The Oily Rag!

Autumn
2013

Photo Paul

Steam at Isle Abbots
More pictures on the back cover

The Taunton Model Engineers'
magazine

Contents

From the Editor

It has been even more difficult than usual to fill the pages of the "Oily Rag" for this issue. The reports from the sections can always be relied on and there are some members who will always write something to help out. But surely there are other members out there who are doing things which would interest the rest of the membership. Within reason it does not matter if it is not a polished piece of prose. A few emails or handwritten notes and a few pictures can be made into something worthwhile if the subject is of interest. Come on, give it a try, get your name in print as a contributor to one of the best club magazines in the country!

If you are going to drive miniature steam locomotives you have to start somewhere. I enjoyed Mike Callaghan's report on his trip to Swansea with his Polly 4. This was written some while ago and Mike was one of those who pressed for the club evenings at Vivary which have been so successful.

I was also pleased to get a report on the first steaming of Andy Cooke's Maclaren. New engines do not appear very often so it is good to have an article about one. Andy intends painting it as one of the traction engines used by the military in world war one which is rather appropriate considering the centenary of the outbreak of hostilities next year. I look forward to seeing it when it is finished.

Sadly this issue includes another obituary. This one is for Noel Whiting who was the last founder member and will be greatly missed.

John

Chairman's notes

By Mike Johns

Now that our 'indoor' season has started I think everyone will agree we've had an interesting and entertaining programme of visits, club running evenings, BBQ's, etc. Our thanks go to all those who hosted our visits – the preparations they make go a long way towards making each event a success. We've now embarked on the winter programme which includes a number of regularly popular items. Please make sure you do not miss them.

As ever your Committee are open to ideas for the future events, talks, slide shows, etc. Please let them know what you would like to see as there are still gaps in the timetable for next year. It was an interesting change to have a 'Bits and Pieces' evening to start the indoor season this year. Normally this would be the wrong end of the year yet I'm sure everybody was pleased to see the number and variety of items that were displayed and to have the opportunity to learn how each was made and what problems the makers had to overcome.

We have to remember that not all our members are proficient model engineers and it is from such evenings that novices can gain an insight into what is involved and hopefully learn that they could also achieve similar results given time and patience. They would also benefit if we could include a series of 'how to' topics in our programme but this is dependent on individual members coming forward and prepared to demonstrate, describe or even show photographs of their particular topics.

There is a wide range of skills in Taunton ME so how about some of you stepping forward to take part and give us a presentation?

News from Creech

By Mike Johns

By the end of August we had carried 1332 passengers this year with a peak of 279 during the Creech Funday on 12 July when many visitors judged us to be the best value for money on site! This is a significant improvement in our fortunes, demonstrates the pulling power of the new children's play equipment and augurs well for the future.

The one downside was during the hot dry weather on the Fun Day when we managed to cause 3 line side fires, one of which needed the use of a fire extinguisher to put out. This led to 2 members being stationed on the motorway side of the railway as fire wardens to ensure any further fires were promptly extinguished. Subsequently your Committee has reviewed our operating practices, carried out a risk assessment and stipulated that henceforth in dry weather the use of steam locomotives will be authorised by the Duty Steward according to ground conditions.

This has highlighted 2 problem areas. One is the ongoing need to keep the grass regularly cut and the track clear of both grass and weeds. The other is the need to have members on site at least half an hour before we are due to run trains. Too often it seems to be assumed that everything will be made ready by 'some one else'! The result has been that on a number of occasions we have still been getting ready 30 minutes after we should have opened and have a queue of passengers as an audience. Fortunately they have been good humoured about the delays but this may not always be the case. Please do what you can to help.

On the practical front the Thursday gang of stalwarts has returned Robin to service although some further work will be needed this winter; and have been giving remedial attention to the track where problems had been identified. Meantime the Sunday team have carried on with the installation of the vehicle hoist in the shed which is operational with the high level storage tracks yet to be added. Thanks to Paul Orrells a further locomotive is now on site this being his electrically powered Hymek and which is a welcome addition to our roster. Initially we had some battery life problems but these have now been replaced.

Report from Vivary Park

By Diana Fathers

I'm ashamed to say that after offering to do the reports on Vivary, we have been away at steam rallies on several running days so this report is somewhat brief!

Mark has enjoyed getting to grips with his grandfather's Princess Marina.

