

The Chairman's Notes

This set of Chairman's notes seems to have arrived rather quickly this month. The Council and I are still discussing our Club's various insurance policies: it feels as though we have been forever and ever. We are determined to conduct a thorough review of our insurance cover and we will keep on until we have what we think are satisfactory answers.

I myself have been on a run on my steamroller, which got stuck half way up a steep hill. Brendan and Donal, who rescued the water bowser, think it's a judgement on me for calling their engine noisy. On Saturday I'm off on another Alpine road run but I still say that "Suzy" is noisier than "Lillian" so how is that for tempting fate. By the time this lot is published I shall know.

Christmas is coming and you need some cards. For those very special people you need some very special cards, so get a few NLSME cards from a member of the council. Please see the advertisement in this News Sheet.

All our Parties at Colney Heath are over for this year so a big thank you to all the members who have supported Ian Murray this year, to all those members who have done a tea duty, which is often very hard work.

After bonfire night comes working parties. I for one enjoy them and look forward to their advent with pleasure. So see you at Colney Heath this winter, it's cheaper than a workout at the Gym.

Last but not least I'd like to let you know in advance about our February 2003 General Meeting. It will be an evening with the Slot Car Section when you will be able to try your hand at some really high speed cornering – might be a good idea to bring the kids along too.

John Squire

From the Secretary

- 1) In this issue of the News Sheet there is an advertisement for the Exhibition at Sinsheim in Germany. I'm told it is a fantastic exhibition.
- 2) We welcomed three new members last month whose names appear on the Membership Secretary's page.
- 3) Insurance matters occupied your Council's minds to a very large degree. I hope it will be resolved shortly and be explained to the membership in plain English!
- 4) An early warning that the AGM is not that far away. Actually it's early May 2003 and nominations for the Council and officers will be needed. Now, there will be at least one plum job going vacant because I do not intend to seek re-election. Out of 200+ members there must be somebody out there who is interested – talk to me to find out what the job entails.

Marine Mutterings

We are at the tag end of the season and I have little to say except that usage of the boating lake has picked up to a very encouraging level, which bodes well for next year.

I have been absent for a while due to a recent operation (medical rather than marine!) but John will be reporting elsewhere on our second regatta day and anything else worthy of note.

Friday Meetings at H.Q.

We do not feel that past turnouts for Friday evening meetings at H.Q. justify inviting a speaker. However, if turnouts improve formal speakers can be considered – it really is up to you, the members, to decide that you want a properly organized meeting by turning up!

Finally, on Friday 20th December there may be a Marine (and Garden Railway) meeting at HQ, subject to whether there is any interest so close to Christmas. Decision will be published in the December News Sheet

Enjoy the boating.

Bernard Lambert

Treasurer Twittering

Nothing to report this month except the payment of various routine expenses. So far as I can tell we are still financially sound.

Bernard Lambert

From the Membership Secretary

As stated last month I propose to publish 'Address List Errata' from time to time. New Members should, of course, be added to the list as they appear in the News Sheet.

New Members

This month we welcome three new members approved at the October Council Meeting:

**Roger Clarke,
Nicholas Gear,
John Ovens,**

Changes of Address

**Tony Condon,
Ken West,**

Bernard Lambert

Car Badges

I still have a number of car badges for sale at £7-00 each. These are very attractive, depicting the Society logo and were originally designed to fit on the car grille. Of course they are ideal for other locations if you cannot fit one on your particular car. But for a model engineer, of course, it would be possible to modify them to fit wherever you want!

See me at the Track or at HQ.

Maurice Cummins

Mariners' and Garden Railwaymen's Times

By John Morgan

Notes from the 18th October 2002 meeting

Just 12 members turned out for the first meeting at HQ this autumn to discuss the past season and take ideas for our winter projects.

There were two Open Days this year, July being without doubt a success, with 30 visitors and 24 boats, while September could be described as a disappointment with just seven strangers on site: though I'm relieved to say all enjoyed themselves. The fact that the Colney Heath site has so much to offer must have helped. If we were just a lake in an empty park no doubt some would have wondered why they had bothered!

