

## From the Secretary

**IMPORTANT** - This is the last reminder that your Annual General Meeting takes place on Friday, 3rd May at 20.00 hours. Your presence is essential for the future well-being of the Society which, I believe, we all enjoy.

See you at the AGM.

*Tony Dunbar*  
*Hon. Secretary*

## From the Membership Secretary

Membership figures are meaningless at this time of year when subs. are rolling in - please keep them rolling as I hate chasing late payers. I am gratified at the number of pensioners who are voluntarily paying the full sub. and being classified as full members.

Again please read '**Treasurer Twittering**' with regard to **2002-2003 subscription rates**.

### **New Members**

This month we welcome one new Junior Member approved at the April Council Meeting:

**Alex Chapman,**

*Bernard Lambert*

## Treasurer Twittering

There is not much to report this month as I will be reporting formally at the A.G.M. when you will doubtless bombard me with questions!

*Bernard Lambert*

# *North London Society of Model Engineers*

## **Notice to members**

**The 58<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the North London Society of Model Engineers will be held at Headquarters, Legion Way, Summers Lane, Finchley, London N12 at 8.00pm on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May.**

Preceding the AGM will be an ordinary general meeting to receive nominations for Council.

*Tony Dunbar. Hon Sec NLSME*

## **Marine Mutterings By Bernard Lambert**

The Shelter is now complete but needing a simple locking scheme for the locker. The roof is now fully felted thanks to Mike Foreman and we hope to see members using it soon.

The other work around the Lake is also nearly finished but, as usual, we still need a few more hands to tidy up and sow grass seed.

Enough of work – let's all be sailing from now on.

Happy boating - *Bernard Lambert*



## **Slot Car News**



### **By Steve Francis**

Apologies for the absence of this column recently but I have been rather busy with one thing and another - trying to get my slot cars competitive for one thing.

The season is well under way with various members of our section travelling round the country to race, and generally doing very well.

Welcome to Bryan Latimer Davis to our Section. Bryan used to race at Tottenham in the seventies and has decided to try his hand again with us.

Congratulations to Tony Condon on his retirement from Kodak after thirty seven years. John said that Tony will now get a tin of paint and a paintbrush for breakfast! Good luck Tony in your next endeavour. In fact very, very good luck, as I am illustrating the book Tony is writing about the Le mans 24 hour race.

With all the interest in hard bodied slot cars nationally, Scalextric Fly, Ninco etc., we have taken the plunge and held a few races ourselves recently. It seems to be quite popular even if the racing is somewhat pedestrian compared to the modern day rocketships we currently race. These cars certainly make for a more relaxed atmosphere in the clubroom, and we still have time to make it to the pub afterwards. This is still very much a vital ingredient after a hard nights racing. With the interest generated, Paul Harwood (the quiet one!) has taken it upon himself to organize a Scalextric evening on Friday 10th May. The intention is to hold a regular Friday evening devoted to Scalextric cars if the idea takes off. At the moment we are only using the track once a week and occasional weekends so by opening up the track for use on a second night and encouraging racers from outside the Club we can swell the coffers of the society and get them to join up and benefit from all the Society has to offer.

Most of us has, or access to, the internet but you may not be aware that the society has a website and some photos were kindly taken on our behalf at a recent Club night for our page and as if by magic they appeared the following night. Well I think its magic because I'm still trying to get to grips with this new fangled thing sitting in the corner. So as I was saying the Society website is well worth a visit especially as there are some photos of us on it and you can see what the other Sections are up to. The NLSME website address is [www.nlsme.co.uk](http://www.nlsme.co.uk)

Once or twice a year I manage to get to Colney Heath with Stephi and am always impressed by how much has been done over the winter. We have it easy. We've got a roof and heating.

Next month I should be able to report on the national finals and how well we have done and how the scalextric night has gone.

**RACING CALENDAR FOR MAY:**

2<sup>ND</sup> NATIONALS PRACTISE  
9<sup>TH</sup> TEAMRACE 1/32  
10<sup>TH</sup> SCALEXTRIC  
16<sup>TH</sup> SALOON  
23<sup>RD</sup> F.I. AND SCALEXTRIC  
30<sup>TH</sup> SPORTS

# Tyttenhanger Gazette

## By Roger Bell

The topic for the April Loco Section meeting was by Ian Murray entitled 'Tales of a Loss Adjuster – The Lighter Side'.

