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Thoughts of Chairman Dell

This month I will tell you of the time as a spotty youth I was a patron of the theatre or to be more precise the variety theatre.

The place that I pursued my patronage was The Lewisham Hippodrome, one of London's premier suburban theatres. Most of the Stars who appeared in the West End came to Lewisham Hippodrome unlike the two other theatres in the area, the New Cross Empire and the Deptford Broadway. My Uncle Stan operated the Lime Lights at New Cross and I could always get in free. Nevertheless my favourite was always the Lewisham Hippodrome.

We had a definite routine on Saturday night. A small group of us used to meet up at the Black Horse for a couple of drinks, sometimes only three of us, sometimes as many as six. We attended the second house: Curtain up at eight o'clock sharp and sat back for two hours of first class entertainment all for the price of 4d. We always sat in the Gallery or Gods as they were known.

I've seen some of the Greats - Laurel & Hardy for one and although Oliver Hardy was a very sick man the act was absolutely great. It was an honour to see them. Another act was the Ink Spots. Who remembers them? Four coloured boys in close harmony.

Johnny Ray was another act playing to packed houses all week. 'The little white cloud that cried' was his song. But best of all was Max Miller the cheeky chappie. He was the only comedian who would fill a theatre anywhere in the country, matinees included. He was really cheeky.

Many stories circulated about Max. He had a huge Jewish following. He never admitted to being Jewish, although Jewish people thought he was. He always wore a white Homburg hat and a plus four suit made out of floral curtain material.

On one occasion he was in a bar along with Ted Ray, Jimmy Wheeler and others. Max was telling the company that he had bought another row of houses in Brighton, which was where he lived, to which Ted Ray said, "For God's sake sell one of them and buy a round of drinks". He was a very careful man with money.

When Max was working in London he always tried to get back to Brighton on the last train out of Victoria which left at 11.10pm. Many times the last train was held up as Max hadn't arrived and the station master would say, "We'll give Mr Miller another five minutes". I couldn't see that happening today whoever you were.

I once met the great man. As I was passing the Hippodrome I spotted Max and followed him in. He made straight for the circle bar. I was hoping to get his autograph. He turned round and spotted me,

"Hello son, going to buy me a drink?"

"Yes Mr Miller", I said.

"Make it a double"

Which he downed in one and I never did get his autograph.

One reason for the high standard in comedians was that once they had an act together they could tour with the same act for years. It might be two years before you saw them again. By that time you had forgotten all the jokes. Timing was superbly polished over the years of repetition.

One act anticipated with great excitement was Miss Phyllis Dixie who posed in the nude in a series of classical poses, all very titillating but very tame by today's standards - no movement allowed.

Do you remember Old Mother Riley and her way ward daughter Kitty? Kitty McShane and Arthur Lucan were husband and wife and she ruled poor Arthur with a rod of iron, (Don't they all?): she was always having affairs with younger men which upset Arthur and eventually turned him to drink. Not that he needed much turning as over the years he had become an expert. Eventually he was the complete alcoholic and could not continue with the act.

However, Kitty was not going to give up the act because Arthur was always drunk. She engaged another man to play the Old Mother Riley and for the last 5 years of his life Arthur never appeared on stage and no one knew that they weren't seeing Old Mother Riley. Arthur eventually died in abject poverty. When you think he was a major star of stage and screen and radio it seems hard to believe.

To be continued next month unless I get a mass protest against all the drivel whot I have written!

Frank Dell

Off the Cuff - October Council Meeting

I have to admit to being very considerably hampered by Basil, our black & tan Jack Russell, who is striving to maintain pole position on my lap while I try some one-finger

one-handed typing! He's winning as I'm being reduced to fits of giggles as he's wriggling so much I keep hitting all the wrong keys! Leastways that's my excuse for any spelling errors in this offering. Hopefully Michael will soon be home from the last birthday party of the 1999 season when I know I'll be instantly deserted by Basil for his Best Friend!

