

# January/February 1999 / Issue 589

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## Thoughts of Chairman Dell

Well Xmas is over once again, and although I had a very good time, nothing compares to being a child at Xmas. I well remember 1934 when my Father bought me a train set [surprise]. He told me many years later that he paid twelve shillings for it, second hand of course. It consisted of 3 tank locos 64 wheeled coaches and a number of goods wagons, it was in a battered old box and printed on the lid was Table Top railway made by BING . I've since learned that this was the first 00 or maybe HO train set produced, and came out in 1928.

On Xmas day my Father and Uncles played with it for most of day and I only watched. Gradually their interest waned and I was allowed to take over running the railway. It was one of the best Christmases I ever had. Although if I had looked after the train set, and kept it, I could have had another good Xmas. About 5 years ago, a Bing Table Top railway was auctioned at Christies and fetched several thousand pounds. Never throw anything away should have been my motto. I can't even remember what became of it, perhaps given away [GROAN].

I've just returned from the M. E. and I enjoyed it very much. So there were not too many Locomotives in competition this year, but nevertheless many models to see and admire. What impressed me most were the boats. What a wonderful display they put on in the Pool, particularly the North Sea convoy, the attack by the U Boat, the merchant ship being hit and breaking in two followed by the search and attack by the convoy's escort Destroyers. The sound and visual display was simply amazing.

We won the shield for the best Club stand again this year - two in a row, perhaps we can make it a hat trick next year, who knows. I must say that compared to all other club stands ours was head and shoulders above them all. The lighting, the cards describing the exhibits, the club signs, the panoramic view of the track, the computer web site display - all of these were so professional. The models themselves were of such a high standard that I feel that if members had entered the competition, they would have come away with awards - I hope I don't sound too jingoistic, but the stand was GREAT, a credit to N. L. S. M E.. Well done to Maurice and his many helpers.

Later this month it's PICKETS LOCK, another interesting show, and also much nearer. I don't like

the journey to Earls Court, I would never have made it without Maurice to guide me! Next year the M.E. will be at ALLY PALLY, a better time, a better place, only 15 minutes away for me.

It only leaves me to wish everyone a HAPPY NEW YEAR and a healthy one. If for some reason you feel you're not quite so fit and healthy as you used to be, come along to our Sunday working parties at Colney Heath.

**See you Sunday.**

*Frank Dell*

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## Off The Cuff

This has to be the annual occasion you are all eagerly waiting for – a double whammie of notes covering the December '98 and January '99 Council Meetings, but before starting I have to tell you that very sadly two members died before Christmas. In early December Honorary Member Mrs. Marjorie Simes died – a family friend passed the news to me (see obituary by Tom Luxford). Then a few days before Christmas, Cine member Bill Douglas died. This time it was John Old who told me and he intended going to the funeral. Bill Douglas had had a very interesting life and was a very respected and well thought of member (see tribute).

As one would expect the December meeting was fairly quiet and nothing controversial was raised. The six of us in attendance approved November's minutes: learnt we had a team of 3 members prepared to undertake the risk assessment at Headquarters: discussed in detail suggested revisions to the Constitution – which in due course will be placed before members for their approval or rejection: and decided to recommend that the Track Committee should seriously consider discontinuing attendance at Fetes, concentrating instead on raising money through having more Birthday Parties at the track. Both the Chairman's and the Hon.Sec's reports were rapidly disposed of: in the Treasurer's absence brief financial figures were tabled and noted, and one membership application was approved. Only the 00 Section made a brief report as no news was forthcoming from anyone else. At this point we wished one another a Merry Xmas & Happy New Year before wending our way to our respective homes.

Now we are into the New Year and the January Council Meeting was virtually a Full House. The succinct December minutes were signed and will now be filed. There was a bit more polishing to the Constitution revisions (which means a bit more retyping but the computer makes it so easy!) : the very soggy ground conditions at the track is delaying purchase and delivery of a container to make a secure store: and there was some further discussion on the pros and cons of fetes and birthday parties – Rod Pomeroy (Loco Section Leader) will keep members informed when this subject has been fully assessed by the Track Committee.

The Chairman reviewed a request from St Stephens Parish Council for the Society to participate in their Millennium Celebrations at Greenwood Park (Chiswell Green) on 11 July and it was decided that he would take his model steam lorry and some other members take their miniature traction engines and offer the public rides round the park. Meantime your Hon.Sec. will write some complimentary copy for the official programme.