Before getting to the lighter side Ian spoke of what a loss adjuster does to fill the background in and thus set the scene.

Ian said that a loss adjuster is a great job if one is nose-y, as it gets one into everything, into people's homes, the workplace and the leisure environment and it shows one how the world works.

The work of the loss adjuster started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when crops were insured. If a spark from a steam engine set fire to the crops a loss adjuster would come out and establish all the facts, decide the cost of the claim and then see if it was covered by the policy. Up until the 1930s they were called assessors and at that time several fires were started deliberately by a group of assessors to their financial advantage. As a result of this they went to prison and the name 'assessor' became tainted. It was then changed to adjuster and in the 1950s received a Royal Charter, as a true profession. Although they work for insurance companies they give an impartial view; truth and equity is their aim.

Ian spoke of the different classes of business – marine, aviation, life and pensions, and general, which covers fire, perils and liability risks. From the legal side, common civil law is based on previous cases, statute law is law passed by government and contract law is that made up and agreed between individuals.

Many cases are decided in court and the main benefactors are the lawyers. In one claim of £35 million, 40% went in lawyers' fees. Lord Wolf has now imposed time limits on stages of procedures. If the limit is not met a sanction is imposed. This has reduced the number of claims clogging up the courts, reduced lawyers' costs and resulted in claimants being dealt with earlier.

In America the Twin Towers were insured with a new company for 3 ½ billion dollars per claim one month before September 11<sup>th</sup>. As two aircraft struck the building within minutes of each other, the claim is for 7 billion dollars and the claim is now before the courts, the insurers contesting that two incidents are part of the same claim and they are only liable for 3 ½ billion dollars.

In the 1990s with the collapse of Lloyds, all insurers got together and decided what to pay out rather than pay expensive law costs.

Consumer protection really started in 1932 with the case of Donahue v Stevenson.. Donahue bought a bottle of beer from Stevenson. The beer was drunk with a friend. On emptying the bottle a snail fell out. The friend became ill and claimed against Stevenson in court. Stevenson, the shopkeeper, said the friend did not buy the bottle. The judge ruled that as the bottle was opaque one could not see anything wrong with the beer and found the shopkeeper liable.

On the lighter side, Ian lived and worked in Manchester and was involved with people and incidents. He recounted the tale of two Yorkshiremen, one of whom said that the only good things about Manchester were its cricket and its prostitutes. The other replied, 'But my wife came from Manchester.'

He asked, 'Does she bat or does she bowl?'

Ian's Company sent him to Liverpool as a claims inspector. As a native Mancunian, he did not realise the antipathy the Liverpudlian would have against him. It seemed to stem back to the building of the Manchester Ship Canal. This was built by the Mancunians to give them their own port from which to export their cotton to the rest of the world without having to pay the extortionate Liverpool fees.

The number of insurance claims from dockworkers was amazing. Each usually had a witness to his accident. Finding these witnesses was difficult. The location where a man was working would be found from the timekeeper's office and a code number indicated whether a witness was working on a ship or a berth. If a man had 'gone broke', he had been paid off and the ship had left.

Discharge nets were secured between the topside of the ship and the quay to catch anything that may fall whilst being unloaded. Sometimes a diver would be sent down to find an object not in the net. One item proving difficult was bobbing in the water, the diver trying to retrieve it as it rolled in the water. Ian read the label, 'This Side Up.' And then another label read, 'Keep Dry.'

Ian telephoned a witness involved in an injury claim and asked what had happened. The reply came, 'He was pulling on the andy belly and trapped his belly in the sideport.' It was impossible to make any sense of this over the 'phone, so he went to see the man. The andy belly was a rope attached to the gang-plank, and the sideport was a door at dock level on the ship's side. It seems that as he was pulling the gang-plank in, his stomach became trapped in the door of the ship's side.