So let's begin. We had a full house plus 2 Section Leaders and the Librarian, and it was a bit of a tight squeeze getting under a North American portable layout and finding enough space to sit in reasonable comfort but we made it. Apart from a couple of minor corrections to the September Minutes these were found to be in order and were signed. Matters Arising invariably seems to have lots of items brought forward from the last and previous meetings which hopefully ensures matters needing attention will have been dealt with or are being processed - perhaps we should rename this agenda item "Reminders". In reasonably quick order we dealt with - remedial work required at headquarters: the revised risk assessment document for headquarters: speakers for future General Meetings: passenger hauling at Colney Heath by non-members: and an access ramp for the boat pond.

The Chairman's Report came next when, on a Loco matter, he dealt with a "possible" claim by a visitor for a flesh burn said to have been caused by a hot cinder but which was not reported and recorded at the time of the said incident. There is nothing the Society can do about this until - or if - we receive a formal complaint which will then have to be passed to the insurers via the Southern Federation who then follow it through. The Chairman then spoke about another Loco matter, namely whether or not a general padlock should be used on the secure store to give all members free access to it. Some thought this would totally obviate the requirement for the secure store as undoubtedly at some time it will be left unlocked and could become yet another general dumping area. As this matter has been fully discussed at previous Council Meetings and a number of expensive keys to the new padlock have already been purchased, it was decided that the previous Council decision to provide a high security padlock with limited access will not be changed.

The Chairman then sought clarification on what exactly were the parameters of Council business as he felt too much attention is given to Loco matters possibly to the detriment of the other Sections. This engendered a very wide ranging discussion without actually arriving at a clearly defined answer. However the difference between the two sites - Finchley and Colney Heath - did provide a solution of sorts. Finchley - smaller and more contained, easier to manage, and with far less hazards and risks. Colney Heath - larger, not particularly easy to manage and maintain, and because of locomotive and boating activities based there it has certain unavoidable hazards and risks. Obviously the Council exists to manage the affairs of the Society and oversee its various activities which basically is what it does, and because of the complexities of the Colney Heath site this of necessity will invariably take up more Council time than matters relating to Finchley. It would of course assist the Council to give more attention to matters related to Finchley if all Sections there would provide detailed monthly reports and it was finally left that all Section Leaders will ask their members what they expect from the Council and will then report back.

In order not to overwhelm the meeting with too many items about the Loco Section I found myself with little to report as I rarely receive correspondence or phone calls relating to headquarters, so we rapidly progressed on to the Treasurer who gave his usual financial summary and one membership application which was approved. We were concerned to learn that a reported fault in the coach telephone at Colney Heath had been investigated by a BT engineer who discovered the line had actually been physically

cut in the junction box sited at the top of the pole by the main gate. He expressed the opinion that this had been done to check the existence of an alarm connection to the local police station - and we might now have a break-in!

Our attention was drawn to the new heaters now in use at headquarters which, with just two switched on, seemed very effective. As matters relating to headquarters had already been dealt with we moved on to Section Reports regrettably with nothing from either North American or Slot Cars.

Loco members are due to get a questionnaire seeking amongst other things their views on whether or not the coach should be replaced or repaired, and possible improvements to the catering facility. We learnt that provided non-members who drive locos always sign the track book and their signatures are witnessed by full members then the Society is covered for insurance purposes, and when drivers change places with each other whilst at the Station it is necessary to ensure that the new driver has signed in. These matters are specific requirements stipulated by our Insurers.

There was little to report from the Marine Section but some discussion took place about a proposed bridge/ramp to provide easier access over the Cuckoo Line to the boat pond for elderly members. The 00 Section will shortly bring a portable layout into the main meeting room so it can be thoroughly checked and tested to ensure it is in good working order for exhibition purposes. Video Group members had recently devoted an evening in a "tribute to the late Bill Douglas" and a memorial shield has been presented to the Group by Bill's daughter and son-in-law.

The Librarian drew our attention to the fact that the last binding of ME magazines was for the year 1994, and it was agreed two further years should now be properly bound. Unfortunately there are no magazines in the Library for years 1997 and 1998 and some effort will be made to acquire the missing editions. Speaking for our Exhibition Manager, Frank Hills, the Treasurer reported a successful time at the recent St Albans Exhibition and that we now had the Model Engineers Exhibition to look forward to in December at Alexandra Palace.

