

The Chairman's Notes

As many of you will know, Bert Mead, who has been a member of this Society since before I was born, is ninety. We all have our memories of Bert over the years but I particularly remember a little girl being asked which train she wanted to ride on. The choice was between Bert's fabulous "Saint" and my non-prototypical narrow gauge Sweet Pea. The little girl said "on the real one" and promptly got up behind Sweet Pea. I will never forget Bert's expression. He has produced magnificent locomotives and there's a gauge one engine on the blocks now. He has hauled thousands of passengers. He has been Chairman and he has been Loco Section Leader. Bert was one of the small team who worked so hard to create our present HQ. In short Bert was one of the building blocks of this Society and still is. It is my privilege on behalf of our society to wish Bert many happy returns.

Jim Macdonald is standing down as Loco Section Leader. Now normally I would have thanked him for all his hard work and efforts at his last loco meeting. But as this coincided with our celebration of Bert's birthday he asked me not to do so. Jim has always worked incredibly hard for our Society and been deeply involved in any event or exhibition: Think of a Halloween night without the lights. On top of this he took over as Section Leader at a difficult time for the loco section and has kept us all going. He tells me that now he wants more time to finish building his loco, but I suspect that he will still continue to put a lot of hard work into our Society. They say the more you put in the more you get out: Jim must get an awful lot out of this Society. Thanks to both you and Jenny for all you have done. Frank Hills is also standing down. (There's room at the top of the Loco Section). Frank has been working with Jim but it is Frank who has been organising the parties at Colney Heath and doing the track steward's rota and therefore deserves a medal. He is also standing down as Exhibition Manager. Again here is a member who is prepared to put a lot of time into this Society of ours. It's members like this who keep us going, so on behalf of us all thanks Frank.

The Council is publishing a draft proposal to amend the Constitution so that the Site Committee/Track Committee/ Tyttenhanger Committee is formally organised under our Constitution. We want to get this right so if members read this and find cause to object or wish to make amendments please contact me. Sufficient time will be made for proper consultation and this matter will not be put to the Society before Christmas. In the mean time I will ask the Loco Section to elect a new committee and section leader. The existing Committee will continue to organise the works at the Colney Heath site until a new committee and section leader is elected.

Lastly it is with sorrow that I have just learnt of the sudden death of Terry Hammer, after suffering a fatal heart attack on the 11 October 2001. Terry, aged 63, had been a member of the Society for over 20 years and was a key member of the team who carried out the restoration work at Summers Lane and the construction of the pond at Colney Heath. However, he will probably be remembered mainly for his superb marine models including that of the liner 'Queen Mary' which adorned our stand at the ME Exhibition several times. Our deepest sympathy is extended to Terry's family.

John Squire

Marine Mutterings

By Bernard Lambert

A pretty quiet month in which a lot of free sailing activity took place and a few new faces (potential members?) have been seen. The Lake is due for various improvements over the winter of which the major item is the building of our rather overdue Shelter.

Happy boating - Bernard Lambert



Next General Meeting

Friday 2nd November at HQ, starting at 8.00pm

Building the new St Pancras Station.

A talk by Andrew Ward

Marine Section Open Day 16th September 2001

by John Morgan

It seemed as though we had just packed up from our first Open Day when thoughts once again turned to sorting out the lake for the second bash. I had taken care not to leave too much till September as then weekends were going to be busy for me. Rail trips and shows that should have taken place in the spring but could not due to the foot and mouth situation were now all running in a bunch. So preparation commenced well before hand, with particular attention to the buoys. They needed more weight on the anchor's to stop them being blown around the lake. I also found that some of the hooks used to secure the chains to the lead had almost corroded away to nothing. How long had they been there I wonder?

Fortunately I managed to keep the day before the event free, so that would be the time to set up the harbour. Bernard was already on site and suggested that the gazebo also be constructed before going home. The original plan was to do it on the day, which in the event would have been disastrous, for it took most of that afternoon! (Except that we should have been able to press gang some help, so it may not have taken so much time to achieve.)

The first problem was where was our gazebo? All we could find was one bag of poles. It had been left ready for use in two bags, one with the poles and the other with the fabric. We believe that it was used for the Curly Bowl, not that there is any thing wrong with that, except it had been put away properly, all in just one bag! Eventually we were shown how to look carefully into that bag, past the poles to see the roof!!!

