

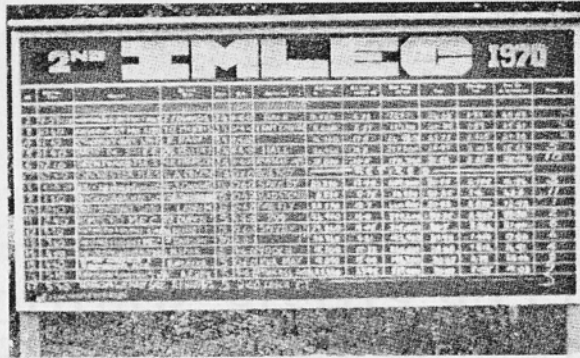
# The Early Years.

## IMLEC at Blenheim.

We have now arrived at the highlight of the society's year - the holding of the second I.M.L.E.C. trials, arguably the high point of all the meetings and events of the whole time the society was resident in Blenheim Park.

The event took place on Sunday July 19th 1970, and the newsletter recorded that the weather at first was not hopeful, but providence came to smile on not only the visitors, but also to the host club's staff to their great relief. They had of course, been up to their eyes for some while before the great day, but they outdid their efforts the day before the event, as the record shows that "a whole squadron of members" turned to ensure that all was above any, even slight criticism by, as L.B.S.C. would say, Inspector Meticulous! A public address system was supplied by a Mr. Bennett, the catering firm from the Palace had erected a marquee, and the track site was overlooked by a magnificent scoreboard supplied, prepared and erected by one of the many stalwarts in the society, Tony Gardner.

After the early morning rain, came the sun, but so also did the showers, on and off during the event. The duty crewmen arrived at the site to commence work at 08.00 hours! Yes, 08.00 hours, and most stayed till past 21.00 hours, (or 9pm if you wish!). Every minute was worth it anyway.



The first competitor was due on the track at 09.00, but had not arrived by 08.45, so there was a delay in starting the proceedings.

Perhaps at this point we should make mention of some of the personalities who came to this prestigious event in the model engineers' calendar. Martin Evans of course was present as was "Laurie Lawrence" from the "M.E." and was reporting the event. By

kind permission from the "M.E." our "Link" editor has the authority to quote any or all of the write-up published by that magazine, and for which both Brian and your scribe are very grateful, more so, since thirty-one years have all but passed by since then, and the grey matter needs a nudge now and again to reawaken the enjoyment of the times past! Anyway, more personalities for your info, Len Labram, from the Birmingham society is known as a top-flight model engineer, and his 5" Firefly bore witness to his skills.

Peter Dupen, who seemed to favour exclusively the Midland railway locomotives to model, certainly showed off their fine and elegant outline and finish by having his 5" Midland 4-4-0, No. 999 present. Norman Spink (who has not heard of him?) brought along a magnificent model of a G.W.R. "Gooch", an outside framed 4-4-0, in 5" gauge. Bill Perrett from Southampton, and no stranger to Blenheim as he came up fairly regularly brought his "Speedy" as did Jim Cousins from the Willesden club.

From Bristol came Mr D. Kellet who had his 3½" Hall class locomotive "Ivy Hall", the L.B.S.C. design of the G.W. Hall Class, and which, if memory serves your scribe correctly, looked more like the G.W. "County" Class, at least with its high pitched boiler.

Another "Hall" appeared with Mr. J. Edwards from the Whitchurch club, Cardiff, and yet another 3½" loco came along in the hands of Mr. Green which was a natty "Rob Roy" finished in Caledonian Blue, if memory recalls rightly. Incidentally, Mr. Green had entered the model at last year's contest.

Brentwood society was represented by Mr. Harrison who ran "Russell" a 3½" 2-6-2, narrow gauge tank locomotive; the Chingford chaps represented by Mr. J. Dabson, brought his L.M.S. class 8F 2-8-0, for an airing.

From Urmston & District came Mr. A. Eves, with his engine driver Mr. Davies who had come with a 5" "Princess Royal" machine, a vast length it appeared to be too with the long boiler. Harrow and Wembley, with their "rep" Mr. R. Haines sported a lovely class E1 of the old L.B.S.C. railway.

Kinver & Wolverhampton society briefed Mr. T. Morris to attend with - guess what - an 0-4-0, tram engine! She was a, shall we say, a little odd looking when seen in the steaming bays with normal locos on all sides. Lastly, Mr. Weaver from the Sutton Coldfield outfit had "Eva May" a 5" 0-6-0, tank loco based on an L.B.S.C. design.