Finally, the Colney Heath risk assessment document produced jointly by Frank Dell, Jack Edwards and Mike Collingwood was formally passed to Rod Pomeroy for action by the Track Committee. It is intended that the document will be continually revised as changes occur. The Council meeting then closed at 10.08pm, expressing regret that the anticipated report from the Fetes & Fairs Section had not materialised.

Beryl Collingwood

Editorial

I must confess to a little secret before I go any further. I am not alone as Editor. I do in fact have an assistant - my daughter Jill Prior, without whose help I couldn't do this job. Oh, all right, I suppose I ought to own up to others helping as well. Three other members of my family are also helping me. They're all fully conversant with computers and they consider me as the only member of the family who is computer illiterate! But I am building a 5" B17 which is something they say they couldn't do.

I started out modelling railways in a gauge called TT (How many members can

remember the heyday of that, when you could buy RTR locos etc?). I then moved on to 00 and then to 16 mm narrow gauge in the garden and finally to 3 ½" and now 5" gauge. It dawned on me some time ago that this progression was nothing to do with going up in the world but really something to do with my progressively worsening eyesight!!

With the increasing size of models comes the problem of, if not lifting them, just moving them and perhaps with increasing age it might be a good idea to stick to 3 ½" gauge. I'm just finding this out now because the B17 is getting to the stage where lifting it at home is out of the question and dropping it doesn't bear contemplation.

This leads me on to thinking about safety. Many years ago I moved off after stopping on the curve next to the steaming bays with my 3 ½" Britannia (and to this day I don't know exactly how it happened) but I leant over just a very small amount to look at the left hand cylinder drains which didn't appear to be functioning. Next thing I knew the driving truck tipped and as the truck and I turned over I was horrified to see the tender and then the engine coming over as well. Everything came off. Fortunately the engine and tender missed the concrete steps landing upside down on the grass beside the track. The driving truck hit the corner of the steps and still bears the scars today. It all happened so quickly. I called John West, the only other person on the site at the time and to whom I am eternally grateful. I was devastated but John's prompt and calm action saved the day. I loaded the damaged engine, tender and driving truck into their boxes and made for home. It took me 2 weeks before I could even face opening the boxes to see what the extent of the damage really was. Fortunately at the end of the day it was only a matter of rebuilding the platework of engine and tender (most of which had only recently been re-built).

I have told this story because I think it might be possible to divide loco section members into 2 groups - those who have come off the track in a spectacular way like myself and those who haven't. If you fall into my group then it doesn't take much imagination to realise what the consequences of coming off the track at the steaming bay curve with passengers might be. It wouldn't be just hurt pride and a beloved engine damaged. At best it might mean minor injuries and at worst it could result in the closure of the Society.

Grahame Ainge

[Treasurer's Corner](#)

As I reported last month, I had cut the cost of the telephone at Colney Heath, but this month I have to report that a member of the criminal fraternity had cut the wires at the top of the telegraph pole by the gate, therefore disconnecting the phone altogether. When I met the BT engineer at the track, he advised me that this is usually done by professional thieves, to check if the line is connected to the police station. So would any member who visits the track at odd times be extra vigilant.

Maurice Cummins

[Tyttenhanger Gazette](#)

The October Loco Meeting was a 'Bring and Buy' auction. It was well attended and the room was full of engineering paraphernalia. There was hardly any room to put anything down. There were three loco chassis, a belt sander, a sensitive drilling machine, model boats, stationary engines, measuring equipment like a variable height gauge and a micrometer, materials, taps and drills not to mention but a few.

Mike Chrisp, our able auctioneer started the proceedings with a flame thrower from the late Bill Camp, whom it was alleged did not like gardening and used it for removing the weeds. It was massive affair requiring courage to use it. A reminder of Bill for 50p. Mike's banter kept us amused and attentive as the money, much of it for the club kept rolling in. After the tally, the club was found to have benefited by approximately £150.

