THE MELDRETH TRAMWAY

I was pleased to see Harry Paar's interesting account of this line (IL.72 p92), having myself undertaken some research on the string of cement works built to tap the Cambridge Marl alongside the GNR Cambridge to Hitchin route.

As regards Meldreth I can add little, except that the Meldreth Portland Cement & Brick Co Ltd apparently closed in 1908, and presumably the 1911 sale was the result of this closure. The reformed Meldreth Lime & Cement Co Ltd can be found in the *Kelly's Directories* for 1916 and 1922, but not in 1929. Atlas Stone Co Ltd, asbestos cement manufactuurers, are not listed until the 1933 and 1937 editions. (The latter, incidentally, includes no reference to the Meldreth L & C Co, so the 1938 *RCH Handbook* seems to be incorrect on this point.) I have found no map that shows anything of a works at Chiswick End, through which the route of the Tramway ran.

The Cam Portland Cement Co Ltd (known as the Cam Blue Lias, Lime & Cement Co Ltd by 1912), although in Meldreth, had no connection with the works under discussion, being sited a mile nearer to Cambridge, with sidings on the east side of the railway. It was in business by 1896, but had closed by the mid-1920s leaving a half-mile long gullet which was presumably rail-worked at the time of extraction.

As to the motive power on the Meldreth Tramway, the article makes no mention of the standard gauge Motor-Rail 40hp petrol loco 2029 of 1920. Built for BPCM Irthlingborough, Northants, it was acquired by Atlas and moved to their Meldreth works, presumably in 1928 when Irthlingborough closed and Atlas set up here. Two years previously Atlas must have found the need of a loco to shunt their other works at Coldham's Lane, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, due to the closure of the BPCM Saxon works to which the Atlas plant was appended. Is it possible that Atlas bought the Moyse loco in 1926 originally for their Cambridge works, then on acquiring the Meldreth site two years later they swopped them over, perhaps finding the more powerful 90hp Moyse better suited to the longer haul involved at Meldreth ? The Motor Rail loco, incidentally, survives in original condition at the East Anglian Railway Museum in Essex.

NORWICH — CHRIS FISHER

THISBE & PYRAMUS

Reference Vic Bradley's thorough discussion on the identities of these locos in IL.70 p12, I do not think that HL 2879 was EVER named PYRAMUS. The only evidence offered is the adverts that appeared in *Surplus* from 4/1921 to 8/1921 as referred to on page 16. But these simply say *No.85 'Pyramus' Type ....*, and I suggest this is no more than a convenient reference to the sort of loco for sale. In main-line terminology they would probably both be regarded as "Pyramus Class", the first loco of this class (and the official photograph of this class) having the name PYRAMUS. If this is true, all the confusion disappears, and we are left with the fact that, several years later, the then nameless HL 2878 was fitted with new plates at Longmoor, and these (inappropriately) read THISBE.

I have studied an enlarged photograph, supplied to me by Vic, of the worksplate fitted to PYRAMUS in the HL works photo of the loco when new. The

last numeral of the works number is blotched and unclear, but sufficient of its outline can be seen to determine that, when compared to figures '8' and '9' elsewhere on the plate, it is certainly very likely to be a blotched '8', and highly unlikely to be a blotched '9'.

BIRMINGHAM — DOUGLAS CLAYTON

[Allen Civil very kindly produced a good clear original print of the works photograph, from which it was possible to make an enlarged copy-negative of the worksplate. Enlarged prints from this neg have been shown to various people, all of whom have decided either the number 'is 2878' or 'very likely 2878'. The problem seems to be that the actual plate was painted up rather roughly for the photo, with the vital character (of course !) being a bit smudged. However, the '9' (in 1911) has a definite bottom tail, whilst the '8' (in 287x) has a closed smudge at the bottom and a smaller upper smudge than does the '9', as does the final character of the '287x' number. Hence the worksnumber is judged to be 2878, rather than 2879. – Hon.Ed.]

FODEN CONVERSIONS – ALLENS OF BURCOT

With reference to this article IL.71 p55, John Maddox states on page 59 that the Burcot loco was last observed sometime in 1937. I noted this loco on the loading bank beside the main road on 3/8/1938 and photographed it. My recollection is that it was then in light steam, which suggests the pits closed later than the 1937 date, unless by then they were clearing stocks or the site. My photograph shows that the left-hand side tank had been altered as it now had a square front corner. I next passed that way in the early 1940s; by then the site was clear and I do not recall an airfield.

BIRMINGHAM — DOUGLAS CLAYTON

[Roger West has pointed out that, coincidentally, the autumn 1993 issue of *Steaming* contained a letter from a Mr Ron Wilsden of Harlech, recalling when "as a young schoolboy living in Oxford in the late 1920s and early 30s" he used to peer through a gap in a hedge, "between Dorchester and Nuneham Courtenay on the A423", to look at an Overtype Steam Wagon that was always there. "I remember that the ground seemed to drop away sharply behind it and I have since wondered if there was a sandpit there in which case the wagon might have been used as a winch. The whole area has long since become a housing estate but I estimate the grid reference to have been about 569993". The letter makes no mention of it being on rails, which surely he would have noticed, and the dates seem a bit early for the Burcot loco which was built in 1933. However, John Maddox has recorded that prior to the loco, Allens tried a "winched-rope haulage", so maybe this latter was in fact a stationary Wagon, and this could be what Mr Wilsden recalls. Can readers comment on this ?

Roger adds that the bufferbeams of Allens' loco look like plate steel sections from a roller's hind wheels. Allens specialised in the 1930s in replated steam roller wheels, and suggests these might have been scrap examples, pointing out that the fixing holes for the rivets that had held them to the wheel rims are visible in the IL photos. – Hon.Ed.]