



May 2003
No 279

T H E G E N E R A T O R

Newsletter of THE PALMERSTON NORTH MODEL ENGINEERING CLUB INC

Managers of the "MARRINER RESERVE RAILWAY"

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TRACK RUNNING

This is held on the FIRST and THIRD Sunday of each month, from 1 pm to 4 pm Summer and 1 pm to 3 pm during the Winter. All club members are welcome to attend and help out with loco coaling, watering and passenger marshalling - none of the tasks being at all onerous.

Visiting club members too, are always welcome at the track, at the monthly meeting, or if just visiting and wishing to make contact with members, please phone one of the above office bearers.

Sender:-
PNMEC
22b Haydon St,

Place
stamp
here

Coming Events

Monthly Meeting; This will be held on the 22 May at 7.30 pm in the Hearing Association Rooms, Church Street, Palmerston North. The program for the evening can be found on page two.

Mid Week Run at Marriner Reserve Railway :

24 June between 10 am and 2 pm.

Please contact Doug Chambers beforehand.

Track running at Marriner Reserve Railway:

1st June	1- 4 pm
15th June	1- 4 pm

Steam and Steel 2004. (Jan 2004 Hamilton Convention)

Note the Daily rate increases after 30 May.

If you want the cheapest rate get your fees in before then.

The closing date for the next issue of The Generator is Friday 13th June

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was held on the 24. 4 . 03 in the Hearing Association Rooms, Church Street, Palmerston North at 7.30 pm.

.The President's Report shows that the morale of the Society to be in good shape with a slight increase in membership and members active in all facets of the hobby.

The Treasurer's Report showed the Society's funds to be in good shape.

The following are the results of elections of Officers.

President	Bruce Geange	Vice-President	Cynthia Cooper
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Secretary	Murray Bold	Treasurer	Richard Lockett
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Committee Chris Morton, Barry Parker, Chris Rogers

Boiler Committee

Doug Chambers, Peter Hatton, Richard Lockett, Ken Neilsen, Chris Rogers and Brian Wiffin

Editor	Doug Chambers	Librarian	Doug Chambers
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Track Convener	Richard Lockett
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The Compton Shield for "**Clubman of the Year**" was presented to the outgoing President, Ian McLellan.

Before the meeting closed Jim Spall noted that **Clem Parker** was only a few days short of his 90th birthday. Members took the opportunity to congratulate Clem and wish him well.

PALMERSTON NORTH MODEL ENGINEERS CLUB SHIRTS

There are seven shirts left of the original order of twenty-five.

1 medium, 5 large, and 1 extra large.

If you are interested please contact Cynthia Cooper or Richard Lockett.

MAY CLUB NIGHT

Bits and pieces and
Richard Lockett will give lecture No1 of the "**How To Series**"
(Sharpening and using tools in the engineering workshop).

Mrs. Model Engineer

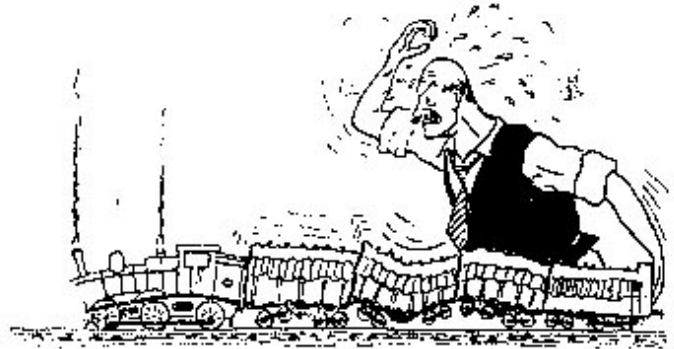
by Herself

*A modeller's life is full of care
And this his worthy wife should share.
The metal filings on the floors,
The oily fingerprints on doors,
She must accept with patience mild
And bear with this precocious child.*



*The boats that in the bath do ride,
The blueprints scattered far and wide,
Must be to her a source of pride,
And never, never must she chide.*

*Should things go wrong, or models fail,
To function for her super-male,
The language drifting through the air
With Billingsgate might well compare.*



*A first-aid kit she needs nearby,
For boilers burst and splinters fly !
She yet must smile and bear it all
For she is lost beyond recall.*

*A modeller's wife should be a saint !
I much regret to say—I ain't !*

Ken Neilsen thinks that many model engineers wives can relate to this cartoon.

Easter 2003 at Keirunga Park

Not having been to Keirunga Park for two years and there being a few new locos about that I had not yet seen, I thought a visit was in order. On arriving John Romanes latest engine an early American electric caught my eye.



“Robyn” was steamed to check out a new gauge glass blow down valve and after fixing a leak around the glass, a few laps around the track ensued.

After the usual excellent evening BBQ meal, I headed home for the usual Marriner Reserve running day on Sunday.