As last year, there was a shortage of North London members attending. I asked if anyone had any ideas and what had to be done to encourage our own people to join

us, without much comment, except that I should have placed an advert in this publication rather than just rely on the diary dates page - point taken. I suspect it's those who were not at this meeting that need to be asked. So, reading this, if you would attend the Open Days if they were run differently, please let myself or Bernard know.

I was asked to continue to organise two Open Days for next year.

As already mentioned in the September Open Day report, the afternoon was largely taken over by children having a go with the Club boat and my electric model designed for that purpose. A discussion took place as to whether this is what we should be doing/allowing. I do have some sympathy with those who wish to keep the site "exclusive", but if new members are not encouraged then what is the future for the Club? That afternoon I was asked for five membership forms.

There is a problem of ensuring that non-members do not take advantage of our "relaxed" policy by sailing regularly on Sundays without joining the Club. I have discussed this already some time ago with Bernard and the only thing we could come up with was a register to be kept with the peg board. All those taking to the water would be asked to note their name and frequency used, which would be the "excuse" for keeping the register. Regular non-members could then be identified and given an application form! To try to force some control over novices and the use of radios, a sign should be erected asking all non-members to ask before switching on - they then could be asked to fill in the register...

Of those who spoke up, the majority were in favour of encouraging newcomers. However I was asked to review our notices both in content and their position. There are two on the gate, one on each side of the gate, policing entry to the lake. Concern was voiced about unattended children lakeside which increased when the proposed extension to the ground level railway was raised which would be an additional hazard that had to be crossed en route to the bridge over the cuckoo line.

Access over any railway running lines for the majority of members/visitors would be best achieved by a new foot bridge similar to those on the garden railway. A level route would have to be kept for wheeled chairs and those with heavy kit to get lakeside (ME!). I said I would take these thoughts to the Site/Track Committee.

With regard to unattended children, all the notices in the world will not have any effect on the youngsters. The general view was that it was up to all members to stop such behaviour and return them to the other side of the gate. However, this is often easier said than done.

I was also, quiet rightly, "taken to task" for not asking to see boiler certificates of visiting steamers, which then broadened out to the dangers of having visitors being able to get close to boats raising steam. Our Open Days are by invitation so I would ensure that some words are added to cover both certificates and the use of gas to fire boilers. A suitable area would be found and marked for steamboats.

After all the above, it was with some relief that the subject eventually changed to this years winter projects!!

Already on the list is; clear and level the bank behind the larger seat on the south side, to which has now to be added, find and secure the area for steam boats and an old favourite - what to do with the bridge over the cuckoo line. Last year's plan to strengthen, then cut it in two did not happen due to running out of time - this year? Another favourite, lighting, gains ever-increasing support. There is now power close to the lake and I said I would ask the Site/Track Committee what would be required to supply lighting.

This is the place for me to ask for help this winter on Sundays. The more hands, the more improvements can be made to the site.

Future Marine nights at HQ would include a current project evening, all to bring their latest models and a talk on the Club boat - why and how it happened.

Future events for the lake - Novelty Evening. Apparently there used to be Pop-Pop races and sailing with lights evening (linked to the call for floodlighting?).

Mike Hodgson reminded all about the new Workshop Evenings, which will build the 36-inch sailing yacht "Hobnoblin". Templates for the bulkheads and drawings and material for the planking will be available. The night is the 4th Friday in each month at HQ.

We are compiling a list of used frequencies to help when purchasing new kit and avoiding, as much as possible, conflicts. Please tell me or Bernard of your 27 and 40 meg crystals in use in your boats and locomotives.

After a very welcome break, things became more light hearted - it was the turn of the Garden Railway men.

First came Frank Dell and his superb gauge 1 LNWR President class. The class was developed from the Newton class of 1866 and by the end of production no less than 166 were built. They were so successful that in 1877 it was decided they would be well worth rebuilding to the latest standards.

Nicknamed by their crews as Jumbos, they were sure-footed and very strong for their size, but unlike the animal, very fast, capable of an amazing 90mph hauling the vehicles of the period.

Hardwick was the loco used by the Railway Company in the "Race to the North" against the LNER on the two London to Aberdeen routes, averages of 67mph were obtained which included the stretch over Shap! The loco named Charles Dickens held the prize for the highest mileage while in service - two million miles.

