

# NORTHERN DISTRICTS MODEL ENGINEERING SOCIETY (PERTH) INC.



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## STEAMLINES

Editor Jim Crawford 2756044

September, 1989.

### PRESIDENTS COMMENTS

*Spring is traditionally the time for new growth and with that season almost upon us we are poised to commence work on our site at Balcatta. The drawings have been finalized, the site pegged, bricks ordered, so from now on its all systems go.*

*I was disappointed with the response to my letter calling for above ground track design. There was only one entry and therefore, by default the prize goes to Doug Baker. Well done Doug.*

*I have written to the secretary of Railways requesting that we be given an option to purchase a Vintage Coach to use as a club house at Balcatta. What better resting place could there be for an ex W.A.G.R. Vintage Coach.*

*Your social event organiser John Millman is approaching other societies with a view to organising a trip on the Paddle Steamer P.S. Decoy giving us the opportunity to extend the hand of fellowship to all W.A. Model engineers.*

*Our next shopping centre run is at Riverton - October 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th & 7th. I will contact you by phone to roster this event. Please give your support to this much needed revenue earner.*

Regards,

## EDITORIAL

Here we are again with the Spring issue of "Steamlines". I don't know where winter went, but in one sense I'm pleased that it has!

As I indicated some time ago, the success of our newsletter will depend to a considerable extent upon contributions made by each of us. As Editor, I am now in the unhappy position of having no articles available for future issues. Worthy scribe John Millman has pulled me from the proverbial once again this issue and for that I am grateful, however, it would be a pleasant surprise indeed if some more of you would draw from your collective experiences and put pen to paper for our mutual benefit and enjoyment.

It doesn't have to be highly technical or liberally laced with expertise. I know of several members who have spoken to others about individual workshop experiences or methods evolved to solve certain situations. No matter how trivial it may seem, let's have a look at it and see if we can pass it on for the benefit of someone else through "Steamlines".

If you would like to give me a ring and discuss a topic for inclusion I will be pleased to hear from you.

## SOCIETY MEETINGS

As you would know, we have been organising our monthly meetings on an alternating - general meeting - social meeting - basis.

The reasoning behind this approach lies in the very beginnings of N.D.M.E.S. where it was decided at the outset that our Club would lean towards maintaining a social atmosphere when possible.

In general terms this seems to have worked well, however, it recently became evident that, in certain quarters, it was felt that we were becoming more a Social Club and perhaps less of an Engineering Society. This was certainly not the intent and if you have particular feelings about this matter, or indeed any other factor relating to our future direction, then the Committee of Management would like to hear from you.

May I suggest that our routine General Meetings would be ideal platforms from which to launch such a discussion.

## GENERAL MEETING

I was unable to attend the June Meeting, so my reflections are limited to the meeting of August 12, 1989. For the benefit of those unable to be there, here is a brief outline of events.

## SOCIETY ANNIVERSARY

We will have completed our fifth year of operation in February, 1990. A celebration of the occasion is planned with a cake cutting and other frivolities around mid-March 1990. Mike Lynn has kindly invited the Society to share the delights of his "home on the Range" (or is it "firebreak"?) at Glen Forest where the portable track will be erected and a good time

is planned for all.

Due to the vagaries of the fire season it cannot be held on the exact date, as steam locomotives (even in our sizes), are rather prone to announcing their presence in dry bushland in a most unco-operative manner.

Final details will be available later.

#### TREASURER BILL

Our number one bean counter has advised that our funds are in a healthy state. There will be a significant expenditure on raw materials and services shortly at Balcatta, heralding the beginnings of serious construction works. Apparently another good reason for spending is that the Taxation Department takes a dim view of non-profit societies accumulating significant monetary reserves.

#### COMING EVENTS

Stirling City Fair at a date to be announced.

Riverton Shpping Centre display - October 3 - 7, 1989.  
More details later.

#### SITE REPORT

The toilet block at Balcatta is scheduled for completion towards the end of September.

The entrance to the tunnel and respective levels have been surveyed and pegged ready for construction to begin.

#### MODEL ENGINEERING

John Millman had his recently completed 2-8-0 GNR "Nigel Gresley" on display. She is a large engine and John says the wheel flanges do protest when attempts are made to negotiate our circular track.

Some interesting details emerging from the construction of this loco include:-

- (1) Wheels and cylinders are the only castings purchased. To quote John, the rest came from the scrap yard.
- (2) Smokebox started life as a large bearing and was turned to size. The smokebox door was a  $\frac{5}{8}$ " thick piece of bronze suitably reduced and shaped.
- (3) The boiler bands came from a printing works.
- (4) The boiler is rated at 100 PSI and has 4 super-heater elements. An interesting feature is the external blower feed pipe. This arose because of the circuitous route followed by the original through the firebox stays.

A very fine effort John and an inspiration to we armchair model engineers.

Reg Barlthrop displayed a recently completed fusee (timing device) to be fitted into a skeleton clock. The method of machining the conical thread was intriguing,

Geoff Evelyn is building a 3½" G NSWGR C38 class loco. He has machined the boxpok pattern wheels completely from solid steel blanks. Well done Geoff, they really look the part.

#### FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

N.D.M.E.S. cloth badges suitable for sewing on coveralls etc., are available from Bill Cooper at \$8.00 each. Metal badges for cap collections are obtained from Doug Baker. The cost is \$2.50 each.

Speaking of our Society logo, many thanks to Jan Lynn for repairing our large banner, which plays such a prominent role in displays and exhibitions.

The annual dinner was held at the Westrail Centre restaurant on July 8, 1989. Although numbers were down, a good time was had by all and the food apparently was most satisfactory.

Charges for rides at public runs and exhibitions have now been revised to \$1.00.

Our involvement with A.M.R.A. this year resulted in the coffers being extended to the tune of \$1,194.00.

The new elevated track at Balcatta will be constructed of steel.

Our Society is to contact the American Navy Public Relations Department to establish liaison with live steamers amongst the crews of visiting warships.

The design of the tunnel at Balcatta has been accepted.

John Millman is investigating the probability of an outing aboard the paddle-steamer "Decoy" together with kindred Society members.

#### WHAT'S BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR?

Has anybody seen Bill Marshall's front door? I have it on good authority that the colour is GWR GREEN! We shall watch this development with interest - perhaps a copper chimney pot will be next!!!

#### TOOLS

For members like me who still use an "Armstrong Miller" may I recommend a visit to Ross' Hardware in East Perth (and elsewhere) if you are in the market for needle files. Made in China and nicely presented in a red plastic pouch, they can be purchased for \$8.00 for twelve. They do seem to be of reasonable quality and considerable less expensive than some other brands.

FLYING SCOTSMAN

I am sure that most of you will be aware of L.N.E.R. loco 4472 arriving in the West shortly. I don't have a complete programme, particularly of local running, however, the details I have from "Great Aussie Holidays" indicate that she will be in Perth at around 1600 hours on Sunday September 17, 1989.

COMING EVENTS

Please note that the September General Meeting will be of a Social nature at Guildcliffe Hall.

The October G.M. will be an ordinary meeting at Guildcliffe Hall.

The November meeting will be a "Simplex Night" (wonder what that's all about)???

Finally the December meeting is scheduled as a Christmas Special. Further details will be available at a later time.

A THOUGHT WE ALL CAN SHARE

ARE YOU ACTIVE?

Are you an active member,  
the kind that would be missed,  
Or are you just content  
that your name is on the list?  
Do you attend the meetings  
and mingle with the crowd  
Or would you rather stay at home  
and complain both long and loud?  
Do you give a little time  
and help to make things tick  
Or leave the work to just a few  
and talk about the "clique"?  
There's quite a program schedule;  
that means success if done  
And it can be accomplished  
with the help of everyone.  
So come to all the meetings  
and help with hand and heart;  
Don't be just another member,  
but take an active part.  
Think it over member,  
are you right or wrong  
Are you an active member  
or do you just belong?

Author Unknown

That wraps it up for my segment of "Steamlines." With much pleasure I now hand over the rostrum to John Millman to continue his tales from British Rail.

*Best Wishes  
John*

## FREIGHT WORK

My early days as a Fireman of course involved much work on Shunting Engines, the Motive Power Being Pannier Tank Engines, of which there were numerous. This also positioned me to work alongside much older men, as many of the Drivers on Shunting Engines were men who had ceased Main Line Duties, for one reason or another, and spent the remaining few years of their working lives performing this type of duty. All these Drivers were naturally old Great Western Men, with a solid upbringing of Great Western Discipline and Practice, and who did their utmost to indoctrinate me with the same proven methods. Needless to say, I suppose so much rubbed off, but as a young man, and as nearly all young men do, a lot of advice and experience was ignored, but generally these first years formed a good base for what lay ahead.

I progressed steadily until I found myself taking up a position in the "Freight Link" ('Link' being a group of Enginemen on roster to cover and perform certain work).

Now it was the practice of British Railways to time passenger trains throughout the daytime, these services of course taking preference, likewise to time freight trains to run at night and hopefully arriving at their destination by morning and before passenger services resumed, so needless to say my work now consisted mainly of night work.

The "jobs" we had were covered by any and every type of Motive Power, so to work a Coal Train, say from Birmingham to Oxford (a distance of approx. 70 miles, usually via the West Midland Line), one could be working a Western 28XX -2-8-0 class one night and an old Robinson R.O.D. 2-8-0 Austerity the next, and if the Freight Train in question was an Express Freight, then the power would probably be of the 4-6-0 breed, Hall, Grange etc.,.

I worked in the "Freight Links" for a considerable time with a few different drivers, so by this time I had married, started a family and acquired a mortgage, you can imagine the extra money earned in the way of overtime and shift penalties was quite acceptable.

