

**THE SUTTON COLDFIELD MODEL  
ENGINEERING  
SOCIETY LIMITED**



**A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE FIRST  
FIFTY YEARS**

**BY FRANK WHITEHEAD**

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## FOREWORD

From time to time fellow members and myself have been asked for information regarding the origin and pursuits of the Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society. This potted history assembled by Frank Whitehead provides most of the answers.

I am happy to write this foreword since reading the draft copy has revived many happy memories associated with this absorbing and diverse hobby. This history shows how people from many walks of life come together with a common interest to promote and develop craftsmanship and practical skills, which may be passed from generation to generation.

I am sure that all members of the Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society, are indebted to Frank for his painstaking research in assembling the historical detail of the Society. I commend this history to members, future members and all who are interested in reproducing miniature working replicas of any mechanical or electrical item imaginable. For us "old-uns" it makes interesting and nostalgic reading.

Stan Jones  
President (1997)

## PREFACE

The wealth of information available both official and anecdotal can quite easily be lost in a voluntary organisation such as the Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society, and this has made my task, as author, a formidable one.

Being conscious of the approach of the Society's 'Golden Jubilee' celebrations, scheduled to take place during 1998, I felt it would be appropriate that these celebrations should include the publication of a Concise History of the First Fifty Years. To this end, during the latter part of 1992, I opened up a dialogue with a former Secretary and Chairman of the Society, Mr. David Palmer.

Unfortunately, no sooner was the task of compiling information commenced, than David was suddenly taken ill and passed away. Undeterred, I pursued my inquiries through the offices of Roger Addenbrooke, the son of founder member Ron Addenbrooke.

I was then most fortunate in receiving quite a collection of material from Mrs. K. J. Jones, the daughter of another founder member, Mr. Frank Emmerson. Thus work progressed in earnest and has recently culminated in the contribution of a mass of valuable data from the only currently surviving founders - Mr. John P. Bertinat and Mr. Walter H. Laight.

Thus, by the beginning of 1997, I was able to commence serious work on writing this history.

To those members of the Society whose names, exploits or favourite anecdotes have been omitted, I can only apologise and, similarly to those whose activities are misreported, I would ask forbearance.

I am conscious too, that there is very little included which covers activities of members wives and families. However, I sincerely hope that none of these concerns or omissions are seen to detract from the value of their participation and commitment to the success of the Society's activities.

In conclusion, I am only too aware that the coverage of the contribution made by C. F. Palmer to the evolvment of the Society could have been much more comprehensive had this history been written during his life-time. Similarly, that of the late Cyril Spencer, who contributed greatly during the period he was a member.

F. Whitehead  
1998

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the light of events it was fortuitous that I was able to make this review of the Society's history, when I did. For this I am indebted to the late David Palmer and to the trustee of his estate who passed to me his copious jottings, tragically brought to an end by his sudden demise.

My appreciation for the help afforded by a former Society Chairman Bill Hall. Bill has accompanied me during my researches and has scheduled much of the information gleaned from Walter H. Laight, a former Chairman.

To Roger Addenbrooke, for his compilation of many useful facts concerning the early history of the Society.

To John P. Bertinat and Walter H. Laight, for all the effort and time they have devote to setting down their memories and impressions, extending over a period of 48 years, since first becoming part of that small group who founded the Society in 1948.

To the proof reading, by Paul H. Ennis, a former Committee member along with Ken Little, a former Chairman, of what I have set down in an honest endeavour to reflect a full and accurate picture of our history extending from 1948 up to the present date.

Finally, I wish to thank Roger Timings for editing the entire document and preparing it for printing, and Garry Tyso for its printing, binding and publication.

PART I  
THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The Society effectively came into existence during the autumn of 1948 when a notice appeared in the window of Gill's toy shop, High Street, Sutton Coldfield. This notice invited interested persons to attend a meeting at the Station Hotel, Sutton Coldfield, with a view to the formation of a model engineering society.

The notice, together with a locomotive chassis also on display, were the work of the late C. F. (Fred) Palmer, a toolroom foreman and inspector with the Cincinnati Milling Machine Company. Fred possessed a comprehensive workshop at his home in Hartley Road, Kingstanding, Birmingham, where he pursued his interest in all aspects of model engineering with a bias toward sailing ship models

The enthusiasm and dedication of Fred, together with his son David, were to be central to the early development of the society.

At around the same time a change of circumstances occurred within the already established Birmingham Society of Model Engineers. Meetings of that society were being held at Sheldon, south of Birmingham, so that members residing in north Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield were finding travel by public transport over such a distance difficult. This impediment focused their attention on the possible formation of a similar society able to cater for the needs of model engineers in the north Birmingham area

Already, four model engineering enthusiasts, Dudley Priestly, Harold Bosworth, Owen Prosser and Jack James met together regularly at the Station Hotel to discuss model engineering matters and were working towards a similar goal.

From the amalgamation of these two groups, the first meeting of the proposed new society took place at the Station Hotel, Sutton Coldfield, in November 1948. At this meeting the foundation of the **Sutton Coldfield and North Birmingham Model Engineering Society** was laid. Records show that the nucleus of the new society was formed by the following persons from these two aspiring groups of enthusiasts who attended that first meeting.

Dudley Priestly	Ron Addenbrooke
Harold Bosworth	Owen Prosser
Jack James	Les Roberts
Jack Orme	Fred Hawthorne
Fred Palmer.	J. P. Bertinat

John Bertinat also recalls that Sam Howard, Harry Barr, Frank Emmerson, Walter Laight and Frank Shrieves attended along with several others.

At that meeting the following appointments were made:

Chairman	:	J. James F.R.H.S.
Secretary	:	C. D. Priestley - Founder
Treasurer	:	H. Bosworth
Social Secretary	:	P. Sambridge.

A subsequent list of members from the early 1950s contains the names of some 79 persons; and of these, the following are noted as carrying the appointments listed below:-

J. D. L. Orme	:	President
J. James	:	Life Vice-President
D. G. Morgan	:	Life Vice-president
H. Bosworth	:	Life Vice-president.

By this time the Society was a member of the 'West Midlands Federation of Model Engineering Societies', a body which Ron Addenbrooke was instrumental in forming. In 1949 the officers of this Society comprised the following:

#### OFFICERS

Chairman	:	J. James. F.R.H.S.
Committee	:	F. Shrieves, O. Prosser, F. Emmerson, . M Hobbs, F. W. Hawthorn, J. Orme
Hon. Secretary	:	C. F. Palmer
Treasurer	:	H. Bowsorth
Hon. Soc. Sec	:	P. Sambridge.

However, returning to our own Society, great enthusiasm existed during these formative years. Meetings were held on alternate Tuesdays at the Yenton Hotel, Sutton Road, Erdington, and subscriptions were ten shillings (50p) per annum.

On the 11th-12th November 1949, the first model engineering exhibition of the Society took place at the Church House, High Street, Erdington. This first exhibition, for which the room hire charge was £25.00, was organised by Fred Palmer and formed the basis of many subsequent events.

In order to ensure that the event should be a financial success, each member was required to contribute the sum of £3.10s (£3.50). The catalogue of exhibits was priced at 3d (1.25p) and the entrance fee was 11- (10p) payable on admission. The whole affair raised the handsome sum of £300.00. The exhibition was officially opened by his Worship the Mayor of Sutton Coldfield and, such was its success, that an influx of new members resulted in the existing meeting place at the Station Hotel becoming no longer adequate.

Subsequently similar exhibitions were held during the years 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953 and 1955. Also, during the latter part of this period, the regular meetings of the Society, previously held at the Yenton Hotel, Erdington, were moved to the Swan Hotel, High Street, Erdington where they remained until the early 1960's.

Subsequent changes of venue resulted in meetings taking place at the Rose and Crown Hotel, Gravelly Lane, Erdington; the Hare and Hounds Hotel in Marsh Hill, Erdington, and at the Co-operative Society Assembly Rooms, Marsh Hill, Erdington. The Society finally moved to the present venue at Wylde Green Library, Emscote Drive, Sutton Coldfield, in 1978.