Next came a very pleasing scratch built O gauge built by Ray Lidzey about 15 years ago. Based on a LBSC 4-4-0 it's fired by gas, the cylinder being in the tender along with the water and a hand operated pump. The boiler design is Ray's own, being made up as he went along. A single tube from the burner through the water, no cross tubes, there is no blower. The safety valve has a shrouded outlet that ensures it does not prime.

There is just one cylinder, 3/8 inch diameter and traction is through a 1:2 gear and suffers from steam condensing in the cylinder. Ray believes it is due to it being bolted to the frames without any insulation. The locomotive is not strong enough to pull any vehicles. After some discussion the voice of opinion was that it had to be that the boiler could not keep up with the demands of the cylinder.

Slot Car News **by Steve Francis**

It is always sad when one of our number leaves for pastures new but particularly so now as Tony Condon has moved to Somerset. Tony has been a part of the Slot Car Section forever. His membership of the Club stretched way back to the sixties and to mark that fact we presented him with a painting signed by all of the current members of our Section. We all hope that he can make it back to London at some time to see us. Please see Letters Page.

Ian's Southern 32 Racing league is going from strength to strength. 41 racers turned up to the Luton round recently. Our own John Secchi took top honours in the individual event just winning from local hot shot James Cleave a former North London racer. Going into the next round Ian is leading the series with John Secchi and Paul Harwood leading the team race. Talking of team races the report of the 24-hour race in Belgium appears in this issue and by the time you read this the 8-hour race at Guildford will have taken place. I shall report on our successes or otherwise of our two teams next month.

Calendar for Nov.

2nd/3rd E.E.C. 8 hour race Wildfields Farm, Guildford.
7th F.1.
10th Southern 32, Bournemouth SCC.
14th Sports.
21st 1/24 GP 12.
28th 1/24 Production.

Restoration of 92 Squadron

Due to a misunderstanding the date of the above talk was advertised for October 11th! An even greater misunderstanding credited the talk presentation to me!! I must confess that regretfully I know little about "92 Squadron" and certainly there is no way that I could provide a talk on its restoration.

FRIDAY DECEMBER 13th may be unlucky for some but not for the North London Society, as we have been fortunate in securing the services of ALAN WHENMAN.

Alan is both Chief Engineer of the Nene Valley Railway and Chief Engineer of 92 *Squadron* and was responsible for its restoration. His talk, which will be illustrated by slides, will cover the entire work programme with all its technical problems, frustrations and joys. Hopefully there will be time for a free for all when we will be able to ask questions on both 92 *Squadron* and the Nene Valley Railway.

I do hope you will be able to attend. Alan is making a great effort on our behalf travelling down from Spalding in Lincolnshire, and it would seem appropriate that we offer our support both to Alan and the Track Committee for organising the event.

Mike Collingwood.

Tythenhanger Gazette

By Roger Bell

The topic for the October meeting in last month's Gazette and in Dates for Your Diary was wrong and led others, including myself, to believe that Mike Collingwood was actually in the RAF and going to give a talk on 92 Squadron. Mike is actually arranging the meeting and 92 *Squadron* is a steam locomotive! More of that meeting to come later in the News Sheet.

The October Loco meeting being a 'Work in Progress' at short notice was started with Sam Skuse giving a description of his *Doris*. As many of us are aware the loco was damaged in a fire whilst it was being repaired by the owner. It was then given to Sam, as he had driven it many times, to rebuild and keep. One of the side frames was bowed so a new one was profiled on a bandsaw, the old frame being used as a template. The horns may have to be replaced with new ones. The charred front bogie was rebuilt so the wheels turn again. The boiler has been re-brazed since the fire and leaks from a few small holes. New axles will be made for the drive wheels on his ML4 lathe. Sam has assistance from Derek Eldridge, another *Doris* builder. Like many model engineers he has more than one model on the go. He has a set of castings for a *Rob Roy* with chassis and stretchers fitted. A 10V Stuart Turner engine also awaits completion.