He then expressed his personal pleasure and enjoyment of the Model Engineer Exhibition at Olympia where, for the second year running, we won the Best Stand Award. Appreciation was expressed at the excellent display put on by Maurice Cummins and his very enthusiastic and hard-working helpers. (By the time you read this we will also have been at the Model Engineers Gathering at Picketts Lock.)

Our finances were discussed and the Treasurer gave his recommendations regarding subscriptions. These will be discussed with members at the February General Meeting, and finally announced - whatever the outcome - in the March newsletter.

One application for membership was approved.

This time there was a bit more news from some of the Sections. Marine members have purchased a gazebo to enhance the pondside during the summer: Cine members have just completed a film which will be their entry in this year's Triangle Competition: 00 members have enjoyed an unprecedented five weeks running their trains but are about to return to wiring, scenery, etc., though the first Wednesday every month will be reserved for running the trains; they are also taking part in an exhibition at the John Keeble Church Hall at Mill Hill on April 10th: Loco members are still working hard on maintenance and other jobs at Colney Heath though more bodies and more effort would be appreciated; a new Track Committee was elected at a recent Loco Meeting - a full list will be found in Track News: finally two Stationary Steam enthusiasts - Messrs Squire and Baxter - took part in the City of London New Year's Day Parade and thoroughly enjoyed the occasion (especially the Cheer Leaders!).

**ENJOY YOURSELVES.**

*Beryl Collingwood*

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## [Tyttenhanger Gazette](#)

The DECEMBER Loco Meeting was chaired by Rod Pomeroy, the first in his new position as Loco Section Leader. In Brendan's absence, Rod laid on a quiz of one hundred questions covering many subjects.

We split ourselves into groups of six or so. The winning team had 85 points out of a hundred, and each member of the team received a book as a prize.

One particular question to stick in my mind was: "During the First World War, what were the trains nicknamed the 'Jellicoe specials' carrying?" The answer was "Coal". Asking why, I was reliably informed that Jellicoe was Commander of the naval fleet, and the coal was bound for the ports to fuel his coal-fired ships.

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At the JANUARY Loco Section meeting the recent Model Engineer Exhibition at Olympia was discussed, together with fresh ideas for the club's stand at the exhibition next year.

An election took place for the new Track Committee. There were twelve names and eight places on the Committee. The results of the election and a report on the exhibition are covered in other articles.

The topic for the evening was a railway video by one of our members.

The February Loco meeting is to be a surprise, courtesy of Mike Chrisp.

*Roger Bell*

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## Marine Mumbles strikes again .....

If I told you all we had a portable pond in use at the November Marine meeting at HQ, would you believe me? OK, how about a portable bowl of water, then? This was needed to show off the newly-built 'pop-pop' boats of Messrs Perham and Precious. It must be noted that Peter's boat had a clinker effect on the hull, thanks to the corrugations around a large tin of 57 varieties. When fired up both were very impressive.

Dave Jones has gone one step further with a 'pop-pop' boat with sound effects:- A 'clink-clink pop-pop' boat The sound is produced by using thin brass shim on top of the 'boiler box'. These boat seem to function by drawing water up the two submerged, rearward facing tubes.

The water is heated in a coil or 'boiler box' by a meths burner under it. The result is hot water being blown back down the tubes giving forward movement in jerks, but still forward movement.

Derek is hoping to get more people interested so we can have time trials of sorts up at the track at the April Marine meeting. We will be using his own portable pond, which I think is made of roof guttering.

How could I follow this glittering demonstration with a talk on using different types of decals and transfers. My son, Neil, came to my rescue when building my Fairmile - the main problem was how to produce draught marks (numbers) down the hull. He suggested using water-slide transfers produced by Games Workshop which had all I needed on them. Don't you just hate clever sons!

One thing that is very important about using water-slide decals is to apply them to a gloss finish, to get maximum adhesion and then varnish over them when dry. Otherwise you would end up watching them floating behind the boat in its first sailing.

I forgot to mention the entry, before the start of the meeting, by Frank Inman attached to a life belt. (I know it was raining, but not that hard.) This was the newly acquired life belt for siting by the pond. It looked very impressive indeed. Norman Brown has very kindly offered to build the frame for it to hang.

The last Marine meeting of the year ended with emptying the portable pond down the sink.