With the growth of the Society there was an urgent need to cater for the running of members' locomotives. One of the earliest of such facilities became available at the Lucas Sports Grounds in the form of 3 1/2 inch gauge and 5 inch gauge parallel ground level tracks. This facility was made available for Society use through the good offices of Jack Orme who was employed by Joseph Lucas Limited. At the annual Lucas Company Sports Day, held each summer, the Sutton Coldfield, and North Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society operated one track while the Birmingham Model Engineering Society ran the other.

Also, as a means of raising funds - additional to annual subscriptions - Jack Orme provided a portable 3 1/2 inch gauge and 5 inch gauge brass rail track. In conjunction with any group wishing to run a steam locomotive event, the hirer was required to provide all transport and paid a standard fee to the Society for the provision of this portable railway system operated by the members.

Virtually each Saturday during the summer months, these portable track events became a regular feature. One of the earliest was held at St. Peters Church, Maney, Sutton Coldfield. Many such events were held at other church fetes, school events and company sports days.

One of the most enjoyable of such outings was that held in conjunction with the Midland Car Club's annual rally. This was held on their own site for the benefit of the Woodlands Orthopaedic Hospital. The car club owners collected children from the hospital and in conjunction with the Model Engineering Society members provided a most memorable day for those hospital patients.

Though the use of the Lucas tracks along with the portable facilities continued, there still remained an underlying desire for more permanent arrangements on a fixed track system. However, the problem of neither being able to rent, lease, nor own a suitable site persisted.

Meanwhile, the officers of the Society jealously guarded their £300 capital. First acquired in 1949-1950 it was held intact for such an eventuality. The basic problem was that, with only a comparatively small amount of capital, purchase of a suitable site was out of the question. Much discussion and debate took place during the early 1960's as to how the Society should move forward. This long running saga resulted in attention inevitably turning to leasing or renting a suitable piece of land, regardless of the consequences.



It was at this juncture, during the usual questions under 'Any Other Business' at a regular meeting that John Harding informed the then Chairman - R. L. Tarrat - that he had a friend, Joe Pearson, who owned a plot of land at Lea Marston. The plot was adjacent to the Hams Hall Power Station and it was, he said, thought possible that the Society could lease this land to construct a permanent track along with a range of basic facilities,

Thus the Society acquired its first fixed assets by way of permanent running facilities on 10th May 1964. Only a 'peppercorn' rental of one shilling per annum was required and this paved the way for the Society to develop its own identity and greater cohesion, where members, wives and children could meet in a relaxed social atmosphere. This was to be the home of the Society for sixteen years, before finally moving to its present location at Little Hay during the early 1980's

## PART II

### LEA MARSTON - EARLY YEARS

In retrospect, the munificence of Joe Pearson, a Vice President and Life Member, provided the Society with the ability to evolve from humble beginnings into its present established form. Membership at that time was stable, comprising some 90-100 persons, so with very low overheads, generous conditions of occupancy at Lea Marston and a regular income, the Society was well placed to face the future.

However, as Walter Laight recalls, in the early days there was a reluctance to spend any money and great caution was exercised as to any expansion by way of acquiring a permanent site. Therefore, consolidation only took place on a limited scale at Lea Marston. Being a leased site, it was not considered prudent to erect any permanent structures. But the aspirations of the founder members had been attained in providing all the facilities for the unified pursuit of a hobby able to be shared by all enthusiasts in the north Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield area.

In the construction of this history of the first fifty years, as stated in the preface to this document, all the anecdotal material has been drawn from former senior members, some of whom are now deceased.

Of these members, gratefully still with us, are those two wise old owls, Walter H. Laight and John P. Bertinat, both model engineers of great competence who are also much respected for their personal qualities.

John Bertinat has provided, along with the late David Palmer and Roger Addenbrooke, son of the late Ron Addenbrooke, much of the factual detail already set down.

At a recent meeting in February 1997, Bill Hall, Paul Ennis and myself interviewed Walter H. Laight, now in his 91st year (having been born on 24th June 1906). As a result of this meeting I obtained confirmation of many facts. In addition, much anecdotal material was also gathered. This anecdotal material was most revealing in regard to much of the past history of the Society, and in regard to the many members who have contributed so much to its rich heritage.

John Bertinat and Walter Laight, the two remaining founder members, are both still very active despite their advanced years. They provide an indication of the varied background of the members who have comprised the Society during the period of this history.

John P. Bertinat, a professional engineer, originally moved into the area from London during the summer of 1948 to take up an academic appointment at Aston Technical College. In his retirement, he now resides in Orleton, Ludlow, Shropshire. He is a former President of our Society who has delivered many lectures to the members on matters of steam engine design and construction. John is still active in building

stationary engine prototypes and evaluating them prior to their being commercially marketed by a well known local model engineering supply company.

Walter H. Laight on the other hand, a former Vice President and Hon. Life member was born at Studley. South Birmingham, and attended grammar school in Alcester. On leaving school, he was apprenticed to the motor trade, at a garage in Studley. In his younger days he raced motorcycles professionally in the Isle of Man riding for Dunelt-Raleigh and New Hudson. In 1934 he entered into partnership with Nixons of Soho Motors, garage owners.

His model making started at the tender age of 11 years in 1917 and his construction of fine working models of railway locomotives and traction engines is legion, extending over a period of some 75 years or more. His memory of the Society and its members is quite remarkable. Set out below is some of the interesting facts I was able to obtain in discussion with him, which Walter recalled quite clearly: -

- a) The First Society Exhibition in 1949. He (Walter) slept on the floor for two nights as security guard to the exhibits.
- b) H. E. Barr (Harry). Harry was a top link driver at Aston shed who drove the royal train, as regular driver of "City of Birmingham" locomotive. His ambition was to "do a ton". He never did, as he could only achieve 99 mph. due to signal checks. He was present when this locomotive was presented to the Birmingham Science Museum.
- c) H. Bosworth (Harry). Harry generally dealt with Society administrative matters. A Life Vice-President.
- d) J James F.R.R.S. (Harry). Harry was a butcher and botanist, who's ambition was to own a Bentley car - which he eventually did. He is a former Chairman and Life Vice-Chairman of the Society. Ultimately he moved to the Isle of Man.
- e) C. F. Palmer. (Fred). Fred was a jig and tool borer who was successfully treated for tuberculosis at Blackwell Court, a sanatorium at the top of the Lickey incline. A skilled builder of models and machines of various kinds, he made a drilling machine and sold the design to Reeves. Fred was Chairman of the Society for many years, also a former President and, at one time, held the post of Secretary for a period of ten years.
- f) D. Palmer. (David). David, the son of Fred Palmer (mentioned above), was a model railway enthusiast of the "electric mouse" persuasion, who also acted as Secretary prior to becoming Chairman in the mid 1980's.

- g) G. W. Jones. (George)  
George was a former Committee Member who was interested in clocks and fine metal work. He was also a motorcycle enthusiast.
- h) F. Emmerson. (Frank)  
Frank was a Committee Member from the outset. He originally moved from Yorkshire to the Midlands to take charge of the mirror-rolling mills at I.M.I. Birmingham for many years.
- i) J. D .L. Orme. (Jack)  
Jack was an active member from the earliest days having first joined the Society during 1950. He later became President. A highly skilled sheet metal worker, he was well known as being given to cutting and forming locomotive components from the solid. The portable track he made was intended for his own use and, upon his death, the Sutton Coldfield and North Birmingham Model Engineering Society thought it should have been made available for them. However, Mrs. Orme let Walter Laight have it and the track eventually ended up being sold to the Wolverhampton Society. Of the residue of his workshop many items were sold to Society members at one of the many auctions.
- j) T. H. Prime. (Tommy)  
Tommy was another member from the earliest days, and it was he who built "Speedy", a 5 inch gauge locomotive of 0-6-0 configuration. This locomotive is now in the custody of the Society. During its long history it has been overhauled several times by members of the Society. At one time it was loaned to the Birmingham Science Museum. This locomotive has seen extensive use at many of the portable track events.
- k) F. Shrieves. (Frank)  
Frank was another early member, who along with many others was also a member of the Birmingham Society of Model Engineers. Frank served on mine sweepers during the second world war and, during this period of conflict, suffered two broken legs as a result of a fall down a ladder in rough seas. This prevented him pursuing his career in cricket. He was the first member to build a model of 'Speedy'. This model, unlike the one built by T. H. Prime, ended up, along with a 'Simplex', at a Northern Model Engineering Society.
- l) S.W.Archer  
An Hon. Life Member who, on joining during the early days, donated a sum of money to the Society as an expression of his pleasure on becoming a member.
- m) R. Tidemarsh.  
He was a very tall man at over 6 ft. 4 in. Formerly with Pat Collins Amusements, he was mainly interested in traction engines. Regretfully, he died suddenly after joining during the early 1950's. Among his bequests he left a book to the Society entitled A Centenary of Traction Engines by Bill Hughes. This book is now in the Society library at Balleny Green.