Stage two – put it up. I do wonder what the entertainment value was for those with the party that was taking place on site as Bernard and myself learnt the hard way how to erect a gazebo, but with luck they were all too busy enjoying the railway. Every time we tried to lift the structure, one or more of the poles became detached and fell to the ground. I wondered if we should stop this game and find some hard hats.

Eventually it was Bernard who thought that if we put the roof on first it may hold things together – brilliant, that's the way to do it... it was now tea time, except the party had gone and the buffet was sold out of those good looking cakes. (I had been offered one at lunch time after removing a large spider from the kitchen sink; foolishly I thought I would leave it until later!).

So Sunday dawned and with a clear blue sky although a chilling wind - but more acceptable than rain. The forecast did promise showers but if it waited until everyone was here we would be OK. That's how it worked out last time.

A steady stream of boaters started to arrive at the appointed hour, some with more than one boat and it soon became clear more table space was needed which was solved by using sheets of wood that had been stored on the platform, supported by trestles.

Eventually, five clubs were represented, a great improvement on our first attempt: Hertford MBC; Broomfield MBC, Harrow and Wembley SME, Welwyn Garden City SME and St Albans SME. I forgot to count how many guests we had, which is a pity. I do know that by 14:00 there were over 25 people around the lake and a total of 21 boats were on display, which was very gratifying.

It would seem that I did not collar all the visitors for the steering course as looking at the sheets only 7 visitors went round. I cannot explain how they escaped, except for one whose model navy boat 'would not go round the corners'. When those from North London were added we had 14 - a good number so I did not grumble.

There was a snag to using the course I had set up. It was designed with the helmsman looking southwards, which was now straight into the autumn sun. So it was midday before the sun had moved round out of the way allowing the first boat to go round. It was such a disadvantage it would not have been fair on anyone having their go in the morning: Something to bear in mind for next year.

In the meantime I busied myself talking to some of the crowd, attempting to persuade them to use the time for free sailing or to find something to do to look busy. I hoped no one would notice the lack of activity on the water. There was plenty of time to take everyone round so it did not matter and eventually some did take advantage and have a sail – literally as we had some nice yachts in attendance and a wind that, for a change, was not being interfered with by the trees.

George Case inadvertently helped me with the pause in the proceedings. He had made two enormous pots of tea, enough for everyone; not a small undertaking. Thanks George, both for the distraction and the refreshment. Once the sun had moved from above the course, we could make a start.

Some of the models were on the large side: Wonderful to look at but difficult on a smallish lake so the no reversing rule was abandoned simply by not telling anyone about it!

All those who went round the course seemed to enjoy it, even if they got in a mess - which is the idea. It is just a bit of fun.

Would you believe that I forgot to bring my camera? Fortunately I saw a North London man with a camera hovering round the area and asked if he would take a couple of shots for this magazine. He did better than that, taking a whole film. Regrettably I did not take his name but after subsequent enquiries, we believe a new member David Foster is the man.

I understand that we are also on video, taken by Peter Precious, to be shown at a Marine evening in the winter.

Any threatened rain did not materialise and the wind calmed down as the day progressed. A little after 17:00 it was all over – disassembly time, which was a lot quicker than assembly on Saturday! While I landed the harbour Bernard managed to remove and pack the gazebo all by himself. By 18:40 we were both ready to go home.

A big thank you to all of you who turned out to swell the numbers, especially if you brought a boat and had a go round the course. At the end of the day no less than two North London men were in the top three places. Well done David Morgan (equal first) and Derek Perham (third). Derek was fourth on our previous Open Day, so its a second next time then? No pressure Derek!

For the record the leader board looked like this:

David, Tony, Paul and Derek walking away with a box of goodies (sweets) each.

A mention about Lizze Morgan, by far the youngest taking part, only just able see over the course map stand. She started well but came unstuck after trying to leap over that pipe, rather than going round it and stalled with a flooded engine room. I'm sure your dad will be able sort out the boat for next time.

The method of scoring was:

Start with a total of 200 points.

Each gate missed deduct 5 points;

Each buoy hit deduct 10 points.

