

# October 1999 / Issue 597

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## Thoughts of Chairman Dell

Well we have a new Editor, thank goodness. Three people came forward; Grahame Ainge, Gavin Strang and John Squire. Well done all three. It's nice to know that people care about the Society. After much thought and as the News of the World were after his services we finally decided that Grahame Ainge was the man for the job.

As I am writing this, Editor Ainge is sitting at the newsdesk, green eye shade pulled down hard, holding the front page in case something sensational breaks, something like "a full quota of stewards turn up on a Sunday!"

Its not all bad news on the stewards front, Peter Kearon who now lives in Cardiff, Wales, turned up for duty on his Sunday turn. Also the new members who have joined us from St Albans asked me why they are not down for stewards' duty (don't worry you will be). Its people like them that make up for members who ring up on Friday or Saturday saying that they can't do steward's duty. Some are genuine; some I suspect are not. Its only once a year so surely you can organise just one afternoon. I think Rod Pomeroy has filled in at least 6 times this year.

Work parties are coming. Broken arms or legs or a death certificate will be accepted for non-attendance!

We had an excellent Open Day in September. I was not there but was told that there were lots of boats on the pond. Nice to see the marine side being active. Thursday afternoons are always busy on the pond and we are seeing different models each week.

I think we have had a good season which is sadly coming to an end.

I've kept this months' thoughts short as I don't want to give Grahame too much work to start his first edition. Thank you Angela for all your efforts and good luck Grahame in your new venture.

*Frank Dell*

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## Editorial

Somehow or other I now find myself as your new editor of the News Sheet. When I first spoke to Angela about what was involved I realised that it's not as easy as all that so the first thing I'd like to say is thankyou to Angela for doing such a fine job for the last 4 years. She'll be a hard act to follow. Hence I don't want to change things – I just hope I can rise up to and keep the high standards she has set.

In a club as big as ours it's quite difficult to know everyone and difficult for some of us to even remember the names of those we do know! So I ought firstly to identify myself. I am a bit of a new boy having only been a member (loco section) for ten years! I drive a 3 ½" Britannia (I can hear you say – Oh – I know him now) and on Sunday mornings in winter months I usually have a paintbrush in my hand at Colney Heath and often smell . . . of creosote!

I don't manage to get to Headquarters very often and these days my visits seem to be only to borrow from our excellent library. Whenever I go I always get a warm welcome from the 00 and North American and Cine section members. A few years ago I saw the slot car section and was invited to "have a go" (bit too fast for an old Britannia driver!). The marine section I know a bit better because of all the work on the pool at Colney Heath. What a picture the pool looked on Open Day attracting many beautiful boats.

At an early stage of life (so early I cannot even remember it) I caught a triple infection I've never been able to shake off; steam locomotives, railways and modelling. When I joined the Club in 1989 I was made to feel very welcome by so many people. The warm and friendly atmosphere and the engineering expertise along with the help of many members felt great. Not having any knowledge whatsoever of engineering I felt a little inadequate and distinctly remember putting my badge away in a drawer feeling that I was not good enough to wear it.

I bought the Britannia in 1990 and when it went wrong I trawled around to find someone who could mend it for me. I realised this couldn't go on for too long so with the children becoming more independent it was time to learn some engineering. I quickly discovered this was a lifetime's job and a more demanding discipline than any I'd encountered before. But I didn't even know how my loco was constructed so I was determined to get started. I've been to evening classes now (Hertford Regional College) for six years and benefited immensely from the experience and advice of many fellow members. I now wear my badge with pride (although I'm still learning and still a real bodger at heart). I've even got a Club shirt from Colin Bainbridge – which I never wear to the track – its only for best.

But the thing we can all be proud of in the Club is its atmosphere. Yes I know there's factions and friction at times and not everyone is tolerant and friendly (sounds like life doesn't it). I sometimes hear members complaining that we are too "laid back" and unfavourable comparisons are made of our relaxed style with the efficient "go-getting" clubs which are forging forward with new facilities, regulations and rules etc, etc. But I have also heard what is said by members who have been or are members of other clubs, "When it comes to people and the good atmosphere they create – we are the best". I wholeheartedly agree.