- n) Dr. G. Reiley. (Gilbert)  
Gilbert, who was associated with the Tufnol Group of Companies, is remembered for giving talks and film show evenings to the members. He provided advice and assistance concerning Tufnol as this material was used extensively for sleepers and fishplates on the re-constructed track at Lea Marston.
- o) C. Strong. (Chris).  
Chris was a Treasurer for many years during the 1970's. Unfortunately he passed away suddenly in 1981. He built a battery-operated locomotive named 'Pandora' on a 'Netta' 0-8-0 chassis purchased from Jack Orme's estate. There exists, at Balleny Green, a memorial bench in recognition of his services,
- p) C. E. Milner. (Eric)  
Eric was an early member of the Society, eventually becoming an Hon. Life Member. He was a director of Enots Limited and a very wealthy man, who in 1951, purchased a 3 1/2 inch gauge 'Britannia' which he bequeathed jointly to the Birmingham Society and to the Sutton Coldfield and North Birmingham Society. As the two Societies could not agree on the shared usage of this locomotive it passed, on sale at half price, to the Birmingham Group. Eric also had a replica full size 'Great Eastern' driving cab originally built at the works of Enots Limited. This cab was displayed at an exhibition held at Church House during the early 1950's. It had full sound effects which were provided by a set of bellows. Such was the interest in this exhibit that two stewards were required to guard it at all times.
- q) G. C. Nicholson. (Geoff).  
Geoff, who is still an active member of our Society, was also a member of the Burton-on-Trent Model Engineering Society and was also associated with Lord Gretton's private railway. He arranged a number of visits for members of the Sutton Coldfield and North Birmingham Model Engineering Society to these two groups. Geoff served in the Royal Air Force during World War II and was familiar with many types of aircraft engines. He is a skilled silversmith and has delivered many lectures and demonstrations on the art of working with non-ferrous sheet metals at Society meetings.
- r) S. A. Howard. (Sam)  
Sam, who was an early member of the Society, grew up on a Herefordshire farm. An ex-member of the Birmingham Society, he delivered two excellent talks on his childhood experiences and on the blacksmith's skills in wrought iron work. His interests lay in all forms of steam driven plant. A keen gardener, he was particularly interested in layout and design.

It is interesting to note that many visitors to the Society's exhibitions held in the 1950's were so overawed by the high standard of the exhibits that their enthusiasm to take up the hobby was almost destroyed. Two such instances affected George Banks and Garry Tyso.

George, had sold his transport business to British Road Services and was preparing to engage in model making, having purchased some new Myford equipment. He first consulted Walter Laight for some guidance on how and where to start. However, the sight of Walter engaged in screw-cutting had such an effect on his confidence that he instantly sold all his machines as he thought he could never do such work.

Garry Tyso, who attended one of the meetings held at the Co-operative Society Assembly Rooms, Marsh Hill, Erdington, was similarly overawed by the high standard of workmanship that he encountered. So much so that he abandoned his wish to pursue the hobby until some little time later when he re-joined the Society and went on to become Secretary for several years.

One can only conclude, that the standards set and achieved by the founders and early members was of the highest order. This is evidenced by the many awards earned by Society members at national exhibitions. These same standards exist to the present day and reflect great credit on our founding members. They set a great challenge to successive members and the standards existing at the present time are testimony to those original craftsmen who first established the Society.

PART III  
LEA MARSTON - THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE

Having gained the facilities to develop a track system and limited accommodation at Lea Marston in 1964, attention now turned to accomplishing this quite formidable task. As is the eternal problem in any voluntary body with limited financial resources, ingenuity and physical effort are the twin keys to a successful end result.

Within the now well developed, albeit informal structure of the Society, there resided many diverse skills waiting to be utilised. It has been commented upon, on many occasions, that any society functions at its best when faced with a challenge. Unity, together with purpose, develop naturally so all that is required is that clear targets are set - and a lead provided. So it was with the north Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society.

Lack of funds coupled with a desire to conserve capital inevitably resulted in the initial steel track set on concrete blocks being a rather unsatisfactory solution to providing suitable running facilities. Many de-railments of locomotives resulted and members would not use the track on a regular basis.

At this juncture two of the members, Bill Hall who by now worked with the civil engineering contractors - R. M. Douglas Ltd - along with David Palmer, collaborated on a suitable design approach aimed at providing an effective new track facility. This was based upon cast concrete beams supported at high level.

As a result of this collaboration, Bill Hall was invited during a meeting held at the Co-operative Society Assembly Rooms, Erdington, to present his views on the subject. This was further explained in an article 'Reconstruction of an elevated track' published in Engineering in Miniature.

Here, again, conflict of ideas developed and a proposal to erect a timber high level track by another group of members was put forward for debate. The outcome was that a longer term assessment of the problem prevailed and, eventually, a track on a concrete foundation was brought into use as the agreed solution. One of the first members to run on this new but incomplete track was Ray Humphreys, of the Kinver Society. He lost his balance on the curve adjacent to the gent's toilet and managed to roll off his locomotive - 'Acabod' - onto the soggy grass. It is understood that, relieved of its load, the locomotive accelerated until its speed reached some 15 mph before it was eventually caught and stopped.

Later a fence was erected beside the pavilion, which had been constructed from packing cases provided from the Cincinatti Company works.

Another problem, which plagued visitors to Lea Marston was the presence of bees kept on site in hives belonging to Joe Pearson's brother-in-law. Although several members, including Fred Palmer, had been stung on a regular basis, only when Joe Pearson was severely attacked by these offending bees did the problem cease -he had the hives removed.

Water supply to the locomotives was obtained from a local stream via a hand pump and galvanised steel tank mounted on brick piers. On one occasion, at the point in the stream where a dam had been formed, flooding of the site occurred. As a consequence Joe was called out during the night by the Water Board as flooding was also taking place in the adjacent woods. He was not at all pleased. Generally, the whole area of Lea Marston constituted a rather low-lying wet land mass which always caused problems during inclement weather.

Bill Hall, then Chairman, recalled that, when the Lea Marston site was to be evacuated in the early 1980's, the start on clearance and re-instatement was delayed by the wettest weather for years and it was not until March that entry could be made into this water-logged site. Eventually, after some difficulty with the earth moving plant becoming bogged down, the site was finally cleared to the satisfaction of all concerned by the 31st March 1981.

Much of the track beam material was moved to the new site at Balleny Green, Little Hay, together with the old steel framed asbestos sheet clad storage building. Nothing was wasted; all scrap material found use in road construction and storage at the new location.

Lea Marston had served the Society well in spite of the absence of any public water supply, mains electricity or permanent sanitation. It was all rather self-help and very basic, but it gave great pleasure and enjoyment to all who were privileged to have contributed to it during its 16 years service as the first permanent home for the Society.



PART IV  
AN EARLY BENEFACTOR - JIM BALLENY  
INITIAL DEVELOPMENT OF LITTLE HAY (BALLENY  
GREEN)

About the year 1958 and again in the 1970's, Joe Pearson was approached by the Society with a view to the purchase of his Lea Marston site. He declined the offer, intimating that this piece of land had a special place in his heart and that while he was prepared to lease it, he would on no account part with it. Subsequently, however, Joe did provide the Society with some very sound advice. He advised the Society on the desirability of acquiring suitable land within its capital capabilities before land values outstripped the Society's capital assets. A paradox indeed, as these assets were small and no evidence existed that they were likely to be increased.

