

Want to see this  
in full colour?  
Then visit  
[www.nlsme.co.uk](http://www.nlsme.co.uk)

*This Month...*



# The News Sheet

**Chairman's Thoughts, Treasurer's Report,  
Forthcoming General Meetings, Standard Gauge,  
47848, My Life in Drag, East Anglian Group Gauge One  
visit, Steward List, Slot Car News, Marine News,  
NLSME visit Fareham DSME, Steaming Bay Project  
update, Diary Dates, Club Contacts.**



## The Thoughts of Chairman Ian



While your Chairman was driving to Colney Heath the other day he realised that the wheel of life had turned through a full circle. He had been asked to make the teas for the visiting Clubs at Tyttenhanger on a Saturday morning. Why a full circle? Because he had started work at sixteen on a foreign going merchant cargo ship as a Peggy and among his other tasks was the brewing of teas for the midshipmen and the mates of the ship. Now into his eighties had reverted being Peggy again and making teas for the visiting model engineers from Clubs from the South-East corner of England. It was a bit disappointing to see such few of our members there to view the

magnificent models being prepared for steaming such as a five-inch Gauge Garrett locomotive or help with the organisation. The Club perhaps missed an opportunity because some time could have been used very profitably by asking the Chairmen of the invited Clubs to get together for lunch to compare notes say, about H&S. A small forum of Chairmen or Health and Safety Officers could disseminate knowledge regarding the way their Clubs see the future of model engineering in a corporate organisation.

The Club has always entertained Societies from other areas, we are very proud of the setting and facilities at Colney Heath which are a direct result of the Club's challenging work. Visiting Clubs are grateful to be able to attend and to use our excellent amenities and tracks.

Your Chairman enjoyed a meal of excellent fish and chips as a guest of the Gauge 1 group when the East Anglia Group ran their train sets in the pouring rain. . . . But all enjoyed the meal under a large tent supplied by one of the members.

The Chairman would like to endorse the thoughts of Treasurer Mike in that members should be proud of the Club and leave things as they would like to find them and to report any 'breakages' to the relevant person.

Organisers should make sure that they have told someone through the medium of the News Sheet that events are taking place so that newer members especially could help and enjoy and have some cross fertilization of ideas regarding activities at other Clubs.

**Ian J. Chairman.**

## **To the Editor,**

Please could I through the pages of the club News Sheet thank everyone who attended and helped on the memorial day for Mike and Beryl Collingwood held at the track recently.

Through everyone's kindness the occasion was a mixture of dignity and pleasure which meant so much to Mike's sister and family. The weather was kind and the facilities available were faultless.

Thanks also to Ian J not only for the splendid write up of the day itself, but also for putting into words my own thoughts about the club in general in his Chairman's notes.

As a country member now my visits to Colney Heath are sadly much less frequent than I would like, but when I do visit I am always impressed by how the site has developed and what it has to offer, and what it does offer has obviously only come about through much hard work and co-operation of the members.

Thanks again and I look forward to my next visit.

**Colin B**

**Front cover photo.** Double headed class 37s with tank train, see page 12 for report.

## **NLSME Standard Gauge.** **Standard Gauge; its origin??**

Son. Dad; what's Standard Gauge for the railway?

Dad to son. Why lad, it is 4 feet and 8 ½ inches most of the time.

Son. Why is it 4' 8 1/2". dad?

Dad. Well lad that was the gauge that the first plateways used in Northumberland to carry coal down to the sea.

Son. Why did they choose that gauge for the plateways dad?

Dad. Because the trucks were built to that gauge.

Son. Why were the trucks built to that gauge?

Dad. Because the patterns and jigs the coach builders used were already built to that gauge and not wanting to waste money they just carried on with it.

Son. But dad why did they use that gauge?

Dad. You see, son the old Roman roads had grooves in them at that gauge and if the vehicles on the roads had a different gauge then there would be a risk of the wheels coming off the vehicle if it got stuck in the ruts.

Son. Then dad why were the grooves that gauge?

Dad. Because, Son the Roman chariots were built to that gauge and after time the chariots had worn the grooves to that gauge into the roads.

Son. But dad why were the chariots built to that gauge?

Dad. You see son it was because the central shaft on the chariot was made to fit two horses side by side.

Son. And so Standard Gauge is equivalent to the width of two Roman horse's buttocks?

Dad. That's right son you've got it in eight!

