

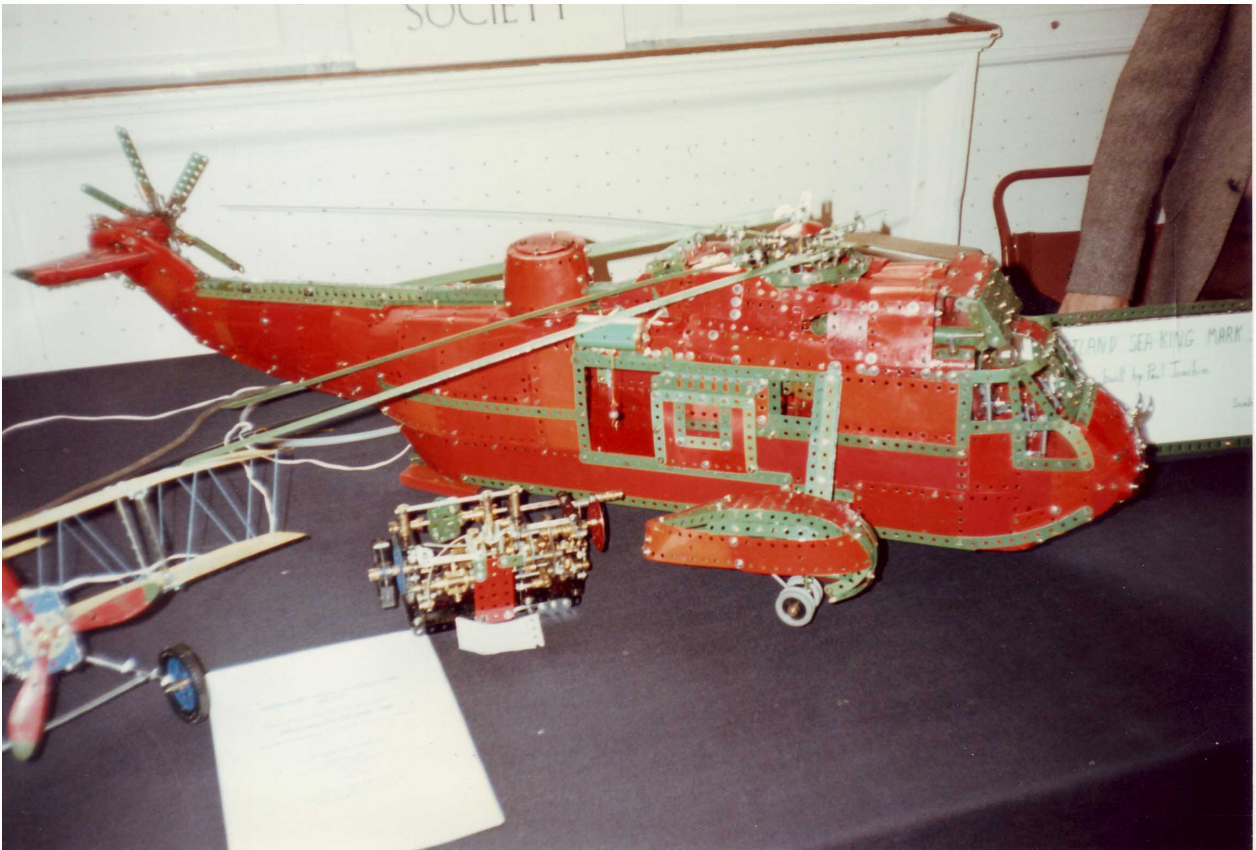
West London **MECCANO** Society



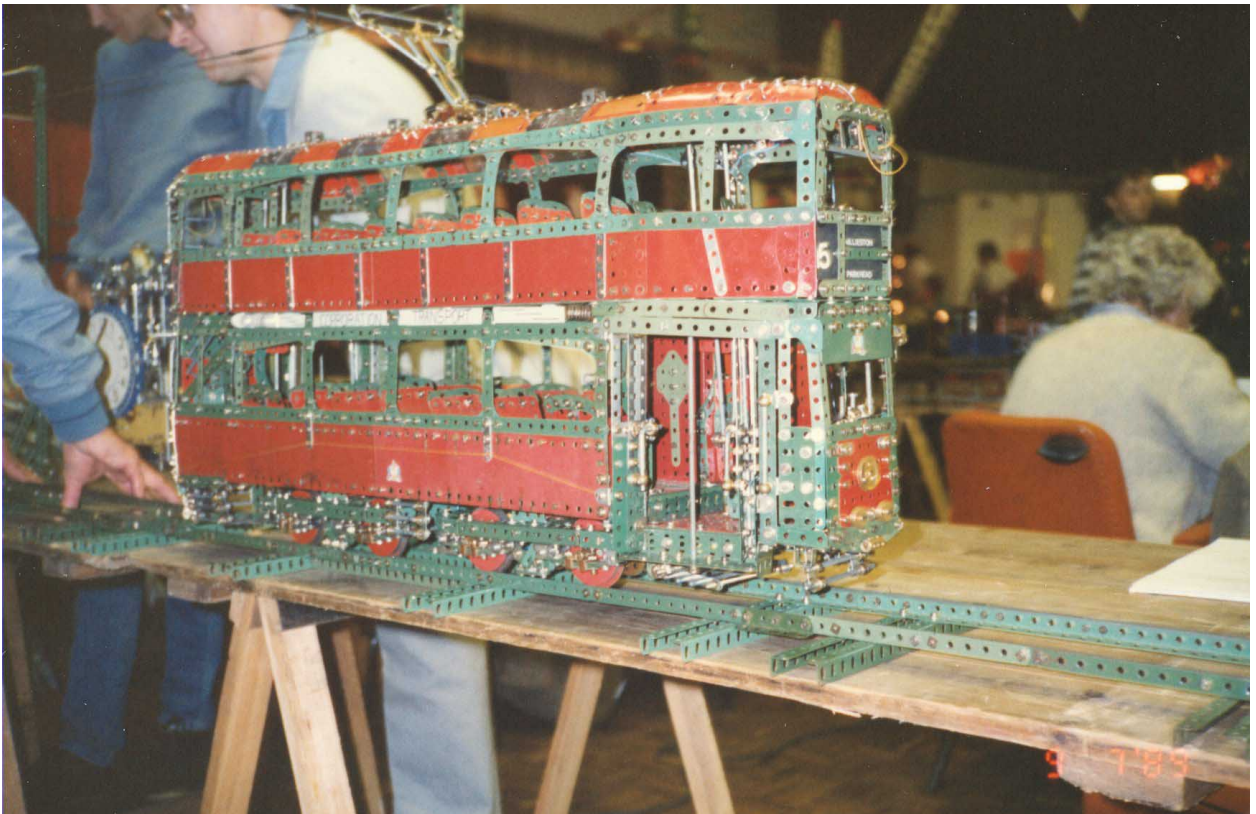
Paul Joachim 1946 - 2011

Edited by Chris Bourne

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Westland "Sea King" Helicopter, Henley Exhibition, 1986. (photo by "NoirProfond2")



Glasgow "Coronation" Tram, SKEGEX Exhibition, 1989 (photo by Rob Thompson)

Paul Joseph Joachim, 1946-2011

Chris Bourne recalls the life and Meccano times of our late Chairman

Our dear friend Paul Joachim has passed away, at the age of 64. Paul has been at the heart of the WLMS for nearly thirty years, variously Chairman, Newsletter Editor, and an inspiring and influential modeller in his own right. We have lost a wise and capable leader, a loyal friend, a modelling great, and a vivacious play-mate all in one man.

The phrase "Renaissance Man" is generally overused, but in Paul's case it is most apt: we are talking about a chap who could play the French horn, light a stage, patent new chemical applications, sing light opera and serious oratorio in a fine tenor, build his own loudspeakers and bottle his own whisky. All while running a Meccano club and constructing models of the highest quality.

Paul Joseph Joachim was born in Bradford in 1946, but the Joachim family soon moved to Glasgow, which is where the seed of his Glasgow Coronation Tram model was first sown. Paul has often told how he lived in the shadow of the "great Joachim" - Joseph, the celebrated violinist for whom Brahms wrote a concerto, Paul's great-grandfather, the measure to which later generations were expected to aspire.

But from an early age, Paul was drawn to engineering: notably, at the age of three, he investigated the family's Bendix washing machine with a knitting needle, and later dismantled the alarm clock - and put it back together again.



