

West Midlands “N” Gauge Club NEWSLETTER



From our Chairman

We're closing in on the end of another good year for West Midlands N Gauge Club. We sadly lost member, Len Bane, earlier in the year. He is someone that we will miss a great deal for his electrical and electronic knowledge, good humour and stories. In spite of this, we have an increased membership and with it some greater financial security. We have also needed to look at a small part of our Constitution to encompass Junior membership.

We have four main N Gauge layouts, all of which get regular use. Two of them, Whartson Hall and Gibben Quarry, have been active on the local show scene. Gibben Quarry was invited to the inaugural 'Warley at Statfold' exhibition in October. We currently have two 009 layouts under restoration and are considering a further N Gauge layout for the future.

Community work is a worthwhile part of the club's activities. We have long supported our landlord, Tipton Green Methodist Church when there are events locally. Recently, in September, we supported them at the Tipton Canal Festival by having a running session upstairs in the clubroom. Last December, they ran a Christmas Tree Festival for the first time; we had trains running and had one or two visitors who specifically visited to see us. For this year, we have decided to give the event more publicity by advertising a club open day combined with the festival. We are bringing a couple of layouts downstairs to give the event more appeal as well as having layouts upstairs in the club room. Hopefully we can bring in more visitors who will make more donations to church funds.

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Sadly, the church has suffered two break-ins this year, both on Saturdays. The first one did not directly affect us as the intruders were spotted and disturbed before they got upstairs. Unfortunately, the second time, the intruder managed to get upstairs. The security glass in both clubroom doors was broken using a fire extinguisher but the intruder did not enter. Whilst no damage was caused, there was a lot of clearing up to be done as glass was scattered all over parts of the room and at least one layout.

We are considering the construction of another N Gauge layout. At present we are discussing what we might build. All of our layouts are continuous run so we might well consider an end to end layout as a change. It would be designed with exhibition in mind – particularly easy set up. If we keep the existing four club layouts, we would design it to be portable, stored away easily and erectable in the centre of the room. Claire has come up with a number of ideas and scenarios for a local layout – whether Tipton Owen Street or somewhere else in the Black Country. It is possible that there might be a heavy industrial feel about the layout with little green and a lot of dark grey.

2025 is our 30th anniversary. Covid and lockdown ruined any chance of celebrating 25 years so we need to make 30 a big celebration. The only feature currently agreed on is 'cake'; we can consume a lot of cake on a Saturday afternoon. There have been a few suggestions but nothing has yet been planned.

As I pointed out earlier, we continue to be active on the exhibition scene locally. One reason for considering another layout is that two of our layouts have been heavily exposed over the last two years. Organisers have tried to cut their expenses a bit recently and have tended not to go too far afield for their visiting layouts. This has resulted in the "same layouts again" syndrome. Another factor locally is that the calendar is not evenly spread. There are plenty of shows running up to the end of April then things go fairly quiet until September when we get shows on consecutive weekends (Burton, TINGS, Lichfield, Stafford etc) and then on into October and November. There appears to be some discussion among organisers locally about reducing insurance costs; I'm not entirely sold on that idea and would be wary of letting one of our layouts go to a show where the insurance cover was inadequate. We have Third Party Public Liability Insurance that covers us when taking a club layout to a show but

Enough grumbling. We're looking forward to 2025 and year 30. I must end by adding my thanks to Edgar, Phil, Claire, Jules and Jane for their unwavering support in 2024.

Its Christmas and Santa is Coming

By Phil Hunt

Last Christmas I started to think about doing a layout with snow static grass; and wondered what I could do for a bit of fun. I decided that it could fit in with the Christmas tree festive at the church; this meant I needed to get this organised for December.

Time flies when you are thinking of doing something and its is nearly upon us.

Taking on the Clubs recent theme this is actually 009; I saw good offer on a 009 loco unpainted and decided I would go with that. I wanted it to be simple so that I could put it in the bay window and leave to run.

I decided on a simple circle one half of the layout would have a Christmas tree and presents underneath and the other side would be a winter scene full of snow.

Christmas tree side was fairly simple find a cheaper small tree in the sales after Christmas; the floor would be stained floor with the train going through the skirting board and disappearing. Even though the tree is small it still needs a longer length of lights than you would think.

The Winter side was build up at the corners and a central hill in the middle; I have done a small forest of trees left over from the garden railway and put a road at the back to break up the scenery. There is a car to go on this, covered in snow.

