. Raymond is a member of the Steam Boat Asssocation who pride themselves with traditional boats of the type that usually have a fire tube boiler, an open engine, Stephenson's valve gear and the like. Bitten by his experiences of a Wright steam car he preferred a flash steam boiler and having limited metal working skills decided to design and make his own engine rather than be tied to a traditional design.

The engine is three cylinder, overhead cam, overhead valve, and semi uniflow; that means it has valves for inlet and exhaust; six valves in all. The working temperature of 300C which has risen to 340C is too high for piston or slide valves, so poppet valves were used. Having designed the engine, patterns were made and castings produced. We saw some slides of the engine's progress, the cylinder block was surface ground top and bottom at Barnet College. The bores are 2" dia, and the stroke is 2". The pistons were machined from a casting. The connecting rods were made from 5/8" thick mild steel with lightening holes in them. The piston was secured to the rod with a gudgeon pin

which was secured to the piston with set screws. The big end bearings were gunmetal, the crankshaft was fabricated and assembled using Loctite 638 and also pinned.

The crankshaft was mounted on a box framework which was mounted on a plate that fitted between the cylinder block and the sump.

The overhead camshaft moves the valve through a cam follower, the steam comes in the cylinder around the stem of the valve, and a hole opposite is for the admission of lubricating oil which is pumped in.

A device was demonstrated for milling the profile of the cams. There are three speeds; forward start, reverse start and run. The engine runs on a steam pressure of 200 to 300 PSI. It has an expansion ratio of 8:1. Raymond found the book on springs by Tubal Cain to be invaluable for designing the valve springs. The engine runs but trials are still continuing to improve its performance.

We thanked Raymond for giving us an interesting talk and showing us his engine, which is quite a remarkable achievement.

Roger Bell

Some Memories of Graham Balcome

The first we knew of Graham was in July 1993 when we received a letter which said "I am looking for some society or organisation such as yours which would appreciate receiving after my demise and as a gift, the mechanical and electrical equipment I have collected over many decades. Free, that is, except for the "burden" of dismantling and collecting." Within two weeks Mike and Tom Luxford met, for the first time, an extremely interesting and talented gentleman when they accepted Graham's generous offer.

By January 1995, Graham realised that his interest in his workshop was waning and wrote asking the Society to take certain specified items of equipment as soon as convenient to us. This was rapidly done and in either March or April the various high quality items were offered for sale to members, and a large sum of money was duly deposited in the Society's bank account. Two years later and once again Graham decided he needed to dispose of more of his equipment, just keeping a small selection to help maintain his house. This time his A-reg. Talbot Solara (under 30,000 on the clock!) was included - again free though we did not actually receive it for several months. Some time later we were able to let him know that everything had been sold on to members, and once again the Society's coffers were greatly enhanced.

At some point, though we cannot remember exactly when, we began to send Graham our monthly News Sheet which we know he enjoyed reading and finally he was elected an Honorary Member of the Society. The last letter we personally received from him was in August 1999 by which time his eyesight was becoming extremely bad, but over the past years we entertained him at home, brought him to our exhibition in Barnet and on several occasions he spent an afternoon with us at Colney Heath - all of which he thoroughly enjoyed. The last time he came to us some 8 months ago he was proudly holding a photograph of his sweetheart Ann of 60 years ago and he couldn't wait to tell us how they had met up again. They were phoning each other every day and visiting each other as often as possible. He was so very happy and it transformed his loneliness,

and it is a memory of Graham we will long cherish.

During the course of the many visits to Graham's house at Goffs Oak we were able to get some insight into his character and interests. He had worked as an expert on shortwave radio for the GPO at Dollis Hill and certainly was involved in some highly secret research work during WWII. He had a wide range of diverse interests and after a period climbing mountains in the UK he went to the other extreme and became a pioneer in underwater cave exploration during which he worked closely with Siebe-Gorman on the development of diving and breathing apparatus for this kind of exploration. He was also the first person to dive Wookey Hole (Cheddar) where there is a memorial plaque commemorating his action.

