
West Midlands "N" Gauge Club

Newsletter

Volume 14 Issue 1

March 2011

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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HEADCODE

Welcome to the March issue of 2011 and may I add my thanks to those already expressed to Rock for his huge contribution during his tenure as editor.

At this point tradition dictates that I should outline my plans for the future of the Newsletter. Unfortunately, I cannot easily do this, for an editor's powers, whilst wide reaching, are certainly confined. I can determine the order of articles, the size and number of photographs and illustrations, the scale of drawings, even the number and arrangement of pages. I can also choose typefaces and colours. Apart from these, I haven't got any plans right now.

So, rest assured that I don't plan to make any huge changes just yet - if at all, to what is evidently a successful format, but over time the format may lean this way and that, or try new things to 'suck it and see' and it will evolve as it does so. As surely as eggs is eggs.

What I can't do of course is publish features that haven't been written.

I shall search out new material, but inevitably, anything I find may...

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The attendance for the start of 2011 has been quite good and this is always an encouraging sign. My comments in the last newsletter turned into typing nonsense (too much brandy in the Christmas pud perhaps? – Ed) but few complained or even commented so it made me think does anyone read my little column? – Or do they say Ken always talks a lot of nonsense? Undeterred I can remind you that we have a new newsletter editor, an event on March 19th, work on our layouts to do – and above all a warm welcome should you wish to visit the club during one of our meetings. I want to thank everyone who has wished me success in my new job.

Best wishes

Ken Jones, Chairman

Chairman: Ken Jones

0121 777 7062

Email: info@kenjonestrains.co.uk

Treasurer: Edgar Mason

CLUB MEMBERS

Linn started the New Year in hospital – something about checking out the nurses. Actually he's had a pacemaker fitted so that he can remotely control the trains. He's fine now and running correctly to timetable we are glad to say, and back regularly at the club.

Jules now owns a red Mini Cooper – very nice. He's still doing distance running – mainly away from the club but rumour has it that he is going to build a small z gauge layout.

Alf's family have contacted us from Huntingdon, where he and his wife now live, to say he still follows the club's activities and looks forward to his newsletter. Alf is one of the original members of the club and it's great to hear from him and his family.

Mike T continues to build scale models in T gauge to help his campaign against HS2. These are non-working layouts / dioramas but you never know what he can turn his hands to.

THE CLUB LAYOUTS

Waterstock . . .

Following an appearance at the Wolverhampton show, certain changes and items of maintenance have been discussed for the layout. It has been decided to re-align the entrance to the fiddle yard from the Up Quainton Rd line. Partly because there is a tricky reverse curve to negotiate, but primarily because an intermittently faulty point causing

head scratching running problems has provided an excuse to work in this area anyway. The fault was finally diagnosed when one of us held up one of the switch rails at Wolverhampton and said, "Should this come off like this?" At the first meeting this year Mike (T) showed up with a couple of new curved points and work would have commenced after tea but for the necessary inspection of everybody's Christmas goodies. Recent reports suggest that by the time you read this the track gang will have rolled up their metaphorical sleeves, if not their real ones, and the work will be complete.

Motorising the turntable is still a project to do later in the year and Dave currently has some prototype ideas in production.

Water Orton . . .

Mike T. has been subterranean for many meetings now but surfaced for Christmas and has now pretty much finished fitting all the droppers to the tracks. Recently he and Len could be found huddled in far corners in hushed conversation and deep thought as they prepare to tackle the control end of things. There are some 34 points to consider, plus automatic operation for some of the trains and bi-directional running through the station. This is likely to tie Len up (literally) for a while yet which is another reason why some of the ideas for change to Waterstock have been put on the back burner.

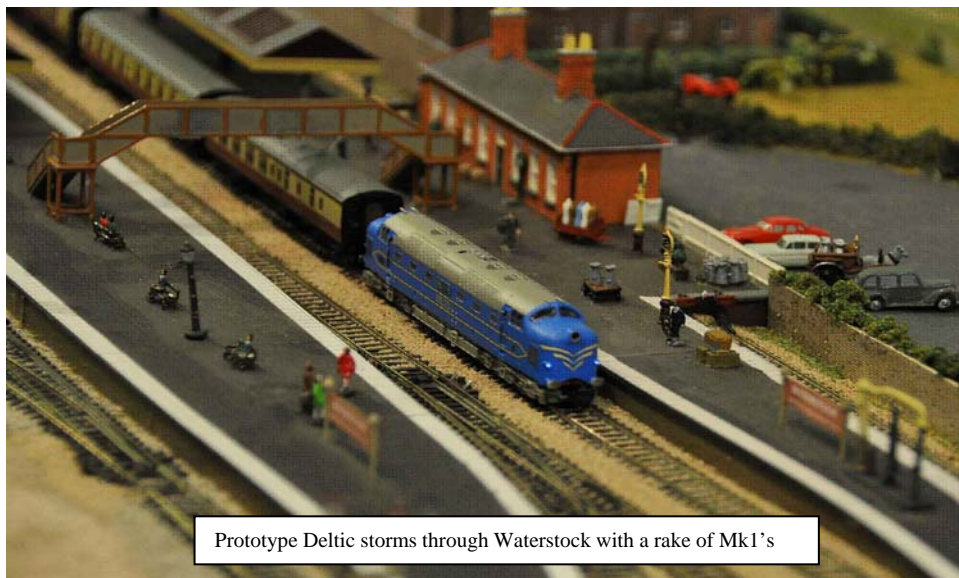
Tipton Hills . . .

