

# December 1999 / Issue 599

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## Thoughts of Chairman Dell

Continuing from last month Things were so much simpler in those days including entertainment. A good example of how things were was Percy Edwards who was an impressionist. Not the kind like Rory Bremner but a farmyard impressionist. Percy would start his act like this, "Imagine if you will, we are walking down a country lane and we meet Shep the farmyard dog", (barks like a dog). Loud applause. "Further down the lane we come to farmer Giles and there's Daisy the cow", (moos like a cow). More loud applause. "And now meet the Red Rooster", (crows like a cock) more applause. And so it went on. Finally the orchestra played In a Monastery Garden and Percy did bird impressions! More loud applause. None of us knew a Blue Tit from a Greater Eagle. We now know better. So it went on and on!

Percy did this act for over twenty years and never changed an item in all that time. He got himself a good living from something quite simple.

Much more sophisticated were the Big Band shows, these used to take up the whole second half; so lasted over an hour, unlike Percy's 10 minutes. Some of the bands that I recall were Geraldo, Henry Hall, Ted Heath and Billy Cotton. Billy Cotton we all thought was the most entertaining. Even when Billy was well over sixty and weighed well over 16 stone he would do cart wheels from the one side of the stage to the other.

We didn't have many coloured people in Britain at the time, so we invented some: The Kentucky Minstrels (forerunners of George Mitchell's Black and White Minstrels.) The company consisted of Banjo and Mandolin players and they all sang as well: Also two knock around comedians Rastus and Bones and the whole company controlled by Mr Interlockiter the M.C who was white. Now there's racism for you.

We only had one coloured man when I lived in Lewisham and he was a fireman on the Southern Railway. Wherever he went he was followed by children. He was a large man, always with a huge grin and if you touched him you would have good luck all day! How times have changed.

Slowly one by one the great music halls closed. They had fought the cinema for customers for years, but with the coming of TV after the War it proved too much. Some

became bingo halls but most were knocked down and the Lewisham Hippodrome site became a supermarket.

Finally still on entertainment we have a fully booked season of speakers for our General Meetings, most speakers coming from our own ranks. So watch your News Sheet; some very good talks coming up. And not least I wish all members a very Happy Xmas and may all your projects prosper!

*Frank Dell*

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## **Editorial**

For as long as I can remember I've been interested in the personalities behind great works. I've always been a music lover and in my early twenties I came to love the music of Beethoven and it was not long before I became fascinated by the man himself. A few years later I was able to organise a holiday in search of the composer's haunts. It was I suppose a pilgrimage and I visited the many houses he lived in, in Bonn and Vienna. Later my interest in music leaned towards opera and this led me to such places as Salzburg, Paris and Busseto. Last summer I was able to make the pilgrimage for a second time to Tuscany after a 10 year break to bask again in the atmosphere and surroundings of my greatest hero of all - Puccini.

Of course, having a lifelong love of steam and having lived all my life in areas served by BR Eastern Region it will come as no surprise to you to learn I am a bit of an admirer of Gresley to say the least. And yes you've guessed it - I've studied the man and done the pilgrimage. I remember when I was first reading about him I came across the words "died in Hertford". I was on the trail! As many of you know Sir Nigel lived in several houses in Hertfordshire and in the last years of his life at Watton-at-Stone, a village which in the 1940s was included in the Hertford District. (It probably still is). It was in that house that he died and you can see it quite clearly today on the left as you travel between Hertford and Stevenage on the A119, although it is now converted into flats.

I also visited his grave in Netherseal in Derbyshire. Like so many graves of people who died long ago it had no fresh flowers on it. So we left a few just as we had done at Bizet's in Paris. A friend of mine when he heard of my interest in Gresley, calmly and quite out of the blue announced that his sister knew 2 people who had been members of Sir Nigel's staff at Watton-at-Stone! What luck! Unfortunately it was not to be. For reasons I will not go into my Gresley trail ran out. I was disappointed because there's very little been written about the personal life of this most important figure in railway history.

From all these ramblings you can imagine my interest when it was suggested by Mike Collingwood and more recently by Mike Chrisp (in his ME editorial) that we should regularly profile a Society member in the News Sheet. To start off the series this month I asked a man who I think most would agree is one of this country's best model engineers - Ron Price - to tell all. I believe his A4 is in a class of its own and in conversations with other modellers outside of our Society, I have found that his Mallard and No. 10000 are something of a legend. I hope you enjoy reading his story as much as I have.