Roger Wollett then spoke of his gas-fired gauge 1 loco called *Project* and designed by Ron Poulter and Bob Hines who have written a book on the construction of the loco. Roger's interest in model engineering began 18 months ago at a model engineering evening class at Willesdon, although it included students of more diverse interests. One was rebuilding a Lea Francis and another was modifying a VW engine to suit his microlight. Having joined our Club the loco is now one year in the making. The castings, pressure gauge and handrail knobs were purchased, all the rest was made. Seeking a replacement spring for the front draw hook, 28g was the smallest available and .010" was required. A visit to a music shop secured a .008" guitar string ideal for coiling into a spring. Roger also belongs to the Gauge 1 Association who gives a list of trade suppliers and a lot of advice. The loco has been in steam twice and goes faster on the straights than on bends – probably something running in will resolve. It will go round a 7' 6" radius. Our Club track is 8'6". Last week he made the funnel but the proportions are not quite right so he spoke of making another. One piece of good philosophy offered was that life is too short to go back and make another – make a

better one on your next model. The tender was soft-soldered using the smallest Sievert burner with no more heat than is necessary to avoid distortion. A favoured method of assembling platerwork on larger locos is to secure the brass panels to angle section with 10BA screws and Araldite. If the Araldite is warmed up first with a hair dryer it flows like water. (Do not use quick setting Araldite.) The excess is wiped away. This provides a strong joint and a watertight tender. Araldite has been around a long time and despite the introduction of Loctite it is still widely used.

Mike Chrisp then spoke of a new method of making your own waterslide transfers from a colour picture. The picture of a logo is scanned using a computer and reproduced on a special waterproof A4 sheet that 'Jetcal' supply. For more information their website address is www.thedecalpaperstore.com

To round the evening off we spoke in turn of the type of lathe we use for model engineering. The makes were, Perfecto, Atlas, Tyzac, Zyto, Harrison and ML7 to name a few. One member went through his counting them on his fingers. He had about 15 lathes. The largest turns 12ft in diameter and is 45ft long and was built in 1880. He bought it from a water works, delivery cost £860 and came by four lorry loads at 18tons per lorry. But he is a professional engineer.

The next meeting in November is talk by Dr Ian Johnston on First Aid and Accidents, about what to do and equally important, what not to do.

Society Christmas Cards

Your Council has now sorted out the Society Christmas Cards (first discussed last year) for sale to members at £1.00 each.

Contact any Officer or Council member to view and to purchase your cards.

The card features in full colour a driver and passenger riding behind the NLSME's 'Butch' locomotive steaming through a snowbound Dingly Dell Halt on the Tyttenhanger mainline. The original acrylic painting is by Adam Gorski GRA.

Although we thought that this was the first time a 5" gauge line has appeared on a greetings card we have been assured by Stan Bray that another model engineering society has pipped us to the post. Nevertheless it will be an unusual souvenir for family and friends who have already visited the Track and perhaps encourage others to pay their first visit. And of course it's just the job to send to those special friends. Don't forget to keep one for yourself!

Model Engineering Exhibition 2002

As you will probably already know the Model Engineering Exhibition will yet again take place at Sandown Park Race Course over three days at the end of December. The North London Society of Model Engineers has been offered a stand at the show, which the Council has accepted.

I have volunteered to organise the Society's stand with Jim MacDonald assisting me, and therefore I am putting forward this request, that in order to put on the best stand that we can I ask the membership to put forward ideas for what they would like on the stand.

I have approached a few members of the Society asking them if they would like to put their models onto the stand, and I hope to contact at least one member from each section to attempt to have a large selection of the Society's interests available on the stand.

If you have anything, which you would like to exhibit, I would be glad to hear from you. (My contact details are at the back of the News Sheet.) Alternatively I will hopefully be at the Track for work parties on Sunday mornings. If you would like to volunteer as a Steward I will have a rota available as soon as I get further information.

Donal Corcoran

Saturday August 10th – A Successful Invitation Day at Colney Heath By William Mason

The weatherman really pulled out all the stops on our Visiting Clubs Day this year, which was again organised by Brian Apthorpe. At 8.30am the road on the Club side of the bridge at Colney Heath was flooded and too deep to drive through. By 11.30am the water had dropped enough to drive through to the Track. I hear that the stream was blocked further downstream and that once the blockage had been removed the water level soon receded.

After all that, it turned fine and a super day was had by our visitors. A few more Club members in attendance would have been a great help to Brian.