PS. With the Discovery Centre close by in Luton, I thought that I would pay it a visit do a bit of research and look at the vast collection of horse drawn vehicles in the George Mossman of Caddington Collection. The collection is probably the largest collection of horse drawn vehicles in the Country if not the World. A vast hall has been built to accommodate most of the assemblage with carts and carriages arranged vertically on the walls tiers high. Mossman provided carriages for the Lord Mayor's show for twenty five years and for several Coronations.

I started to measure the width between the wheels of the vehicles in the

collection and found that many were in fact remarkably at 4' 8 ½" gauge! A curious curator came over to me and asked me what I was doing. I explained to him and then said rather unwisely "It is a pity that you have not got a Roman Chariot here". He replied. "But yes, we have". "It is in the children's collection in the next hall".

I hurried out to the Children's Collection to see the Roman Chariot. Found it and quickly measured its gauge; and, to my utter dismay it was Five Foot Three inches!! My theory was blown right out of the water.

On my way-out I saw the curator again and told him of my measurement of the chariot and of my total disappointment. He laughed outright and said. "George Mossman bought the chariot off Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer the makers of Ben Hur (1959 edition). The chariot had been specially built for the film and was of that extra width because William Wyler the director wanted it broader to be more stable when racing round corners!!

**Ian J**





## 47848 passes Grange Park station



47848 dragging a Robel Mobile Maintenance Train makes a colourful combination through Grange Park with a West Ealing Plasser Siding to Darlington transfer on August 11th 2017.



**NLSME.**  
**'My Life in Drag'.**  
**Craig Lowes.**

A substantial number of members attended the first meeting of the new season at Headquarters. They were perhaps wishing to see Craig in tights and suspenders! That thought was soon dispelled by Craig who obviously was not of that persuasion. No. Drag referred to Drag Racing, which had nothing at all to do with drag, as some perhaps know it.

Geoff B very eloquently introduced Craig who had 'restored' the Club five-inch gauge Type 31 locomotive at Colney Heath. That work is well appreciated by all who enjoy being at Colney Heath and running locomotives there. Craig then told the assembled group a little of his history. He was an engineer apprentice to British Aerospace at Hatfield and prospered as a student learning many skills on the way including lathe and milling machine work as well as welding and fitting both at college and on the shop floor. These skills stood him in good stead as will be explained later.

Craig then told the members about his affection for Dragster Racing. The phenomenon started in the USA. (Where else!) and originally was initially racing down the main drag of the town. Naturally the Constabulary became interested in the races and pronounced them illegal but did recommend that the young racers take their sport to safer and provided areas out of town. The races were over a quarter of a mile course from a standing start. The sport was very popular and was transplanted to the UK by the American GIs. It has remained in this country but has not prospered due to lack of sponsorship. Seeing the car and logo for just a few seconds is not very attractive to sponsors when in a Grand Prix the same car and logos is seen for seemingly days on end.

For Craig it all seemed to start in 1966 when he and his brother caught the Drag bug. Using their skills in engineering they built/converted a Viva into a Drag Racing car. The welding skills were used to their full in the construction of a tubular chassis. Craig's brother won by the flip of a coin the accolade of being the first to drive the car over the quarter of the mile race. Timed at 8.2 seconds. The driver sat in the back seat with centre steering and the turbo air intake right in front of the driver! So the steerer had to watch the side of the track to keep on course. They called the project Black Knight. Several cars issued from the Lowes stables. A change was made from petrol to ethanol and the SU carburettor abandoned for a much simpler method of just pouring the fuel in and

the surplus returning to the tank rather like the bi-pass on a steam locomotive. Then came the desire to build one of those drag cars with the little wheels right out in front and thick black rubber tyres at the rear. No plans could be found but a Revell Kit was amazingly accurate! They just enlarged the kit to full size and away they went.



The Revell prototype. Photo courtesy of Mike C

The brothers were getting famous and sponsorship was becoming available which helped to ameliorate the crippling costs that were being entailed. By 1985 their cars could get from naught to one hundred miles per hour in one second. And 'Big Block' Chevrolet engines being used with an oil change after every race! The group had run out of Jaguar engines. Soon Chrysler engines were being manufactured in the UK and they were adopted for racing. Sponsorship came in from the Rug Doctor, Loctite, and Venom Car Alarms. **Photo below** – Craig explaining that the car was far longer than the trailer that his brother made. The 'nose' of the car fitted into the compartment high up in the 'bows' of the trailer so the footprint was maintained.