*Peter Stern*

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## Track News

With the Christmas / New Year / ME Exhibition now behind us, it is time for the Sunday morning working parties to crack on and finish some of the smaller jobs, so that we can really get a good start on some of the larger ones. If anyone is at a loss for something to do on a Sunday morning, please feel free to come along as you will receive a very warm welcome, an excellent cup of tea or coffee, some good chat and a job!!!

Due to work and illness I was unable to attend the exhibition at Olympia until the afternoon of the final day, and in the short time that I had to look around I was struck by a number of points.

The Quality of the club stands were again of the highest order, although I feel sure that ours was the best as always!! (I have since found out that we won the Best Club Stand Trophy again.) so we must

all congratulate Maurice and his team for a good job. Very Well Done.

I was disappointed by the number of competition models in the show, is this because no one is building anything? Or is the judging becoming too choosy?

If people are not entering the competition classes, then why were there so few loan models? Surely if we build something we want to show it off, not lock it away only to be seen by fellow club members.

I felt that there were too many stands selling toys and products that bore no relation to model engineering or modelling in general. I have spoken to some people since the show, and have been told that "As the show is now known as the 'International Model Show' it is trying to cater for a much larger cross section of the public", but lets face it, how can you class ready made items as models - things like teddy bears, Scalextric cars, wooden toys, pin cushions, coloured coins and so forth - there is no skill or modelling involved in these items, simply open the box and there you are!!!

From the ones that I visited or passed, the engineering trade stands seemed to be doing brisk business, although where were Reeves?

I feel that the second-hand tool/junk stands are now too many, and just how do they set their prices? As all the ones that I visited had the same things at the same price!!!

Anyway, enough, I hear you cry, another show done and dusted and I expect many people enjoyed themselves, so we must look forward to the next show that the club is to attend, which is Picketts Lock. Although by the time that you read this, that show will have been and gone, I feel sure that we will have done ourselves proud and advertised all our different sections and interests.

The January loco section meeting was a fairly quiet affair when we discussed the recent show at Olympia, and threw around a few ideas for the exhibition committee to consider for next year.

Also, we held the election for the Tyttenhanger Committee with the following eight persons being elected to serve:

- Keith Bartlam
- Les Brimson
- Mike Chrisp
- Jack Edwards
- Mike Foreman
- David Jones
- Tom Luxford
- Ron Price

If you have any ideas / thoughts / wishes, for future projects at the track, please don't hesitate to approach myself or one of the above named members with your idea / thought / wish, so that it can be discussed by the Committee. I promise that you will receive feedback.

The track stewards rota for the 1999 season is published in this Newsletter, so please check to see if you are down for a duty. If you are unable to do the date that you are down for, please arrange your own swap with someone else on the list and let me know, or amend the lists which are posted in the coach at the track or at HQ.

The next Loco Section meeting will be at HQ on Friday 12 February and will be a surprise evening by Mike Chrisp.

*Rod Pomeroy*

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## **[A Tribute to William George Douglas D.F.C.](#)**

It is with great sadness the Cine Section has to report the death of one of its staunchest and longest serving members. 'Bill' as we knew him was at our last meeting before Christmas just a few days before he was taken ill. He has a quiet and peaceful end and joined the great film club in the sky on 19 December.

Our sympathies go to Mabel, his loyal friend and companion who shared many years of happiness with Bill, helping him over the grief of losing his wife through cancer twenty years ago.

Even though he was 85, Bill regularly drove in from Welham Green to our Wednesday evening Cine meetings and was a member of North Finchley British Legion and would pop in there for a tonic water or if he wasn't driving, a bottle of light ale. "Not one out of the fridge", he would say, as it set his teeth on edge (yes, he still had his own!).

A Pathfinder during the Second World War, Bill flew over 1,000 hours in Lancaster bombers, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in recognition of his courage, he also taught many of our excellent young pilots and retired from the RAF as a Squadron Leader.

A signwriter by profession, Bill made many noteworthy films noted for their excellent graphics and he won our Film of the Year Trophy in 1974/75 and 1983.

A film club member for over 30 years and an accomplished amateur artist, he had a painting exhibited at Central Hall, Westminster, which came third from over 700 entries.

