

STEAM**LINES**

NORTHERN DISTRICTS MODEL ENGINEERING SOCIETY INC.

January—February
2005

20th Anniversary Special

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STEAM LAUNCH SOCIAL by Bob Tanner



I had a feeling that the Steam Launch Social Weekend held at Ravenswood on the weekend of 12 December 2004 would be a good turn-out in terms of the number of boats participating, and I was not disappointed!

Pat and I arrived at Mike Rogers' house on the Saturday – and after a scrumptious ploughman's lunch we thanked them for their hospitality, and

Bob Tanner's steam launch S.L. 'Lady Patricia' on the Murray River at the social weekend
Photo: Bob Tanner

were all on our way south with two boats to the Murray River. The boat ramp is located at Murray Bend, a rather picturesque spot located between Mandurah and Pinjarra. Arriving at around 3pm, afternoon tea was followed
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

General Meeting	Club Meeting Room Vasto Pl, Balcatta	8:00 pm	Friday 11 February
20th Birthday Party Club Run Day	Club Track Site Vasto Pl, Balcatta	10:00 am—4:00 pm	Sunday 13 February
Official Opening of New Club Rooms	Club Meeting Room Vasto Pl, Balcatta	5:00 pm	Thursday 24 February
Public Run Day	Club Track Site Vasto Pl, Balcatta	11:00 am—3:00 pm	Sunday 27 February

Minutes of January Meeting

by Milton Smith

The meeting was opened at 8:05pm by the President. This meeting being a "show and tell" was not formal. Apologies were received, and visitor Barry Parker from the United Kingdom, a friend of John Martin, was welcomed.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Society's 20th Birthday — It is planned to celebrate the Society's 20th Birthday on Sunday 13 February. Dick Langford said that he would make the cake and that it would be suitably decorated. A barbecue will be part of the festivities (*see article below*).

Official Opening of Club Rooms — The City of Stirling, because of Mayoral engagements, has fixed the opening for 5:00pm on Thursday 24 February. All Members will be receiving formal invitations to the opening. Some locos will be needed for a run and barbeque afterwards. Considerable tidying up of the grounds also needs to be done to make them presentable for this milestone in the Society's history (*see article below*).

MODEL ENGINEERING

Ken Austin — showed the superheater for his "Flying Scotsman." The superheater tubes were designed with a divider in such a way that the steam travels down the one pipe twice, in order to increase the degree of superheat.

George Palmer — Over the holiday period, George has made patterns for the wheels for a 7 1/4" gauge South Australian Railways 500 class locomotive and as well, beautifully made expansion links for the valve gear. These locomotives, which began service on the S.A.R. in 1926, were large 48-2s originally, with a Tractive Effort of 51,000 pounds. With booster (added in the late 1920's), they thus became 48-4s with a TE of 59,000 pounds. The 2 cylinders were 26" x 28", and the boiler pressure was 200 psi.

The meeting concluded about 9:00pm.

Milton Smith

Christmas Dinner Meeting

Our first Christmas Dinner meeting in the new Club Rooms, the Casserole & Curry night on 10th December 2004, was a most enjoyable event.

Thank you to those members and partners who provided the food, helped set up and clean up, and especially thank you to Noelene Langford and Lynn Shugg for their efforts in setting the tables and generally helping on the night.

The room certainly looked fantastic with all the tables set with Christmas decorations. Some members said it was the best Christmas party the Society had arranged. We will do it again this year!



Lots of good food, party hats and convivial atmosphere at the dinner.
Photo: Jim Clark

20th BIRTHDAY PARTY

The first minuted meeting of the Northern Districts Model Engineering Society was held on Saturday 9 February 1985. A Birthday Party in celebration of our first twenty successful years will be held at the Balcatta Track Site on Sunday 13 February commencing around 10:00am, through to 4:00pm.

Visitors, in particular ex-Members, are welcome. Members of the other Miniature Railway and Model Engineering societies in WA are also invited.

All locomotives (with current Boiler Certificates) are welcome. BYO barbecue lunch and drinks etc.

Please come along and make this special Society Run Day one to be remembered.

OFFICIAL OPENING

The Mayor of the City of Stirling will officially open the Society's new Club Room building at the Balcatta Track Site on Thursday 24 February at 5:00pm.

All Members should have received formal invitations to this event from the Mayor by now. Please RSVP your attendance to the City of Stirling for catering purposes by 18 February (9345 8502).