Photo of an earlier Lowes car courtesy of Mike C



Burning rubber at the start

The races started with two cars side by side on a grid with a 'Christmas Tree' of starting lights. The cars prepared their tyres by running through a bath of water, then spinning the tyres to deposit rubber on the track and to warm them up. By these methods and with the aid of nitrous oxide injected into the engine to aid combustion the team were able reduce the time down to almost 6 seconds for the quarter of a mile. Driving from a standing start needed skill plus plus. If the clutch were slammed in the car would be wrecked if it were eased in the race would be lost so the multi-disc clutch had to be handled very skilfully. It was not necessarily the fastest car that won. It could be the driver with the quickest reaction times to the green light with the greatest skill in clutch application that won.



The team was quite united with wives and children helping and supporting. The attentive group at Headquarters saw photographs of families with young offspring featured who are now in their forties! Then Craig's brother was poached to work in the USA and the enterprise decided to stop that project while they were on top.

**A section of the attentive gathering asking questions at the tea break**

As Craig said in conclusion 'It is easy to make a small fortune, especially if you start with a large one'. But they certainly enjoyed every second of it using their engineering and racing skills, their ability to get sponsors and the valuable support from their families.

## Garden Rail, Gauge 1 Group hosts visit by East Anglian Group to Colney Heath

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> August was a fine day, so was Thursday 31<sup>st</sup>, Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> August definitely was not, the rain started about 10am and went on all day. Members arriving early to prepare for the visitors decided it would probably rain so decided to erect the large gazebo donated by one of our members. Unfortunately the gazebo had not been erected whilst in our care so a good period of time was taken sorting the 70 pole pieces to determine which matched and which corner/ridge pieces were required and where. As the picture shows the erection was completed, not a moment too soon as the rain had started.



We thought the weather would deter East Anglian members making the journey from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex attending, not a bit of it, they are built of sterner stuff up there. Before long we had at least 12 visitors unloading their engines and rolling stock.

All had good runs despite the rain only being interrupted by arrival of Brian with the Fish & Chips.



There was a good selection of visiting engines, both steam and diesel outline and including a Tom Barratt built N. Eastern R1 4-4-0 now over thirty years old, which had belonged to one of our members, Chris Dean, several years ago. He was pleased to see it back at Colney Heath and enjoyed it still being an excellent performer. A pair of scratch built Class 37 diesels under radio control with sound effects, hauling a rake of bogie tank wagons (also scratch built) looked impressive as did a Class 68 hauling a partially built track laying train built from 3D printed parts, making the building of intricately curved parts for this, to my mind, very ugly locomotive relatively easy.

Photo – previous page - Fish & Chips in the gazebo.

Photo above - N.E. R1 run by visitor Stan.

Photo next page - Class 68 running in the rain.



How long before a 3D printer becomes a necessary part of any workshop?  
At the end of the day our visitors departed happy but a little damp, we cleared up leaving the gazebo up to dry off and pack away for the next event, we think it will be a feature of our invitation days in the future, hopefully to keep the sun off rather than the rain!

**David W**

## Slot Car News

After much discussion, it has been decided that regular club nights will revert to Thursdays, which will allow some previous club members to be able to race as Monday was not suitable for all. Retro nights continue as usual on alternate Wednesdays. Club nights have been well attended of late, and should be boosted by the arrival of some old faces.

September saw the annual 6 hour Retrorama race in Clench, near Marlborough, and again North London sent a strong team to defend the title won last year. The theme of the race is quite retro, with well known sports cars from the 60's and 70's, all the cars being quite evenly matched being powered by quite cheap handout motors, so performance was all down to chassis design preparation and driving. This year, the team of NLSME members Steve K, Danny K, John S

and Bob H, entered under the team name of Walmington-on-Sea, which was used when a team regularly used in the European Endurance Championship and resulted in an overall win back in 2003.



After a steady start, we moved into a hard fought lead from the Gulf

Oil team, after an excellent one hour stint by Danny K but in the third hour, disaster struck and the car suffered some chassis damage which needed a lengthy pit stop to repair. A slow fight back was helped by the Gulf car also suffering crash damage which also need a lengthy repair, but in the end, the Walmington boys completed 4620 laps, 84 ahead of the Gulf Oil team, and in 3rd was scratch team which included long time NLSME member in their ranks, and Rob L in the 4<sup>th</sup> placed team.



Now looking forward to next year's event where hopefully we can get a hatrick of wins.