He was clearly a man of science and had little truck with anything that did not have a scientific background or evidence. Around his house were a collection of bulldog clips holding paper clippings which, on closer inspection, were found to be calculus formulae and mathematical equations. On being asked what they were about, Graham said when the television bored him, which was frequently, he stimulated his ageing brain with these little mathematical exercises! In the latter part of his life he was delighted to enjoy the Presidency of various diving clubs up and down the country and it seemed he attended most of their annual dinners as guest of honour and an after dinner speaker. We have now learnt from his next of kin that one of the diving clubs has taken his ashes which will be scattered in one of the deepest caves in his honour - a very fitting tribute and one he would be appreciated.

The North London Society is greatly indebted to Graham for his generosity, and we know he was pleased we responded so positively to his original letter. We rekindled his interest in things mechanical and he enjoyed meeting and talking to so many member.

Mike & Beryl Collingwood

The Britannias ~ A class that just slipped away ~ By Peter Kearon

Having been raised and trained in the unchallenged ways of the Great Western Railway and seen the introduction in 1951 of British Railways' Britannia class, the author puts forward some unbiased memories and personal experiences of BR's first standard series.

My courting and college days in the early and mid 1950's repeatedly took me to Stratford (East) station, well served by the Underground's Central Line. Instead I chose always to travel from Liverpool Street by the so-speedy newly introduced 1500 volt dc electrics which gave the added bonus of a walk through that station's smoky and sulphur-laden atmosphere. Engines were everywhere although by then the once-numerous Great Eastern N7 radial tanks had been displaced on the main line by the electrics; only the Enfield service still ran steam hauled.

There was no doubt that pride of place was held by the new pacifics. Names such as "Alfred the Great" and "Lord Hurcomb" are still remembered but all were turned out in spotless condition and were manned by interested footplate men who were plainly pleased to see an admiring face, to the extent of occasionally inviting such enthusiasts

onto the footplate.

But what had previously been in charge of the express services? Pre-first world war inside cylinder 4-6-0s some still with a Victorian-era lattice covering much of the coupled wheels; under-boilered, under-pressured Sandringhams, those that were built not up to quality but down to shortness. Shame on you Nigel. Or 10-year-old mixed-traffic B1s. No wonder the new Britannias were welcomed at Norwich, Ipswich and Stratford with so much enthusiasm and in consequence produced such reliable, speedy running as had never before been seen on the Great Eastern main line. Railway politics insisted that all regions should enjoy the excellence of this new class, a design optimistically described as state-of-the-art which, it was falsely said, incorporated best features taken from all the regions. The result was claimed to be a design which would replace outdated pre-war and even post-war classes such as Royal Scots, Castles, A3's and West Country Pacifics. Needless to say Stanier, Churchward and successors, Gresley and Bulleid were not to be outdone so easily.

A batch of engines, condescendingly named after stars was inflicted on the GWR and, of course, shedded at Old Oak Common. They were tried out on the named expresses but their lack of power soon showed up; photographs taken at that time when working the Cornish Riviera revealed that they were commonly double-heading a King or Castle which rather spoilt the effect. Soon these new engines were relegated to lesser duties hauling Oxford and Weymouth expresses or stopping trains to Bristol.

Not to be thwarted, Euston, the ruling power, decreed that all should be transferred to Cardiff (Canton) shed and to remove any choice Cardiff's fleet of Castle (unwanted Kings had not then appeared) was transferred away. Britannias, to Canton drivers, were an anathema. Brought up to be accustomed to the doorless spartan cabs of Castles it could perhaps be thought that the enclosed cabs of the newcomers would be welcome but they were soon labelled as draughty, dust-filled spaces which scooped up icy blasts from beneath the suspended floor which was positioned above a forward extension of the tender framing.

As my single experience of riding in the cab of a Britannia was to rumble from the turntable at the bottom of Canton shed to the water towers at the other end I can hardly offer an opinion of cab comfort. But I well remember the driver's gloomy offering that the high-pitched cab looked like a so-and-so hen house on wheels, a remark doubtless contrary to general opinion.