We had 14 locomotives which all ran well. They were as follows:

N Thompson	Erewash	5" Claughton
M Fox	Oxford	5" Britannia
M Parnham	Maidstone	5" 2-8-2 P2
T Parnham	Maidstone	5" Speedy
S Parnham	Maidstone	3 1/2" Juliet
B White	Maidstone	3 1/2" Britannia
E Playford	Maidstone	5" 4-6-0 B12
G Riddles	Maidstone	5" Freelance 4-6-4
B Baker	Canvey Island	5" 0-6-0 Buckjumper

L Connel	Canvey Island	5" Simplex
A Mankowitz	Bournemouth	5" 4-4-0 2P
A Cox	Bournemouth	3 ½" Doris
K Spence	Northolt	5" Britannia
M Byatt	Harrow	5" De Winton

All in all it was another fine visitors day with such a variety of great locos. Perhaps the favourite of many Society members was the B12 from Maidstone resplendent in GER blue livery. So thanks to Brian for all his hard work and to Dave Foster who gave such valuable help on the day.

Marine Section Open Day, 15th September 2002 **by John Morgan**

With poor Bernard not being able to help set up on the Saturday, having undergone his major operation (from which the news is thankfully very good), I decided that we would have to do without the gazebo. It's September and the sun would not be as hot as in July. Rain? It *never* rains on our Open days!! Still, just in case, a close eye was kept on the weather forecast each day as the weekend approached. The other problem was that it clashed with the Bedfordshire County Show, to which a friend wanted to go, so unable to be in two places at once I decided to chance leaving the set up to the Sunday morning.

I arrived very early AM to change the course, as I remembered this time last year having left things as they were from July. The sun was right into the eyes of those attempting to navigate the course. I built and launched the harbour then finally organised some tables, after which I sat down (to recover!) and waited ... waited and waited. I need not have panicked as no visitors. I could have stayed in my bed for another 2 hours! Eventually just seven arrived. Far from being disappointed by the lack of numbers they enjoyed the space, both on the banks and water, with no problem obtaining the frequency pegs.

Once again, I am indebted to George Case for providing a large pot of tea midway through the morning for our small gathering to take advantage of. Taking everyone around the steering course was a doddle, so easy that I offered them all another chance after lunch with the offer to take their highest score. An offer that none could resist, though not all managed to better their first attempts, one exception being our youngest competitor, Clare Wiltshire from the Welwyn G. City club who jumped from last to equal first. Good to see a youngster take an interest in the hobby.

Chris Platford took his model of HMS Prince of Wales round the course, just to say "he had done it". His last placing does not really do justice to his achievement for his model, though not large, requires a big turning circle. As can be seen from the results sheet he did manage quiet a respectable score. I did offer him the Club boat, but Chris wanted to use his own.

What to do next, with the rest of the afternoon to fill? Fortunately the Sunday public running came to my rescue with the children, who may have seen Clare on the water, coming up and asked if they could have a go. So the club boat and my small electric one worked non-stop with 10-minute slots for the rest of the time.

Many of the parents said they had found the site for the first time as a result of the club attending the fetes in the locality, at which we had some representation. No less than 5 prospective families took away a membership form. Why the lack of boaters? Well, one reason may be we clashed with a certain County Show, something that will inevitably happen from time to time. In the end it did not matter. So same again next year...

Score Sheet

<i>Name</i>	<i>Start Points</i>	<i>Hits</i>	<i>Miss</i>	<i>Points Lost</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Place</i>
Mark Wiltshire	200			0	200	1
Clare Wiltshire	200			0	200	1
Alan Trowbridge	200	1		5	195	2
Harold Barrow	200	2		10	190	3
Malcolm Willmott	200	3		15	185	4
Chris Platford	200	2	1	20	180	5

A hit of a buoy scores 5 points and a miss of the gate 10.

The 2003 London Model Engineering Exhibition

As last January, and I understand for the next five years, this Exhibition will be held at Wembley. We have been invited to participate in the Show at the Wembley Exhibition Centre from the 24th to the 26th January 2003, so once again I will soon be asking for helpers and models. For those who exhibit models you will get a free pass into the Exhibition for all three days.

If you would like to show a model please don't hesitate to contact me before I contact you! See me at the Track or at HQ.