If you'd like to be profiled in the News Sheet please contact me. If you don't I will certainly be twisting some arms in all sections of the Society over the coming months. I

have a little list!

Lastly, as is tradition there will be no January News Sheet since the editorial, printing and distribution teams need their Christmas break too. To you and your families we send very best wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous and above all healthy New Year.

*Grahame Ainge*

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## [Tyttenhanger Gazette](#)

A general knowledge quiz was organised by Rod Pomeroy for the November Loco Section meeting. One pound was collected from each of us to provide a donation to the Children in Need charity.

We split ourselves into teams of six. There were four teams.

The winning team comprised of Roger Bell, John Caldwell, Mike Collingwood, Nigel Griffiths, Frank Hill and Mike Hodgson. Each received a 'Chronos' 82 page catalogue together with a £5 credit voucher.

Please note that there is no Loco Section meeting in December as Friday 10th coincides with the ME Exhibition at Alexandra Palace.

*Roger Bell*

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## [Workshop Nights](#)

The start of the season's meetings began with a full house. The meeting was a good one. I felt that the time has come to make this my last season of taking the podium and I will be sitting back next winter with nothing to do on every 4th Friday unless someone would like to have a go at running these full-house meetings.

Alongside the fact that I perhaps have had enough after at least 5 years, next October I become unemployed again: This time with a pension book and no chance of signing on one day a week. This time the Post Office becomes the signing office and perhaps I will be greeted with a smile instead of the "lazy b\_\_\_\_" syndrome which I have suffered 5 times since joining the NLSME in 1981. I made most of my engines and models during these times and it saved me from going mad several times, but that's enough of history.

So! Lets have someone to run these very worthwhile meetings which I can guarantee will give a huge amount of satisfaction to whoever takes over.

That's about all except that a prize/cup has been offered for the Millennium Year Pop-Pop Boat Race to be held in April 2000 - actual date to be arranged. Rules will be the same as 1999.

Happy Xmas and have a prosperous next 1000 years.

*Derek Perham*

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## [Items for Sale by Mr. Chris Ledger](#)

Pictures available

1. Most castings and tubes for Westbury WE11 Vertical Light Milling Machine, Plus Base plate and Compound Table partly finished - needs lead screws, handles and brackets machining. £100 O.N.O.
2. Dore-Westbury Mk 1 Vertical Light Milling geared head, motor and long vertical screwed tube. Probably needs new spindle. Presently mounted on large surface plate with a Jones and Shipman compound table. £150 O.N.O.
3. Small one and three quarter inch centre height Mason design lathe with mains motor and building instructions. Cross slide, saddle and tail stock need completing. £60 O.N.O.

*Use the Contact Us Form if you are interested*

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## [!Injector Warning!](#)

Locomotive injectors are subject to breakdown during periods of critical need.

A special component in the injector (called a "critical detector") senses both the driver's emotional state, in terms of how desperate he or she is to use the injector and the state of the fire in the grate, the level of water in the boiler and the pressure on the gauge.

The critical detector creates a malfunction the magnitude of which is directly proportional to the combination of problems detected (the magnitude of the malfunction rises more if the driver's desperation increases at a faster rate than the increase in rate of other factors).

Using bad language or threatening the injector with violence will only make the situation worse and prolong the period of malfunction. Likewise an attempt, or even only a hint of an attempt to use another injector may well cause all proposed replacement injectors also to malfunction after fitting (they belong to the same union).

Drivers should always stay calm and say nice things to the injector -nothing else seems to work.

Drivers should never let anything mechanical know that they are in a hurry.

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The above information was given to visitors at the recent Midlands Model Engineering Show and is reproduced here by courtesy of Mike Foreman and with acknowledgements to:

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## Letters Page

Firstly, as an 'ordinary member' may I take the opportunity to thank Angela Foreman for her dedication as the Editor of our News Sheet for the past four years. I suspect that to meet the deadline of this News Sheet dropping onto our doormats before the general meeting each month has not been easy at times. Thank you Angela.

I will add my support to the suggestion about having a Letters Page by putting fingers to computer keyboard and expressing my views which may or may not be worthy of further consideration.