The fine weather has continued to bring in the customers – with the exception of the Flower Show, when it rained on both Saturday and Sunday. The Sunday was so wet that no running was possible. (We missed it as we were busy getting drowned at the Norton Fitzwarren steam rally for the third year running!)

Caption please!

More members have been turning up at the Tuesday evening runnings, which have given learner drivers the chance to practice without any hassle and owners of new locos the chance to try them out.

These evenings have been very pleasant, with more wives and partners coming to join in the chat. Shorter days mean no more this year, but I am sure they will become regular events in future.

The Tickers
(Horological Sub Group)

The Harrison project is progressing somewhat slowly as after clock material at Greenwich was x rayed we need to obtain some high tin bronze to be able to make bearings. This is expensive as the foundry will only supply it in ½ crucible size at approx cost of £750.00!

This information was given at the bits & pieces evening and is for those who were unable to attend.

I will say again if there is any member who may wish to have a go at clockmaking or repairs. I would be more than happy to give guidance or mentoring.

HERE endeth the lesson for this edition.

My view on the club's day trip to Swansea.

Michael Callaghan

I am new to model engineering and apart from steaming up my 5 inch gauge Royal Scot under the direction of Barny Evans (thanks again Barny) I have never had any experience of driving a loco on the track. As Taunton club members will know it's not easy to just take one's engine along to the track and just try things out. I understand the reason for the need for public running but feel that the balance between public running and just enjoying using one's own loco is somewhat out of kilter. This is my personal view and no-one else's. So I was looking forward to the club day out and on the day took along my Polly 4 as this I am told is an easy engine to steam and is a lot lighter to move around then the Scot.

The day was clear and bright when I got to Dave Wood's house for seven. Tim Griffiths turned up at the same time. A cup of tea, and with the locos loaded up, Dave took his Polly 5. We started out for Swansea.

Well it had to happen, we got lost somewhere in Mumbles. A dead end was to our front, so it was turn around and with some local help we made our way to the Swansea club car park.

Yes the Swansea club is small, but packed into this area is a tunnel, bridge, station, signal box, and a club house with workshop, including a TV showing videos of past club days, and a good size kitchen from which endless cups of tea and coffee, bacon rolls etc was finding their way into grateful hands.

Each steam bay had a water supply and electrical hook up for the boilers. The Swansea members had put a number of their locomotives on display and could not have been more welcoming. After a ride round the track behind one of the Swansea members who pointed out the lights and land marks of the track. It was time to get Polly in steam, lucky for me Dave Wood was in the next bay so I just watched and copied him.

After a few more cups of tea and a further roll it was time for my go at driving. I must say that part of me was hoping that the sky would open and it would pour down but it remained clear and bright as I pushed Polly onto the main track. Check water level, OK. Check steam, OK. Ready for the off!!

Photo Tim Griffiths

A picture is worth a thousand words!

A bit of a push on the regulator and just slowly at first the little engine started to pull me along. It was with a feeling of joy I felt myself moving along, which all to soon was followed by horror as I looked up to see the first bend ahead. I was sure I would fly off and land in the hedge alongside the track. Quickly followed by a boiling hot locomotive. But joy returned as Polly just took the bend and headed for the all too dark tunnel ahead. With no idea of what I was doing and alone in the dark I could hear the little loco just steaming away and making light work of it all,

so unlike its driver who was starting to re-live his first time on a motorbike, yes that out of control feeling, I am sure all readers must have experienced at one time or another. Out of the tunnel into the light, up the hill and into the station. So far so good! However, no one had told me about the hot cinders that flew into my eyes each time I looked up and after a few times round the track I just had to stop. My eyes burned for a few days after and goggles have been ordered for my next outing.

All too soon it was the close of the day and after a photo shoot for the Swansea club members, it was time to head back. I think that all Taunton members had a great time. I know that I am looking forward to a revisit and maybe just maybe I will take the Scot next time.

Rosebuds from Montana

By John Pickering

In the early 1920s a group of surveyors working for the Northern Pacific Railroad conducted an extensive survey of the Rosebud valley, Montana to find a suitable site for open cast, strip mining. They chose a site on Armell's creek and in 1923 laid a 30.5 mile long branch line to connect the new mine to the railroad near Forsyth. The line terminated where a township was to be built to serve the mine. The township was to be called "Colstrip". The first coal was shipped in September 1923 and mining for coal for Northern Pacific Railroad locomotives continued until the end of the steam era in 1947. Coal is still mined at the site and is now used for electrical power generation.