*Grahame Ainge*

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## Off the Cuff September Council Meeting

I am busy packing our bags ready for another jaunt up the Grand Union Canal - could be two, maybe three, possibly four boats in all, and this time we're heading for the Northampton Arm (narrow canal, lot of locks) and a few days on the River Nene - but needless to say all this will depend on the vagaries of the weather which at the moment is dull, overcast, and drizzling, not at all inspiring after the recent hot spell!

Almost a full house at the meeting which went on (and on) for 2 1/2 hours! Matters Arising covered a lot of ground and it was decided that use of Club engines - who can and who cannot drive them - is primarily Track Committee business and hopefully will be discussed at their next meeting, whenever that is due. The Treasurer had achieved a substantial reduction in British Telecom's quarterly telephone line rental at Colney Heath, and if outgoing calls continue to be less than £10 per quarter then in a year's time there will be another reduction! Sections based at Headquarters are responding well to the call for various remedial jobs to be dealt with, and quotes for one area of roof repairs are being obtained. Still at Finchley, we have learnt that the British Legion is discussing its lease with the Local Authority as it now has only one year to run! We will await further news on how they fare as our lease has only three years left and a watching brief will be maintained on this sensitive issue. The "risk assessment" document for Headquarters has been amended and probably needs a bit more work before it covers all safety aspects, but again this is in hand. We had of course been absolutely delighted to recently learn that we had a new Editor - Grahame Ainge - and even more pleasing was the news there had been other volunteers. We all wish Grahame well for this and future issues, and continue to be so grateful to Angela Foreman for the excellent work she did for the Society. A number of suggestions were put forward for possible speakers at our General Meetings which will be passed to our Speakers Committee for their action.

The Chairman covered a number of topics in his report. He considered there had been too many barbecue evenings in the past few months, and we were unanimous in our agreement that people had become bored with them and this has caused a lack of cohesion within the Society and its Sections. General Meetings will once again be held at Headquarters on the first Friday of every month except August, popular "Work in Progress" evenings will be held at regular intervals, and speakers - from within and outside the Society - will become a regular feature. Loco and Marine Sections will decide and publicise their plans for the summer months, and there will be one barbecue each summer month - on the 4th Friday. You can all go there and barbecue anytime you want, but regular meetings at Headquarters are an important focal point of the Society, keeping us all in touch with one another. It was generally agreed that the "invitation club" day had been more successful than either of the "open days", probably because the former was arranged through personal contacts. Three new passenger trollies are in course of production, to be ready for the 2000 season. At Headquarters two new ceramic element fan heaters will be purchased and assessed and if effective and not too noisy a further four will be purchased as this is considered an adequate number to warm the main room. Hopefully this installation will be completed ready for the winter evenings. The Chairman expressed both his and the Council's concern at the state of the ground level track which was first started some six years ago with little progress since the track was first laid. No-one disagreed and we all wondered if it would ever be used as there

now seems very little support for it with only a few 71/4 gauge engines within the Society.

Once again my Secretary's Report was brief due to little correspondence and few phone calls but that will probably change once winter arrives. A formal complaint had been received about a non-member driving and pulling passengers on a Sunday afternoon. This was discussed and it was decided advice had to be sought via the Southern Federation on the insurance implications, and this will be pursued. This led to the general realisation that contrary to Track Rules there are members who do not themselves sign the "running book", other members who do not get their visiting drivers to sign in which they should then witness, and juniors who drive on the main line on Sunday afternoons when there are public present. Whilst it was accepted that these are all matters which should be but are not dealt with by the Duty Track Stewards we were unable to resolve a procedure for overcoming these serious omissions and more thought will be given to these problems. In other words a laxity in procedures needs to be addressed asap.

The Treasurer reported a substantial increase in insurance premiums for both Headquarters and the track; tabled his latest financial statement; and had five membership applications approved. There were no further matters related to Headquarters to be discussed.