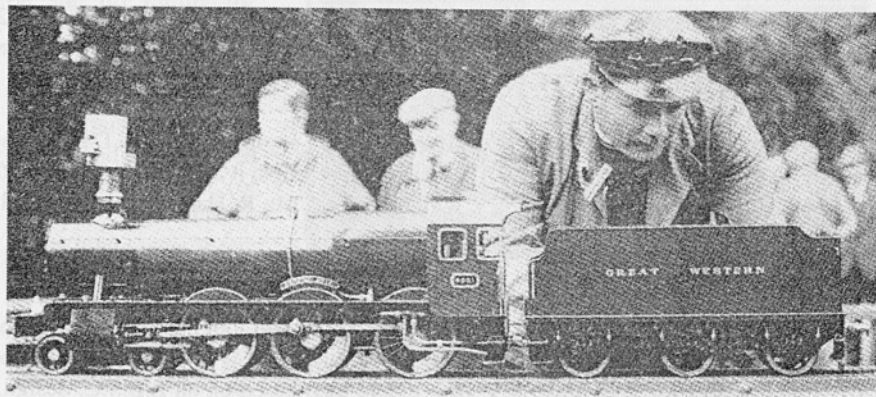
Well, that's the list of competitors, so now let's see how they all fared shall we? We are indebted to the "M.E." for what follows, being taken and edited as thought nec-

essary without impairing the text. Your scribe has put the entries in the order of running, as per "M.E."; the results will be in the order of efficiency. The dynamometer car was kindly loaned to us by the Birmingham Society, without which we could not of course held the event.

Mr. Green with "Rob Roy" was scheduled for the first run, and as with all other locos was issued with charcoal, as much as was required to raise steam and keep it up till ready to take the run. Coal in measured bags were given to each driver as was needed to complete the run, any remaining in the bunker or tender was weighed off and taken into account when working out the efficiency results, and these together with the dynamometer car data were analysed by the judges who were ensconced in their own small enclave away from the "madding crowd" and consisted of Martin Evans, Roddy Davenport, (who had travelled from his home in Bath at a very early hour) and our committee member Ray Smith.

Rob Roy was duly steamed and took to the track together with the dynamometer car and the observer, while the driver warmed the engine up on the first lap. It was unfortunate that he lost steam rather quickly, and had to retire, due as Mr. Green said, to his miscalculating the heat content of the charcoal. The judges took a sympathetic view of his predicament and duly allotted him another run later.

Next came John Edwards with his Hall loco, based on L.B.S.C.'s "Lickham Hall". He took five adults as passengers, and set off gently on the first lap. He then dropped the reverser down lengthening the cut-off and this resulted in several fast laps. Nemesis



Mr J. Edwards raising steam on his 3½" gauge G.W.R. 4-6-0 "Borwick Hall."

then struck and he also ran out of steam, so having to retire before completing the full time of the run.

Run No.3 saw Mr Morris from Kinver with his unusual little loco, the 3½" Burrell tram engine. It had a compound engine with an H.P. cylinder of bore ¾", and an L.P. cylinder of 13/8" bore. Working pressure was just 30 p.s.i. and the wheels were 2¾" diameter. The coach body was finished in light blue livery, while on the roof was a nest of copper tubes forming a condenser as per the full size machine. The centre of gravity must surely have been quite high. Mr. Morris took just the observer with him, the machine being intriguing to watch as it had a bobbing action as it rode round. Speed was variable, at times rather slow, at other times surprisingly fast. But she derailed after about twenty minutes into the run, and some slight damage ensued, so the run was terminated.

Run No.4 brought Mr Tucker from Stockport with a narrow gauge model of a Londonderry & Lough Swilly 4-6-2 tank locomotive, a very powerful looking machine, the boiler being fed from a natty small donkey pump which apparently ticked over "sweetly when pumping", (quote). The driver was Mr. Raw, and he took thirteen adults as the load. The engine slipped quite heavily at first, but soon settled down to



A. W. G. Tucker's L.& L.S.Rly. Hawthorn 4-6-2T driven by Mr. F. Raw at the beginning of one of the gradients.

[The observer - sat behind the driver - is a somewhat youthful looking Ivor White - Ed.]

a good speed. The injector began to leak steam however, and the loco began to prime. The driver opened up but the slipping restarted, eventually corrected, but steam pressure was lost and not being able to recover, the run was terminated.