When I first joined the Society nearly 6 years ago the first thing that struck me was the number of different sections that exist, some work closely with one another, others you come into contact with more by accident than by planning. One thing I do believe is that we have a good Society which with a little bit of effort by us all could be even better. I recollect that as a Society we have managed during the last few years to put on the Curly Bowl and more recently an exhibition of the highest order. Both did not just happen but were a result of dedication by a nucleus of Society members prepared to make the commitment with support by all sections on the run up to the event and also on the day.

To get back to the substance of this letter, when I joined I wanted to get to know people and hoped that they would also want to get to know me. How is the best way to achieve this without going through the ritual of approaching strangers with the line "I am so-and-so, who are you". For some less reserved than myself this can be daunting and after a while can also become tedious to say the least for both the new member and those of us who have managed to integrate ourselves into the society. Why not invest in proper name badges which can be worn at Society meetings/events, these could be paid by using part of the joining fee. WHAT! I hear some of you say, but can you come up with a better way of overcoming the natural reservations we all have. With a Society membership in excess of 200 just think how many fellow members you actually know well by their first name. As some members know I also belong to the Ground Level 5" Mainline Association. When I attend those gatherings I wear a name badge I made when I was an apprentice (30 years ago) and I have found that I am known by my name not as "the chap who owns the small prairie tank".

I must add my support to the observation made by William (Bill) Mason in last month's News Sheet that the Open Day in September was not as good for locomotives as some in previous years. The boats were excellent, and the support from visiting clubs and from other sections of the Society made the day. But who are we putting these open days on for I ask myself? From a selfish (loco) point of view I suspect that we judge success on the basis of the quantity who arrive and whether we have seen their locos at our track before. Perhaps we should have only one open day each year on a Saturday with no general public admittance, thereby breaking the routine we seem to have got into. An added benefit in my opinion would be to minimise the safety issue which has become a subject very much to the fore in both the Society and other clubs.

Why not take this a stage further and during the summer put aside a Saturday afternoon and evening each month when the whole of the Society can meet at Colney Heath or

occasionally at HQ for a social gathering. Those who wish to have a barbecue (I am not one of them as I always end up with burnt offerings) can bring along their own charcoal or club together while the rest of us enjoy one another's company and hopefully get the opportunity to experience what other sections of the society get up to. As I work it isn't easy at times to get home in the evening, change and get out for a particular time. I will admit here and now that, yes, as well as getting great pleasure from driving my loco I have also enjoyed myself when sailing my boat and operating trains on the HO layout at HQ. I have always been made most welcome.

Well, this letter to the Editor has ended up being longer than I anticipated and hopefully I have not been controversial. If so please accept that I want our Society to be seen as one which allows us all to pursue our own interests yet continues to move collectively in the same direction. I've had my say. What do you think fellow members? Please let your section leaders know if you do or do not agree so they can discuss this at Council, or write to the Letters Page c/o Editor.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Griffiths

P.S. Which one of you will be the next to write to the Editor. It's not too painful to have your say about Society matters.

*Nigel Griffiths for the Member's Letters Page*

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## **North American Section: Woodside Union Terminal**

Our Open evening will be Wednesday December 15th. All Society members welcome at HQ. Drinks, food, and your chance to work one of those large American freight trains up steep hills, to try a rolling meet (or a field meet if it goes wrong!!), or simply to try switching a load of coal hoppers.

The NMRA Convention at Peterborough, organised by members of the section, seems to have been a great success. We took a refurbished Young Street Yard, our portable layout, along for any NMRA members to run their locomotives on. A tunnel and scenic break to hide access to the fiddle yard was completed in great haste (and HQ library seriously cleaned up afterwards), and was greatly admired. Only one visiting operator managed to sink the car float (train ferry to you) by not balancing the cars while loading. As a result we have been invited to take Young Street to subsequent meets and exhibitions. Not bad for a layout which no longer admits to its age. Our section leader, who prefers to remain anonymous at this point, found it very difficult to announce "Ladies, Gentlemen, and Fellow Ferroequinologists" with clarity after four, or was it five glasses of wine at the banquet. Well, you try it then. Now back to serious work on our layout at HQ - WUT3.