The coal is described by the geologists as bituminous and sub bituminous lignite and earned the nickname of "burnable dirt" from the crews who had to use it. It was cheap, which pleased the "bean counters" and the share holders, but not easy to burn well and of low calorific value which left the engineers with a few headaches.

To burn it a form of table grate with many small holes was developed. This became known as the "Rosebud grate". The high gas velocity through the holes results in a fluid firebed which is constantly in motion. As the coal burns it breaks up into small particles which burn in the air above the fire. This was claimed to result in more complete combustion and a residue of ash rather than ash mixed with unburnt fuel. The only way around the low calorific value was to burn lots of it which required locomotives with very large fireboxes. The size of the grates was far too large to fit between the frames but this was not a serious problem since the "Rosebud grate" works best with a thin firebed, this meant the grate could be placed above the frame top.

The ultimate Rosebud burning locomotives were the "Challengers" bought from Alco. between 1936 and 1944. Twenty two of these

4-6-6-4 Mallets were bought in 3 batches. The second and last batches were slightly larger than the first weighing 1,081,000lbs engine and tender (482.6 tons) with a tractive effort of 107,000lbs. To achieve this tractive effort the "Rosebud" grates had a massive 152.3sq.ft. grate area. These were the largest grates ever fitted to steam locomotives. Several other American railroads adopted "Rosebud" grates and they became fairly common in the USA towards the end of the steam era.

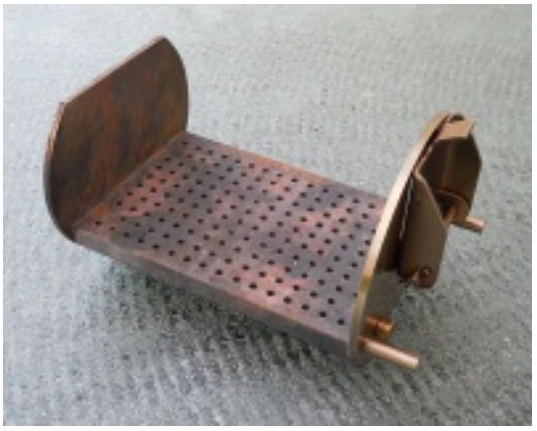
The USA is not the only country with good reserves of lignite and similar poor quaility coal. Test carried out in 1931 in New South Wales with "Rosebud" grates led to over 900 engines being fitted with them. In 1934 experiments on a Victorian Railways A2 class increased the output from 860 hp at 26 mph to 1,230 hp at 32 mph.

I knew nothing of this interesting piece of steam technology until it was mentioned by Ray Rolt at a Tuesday evening "steam up". From his description it sounded interesting. A week later he produced a photocopy of an article from the Maxitrak owner's club magazine, "Road n Rail" written by Peter Giffiths which gave some background, some of the theory and went on to recount his own experience of using a "Rosebud grate" in his 7.25" gauge "Lil Joe". The results he obtained suggested this grate could improve my little 5" gauge locomotive's performance.

The "Salome" boiler has firetubes which, according to the C. M. Keiller criteria are far too large. This means the firetube part of the boiler is very inefficient. I believe that most of the heat transfer is radiant heat from the fire which means the fire has to be kept very hot to keep running. This in turn requires a strong draft which gives a high gas velocity through the tubes, a short transit time and a very hot funnel! It also results in an engine which can be rather temperamental (well it is called "Salome") The large volume of water, in the boiler, means that there is quite a lot of steam available

even when the fire is getting low as a result the pressure gauge tells you what has happened rather than what is happening! The only way to keep on top of it is to continuously open the firebox door and take a look.

I reckoned if a Rosebud grate would allow me to get a hot firebed with far less excess air, the gas temperature in the tubes would be higher and the gas velocity would be lower allowing more time for heat to be transferred to the water. Which should result in a more efficient boiler and one which was less fussy to handle. One of the advantages claimed for the grate is that it gives more complete combustion. With some coal, the original grate could become choked quite quickly with small pieces of unburnt coal, particularly if the coal was wet. Hopefully this situation would be improved.



Salome’s Rosebud grate

A piece of 10mm. steel 80mm. wide and around 4.8" long which fitted reasonably well into "Salome's" marine firebox was acquired. To give 12.5% grate area I needed around 160 3mm. holes these were arranged as a 10 x 16 grid. I followed the Peter Griffiths pattern and counterbored them 5mm. from below.