It was at this time that Jim Balleny, a bachelor and comparatively recent member of the Society, came into prominence when it was discovered that in his last Will and Testament he had bequeathed the residue of his estate to the Society after all other specified bequests had been met. This gentleman, who was invariably to be found wearing shorts when conditions permitted, laid the foundations for the next phase in the Society's history. His photograph can be seen in the club house at Balleny Green astride his locomotive on the high level track at Lea Marston.

His particular bequest is perhaps an object lesson on the drawing up of a will; or rather how not to do so. Patently, at the time he drafted his Will, which comprised fixed bequests to his dependants with the residue to the Society, he had not considered on how many years he would live nor how his estate would appreciate. The net effect of all this was that, in the mid-1970's the Society became the recipients of some £8000. This was a great surprise to many within the Society and a great disappointment to others not so connected.

At the time of his bequest Walter Laight was Chairman but, due to the closeness of Fred Palmer - along with others - to Jim Balleny, the news of this windfall reached the official ears of the membership not from Walter but from Fred. Consternation prevailed and Walter Laight removed himself from the position of Chairman forthwith.

In writing this account of the affairs of the Society, it must be remembered that at times emotions can run high and harmony is often put to the test. Inevitably tempers cool, common sense prevails, and business resumes as normal. Such was the case in this instance and that great stalwart, S. A. Greenway, stepped into the breach to restore the equilibrium of the Society until the next Annual General Meeting. At this meeting Stan became Chairman and, with his calming influence, set the scene for the next phase of evolution which was about to take place.

Under the leadership of Stan Greenway the decision was made to use the legacy to purchase land as a means of locking into escalating land values, and here the original advice from Joe Pearson is repeated. Joe advised: "Buy a piece of land so as to secure your purchasing power and sell later if you cannot obtain planning approval".

A search was instigated to find a suitable plot of land, but this was not an easy task. Several potential sites were investigated and found unsuitable for a number of reasons. Among these sites was a field at Nether Whitacre, but access proved to be unsuitable, Land adjacent to the A3 8 at Fradley was rejected because of plans for road development, and a large meadow at Alrewas, which unfortunately proved susceptible to flooding from the river Trent, was also rejected.

Eventually the Society learned of the forthcoming auction of a farm at Little Hay which was to be divided into small plots of land. Three of the plots were deemed to be suitable if planning permission could be obtained, quite a gamble considering the green belt status of the site and the up-market nature of the local area. A Sunday morning inspection of the site was arranged and the general opinion was favourable, although considerable scepticism was expressed on the likelihood of planning consent being granted.

As a result Chris Strong, the Society's Treasurer, undertook to attend the auction and bid whatever was considered sensible and necessary. Several members attended the auction with Chris, including Dick Pearce and Ken Little. Bidding turned out to be brisk and the parcels of land attained prices far beyond the auctioneer's estimates. In the event the only plot within the budget was a 2.5 acre field which was snapped up for £7,100. Many members, conditioned to low capital aspirations, were somewhat dumfounded at such boldness but the die was cast and the future of the Society was confirmed at a stroke,

Though legal title to the land had been drawn up and Society Trustees appointed to assume responsibility for this new asset, planning approval for its proposed use required to be negotiated with Lichfield District Council. A public relations exercise also required to be mounted in order to pacify the local villagers who, in many instances, had been "out-bid" at the public auction.

In the capable hands of Ken Little, Stuart Harrison and Dick Pearce, Lichfield District Council and their planning officers were approached. Bill Hall, Ken Little and Peter McMillan surveyed the new 2 1/2 acre field. Meanwhile Ken Little, now being the Chairman following Stan Greenway, consulted the membership. A consensus of opinion was obtained as to what facilities members considered would be desirable at the new site.

The management committee considered all this information before it was passed to Bill Hall in the form of a design brief. Speed, co-ordination and co-operation were the order of the day and all members pulled together in what amounted to a tremendous and challenging task. Suffice it to say that within the comprehensive design produced by Bill Hall, the following on-site facilities were fully detailed in the planning submission to the Council.

Site layout.  
Landscaping.  
Buildings design, including sanitation.  
Raised level track layout  
Steaming bay canopy.  
Footbridge  
Tunnel.

F. Whitehead had the landscaping proposals cleared by his professional staff in the Property Services Agency, of the Department of the Environment, who fully endorsed the proposals.

The scene was set and, following requests from several members, modifications were made to the plans to include a ground level track layout. Bill only completed his design work, including a complete re-draw at 2.30 a.m. on the day of the planning application deadline. Needless to say the planning application was turned down. Objections, mostly made on an uninformed basis, had been received from a number of local residents and, more significantly, by the Severn Trent Water Authority who contended that the proposals could cause pollution to local water supplies owing to the proximity of their pumping station.

A long and complex battle then began between the Society and the Severn Trent as to the validity of their objection. Stewart Harrison led the fight and it was he who finally succeeded in winning the day following, it has to be said, some rather "unconventional" tactics. Sewage disposal proposals, which included a triple chamber storm water chamber design, were finally accepted. This removed the hard-pressed objection from the water authority.

During this period intense lobbying of District Councillors was also undertaken in order to convince them that the proposal was not intended to resemble a theme park. This entailed a number of visits being made to the facilities at Lea Marston by Councillors who, once they could see and understand the Society's aims and ambitions, became much more sympathetic to the cause. As a result, the plans were passed by the planning committee at the fourth attempt, the only conditions being that no model aircraft were to be operated on the site and that the permission was to be for a period of five years. If no problems were experienced within those five years then permanent permission would be granted.

It should be recorded that Dick Pearce, one of the trustees, assisted Stewart Harrison in the negotiations with the planning officers with regard to the aesthetic treatment of the construction so as to not conflict with environmental factors within the area.

At the end of the day, the Planning Authority at Lichfield District Council, including their building inspectors, complimented the Society on the quality and clarity of their

application. All this is to the credit of those officers of the Society who had devoted so much time and effort to the initial stage of the process.

Having expended the bulk of the original capital derived from our benefactor, Jim Balleny, whose name is commemorated in this site, the next problem was marshalling our remaining financial resources.

F. Whitehead, having been appointed Treasurer in 1981, set about drawing up a forward budgetary plan of projected expenditure to sustain this proposed programme of ambitious works. At once it became apparent that income had to be increased to line up with planned expenditure. Suffice it to say, the Society had always lived within its means and by attention to such aspects had, at all times, by one means or another, been able to fund the aspirations of the members. Many members were generous in the extreme and a succession of anonymous donations coupled with profitable fund raising events sustained the financial reserves. Generally, the limiting factor proved to be one of human resources. As the construction at Balleny Green progressed, and in spite of heavy expenditure, the financial reserves of the Society have increased as the years have rolled by. This has been due to unremitting activity by Society members.

During the construction phase, extending throughout the 1980's, a tremendous effort was put in by all the members who took an interest in the development of Balleny Green. Overlapping this construction work, a secondary problem arose. This was the ongoing maintenance of the construction work already completed and the attendant grounds facilities. At the end of the day when the site is fully developed the main problem will always be the overall maintenance and servicing of the site, including all overheads. This, of course, includes the financing and running of the regular twice monthly meetings at Wylde Green Library.

At the time of writing this record of the first fifty years in the life of the Society, whilst many names have already been documented, likewise it has not been possible for many of the silent majority to be mentioned. During the period 1985 to 1995 membership has stood at around 120 to 140 and this appears to be about the optimum size of the Society. Whereas in 1948 annual membership subscriptions stood at ten shillings, the full membership fee now amounts to some £32.00 per annum. Such is the passage of time with its attendant inflation.

Before closing this review of the initial development at Balleny Green, it must be recorded that in 1992, in anticipation of the Golden Jubilee celebrations scheduled for 1998, upgrading of the track and storage facilities was put in hand. All this is now coming to fruition and has resulted in the need for further planning approvals and additional site work at Balleny Green.

Though reference has been made to the generosity of Jim Balleny, which enabled the great step forward that the Society made in acquiring its present site, the high standard of site facilities presently enjoyed by the membership are also due to the steady efforts and contributions - in labour and cash - from a small nucleus of its members. The society has never found it necessary to borrow money - donations and the successful running of events have raised it all.