Paul and Margaret at Paul's 60th birthday party in Acton

Clearly requiring the right sort of toy, Paul was first given a Dinky Builder set, and then, by a perceptive aunt, a Meccano Number Two outfit. "I have most of the parts from that set still" he wrote in 1989. "Hard use has made them almost unrecognisable. They are buckled with frequent bending, some of the plates have split, the original mid-red and green enamel has quite worn off, and the round end holes in the plates are distorted from frequent levering with the drift."

By the time Paul was twelve he had got up to a Number Seven, with two gears sets and a whole load of extras. He used to take it on family holidays, and longed for a better electric motor than the Trix "Permag" that was all he could afford. Once again his

favourite aunt came to the rescue, and the combined efforts of aunt, parents and grandmother produced the expensive E20R(S) and transformer for Paul's eleventh birthday. Paul's imagination ran riot: if only we could now see the plans for his automatic washing machine, or his egg boiler, which had its own indicator lamp to let you know when the egg was done.

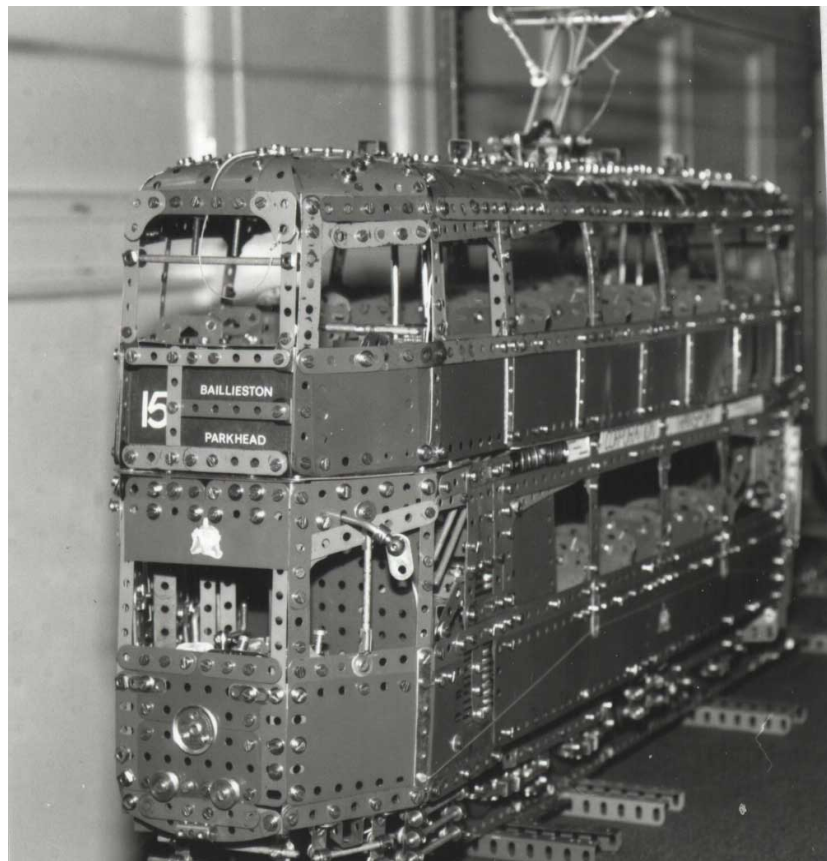
Paul's father had converted to the Quaker faith in the 1930s, and Paul was sent down South to the Friends' School in Leighton Park - another Leighton boy was former WLMS chairman Roger Poulet, although the two were not quite contemporaries.

An unsympathetic headmaster warned Paul off engineering, which is what he wanted to study, but could not prevent

him from getting into Balliol to read chemistry. As well as his studies, Paul played French horn in the University Orchestral Ensemble and was active in student theatre, as a set designer and lighting director. He taught himself computing - a prescient move in the mid-60s - and dated the young Marianne Faithfull, or at least, had tea with her. But the lure of coffee proved stronger: the Geology and Chemistry labs shared a coffee machine, and that is where he met his future wife Margaret, then a student geologist. It must have been a noisy romance: they cemented the relationship by founding the Oxford University Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

Paul embarked on a career in industry, and joined Albright & Wilson, where he became adept in pyrotechnics. Not your usual fireworks, but chemical markers for depth charges and other military activities. "I am a world expert in orange smoke" he said, grandly, in his appearance with the WLMS team on the BBC2 quiz programme Eggheads.

