

West Midlands “N” Gauge Club NEWSLETTER



From our Chairman

We're now three months into 2025 and Spring is on its way. Life continues as usual at West Midlands N Gauge Club with plenty of enthusiasm, lots of trains being run and layout planning and building work continuing.

As you will read elsewhere, we're not being active on the exhibition scene this year; we may have a couple of bookings but nothing is confirmed as such. This is, hopefully, only a temporary pause as we look to build up a new team of volunteers over the next couple of years. Exhibiting our layouts has been a good recruitment policy for us so we need to come back stronger. We also need to build up a bigger portfolio of layouts as all three of our regular layouts have been well exposed recently.

Activities in our unofficial '009 sub-group' are starting to bear fruit. Dave Griffin got the track on Minchin Vale re-laid and operating well last year. Mick Higgins, with help from Angie and Carl Boden, is starting to bring the scenic side up to scratch. Jim Webster re-designed the control system for Sally Junction so that the control box could return to its owner. This showed up some reliability issues with the general wiring of the layout; Piers Milne has taken this on and made the wiring simpler and more like a traditional wiring arrangement.

The main N Gauge layouts continue in regular use at club meetings which have been well attended so far. We may need to do some fettling on various bits of the layouts but generally they are being

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reliable. We are still very much in the planning stage of a new layout (details to follow). A simple re-arrangement of the clubroom and use of a different door protocol will allow us to set up one possible version without causing a loss of circulation space.

Unfortunately, we've had quite a cold start to the winter in the clubroom as there have been issues with the central heating. This has been resolved fortunately for the last couple of meetings. The church had a new boiler fitted to replace the one that covered upstairs and the rear part of the hall. The company that fitted it had accidentally turned the supply to the upstairs part off and it took some time to find the problem. All is well now and we are feeling much warmer.

We're looking forward to a fruitful year with projects moving along and well attended meetings.

Jeremy

Exhibition Announcement

We have a core team of three members and a small group of about four other members who are involved in taking and operating layouts at exhibitions. Recently, we were in the position where we could not guarantee to provide a team for an exhibition later in the year and have therefore declined the invitation.

At one of our February meetings, we took the decision that we would not attend two day events and would probably only take the smaller layouts that we have available to one day events. This is a major step as we rely on exhibiting to draw in potential new members. It is also a situation that we would hope to rectify in the not too distant future as we hope to develop a small group who would be prepared to take on the mantle.

The West Midlands N Gauge Club

by Ken Jones (Updated from original text by Mike Turner)

2025 is an important year for the club, as we will be celebrating our 30th birthday, so here's a resume of our history. The West Midlands N Gauge Club started life as The West Midlands Area Group of the N Gauge Society and was formed in September 1995 by Geoff Waters.

Meetings were originally held at Langley Hall. It was decided that meetings would be held on the third Saturday of each month. No annual membership was to be charged, but it was felt that a £2 attendance fee should be levied to cover costs re the hall, tea etc., however, guests should not be charged for attending. It was decided that major investments in the model should be levied by separate invitation as and when needed. A Committee was appointedwe were ready to go!

Planning of the Club model began after considerable research and thought, and we began construction of a 20ft model based on a combination of Hatton and Yeovil Pen Mill. which, we christened Waterstock (a small village between Thame and Oxford) and which we hoped, would eventually join the exhibition circuit.

I took over the helm as Chairman 1997 after the unfortunate death of our founder, and we moved the club to larger (and cheaper) premises in The Church Hall at St. Michael and All Angels in Causeway Green Road, Langley, Warley. This remained our home-base until we were advised that the site was to be redeveloped.

A long search for a suitable Clubhouse resulted in a further move to our present location at Tipton Green Methodist Church Hall in 2004. At that time, we had as many non NGS members as we did NGS members so we changed our name to The West Midlands N Gauge Club, and created a new logo and constitution plus a website. Eventually we would cease being an area group of the NGS. We also organised outside speakers, before concentrating solely on our layouts

Waterstock went out to exhibitions in 2007 including the 40th anniversary of the NGS held at Kettering. It has since then been to several exhibitions including TINGS, before being replaced on the exhibition circuit by our smaller layouts.

Jeremy Edwards took over as chairman at the end of 2020 when I stood down. Fortunately, the club survived Covid but many original members have moved away or are no longer with us

Today we are still an active club, meeting normally twice a month, with now also a junior membership. We have 4 exhibition N gauge layouts, although Waterstock now stays in situ, and we have been given two 009 layouts which are being renovated to exhibition level. We now have an annual subscription plus pay per visit. There is talk of building a new layout, and an idea of making me life president of the club has faded away.

You'll find the club and individual members exhibiting at many exhibitions and we still have a newsletter which goes out to over 400 global readers. Besides our website we are also on social media now.