We were now getting to the end of the meeting, with Section Reports being the next Agenda item. SLOT CARS were sending two teams to Brussels at the weekend for a 24-hour endurance event, where I think they usually perform very well but we will know more next month. The MARINE Section is pleased to see a steady increase in members, with the pond being well used, and they particularly had a lot of enthusiastic visitors at the Open Day. They are now discussing having portable floodlights for the Autumn evenings - watch this space for a progress report. CINE members have decided to face up to reality and will henceforth be known as the VIDEO GROUP. Due to holidays there were 2 weeks in August when they did not meet but they did have a thoroughly enjoyable coach trip. Brambles, nettles and other foliage outside HQ is being enthusiastically tackled and laid low! 00 members will be setting up their big Bath layout in the main room to make sure it is in A1 running condition. They regretted they could not set up an exhibit at the forthcoming St Albans DMES exhibition - but would like to be asked a bit earlier next year so they can organise themselves. The NORTH AMERICAN members are busy preparing for their Annual Convention being held at Peterborough in October. LOCO Section is still being overwhelmed with visiting public on Sunday afternoons - must be the good weather that is bringing them in! 3 more birthday parties have been booked, and a provisional booking is already in hand for May 2000! I think they can justifiably be pleased with the number of parties which have been held this summer. Finally, on Saturday 30th October the Hallowe'en Bonfire Evening will be held - if you've got any burnable rubbish please bring it along to make it a worthwhile bonfire, and Sunday 31st October is the last chance this year to drive your locos - thereafter its going to be maintenance, maintenance, and more maintenance to keep you all happy and busy on winter Sunday mornings! Several STATIONARY STEAM members enjoyed two glorious days at Barleylands - rated one of the best traction engine rallies.

And that about summarises the September Council Meeting. As we expect to be back home by the end of the month I shall be around with pen poised over my shorthand pad for the October Meeting - apparently you don't get holidays with this job!!

*Beryl Collingwood*

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## [Tyttenhanger Gazette](#)

The September Loco Meeting was a social and barbecue at the track. Two locomotives ran during the evening, a 'Toby' electric and Mike Foreman's Rob Roy. The barbecue was blazing away, tea was available and we enjoyed each other's company. This does leave me a trifle short of something to write about. However, the other day I recalled an event from way back in my childhood. It is surprising how one can recall with such clarity from so long ago and I enclose it here for all to read.

### **Memories**

It was a special occasion, a day trip to London with my Grandparents in 1954, to watch the one hundredth boat race. At the impressionable age of ten I recall, getting up early, we were to travel on the 'workmens', the name given to the cheap ticket early morning trains that arrived in London, on or before 8 am. They also ran on Saturday as that for many was also a working day.

Seated in the compartment we seemed to be travelling very fast, the carriage was rocking and lurching and I wondered if it would crash. A soldier in uniform sat opposite me. I thought that if it did crash he would know what to do. The locomotive's whistle sounded and all went black. We were in a tunnel. The lights came on and glowed dimly; smoke was coming in through the open window and one could smell the exhaust from the locomotive working hard up ahead. One passenger closed the window. It seemed that this had been done before. Out of the tunnel and the window was opened, and the locomotive sped towards the Capital.

I was quite short for my age and on arrival at St. Pancras Station I jumped down onto the platform. My Grandfather took his coveted pocket watch from his waistcoat pocket and showed me. 'How's that for being on time' he said. The hands showed 8 a.m. exactly. The large clock at the far end of the platform also bore the same time. He pointed up to the roof of the station, 'This roof is the largest single span in the world' he said. After some clarification I understood what he meant. It was enormous and unsupported apart from each end.

Having walked down the platform we joined the queue where the tickets were being collected at the barrier. As we stood near the locomotive the fireman was looking down upon the crowd. He moved the half doors back between the locomotive and the tender and the rear door became jammed in its runner. He casually reached up onto the tender and grasped the large four foot hammer for breaking up the coal. He swung the hammer at the base of the door; it moved immediately to its open position!

An American in the queue ahead shouted up 'How fast were we going?' The fireman called back 'eighty miles an hour'. He leant on the door, dirty and grimy after his early morning start and firing on the run from the Midlands.