Generally foamboard cut and covered with pollyfilla, I did try now to keep this level and sanded the fills to remove grooves or provide a smooth surface for the static snow; painted white and then the static snow. I planted the tress after the initial snow fall; and then sprayed the trees and applied the static snow again.



The loco was unpainted and the wagons were unpainted kits so I decided to paint them the same two colours to reflect Christmas; I did try doing my own decals for the loco and wagons with varying success. Some of this success depended on the colour of the decal for some reason.

Just need Father Christmas to leave the presents now.

Happy Christmas



Tipton Christmas Tree Festival

by Jeremy Edwards

On Saturdays 7th and 14th December, our landlord, Tipton Green Methodist Church, ran their second Christmas Tree Festival. As per last year, we provided a small model railway exhibition but this time badged it also as a Club Open Day. As with 2023, the first Saturday was blighted by severe weather – Storm Daragh.

This time, with a bit better signage within the building, we decided to supplement this, particularly in case of crowding, by having a couple of layouts downstairs. We brought Gibben Quarry downstairs as it is the simplest layout to move and we invited Jim Webster to bring his innovative Tipton Garden Railway along too. On the first Saturday we were joined by trader, John Sutton, and Phil Hunt brought a special Christmas layout which had a Christmas tree (with presents) on one side and a snow scene on the other.

Attendance on the 'stormy 7th' was low and we had no specific visitors as a result of our advertising but the 14th was better. Whilst our attendance numbers were low, we did have a visitor who came all the way from Cambridge. Set up on the first day was plagued by a couple of electrical failures on Gibben Quarry and Waterstock. The temporary repair on Gibben Quarry failed again on the 14th and required a little 'thinking outside the box' to fix -even more than the week before. Once sorted, every layout performed reliably and creditably.

My thanks to the operating team of Dave Evans, Dave Griffin, Chris Thornton, Phil Hunt, Angie Boden, Carl Boden and Derek Gibbin. Thanks also to Claire Fisher, Jules, Ken Jones and Ian Bosworth for dropping in to support us.

We are now working out what we would like to do to celebrate our 30th anniversary.

Website Update

We are pleased to announce that our Social Media Manager, Jules, has been busy at work changing the arrangements for archiving newsletters on the website. The old arrangements made adding items to the archive quite difficult but help from our website provider, Wix, has enabled Jules to update the page a lot more easily and it has now been updated to the Autumn 2024 edition.

www.wmngc.co.uk

Mike Turner by Ken Jones

Many will know Mike as a former active member of the club who did most, if not all, of the construction work on Waterstock. His layout based on Water Orton is still in his garage not touched.

He is actually housebound as he had a stroke in March, and stability is an issue plus he is not allowed to drive. He still reads our newsletter etc.

He and his wife Ann were please to see Vince and I when we popped in to say hello on our way back from visiting Rail Support Systems at Wishaw and I took the below picture.

Ken



Scenic3D Printing

by Jeremy Edwards

I first came across this trader, Geoff, when I was at the Telford Steam Railway Show a few months ago. We had Bad Durkheim Ost, Trent Valley MRS larger German N Gauge layout. Geoff was in the same room at the village hall as we were. He had a large display of packeted 3D printed items covering a range of scales. Most items were of a scenic nature but he also had some templates for drilling holes to fix point motors to various types of track.

Scenic3D is part of a bigger organisation called Jumble Lane Printing who do a variety of different types of printing from key rings to backscenes and everywhere in between. Geoff is quite a regular at Warley Open Days and is breaking into the Model Railway Show scene with his 3D printing. We had various conversations during the day and looked at his range. At the time, I didn't need anything so didn't go any further.