*Clive Winter*

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## **Spotlight on Ron Price**

Although I had grandparents living in Hatfield, I was born in Stoke Newington and at

about the age of three my family moved to Chingford. One of my first recollections is of 1939 when I lived in Chingford and my father had an O Gauge layout in one bedroom and also an American Lionel standard gauge railway (I think it was approximately 2" gauge) in the garden. I can remember riding on a small truck with my feet on the loco. It used to pull me around the garden and I think it was 24 Volt A.C.

We were bombed out in 1940 and moved to Hatfield. In fact all three schools I attended, two in Chingford and one in Hatfield, were bombed and naturally it disrupted my education quite seriously. I remember at one time we only went to school one day a week in a big house.

In about 1946 my father joined the Hatfield Society of Model Engineers and in 1947 I started work. I got a job at the Sphere Works, which was an engineering firm in St. Albans. I was working in the machine shop on small milling machines and capstan lathes. I remember I used to go home smelling of cutting oil. I learnt a lot but never thought at the time it would be very useful in years to come.

About this time my father acquired a 4" round bed Drummond lathe. Also the Hatfield Society had a model exhibition and running at the show was a 3½" Juliet built by Bert Saunders of the St. Albans Society. We were having a lot of trouble running the O Gauge layout and he said to me, "how about building a live steam loco?" Well that is how it all started for me!

We had the Model Engineer series on Juliet so Kennions was our next port of call. Drawings and all castings were purchased and work started. My father did all the fitting and I all the machining. Juliet was completed in 12 months and I remember building the boiler with 5 pint and 2 pint blowlamps. My mother never resented the fact that the 2 men in her life were always in the workshop. In fact she took an interest and encouraged us.

I gave up my job at the Sphere Works and got a job with de Havillands. This was 1948, I was a shop boy on the electrical section in the Erecting Shop working on aircraft such as Mosquito, Hornet, Dove and Vampire. After about a year in the Erecting Shop I joined the de Havilland Aeronautical Technical School as an apprentice, I wanted to be a toolmaker but at that time the section was full up. But as a second choice I chose sheet metal work. You had four days a week on the bench and one day in the classroom.

The Hatfield Society started running fetes and it was found that Juliet was not quite man enough for the job so we started thinking of another locomotive and it was decided to go for Princess Marina. In those days Dick Simmons supplied drawings and castings and the loco was built in 18 months. Marina is a very good locomotive and being very powerful ideal for fetes in those days.

After about a year I completed my course at the Tech School and was transferred to the sheet metal department. In those days it was in Welwyn Garden City due to the fact that the original sheet metal shop at Hatfield was bombed in 1940 (Hitler must have had it in for me although this time he had bombed before my arrival !) The sheet metal shop at Welwyn was building drop tanks for Mosquitos and Vampires, aluminium fuel and water tanks and a lot of pipe work. There was also a Coppersmiths Department at Welwyn in which Derek Perham's father was the superintendent.

The Drummond lathe was sold and we bought a new lathe called the Hobson from Victa Engineering in Maidenhead. The Myford ML7 came out about the same time but the Hobson had Timkin bearings, six speed gear head and No. 3 morse taper. Now with a new lathe it was time to build another loco. This time it was to be 3½" Hielan Lassie. As we lived near the main line from Kings Cross one would often see the full size one.

Lassie was built in 2½ years. It was now 1955 and Lassie was highly commended at the ME Exhibition that year.

I had by now been transferred from the Sheet Metal Department at Welwyn to the experimental sheet metal section at Hatfield. I considered this was the best department to work in since we were working on and building new aircraft. The first Comet was being built. We had the two seater Venom, a test Vampire and the DH 108. The latter was a flying wing and we as apprentices would go outside the hanger to watch flying displays with John Derry taking the 108 through the sound barrier. Geoffrey de Havilland Jr. had been killed taking a similar aircraft through the barrier over the Thames estuary.

I had completed my apprenticeship as a sheet metal worker and in the Experimental Department the next aircraft we started on was the DH 110. This was a much larger aircraft than the Vampire. It was a twin boom type but with two Rolls Royce Avon engines. We build two aircraft; one was painted silver and the other all black. The second aircraft (the black one) had all the latest modifications which the first aircraft did not have. The black 110 had been painted specially for the Farnborough Show. On the Saturday, the aircraft had engine trouble and John Derry flew back to Hatfield and took the silver 110 to Farnborough. This aircraft on that Saturday afternoon was involved in that tragic accident when a lot of people were killed as well as John Derry himself. This was a great shock and sadness to us at work since we knew him well. Both he and John Cunningham would regularly walk round as we were building aircraft and talk to us about the job.