Ironically, in our latest production, which we have just finished shooting, we provided Bill with a zimmer frame (he did not even use a walking stick in real life), and even then the director had a problem getting Bill to appear old enough. We had to tell him to lean over a bit and slow down a bit. It is hoped this film will represent us in our annual 'Cup Final', the Triangle Competition, a fitting tribute to a quiet, unassuming, modest gentleman.

Not one to blow his own trumpet, I hope Bill would forgive me for revealing some of his remarkable achievements which he kept under wraps for so many years.

His memorial service at Garston Manor was conducted as he had lived, with quiet dignity, the coffin being led into the Chapel by the Standard Bearer of the British Legion carrying the flag of the North Finchley Branch. Although several members were away over the Christmas period, over 50% of the Cine Section attended.

We hope Mabel will continue her association with us and when time has helped the hurt she must be feeling now, we can share with her the memories of the Happy and Joyful times experienced by all those who had the privilege of knowing Bill Douglas and may our future films reflect the skills and wisdom he imparted over many, many years.

A good friend sorely missed.

*John Old*

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## Mrs M Symes, an obituary

It was with sadness that I have to report the death of Mrs Symes, one of our Honorary Members. Mrs Symes was the wife of Ernie Symes, one of the leading lights in the group that originated the N.L.S.M.E. Mrs Symes was a tireless worker in the early days of the Society. I remember that she supplied us with sustenance while we were working in the Barnet District Gas and Water Company's garages making portable tracks for both Rail-car racing and the two and half, three and half, four and three quarters and five inch gauge locos.

Mrs Symes was a true Model Engineer's Wife.

*Tom Luxford*

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## The Great Train Robbery

The subject for the December General Meeting was a talk by ex-DI Clifford Wrate, entitled 'The Great Train Robbery'. Had I have been appraised in advance that a write-up was required of me I would have taken some notes, or better still, a tape recorder. As it is I am rather hazy on details, I know that I thoroughly enjoyed it, and laughed like a drain at intervals, but can't remember specifically. To generalise, the title was a bit of a misnomer since Mr. Wrate gave us, initially, a potted history of his time in the police, starting on the beat and rising to the C.I.D., interspersed with anecdotes. He gave us a resume of the robbery, which, although he was not connected directly with the investigation, brought up some interesting points, particularly since he is a keen railway enthusiast.

He is a polished speaker, with the ability to go from the amusing to the dramatic with startling speed. One thing was clear, he does not like criminals, and has done his part in putting more than a few behind bars. He was particularly scathing of the system which, in many cases, lets them out again all too soon.

The train robbery saga started when a postman and a bank robber were banged up together in Maidstone prison. In the course of their evening chats the postman was telling his cellmate about his duties on the mail train, and some of the things they carried, which at that time, included large quantities of banknotes which were considered too dirty for further circulation, and once a week were sent to London to be burned. This, not unnaturally, interested the bank robber greatly, and when he was released he began to research the operation. Although the train ran into Euston in the early hours of the morning, the station was anything but quiet, no chance of offloading several bags of money without attracting, to say the least, some attention. Likewise there was no convenient point on the outskirts of London to stop a train and get a vehicle close enough to get the bags away. So they decided on Lechlade, bought a nearby farm, to which they hoped to flee until the heat was off. The rest is history, I expect most of you are familiar with the story. One or two interesting little sidetracks as to why the perfect crime wasn't, were brought to light. When the chap who came out of Maidstone with the germ of a brilliant coup returned to his "firm," or group of people with an interest in acquiring other people's money, they were interested, but since it was a large enterprise other people had to be brought in with special 'skills', some of whom did their part well, others did not.

Finance was needed to purchase vehicles, pay people to provide alibis', etc. One well educated gent spent a lot of time chatting to drivers, under the pretence of being a railway buff, so successfully that he not only got some early morning footplate rides, but was allowed to drive! On the basis of this