The two end plates, the backhead and the brick arch were made from 1/8" stainless steel and were close enough to the original pattern to be converted into a spare conventional grate if the experiment was unsuccessful. The completed grate, as yet unused, was shown at the "Bits and Pieces" evening a few weeks ago

The following Saturday the "Nomads" were running the portable track at the Creech Saint Michael Flower Show. I could have played it safe and used the original grate but since the weather was cold and damp and there were few visitors around I decided to risk it and try the new grate. I was surprised at how quickly I was able to raise steam and with a less fierce draft from the electric blower. I soon had a thin but very hot firebed.

The locomotive performed faultlessly for an hour and a half, but did require constant attention. Eventually the distractions of getting restless children to sit still and allowing younger riders and parents who had decided just before you pulled away to burst into tears and want to get off (the kids I mean) I lost concentration. The pressure was falling as I pulled away but I thought I could build the fire when I got back to "Creech Central" how wrong I was! When I got back I was astounded to look into the firebox and find it was virtually empty. One or two lumps of black coal with bright red corners on top of a clean sheet of steel with neat rows of holes. There was no fire left to build up! so I would have to start from scratch. In the mean time Dave Wood had sorted the problem with the feed pump and his Polly V was in steam, so I handed over to him for the rest of the session.

When the loco was cleaned up the different way the grate was working was also made clear. Normally the smokebox door would have been black as would the inside of the smokebox. The material carried over from the fire would have been a dark grey mixture of ash, soot and pieces of unburnt coal about the size of grains of rice. With the Rosebud grate the firebox door and inside were almost white and the deposit in the bottom was a fine light grey powder. The grate was obviously working well but as to making the engine more "user friendly" the jury is out. Running on a short track on a steep incline with frequent stops, distractions and delays is not the ideal way to test something new like this, what is now needed is a good long run to get used to it. May be November 3rd ?

The Bristol Exhibition 2013

By Phil Mortimer

On Thursday the 15th August five members of TME met up at Thornbury Leisure Centre to set up our stand for the Bristol Model Engineering Exhibition.

Photo Don Hancock

These members were Dave Spicer, Ian Grinter, Barney Evans, Bob Richards and Phil Mortimer. The stand was assembled using the layout that Bristol had supplied. Prior to this Thursday, models from club members had been selected and collected from Don Hancock, Noel Whiting, John Pickering, Barney Evans, Bob Wilkinson, Tom Dominey and Dave Spicer. The club loco, Jack Gardner was also included. These models were arranged, hopefully to display them to their best advantage. The new photographs that were displayed on the stand showing the wide variety of club activity were supplied by Mike Pinkney.

The models on display covered a variety of club members' hobbies, locomotives, boats, wood craft, clocks and tools

Friday morning saw the stand being manned by Dave Spicer, Barney Evans, Graham Barfield and Phil Mortimer. It was a long day, 10am to 6pm. On Saturday it was manned by Andy Cooke, Don Hancock and Bob Richards. Not such a long day 10am to 5pm. On Sunday the stand was manned by Dave Spicer, Barney Evans, Ian Grinter, Bob Richards and Phil Mortimer. A shorter day 10am to 4pm.

At 4 o'clock the halls were a hive of activity with every one packing up their stands, whether trade or club. The club stand was dismantled and packed away in their respective vehicles for the drive home. We left the car park just after 5pm.

Much interest was shown in the stand especially in the Gauge 1 Big Boy owned by Barney Evans.

I would like to thank all the members who very kindly loaned their models for display and the members who helped set up, dismantle and man the stands during the three days of the exhibition.

"MACHINERY IN MY LIFE"

by Ray Rolt

Life on the Farm

The farm was 'Manor Farm' in Ashmore, Dorset. This was a revelation to my brother and myself. In 1944, mains electricity was taken for granted in towns of any size, but this was in the days before the 'National Grid'. Being about 6 miles outside Shaftesbury,

it was like living in a ‘time warp’. There was no electricity at all in the village, the only radio was in ‘North Farm’, the other end of the village, which used two large glass accumulators for power which were recharged in Shaftesbury. It was probably no coincidence that they also ran a ‘taxi’ service into there, which was the only means of shopping, making it easy for transporting the accumulators!