Roger Bell

Coming General Meetings

General Meetings as you know take place on the first Friday of every month at Headquarters, Summers Lane, Finchley. We are hoping to widen their appeal to attract support from all Sections within the Society. A cup of tea during the interval will be provided and we shall, each month, be looking for volunteer "tea makers" on an ad hoc basis.

On **5th November** you will be entertained by Hugh Fairhead (ex-R.A.F.) who will talk on his memories of flying the de Havilland Mosquito and the Bristol Beaufighter. There will be no reference to the war in this talk and Hugh has indicated that he will welcome questions from you. Hugh has been to Colney Heath on various occasions and attended the recent St Albans Exhibition with some enthusiasm. He was introduced to the North London Society by Marcel Bolle and has given this talk to several local Model Flying Clubs.

On **3rd December** we are fortunate to have two speakers, both members. Chris Hogg has given me the following notes about his talk -

Model Photography - Making the best from your film and pixels.

Your model can be elegantly designed and finished yet its photograph disappoints. This illustrated talk discusses common problems with model photography and suggests how camera users can make the most of film, pixels and video.

Chris photographed and produced the Society of Model and Experimental Engineers video: SMEE 100.

After the tea break that very upright and well-known orator Bert Mead will give us his memories of pounding the beat during the blitz - should be lots of interesting and amusing memories there.

In the Millennium year we will start on 7th January with a talk by Jim Norris. Jim is a friend of Brian Kennedy (wood-worker supreme and supporter of the Society by deed and action), and he will tell us about the restoration of a Tiger Moth. It all started when he went out to buy a lathe and came home with a larger package - lathe, pillar drill, and a parcel of bits which were allegedly from a Tiger Moth. Jim along with three friends

fully restored the Tiger Moth to flying standard and among its exploits it has been as far as Russia. Jim has a video of its maiden flight which, time permitting, you will be seeing.

Then on **4th February**, Keith Hughes returns with an up-dated view of his exploits with Railtrack. If it is half as good as his previous talk we are in for an interesting evening. He has called it "An Insider's View of Maintenance on a Modern Railway". Perhaps by next February this won't be such a contentious subject as it currently is!

Don't forget - 8.00 pm start at Finchley on the first Friday each month. We look forward to seeing you all

Mike Collingwood

All Steamed Up

There are many stories in this Society, this is one such story, and only the names have been given to protect the innocent.

Our story begins with the sale of Bill Camp's other two locos, a 7¼ " Maxitrack 0-4-2 and the 5" Maid of Kent to our arch villain Paul 'just plain loco Lacey'. After one go on a club loco he was converted from a villainous 'Petrol Head' to a heroic 'Steam Head' who had to have a loco to drive round and round the track.

Hearing of the disposal of Bill's locos he smugly took advice from a certain underworld Mr Big, Tony the Dunbar, who suggested prices. An envelope was posted containing offers. Expecting only to have success with one, Paul was shocked to find later that he was now the proud owner of two live steamers.

Expecting to be running the following week Paul turned up at the track to meet John West the club tough guy, only to be horrified to be given a very knocked about Maid of Kent with a duff boiler and a large and very heavy lump of rusty metal which came with a box of extra parts.

As he left with the voice of Mike Collingwood ringing in his ears, 'It will all look much better when its cleaned off with paraffin' he stopped at a garage on the way home for paraffin and guess what - it looked awful after a good clean up with paraffin.

Our observers then told us that the Maxitrack was stripped, steam cleaned, re bushed, boiler tested and presented for boiler inspection half completed. After a full inspection by the FEDS and a large tap on one of the stays it was shown the Red Card and released without bail. With the cold testing finished he was spurred on to present his equipment for further hot inspection the following month.

By the first Saturday of the month our subject had the usual problems seen by many people - nothing fits, the water leaks from everywhere, the cab did not fit and he had yet to make a transporting device.

All was not lost. Our surveillance team told us he was up at the crack of dawn Sunday morning to perform the above disgusting acts before the afternoon's fun.