The official opening will be followed by an evening run and a barbeque. Please make the effort to attend if possible—if you are working that day please try to at least make it to the barbeque afterwards.

President's Thoughts for January/February by Dick Langford

I trust you all enjoyed Christmas and New Year, as Noelene and I did with our family. The end of the year is always a busy and interesting time as we celebrate Christmas and look forward to what the new year may have in store for us.

Editorial Comment



It is not usually my custom to make editorial comment in this newsletter, however on this occasion I would like to take up some issues relating to the front page photo that I ran in the Steamlines December 2004 issue (*see above*).

Apparently this photo has caused some unfavourable comment about juveniles being allowed to operate steam machinery, and possibly resulted in some criticisms being levelled at the host club, South West Model Engineers.

To clarify the situation for those who might have been concerned by it, the two youngsters involved were the children of members of a visiting club. The photo was taken during a private function for club members and guests. There were no members of the public involved. What you did not see out of camera view was the owner of the engine supervising them while they operated it.

I specifically chose that photo over others because in my opinion it showed the interest and enthusiasm that young people can have in "old fashioned technology". Given a little encouragement by being allowed to actually become involved—touching, doing and learning—youngsters can demonstrate their skills and abilities in a responsible manner, and can develop genuine interests outside of computers and TV. To me, this is a great aspect of our hobby and one to be encouraged whenever possible.

It will be a very sad day when due to the ever-growing paranoia about liability, litigation and insurance, no one except a few grumpy old men are allowed to touch or operate miniature machines. If we ever allow that day to come, our models will simply gather dust in glass cases.

Jim Clark, Steamlines Editor

Now, your Society is about to begin its third decade. I believe this is quite an achievement. We finished last year with a problem with trees at Balcatta; this has been almost completely resolved with all the potentially hazardous trees now cut back. Doug Baker organised his neighbour, who is a rigger, and his son-in-law, Simon Dodwell to do the hard work up a ladder for us. Thanks chaps. There are still a couple of smaller trees and one large tree at the western end to remove. These are not in areas where we allow people to walk.

We are ready to care for our patrons on 30 January at our first public run day for 2005. So come along and help make it a great day for our patrons and for your fellow Members.

February is a very busy month for your Society. Our 20th birthday party will be on Sunday 13th and the new building will be opened by the Mayor of the City of Stirling on Thursday 24th. (*see articles page 2*)

There are still some finishing jobs to do on the building before the official opening. We can use your help to get these done. And the site itself needs a spruce up before this day—your help with this would also be appreciated. Talk to your Committee about what you can do. Our regular Saturday and Tuesday morning working bees are back on timetable. If you can get along to a few of these, you will make the job of keeping your site attractive and safe easier for everyone. There is always a wide range of small and large maintenance and development tasks to complete. So, come along and take ownership of one of these tasks and carry it through to completion, adding your individual stamp to it as you go.

Now is a good time to consider where our future lies. I believe it is time to look at improving the safety standards for our elevated track by increasing clearances where it is possible, and through some formal training of our railway operators. Preparation of job descriptions is a good way to go here. They will help identify problems and allow us to improve our understanding of the jobs we do on Public Run days.

We have recently decided that we will operate a ground level track at the Australian Model Railway Association exhibition at the Claremont Showgrounds in June this year. This will require some detailed planning to ensure that we do not have any hitches at the time. You may wish to get involved in this project; your assistance would be appreciated to help ensure that the change occurs seamlessly.

As always, I look forward to meeting you at our next Friday night meeting on 11 February.

Dick Langford

A Historical Review of the NDMES

Article by Dick Langford

In Tasmania I had been, like Jim Crawford, a member of the Hobart Miniature Steam Locomotive Society. This Society had an elevated 3½" and 5" gauge track on a site in Flagstaff gully, a suburb of Hobart. It is still based at this location. After driving Geoff Stevens "Maisie" on this track, I was hooked on miniature live steam.

I moved with my family from Tasmania to Western Australia in April 1986, just after the Easter 1986 AALS Convention at the Castledare Miniature Railway. I soon went looking for some live steam action and found it, later in 1986, with the Northern Districts Model Engineering Society at Whitfords Shopping Centre, where the Society had its portable track in operation during the September school holidays. I learned that the Society had been formed less than two years previously, in February 1995. Its first meeting was attended by Stan Andrews and his partner, Doug and Sue Baker, Reg and Lilly Barltrop, Bob Burgess, Bill Cooper, Peter Goddard, Steve Reeves, and Milton and Jill Smith.