As there was no gas either, this meant that all lighting was by candles or oil lamps! The water supply was from wells, the one for the farm being close to the house, with a concrete water tower some distance away. In the absence of electricity, how the water was pumped up to the tank I never knew, presumably by the use of a petrol engine. If it was, I have no recollections of hearing it. By the size of the tower, it may have supplied other premises as well. The biggest demand for water would have been for the dairy, not only for washing the churns and other equipment but also as a continuous supply of water for the cooler.

The recent BBC programme “Wartime Farming” made me realise how my brother and I were very much a part of this and explained much of what was on the farm!

The farm house was an impressive Georgian building, built in ‘dressed stone’ and the farm buildings appeared to be set out as a ‘model farm’. There was an extensive ‘L’ shaped stable block adjacent to the house. This had an upper floor to form the hay loft. This we found particularly exciting! Not only were the floor boards rotted in places, cunningly concealed by the hay, making it necessary to work out a safe route, but there were copious quantities of ’live’ .303 ammunition scattered in the hay as well!!!

Apparently some of the ’Parachute Regiment’ had been doing a training exercise on the farm previously!! We collected the ammunition and ’clips’ and gave it to one of the farm hands. He

removed the bullet, emptied out the gunpowder for filling shotgun cartridges, put the shell in a vice and fired the detonator using a hammer and nail and replaced the bullet. This gave us good supply of ’safe’ ammunition!! More a question of ’status’ than anything else!! Behind the farm was a steep field leading down to a ‘gully’ known as ‘Shepherds Bottom’. This was ‘scrubland’ and had boards on posts with an effigy of ‘Hitler’ on them, and mortar shells scattered around! These may have just been practice shells. Whether they were ‘live’ or not, my brother, being a bit of a dare devil, picked one up and hurled it in the air! Even at the age of 6, I had a strong sense of self preservation and ran in the opposite direction as fast as my little legs would go! It did not explode.

A John Deere model A.

What about the ’machinery’, I hear you ask? On the farm they had two “Fordson” tractors and a “John Deere” tractor. These were in as new condition, and one now realises that they would have been supplied in connection with the drive to put more land under the plough. The “Fordson” tractors used 3 furrow ploughs, but a 5 furrow plough was bought specially for the “John Deere”.

Obviously this would have greatly speeded up the ploughing.

At this time, the farms would have mainly relied on horses, two still being retained on the farm. Consequently the blacksmith was the main source of 'engineering' services for any metal fabrication and maintenance of implements, and Ashmore had its representative. General routine servicing on the tractors was done on the farm. I remember that on one occasion one of the farm hands had just finished an oil change on one of the "Fordson" tractors when he managed to drop a spanner down the oil filler! He was not very happy, as it meant draining out the oil again and removing the sump to retrieve it!! For other maintenance on the tractors, only the blacksmith was available! He seemed to have problems with the "John Deere".

Our daily routine was to have a large bowl of Cornflakes for breakfast, with milk in a jug straight from the dairy. Then we did a day's work helping with the harvest armed with a canvas bag containing our lunch and a screw stoppered 'Tizer' bottle full of cold sweet tea! On a hot day this tasted like 'nectar! As my 'Uncle', though not a direct relation in those days everyone was called uncle, who was the farm manager, was a 'lay preacher' at the local Methodist Church, all of the men only drank cold tea in the field!

The "John Deere" had the normal layout of a flat two cylinder four stroke engine with a magneto ignition giving a spark on every back stroke. As with all the tractors, it ran on TVO which required starting on petrol to warm the engine before changing over to TVO. The tractor was started by hand, requiring two men on the starting handle. I think that this may be the reason why I have an interest in the "Field Marshall" single cylinder two stroke diesel tractor today.

A demonstration of the problem the blacksmith had was demonstrated coming back along the road as the sun was just setting one evening. We were sat on the edge of the empty trailer flat bed with flames shooting out of the direct vertical exhaust pipe caused

by the ignition of surplus fuel mix on the exhaust stroke. Quite dramatic!

My brother and I always thought that this was one of the best summer holidays we ever had as boys. The large kitchen was used as the main living area and the single double wick “Aladdin” oil lamp with mantle lit the whole room with a warm glow. There was an iron range, fired by ‘faggots’ of wood, which was used to make lovely apple pies! This was supplemented by an oil burning range in a separate room. Going to bed was by candlelight which was a bit ‘spooky’ as the wide staircase was in two flights, with a half landing. This had a full height sash window in which one could see ones reflection, complete with candle!