Arriving at the track to find Mr Big playing with his B1, a large weight lifting device

that runs for a short distance on two pieces of metal and is then lifted into his car. Mr Big became bored and goaded our poor Paul into unloading the Maxitrack and placing it on the 7 ¼" track.

At this point John West, Tony Dunbar, Frank Dell and others, produced matches, wood and charcoal and surrounded him, with threats to start a small fire!

Next a large blower was placed over the chimney and connected to a battery. The next thing he knew steam was everywhere.

Being unskilled in the art of locomotion, Tony Dunbar took control (or he called it control) and was seen to rock the loco backward and forward from the driving car. To his surprise he found that the regulator was permanently open. The good news was the gear selector. (should this be reverser? - Ed) was also set incorrectly and with a whoosh the loco sped off heading for Paul who was standing opposite.

Being the sensible man he is, Tony Dunbar jumped off and shouted 'catch it but not by the chimney' Not fancying a rugby tackle on a boiling kettle Paul decided that he was not stupid and why catch it, when he could just jump on!

A valiant leap occurred and that was it - he was astride his pride and joy. However as he rounded the bend by the gate he too found he only had one option...flat out. At breakneck speed he rounded the bend like a bobsleigh, whistling like mad with Mr Big running alongside him laughing so much he was crying: Only to find that his path was overgrown. First the thistles took most of the skin off his legs (in ignorance he wore shorts) then the brambles cut and sliced and then to make the day complete stinging nettles! He could see the station coming up and bravely slammed the loco into reverse.

On the way back he realised he could not see where he was going. The undergrowth was going to reap its wrath again and Mr Big would once again be in tears.

However other than a further loss of skin the return was uneventful. Stopping at the loco area and dropping the fire (as like a true novice he did not keep the water level up) he wandered up for a cup of tea knowing full well that he had done it!

We knew the mob had been watching but who knows, maybe they have some respect for this little guy, who hung on, lost most of the skin on his legs and performed that great ritual - 'The First Steaming'.

Paul Lacey

The Wideangle **Armani, Versace, Moschino!**

Shopping for clothes is a necessary chore for me. I envy my little pet dog who has no need of such things- God provided him with a bespoke suit of fur at birth and aside from the occasional rendezvous with a set of shears, it wears very well and never goes out of fashion.

Apart from nudists the rest of the human race has to endure the indignity of getting fitted

out (or should that read fitted up) with a new wardrobe every now and then.

For me this is an annual event. Each year I am reminded that I'm getting very short on shirts, trousers etc. and am duly despatched to the nearest clothes store(s) for a fresh set of duds. Off I go with a face like a wet weekend, often coming back with a sheepish grin and a new item of gadgetry complete with the well worn excuse- "I couldn't find anything I liked!"

Unfortunately, this doesn't wash (rather like the dry clean only shirts I have a habit of purchasing) and the following day I'm sent out once again and told that should I come back with nothing, that'll be exactly what I have to wear next Saturday night.

Mooching round the clothes shops, checking out various overpriced designer shirts and trousers which will undoubtedly end their days cleaning oily engine parts, I often wonder at how anyone can derive pleasure from this soulless exercise. Certainly the fairer sex, seems conditioned to this pursuit from birth, with the likes of Dixons and Currys anathema to the female gender.

They have no need to purchase such useless items like camcorders and computers-after all they can just borrow ours!

Still, it's the difference that attracts, and with my new set of threads hanging in the wardrobe, I can start thinking about that new digital camcorder and those Apple Mac G3's look very tasty and then I'll be needing a new...Oh dear!

Sprocket Hole

Visitors Day

Saturday 14th August brought a fine morning but with a forecast of cloud and showers. Thankfully, this forecast proved to be wrong (Surprise!), and 9.00 am saw the site unlocked and all being prepared for our visiting clubs and their locos. The first hour and a half was spent in cleaning up the steaming bay and traverser etc to make the place respectable and of course getting the kettle on!