Doug Baker was elected as the first President of the Society at this meeting. He held this position for three years, the maximum continuous term allowed by the Society's new Constitution. In 1989, Bill Marshall was elected to the position. Bill also served the Society as its President for three years, standing down in 1992.

The minutes of the Society's meetings indicate that the first public run by the Society was held, over three days, at the Wesley Church site in the centre of Perth in December 1985. This, I believe, was followed by a school holiday run at Karrinyup Shopping Centre, early in 1986.

I joined the Northern Districts Model Engineering Society shortly after my first encounter with it at Whitfords Shopping Centre. At this stage, the Society did not have a permanent track site as it does now. For the first twelve months of its existence, meetings were held at Members' homes. As the membership grew, a hall was required and meetings were then held on the second Friday night each month in the Community Hall in Guildercliffe Street, Scarborough. The first Society meeting I attended was at this hall.

Over the next few years, shopping centre runs were really the only opportunity for the Society to operate a miniature railway. Runs were held at Maddington Plaza, Phoenix Shopping Centre and Kwinana Hub Shopping Centre. In most cases, the straight portable track was run down the main aisle of the shopping centre and we spent an enjoyable but hectic week or so providing rides to hundreds of children and their Mums and Dads. Doug Baker's 3½" gauge Pacific, "Lord Forrest" provided the motive power for most of these runs.

Another Society activity that commenced in the late 1980's was our participation at the Australian Model Railway Association's annual model railway exhibition over the June holiday weekend at the Royal Agricultural Showgrounds in Claremont. For the first few years we operated our portable track outside the exhibition building. This was great if the weather was fine, but this is definitely not a certainty for June in Perth. So some of our runs were on wet rails with us trying to keep dry under the extended eaves of the building. When these Showgrounds buildings were altered and expanded, we were able to run inside, close to the electric mice, which we tended to scare with our real steam whistles.

We have participated at every AMRA exhibition since and our stand is now a well known feature of this show, eagerly sought out by many exhibition patrons. About 70% of all the children who attend the show have a ride on our trains. Doug Baker's "Lord Forrest" and Lindsay Adams' magnificent "Waratah" were the main locomotives used at many of these events, with the Society's "Blowfly", built by Steve Reeves and Phill Gibbons, providing the power in latter years.



Our track site as we received it from the City of Stirling.

After a few false starts, the Society took a huge step forward in 1988, when it reached agreement with the City of Stirling over a site in Balcatta where it could establish a permanent miniature railway and other facilities. We had also looked at other sites, including the old railway goods yard area in Subiaco and Whiteman Park in the Swan Valley, but Balcatta soon became our preferred choice and the Society signed a ten year lease agreement with the City of Stirling, who fenced the site for us and built the current toilet block for us to share with the BMX Club which was given a lease to the adjacent land at the same time.

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A Historical Review of the NDMES photos from Society's Archives

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The circular portable track was quickly set up around the large tree in the centre of what is now our picnic area and fairly regular steaming days occurred.



The portable circular track on the site with water tanks collecting rainwater from the toilet block roof.

A permanent track plan was developed and the surveying and earth works required were soon started. Substantial earthworks were needed to prepare the area for the tunnel and cutting and build up the embankments for the higher sections of the track. Right from the first planning sessions, the Society decided that two separate tracks would be provided for. These would be an elevated 2½", 3½" and 5" multi-gauge track and a ground level track catering for larger 5" and 7¼" gauge trains. As substantial 5" and 7¼" gauge ground level tracks already existed at Castledare and Bunbury, construction of the smaller elevated track was commenced first.



Tunnel and bridge under construction.

Some 600 cubic metres of earth was moved around the site by bob-cat and front end loader. A good proportion of this material was brought to the site from other building sites around Balcatta. The structural features of

the site, such as the tunnel and track crossing bridge were built right from the start to accommodate the two tracks. The standards used for clearances were those accepted at this time. These have changed over recent years and now some reorganisation of the track arrangements is necessary if the concept of the two tracks side by side is to remain.

Some four years later, in November 1992, the first steam locomotive operated on the track. We had deliberately chosen not to use locomotives on the track, either for pleasure or to move construction materials, until the track was complete. This was a great day for the Society and its members. A raffle was held to choose the first member to drive a steam locomotive on the track. This opportunity was won by a Founding Member Milton Smith, who chose to drive Doug Baker's "Lord Forrest".