expertise he and the gang assumed that he would be able to drive the train forward after it had been stopped, the short distance to the overbridge where the transport was waiting. Having brutally disabled the driver with a blow to the head with a pickaxe handle, the gang then discovered that the "apprentice" had been driving an 08 shunter and the technique of handling a mainline Class 40 was beyond him. So they forced the unfortunate driver, despite his injury, to drive to the bridge. The second part was that although the normal consignment was in the order of £ 300k, on this occasion, due to the bank holiday on the previous week, this time it was £ 2.3M! Which should have been a considerable bonus, but contributed to their downfall in two ways, 1) it took longer to offload, and 2) greed. When they got back to the farm they started squabbling about shares. Had they stuck their original plan of laying low until things quietened down they might have got away with it, or at least postponed the inevitable, but a series of blunders messed this up. I can't remember all of them but one of the major contributions was that a nearby RAF group were carrying out training flights which included circling low over the farm and convinced the inhabitants that they had been spotted. A bunch of Londoners in rural Bucks stood out like a sore thumb, one who took off on a bicycle with his share of loot in the saddle-bag was stopped for not having lights. There was a whole chapter of incompetent events which nobbled the gang in various ways and gave them their come-uppance, some in quite amusing circumstances. Sadly, the man who had given his life to the railway, the driver of the postal train, never recovered from the injury received, and the accompanying trauma, and died within a year.

Mr. Wrate works for a travel company and travels to various parts of the world as a passenger so that he can observe things like service received and other passenger/holiday-maker comments. This involves him, amongst other trips, in having to ride on the "Orient Express." Such dedication, still, someone has to do it.

I apologise for a rather disjointed report and any facts I may have got wrong. The bottom line is that I had a thoroughly enjoyable evening and I hope that we can persuade Mr. Wrate to visit us again.

*Jim Robson*

## Valve Gear Verses by Cut Off

<p>Now Bunsen invented some lab gear Mary Quaint makes remarkable fab gear So isn't it sad That we don't know the lad Whose genius gave us the Gab gear.</p>	<p>A Belgian named Walschaert (Egide) Said "A good outside motion I need</p> <p>The crank pin I think Will waggle the link And the crosshead will give me the lead "</p>
<p>There was a young fellow called Howe Who said "My link motions' a wow</p> <p>It will carry my name To perpetual fame But it's always called Stephenson's now.</p>	<p>There once was a clever young boy Who said these eccentrics annoy I will just attach one rod Half way up the con rod And that was the start of the Joy</p>
<p>Said Gooch of Great Western renown</p>	<p>If valve gears you study for long</p>

<p>These great swinging links make me frown It is better, I think Just to pivot the link And move the valve rod up and down</p>	<p>You'll classify Southern and strong With Marshall and Breame For the secret of them Is this. They're all Hackworth gone wrong.</p>
<p>Said Allan, "The Stephenson's gear" Fills me with repulsion and fear The links with their curves Just gets on my nerves Let's make them as straight as a spear</p>	<p>Young Baker exclaimed (Abner D) My gear is a complete novelty The back end is partially Hackworth or Marshall</p>
<p>J.W. son of old Tim On link motion had views that were dim So he just put a guide On a pivoted slide And Hackworth is named after him.</p>	<p>Said Caprotti, "My permanent dream Concerns the wire -drawing of steam And how to stop it The use of a poppet Controlled by cam is my scheme.</p>

I saw this Poem in an old News Sheet (Nov. 69) and thought it might be useful to fill an empty spot.

*Tom Luxford*

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## [The International Model Show and The Model Engineer Exhibition, Olympia](#)

I would like to thank all those members who helped and supplied models and equipment for the Exhibition. It was a good display and for the second year running we have won "The Best Club Stand Award". This year the Exhibition will be held at Alexandra Palace from 8 - 12 December 1999. By the time you would have read this, we would have had a display of Models at The London Model Engineering Exhibition, Picketts Lock.

*Maurice Cummins*

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## [On-Line News](#)

No doubt everybody has mentioned the Exhibition at Olympia, so I might as well mention it too. As some of you probably know, we had our Web Site on a table at our stand, which drew people of all ages and I believe they thoroughly enjoyed it.

So now, on our Web Site, which can be found at:  
**[www.comports.com/nlsme](http://www.comports.com/nlsme)**

you can find many pictures of the Exhibition and the latest developments at the Track.

We have now had well over 1,000 hits on our Site since it went live on 18th July 1998.

We have also got many new features to our Site, including an E-Mail list where you will receive news and notices by E-Mail. We also have a Guest Book and a search function where people can search our Site, including back-issues of our News Sheet for a particular subject.

When the Track Stewards Rota is finalised, it will be posted on-line, so there will be no excuse for missing it. If anyone can suggest any new features we can add to our Site (eg. plans for pop-pop boats, stationary steam engines which run off the heat of your hand) do not hesitate to contact me.

*Peter Foreman Web Editor*

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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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