As an example, when the tunnel was under construction by Colin Davis, we ran out of bricks. In the space of some 36 hours £800.00 was raised internally from members, allowing work to progress. Again, in the case of the signal box, this was not only donated by the late Frank Ashmore but also designed and constructed by him. There have also been other anonymous donations; the footbridge being one such valuable facility. All these gifts have been to the benefit of the Society and born out of a desire to contribute by whatever means was considered appropriate at the time. This trend continues.

PARTV  
BECOMING A PRIVATE LIMITED COMPANY

As the Society grew in size and complexity, so it was necessary to keep the constitution and organisation in step with modern legislation. At the outset, a simple set of rules sufficed. However, by the mid 1980's it became apparent that this arrangement was no longer appropriate - particularly as valuable assets existed at Balleny Green. Thus, it was decided to alter the administrative structure of the Society to that of a private company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. This, in effect, removed responsibility from a diminishing few trustees who were first appointed when the land at Little Hay was purchased, and creating an organisation where each member had a vote carrying with it collective responsibility for all the assets and actions of the Society. A shared authority and responsibility.

This process, which took some two years of steady work by R. J. Pearce and F. Whitehead, came to fruition in 1989. The Society then became a limited company whose assets could be assigned in perpetuity and where full legal arrangements existed to wind-up and dispose of assets should the need ever arise. Since that date, the Memorandum and Articles of Association have been reviewed and amended several times to keep them in step with changes to company law. Such is the value of this document, first conceived by Frank Whitehead when he was Chairman in the early 1980's that it has become a model for many other similar societies.

In the formative years of the Society a simple set of rules was the only guide members had as to their aims, objectives and conduct. However, once Balleny Green came into full operational use by about 1982 it became apparent that a code of conduct, safety by-laws and operating standards were necessary. Such a guide was finally produced and brought into use during 1992. Also, guide rules were produced for the running of large events, which had become a regular feature.

The Health and Safety Executive recommendations were also embodied into the running of the Society, as were the insurance regulations of the Southern Federation of Model Engineering Societies. From all this evolved a formal disciplined system, which permitted full enjoyment of the hobby by members whilst they remained within a set of nationally agreed rules. Safety at all times became paramount, particularly when large numbers of the general public were admitted to the site during major events.

While it is always slow and tedious to achieve results in any voluntary organisation, as consensus is difficult, this has generally been achieved by the appointment of small subcommittees who are tasked with reporting back to the main committee and membership at large.

As the affairs of the Society gradually evolved and the membership rose during the period 1987 to 1995 to a now steady 140 to 150 persons, it became apparent that the original name of the Society no longer fully described its location and catchment area. Thus, on the 6th January 1994, it was renamed **The Sutton Coldfield Model Engineering Society**. This also made it quite distinguishable from its sister society located at Illshaw Heath, Birmingham. Many members still enjoy membership of both societies and a steady social interchange between the two has continued.

From the outset, there has always existed a boiler inspectorate, this has generally operated under the aegis of the Society's third party insurance cover, down through the years. Great continuity has existed, names which come to mind of those who have carried out this important task - and some are still currently active inspectors - include Chris Strong, Frank Shrieves, Stan Greenway, Fred Palmer, Pete McMillan and Ken Little. A full record is maintained of all certificates, relating to boiler inspections and testing approved within the Society. By this means, members are enabled to run their models at functions and events organised by other organisations and still carry the full insurance cover of the Society. Indeed, this is one of the important factors in being a member of a recognised society.

PART VI  
MAIN DEVELOPMENT OF BALLENY GREEN

Bearing in mind that the Society has continuously operated on a regular basis since its inception, the move from Lea Marston, to Little Hay was but a phase in the history of the scheme of things. Having secured the 2 1/2 acre site at Little Hay, the Society Committee appointed trustees to hold the land in trust for the membership. These trustees were as follows: -

Stan Jones  
Dick Pearce  
Mike Brophy  
Stan Greenway

Dick Pearce completed all design and planning applications, temporary accommodation and services had to be established so as to permit works construction to proceed. The place resembled that of a building site.

Stewart Harrison, who on occasions almost lived on site, set about organising public electrical, water and gas supplies. Public sewage systems did not exist in Little Hay village, so private arrangements were put in hand for this aspect.

Peter Boosie provided a mobile site caravan which was sited next to the present main building and was coupled into the outside M.E.B. electrical system. Already the site had been made secure by a gated entrance, built by Stewart Harrison. This also embodied an intake point for all public utility services.

A portable "thunder box" toilet was established, and one of the first tasks was to install a 'Klargester' sewerage storage tank.

This being achieved, the construction team was in business, even to the extent of having catering and first aid facilities in the site hut, which was now equipped with electricity and running water. Outside, there was even a flush toilet within the steel "thunder box". Fred Paler, having initially been sceptical as to the wisdom of the new site, now threw his enthusiasm firmly behind the project and became self-appointed catering manager, a role much appreciated by those workers who consumed tea by the gallon. Work now progressed in earnest and more or less in parallel on several fronts -

- The main building.
- The high level track.
- An inner low level track.
- A buried duct system for the ground level signalling system.
- The steaming bay area.
- Canopy and services to steaming bay.
- Completion of a hard surface entrance and internal road.
- Landscaping.



With the Holly Bush public house not far away, respite and intense discussion took place, between long bouts of hard physical work on site.

In the construction of the several areas listed above, all able bodied members lent a hand. For the main building Frank Ashmore, a retired builder, took charge of all brick laying and, in conjunction with Arthur Saunders now resident in Perth, Western Australia, produced a first class job. Stewart Harrison, almost single handed, provided all internal services. Ray Reeves prepared the timber roof trusses. Stewart Harrison had purchased these, for a nominal price, at an auction in Telford. However after transporting them to site (in itself a daunting task) it was found that they were too large, hence the preparation work by Ray Reeves.

Barry Kefford manufactured steel moulds for the high level track beams and Cyril Spencer along with Pete McMillan worked on trenching for the ground level signalling services.

Roger Edmonds and his father could be found building underground water and cable brick chambers for the steaming bays, and their names are inscribed on one such solid piece of work.

A petrol filling station canopy, which had been purchased by Stewart Harrison from Cross Guns Garage in Washwood Heath Road, Saltley, Birmingham, was delivered to site for re-erection over the present steaming bay. Bill Hall, who had located the original construction proposals with the Local Authority, then proceeded to have all structural members and foundations re-calculated for re-use in compliance with the building regulations current at that time. The problem was that the only information then available consisted of simple elevation drawings. Undeterred, Bill managed to obtain a copyright waiver from the manufacturers. Condor Ltd., and a complete re- design took place. This enabled the canopy to be erected in its new location.

The completion of the canopy, by way of translucent roofing was due to the good offices of Ivor M. Thompson. He and Frank Whitehead went to Ivor's old plastics factory and acquired a load of sheeting. This was subsequently installed by F. Tucker and A. Roberts.

Paving bricks for the steaming bay were provided by H. Gales in conjunction with W. M. McKie. Earth moving plant was provided by P. G. Boosie on numerous occasions so as to progress the heavier ground works more quickly.

In attempting to set down a history of the Society in something approaching chronological order, presentation has also to take into consideration all the many other parallel functions taking place at the same time. Therefore the next section of this history will thus move on to what may be described as how the Society acts in the social sense. That is how it uses all its facilities and functions as a corporate body.

At this juncture in the saga, it is perhaps useful to summarise the position as it stood in 1987, by including a copy of the Chairman's report presented at the Annual General Meeting held 28th April 1987, in the Wylde Green Library.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT : 28TH APRIL 1987.**

In retrospect, the past 12 months has been a busy and fruitful period where we have, in a national sense, developed an identity of our own. This I believe is due to a wide involvement of all members. Evidence of this is to be found in the distances other Model Engineers' have travelled to visit us; also in the favourable press reports on our affairs. Our membership has shown a growth of well over 10% in conformity with previous years.

A full programme of Regular Meetings has taken place and your Committee has met on 12 occasions.