During a career that took him to British Oxygen, Standard Telephone & Cables, Fujitsu/ICL, Itochu, Anglian Water and Alginate Industries, as well as a spell at the National Enterprise Board advising on corporate venture capital for new technologies, Paul found himself increasingly involved in industrial strategy rather than chemistry. For over a decade the Meccano stayed in its home made box, until his daughter Rowan, unable to make a lorry from her Lego set that had proper steering, asked her dad for help, and



Paul's Glasgow Coronation Tram

dad in turn resurrected that ancient Number 7 from the loft. And it was a chance article about Geoff Wright's use of an Epson computer to assist in running MW Models that brought Paul back into contact with the adult Meccano hobby.

Paul was introduced to the WLMS by Ian Evans, and his first model duly appeared in June 1985: a Sentinel 0-6-0 SR diesel locomotive. Right from the start, Paul's trademark style was there: uncompromising attention to scale prototype detail; mechanisms that reproduced essential features of the original; and a near-puritanical dedication to doing as much as possible in 'official' Meccano. He brought his daughter Rowan along as well, who charmed the entire society, not least, the notoriously grumpy Bert Love. Father and daughter were a regular fixture at meetings, with Rowan's won-

derfully inventive models - the sandwich, the handbag of fabric plates - alongside Paul's increasingly ambitious scale models.

Those must have been golden years for the WLMS. Not only were such Meccano 'greats' as Bert Love and Noel Ta'Bois in full creative flow, but the intake for 1985 alone included Paul, Roger Poulet, Terry Allen, Nick Rudoe, Howard Somerville and Tim Gant, to name only half-a-dozen. In such company a man might well sit in the shade and let others make the running. Not our Paul. His next model was one of his finest: the Westland Sea-King helicopter, complete with fully functional swashplate, followed by the Festiniog railway's double Fairlie.

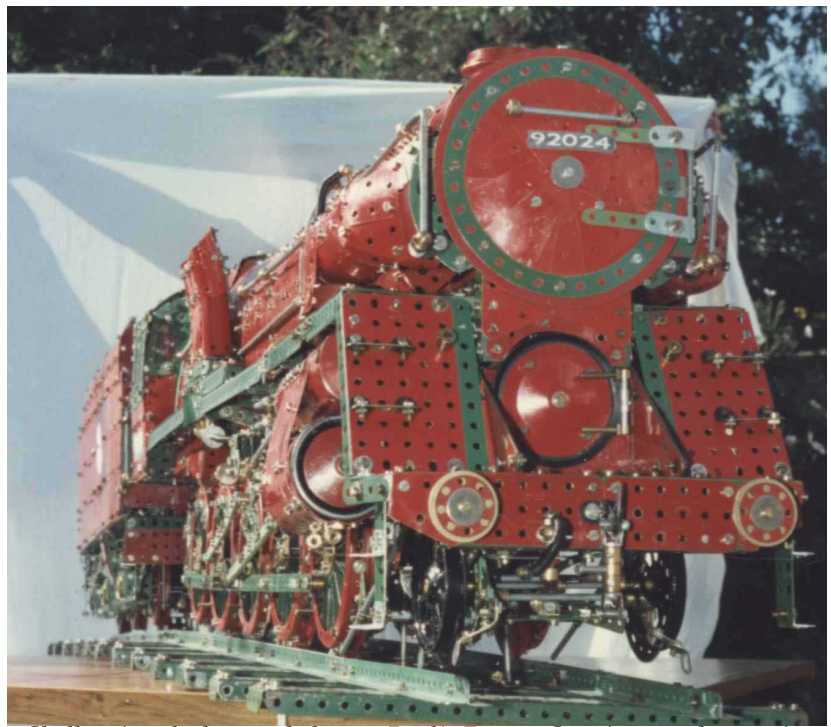
Within two years Paul had taken over the newsletter and

chairmanship of the society. He laid down something of a bracing challenge to the membership: "By constructive competition we improve our standards; continually challenging the best to do better, and encouraging the less skilled, by example and support, to learn and practise new abilities" he wrote.

For Paul, that meant models built to the highest standards of scale, mechanism and originality. And it meant documenting them in the club's magazine: intricate drawings by Philip Webb or Tim Gant of impossibly complex gearboxes and clutches, articles on epicyclic mathematics or locomotive valve gear. The stuff you needed to build the sort of models that Paul and the other leading lights of the society were creating.