One of the Drivers I worked alongside at this period was a huge man, but a gentle giant, by the name of Bert Watkins. Now Bert never did anything quickly and driving a freight train was no exception, in fact, he earned himself the nickname of "The Undertaker". To work alongside Bert could sometimes be very frustrating, he would gauge the speed of his train to arrive at a point, the time of which suited him, never mind what the timetable said. He would do this knowingly, so that we would be held at a junction or siding so trains of greater priority would be released in front of us, thus arriving at our destination much later than scheduled, and involving perhaps another couple of hours overtime.

He would look at me (he stuttered slightly) and say "Th-th-thats another c-c-couple of b-b-bricks off your m-mortgage."

During the summer months extra passenger trains were introduced at weekends, to cater for holiday makers, so all freight workings were suspended on Saturdays, and consequently we found ourselves working freight trains during the week and express passenger duty on the weekend, often worked with engines which were only fit for freight work, so you can imagine the performance we had.

One Saturday Bert and I were booked to work from Birmingham to Bristol and return with one of these Summer Specials - an all round distance of 180 miles. I recall we had a "Hall" class Engine to work to Bristol, our train booked to stop at Stratford-on-Avon, Cheltenham and Bristol. We were then to be relieved by a Newton Abbott crew and take up our return workings. The trip down to Bristol as I recall was quite usual, the Engine wasn't too free for steam, but never the less we managed very well, but I'm afraid the worst was to come.

After a break and a welcome clean-up, it came time to relieve the crew of an incoming Special, and work same back to Birmingham calling at the same stations en route. The train arrived and my heart sank into my heavy, dirty working boots. The Locomotive was a "Grange" class 4-6-0 that had obviously been *relegated* to freight work. It was filthy, the smoke box was stained with rust and boiler water where she had been priming. The boiler bands were loose and had shifted, and in general presented a pretty sorry sight.

A couple of Bristol Engine crews encouraged us immensely, telling us she was a local Engine, and in their opinion was only fit for the scrap heap.

As we departed Bristol, within a very few moments we knew what we had got hold of, because as you leave Bristol there is a heavy climb to "Filton Junction", a section of line for which bankers were provided assisting in the rear, and as we pounded and clanked our way up the bank (with assistance) we were overtaken by a local passenger train running in the same direction on the relief line. As he passed us we came in for even more "sympathy" from her crew.

After breasting the bank at "Filton" we started to gain speed, the noise was incredible. I remember the left hand big end knocked so bad that the vibration through the cab was unbelievable, the side window my side vibrated in sympathy and even the steam pressure clock (the needle) bounced around so you couldn't really be sure where it was supposed to be. Asbestos lagging showered onto Bert and myself - this was being shaken loose around the boiler and forced out by the air through the many large gaps in the boiler cladding, but fortunately the engine steamed exceptionally well, this was put down to the fact that dirt, soot etc., was shaken from the tubes, and the fire shook and levelled itself with the vibration that was taking place.

We finally arrived in Birmingham of course, but the ringing in our ears lasted quite some time. I wouldn't like you to think that this was a typical journey - far from it. This was quite exceptional and therefore remains in my memory.

Apart from the financial aspect, freight working was quite rewarding, as you usually travelled at a somewhat leisurely pace (compared to passenger services), and it gave you time to see more of your surroundings. Also, many 'jobs' had no return workings

and we were often booked back as 'passengers' on the first available service. This gave us the *chance* to catch up on a little sleep, but what I really liked doing is travelling home from Gloucester for instance, a journey that meant travelling over the L.M.S. line, was to travel 'up front' on the engine. This gave me the opportunity to "have a go" on either a L.M.S. Jubilee, Black 5 or similar engine, and when travelling back over this particular route we had to climb the famous "Lickey Incline" (an Incline I shall tell you more about in a later issue).

This Bank extended from Bromsgrove to Blackwell - a distance of 2 miles up a gradient of 1 in 37 (actually the steepest 'main line' gradient in Europe). All but the very lightest of trains were assisted in the rear by as many as 3 Banker Engines.

As you can imagine, I got to know several of the regular crews over this line, and was made quite welcome, especially by the firemen.

Great Western enthusiasts admired the "Brunswick Green" locomotives and rightly so, for in my opinion they were a fine locomotive. But, believe me, not every aspect of working on the 'footplate' was all "beer and skittles" - far from it. Usually the enthusiast viewed the locomotives and the work thereon from a distance, he didn't pull himself from a warm bed at 0200 hours on a freezing cold winter's morning, cycle four miles to work only to stand in a dirty, smokey loco shed and prepare his engine, then travel tender first for a couple of miles to pick up the train, and when on freight work in bad weather, never be certain when he was getting home.

The enthusiasts usually confined themselves to warm summer days, set up at a strategic point on a main line (usually on a gradient) armed with a camera and capture the action on film, so if I have a slightly different view of things no doubt you Great Western enthusiasts will forgive me.

Perhaps next issue I can recall an incident which involves a personality clash.

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STOP PRESS

News just to hand indicates that N.D.M.E.S. has been invited to set up and run at the Westrail Centre on September 17, 1989.

We will be part of the proceedings to welcome LNER 4472 "Flying Scotsman" to Perth. More details at the General Meeting.