



Northampton Society of Model Engineers Ltd. (NSME)

History

The Northampton College of Technology Society of Experimental and Model Engineers was founded under the auspices of the Northampton College of Technology in November 1933. The first lecture meeting in March 1934 heard a talk on models and model making given by W.J.Bassett-Lowke, the well known entrepreneur and local councillor, in which he traced the progress of commercial model making in the town by several firms including his own.

After the Second World War the Society was re-formed as the Northampton Society of Model Engineers in October 1945 and met every Tuesday at various venues in and around the Town until in due course some rooms at a Community Centre in Thornton Park in Northampton were found and used. At that time the Society did not have a permanent track.

In 1965 the present site at Delapre Park was acquired and work began on the construction of the first 3½" and 5" elevated track which was completed in 1967. The Club members then used both Thornton Park and Delapre Park until 1984 when the Clubhouse was built at Delapre Park. Once the Clubhouse was complete, the facilities at Thornton Park were dispensed with and all activities moved to Delapre Park. The membership then was approximately 30. In November 1976 we became a Registered Company, Northampton Society of Model Engineers Limited.

In the late 1980s it was decided the elevated track needed to be rebuilt and it was completed in 1990. In 1993 an Extraordinary General Meeting was called and the decision was taken to extend the Clubhouse and to build a ground level 7¼" and 5" track which was approximately 1700 feet long. The Clubhouse has now been extended, a workshop built, a hydraulic loader built for large locomotives and the unloading area and traction engine steaming bay has been concreted.

In 1994 we hosted our first National Rally, the Don Young Rally. In 1995 we hosted the Midland Federation Rally and the Martin Evans Rally. The 28th and 31st IMLECs were held at Northampton in 1996 and 1999. We also hosted the Southern Federation Spring Rally in 1997, the Northern Association Rally in 2002 and Lionsmeet in August 2004. In July 2005 we hosted IMLEC for the third time.

In 2007, thoughts started on extending the tracks again. The project was launched and this part is now complete. Although originally a 10 year project, progress was amazing. Tracks were closed from early October 2010 in order to complete the works. The new raised track extends to approximately 1/3 of a mile and the ground level track extends to well over 1/2 a mile. The formal opening, by the Mayor of Northampton, was on May 2, 2011. The ceremony included formal naming of the two stations.

In December 2010, we welcomed a new group of members calling themselves the NorthHACKton Group. The group meet to discuss and construct various projects based on electronics, computers and robotics. Aiming to meet monthly, their first meeting at Delapre was on December 8, 2010.

A grant from the Northamptonshire Communities Foundation in 2010 allowed us to make improvements to access and safety. These included knee-high fencing to the tracks, concreted disabled access to the ground level station, widening and separate directional access to the footbridge and reduction of the slope from the tunnel bridge. Donations from members allowed extension of the concreted area of the car park.

A carriage shed was added to the ground level track in 2011.

The Northern Association of Model Engineers (NAME) rally was held at NSME in September 2012.

Toward the end of 2012, an elevated track to accommodate 32 mm and 45 mm Garden gauge railways was added to the central area of the site.

During the winter of 2012/13, a new ticket office was built. The raised track refurbishment with plastic sleepers/new track and a larger steaming bay for the ground level track with better access were completed. An extension of the raised track signalling system was also implemented.

The membership has now risen to well over 100. However, more new members are needed and if you live locally and are interested, why not come and join our exciting Society and help us to improve still more the facilities we have to offer. Members meet every Tuesday daytime, Tuesday evening and on Sunday mornings, when the majority of the necessary work on the site is carried out.