A slow but steady flow of cars heralded the arrival of our friends from the Erewash valley, Derby; who started this Saturday visit some years ago. Being a small club, they have coerced a few members of other clubs to accompany them to make up the numbers. This year to make it a really worthwhile day, members from Bracknell, Fareham and Swansea were invited. The Swansea lads, unfortunately couldn't come this year as they were hosting the "LIONS MEET" at their own track, DERWEN FAWR. But members of other clubs rallied round and soon the car park was filled with cars carrying locos.

The sun shone and the locos were a very good selection. Three ladies brought their own locos, one electric, and we soon had the track fully occupied.

After a steady morning's driving, Sue Apthorp ordered two dozen fish and chip dinners (plus sausages etc) and some 8 locos sat simmering while chomping became the order of the day. In the meantime a well known magazine editor had disgorged from his car, enough food to feed the five thousand, so the locos simmered quite a bit longer.

After lunch, other engines began to make their debut and with Colney Heath at it's best a super afternoon followed.

A few of the guests departed after tea, offering their thanks for a wonderful day's running and promising to return.

Others stayed on and running continued into the evening with some of our members being invited to drive a visiting Glen 4-4-0, and the 2-8-2 loco which won IMLEC three times in succession: Quite an experience.

Rod Pomeroy had, meanwhile, started up the barbecue and the station became alive with loco chat and anecdotes until the lengthening shadows drove all but two members (from Bracknell) home. These stalwarts stayed overnight in their caravan, (I slept in the coach!) and had an early run on Sunday morning, after which, they too departed having thoroughly enjoyed their first visit for many years.

With 15 visiting locos and the fine weather this had been one of the best days at the track for a long time and showed our site to be one of the best in the country.

Despite our Chairman referring to our recent open days as "excellent", apart from the boats, which were super, I think that the open day was not a patch on the private visitors day and that we should consider whether or not this should be the way forward.

| <i>Locos present</i> | | |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| <i>Club:</i> | <i>Type:</i> | <i>Wheels:</i> |
| Bournemouth | 2P | 4-4-0 |
| Bracknell | L1 Maid | 4-4-0 |
| " | Speedy | 0-6-0 |
| " | Conway 3½" | 0-4-0 |
| " | 4F | 0-6-0 |
| " | Simplex | 0-6-0* |
| Erewash Valley | Simplex | 0-6-0 |
| " | LNWR | 0-6-2T |
| Guildford | 'Proposed' | 2-8-2** |
| Maidstone | 520 | 4-6-0 |
| " | Duchess | 4-6-2 |
| " | B1 | 4-6-0 |
| " | Enterprise | 2-6-2T |
| " | Warship | BB elect. |
| Portsmouth | Mabel 5" | 2-4-0 |
| | | |

| | | |
|--|------|-------|
| Sutton | Glen | 4-4-0 |
| * This loco pulled a rake of 5 super wagons | | |
| ** This loco won IMLEC 3 times in succession | | |

Bill Mason

An Appreciation

As many of you know, the Society has for many years entertained the St Albans Branch of MENCAP (making the most of life) with an afternoon at the miniature railway track where they enjoy lots and lots of train rides. This enjoyable afternoon always takes place on the third Saturday in September and this year we were blessed with some very good weather and a high turn-out of folk from MENCAP.

The MENCAP organisers are always meticulous in writing to thank the Society, and this year I thought you might all appreciate reading the very nice letter we have just received

Railway Afternoon at Colney Heath on 18th September.

Another year and another railway afternoon, enjoyed just as much as the previous ones. As we have said in the past, our annual visit is always looked forward to and then talked about, with real pleasure. Will you please pass on to your members our grateful thanks and tell them how much we appreciate their cheerful goodwill. As a small gesture of thanks we will be sending a cheque to Day Bros.* to cover the cost of two bags of Stovesse, so when your members call in these will be waiting for them, with our compliments.

*Day Bros. are coal merchants in Colney Heath.

Why not make a note in your diaries for next year to come along to help and enjoy the afternoon with our very happy visitors - SATURDAY 16th SEPTEMBER 2000.

Beryl Collingwood

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

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