*Roger Bell*

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## Marine Mumbles

What can I say about the open day. I think we had everything going our way (cue for a song). We could not ask for better conditions.

The day was made for us by having the Saxon Association of Marine Modellers come for the day with a lot of their ships. It was wonderful to see John and Pam Shrubsall again. For those who do not know of John, he was a long time leader of the marine section before moving to Suffolk and joining the Saxon Modellers.

It was interesting to see a W.W.I Town class cruiser that had its own smoke generator for its stacks. The fuel for it is the same as that used in Disco smoke machines. There was also an M.T.B with a sound chip for machine gun fire.

The borders around the pond are now looking good thanks to Terry's and Frank's gardening.

Thank you to all you good folk who brought boats to sail.

The October meeting will start our winter season at the H.Q due to failing light for pond sailing. I hope to give an account of building my 1:5th scale Oerlikon 20mm A.A gun. See you all there and don't forget to bring any talking points as I can't keep going all night.

On a serious note, my work commitments have increased. So I would like to ask if someone can take over as section leader after my two year stint in April.

**Winter building starts now!!!**

*Peter Stern*

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## Letters Page

It has been suggested to me by Colin Bainbridge that we have a 'Letters Page' each month in the News Sheet which I think is a very good idea. Perhaps it could become a medium for members to air their views more widely on Club matters or make suggestions (polite ones please!) or just tell a little story of interest or humour. That way if people were to reply to letters published it could become a forum for discussion. Sounds good, doesn't it? BUT it does rely on us all as members to contribute.

### **Contributions to the News Sheet**

The News Sheet is only as good as the contributions which are received. Letters Page might just be right if you have something quick and short to say. In addition, don't forget that any size – large or small – contribution will be much appreciated. Roger Bell's fine atmospheric story in this edition is a good example of what I think members want to see.

If you feel you are not good at writing or your English might let you down – don't worry. I can always tinker with it if you'd like me to – just write as you would speak it

and I'll do the rest. It's part of an editor's job.

I am often impressed by the wonderful stories which members (especially older ones) relate to me from time to time. I won't mention any names because I don't want to put undue pressure on anyone or make them feel guilty if they don't want to commit to print – but think about it. Some of the very best, most interesting or entertaining contributions to publications come from those who feel they cannot write well. Many years ago I remember Tom Cooper of Merlin Models who edited a journal he published on garden railways. In an edition he once wrote, "I never cease to be amazed at the enthusiastic acclaim with which my scribblings are received. I was told at school I was useless at English!" I for one hung to his every word. He really could write interesting stuff although his grammar was sometimes a little shaky. So please put pen to paper and send those stories in.

*Editor*

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## [Almost End of Season at Colney Heath](#)

So here we are, October and almost at the end of what I consider to have been a very good running season. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who have done their turn on teas and track stewarding, in some cases more than once. Also a very big thank you to Angela Perham who has kept us well supplied with goodies in the coach and for the organisation of the catering at our two open days. Thank you Angela. I would also like to thank all of the members who have attended the Birthday parties at the track. By the end of this month we will have done approximately 15 parties this year and we already have enquiries for next year!!

Our traditional end of season party will happen on Saturday 30 October (fire to be lit at approx 7-7.30pm). If anyone has any wood, trees, bushes or any clean burnable items that they wish to dispose of then please deliver them to the track by Friday 29 October (We need a Guy). Unlike previous years work parties will not start on the following Sunday morning, but will commence on Sunday 7 November at 9.00am.

Our monthly meetings now being back at HQ, the program of events are as follows:-

Oct 8 Bring and Buy or Under the Hammer with M Chrisp  
 Nov 12 Christmas!! Quiz. Teams of 6 (prizes)  
 Dec 10 At Alexandra Palace i.e. no meeting, ME Exhibition  
 Jan 14 Presentation by Fetes & Fairs section  
 Feb 11 Work in Progress

And finally we have two birthday parties booked for this month. The first is on Saturday 9 October at 2.00pm for Richard Payne who is a club member and the second is on Saturday 16 October for the Rose family (full fee).

*Rod Pomeroy*

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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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