Milton Smith driving the first steam locomotive on the new track in November 1992.

1992 saw Doug Baker elected for another term as Society President. Doug again held this position for three years. In 1995, I decided to stand for President and was elected; I served as President for two years. I did not seek a third year as President and Doug Baker was elected to the position, which he again held for three years, until 2000.

With the track itself complete and in operation, it was time to start construction of the line side features. The steaming bay pit and roof was the first structure to be finished, in 1994. The pit had been dug and the brick walls constructed as part of the track construction so that the traverser and steaming bays were available for use fairly quickly.

The station with its canopy and concrete platform was the next feature to be built. The footings for the two columns that support this roof contain a lot of concrete

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A Historical Review of the NDMES

by Dick Langford

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and some heavy steel bolts. The canopy was designed by Ken Collett in the same style as a Great Western Railway station canopy. This project kept Society members busy from 1993 through to 1997.



Lunch time in the early days for Susanne & Doug Baker, Noelene Langford, Geoff & Gwen Evelyn, Linda Jennings & Clive Jarman.

The access ramp to the picnic area in the centre of the track was our next construction project. We gained a substantial grant from the City of Stirling to help fund this structure which was commenced in 1996. The main 200 mm deep steel channel beams in this ramp came from the WAGR Armadale line railway bridge across the Swan River at Belmont. Lifting these into place safely was an interesting and challenging exercise. Ian Allison was the first member to cross the still unfinished bridge. A generous donation from Cullity Timbers provided the timber beams and decking in this bridge, which was officially opened by our Society Patron, Mr George Strickland, in 1998. Society Members and their families could now move into the centre of the track without having to step across the rails.



The steel framework for the Club Rooms and Workshop going up.

The Society did not remain for long without another major project to get its collective teeth into. Construction of the club room and workshop building was commenced in December 2000 with the pouring of the floor slab and wall footings. The steel frame was fabricated and erected over the next six months or so, then laying of the re-constituted limestone blocks commenced. Laying these blocks kept the construction team, ably led by President Ron Date, busy until March 2002, when the last block was set into place, above the western window on the southern side of the building. Fitting out the interior of the building has kept us occupied until now.



The last limestone block being lifted into place.

Regular public running at Balcatta commenced on the last Sunday of July 2000 and has been a dominant feature of our activities calendar ever since. We have now had some 3,000 visitors to our Balcatta site on these public run days. The only patrons who leave our site unhappy on these days are youngsters who want to stay for more train rides.

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The track in operation on a Public Run Day in 2003.

Steam Launch Social Weekend

Article & photos by Bob Tanner

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by a leisurely launching and preparation for the planned festivities.

A slow fire was lit on both S.L. 'Lady Patricia' and S.L. 'Platypus' (Mike's boat) while we contemplated our beautiful surroundings and organised the myriad of things to do on a steam boat. We had made the decision to go downstream – well there are a couple of pubs that way which influenced our thinking!

Steam pressure was raised on my new and recently certified boiler and with everything required stowed on board (Where did I put the kitchen sink?) and we were off in the two launches.

We sailed down to Murray River Lodge at a leisurely pace and made-fast to allow the girls 'shore leave' while we de-ashed the grate, cleaned the firebox, and screened out the fines from the good coal in the bunker etc.

A true return course was plotted for the Ravenswood hotel, and we set off at a great rate of knots (well, it must have been 4 knots at least!) – down the river which at that time was looking magnificent in the late balmy afternoon and complimented by the rhythmic tick of the engine and a bow wave (a little ripple) up for'd!

This is steam-boating at its best – magnificent!! We were aware though of the many snags which lay hidden on the river bank and a wary eye must be kept open at all times to spot these fallen tree trunks, underwater obstructions and other potential hazards to navigation and which can rip a wooden hull open if you loose concentration!

With refreshments on board, the banked boiler was livened up and we set off again for Murray Bend – our camp for the night. After a convivial evening with a

S.L. 'Luxor' making good time (Peter Michaelidies)



Tom Talbot's boat coming up to the jetty

Photos: Bob Tanner

bottle of red and a few more beers, Mike and Trish bunkered down on 'Platypus', and we in Mike's camper bus – (Thanks Trish and Mike!).