Maurice Cummins

Letters Page

E-mail from Tony Condon to Steve Francis 15/10/02.

Hi Steve,

Just a note to you and the rest of the gang at North London, to thank you for the gift you presented me with last Thursday. I had absolutely no idea you had anything planned and what you gave me was perfect as I have now got a "bit" of all of you down here in Somerset.

I didn't say too much last Thursday as I had been a bit emotional most of last week, as it is a big change to up roots from somewhere you have lived for 55 years, and indeed I had been a member of NLSME since 1965 so it is big life change and I will miss Thursday nights with you lot as much as anything I have left behind. Anyway suffice it to say the superb picture you did for me was the first of my personal belongings to be installed in my new den. Once I have got the place down here ship shape I will get my model car stuff out again and I am sure that you haven't seen the last of me and I also sincerely hope to join up with you all again soon. Keep in touch.

Cheers, from not so sunny Somerset.

Tony

The St Albans Exhibition

I would like to thank all members who helped in the setting up of the stand at the St Albans Exhibition, even if it was in the wrong place; also for all the models displayed on our stand.

Maurice Cummins

Dads Army on Manoeuvres (and how the Walmington-on-Sea Platoon Invaded Belgium) **By Steve Francis**

It would seem that long distance racing is all about one thing, trying to beat North London's stranglehold of this discipline. This is the story of the events of the weekend of 14-15th Sept. at the Merlijn 24 hour race in Belgium, where Walmington on Sea, assisted by our sponsors SCD attempted to do just that. Bob Hallums, John Secchi, Mark Harwood and myself met on Friday morning at my place close to the greatest football club in the land (I live in Highbury) and loaded up the Millennium Falcon. O.K. so its really a lumbering old Volvo estate and it beats sleeping under the track in the middle of the night.

We took the scenic route out of town and I was able to show the others the delights of Hackney and the Blackwall tunnel. Security at the Eurotunnel has increased and I had the bizarre experience of having a thing shaped like a cattle prod waved at me, the steering wheel, door and dashboard. I don't know what they were looking for but if they had waved it at John's slot box I'm sure they would have found all manner of illegal things in it. "Monseieur, zis group 12 'as the wrong wires in it."

The tunnel is a great way to travel to France, which is just as well as it doesn't go anywhere else. It is also quick, so quick in fact that the announcement told us to put our clocks back one hour. Two minutes later they then put on the right one when they realised what way we were going. I expected Belgium to be similar to France but when we got to the border, or rather a signpost announcing the fact, the lampposts disappeared. Now I know that this is not particularly momentous but for someone who is fond of lampposts this must come as quite a shock. What really impressed me was how clean the place was and how modern it all was. Belgium looks about ten years old. I have heard about how flat the place is but if it has one other hill apart from Eau Rouge I never saw it. While driving towards Brussels and looking for a place to stop for lunch I was idly thinking about famous Belgians as you do in these sort of moments, Jacky Ickx, a fictional detective and the man who invented the saxophone, we were suddenly surrounded by thirty O.A.Ps on push bikes all trying to turn left before I could. There was complete chaos. Thirty hells grannies, a Volvo and a road full of oncoming traffic. Eddie Merckx (there's another one) and his mates were not stopping for anyone. By the time it had all sorted itself out the silver haired lunatics had gone leaving the rest of us to shrug our shoulders and drive around each other. It was now time for lunch. Time was the operative word. The beers came quick enough but lunch took ages. At least we were entertained by Mark getting dive bombed by something that looked like a wasp but was the size of a sparrow. It was one scary looking insect. When he realised he wasn't going to meet some horrible death at the hands or fangs of this monster all he could say was "I'm glad we don't have things like that where I come from".

It was now time to get a move on before we got any more nasty surprises. In fact the only thing to disturb the pleasant drive east was the unpleasant odour that seemed to follow us around No, not someone removing their shoes but we seemed to be in the middle of national muck spreading week. When we arrived at our hotel John took it upon himself to inspect all the hotel rooms personally. Not as you might think to see if they were suitable for his team but to make sure he got the best one for himself.