Things were about to change for me now. I met Sylvia at a local dance class-we both enjoyed ballroom dancing-and three years later we were married. She gladly accepted my model engineering which is marvellous because not every wife is happy about such things. After 4 deferments I was called up for National Service in 1956. I went in the R.A.F. and spent my time as - guess what - a sheet metal worker at Middle Wallop in Hampshire. It was quite good though because I was the only sheet metal worker on the site. I travelled home at weekends whenever possible and developed a real respect for the Spam-Cans - they really could go! During my two years in the R.A.F. my father passed away. It was a great loss - we'd been a good team. When I left the R.A.F. I had to move the workshop from where my mother and father lived in Hatfield to the house we now live in.

At the time I came out of the R.A.F., Martin Evans started the series in the Model Engineer on a 3½" 2-6-4 Tank-Jubilee. I had been looking for a new locomotive and I liked the 2-6-4 Tank so I decided to have a go. As I had other locomotives to run I could take my time in building it. I started to put detail onto the loco which Martin Evans hadn't included and I was pleased with the results. It was a taste of what I would concentrate much effort on in later models. I also became a member of the N.L.S.M.E. It was 1959.

I think it was at this time the North London lost its track at Arkley. I remember trying to salvage the rail and the concrete beams for use at a later date. After a while the Water Company offered us the site at Colney Heath. I was Section Leader at the time and on 28th May 1962, with Edd Hobday met Mr Shaw and Mr Boyd of the Water Company at Colney Heath to put forward the plans for the railway at the site. I led the team which built the first (shorter) track at Colney Heath. The brass plate by the traverser gives the names of the people involved. The first working party was on Sunday 17th June 1962. The shorter track was complete and the last section welded on Saturday 11th April 1964 and the very first run was with my Princess Marina at 6.30pm on that date. The site with

workshop and station building were all completed by 1965. The extension was built later. My Jubilee tank locomotive was complete and with several other locomotives took part in the grand opening of the track by Mr Stace of the Water Company.

Two members, Geoff Wren and John Sumpter decided to build a Speedy and on a visit to Reeves they asked me if I would like to build a Speedy too, but I said I would build Pansy. So I did and it was my one and only 5" gauge locomotive.

After I finished Pansy a lot of people asked the question, "what will be your next loco?" A member whose name I can't remember suggested an A4. I always liked the A4 but I knew it would be a long job. A friend offered to make the name plates, works plate, also the record crest and in due course the plates arrived. After that I had to build an A4 and I built it round these plates! I wrote to Clarkson of York for drawings and castings but when I looked at the drawings a lot of dimensions were missing so I wrote to B.R. for full size drawings of engine and tender (G.A. only). They cost 10/6 (50p) each. Having the full size G.A., work was started on re-drawing and cutting metal.

The A4 marked a turning point in my model engineering really because I had to get further information to make a good job of it. Once you start down this road, that is building the first parts to works drawings incorporating the same features, to scale, as the big engine has, you feel you have to continue to the same standard. And so it was that the A4 came to incorporate everything the big loco had, including such details as steam sanders, vacuum brake and water scoop.

I was still working of course, but the company changed its name to Hawker Siddeley. I came off the Sheet Metal Bench to take up a new position with the Production Engineering Team. This job was working on the shop floor and involved liaison with the design office.

The A4 was going along quite well. The frames had been assembled, also the front bogie. It was being built as per full size. The expansion link brackets had ball races, also part of the two to one gear and the return crank. It also has the correct Kylchap exhaust system. The casing is 24 swg copper beaten up (sheet metal term) to give the correct shape and silver soldered. I must say a lot of detail was obtained from photographs taken by Geoff Cashmore when the full size locomotive was stripped down in Doncaster works and at a B.R. Exhibition at Marylebone. The loco and tender took 14 years to construct. It was entered in the competition section at the M.E. but "nuff sed".