**Bob H**

## Marine News

By the time you read this it will be the end of season another year over, another year older. Sorry I missed last months news but we were away on holiday taking a break from all responsibilities. Not from steam and oily smells though as we were in Dorset when the Great Dorset Steam Fair is on. I figured if Shirley can make me push her wheelchair round Marks and Spencer saying “yes dear, it looks good”. Then she can be pushed round steamy oily smelly things (her words) saying “yes dear, it looks good”.



Some sad news for those that may not have heard but we attended the funeral of David Howarth last week where we met members from many of the clubs he had been associated with over the years. We hope to see his sons Richard and Glen onsite running his loco and Margaret with the boats next year, our thoughts and prayers are with them.

The weather just about held out for our last Toy Boat Regatta in September although a lot colder than previous events and with the distance many travel to attend, the numbers were down. But a good day was had by all that made it. Amongst the boats the collection that caught my eye this time was a mixed lot of clockwork, candle and small battery powered toys. One with a very small outboard motor. I took a few pictures of them on the water but I could not do them justice so here is a picture showing part of the collection on a table.



Toy Boat Regatta dates for next year are set the same, at second Sunday in May, July and September. Keep space in your diaries.

Just leaves me to close this year saying once again many thanks to all who helped keep the water clear of debris and the tea flowing at the regattas. I will now leave the newts in peace to enjoy the clear wet water although the water is still available for the hardy few who sail all year.

Catch you lakeside 2018

**George C**  
Marine Section Leader.

### **Correspondence received.**

Evening George,

Michael and I went to Potters Bar this afternoon and collected this "large warship". It's a 48" long model of a 72 foot Vosper Thornycroft fast torpedo boat called "Perkasa". This was a famous and well known Royal Navy fast patrol boat. Lots of information on the net of course.

This model was made by Precedent Models who are no longer in business. It's quite grubby but will clean up okay. It's missing a small front mast and a rear machine gun - parts can be obtained from a company called Battlecraft. It has a powerful electric motor but it's about thirty years old - according to the lady we collected it from. But the hull and superstructure are still solid - made of fibreglass. We will drop some new batteries in it and new radio gear - the batteries and radio gear with it need dumping.

*HMS Kelly* - we have purchased new motors, shafts, props, rudder and radio gear for it. I have spoken to Ron Dean and a set of instructions has arrived so we know what goes where. We have installed all this new gear and are now sanding down the hull to get the right levels. We have started to cut out parts and assemble them now we have the instructions.

We will have both these boats ready for 2018, to run and hopefully for others in the club to enjoy as well.

**Gregory M.**

## North London SME visit to Fareham DSME



We finally settled on 19 August for our Society visit to Fareham because previously allocated days clashed with other commitments for the members who had expressed a wish to attend. In the event just four of us set off with one locomotive. Made aware of the situation, Fareham invited members from several clubs and societies local to them to join us on the day.

Peter D kindly volunteered to drive with Laurie, Matthew D and me as passengers and took Bertie Bassett, a 3½in gauge Bassett Lowke locomotive, with all the accompanying paraphernalia to run on the day. Opting to travel from St Albans by way of the M25, M3 and M27, a trip that normally takes about an hour and a half, we set off at about 10am. Slow moving motorway traffic extended our journey time and we eventually arrived at about 1pm.

Several Fareham members greeted us, made us welcome and helped offload the locomotive. A hot meal had been prepared and was awaiting our arrival. Regrettably, few other visitors attended and the morning had apparently been spoiled by heavy rain. The only steam locomotive running when we arrived was a 7¼in. gauge Crampton to the Liverpool design which was circulating effortlessly around the ground level track.



Steam was raised in Bertie Bassett and Matthew took it onto the raised track. The footrests of the driving truck he was using fouled the station platform so he was invited to use one of the Fareham passenger cars. We didn't get to see him again because the boiler ran dry, had become a flash steam unit and it was felt prudent to retire hurt! We commiserated over mugs of tea, collected ourselves and our stuff together, thanked our hosts who had made us so welcome and set back for home just before it started to rain again.

We made a point of avoiding the M3, returned by way of the attractive Meon Valley and had a good run back to St. Albans where we called at a local hostelry for an enjoyable meal together and some well kept beers. Bearing in mind the support we had from Fareham members when they visited our track the following Saturday, it is sad that our visit to their track was so poorly attended.



Please note we have been invited to visit Fareham again next year on 9 June and it would be really nice to have a good attendance!

### **Photo Captions:**

Laurie and Peter admire Liverpool, the Crampton locomotive running on Fareham's 7¼in. gauge track when we arrived.

Matthew managed four circuits of Fareham's raised track before having to retire with a severe lack of water.

**Mike C**