For the first time in many years we have all official offices of the Society filled, along with a very interesting programme of meetings and events planned for the next 12 months.

The conduct of the Society may perhaps best be divided into four areas:-

- Regular Meetings.
- Committee Meetings and General Administrations.
- Social activities and field events.
- Site development at Balleny Green.

The Regular Meetings, which are our main activities in the Society, have been well attended with an innovative and interesting programme drawn up by our Programme Secretary John Bishop. The only low point was 13th January 1987 when, due to heavy snow, only 7 members turned up. Our new starting time of 7.45 p.m. has proven to be satisfactory and has enabled us to finish promptly by 10.00 p.m. Routine business has, I believe, been contained within a sensible period of time and an acceptable pattern has been established to receive and thank our speakers.

Under the next topic area. Committee and General Administration, we have enjoyed the wisdom our new President, Stan Greenway and have also been privileged to receive the support of two new Vice Presidents, Walter Laight and Joe Pearson. Additionally, the Committee has carefully enquired into such diverse subjects as track and rolling stock design as well as passenger safety.

The prospect of the Society changing its organisation to a fully incorporated body, for the protection of the membership, has also been enquired into. Findings remain still to be formalised and announced.

John Clayton has been elected as Vice President of The Midlands Federation of Model Engineers and he will no doubt continue to represent fully our interests in that theatre.

Our social and field activities have seen a highly successful programme of events which, I understand, have not escaped the notice of the Model Engineering press.

On the 30th May 1986 an outing to Talylllyn was organised by Pete Smith and well supported. 22nd June 1986 saw the holding of the Narrow Gauge Rally co-ordinated by David Palmer, likewise, on the 3rd August 1986 David also organised the 2 1/2 inch Gauge Rally, whilst on 14th October 1986 Mick McKie produced the 7 1/4 inch Little Engine Rally. Full catering facilities were available at all these events and here I wish to thank the ladies of the Society along with the wives of members who so ably provided these facilities.

On 16th September, 1986, John Bishop moved our Steam Up Night to Balleny Green and another successful event was held. Finally, of the events held on site, the Bonfire Party of 8th November 1986 - under the auspices of Ted Avery and the ladies - provided a lot of enjoyment for many people; members and public alike.

IMLEC this year took place at Bournemouth on 6th July 1986 and, under Pete Smith's control, a large party spent an enjoyable day out. The T.E.E. Exhibition at Birmingham University was organised by John Bishop and was well supported by members. Prizes were won by Bill Hall, Dave Piddington and Harry Poole, which reflects well on the Society as a whole.

I also wish to thank my wife Olwen who organised a Jumble Sale in March 1987 at Brampton Hall. She also held a most entertaining Buffet Supper Party for Committee members and their ladies when over 30 people were present at my home.

Turning now to my final topic, of our site at Balleny Green, construction and development is now showing encouraging signs of maturity. This is as a result of a 5 year development plan, drawn up by your Committee some 3 years ago when I first took office as Chairman. Under this plan, 'Team Leaders' were appointed to control specific areas of work within agreed financial budgets. The scheme has worked well and resulted in productive and enjoyable working atmosphere on site. A high standard of construction has resulted along with early use of a wide range of facilities. The main pavilion is now approaching completion and extension in the ground level track has commenced. Landscaping is now resulting in a mature and pleasant environment on site. Here I wish to record my thanks to all who have either provided money, materials or labour at Balleny Green.

I now propose to stand down as your Chairman. It is not, however without some regret as I have enjoyed my period in office and found it to be quite a satisfying task.

However, had it not been for the support of the Committee along with the untiring efforts of the members of the Society, we would not be in the present healthy situations we now all enjoy.

Prospects for the Society are good. Long may they so remain.

F. Whitehead  
Chairman S.C.M.E.S.  
28th April, 1987.

## PART VII

### EVENTS, FUNCTIONS, MEETINGS AND NEWS SHEETS

In the Appendices to this history a schedule of meeting places is listed. However, it is not considered essential to attempt any similar schedule of either events held, nor of functions which have taken place. Suffice to record only those activities which have had a key bearing on the evolvement of the Society, particularly as to its financial and national standing.

#### REGULAR MEETINGS

These, as far as can be traced, have always been held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each calendar month, with the exception of December when only that of the second Tuesday takes place. The Annual General Meeting has traditionally been held on the fourth Tuesday in April each year. However, the end of the Society financial year, being 31st March this did not provide adequate time for properly audited accounts as provided by the Society's accountants in accordance with the current requirements of the Companies Act. Therefore it became necessary to move the A.G.M. to the 10th June in 1997. Should it become necessary, further adjustments may have to take place.

Regular Meetings now commence at 19.45 hrs and are timed to be completed by 22.00hrs.

Committee Meetings of the Board of Directors are held at the registered offices of the Company, Balleny Green, Little Hay. These take place on the first Tuesday of each calendar month, commencing at 19.30 hrs. Since the incorporation of the Society into a Private Limited Company in 1989, there have been ten Directors who form the Board of Management; and one of this group is appointed from within the Board, to act as Chairman for the ensuing year following the A.G.M.

The affairs of the Board of Directors are recorded by the Company Secretary, and at the end of each financial year a signed and approved set of Minutes are sent to the Society's Auditors (Arthur Haslam and Co.) together with the Treasurer's account books. From these documents the Society's Auditors prepare a fully audited set of accounts which, together with their report, is sent to Companies House, in accordance with company law. Returns are also rendered to the Inland Revenue. In addition, details of the Directors, together with any changes, have to be registered at Companies House by the Company Secretary. A report is also made to members.

Generally, although the Treasurer handles all cash transactions, all other administration, including insurance and other binding agreements are dealt with by the Company Secretary, who also deals with all matters of correspondence.

All matters pertaining to membership are handled by the Membership Secretary, who also advises the Board in conjunction with the Treasurer, on membership fees.

The subject content of the talks, lectures and discussions is arranged by the Programme Secretary. This is quite a demanding task which is usually held by any one person for only a few years so that fresh ideas and impetus can be brought to the gathering of members at Wylde Green, Library. Auctions and displays are also mounted during Regular Meetings; some of which, during the summer months take place at Balleny Green, when locomotives are run along with stationary engines. Refreshments are always provided free to members at these meetings. The additional fee, placed upon members and visitors to these meetings is currently £1.00. A register of attendance is signed by those in attendance. Numbers attending these meetings varies between 20 and 30 members and visitors, with upwards of between 60 and 70 members at the A.G.M.

Many of the lectures, talks and demonstrations are given by members. A number are given by outside speakers where a small fee is paid to cover expenses.

#### FUNCTIONS AND EVENTS.

As has already been recorded at the outset, in this concise history, many functions using portable tracks or borrowed track facilities were indulged in to provide either funds for the Society or enjoyment to its members. Though this practice remained for some thirty or more years from the start of the Society, the use of portable tracks declined as engines increased in size. For the past ten years, with the excellent facilities existing at Balleny Green almost all running now takes place there. Members of course still participate in other society functions by way of mutually co-operative exchange visits.

In 1983, with only basic facilities at Balleny Green, the first publicly attended November 5th Bonfire Party Event was held. Records show that of the group of members who put the show on the road, the following arrangements were successfully put into place for the 150 persons who attended - including many of the local residents; it was very much a public relations exercise.

#### CATERING.

A. Ashford and family plus Mrs. O Whitehead, Mrs. I. Strong, Mrs. M. Hall and Mrs. A. McMillan.

#### PARKING OF CARS

P. J. Smith plus friends.

#### ENTRANCE GATE CONTROL

J. Bayliss.

#### INVITATIONS

J. S. Harrison, F. Whitehead.

BONFIRE FIREWORKS SAFETY

P. J. Smith

TOILET & ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

J. S. Harrison

ACCOMMODATION

B. Kefford

ILLUMINATION OF SITE

J. S. Harrison

TRACK FACILITIES

W. M. McKie, P. F. McMillan and B. Kefford

SITE CLEAN UP

F. Whitehead.

At the end of the day, with the fire being lighted by the eldest lady resident of Little Hay village, the whole affair was adjudged a complete success. Some £50.00 profit accrued too much needed Society funds.