Rodney continues to be the main driving force behind this third layout, which has progressed mightily under his leadership with quite a lot happening. Ballasting has been finished, and toned down. A platform is being constructed between the main lines and the hill railway. A fiddle yard and board are also being fixed to the layout and we hope to have legs built soon to make the layout self standing

Well Done Rodders!

CLUB NOTES

The first meeting of the New Year at the club traditionally sees people trying out and generally 'showing off' their Christmas goodies and this year was no exception. Rodney, for being a good boy all year, received a Prototype Deltic, which ran as beautifully as it looked. Early running trials of the Prototype Deltic began in November 1955 on the LMR between Euston and Liverpool, mainly on fast freight trains. These trials were followed by a series of performance tests in August and September between Carlisle and Skipton, covering 5,000 miles which more than adequately demonstrated the power of this locomotive. One test involved a train of 20 coaches, grossing 642 tons, being driven at full power over the 15 miles from Ormside to Ais Gill, which is mostly 1 in 100.



Prototype Deltic storms through Waterstock with a rake of Mk1's

Following this, Deltic worked passenger services between Euston and Liverpool on named expresses such as the "Merseyside Express" and the "Shamrock". In January 1957 it worked the London - Carlisle route but by May it was back on Liverpool duties once more. In June the schedule was cranked up so that the locomotive was doing 700 miles a day, six days a week.

The London Midland Region, however, was now turning away from long-term diesel projects and instead considering electrification as its preferred method of transition from steam traction.

Deltic and the ECML. In January 1959 Deltic was moved to the Eastern Region, which had wanted to test it on express services as a possible alternative to Gresley's swift and powerful Pacifics, particularly the A4. Only Deltic appeared to offer the power and speed required within the constraints of a sensible 20-ton axle load. After some early problems adapting to the smaller dimensions of the ER - On one occasion the locomotive hit the platform edge at Manors near Newcastle, and on another it lost its cab footsteps at Darlington - tests involving operations at up to 105mph with a BR dynamometer car were completed by March 1959. Until June 1959 Deltic had always operated south of the border, but late in the month five days

of testing were carried out in the Edinburgh area and over the Waverley route. By July 1959 most tests were complete and Deltic was diagrammed for general ECML work on services between King's-Cross and Doncaster.

Retirement. In 1961 when the first production units were nearing completion, the prototype Deltic was returned to English Electric's Vulcan works with over 400,000 miles on the clock. On Sunday 28th April 1963 the prototype was delivered by road to the Science Museum in London. It was subsequently moved to the National Railway Museum in York.

Throughout the 1960s the Deltics were the speed kings of the East Coast main line and no less than six are preserved. Anyway, we all liked the new N gauge model and think that it captures the essence of the real thing very well.

Also at the club there were a couple of snowploughs in evidence, they were propelled and hauled respectively by, I think, a Standard 4MT.



The chairman had a very nice weathered Class 14 for us to admire. Here it is in the Iron Ore sidings.



We even had an ALCO Baldwin on a world tour visit from Canadian Pacific. Here it gets the signal to move into the Down Oxford Platform.



Later in the afternoon the US visitor happily hauled 14+ Mk1's around the layout with consummate ease. Additionally some European types put in appearance on the Town branch, apparently causing the waiting passengers to stand rigid in slack-jawed amazement. These were Tomix units, and very neat they are too.



Saturday 19th March 2011

By the time you get this newsletter – the second hand NGS sales stand at our venue will be upon us. We are expecting lots of stock being sold and hopefully lots of visitors. A flier for the event was included in the Jan / Feb national journal – so it's just a case of saying you will need your N gauge Society membership card to get in.

If by chance you're reading this after the event – we hope you had a good time if you came and our thanks go to everyone involved with arranging things on the day.

The Armchair Brigade

The term 'model railways' really encompasses many subjects; locomotives (or DMU's if that's more your thing), signals, liveries, scenic and station modelling, layout designs, control and power units, All these and more, but the one pigeon hole that is probably larger than all the others, were the truth known, is generally avoided.

Perhaps its name is derogatory, or maybe there is a society or underground movement for its fans whom avoid publicity at all costs. I refer to the "Armchair Brigade", the bottom bashers (can I say that?) and desk jockeys whom with pencils, paper and lively imaginations create all manner of wondrous things.

The reasons for becoming, and even staying chairborne are varied; lack of space or facilities comes to mind as does lack of inclination. Some become armchair philosophers, a splinter group, and their distillations of the part practised theories and the hastily sketched projects of the active builders and operators often prove

useful. Others leave their seats of deliberation to enter the realms of bustling, practical model railways at shows and exhibitions, there to ferment fury with their incantations.