Run No.5 had Mr. Kellet from Bristol, with "Ivy Hall". Here was a man who knew where he was going - he was out to win! His confident composure though quite modest seemed to result from previous outings with his steed. And so it proved; his load of five adults were mere featherweights to judge by the engine's performance (It did one's heart a world of good to watch this machine doing what most Great Western locos did!) One could enthuse more, but we must get on and give attention to the other chaps waiting in the wings. Suffice it to say, that this run was the first to complete the full half-hour run, with a top speed of 11mph. Some going, but this figure has been reached and raised by several 5" loco motives since then.

Run No.6. This was run with "Russell" a 3½" narrow gauge version of a 1909 Hunslet 2-6-2 tank loco modelled in 1¼" to the foot, driven by "Chips" Harrison of Brentwood. It was a handsome engine in Indian red livery with a large polished brass dome, outside frames, and fly cranks. Apparently the only thing that marred her looks was the amount of coal that "Chips" littered up the footplate with! He carried a load

of eight persons, and set off at a good pace but speed varied considerably becoming slower towards the top of the bank at the South end bend of the line. More regulator brought slipping, but it made the 30 minutes run and it is recorded that while the run was not exactly covered in glory, "Chips" was liberally coated with oil splashes!

Run No.7 was allocated to Mr. Green for his second attempt, but fate conspired against him once again, this time with valves not seating. It was a great shame as little "Rob Roy" had purred round the Illshaw Heath track very well at last year's I.M.L.E.C. event.

Run No.8. This was Mr. Cousin's turn with his 5" "Speedy", which had much modified valve gear from the original drawings, and also had an unsuperheated boiler, but with more tubes than the 26 of the L.B.S.C. design, 39 in fact taking the place of the larger superheater flues. The engine hauled six persons, a light load for that loco really, but the driver knew his steed and with the gear well towards mid-point, and the regulator only partially open, she ran steadily, though not fast, with the exhaust steam not as wet as might be expected.

Run No.9. The Brighthouse & Halifax S.M.E. entered a 5" 0-4-2 tank loco, "Gladstone". This engine was in the care of Mr. G. Sherborne who took a load of five

## SECOND INTERNATIONAL MODEL LOCOMOTIVE EFFICIENCY COMPETITION — RESULTS

No.	Society	Driver	Gauge	Wheel arrangement	Description
1	Birmingham	L. Labram	5	2-6-2T	Firefly
2	Romford	P. Dupen	5	4-4-0	M.R. "999"
3	Willesden & W. London	J. Cousins	5	0-6-0T	Speedy
4	Chesterfield	N. Spink	5	4-4-0	Gooch
5	Bristol	D. S. Kellet	3½	4-6-0	Hall
6	Chingford	J. Dabson	3½	2-8-0	L.M.S. type
7	Urmston & Dist.	A. Eves (Driver Davies)	5	4-6-2	Princess Royal
8	Southampton	W. Perrett	5	0-6-0T	Speedy
9	Sutton Coldfield	R. Weaver	5	0-6-0T	Eva May
10	Brentwood	M. R. Harrison	3½	2-6-2T	Russell (N/G)
11	Brighthouse & Halifax	G. Sherborne	5	0-4-2	Gladstone
12	Chichester	L. A. Green	3½	0-6-0T	Rob Roy
13	Whitchurch & Dist.	J. Edwards	3½	4-6-0	Hall
14	Kinver & Wolverhampton	T. J. Morris	3½	0-4-0	Tram engine
15	Stockport & District	F. Raw	3½	4-6-2T	Londonderry & Lough Swilly
16	Harrow & Wembley	R. Haines	5	0-6-0T	LBSC E1

## TIVE EFFICIENCY COMPETITION — RESULTS

Distance (ft.)	Average D.B. Pull (lbs.)	Work Done (ft. lbs.)	Time (mins.)	Coal Used (lbs.)	Coal per D.B. H.P. hour	Place
23,570	18.7	440,800	30.83	2.875	12.92	1
24,900	16.0	398,400	30.35	2.687	13.36	2
22,280	12.98	289,300	30.75	2.185	14.54	3
15,700	15.33	240,600	29.46	1.812	14.91	4
20,960	12.3	257,800	29.87	2.03	15.63	5
20,940	9.21	192,900	29.58	1.656	17.00	6
22,260	23.95	537,000	30.07	5.125	19.03	7
19,640	16.05	315,200	30.5	3.344	21.00	8
13,090	15.00	196,300	30.67	2.78	28.04	9
17,030	10.5	178,700	31.62	3.25	35.99	10
6,520	9.75	63,560	29.25	1.4	43.6	11
—	—	—	—	—	—	Retired
11,580	6.38	73,870	24.33	1.81	48.59	Retired
5,020	3.57	17,930	20.75	0.59	65.61	Retired
14,260	17.5	249,600	27.75	2.625	20.83	Retired
—	—	—	—	—	—	Disq.