By this time we had our son Graham who spent a great deal of his childhood with locomotives and of course at Colney Heath. Although he is interested in locomotives and has driven them all, he developed his own passion at about 16 for cycles and cycle racing which he still enjoys. (Incidentally, he has won far more cups than I have!). He carried on the tradition of engineering and served his apprenticeship at British Aerospace later moving on to Monach Airlines at Luton. He is married to Amanda and they have an 18 month old son, Oliver

After the A4 and being an L.N.E.R. type I had a liking for the small N2 Tank Locomotive. One of our members had quite a lot of detailed photos and another member had the full size works G.A. Once again it was back to the drawing board. The frames were cut out and in the rear pony wheel position the frames are joggled. To put this set in the frames I had to make up a joggling tool. This could not be done in a bench vice so it had to be done under a fly press. It is not an easy job joggling 1/8" steel plate. The wheels came from Reeves, I think they were for a 3½" Green King loco they had the castings for. The cylinders were from Molly and the valve gear is Stephenson copied

from full size, I think it is a very nice little locomotive - not too heavy to lift around. Well the N2 was finished and I now took early retirement from what was by now British Aerospace after reaching the position of Deputy Chief Production Engineer in 43 years.

At one of our open days at Colney Heath, I ran into Ken Edge from the Peterborough Society and he asked me what I was going to build next. I said I did not know and he then suggested No. 10000. I asked about drawings. He said he had all the numbers as he would like to build it in 5" gauge but I think the casing put him off. I wrote to York for the G.A. drawings, I think they cost about £22 - a lot dearer than the A4. This locomotive being a four cylinder compound had two high pressure and two low pressure cylinders, also with a high pressure boiler. Quite a challenge I thought!

Again, it was back to the drawing board. I find if you are going to build a locomotive from full size, you must draw it out first, as in a lot of cases things do not always fit. A working mock up was made of the valve gear. The boiler was drawn up similar to the one on the A4. To build a scaled down full size high pressure water tube boiler would mean in excess of 1000 silver soldered joints which I did not think very practical. The locomotive being a 4-6-4 (or as some people think it should be, a 4-6-2-2), meant the wheel castings were standard A3 or A4 size and the bogie wheels were also A4. The casting for the wheels and cylinders came from Dave Goodwin but for the inside cylinders I had to make my own patterns and Norman Spink cast them for me.

The casing once again is 24 swg copper sheet and is formed up to represent the shape of the high pressure boiler. The locomotive has the Kylchap double chimney which had been fitted in its last year of service. I must mention the compound operation. It is worked by a lever on the boiler backhead. A shaft goes through a hollow stay which in turn operates a type of two way piston valve in the smoke box. When the lever is pulled out, steam is admitted to the low pressure (L.P.) outside cylinders. Once the locomotive is underway, the lever is then pushed in and the steam in the valve to the L.P. cylinders is shut off and the other port is opened and steam is admitted to the high pressure inside cylinders. The exhaust from the H.P. cylinders is fed into the L.P. outside cylinders thus giving compound working.

The tender is fitted with a corridor which the original had. The loco and tender was finished in a battleship grey as the locomotive was part built at Yarrow and Co., the Clyde ship builders. My locomotive carries the name "British Enterprise". The plates were cast for the full size loco but never carried. No. 10000 steams well and has a working pressure of 100 PSI, but as a compound I do not think it has the same power or the punch of the A4, but as I said it was a very interesting job, a challenge and very satisfying.

Building locos from works drawings of course takes more time than building from published model engineering drawings. I have been asked how much extra time is involved. Roughly speaking I'd say about 1/3 of the time required to build in such a way is spent on research and 2/3 on the actual building.

I think in order to build locomotives, or any other model for that matter, one should be a member of a club because when I was building the A4, I was looking for information on certain items and quite a few members came up with the answers. To name two: Geoff Cashmore and Pete Townend (who was Shed Master at Kings Cross and a one time member of our Society) were a great source of information. When I had finished No. 10000 I thought I might have a go at a boat. Well I built a small radio controlled tug. Although it was quite good fun I would rather work in metal than plastic.

My next project I am still thinking about. I would like to build an A1, but I have built three large 3½" gauge locomotives and three eight wheel tenders so it might end up with an 0-6-0 Tank Locomotive, which would be much lighter to lift around. We will have to wait and see.

*Ron Price*

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

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