There was, however, a much more basic failing in this new design - the regulator and its control function. Open the regulator of a Castle and the engine moves forward. Try the same operation on a Britannia and so often the result is wheels flying at 500 rpm but no forward movement. It was said by Cardiff drivers, true or false, that 100% steam flow was achieved by 5% regulator opening and hence frantic slipping. It should perhaps be remembered that Canton drivers had no experience of pacifics since the demise of "The Great Bear" some 30 years earlier (and how unlikely that even the most senior driver at Canton had ever even fired that locomotive) and had no knowledge of the propensity of all pacifics on starting to settle back on the rear wheels and thus take the weight off the leading and driving coupled wheels just when adhesion is most needed.

Remember the pitiful starts of A3s and Merchant Navy Engines? By necessity Britannias took over the prime London expresses. This arrangement coincided with regular visits I made to Pontypool (Crane Street) not to be confused with better known Pontypool Road. On paper this could be achieved by taking the 8am Capital United Express and hence, with time to spare, the 8.20 Newport-Blaenavon 6400-powered

push-me, pull-you auto train to my destination.

(Funny things GWR auto trains. The driver spent half his time in a compartment at the far end of a two-coach set controlling a linked regulator handle and the vacuum brake handle. To allow the fireman the facility of linking up a slide valve locomotive without suffering injury from an open regulator the GWR built a series of screw-reverse engines comprising 5400 and 6400 but not 7400 classes along with 4800 class but not 5800 class sister engines. Prairie tanks with piston valves were safely notched up with the pole reverser. In practice the awkward regulator linkage was often unofficially disconnected allowing the fireman to be driver except for brake operation.)

But the true schedule was not like that. For reasons which I never understood the 8 o'clock deadline from Cardiff was ignored while a group of officials including the guard held cabside discussions and it was rarely before 8.10 that we made a slippery, albeit downhill start on the 12 mile journey to Newport where our late arrival ensured that the Blaenavon train had already departed. The thought of holding this little train to meet up with passengers changing trains seems never to have entered the head of the Newport controller.

With the better part of an hour to wait I was in a perfect position to see Britannias at their very worst. The platforms at Newport, up and down, were offset from the through tracks such that leaving the station entailed an immediate double swing over points to regain the main line. (There was at one time a fine painting by Eric Bottomley showing "Tornado" at Newport with the front leading bogie wheels just inches away from the points.)

Taking these points was something that Britannias resolutely refused to do. Pyrotechnics, wheel speeds that wrecked Blue Peter and haggard drivers were commonplace as 10-15 minutes of regulator manipulation elapsed before a Britannia-hauled up Paddington train finally cleared the platform, time enough for a Castle to have taken 15 coaches from the same platform to beyond Severn Tunnel Junction.

In an effort to improve matters a team of 'inspectors' was brought in to supervise and assist. One would stand at the left-hand drive cabside to comfort and encourage the unhappy driver with such cries as "give it - the regulator - a bit more", "shut it quick" and finally "I think she's moving", I have removed the colourful expletives and endless blasphemous expressions. On the fireman's side of the engine an unfortunate junior inspector was positioned at the trackside with a supply of sand which he endeavoured to throw on to the rail in front of the three coupled wheels. He needed great courage to work in the proximity of flashing connecting and coupling rods and perhaps worse the wicked return crank. When the wheels exploded into a blur of motion the sand was ground into the finest dust such that the engine -and unfortunate inspector - were subject to a Sahara like storm. Eventually, inch by inch, the engine fought its way over the points and onto the main line but even then the last coach was moving at little more than walking pace as it finally cleared the platform and made space for the following 8.15 stopper to Paddington which in turn went through the same starting disaster. It must be said that when these engines got into their stride they were fast and free running such that on an easy schedule punctual arrivals at Paddington were achieved despite these unhappy starts. On the other hand the thought of restarting a heavy train on a wet, slippery Dainton or Rattery bank is not a pleasant one. From the bottom of the Severn Tunnel unthinkable. On the other hand drivers of Duchess pacifics faced this problem every wet day on Shap and Beattock and perhaps accepted that closing and opening the regulator 300 times was normal.