persons. He started off well, just a slight slipping and it looked as if the run might well have been another steady one. But it was not to be, the long haul up the bank took it's toll, and speed inevitably fell off as the loco lost steam; at one point she was just crawling along. But all was not lost as the driver managed to recover steam on the run, but had to stop for a "blow up". Despite the setbacks, they ran the full course of time.

Now came No.10 run, with "Len" Labram and his 5" 2-6-2, Great Western, 4500 class tank locomotive. My word she did look a picture, fully lined out (though the real ones were not) and was pretty well to works drawings, though Len said he had made alterations to the lubrication system, and had fitted a disc in a tube type regulator. L.B.S.C. would have eyed the spot on riveting with his Meticulous Inspector's cap on no doubt, but even he would have been hard put to have, one out of place, or for that matter anything else out of place. All the passengers, - and there were eleven of them, were from the Birmingham Society. As with the "Ivy Hall" run, from the way Len handled things, this was going to be an all out fight to beat the 3½" machine's effort! And so, intentionally or not, Len did the trick only stopping once for water and lapping the circuit at a steady 9 mph. The score board which announced the results as they were worked out by the slide rule wizards and written up, showed that the Birmingham team had taken the lead and so it remained that way.



The winner! Len Labram's 5" gauge small Prairie "Firefly."

Run No.11. This was the entry that your scribe had been looking forward to watching. It was the Midland "999" class loco in the hands of Peter Dupen who had a reputation as a speed merchant. He had apparently had to listen to good-natured banter by some

wag who suggested that he sat on the boiler to give an added adhesion to the loco! Peter smiled laconically, but took load of nine adults instead! He started off in fine style the engine being fully capable of being master of the load, but the long bank still proved to be a formidable hazard to performance. In this case it was the cause of slipping, and for a couple of laps the run was below standard, but then Peter made a recovery lapping at a steady 9 mph plus, an excellent effort, with the driver splattered with oil so it was reported. It would have been a calamity if that beautifully finished loco had been equally coated with lubricant! This was not commented on, so perhaps the exhaust was sharp enough to clear the engine's profile. He took second place in the contest.

Run No.12, Bill Perrett, the Southampton expert with his "Speedy" now came on stream, with a load of fourteen adults, and as the Southampton chaps also have a "Hell for leather" reputation, as did the previous driver, it proved to be an interesting half hour indeed comparing the driving techniques of the two experts. Bill knew our track quite well anyway having been to us several times, but even he had a problem with steam and came to a halt at the top of the bank. He recovered the steam pressure and completed the run. Bill said the coal he was using did not behave as expected, and sure enough, when the smokebox door was undone, the char was halfway up the smokebox. This was not expected, as the coal was "Stove Esee" a form of anthracite that burned very well in domestic room heaters and boilers.

Mr. Dabson from the Chingford Society came on as No.13 with his L.M.S. class 8, 2-8-0 in 3½" gauge. He took five persons as load, and it looked as though this would be another exemplary run. It was not to be, as a light rain fell and upset the adhesion on the alloy track. However, teeth gnashing though it was, the driver courageously carried on and completed the run. It must have been a great disappointment as the loco had done very well at last year's event.

Now we have come to run No.14, and Norman Spink confidently taking to the circuit. His locomotive had attracted a good deal of attention at the steaming bays with it's polished dome and fine finish, and he took nine people as his load, a smaller load than last year so the report says. He had a quick stop after the first lap to fix a loose pipe twixt engine & tender. This stop was at the foot of the bank, and due to a little overmuch regulator opening, she slipped badly, partly due to the wet rails, but later the rails dried out, the run improved and Norman completed his run.