For each miss of the buoy at the end of the course deduct 5 points;

Hitting the harbour walls/rocks etc. deduct 10 points

A Tribute to Terry Hammer

Sadly Terry died on October 11th. He was taken to Barnet Hospital and died that night.

He will be greatly missed by all his family and friends. Terry was a long standing Club member spreading over many years. His main interests were marine and loco although he had a great knowledge of other subjects. His modelling skills show up well with his 8' 6" long model of the Queen Mary which was a show stopper at all the exhibitions he went to. He had just finished making all the lifeboats for this.

His other boats also showed the detail he went to and the research he did to make sure that the scale of everything was just right. He also built an electric loco and ran it at the Track on odd occasions and on special days. He also built a steam-powered boat such was his wide interest.

I knew Terry for many years and we were close friends. He was always willing to give advice or help whenever he could. His work with the pond on Sunday mornings over a long period will long be remembered by me.

A great man: A great modeller: Terry will be sadly missed by all of us. He leaves a widow, two sons and a daughter to whom I extend our sincere sympathy.

Frank Inman

Charity Status for the NLSME?

The Council have been considering the possibility of applying to the Charity Commission for the Society to become a Charity.

There appear to be some worthwhile financial advantages that we would enjoy as a Charity and the only apparent disadvantage is that we might have to make small changes in our financial reporting.

So far as we can ascertain we meet the criteria for becoming a Charity and we do not foresee any difficulty in making our accounting methods acceptable to the Charity Commission.

We would like to hear from any members who have prior knowledge of applying for Charity status on behalf of a voluntary organisation such as ourselves.

We would also like to hear from any members who would object to our becoming a Charity.

Any application would also be subject to there being no objections from the Three Valleys Water Company.

A sub-committee to investigate possibility of Charitable Status consists of:

Keith Bartlam
Jack Edwards
Bernard Lambert

Bernard Lambert

Passenger-Carrying Miniature Railways; Guidance on Safe Practice

The above HSE publication is about to replace the previous publication TN3. The Council are ordering a number of copies from the Southern Federation. Some of these are for Society use and some will be available for sale to interested members.

The A4 document has 28 pages in full colour and we are assured that it covers the subject in a comprehensive and readable manner. All who are involved in passenger hauling activities should become familiar with this document. You may like to have your personal copy for reference.

Copies will cost £5.95 and will be sold to members on a 'first come first served' basis. Further copies will be available direct from the HSE in due course.

Tyttenhanger Gazette: Bert Mead's Birthday Evening

By Roger Bell

Headquarters was packed to capacity for the October Loco Section meeting. Whilst we all knew the subject of the meeting, for one member it was to be a surprise. Some computer equipment had been set up to show pictures on the overhead projector. Jim Macdonald opened a large envelope and withdrew a wooden truncheon followed by a pair of handcuffs and Bert Mead was invited to the rostrum with the projection bearing the heading and the tune playing to the television series programme 'This is your Life'. Mike Chrisp played the role of TV presenter Michael Aspel and complete with red book shook Bert's hand and announced, 'This evening it gives me great pleasure to say tonight, Bert Mead, this is your life.'

They both sat comfortably under the glow of the projector as Mike attempted to tell the story of the first ninety years of Bert's life. Bert was ninety the following Monday.

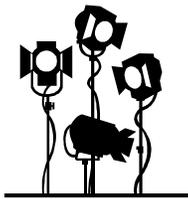
Bert's story is told in the News Sheet this month in his own words under the title 'Spotlight on Bert Mead' and some of his story was given in his millennium message in the February 2000 News Sheet, so I will not repeat it all here. However, Bert was born on 15th October 1911 and lived in Ashley Road, Salisbury and was the only son of Albert and Teresa Mead. He was named after his father who was a guard on the London and South Western Railway. At that time the first Ford Model T came off the production line in this country and the Royal Navy's biggest ship, HMS King George V was launched at Southampton, just down the road. Aircraft were being used as offensive weapons in the Turkish Italian war. There was no television or video and even radio was in its infancy. The entertainment of the day was the gramophone and at the dance halls the band played Irvine Berlin's ragtime. Silent films were being watched at what was referred to as the 'flicks'.

At the age of five, Bert attended St Paul's Junior School not far from his home. This was in 1916 and the First World War was well under way. Although he was never told officially, some of the tasks he did at school may have gone to help the war effort.