The Trials and Tribulations of a New Engine and an Inept Handler

By Andy Cooke

The first steaming:

My workshop is in my garage which is a short driveway’s length from the road. This means it is not a very private area in which to carry out experiments with a recently almost completed engine. For this reason I always carry out any tests in the back garden, hidden away from prying eyes. One snag this time however, at 30 inches over the rear wheels, the engine was too wide to go through the gate. This meant a modification to the steel gate which I made some 35 years ago. Fortunately there was sufficient room to do this and a morning with a welder soon sorted the problem out.

Then came the great day, the engine was manhandled into the garden, a heavy thing it is too and unwieldy. I had decided not to use an electric blower for too long in order to bring the boiler temperature up slowly. The blower was used until the smokebox and chimney were warm and then it was replaced by a long extension tube. I was a little surprised at how quickly the pressure rose as this was my first experience with steaming a steel boiler from cold. It had been suggested to me by an “expert” that the safety valve spring would not be strong enough to contain the working pressure of 175 psi so I had screwed the adjuster down quite hard. This was my first mistake as at 190 psi the valves had still not lifted (the boiler is tested to 265 psi), this entailed some hasty adjustment until the pressure was under control. The engine worked quite satisfactorily in neutral although there was insufficient room to actually move it over the ground. I then tried the boiler feed pump which refused to deliver water, oh dear, another minor panic as the injector would not pick up either. I blame my pipe work and/or filter installation for this as I know the injector is good. By this time there was only about 3/8 of an inch of water in the gauge but I believed this to be plenty. This was my second mistake as the fusible plug suddenly let go so the fire was quickly dropped. Thus ended the first steaming!

With regard to the water level in the gauge, this would seem to be a feature of this design as a friend with a 4 inch scale version of this engine told me he did exactly the same thing when he first steamed. Perhaps the design position of the bottom water gauge fitting is too low, not a problem as long as one is aware of it.

A later investigation soon revealed why the pump would not pick up - the balls in the clack box were not seating properly and I cursed myself for not doing the job properly in the first place! With this problem sorted out I made certain that the situation had been resolved by putting an electric drill via a socket spanner on the end of the crankshaft. With the feed pipe disconnected water went

everywhere, especially into my son's shoe with his foot still in it - I will not repeat what he said! I also shortened the fusible plug which I calculated to be too long by 1/8 of an inch. Following these modifications came.

The second steaming:

Into the back garden again with much heaving and grunting. The fire was lit and the same procedure as the first time followed. Pressure seemed to take longer to come up this time, I don't know why, perhaps impatience. At a reasonable pressure I tried the pump - partial success, it did work but pumped more water past the gland than it put in the engine, I did not try the injector as I wanted to ensure the pump was reliable first. The pump struggled to keep up with demand as most of the water was going on the floor but I persevered, putting more coal on the fire until I had quite an inferno going. Now the real ineptitude! The fire hole door catch is quite stiff in its location and I wanted to check all was well with the plug.

Andy with the new Maclaren.

Whilst attempting to open the door with the poker I slipped and would you believe it? I managed to smash the water gauge with the poker. Thus ended the second steaming!

Now in my normally sympathetic manner when members relate problems to me my reaction is frequently “well it’s your own fault, you followed the drawings”. I said this to myself quite vehemently over the water pump and have since rebuilt it to my own specification as based on my experience with another engine, taking the ram out to 5/8 rather than 9/16 inches. I have now fitted an O ring to the ram and am satisfied all will now be well as the pump works well by hand in the kitchen sink. If so then this will leave me free to concentrate on the injector. I intend to disconnect my water feed line and substitute this for a flexible pipe into a container of water, I have seen this done very effectively by another member without trouble. I now look forward to the third steaming and better handling