Spillers had a grain silo insured with them and had made a claim as a result of an accident in a machine room at the top of the silo. The foreman led the way to the top of the silo by jumping on this one-foot wide moving ladder, which was positioned against the wall. Ian had to follow and looked round nervously as it reached each floor. As it reached the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor he saw the foreman who shouted, 'Jump off now.' He noticed that the ladder had gone over the top like a conveyor and was going down the other side. After inspecting the room and being assured there was no other way down, the foreman again disappeared on the ladder. It took Ian ages to summon up nerve to leap on the moving ladder. Back in the manager's office, the manager said, 'You were quick. Did you walk up?-----He never took you on the man lift did he?-----The bastard.'

With eyes streaming with hay fever a visit was made to a pharmaceutical works at Skelmersdale. He was told that they had just the cure for him and led him to the *Vick* vat. He was invited to take a deep breath as the lid of boiling *Vick* was lifted. Anxious for a cure he followed the instruction. He then felt as though two red-hot poker had

gone up his nostrils and that his lungs were on fire. It was supposed to cure almost anything.

Ian then came to London as a loss adjuster. One of his first cases was to visit a lady in Brixton who claimed her hair had fallen out after using a hair product and could not go to a wedding. Ian knocked on the door and was met by a short, plump lady holding back an Alsatian dog. She claimed that it did not say on the bottle, 'Do not use this with permed hair.' On asking her, she had not permed her hair so Ian asked her what the relevance of this was. She then went mad and tore a lump out of Ian's hair and went to get her large black boyfriend who then started knocking her about. Ian said, 'My hair has come out and I am not making a claim,' and left them to it.

In the main he enjoyed dealing with people as the great majority were honest. He visited one house about a burst pipe at about 5.30pm one dark, cold evening. As he knocked on the door a woman appeared with a torch, splish-splashing to the door. She invited him to sit down on the arm of the settee whilst she made him a cup of tea on the gas, with freezing water dripping down. She asked if he had done many of these calls that day. Ian felt that such kindness was quite heart warming in the circumstances.

Ian can really tell a good tale. His humour raised much laughter throughout the meeting and we thanked him for his informative and entertaining presentation.

## **The Marine Section Sailing Plan for 2002**

### **By John Morgan**

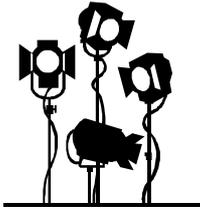
In an attempt to bring the Section together, the first Sunday in each month would become a "special" day so that those that cannot attend every week know that there will be boaters around on this particular day. I will also make very effort to attend and launch the harbour for captains to play with!

Eventually, once the buoys have been sorted, I will organise a steering course with points being accumulated towards a (small) prize at the end of the season, provided our Treasurer approves. We will have to wait while Bernard changes hats.

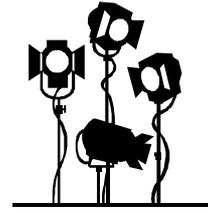
To give those who cannot attend every month a chance, I would take only the highest scores from everyone's, say, four visits. That way a missed Sunday or two would not automatically result in a place in the final being unobtainable. There you go, there are no valid excuses for avoiding taking part!

Following the success of our first ever Open Days last year, we are going to have two more. Please make a note of our Open Days for this year, they are Sunday 28th July and 15th September 10:00 to 17:00 and remember to turn out with a boat! Yes, there will be an organised event or two on the water, but the emphasis will be on "fun". Plenty of time will be available for free sailing.

That's 2002 in brief.



## Spotlight on Geoff Wren Part 1



I was born on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1923 in Twickenham and my first school was St Catherine's Convent School, Twickenham. The house had previously been the home of the poet Alexander Pope (b.1688). He was in fact a hunchback and was embarrassed by his condition. Part of the grounds of the house lay on the other side of a busy road and the poet built a grotto in the eighteenth century under the road so that he could cross the road without being seen. I had a lot of fun with friends playing in that tunnel.

Something, which I remember well as a child, was the Graf Zeppelin coming over. It was on a courtesy visit and certainly was an impressive sight. It had previously visited both the North and South Poles and for a number of years ran a regular service to South America. Whilst over here it was based, I think, at Heston or Handsworth where there were small aerodromes. Eventually, Heathrow swallowed up such aerodromes. Incidentally there is an interesting museum of the Zeppelins near Lake Constance at Friedrichshafen in southern Germany. There was a big floating launching pad on Lake Constance, which could turn through 360 degrees, and it was there that the Zeppelins were tested.