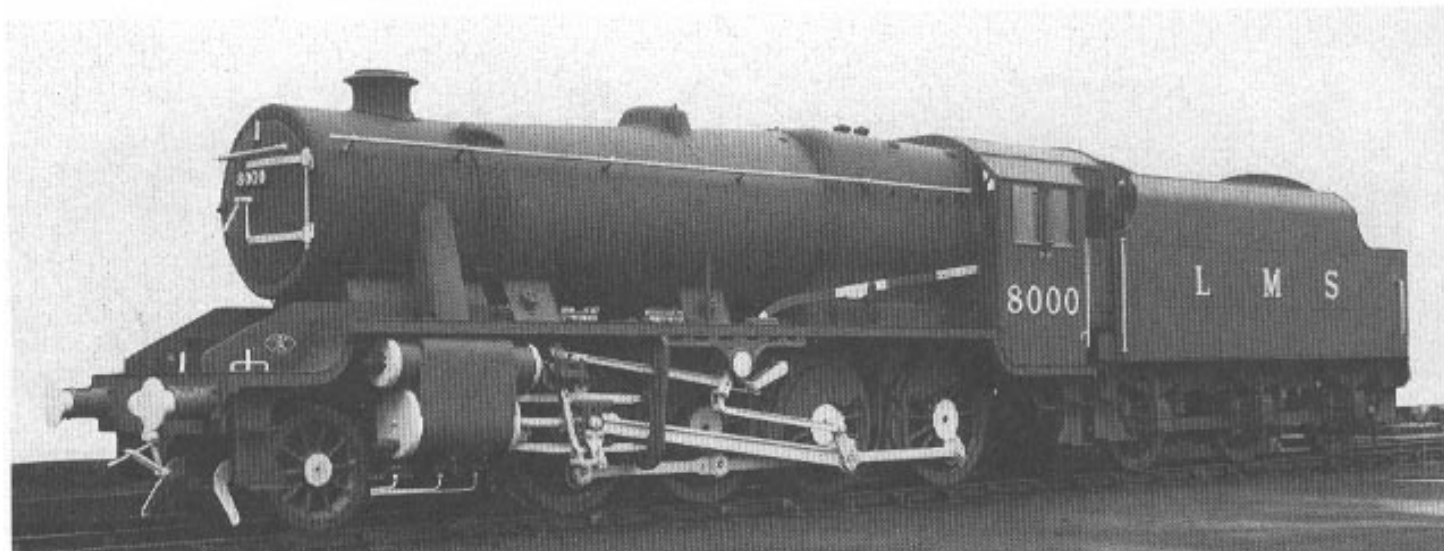
On the Friday Roger Corlett was in attendance with his recently purchased **“The Beejax”** and was privileged to meet the original builder the Honorable Jim McLean from Manakau Club.



Murray and Janice Bold arrived late Saturday and stayed until Monday. **“Mr Sandman”** was double headed with Dave Giles **“Phantom”** for most of the Sunday running. Here seen crossing **“Fletcher’s Crossing”**.

ONE SAPPER'S WAR

By Bren Campbell



The above picture shows an LMS class 8F freight locomotive. This was the design ordered in 1939 by the War Department and used in France and elsewhere overseas. In 1943 the Ministry of Supply ordered further locomotives based on the Stanier 2-8-0 engines.

During the last few months before the enemy advance to El Alamein the railway had been completed to Fort Capuzzo which was set out with dispersal yards and balloon loop on a smaller scale than the installations at Masheifa. Also on a stop-go program the track was extended from Fort Capuzzo to within 12 miles of Tobruk. In the two month period before the allies were routed from the Western Desert, the railway came under intensive attention from the air with ground strafing raids by Messerschmitt 109F fighter planes which carried machine guns and a 20mm cannon. Amongst the machine gun ammunition were armour piercing slugs which penetrated locomotive boilers, tubes, and inner and outer boiler plates.

The cannon explosive shells had thin casings and did no real damage to the boilers but blew fist sized holes in the sheet steel boiler cladding as well as taking out the cab windows and boiler steam and water level gauges. We had survived several strafing runs when the target had been troops on the ground at the sides of trains stationary at crossing loops.

On the night of the 6th March 1942 we coupled onto a troop train at Similla and were warned that intelligence had advised that the enemy was initiating a crippling action against trains from that night. We proceeded as usual with eyes and ears all round to arrive at and enter the crossing loop at Mazhud, the second to last siding before the railhead. We rolled to a stop at 1030 hours when there was a slam that shook the locomotive and all hearing was instantly drowned by a horrendous roar of escaping steam. I saw my driver cross the cab and leap out. I dropped from my seat to the floor and rolled beneath the coal-shovelling chute of the tender. While I was there a second plane raked the engine and passed over and then I became choked out by the hot billowing steam. I groped around until I felt cool air and tumbled out of the cab onto the ground, where I saw my mate lying prone and the third fighter beginning its run in. I dived under the tender through a space in the chassis frame and clambered up onto the middle axle and listened to the hellish spat of the hail of machine gun bullets as the plane completed its run.