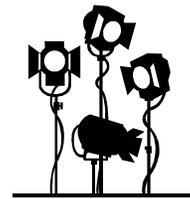
Later whilst Mike was describing Bert's model engineering career, at an appropriate point the cover was removed from his *Saint Benedict* loco, resplendent and for all to see. The loco is full of detail and a joy to examine.

After the story we drank white wine and celebrated with a birthday cake made for him, and munched through an assortment of snacks. He was presented with some gifts and a card signed by us all.

The evening was superbly presented and a credit to the Society and to Bert's long and fruitful life. We wish him many more happy years.



Spotlight on Bert Mead



When I first left school I went to work for WH Smith and Sons on Salisbury Station. In those days, for state schools the leaving age was 14. First thing in the morning I did a local paper round and then we used to travel by train four stations down the main London South Western line. We used to have the papers and the book for the rounds and make up the rounds as the train was going with all the papers and periodicals spread out on the seats. At Semley, there were two rounds and two bikes were kept there. We had two large panniers and we cycled out onto the country roads. I finished my round at the Duke of Hamilton's mansion at a place called Fern, near Shaftesbury after which I cycled back to Semley and caught the train back arriving at about 1pm in Salisbury.

But it was clear that the job was going nowhere and I only stayed for about a year. I was at that time knocking about with a young lady who was companion to a woman with children whose husband, called Wally Uphill, sold bicycles and gramophones and I was able to get a job with him. He used to employ someone until they were 21 and then because he had to pay them an adult wage he sacked them! It so happened it was Wally Uphill who introduced me to engineering. He showed me how to set out a job. He showed me centre drilling, tapping, filing, cutting threads etc etc. He was a clever bloke. I learnt how to repair Sturmy Archers and put new springs in gramophones. He had a notice up, 'We mend anything' and within reason he did. One day he started to make sack barrows out of scrap bits of metal and sold them outside the front of his shop and they sold like hot cakes. He taught me the basics of engineering. The job in the Carriage and Wagon Department of the Southern Railway at Salisbury came up when I was 16 (the earliest I could start on the railway) so I moved on. This new job for me, as a greaser and oiler, was considered the lowest form of animal life on the railway and it was very hard work but I stayed for four and a half years. I had several girlfriends around that time and eventually I met Phyllis.

The pay in the Carriage and Wagon Department was poor and I wanted to get married. I couldn't possibly ask Phyllis to marry me on that money. My wife-to-be was earning more than me so I started to look for another job. The bloke I was working with (an examiner, or wheel-tapper, in the C+W Department) suggested I join the police force which sounded attractive to me. My grandfather had been in the Wiltshire Police and my father worked on the railway so there seemed something of a family tradition with my jobs. The Depression was on then and jobs were very hard to come by but I got a job in the Met.

During training at Peel House, every morning before breakfast you had to run round Vincent Square and one morning I noticed off the Square there was the Model Engineer Exhibition. Of course I went to it – my first. It was 1932.

At first in the Met I was a single man and I lived in the Section House at Tottenham. Whilst I was there, near Spurs football ground there were a lot of lock-up garages that a bloke rented out to people. One of these, which wasn't quite big enough for a car, I rented as a workshop for about half a crown a week (12 1/2p in today's money). I got a decent second-hand bench. I had my tools sent up from Salisbury by my father and I set up my first workshop, although I did not have a lathe at the time, where I built my first steam engine; a single cylinder, horizontal engine, soft-soldered together. There was a policeman at Tottenham who was into steam boats and I used to fire up his old boiler with a blowlamp which I used to power my single cylinder engine.

When you got married in the police force it was the policy to transfer you because you might have to deal with your in-laws or near relatives as an officer and by moving you it would save any embarrassment it was thought. In my case with Phyllis coming from Salisbury it didn't apply but I got transferred to Hornsey which was fine by me because it was a better area with the main line out of Kings Cross running through it so I could see the Flying Scotsman come through!