In all this time we have only needed 3 chairmen, 2 treasurers, 2 webmasters / social media managers and 4 newsletter editors and a lot of help from members and non-members to keep the club active and relevant. A special thank you to everyone who has helped the club in whatever way over the years, just too many to list individually.

Here are the main logos used in the time of the club:

1] our original logo



2] Our 2004 logo



3] 2015 logo



4] 2020 Logo



5] current logo used on social media / website



5] 2025 30th Anniversary Logo



6] My logo



Hopetown Darlington Part One

By Phil Hunt

On a recent trip back up to Middlesbrough my sister in law suggested that we went to Hopetown Museum in Darlington; the museum recently reopened at the end of last year after a refurbishment and was getting ready for the 200th anniversary of the creation of the modern railway.

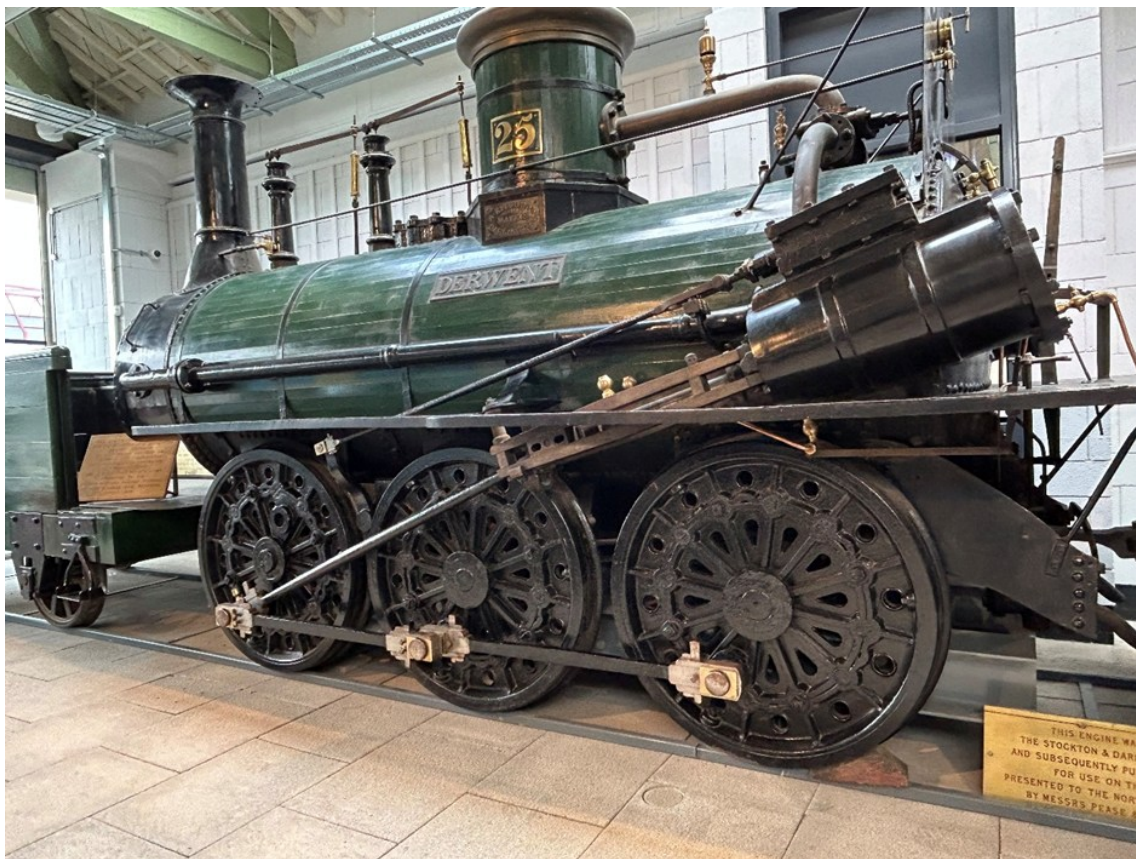
The museum is centred around the initial railway and comprises the original Goods shed (1833), now the main entrance; North Road station dating back to 1840; where most of the history is stored and the carriage works dating to 1853, where there is a display of their stores which has 30,000 artifacts and children's indoor play area. There is also a outdoor play area.

The museum houses the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust; and they have started a project to construct a new classic LNER locomotive the LNER P2 Class No2007 Price of Wales; there is a viewing gallery so you can watch over the works when the volunteers are working on the locomotive.

It was a good few hours walking around the museum and learning the history of the start of the railways and why certain towns in the area had actually been developed and quite a few interesting pictures/photos.

If I asked when did preserving locomotives actually start most of us would talk about the Beeching cuts but I was surprised by the answer 1898. No 25 Locomotive Derwent unless anybody knows anything different.





They also had this locomotive as part of the museum; however, the Hawthorns referenced was a family in the area rather than that to do with West Bromwich

Modelling Mojo and Money

by Jeremy Edwards

You may have noted that there hasn't been a 'follow-up' on my last New Street Update. Things have happened with the layout but there hasn't been any recent progress – well not enough to write about as I haven't finished any of my projects.