I was satisfied to stay there until the attack was over, but a rush of hot water from the punctured boiler flowed back between the rails and 'steamed' me out. A plane was making a steep turn and coming back so I ran about thirty yards and dropped into a wheel rut and watched. I was greatly relieved when the plane flew away without firing its guns. I got up and noted clouds of steam billowing from all over the engine and my driver accompanied by a British Army Officer attempting to discover if I was still in the steam filled cab. I grabbed his arm to make him realise over the noise that I was indeed alive and kicking. We moved clear of the engine and only then found that we had suffered some burns. His were quite severe about one side of his face and neck. Mine were relatively superficial, about my forehead and forearms and on the flesh of my wrists and hands. My eyes were smarting badly and a piece of flesh was exposed on my nose. The crossing station crew took us to their quarters, brewed us good strong sweet tea and with their limited resources attempted to dress our injuries.

Reports came in that three more locomotives had been knocked out, one at a station ahead of us and two at stations behind us. Amazingly there were no fatalities among the engine crews. One driver suffered a severed tendon of a little finger. One fireman lost an eye, one received a deep slicing wound across the back of his thigh and the third received slight burn to his head.

My mate and I were taken by ambulance to the casualty clearing station where we were able to witness the superb efficiency and dedication with which the staff dealt with the severely and not so severely wounded. As I was in the latter category, I received my attention at 2200 hours. I awoke next morning to find my burns skinned and dyed and dressed with sutured areas on the balls of my thumbs and both wrists were bandaged. The next day my driver was flown to a hospital near Cairo and I was taken out by ambulance train to the then forward hospital at Gerawla, about eight miles on the railway east of my unit at Similla. I vaguely remember admission to the hospital and waking up one morning feeling good. A patient in the next bed said, "Gee, Kiwi, what happened to you? You've been asleep for three days, they brought your meals and took them away again". I thought such a thing could not have occurred but some days later I was to see a British soldier with no apparent injury, but in poor physical shape sleep solid for three days and when he awoke the ward sister shaved him, cut his hair and trimmed his finger and toenails.

I was to admire these 'Tommy' soldiers for when enemy soldiers were brought in, they were escorted by some of the soldiers who had captured them and they invariably looked more battered than the prisoners. After three weeks I was discharged and returned to my unit on light duties for two weeks and the back onto the railhead trains.

My driver, who was rather older than me, suffered a mental breakdown and was returned home. For his attempt at rescuing me he was mentioned in dispatches.

The Similla to Masheifa trips were much the same as before with the addition of anti-aircraft gun equipped wagons assembled into the trains. The tender skin on my hands and wrists chafed and bled and I received dressing replacements at the regimental aid posts at the ends of the trips. Healing became permanent after about two weeks. During this time the allied forces commenced the withdrawal to El Alamein and we were the only loads travelling west with mostly petrol to sustain the retreating army.

Then came the final two days when we withdrew every locomotive and railway wagon possible with as many as five east bound trains occupying a single eight-mile section. Unclaimed petrol was set on fire and we left 150 wagons behind. After four days of stop-start travel over heavily bomb blasted and hastily repaired track the company arrived safely at Alexandria. Our train together with three or four locomotives was shunted into King Farouk's private station where we remained for a week, before moving to a permanent campsite in a suburb of the city close to the walled yards. As the front line stabilised at El Alamein we commenced running supply trains to a temporary railhead 35 miles west of Alexandria at Burg El Arab. About four trains a day were run during the early part of the nights.

Unfortunately here bed bugs became the scourge of our nights, much worse than the fleas. There was an ongoing assault with knives, insecticide, and cigarettes all used in the destruction of these pests.

During their time off the other chaps spent their time studying the Egyptian language, writing lengthy letters, playing the ukulele, violin or cornet, and some talented chaps drew sketches of Army experiences as they saw it.

I drew plans of mechanical ideas that I hoped to develop once I returned to 'Civvy Street'. In these circumstances the seeds of my self-constructed lathe, steam machinery and power tools were sown.

In anticipation for our return to the Western Desert railway, a batch of American diesel electric locomotives was shipped to the vast army stores at Suez and 16th and 17th railway personnel were selected for training in their operation. For this group the companies chose the steam locomotive firemen who had accumulated long service on the railhead runs, thus I became a member of the detachment that was sent to a school at Suez. We had about a month gaining handling experience in the store yards spread out over several square miles. Then we took a fleet of the new locomotives via the ESR route along the western side of the Suez Canal to El Firdan and across the new Army swing span bridge to the eastern bank and onto the new military line constructed from El Kantara to El Shatt which was another supplies dump at the southern end of the canal opposite Suez.

For about two months we worked supply trains over this route, some bound for the El Alamein area and others worked from El Kantara to Gaza on the first legs of their journeys to Turkey.

Finally we delivered the locomotives to our base at Alexandria and set about training more drivers over the Alexandria to Burg El Arab section.

To be continued