They were of course identical! We finally got to the track for practise about 4.30. Standard practise for W.O.S. at this point is to spend six hours debating what car to use for the race and then choosing the wrong one. After a few hours of trying out various cars it was now time for a traditional Friday night blowout. Alan Lucas from the North London team joined us for the evening as the rest of his team were still trying to get there as Paul Harwood had a disagreement with a German lorry on the M25 and lost, that afternoon. We ended up at a Montenegrin (somewhere near Yugoslavia) restaurant close by the airport. In fact so close, we visited the said airport three times that night trying to find our way back to the track. Once our meal had been personally brought from Montenegro we were eventually treated to the most enormous mixed grill we had ever seen. The meal was an orgy of meat from a variety of animals, none of which we recognised, as it all tasted the same. "I think this is

cod," came a cry from the other end of the table. At least the olive it was topped off with tasted of olive. With our excursions to the airport and the entire Belgian motorway network, night conditions at the track had finished by the time we had got back but we had some more practise anyway at what had now turned into a disco. We waited for the rest of the North London team to turn up so we could show them where the hotel was, which was probably not a good idea given our sense of direction.

Saturday morning arrived far too early for my liking but we had a motor race to compete in and headed off after breakfast. There were the usual formalities to go through during the morning, scrutinizing, practise, qualifying and deciding what car to use. There is apparently one body on their list that is too high even on the cut line, a closed Audi and yes we had it so after some adjustments we were legal. Mark was our top qualifier with 4.3 secs. and that put us third and we chose to start on lane 5.

With our matching new red tee-shirts "Team Attack of the killer tomatoes S.C.D. Walmington" were ready to take on the world or we would have been if our car would go through their gauge. It didn't! Our tyres were suffering from the 'battle of the bulge' so we took the start at 2.05, late having to sort out the problem first then getting it rechecked. Mark soon got in front after our delayed start and we had a healthy 100 lap lead at the end of the first three-hour segment. Next up for us was lane 7 and it was awful. The car would just not work on this lane for us. At 6pm. the car suffered a small chassis break. It was quickly fixed with John's excellent pit work but we could not stop North London hauling us in. At 7pm. they were only 20 laps behind and there was nothing we could do as the car still refused to work properly on lane 7. In the meantime one of the French teams, Grand Mare, was going backwards. Literally. They put their lead wires the wrong way round after a pit stop. Obviously we did not know at the time but this team made a real fight for third place with us late in the race. From lane 7 we went to 8, an outside lane and not much better. This would mean one hour in the dark on this lane. At least the majority of the night it would mean we would be on better lanes. We had now dropped to third with the home team Merlijn taking second. North London were simply flying and now 200 laps up running on lane 4 after a motor change. Seven hours had now elapsed and we were already knackered. To see our lead slip away like that on two, at that time, dodgy lanes was soul destroying as there was nothing we could do about it. So our morale dropped. One highlight was the webcam showing the race live on the E.E.C. website so Mark was able to wave to his family back in Blighty. Arggh! Bless him. We at one point dropped to 4th, but quickly got back to 3rd, now on a better lane 6. It is now 11.30pm. and the place is buzzing it says in my notes. We were back to the nightclub scenario. It was quite a surreal experience trying to race in a Belgian String Fellows. We took it in turns to curse the next driver whose turn it was for a sleep in the Millennium Falcon because it was he who woke us up for his turn to have a comfortable sleep for the next hour or so and we had the pleasure of marshalling. Just imagine the sight of Bob Hallums at 5.30am peering in the car telling you that your presence is required at the track and you will know what I mean. Delirium has now set in. I went up to Mark to see how we are doing and he says he wants to swim with the dolphins. I must point out that there is a lake next to the track and there is a fountain that has three bronze dolphins as the centrepiece. Very picturesque it looks too, but to swim with them; I don't think so. The track had now taken on the appearance of Le Mans in the early hours: cars circulating with just their lights on, a few people wandering around in a sleep deprived state, drivers asleep in the pits and the noise of

motors being buzzed up to the limit. Even the commentary from race control in French and English adds to the feeling that this is the real thing and not just a 1/24th. scale version of it. It is worth mentioning at this point that North London have built up an incredible lead through the night. They are so far in front that the only problem that they have is to decide who's turn next it is to have 4 hours sleep. It is obviously a testament to the experience of Ian Fisher at this sort of event to have the team run like clockwork and to know what to do to the car at the right time.