Run No.15 was made by Rodney Weaver with his 5" "Eva May". He came representing Sutton Coldfield M.E.S. (Some of us, quite a few perhaps, may remember Rodney who came to us and gave an excellent talk on his low friction driving car, at some time when the Midlands exhibition was held in the Birmingham University

building at Selly Oak. He had it on view there among other top-flight exhibits). His engine was built by a Wolverhampton engineer in the 1930's and had been rebuilt by Rodney. She looked smart in a red livery, and the tender being a fairly low-sided one; the engine controls were of easy access. He took as passengers eight of his club members. There were two "hiccups", the first at the foot of the bank, due to loss of steam pressure, which was soon rectified. With twenty minutes further steady run, pressure had fallen again, but recovered enough to finish the course.

Now came the turn of the largest locomotive of them all. Run No.16 was allocated to Mr. Eves from the Urmston society. His machine was a 5" pacific modelled on the prototype "Princess Royal" class. It had the four cylinders, also the original top feed and the domeless boiler, as the first few built were equipped. Twelve people comprised the load the engine being in the hands of Mr. Davis who had his work cut out to reach the controls over the long tender. However, he made a run that was reported as being uneventful the modest load giving little trouble to the locomotive. (In these days, when 5" and 7¼" engines abound at many tracks, the 5" models do not now seem quite as large as that model pacific did in 1970).

So to the final run No.17. It was getting rather late in the day, but there were more than a few people still there enjoying the last of contestants have his turn. It was Mr. Haines from of the Harrow & Wembley Society and he drove his 5" L.B.S.C. tank loco, which had been awarded a silver medal at a recent M.E. exhibition. The engine had been developed from L.B.S.C.'s "Pansy" and had alterations made to give it the correct outline of the full sized machines. He had also managed to secrete a fair load of heavy metal to give the engine extra adhesion. The run was exemplary, very fitting to conclude the day's running with such a run. But by one of those quirks we all experience at times, the run regretfully had to be declared void, as the dynamometer car had developed a fault which gave inconsistent readings and as the time was by now really late, and the presentations had yet to be made, Mr. Haines was consoled somewhat by the knowledge that he could have another go later.

The proceedings were brought to a close by a short presentation ceremony which should have been graced by the Marchioness of Blandford presenting the awards - but as the event was way behind time, another evening engagement prevented this, but Ray Chilton, the host club's secretary apologised for this, and said how pleased we were to have been invited to stage the event. He remarked on the interest shown by the clubs who had participated in the competition, and concluded by introducing Martin Evans to the audience, who spoke of his disappointment of the absence of the Marchioness, but the host club's chairman had suggested that Barbara, his wife, would be honoured to take her place. And so it was. The winner of last years I.M.L.E.C. received his Replica Cup, and then the presentations were made in reverse order;



Mrs. Barbara Cleaver presenting the trophy to Mr. Labram (back to camera) watched by smiling Martins Evans (right).

fourth prize, Norman Spink, "Gooch"; third prize, J. Cousins, "Speedy"; second place, Peter Dupen, "Midland 999"; and first prize, Len Labram, 4500 G.W.R. tank loco.

Martin Evans brought the day to its conclusion by giving a well-merited commendation to the fifth and sixth place winners. An informal gathering in the clubhouse followed, at which Martin asked Ray Chilton to give his personal thanks to our society for their splendid efforts in staging the competition.

Mr. Lawrence writing in the M.E. spoke highly of his visit, and of all he saw and all who met to speak of their entries.

Since congratulations were the order of the day, or rather, evening, what of our own chaps, (and ladies too), who had achieved so much to ensure the day was a memorable one? The main tasks of the sub-committee were undertaken by Ray Chilton the Hon Sec, with Pat Beesley, Tony Gardner, and Tony Robinson, who made all the arrangements including the detailing of club members to the various tasks of stewards, car parking etc. Our judges, Ray Smith, Roddy Davenport, (as mentioned earlier, travelling from and to, Bath). It was indeed a momentous day. What did your scribe do then? He was on the "coaling stage" weighing up the one-pound bags of fuel for the contestants and weighing the remaining coal from the locos as they returned the

weights being passed to the judges. A most interesting day, close to the locomotive galaxy, very busy at times, but relaxing later in the day, and of course being able to chat to the many folk around the steaming bays.

So there we are readers, it is hoped that you may be able to get at least a small idea of how exciting the day turned out, and to feel the atmosphere that prevailed at Blenheim on the occasion.

With acknowledgements once again to the Model Engineer and its Editor for permission to use their article for some of these recollections.

Arthur Penny.