OF SHIPS AND THINGS

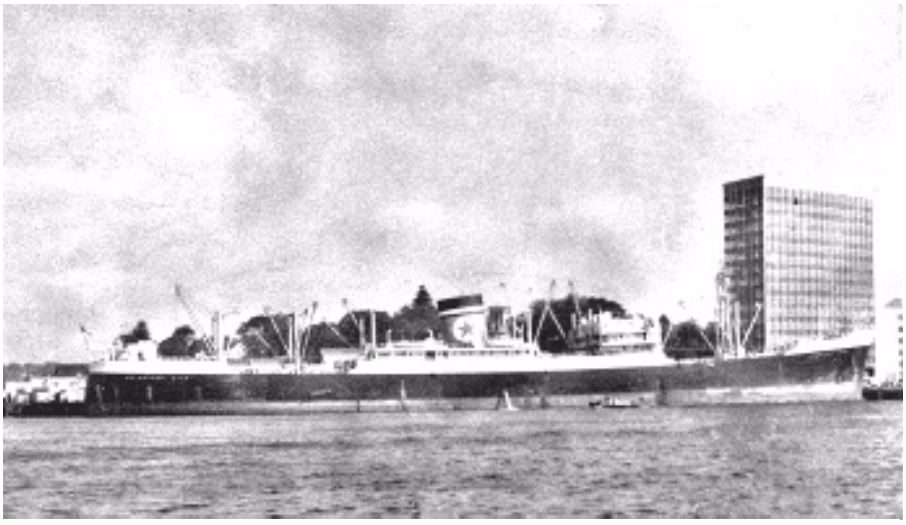
By

FIREMAN MN (Retired)

After 3 days at home my feet started to itch, so it was up to the docks. “Melbourne Star” was still loading so I was fixed up with a job, main greaser. We sailed on the 17th October, but this time we headed for the North Sea and docked at Bremerhaven to load 10 locomotives, deck cargo, to take to Lisbon. Then Tenerife for fuel oil and on to Ascension Isle, to pick up the “Guano diggers to take them to St Helena.

A quick stop at Cape Town to drop off mail, just in and out without tying up, unloading into a lighter alongside.

When we arrived at Australia, first port was Fremantle, then across to Brisbane and up the coast of Queensland to Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns. It was going to be Christmas in New Zealand again so it looked as though good times were on the horizon, as it happened we were in Lytleton a one horse town with a dairy plant, a meat works and 2 pubs which shut at 6 oclock. But all was not lost, it cost a shilling return on the train to Christchurch were for a further shilling supposedly as a deposit it was then legal to drink and join in the festivities all night as you were registered for the night, the hotel had 20 rooms and 300 guests, (you work that one out).



Melbourne Star

In the New Year with loading finished we set off for Dunedin.
The main engines were a pair of eight cylinder Burmeister and Wain double acting two strokes, burning the usual boiler oil, giving a speed of 17 knots.

On the trip to Dunedin No 4 cylinder of the starboard engine developed a terrible grinding noise and loss of power which also upset the balance, so it was shut down, the idea being to strip it down when we docked and replace any damaged units with spares.
The upper yolk and top exhaust piston were lifted clear and then the cylinder head. The main piston and rod were detached from the crosshead and drawn out. There it was, 4 piston rings had broken into several pieces and had cut great gouges into the upper liner. The rings were 3ft dia and ¾ inch square, in fact broken pieces about 10 inches long made good cold chisels.

The procedure was to withdraw the liner from the surrounding water jacket and replace it, that was the theory, in practice the overhead gantry crane just could not shift it, it was seized solid despite hitting everything in sight with 14lb hammers to try to shock it loose, also heating it up with Oxy-acetylene.

The outcome was we would have to go to Singapore were there was a naval dockyard with heavy lifting gear and staff. Also to get there a deep sea tug would have to be in attendance, also the cargo on board had to be kept refrigerated, all in all a very costly exercise.

Meanwhile as the hands were being rung in anguish up steps yours truly. Can I make a suggestion? says I. The look of horror on the face of the chief engineer made me feel like Oliver Twist with his bowl. Get the chippy to build a circular wooden platform, a nice fit in the liner. Then get some dry ice from the freezer plant ashore and put a layer on the platform. After a while the penny dropped and it was tried. The crane hooked on and the liner came out like a cork from a bottle. If I ever have bright ideas I can’t keep them to myself but I like to share them. Later on the chief took me to one side and said that was a smart idea, book yourself a couple hours overtime, big deal!! At three shillings and nine pence an hour. When you think of what I had just saved the company. That is why shipping companies get rich and greasers don’t.

In Memoriam
Noel Ernest Whiting,
1929 – 2013.

Noel was educated at Huish's Grammar School and studied engineering at Bristol University. He served most of his National Service in a radar establishment at Bude in Cornwall, which enabled him to be home most weekends, travelling on his well-loved Velocette KTT motorcycle.

He started his professional career with the Taunton Corporation Waterworks Department at Flook House in Station Road Taunton, conveniently next door to the Edwards Motor Cycle dealership, where he was a valued addition to the spares counter staff on Saturday

afternoons. He left the Army with the equivalent of a Heavy Goods Vehicle driving licence, but that didn't allow him to drive a car. He failed his first driving test, using the waterworks' Bedford van with its sliding doors, keeping the nearside one open to help with his judgement of distances from the kerb; the examiner closed it!