Something had to be done and it was clearly a case of improving the control of the steam flow. Canton-shedded engines were one by one taken into Swindon Works and the patented multi-valve regulator changed to a Swindonised double flat valve arrangement which had made GW starts virtually slip free. (Remember how Kings took the Cornish Riviera out of Paddington on what looked like half regulator but allowing for the lubricator linkage really on quarter regulator without a trace of slip). The BR external control linkage remained unchanged. How many engines were modified in this way and whether only the locomotives allocated to Cardiff remains unclear.

But unpopular engines remain forever unpopular. In 1955 the Cardiff driver of "Polar Star" failed to understand the daily notice board and nearing Didcot passed well-signposted signals (what's new?) swung from the up fast to the up slow line without reducing speed, derailed and finished up at the bottom of an embankment. Eleven passengers lost their lives. The driver's excuse was lack of forward vision which he blamed on the vertical handrail bolted to the side of the smoke deflector. A few engines had these offending handrails removed and replaced with brass-edged handholes. I believe only Canton-based engines were so treated; others remained unmodified.

By then even Euston, with lots of bright new diesels to play with, had to admit the cause to be lost and just as these engines arrived unannounced so they just slipped away. Electrification of the Great Eastern main line to Norfolk and the former Southern lines to Kent took away the work where Britannias were most valued. In the early 1960's I remember Kings Cross sending out one from Immingham shed on the less-than-glamorous most stations to Cleethorpes Express. A local Sulzer powered stopping train, leaving at the same time would generally have reached Finsbury Park or Harringay ahead of the main line train.

Camden's use of these engines I do not know (their handling of the three cylinder poppet valve version was pathetic because it was vying with well-established Stanier Duchesses) but finally all 50-odd engines drifted north to become absorbed into Black Five links where current photographs show black was really spelt filthy. Carlisle and other Lancashire sheds showed little interest in them; they were largely put to goods work as many sheds had no passenger links. Eventually all but two found their way to the scapyards.

In truth Britannias were too few in numbers to have had any real impact on the rail system and the original hype and over rating did nothing to endear them when well-established classes were increasingly available. It is sad to think that these days a nicely polished Britannia nameplate at Mr Wright's auction can demand more money than the building cost of the entire locomotive.

Footnote - Unfortunate though these engines were, they did have a certain appeal and nowhere can this be better seen than in well-made models. The Editor's 3 ½ inch model often seen at our Club is a pleasure to watch and a slip free climber up the bank with passengers in tow.

Peter Kearon

North American Section News

Your scribe is feeling a little guilty about not having written anything in the Society's journal recently so let's get on with it. Work proceeds at varying rates and then suddenly

we see progress. It feels like one of those times - seeing progress rather than merely knowing that it's going on.

After some years of having several circular holes in baseboards we are seeing them filled with turntables. Lack of photographic evidence suggests that running tender first is not prototypical in North America. Therefore we've been unprototypical for some time.

A gallows type turntable is nothing to do with a ferroequinological lynch mob, rather it is an early balance type of table. John Squire is installing one into McKeen, beside the rapids. John insists that hostlers will have to exercise care in positioning locomotives as his quarter scale traction engine isn't readily adaptable to extracting locomotives from raging torrents. He's been avidly scrutinising rare and ancient manuscripts to identify the flora which flourished under the table. We do like to get the detail right.

Down at Richmond, our industrial destination, Les Dobbs has scratch built what I understand to be a three point table, a more substantial structure for turning rather larger locomotives. The pit is deeper and unlikely to support any life forms. Les has fabricated a single circular rail to support each end of the table - an impressive feat of accurate construction to those who never even got as far as 'O level' woodwork, let alone metalbashing. Debate still rages as to whether or not it is desirable to make this power operated. At present Les' boyhood skills with Meccano are evident to those humble enough to kneel under the baseboards.

On the main line at Lima it appears that even the grotty plastic turntable may be in for a refurbishing - any takers?

Through our NMRA contacts we continue to receive visitors from both sides of the pond who are impressed by our ability to put so much into a small space. To further our publicity we have recently taken new photographs to update those on the website. Full and frank discussions are now in progress as to whose locomotives will appear.

Clive Winter

The opinions and views expressed in this News Sheet are not necessarily those of the Society or editor.

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