

Tony Mason 1945-2021

Soon after Tony's birth in Loughborough in 1945 he was adopted and moved to London. He was raised by his adoptive parents in a top floor flat in Holland Park backing onto British Rail lines at Olympia. Tony was obviously smitten by steam from early days and the passion never waned.

As we are all aware Tony was handy with a camera having graced our gazette with many excellent photos. Tony left school at 17 at the end of the summer term and was ready to start a photographic career in the autumn. As was common in those days, school leavers grabbed temporary work to fund the new freedom. Tony's temporary job, assisting in the back of house at the wine department at Fortnum & Mason, changed his career direction. From 1962 Tony spent his entire working life in the wine business till retirement in 2005. Tony's involvement and foresight transformed the wine market in the UK establishing and driving forward the wine warehouse concept eventually founding Majestic Wine. The success of the business he founded and developed is testament to his qualities.

Tony having fun with his Stirling Single on his own portable track at our exhibition in 2014.



Tony's contribution to the society was exceptional. Tony joined the society in 2002 becoming a committee member in 2003 as the joint editor of the Gazette (with Alan Harmer) becoming sole editor in 2004. Tony remained as the editor or deputy editor or managing editor until the launch of the Newsletter in 2019. The Gazette went from strength to strength and Tony's content contribution was also exceptional. Over the years Tony published over a hundred articles against his name and others unattributed. He sometimes wrote under the name Mel Drew – inspired by TV's Victor Meldrew and giving a hint of his excellent sense of humour. Tony gave the Gazette sixteen years of service which we all enjoyed whilst most of us did not appreciate the work and dedication involved.

Besides editing duties, Tony contributed to club nights entertaining us with his films and slide shows and supported the society at its exhibition not only with static models but supplying his own portable track and demonstrating how to fire and run miniature steam locomotives.

Tony had a collection of good quality model steam locomotives of various gauges. We believe the collection really began the day after the great storm of October 1987 when his business meeting in London was cancelled and he wandered into a London auction house where there was a sale of railwayana. With few bidders present Tony bought

three locomotives including his superb 5" gauge Durlston Manor and little Jeanie Deans. Having joined the society Tony added several other locos to his collection including a Stirling Single and Heilan Lassie, and it was not long before his 5" and 3½" gauge locos were regulars at the Puffing Park. He liked nothing more than a quiet and relaxing 'puff' with friends. Tony's locos also frequented other tracks as he was a member and regular visitor to the North London and Pembrokeshire model engineering clubs. In recent years Tony sold some of his collection to make it more manageable but he retained his favourites.



Tony demonstrates running his Durlston Manor on his rolling road at a society exhibition.

Tony still loved full size steam locomotives and frequently went to visit museums and took trips on main line steam specials. He often went with other society members and once generously took a small party of members on a day trip to the Bure Valley Railway in Norfolk.

Tony readily conceded he was not an engineer but he did try and was always generous in his praise and appreciation when other members helped him out.

In 1966 Tony married Hilary who survives him with their two daughters. In 1995 Tony discovered he had two half-sisters in New Zealand to whom he became very close.

He was always easy going and good company to be with. We shall miss him.

Tony at the Puffing Park with his ex Guy Ellerby Hunslet quarry locomotive.