My father had a car (which was necessary for his work) and he liked to go out and about. He took me several times to Brooklands racetrack at Weybridge. The second time we were there Malcolm Campbell ran his Bluebird II round before it went to America for an attempt on the world speed record. I think he broke his own speed record that time. His great rival was Henry Seagrave whose car was the Golden Arrow. I remember it once being on show at Gamages – that wonderful shop in Holborn which sold everything – lathes, mills, steam engines, tools, railways, fur coats, pots and pans etc. etc. Of course the times before the Second World War were days when Britain held all the speed records, on land, sea and air.

Another thing, which sticks in my memory, was the time my father took my brother and I to Crystal Palace. On the programme was daylight fireworks, which fascinated us both seeming a bit far-fetched. Anyway these turned out to be very enjoyable. When they exploded in the air lots of paper animals floated by which was most effective. I've never seen such a thing, though, ever since.

In 1934 we moved to East Sheen and I started at the County School. My first recollection of steam locos was when I saw them crossing the bridge at Richmond. My eldest sister used to take us for a walk every Saturday morning down to the river. Most of the trains around Twickenham were electric, so steam was something quite special. The same was true at East Sheen. I got friendly with a porter at Mortlake Station and if I got hold of any cigarettes I used to give them to him and in return he gave me the odd ticket. I remember going on one of these tickets to see one of the new

Portsmouth electric expresses which was on view at Victoria Station. These units were nicknamed 'Nelsons' on account of them having a front window on only one side and they ran to Portsmouth.

One afternoon we had a tremendous storm for an hour and a half and when it was over I went down to the station. There was a lady there with a great pile of luggage and my porter friend was with her. Both were looking anxious. I asked what was wrong and the porter said that the power was off as a result of the storm and the lady had to catch the Ocean Liner Express at Waterloo to go to Southampton to get on the Queen Mary. I saw the stationmaster go across to the signal box. There was a steam service between Reading and Waterloo (the only steam service that came through Mortlake) and the signaller put on the boards so that the train was halted to allow the lady to get to Waterloo. I wonder if you'd find such service today from our railways.

Another thing I remember was that during my summer holidays school friends and I went to Kew Pier to get the 1.00pm boat to Hampton Court. It cost nine pence return. Joseph Mears who also owned coaches and cinemas ran the boats. On the way home it poured with rain and we went down below. A lady asked us if we liked bread and butter pudding. We said 'yes' although I was not that keen. She had a great bowl of it and said we could have as much as we liked as it was only going over the side when the boat got to Westminster! I certainly didn't like bread and butter pudding after that. It's funny what experiences stick in your mind.

Another experience that I still remember well from my childhood was a visit by the Prince of Wales who was coming one afternoon to open three bridges, Chiswick, Richmond and Hampton Court. He'd done Chiswick and Richmond and was on his way to Hampton Court. Well, us schoolchildren from the Convent School stood by the roadside waving our little flags but his car swept by and I don't think he really saw us. I suppose it was the disappointment of being unnoticed by the future king after we'd gone to so much trouble that meant I remember this.

I had grandparents at Watford (my mother's parents). Whenever we went there I used to spend all the time I could on Watford Junction Station and after seeing Southern electrics, Royal Scots and the big pacifics were marvellous. We went to my grandparents one Christmas and on the Boxing Day afternoon I said, 'I thought I'd go down to the station'.

'It's no good going down there', my uncle said, 'There's no trains running today'.

'OK', I said, 'But I think I could do with the walk'. When I got there the station was deserted with all the signals on. It was just getting dark and I heard a hiss of steam and there in a bay platform was an engine and a couple of coaches. The driver looked out and said, 'Want to have a look on here, son?'

'Thank you,' I said and he showed me all the controls.

Eventually he got out a large watch and asked, 'Coming with us?'

'I must be home for tea at five,' I said.

‘Are you coming or not?’

‘Yes OK’. We went down to St Albans. It was my first ride on the footplate of a loco. Of course, I’ve always loved railways and by 1939 I remember I had an ‘O’ gauge meths- fired Bowman steam locomotive.