The Sunday morning dawned fine and beautiful as the weather forecast had predicted. The other boats were not expected until 9-10am; which again afforded us a leisurely steam raising period and a chance to clean the tarnished brass work. One by one the boats started to arrive, with Alan Mathie and S.L. 'Inyanga', Tom Talbot (Bunbury club) and S.L. Robin Gordon, and Peter Michaelidies (non-club member) with S.L. 'Luxor' – 5 boats. I have waited a long time to see this magnificent line up!

Preparations for sailing complete, we all set off for Ravenswood at intervals, where fellow Steamies, rellies and interested visitors formed a reception committee. Much motoring or should I say steaming up the river was followed by lunch at the hotel accompanied by copious amounts of the inevitable steam talk, which went on until the early afternoon. With fuel supplies

starting to deplete, thoughts turned to heading home, and with the obligatory blast on the whistle we made passage back to the boat ramp. Tom Talbot overtook us in his racehorse – I'm sure he has got a 'steam turbine' installed and not a reciprocating engine – you would think so judging by the speed his launch runs at!

Then it was fires out, boilers depressurised and boats back on the road trailers, and battened down for the run home to Perth.

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Northern Districts Model
Engineering Society Inc.

Track Site:-
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<http://www4.tpg.com.au/users/jimclark>

Steam Launch Social Weekend

by Bob Tanner



S.L. 'Platypus' (Mike Rogers' boat)

Photo: Bob Tanner

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Steam boating is great fun, but there are a few important variables to consider. Each trip is different, and certainly has to be well planned with particular attention being given to the venue, weather forecast, boat ramp access, river conditions, high-low tide expected on the

day, quantity of fuel required (on one occasion I arrived back at the ramp with two lumps of coal and a handful of wood in the bunker!!) etc.

A vote of thanks must go to Dennis Baker for organising another great event.
Bob Tanner

FOR SALE

BA Nuts & setscrews. Prices are per 10 off:

2BA x 5/8" Steel hex screws	\$3.15
2BA Steel nuts	\$1.40
4BA x 1" Steel hex screws	\$1.50
4BA x 1/2" Steel hex screws	\$3.35
4BA x 7/16" Steel c/sunk screws	\$1.25
4BA Steel nuts	\$1.00
5BA x 1/2" Steel hex screws	\$1.25
5BA Steel nuts	\$1.00
6BA x 1/2" Steel hex screws	\$3.20
6BA Steel nuts	\$0.45
6BA x 7/16" Brass c/sunk screws	\$2.90
6BA Brass nuts	\$0.45
7BA x 1/2" Steel hex screws	\$2.90
7BA Steel nuts	\$1.90
8BA x 1/2" Steel hex screws	\$2.20
8BA x 7/16" Steel hex screws	\$1.90
8BA x 1/2" Brass c/head screws	\$2.55
8BA x 1/2" Brass c/sunk screws	\$2.35
8BA Steel nuts	\$1.00
10BA x 1/2" Steel hex screws	\$2.60
10BA x 3/8" Brass c/head screws	\$2.55
10BA x 1" Brass c/sunk screws	\$2.30
10BA x 1/4" brass c/sunk screws	\$2.50
10BA Steel Nuts	\$2.25
10BA Brass Nuts	\$2.60
Gauge Plate 1" x 3/16" (per inch)	\$2.80
Gauge Plate 3/4" x 3/16" (per inch)	\$2.10

Gauge Plate is a good material for expansion links. It cuts accurately by laser.

Pressure gauge 3/4" dia. 0-120psi (scale for 5" gauge) \$55.00. Prices may vary on replacement and exchange rates.

Contact Dennis Lord on 9445 3424.

History of the NDMES by Dick Langford

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In 2000, the Society elected Ron Date as its new President. Ron remained President for three years and I was elected, in 2003, to continue leading the Society.

The Society is now at another major turning point as it enters its third decade. The club room and workshop building is finished and is to be officially opened by the Mayor of the City of Stirling on 24 February 2005; 20 years and 15 days after the Society's first exploratory meeting.

With the club room and workshop building completed, the Society can and should devote itself to improving the overall quality of its Balcatta site and starting to establish the ground level track and roadway for miniature road vehicles, as it enters its third decade as one of the better Model Engineering societies in Australia.



Geoff & Gwen Evelyn with their 3801 doing the Santa Special run.

Dick Langford