He quickly assumed responsibility for the electrical and mechanical aspects of the water supply operation, eventually being formally appointed to that role with the much enlarged West Somerset Water Board, finishing with the Wessex Water Authority and its subsequent privatisation. He had a photographic memory, which served him well when sitting professional examinations; he just, "read a few text books", his words, in the weeks leading up to the exam. He was very confident in his own abilities, knew how clever he was but was never boastful, and was quick to acknowledge those whom he regarded as cleverer.

He joined the Taunton and District Society of Model and Experimental Engineers, the fore-runner of TME, soon after its formation in 1946; he knew many of those who attended that inaugural meeting in a garden in Trull Road. He was always an active member, being Secretary and Chairman at various times, and was always willing to pass on his knowledge and expertise to anyone who needed it. He was a very clever man and a superb metal worker. From his unfinished models, a 1½in. scale Allchin traction engine and 3½in. gauge 'Caribou' locomotive, to his numerous small tools and mechanical and electrical devices, all were well made. He once achieved what he described as "technical superiority" over the local electric miniature slot car racing club, but remarked - "I just can't drive the damn things"! And if you ever saw it in operation, how could you forget his terrifying backyard foundry!

He was able to achieve the highest standards ever seen at any model engineering exhibition. Had he wished to pursue the winning of trophies and prizes, then undoubtedly he would have won the top

awards. But his laterally thinking mind took him to the quiet realisation of perfection to his own satisfaction, and he was always moving from one small but valuable project to another. And although taken in the early 1960s, this photograph epitomises Noel; taking apart the club locomotive to find out why it wasn't going so well, at the trackside, with limited tooling and on the grass!

He was adept with the repair of all sorts of mechanical equipment, from cars and motorcycles to heavy workshop equipment, and was well known in the town as someone to consult if you were really stuck with a mechanical problem. He was proud of being able to maintain his various cars, using experience gained from his many years of motorcycling.

Right up to the end, Noel regularly attended the twice monthly evening meetings of TME – the only two things that ever really stopped his attendance were poor weather and then latterly his eyesight, if that meant him driving to meetings in dark and miserable conditions. At our Club exhibitions over many years, he manned the workshop table where he demonstrated various processes and methods of model making to visitors - something at which he was so good.

During all of his years of membership, he saw many generations of model engineers join the Club and then move on if their careers or jobs took them elsewhere. Without exception, everybody greatly respected this talented and gifted man, not only for his vast knowledge of things mechanical and electrical, which he was always glad to share, but also for his kindness and gentleness.

Noel was my Model Engineering Guru; without his patient example and encouragement nearly half a century ago, I would not be model engineering today. He put up with my crude efforts to emulate him and his comments were always constructive. With his death, part of my life has come to an end.

Chris Orchard. (With help from Tony Gosling)

Letters to the editor.

Dear Editor,

I recently came across a thread on the Model Engineering Clearing House forum regarding Timken bearing covers, which I thought may be of interest to other members of the club.

For sale were some highly detailed Timken covers (cast in bronze), which had been designed using the latest computer wizardry and contained every little detail of the originals. (see back cover) I had already bought a set of eight Timken bearing covers from Blackgates Engineering for my 5” gauge Britannia, but after reading the article on the forum these were soon destined for the bin

I got in touch with the gentleman, Mike Jack (username 44767) via the website, to find that he lives in New Zealand and is a fellow model engineer building a 5” gauge BR Standard Class 3 Tank engine. When I say building, it appears that he makes absolutely everything himself, see examples of his work at http://www.flickr.com/photos/mkrj/ or http://www.unionsteammodels.co.uk/cgi-bin/yabb/YaBB.pl?num=1329733531

The funds were easily transferred to his bank account in the UK (the covers are £4 each and £3 total for p&p), and four days later I received my covers all the way from New Zealand.

He offers an engineering service for fellow modellers, so if you require any bits and pieces he could possibly help.

Regards,
Paul Orrells

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Ordinary Membership is £30 with a further £5 for spouse or partner.

Junior Membership—£5

Membership Secretary contact details—see inside front cover. If renewing by post, please enclose S.A.E. for Membership Card

Roy gets up steam

Martin on a diesel

The Timken axlebox covers referred to in Paul's letter.

photos Paul Orrells