We went to several air displays at Hendon in the mid-thirties. The RAF gave displays of such aircraft as Hawker Hart, Demons and Furys. One year I remember they were at one point doing the *Prince of Wales Feathers* in colour. The aircraft on the right dropped out and we suspected he must be in trouble. He came down low, right over us and landed. We saw the pilot get out and run and the plane exploded. What we didn’t know at the time was that the Lord Mayor’s son was in the rear seat of the plane and we heard later on the news that he had died. This was in 1938.

We went to one of Alan Cobham’s displays. We took a flight in a four-engine passenger plane, which was a lovely experience and my first time in the air. Alan Cobham was famous, incidentally, for developing mid-air fuelling.

The Prince of Wales had his own aeroplane at Hendon, a little red one. Apparently it was said that one day he arrived much the worse for drink and got in his plane and started it. The Station Commander got straight on the phone to Buckingham Palace whilst four or five mechanics held down the plane as the Prince revved it up! Whether the Palace gave permission I do not know.

My mother and father had a legal separation in 1938 and we moved up to North Finchley. In 1939 the War started and during the Blitz I was a messenger. That role was required if the phones broke down. As it was they didn’t so I used to go out with the warden on patrol and looking for unexploded bombs. I was still at school then. But I remember when the barrage opened up on the Wednesday night. The next night every gun in London opened up and carried on all night. They didn’t bring anything down but it did keep the planes up high and it was very good as a morale booster. No one slept much that night. Next day we found what we thought was a lot of bombs. They were in fact shells that had not been fused and 16 of them had landed on North London. They were thought to have come from AA guns on Blackheath Common! It was as if Londoners were attacking London.

One night one of the wardens asked me if I would go up to the Gaumont and get some cigarettes. When I came out of the shop I could see all these searchlights raking the sky and I could see five parachutes coming down. I thought either they were land mines or they were airmen. I ran back to the post and we all hoped to God they would not come down here. Anyway, one landed at Wood Green, one at Finsbury Park and at other places some way away from us. When they exploded they gave a terrific blast because they did not bury themselves in the ground and cause a crater.

In my last term at school my father asked me what I wanted to do when I left. I said I’d like to be an engineer. I left school in 1941 and he contacted a man next door from Bryant Symonds, precision engineers. I went for an interview and got accepted. There was plenty of war work. They built diamond tool lathes and had several Admiralty contracts. They had lens grinders and many other machines to help the war effort.

It was a tradition in the Company that all apprentices went in the water tank. After I'd been there three weeks I hadn't been put in yet and I thought perhaps they had forgotten. How wrong I was! One night during overtime I was marking up and several blokes came in and carried me down there and in I went, head first, banging my head on the back of the tank. I came out and gave my clothes to the hardener for drying in front of the big muffles. Later they stopped the practice when someone suddenly twigged they used to quench cyanide hardened things in it!

When I reached the age of 18 (which was call-up age) I applied to the RAF. I'd always wanted to be a spitfire pilot so I went to Euston for the interview. I had a very thorough medical and they sent me to the London Hospital and I had to report back the following week. They told me that I had a murmur on my heart that was the result of rheumatic fever I'd had as a child. So, aircrew was out and I went back to the Admiralty work at Bryant Symonds.

We got pep talks by naval officers at Bryant Symonds and I remember one officer used to stray from the point and end up telling us *risqué* stories, which didn't go down too well with the boss. Once he told us that a Wren chauffeur turned up one day to take him to see the Commander-in-Chief. When they arrived at the big house that had been requisitioned by the Admiralty he asked her, 'How's the crusty old sod this morning?'

'Well,' she said, 'He was alright at breakfast time but I suppose he would be – I am his wife.'

One of our fitters was on HMS Southampton, which was receiving some work on the Tyne, and he was fitting some of our equipment and he heard a lot of running about and a petty officer came up and asked him if he was going soon. He said he was going to be another half hour at which the petty officer asked him to 'get a move on because we are going out to intercept the Bismarck.' In the end he was taken off by tug at the mouth of the river. He was told that if he had been caught as a civilian on the ship the Germans would shoot him as a spy.