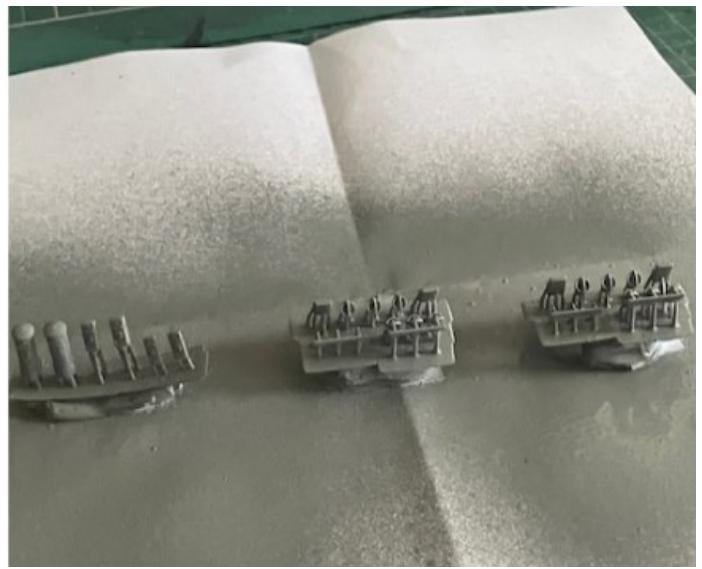
When deciding how to detail my station area particular on New Street, I remembered that he had some fire buckets. We had a conversation about those at Telford as someone had questioned the fact that they seemed rather large. He had checked his measurements at a heritage railway and made the comment that railway fires were rather large so you needed a big bucket. The range of N Gauge is relatively small and quite lot is fairly modern rather than the 60's that I needed; fire buckets and pillar boxes were available (I needed pillar boxes to decorate part of the street scene). I ordered 2 packs of fire buckets and a pack of pillar boxes, total cost including postage was £12.62. Delivery was quick.



Contents of the pack



A single pack contains a set of buckets on a hanger, 3 separate buckets, a hanger and a pair of alarms. All is neatly moulded and mounted so it is easy to paint before separating from the base.



Packet of Fire Buckets

The first stage was to prime the various items. I used Halfords Grey Primer aerosol (apparently no longer available in the same formulation according to Charlie Bishop). A reasonable coat all over the buckets and the pillar boxes was used.

Items primed



Painted ready for fitting

Starting a Model Railway Club

by Jeremy Edwards

This is a long and convoluted tale which continues to develop but I thought that this was the point to “come out” and explain what I have been involved in for several months. Last night, Monday 18th November 2024, was the date at which something finally started. How it develops and whether and how it flourishes we shall see.

Firstly, we need some history. Good Friday Communion service at Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church – I was sitting close to someone I knew well through Alpha Course and was bemoaning issues Trent Valley MRS were having with the landlord. This was before the service started. At the end of the service, the person next to me introduced himself and I had an interrogation about model railways only to get an invitation to speak at the local Falcon Lodge Chapel to their ‘Mainly 4 Men Group’. Up until then, my interest in model railways was little known. It’s now got to the stage that, when I answered the phone at our Community Shop, I was asked if I was the ‘Train Man’.

At a meeting where the ‘church week’ was being outlined, a member of the group commented “wouldn’t it be good if we had a model railway group at church?” That sowed the seed. Looking around the area, there isn’t a general model railway club in the town; Sutton Coldfield Railway Society organises an exhibition but is, in reality, what its name suggests – a railway club. The nearest general clubs are Birmingham MRC at Castle Vale and Trent Valley MRS near Lichfield. There was space and possibly a need so I followed it up.

The model of club that has arisen is somewhat similar to Bloxwich St Johns, indeed we have a Bloxwich member amongst our number. We are a ‘Special Interest Relational Community’ within Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church. As such, membership is open to anyone – whether they have faith or not; there are a number of similar groups including basketball, football, photography, artability. Compared to other clubs, we have a number of advantages, particularly financially.

My first task was to persuade the church that I knew what I was doing. All communities, whether they are the Relational Communities, House Groups or informal groups come under the eye of the Discipleship Team leader, Deb. She was the person, along with Mark, the admin team leader, I needed to persuade. Having written a couple of detailed breakdowns of what I had in mind I had a meeting with Deb. This happened in August and we agreed a way forward. Anselm, who was the person who made the initial suggestion, was interested in helping to run the group.

Date and time were the next problems. Finding a quiet time and space at the church is difficult – we ended up with Monday evening. It’s not that there is a shortage of rooms; they’re in regular use just about all of the time. We sorted out a date in October for a preliminary meeting and later found difficulty as the room we wanted had been booked out all month due to additional activities. Prior to this, I was asked to speak in both the morning and evening services for a couple of minutes to introduce the group and the meeting.

Meetings on a Monday are a little bit of a problem as Photography Club already meet on the second and fourth Mondays so I arranged to book the lounge for the first and third Mondays. The Church Lounge is a very pleasant area with a tv available for presentations and a kitchen for making filter coffee, tea and

serving snacks. It's a very good social venue and flexible enough for our uses. Storage at the church is an issue which I am trying to address; if we want to build and run a layout we need somewhere to store it. I have left the admin team leader scratching his head on that one.