Since that date, a bonfire Party has been held each year and on each occasions the residents of the village have received free entry. However, as a result of proposals made in a paper to the committee during 1986 by G. Tyso, it has now become standard practise to charge for entry to all events where the general public are invited. This has resulted in a most useful source of revenue, which has enabled the estate at Balleny Green to be developed to its present state. Without this type of income, membership fees would inevitably be much higher than they are at the present time.

By 1991, to quote Peter Boosie: "The Society had become the victim of its own success" and by this time numbers attending had peaked at 1000 persons. It thus became necessary to limit numbers by printing entrance tickets and charging a fee for entry. Numbers are now controlled at approximately 600 maximum for all events and, generally, it has been a good source of revenue to fund development of the site. To this day, relations with the local residents' remains excellent and also with Lichfield District Council to who rates are paid. In recent years, one of the organisers of major events has been Garry Tyso who has injected a strong sense of commercial acumen into the preparation, publicity, general organisation and innovation; with such further events as the 'Easter Egg Special' and the 'Santa Special'. These events provide a substantial source of income for the Society. For example, income from the Bonfire Party is currently of the order of between £ 1,200 and £1,500.

In summary, all outings and events sponsored and managed by the Society since 1982 and up to 1988 are listed below:-

Traction Engine Rally	June	1982
Bonfire Party	Nov.	1983
Steam Day & Fete	July	1984
Visit IMLEC Bristol	July	1984
2 1/2 inch Gauge Rally	Aug.	1984
Railway Exhibition, Lichfield	Sept.	1984
Bonfire Night	Nov.	1984
TEE Model Eng. Exhibition	Nov.	1984
2 1/2 inch Gauge Rally	Aug.	1985
W. M. Federation Rally	Sept	1985
TEE Model Eng. Exhibition	Nov.	1985
Jumble Sale	Mar.	1985
Bonfire Night	Nov.	1985
Talyllyn Outing	May	1986
Narrow Gauge Rally	June	1986
Visit to IMLEC, Bournemouth	July	1986
Steam Night Balleny Green	Sept.	1986
Narrow Gauge Rally	May	1987
Don Young Rally	June	1987
Visit to Derby Society	June	1987
Visit to IMLEC, Birmingham	July	1987
2 1/2 inch Gauge Rally	Aug.	1987
Visit Town & Country Festival Stoneleigh	Aug.	1987
Visit Midland Federation Rally, Kinver	Sept.	1987
7 1/4 inch Gauge Rally	Sept.	1987
Visit Southern Federation Rally	Sept.	1987
Visit to Derby Society	May	1988

On the 19th November 1988 the Society celebrated the 40th anniversary of it's founding when the Chairman, David Palmer, presided over a most enjoyable gathering of members and invited guests.

The President, Stan Greenway, officiated by cutting a celebratory cake; W. M. McKie provided a marquee and controlled all passengers running on the ground level track and Pete McMillan handled running on the high level track. Colin Davis, in conjunction with John Bishop and Pete Smith organised the display of all models within the marquee, including the running of a raffle. Dick Pearce dealt with all presentational matters in conjunction with Barry Kefford and Colin Davis.

As part of the proceedings, the new signal box was formally handed over by Frank Ashmore who had constructed and kindly donated it to the Society.

General back-up including parking of vehicles, refreshments and utility services were organised by Mrs. Betty Wincott, Mrs. Iris Strong, Joe Pearson, Garry Tyso, J. F. Bayliss, Roger Edmonds and Gordon Caddy.

The extension to the 7 1/4 inch track was completed on 26th March 1989, Mick McKie having supervised this work and assisted greatly in its construction. Official events on site, having been held in abeyance during the alterations, were then able to be resumed.

It is to be noted that visits and social outings by private coach, on a contributory basis, having been very popular during the period of late 70's to the late 80's gradually declined. Similarly, a Society news letter which had been published intermittently down through the years also ceased. One such news letter series, running for upwards of at least 12 issues also ceased. This series was edited by Bill Statham.

An inescapable factor in the running of events and the editing of news letters is that it has usually been dependent upon the enthusiasm and zeal of a single member. However, though social visits to places of model engineering interest ceased, the issue of a news sheet in the form of a document entitled The Balleny Blast was initiated by Garry Tyso in September 1990, when issue number 1 appeared. It has now run to issue number 26 as of December 1997. The issue of the Balleny Blast continues under the auspices of the present Board of Directors.

Experience has shown that in a voluntary organisation, such as this Society, if a duty is left to the voluntary enthusiasm of a particular individual, for a variety of personal reasons this activity inevitably ceases in due course. Whereas, if the particular function is taken on board by a fully structured group or committee on a formal basis, the activity can be maintained indefinitely. The committee providing the joint input until such times as it can again be 'franchised out' to a particular individual or sub-group.

Since 1989, with the incorporation of the Society into a Private Limited Company, this indeed has been the case. Though it is Society policy to encourage the individual members to contribute in whatever way they wish, it is now the general practice to do so within a sub-group or sub-committee which enjoys the full resources of the main committee, who are able to provide the necessary back-up. Where the drive and enthusiasm has come from the individual member working within an authorised and organised harmonious group, there seems to be no limit to what can be achieved. The benefits of this situation are that the membership at large join in and work to the good of the Society.

During 1990 and the succeeding period the following events took place

Invitation Rally	July	1990
2 1/2 inch Gauge Rally	July	1990
Small Engine Rally	Sept.	1990
Bonfire Night	Nov.	1990
TEE Exhibition	Nov.	1990
Invitation Rally	July	1991
2 1/2 inch Gauge Rally	Aug.	1991
7 1/4 inch Gauge Open Rally	Sept.	1991
Curly Bowl/T.E. Rally	Sept.	1991



Bonfire Night	Nov.	1991
Boxing Day Steam-up	Dec.	1991
New Year Steam Up	Jan.	1992
Easter Egg Special	Apr.	1992
7 1/4 in. LEC - Tich/Juiet Rally	June	1992
Summer Fayre	July	1992
2 1/2 in. Gauge Rally	Aug.	1992
7 1/4 in. Small Engines Rally	Aug.	1992
Bonfire Night	Nov.	1992
Boxing Day Steam-up	Dec.	1992
New Years Day Steam-Up	Jan.	1993
Easter Egg Special	Apr.	1993
Model Engineer Shunting Comp.	May	1993
Evening Run	May	1993
Don Young Rally	Aug.	1993
Visit to Derby Society	Aug.	1993
Evening Run	Aug.	1993
Bonfire Night	Nov.	1993
Boxing Day Run	Dec.	1993
Easter Egg Special	Apr.	1994
Charity Event. Canal Trust	May	1994
Charity Event. St. Michael's Church	July	1994
Traction Engine Rally	July	1994
2 1/2 in. Gauge Rally	Aug.	1994
7 1/4 inc. Gauge Rally Small Engine	Sept.	1994
Model and Experimental Engineers	Oct.	1994
Bonfire Night	Nov.	1994
Santa Special	Dec.	1994

Thus, the regular pattern of events which had evolved during the period from 1982 onwards continued on a steady basis, and will culminate in the Golden Jubilee Celebrations planned for 1998, when the Society will commemorate some 50 years of steady progress.

In concluding this section of the history it is well worth commenting that within the Society there are many disparate groups. Those, for instance who find their pleasure in operating locomotives and participating in all the activities at Balleny Green. Others obtain their enjoyment by constructing models and equipment in the privacy of their own workshops. Others may prefer simply to attend the meetings and lectures held at Wylde Green Library. Some, of course, do all three. No matter how the individual members obtain their enjoyment from the hobby of Model Engineering, in their own way they all contribute to the well being and success of the Society.

During the last few years a group, affectionately known as the 'Geriatrics' because it is composed of elderly retired members, meets on a regular basis at Balleny Green to perform routine maintenance tasks and to chat over a cup of tea about by-gone times in the Society.

## PART VIII

### CONSOLIDATION OF THE SOCIETY

Mention has already been made of the Golden Jubilee celebrations planned for 1998. In fact, this history will form part of that programme and effectively went into planning at about the same time during 1992.