They are an odd lot, no doubt about it. Indeed, given that my total contribution to the club layouts thus far (over two years mind!) has amounted to the grand total of three painted cars and cutting a few pieces of cork underlay, and that nobody has ever seen any of my efforts towards my home layout 'Coalbridge (Salop)' anybody could be forgiven for thinking that I should count myself an armchair modeller amongst their number.

But wait! Something nagging at me from the back of my mind insists that the term should be investigated more closely. Just what *is* armchair modelling?

Surely every time we pick up a book or magazine on the subject of railways, be it full size, narrow gauge or miniature, we start to armchair it, as we generally sit down to read. – Every time we expound our favourite theory at the club we are indulging in armchair modelling. Simply sitting upon a platform seat (should you be lucky enough to find one) whilst gently musing about the valencing - off we go again. At this level, pencilled plans on sheets of graph paper become the practical rather than the theory.

One thing is for sure: When the armchair modeller sits down to design a layout – it is a complete success, running perfectly with no dirty track or derailments; Paint a backscene – it is worthy of a Turner Prize; Build a loco – it'll equal one of Guy Williams', and the process of doing these things is so much easier and less messy than the reality.

Like I said, a peculiar lot, and I think I'm one of them. *TB*

Headcode Continued from page 1. have a particular bias. The last thing I want is for the newsletter, under my direction, to become a sounding board for myself alone. It must represent fairly the West Midlands Group as a whole and so the bulk of the input must come from the club membership and from you, the readership.

In short, dear reader, contributions are wanted. Don't worry about grammar, spelling or drawings, that's my problem. Just submerge me with content and I'll see that it gets included. *TB*



Rock Battye meets the Grinning Buffoon.

Volume 14 Issue 2 should appear in early June.

Copy deadlines for the next four issues are:

June Issue:	7 th May
September Issue:	13 th August
December Issue:	12 th November
March '12 Issue:	11 th February

2011 PROGRAMME

All meetings are held at Tipton Green Methodist Church Hall, Park Lane West, Tipton, West Midlands, DY4 8LD, on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays in each month, from 2pm to 5pm.

Meeting dates for the rest of the year:

March		19 th
April	2 nd	16 th
May	7 th	21 st
June	4 th	18 th
July	2 nd	16 th
August	6 th	20 th
September	3 rd	17 th
October	1 st	15 th
November	5 th	19 th
December	3 rd (AGM)	--

There will be no meeting on December 17th.

Any changes to these dates will be notified on our website or in our quarterly newsletter.

For more information, contact
Ken Jones: tel: 0121 777 7062
Email: westernsultan@hotmail.co.uk
Website: www.ngaugewmg.co.uk

Please use the **rear entrance** to gain access to the church hall.

If you are in doubt, please ring first, especially if you are travelling any distance.

TAIL LAMP *by TB*

I began putting this issue together on a Monday morning whilst being hauled to London Marylebone behind 67013 Dyfrbont Pontcysyllte as part of the 1P01 Wrexham to London Marylebone service. Not unusual for me really, but little was I or anybody else for that matter to know that by the end of that same week the service would be no more.

The last service ran on the Friday of that week hauled and propelled once again I believe by 67013. It was a sad day, one could sense the pride that the W&S staff had with the service that they ran. The little railway that everyone loved was no more.

The service, from North Wales to London Marylebone restarted in April 2008 after a gap of 41 years.

The service operators blamed falling passenger numbers for the closure.

In the Spring 2010 National Passenger Survey by Passenger Focus, the independent rail watchdog, Wrexham & Shropshire scored a 99% satisfaction rating - the highest rating in the survey's history.ⁱ

Wrexham & Shropshire was a great little service, equal to the best of British Rail, but with clean trains, polite friendly staff, nothing too much trouble, good food too. I've even been brought a coffee and *real* bacon roll to my seat (In 2nd mind you!). It couldn't last of course. The problem was that there was no money in the service and it lost £2.8m in the last financial year.

The opposition of Virgin and the regulator's insistence in limiting its stops did not help it, of course. I think Virgin's covenant (expires 2012) was the real coffin nail restricting use of Wolverhampton, Birmingham New Street and Coventry. It's pity too that the old junction on the Handsworth link was pulled up; else perhaps they could have run them into Snow Hill. The whole paraphernalia of the open access rules actually pulled against their very purpose of stimulating innovation.

It really rankles me that all the efforts of the WSMR staff that worked so hard on the service to deliver the sort of old time customer service now only seen on preserved lines have come to nought and that more than 50 jobs are now in the balance.

On a personal note, I will now have to ride those awful Virgin Pendolino services again. I don't care for the Pendolinos myself, all that tipping and tilting about makes me nauseous.

Furthermore, I reckon that the chances of Dapol ever producing a Mk 3A RFM to complete my WSMR set must now have lengthened from slim to none. I feel a conversion coming on.

Wrexham Shropshire & Marylebone Railways

April 28th 2008 – January 8th 2011



The 5.10am Telford to London train sets off. Picture by James Poole.

ⁱ ["National Passenger Survey - Spring 2010"](#). Passenger Focus. 22 June 2010.