Some lunchtimes I used to cycle up from the firm to a *British Restaurant* where you could get a cheap meal. (These restaurants were set up and run by the WVS). One lunchtime we were standing on a corner debating whether to go down to the marshes to have a swim in the River Lea. Some of us decided to go but after a half mile down the road there was an explosion in the distance behind us. We accepted that and carried on but next day we discovered that the very corner we had been standing discussing our swimming expedition was now a big crater. We'd been minutes away from being killed.

Although it was a war there were exciting times. But sometimes they were too exciting! There were V1s and V2s but people were much more friendly towards one another. I had joined the home guard (28<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Battalion) which meant that if you were on duty of an evening you were allowed off from work at 3.00pm. I remember going to work one morning and I got up by the Moss Hall Tavern in Finchley to catch the trolley bus and there was a terrific bang. As we neared Bounds Green we found the wires were down and we could go no further. There was a great gaping hole between a row of houses so we all got off and ran across to see if we

could help. They were getting people out and they were covered in a grey dust with blood coming through in places. We did what we could until the ambulances came. I then went up to Bounds Green and got the tube to Wood Green where I got a bus to Bruce Grove and to work.

On another occasion I was out with a warden one night when we heard this bomb in the distance. A garage had been set on fire by a previous bomb and we felt that German bombers, when they saw this, would drop more. Immediately there was a whoosh and a couple of explosions nearby. We went right down on the ground and the warden lay covering right over me. The bombs had gone off yards away, partly demolishing a house.

In the Home Guard we had 'sticky bombs' which were designed to be stuck to tanks etc.

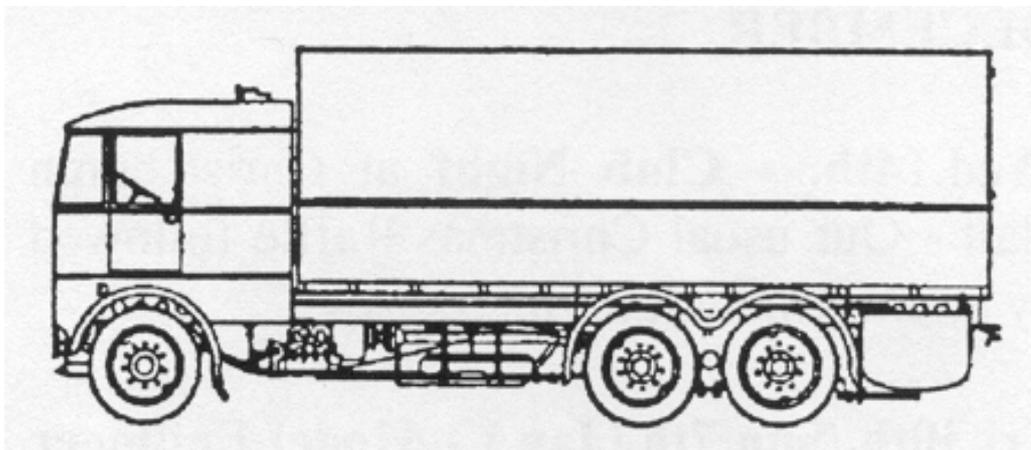
For example they could be stuck to the bottom of tanks as they passed over a trench. I remember on a training exercise with these one of my colleagues was about to throw the bomb when the wind caught his coat and the bomb got stuck to it. He had a devil of a job to get it off. Eventually a sergeant came to the rescue.

We sometimes were on guard at the railway tunnel at Southgate and saw the night traffic, which included troop trains and ambulance trains. It was towards the end of the war and it was thought that power stations, railway installations like tunnels etc. were vulnerable to attack.

*...To be continued*

## **The Ultimate Steam Wagon? By Bernard Lambert**

This remarkably modern looking vehicle was Foden's final foray into steam wagons.



The 'Speed Twelve' 12 ton undertype was the last steam wagon to be developed by Foden in 1930. It was fitted with pneumatic tyres, proper mudguards and a fully enclosed cab. The Speed Twelve was capable of speeds up to 60 m.p.h. - not bad for a steamer!

One wonders where steam would have got to if development work had continued.

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