I spoke in church and hung around with leaflets. We also had an advert in the weekly news email on the Friday before the exploratory meeting. We held our first exploratory meeting and there were six of us there. We decided to meet once a month initially and I set up some meetings. There was a consensus that we should build a layout of some sort. A couple of those present were also members of Sutton Coldfield Railway Society and they thought it might help if they put the word around there. As a consequence, I emailed Ray Gilbert, the SCRS Chairman, to explain what we were doing and that we weren't looking to compete, I had a very positive reply which has had some good consequences.

To avoid other church activities that at least two wished to be involved with, we agreed to meet on the third Monday to start with and I sorted out bookings. In December, Photography Club had already moved their second meeting a week earlier to avoid Christmas week so we have the room in the Church Hall booked instead. We're currently booked in up to the January meeting and I am about to put together a programme of days for the rest of 2025.

The first proper meeting was very positive. We had eleven attendees including at least three from the Railway Society. I organised a talk and demo on Scenic Ground Cover, including static grass. This appears to have gone down well. In the general discussion afterwards, we talked about expanding the scope of the group and enlarging it somewhat.

There are pros and cons for this sort of organisation. The advantages are linked to the venue. We get a comfortable, warm venue with great facilities and, being a church group, it is at no cost. In addition, to a certain extent, we also get professional back up from paid staff at the church. This means that our meeting costs are minimal and we are asking members to make a small donation to church funds. We do not need a bank account as all finance goes through the church, although I'm not sure how that is going to work later on.

The main disadvantages are linked to storage and room availability. Monday is a good night for the church to organise its Church Meetings where members vote on matters that the management and elders bring forward; I can foresee an issue there at some time – it has already affected Photography Club recently. Currently we don't have any sort of committee or constitution structure; as a Church group, I'm the nominated person as far as church management is concerned. To make things equitable, therefore, I need to make sure that all key matters are discussed and agreed on at meetings.

I have received some very positive emails after the first meeting. We're looking forward to the December meeting where I hope to have some baseboards for us to look at for a layout project.

West Midlands N Gauge Club 30th Anniversary by Jeremy Edwards

2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the formation of the club, initially as an area group of the N Gauge Society and later a fully fledged model railway club. In 2020 we were due to celebrate our 25th anniversary but sadly Covid 19 put paid to that and we didn't get very far.

30th anniversary is 'Pearl' and not normally such a milestone but since we didn't get to celebrate the 25th, we hope to make 2025 a bit different. Former chairman, Ken Jones, instigated the design of a special logo for the year and with input from Ian Bosworth and our Social Media Manager, Jules, we have a modified logo to suit.



We will be using this logo wherever possible next year; Ken has already started publicising it. You will notice that the wording around the outside has also changed slightly in format and we hope to use this as a general logo going forward. Eagle eyed observers might just spot the shell on the buffer beam of the loco representing a pearl.

As yet, no particular celebrations have been planned although most events are likely to include copious quantities of cake.

Where to see us in 2024

Club Layouts at Exhibitions in 2024

To be announced

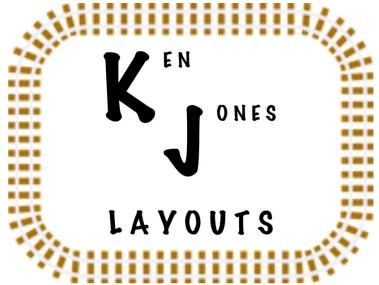
Member Layouts at Exhibitions in 2024

Ken Jones

2025

	Exhibition	Layout
Sat 8 th March	Wombourne	Waterfall Junction and The Bus Station – confirmed
Sat 22 nd March	Midland Model Buses / Alfreton	Jones of Taunton & The Bus Station – confirmed
Sat 29 th March	Tamworth	Anyone for T and The Bus Station - confirmed
Mon 26 th May	MBF at Wythall	The Bus Station and maybe static display - TBC
Sun 27 th July	Aldridge	Malken and the Bus Station - confirmed

Full details at <https://www.ukmodelshops.co.uk/layouts/kjl.html>



West Midlands N Gauge Club

Chairman: Jeremy Edwards

jeremyedwards606@hotmail.com

07720 902490

Treasurer: Edgar Mason,
assisted by Philip Hunt

Newsletter Editor:

Claire Fisher

Catch up with us here:

www.wmngc.co.uk

YouTube:

West Midlands N Gauge Club

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West Midlands N Gauge Club

Meeting Dates for 2025

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

Meetings may be subject to local or national restrictions and guidelines. For information about the meetings contact Jeremy Edwards on 07720 902490 or via the website.

Any changes will be circulated via the newsletter, email, text, Facebook posts or if necessary by text or phone call