I have related to Society members many stories from my police days but there are still more. In the police force there was a bloke called Cookson who I often worked with;

we patrolled the beat at times together. Well there was a Station Sergeant at Hornsey who took an intense dislike to Cookson. In those days to progress to Inspector you had to pass the 1st Class Civil Service exam and the sergeant had taken the exam several times and failed. Well Cookson found out about this and took the exam himself and passed. The Sergeant couldn't understand this and asked colleagues why Cookson had taken the exam when he wasn't even a sergeant. It took some time before someone was bold enough to tell the Sergeant that Cookson had done this in order to show the Sergeant up as not being as clever as him. Incidentally, I passed for sergeant before the war but after the war I was tired and I didn't want the extra work. Phyllis was not too keen either, because it would mean a move away and she was happy where we were.

One day in Crouch End I got a call to the rear of a house where there had been a bad accident. The house had been converted into two flats and an iron fire escape was situated at the back of the house for the upper flat. The tenants used it quite a lot. It consisted of two cast iron side members and cast iron steps bolted in between. Some time in the past a side member had fractured and was repaired by two sheets of mild steel having been bolted across the fracture. The bolt holes had now rusted through so that the repair had broken and a woman had fallen and was very badly injured. I reported it fully. In those days it was then entered into the Occurrences Book and the Superintendent saw such entries on his visits. Seeing my report he said, "What's this bloke – is he a metallurgist or something?" He asked to see me and said, "This report of yours Mead."

"Yes Sir", I said.

"What are you then, a metallurgist or something?"

"No Sir. I wish I was. I'd be earning a lot more money." I don't think this went down too well.

"What do you know about cast iron and steel and rivets and nuts and bolts?" he asked sneeringly.

"Before I joined the police I was in the Carriage and Wagon Department of the Southern Railway and I was dealing with this sort of thing all the time – fractured castings, twisted metal, loose rivets and..."

"Oh, all right, all right, all right!" he said cutting me off in mid sentence and walking off.

My association with Cookson led to my return to engineering during the War. We used to go into this little engineering works in Harringay for a smoke whilst on the beat. When the governor there knew we had lathes he wanted us to do work at home because there was always pressure to produce more and more. But in the Police it was a cardinal sin to earn money from a second job. You were supposed to devote all your energies and interest to the job. We both applied to the Commissioner to do work in our spare time to help the war effort. We didn't hear anything for about three months and then a general police order came out saying that anyone could work up to 18hrs/week so we went to work at this place. Most of the work concerned making punches

for pushing explosives into shells and cartridges. Everything had to be highly polished. I was there for about a year or 18 months.

In the main road behind me in Crouch End there was an extremely large garage, far bigger than the owner, a man of German descent (surprisingly), wanted. He bought up a bankrupt firm in Tottenham and gradually transferred it up to the garage and started to make armaments. What I didn't know was that he was subcontracting from the firm I was working for in Harringay. One morning he came into the firm in Harringay and was surprised to find that I was working there. He lived right opposite me and a couple of days later his wife came over and asked if I would consider working for him. 'Not half,' I said because to get to Harringay I had to cycle over a very large hill and this took time and a lot of effort. He paid me a penny an hour more so I took the job. It was very interesting there because he had a lot of clapped out stuff. He had about six small capstan lathes. We shimmed them up and made new bushes etc. They didn't of course work to aircraft standards but they made a hell of a lot of stuff. The lathes were badly worn so that when the pin came back each time to locate in the hardened bush the fit was very poor. The governor suggested that if we could turn the bushes a quarter of a turn and put in a new pin they would be as good as new. I'd read about a novel way of how to get the bushes out in the Model Engineer and although the foreman was sceptical if not scathing of what I suggested I was able to get the bushes out enough to give them a quarter of a turn. There were many other ideas which I put into practice and they were all beneficial because there was a great shortage of skilled labour in those days and these old machines were made to work properly and such things as jigs were produced to help production work.

...To be continued

The Woodside Terminal Railroad Co.

H.Q. Legion Way, Friern Barnet

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Request the Pleasure of
YOUR COMPANY
(friends and family welcome)



on the occasion of their
Annual Open Evening on

WEDNESDAY 12th DECEMBER 2001
7.00pm till late(ish)

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Mince Pies and other Seasonal Refreshments will be served

Special trains will run

Thanks from Bert Mead

I would like to offer my most grateful thanks to the Society and the organisers of my 'Birthday Bash'. Thank you for the excellent food, drinks and birthday cake.

It was a most splendid evening especially with such a very professional production of 'This is Your Life' and all the good wishes from so many Club members. It was an evening I will never forget.

Bert

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