Six o'clock appears like a bolt from the blue. All the house lights come on and we are back into daylight albeit a fluorescent version of it. There are still eight hours to go. We are suffering various woes and nearly dropped back to fifth. We had to make a motor change to a still ill handling car. I took the car from the enforced daylight to real daylight at 7.30 without making much headway but now Mark took over, and with the sun trying to break through the gloom and with the temperature now rising, was coming back at Grand Mare in third. In the daylight things look clearer. If we got a bit of luck with grip on the lanes we had left, Grand Mare were only 50 laps up and Merlijn are only a further 150 laps in front in second. With all this excitement and the chance even after all this time we could have a race on our hands Mark falls asleep in the pits.

After a stop for a gear change we are now on a charge. There are 3 hours to go and we are 4 laps behind. Grand Mare make a tyre stop and we go 10 laps up. The car is ballistic on lane 3 and we go 60 laps up on Grand Mare. Merlijn in second place is only 180 laps in front of us and with the time left can be caught. Disaster! We have another gear let go. We discovered afterwards that we had a loose pillowblock. It was now obvious that with our gear problems catching Merlijn was impossible but we now had to keep our 3rd. position safe. North London were now an incredible 700 laps in front so the real interest was now who could take the final rostrum place, S.C.D. Walmington or Grand Mare as there was now only 25 laps in it with about 1 1/2 hours to go. We were still suffering small problems like body coming loose, a tyre change and yet another gear. Our lead over Grand Mare now down to 9 laps. 1 hour to go, there was a tech. inspection. Time to panic. Did we have enough ground clearance? Were we too wide as we were 23 hours previously? Everybody got through with the exception of North London.

They were too wide. Slapped wrists. We were now only 12 laps up on Grand Mare going into the last hour. This was nail-biting stuff. Mark is doing the last stint and leaking, getting a towel down from Bob at every opportunity. Grand Mare have had their motor in the car for 17 hours and it's really beginning to show. They are desperately spraying the motor to try and inject some life into it. We are now pulling out a lead as the French car is dying on its feet. John is worried our motor is about to suffer the same fate as it has been in the car for a long while. This is doing nothing for our nerves. 20 minutes to go and the gear starts sounding rough. Mark doesn't want to risk stopping. 10 laps later it goes completely but we are now 50 laps up. The French are still spraying their motor. They won't give up. With about 10 minutes to go their motor is almost dead. They are reduced to pushing the car round the slower corners. They are still trying to inject some life into the motor with their magic spray but for the final ten minutes our car behaves itself and doesn't eat another gear and we end up third. A thrilling end to a very long race. It hardly seems possible that after 21 hours of racing it all happens in the last three hours.

With all the prize giving over it was time to clear up, load up and say our goodbyes, then unload again, find a can of oil from deep in the bowels of the Volvo, fill up the two cars from England and load up again. Bob suggested that we stopped in Ostend for a meal. Mark agreed and then the both of them climbed in the back of the car and fell asleep. John stayed awake to stop me nodding off and driving into a muck spreader, as there are no lampposts to hit. The conversation centred around how we both got involved in this daft hobby, revolving around Scalextric, clubs at school, Nordic and Tottenham raceway etc and in no time we were in Ostend. Once we had found a traditional Belgian restaurant playing music from the casbah, we were so hungry we could have eaten a horse between two bread vans but as we were not yet back in France we settled for fish. All except Mark. His one concession to the fact we were 20 yards from the North Sea was to have Scampi for starters. The look on his face when it arrived was absolute horror, "I'm not eating that, its got arms and legs. Where I come from Scampi comes in batter out of a packet." The rest of the journey home was uneventful but we knew we were definitely back in England one mile outside the terminal: road works, and it started to rain! Once we had got back and unloaded my car I turned to Bob and asked him whether he was coming up to the Club on Thursday. He just turned to me and said, "I'm building a new chassis. It's going to be called the WOS Scampi!"

Final Results

1st. NLSME 15802 laps
2nd Merlijn 15151 laps
3rd. SCD Walmington 14921 laps
4th. Grand Mare 14824 laps
5th. Hexagone 12569 laps
6th. MMT 12076 laps
Concours D'Elegance
SCD Walmington