Paul, of course, had to go one step better. His Glasgow Coronation Tram, Daimler Fleetline Bus and Franco-Crosti 2-10-0 locomotive were built, written up and published as Modelplans even while he was running the club and the newsletter: most of us tend to do one or the other, but Paul managed to do it all at once. And there was the ISM: I leave it to IM magazine to tell of Paul's work there.

At the same time, he was travelling extensively in Eastern Europe on business. His record collection is stuffed with obscure treasures from these visits. Years later Paul would invite me, along with a few friends, to annual musical soirees in Acton, where we'd listen to these and our own favourites, on Paul's impeccably high-end hi-fi system (mostly



Challenging the best to do better: Paul's Franco-Crosti 2-10-0 locomotive

Linn), complete with a pair of massive loudspeakers he had designed and built himself.

Back at the WLMS, the new regime was not without friction. Some members were daunted by the increasingly high quality of the modelling and the suggestion that everybody should strive to produce the best models they could, rather than just turn up with a pretty manual model. But although he could be a waspish critic of what he thought was sloppy engineering, he was always kind and encouraging to those who wanted to improve: including myself, when, after Paul had given up the chairmanship (but not the Newsletter) he corralled me into the WLMS in 1998.

"The WLMS is the premier Meccano society" he told me, expansively. "And we rather like to go in for scale modelling." Of course it was outrageous and provocative, but that was Paul all over: proud for his club and proud of its modellers, and wanting to en-

courage new modellers to reach for the heights, not the manual. I recall visiting him for a cup of tea and a chat when he was recovering from a particularly drastic bit of intestinal surgery. I brought along a bogie from my Class 20 diesel locomotive project. "What's that?" he asked, sharply, on the doorstep. I told him. He took it out of my hands and inspected it from all angles. "You can't take this to a meeting" he declared. "It hasn't got nose-suspended motors. You had better come in. I think I have a book somewhere..." He never did tell me that, as a boy, he'd won a certificate from Meccano Magazine for his own model of the same Class 20 diesel.

Having been a volunteer on the Festiniog Railway as a student, he was a Director of the Welshpool and Llanfair Light Railway company. With Margaret, he was an early champion of the Ironbridge Gorge museum: they first became involved right after Uni-



The Dunhill Team - Christmas 2005

versity and maintained the connection ever since. He belonged to a choir - good enough to sing at the Barbican - and, with his wife, now the Reverend Dr. Margaret Joachim, commissioned an oratorio for their church, from the composer Paul Ayres. He was Chairman of Ealing Photographic Society too, until, in a typically bizarre feud, he and his close photographer friends were ousted: even so, he remained an accredited judge of photography competitions. Most WLMS members will recall that Paul always liked a competition to be judged, rather than voted upon: he railed against the democratic vote at Skegness, which he felt unjustly favoured spectacle over subtlety.

Perhaps his proudest Meccano moment was the Dunhill project, when the WLMS was asked to produce the Christmas 2005 window display for Dunhills. A select group of modellers spent that autumn building the display units at "Mister Richard's" country estate. At the evening reception, Paul, urbane, professional and full of wit and charm, was in

his sparkling element.

Paul returned to chair the WLMS on the untimely death of Roger Poulet in 2006, but he had never really been far away and always remained on the committee. His handling of the petty crises that can afflict a club behind the scenes was masterly. At the same time his London Eye, and Boeing Vertol Chinook were remarkable essays in modelling, dense with mechanisms that

revealed the hidden secrets of the real-life prototypes.

By then his health, never good, was getting worse. He was often in pain but willingly took on the work, simply because there was nobody better qualified to do it. Naturally, being Paul, he refused to be a victim of his illnesses. He chaired the Patient Advisory Board at the Bladder and Bowel Foundation, the main advocacy group for incontinence and other plumbing issues.

Everyone at the WLMS will, I know, be full of sorrow at the loss of Paul. A chemist and pyrotechnics expert by training, his life fizzed and crackled with energy, like a rocket or a Catherine wheel: a delight to his friends and an inspiration to his colleagues. I do not know what we will do without him. But I know what Paul would want us to do. He'd want us to build better models, be better friends to each other, and above all, to "Get it right!"



Boeing Vertol Chinook Helicopter



"Franco-Crosti" 2-10-0 Loco, 2nd Prize, SKEGEX 1991

photo by Rob Thompson



London Eye, St Albans 2009

photo by Alan Blake



Robinson R-22 Helicopter