In 1992, it became evident that if the facilities at Balleny Green were to be able to provide the necessary infrastructure capable of mounting such an event then a fairly massive up-lift was essential.

A Sub-Committee was formed under the management of Colin Davis, a fresh planning application was submitted to Lichfield District Council and work commenced on the following installations and accommodation:-

- Modernisation and extension of electrical system.
- Modernisation and conversion of the main building to provide a rest room.
- Provision of additional windows and access to the main building.
- Construction of a canopy to the main building.
- Provision of storage buildings in the N.E. comer of the site.

Subsequently, two additional Sub-Committees were appointed to deal with improvements to rolling stock and ground level track facilities. To enable the decanting of the workshop facilities out of the main building, a steel container was brought onto site and has proven to be most useful as a temporary secure store.

Work has progressed well within an overall budget off 15,000 and, provided weather conditions remain favourable then all will be in place for the new millennium. It has been, and still is a tremendous task. In spite of the attendant capital expenditure, which has included quite major maintenance, the financial assets of the Society have been maintained at a high level. Additionally the financial reserves have been kept intact.

It is interesting to record that the basic costs of running the whole of the affairs of the Society, exclusive of any capital expenditure, during the period 1996-1997 worked out at approximately £3,500 per annum or, expressed as a cost per member, some £25.00 per head per annum. To this must be added forward financing of events plus capital intensive additions and improvements to the estate. Thus, the running of fee paying events to which the public are admitted becomes an integral part of the Society's operation. Were this not so, then annual subscription would have to rise steeply above present levels.

Currently in regard to membership and subscriptions, the position for 1997-1998 is as follows -

Full member	£32.00 p.a.
Senior	£18.00 p.a.
Junior	£08.00 p.a.
Associate	£11.00 p.a.

These figures are based upon a total membership of some 135 persons of all categories. They are a far cry from the inflation free days of ten shillings per year in 1948. We have to live in changing and very challenging times, where the Treasurer's tasks become more and more demanding where forward financial planning has had to become the order of the day. The Society has grown from the inaugural group of members meeting at the Station Hotel to the present, fully member Limited Company with valuable assets. As most societies operate on leased or rented ground, we are rather unique in owing our own site and all the facilities thereon. The problems facing the membership must surely be in the continuing development of the structure and management of this corporate body of present day enthusiasts into the next millennium.

Questions which require to be addressed, to move into the next half century, are : -

- (a) Will model engineering be able to survive and prosper as a machine/workshop hobby?
- or (b) Shall we all end up with a factory produced kit of parts and a spanner to put it all together?
- and (c) How will the average age of members of such societies be lowered by attracting new and younger active members?
- or (d) Will there, in future, be any model engineering suppliers in business able to offer the services we need at an affordable cost?

Recently, the Society received a rather interesting talk from the Director of a well known local model engineering supplier, who was patently seeking answers to the above questions. His unease was quite simple, if model engineering as a hobby goes into decline so does his business, along with the businesses of the publishers of model engineering journals and those who run exhibitions.

It is interesting to speculate that, with the demise of steam locomotion on both rail and road, preservation societies and societies such as ours may be the only link with historic forms of transport and motive power to be seen in action. More worrying is the continuing decline in the number of skilled craftspersons and craft apprenticeships in the UK. Where will the next generation of modellers come from and how will they be imbued with such enthusiasm as the founders of this Society? However, nostalgia is

a powerful force and, hopefully, that emotive beast, the steam locomotive, will continue to be seen puffing its majestic way around the tracks - standard gauge, narrow gauge and miniature - for the wonderment and pleasure of future generations.

Let us not become a nation of observers rather than thinkers, innovators and practical "doers". Let not the 'Myford Lathe' become a cherished museum exhibit or a collector's valuable asset to be traded through the auction rooms. The Model Engineering movement as a whole has a responsibility to remain a repository of important skills and knowledge and a responsibility to encourage the continuity of practical engineering in the generations to come.

## PART IX

### SUMMARY

When I commenced upon the task of endeavouring to set down this history from the facts I was able to glean, I took the opportunity of asking our current President Stan Jones, to write a foreword based upon his long and active association with the Society.

I can only say that though the work seemed impossible at times, at the end of the day it has proven to be a most interesting and challenging task.

Only recently, at a social function in Birmingham, I happened to mention my connection with this Society and my knowledge of its founders to one of the other guests. Imagine my surprise and pleasure when the person with whom I was in conversation turned out to be a former engine footplate-man contemporary with Harry Barr! I was immediately regaled with the subterfuge which went on during the moving of the 'City of Birmingham' locomotive into the Birmingham Science Museum.

It appears to have been something of a cloak and dagger affair, carried out in great secrecy and stealth by those who wished to get this locomotive into its present resting place. Walter Laight would have enjoyed meeting this old gentleman, of northern stock, who had originally worked from Aston sheds.

As soon as this document has received a full screening from those with longer memories than mine, it will be completed by receiving the foreword. Then subject to demand, consideration will be given to a wider publication to members of the Society as part of marking the completion of the first 50 years of its existence

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that those of the current membership will find the document of some interest and, for future members of the society it is to be hoped that they will be enabled to gain an insight into the activities of those who have gone before them.

Frank Whitehead  
August, 1998  
Sutton Coldfield

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Past Presidents

Year.	Past Presidents	Year	Past Presidents
1948	J. D. L. Orme	1974	
1949	J. D. L. Orme	1975	
1950	J. D. L. Orme	1976	J. P. Bertinat
1951	J. D. L. Orme	1977	J. P. Bertinat
1952	J. D. L. Orme	1978	J. P. Bertinat
1953	J. D. L. Orme	1979	
1954	J. D. L. Orme	1980	
1955		1981	
1956		1982	
1957		1983	
1958		1984	C. F. Palmer
1959		1985	C. F. Palmer
1960		1986	A. S. Greenway
1961		1987	A. S. Greenway
1962		1988	A. S. Greenway
1963		1989	A. S. Greenway
1964		1990	A. S. Greenway
1965	J. D. L. Orme	1991	A. S. Greenway
1966		1992	A. S. Greenway
1967		1993	A. S. Greenway
1968		1994	A. S. Greenway
1969		1995	S. W. Jones
1970	J. P. Bertinat	1996	S. W. Jones
1971	J. P. Bertinat	1997	S. W. Jones
1972	J. P. Bertinat		

Foot note: Where names have been omitted, this is due to paucity of accurate records.

APPENDICES

Appendix 2 - Past Chairmen

<u>Year.</u>	<u>Past Chairmen</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Past Chairmen</u>
1948	J. James	1974	
1949	J. James	1975	W. H. Laight
1950	J. James	1976	A. S. Greenway
1951	J. James	1977	A. S. Greenway
1952	J. James	1978	S. W. Jones
1953	D. G. Morgan	1979	K. D. Little
1954	D. G. Morgan	1980	K. D. Little
1955	D. G. Morgan	1981	K. D. Little
1956		1982	W. R. Hall
1957		1983	W. R. Hall
1958		1984	F. Whitehead
1959		1985	F. Whitehead
1960		1986	F. Whitehead
1961		1987	D. Palmer
1962		1988	D. Palmer
1963		1989	C G. Davis
1964		1990	C G. Davis
1965	C. F. Palmer	1991	C G. Davis
1966	C. F. Palmer	1992	B. C. Kefford
1967	C. F. Palmer	1993	S. W. Jones
1968		1994	S. W. Jones
1969		1995	S. W. Jones/
1970			F. Whithead
1971		1996	A.T. Bradbury
1972		1997	C.G. Davis
1973		1989	

Foot note: where names have been omitted, this is due to paucity of accurate records.

APPENDICES

Appendix 3

MEETING PLACES - REGULAR MEETINGS

1948	Station Hotel, Sutton Coldfield
1949 - 54	Yenton Hotel, Erdington
1955 - 65	Swan Hotel Erdington
1966 - 67	Rose and Crown Hotel, Erdington
1968	Hare and Hounds Hotel, Erdington
1969 - 77	Co-operative Society Assembly Rooms, Erdington
1978 - Present	Public Library, Emscote Drive, Wylde Green