Motivation-wise, I've been a bit tied up with other projects – both my new group and moving the Trent Valley project forward. In addition, you may have noticed that I finally got around to replacing my car and that accounts for the 'money' part of the title.

I'm at the point with the scenery where I need to sort out some buildings amongst other things. To achieve what I would like, I need to spend some serious cash. When you reach this situation and the cash isn't available it does have a bit of an effect on your enthusiasm for the project. Can I pursue other projects with the layout? My other possible route involves 'chipping' some locos; I have a couple of tank engines to fit decoders to and the ones I need are fairly low cost. Painting figures could be another area of development – I have a few Peco unpainted figures plus some items I picked up cheaply at a show that are a bit too garish for 1960 so that may be an area to pursue.

In the meantime, I need to plan the electrics for Lichfield Trent Valley while Andy gets some more track laid and we discuss fine planning of the scenic track layout. I think I have plenty of things to keep me occupied and away from my layout.

I think our priorities sometimes change rather than it really being a 'mojo' issue and New Street will be back in my list of things to do shortly.

Ken's Trio of Buses

by Ken Jones

Here are pictures of my finished Coventry N gauge RE buses currently at the paint shop in Grimsby, and due here around Easter.

Produced by 3 Peaks Models and available only via Roger Bailey, they show the 3 liveries these vehicles carried.



Painted by hand for me by my good friend Malcolm Hall [NGS and MBF member] he will be taking back with him some Wolverhampton N Gauge Guy Arab V buses to paint as well as some other N gauge vehicles. He has also painted for me A GS in West Bromwich livery as seen in the fourth picture. The GS is a 3D model produced by Ray Rimes Designs



Structure Modelling in Card - An Odyssey - by Piers Milne

Part One

I started making architectural models in card just over 75 years ago when I was 10. At the time, in the late 1940s, there were only two firms producing kits of models in card. Modelcraft and, a little later, Micro-models. Modelcraft made kits of ships, lorries and locomotives. Micromodels started with a model of the original Globe Theatre in London and went on to do many more structures, trains, ships, aircraft and engineering items. They came in small paper packets a little under postcard size with, mostly, 6 sheets of card inside although some larger ones had 12 sheets. The backs of the packets had information about the prototypes. I built Micromodel kits of all these types continuously right through my schooldays - well over 100 models. The railway models were about 1:200 scale. When preparing to downsize homes, I sold the whole of my Micromodel collection together with a 12 foot long layout incorporating some of the train models to the Brighton Toy and Model Museum who were looking at the time to increase their own small Micromodel collection.



Here is an example of a Micromodel kit, as they came, together with a photo of the made up model. The train is 10 centimetres long and is therefore a little under N scale.

Then there was a diversion. Postage stamps grabbed my interest for about the next fifteen years until I saw a dream car for sale. The stamps were sold and the car, a Lotus Elite, was bought within a week!

I had some money left over from the stamp sale and, never having had a train set during the war years, my thoughts turned to doing so. After a very brief dalliance with British modern image OO, I was introduced to N gauge by the model shop owner. At the time Graham Farish had started to produce N gauge models but they were then of poor quality so I was shown Minitrix models from Germany and I was hooked. This was 1970 and I still have and run regularly many of the mainly Minitrix trains, but with a smattering of other makers' products, bought in the next few years.



Back to card. The shop stocked J F Schreiber kits of German castles and other card buildings which rekindled my interest and I haven't looked back since. I have built over 50 large and large scale models, the majority being European castles, and around 150 small and small scale models of many architectural subjects, in that time. The scales range from the largest at 1:160 - European N scale of course - down to 1:5000. Until recently, all have been made from commercial and, latterly some downloaded, kits from the web. The largest model I've made, the Prague Castle complex, at a scale of 1:625 is over 90 centimetres long and took over two months of concentrated work to build.



The smallest scale model is of the Kremlin in Moscow at approx 1:5000 which took nearly as much time including the painting of the black and white print. It only measures 19 centimetres along the front and includes a vast number of buildings.



In the 1990s an oddball American of Dutch descent, real name John Tramosch but calling himself Chip Fyn, migrated to England and settled in Banbury where he started to produce very simple postcard and double postcard size card kits of English mainly vernacular buildings. Of the 150 small buildings noted above around 100 came from him. They were not very well printed by a firm in Banbury with many slight variations of design and colour between production batches.

Often these consisted of no more than a dozen parts and many could be constructed within a few hours. Most are roughly to N scale. I made a tiered display rack for them and here are a few to give you an idea of the range. They can also make very useful and cheap buildings for rear-of-layout use.

I have some sets of surplus kits for sale if anyone is interested and could bring them to a club meeting. Set prices range from £5 for about 10 models to £10 for about 20 or more models.



Anyone For T By Ken Jones

Update July 2020

Built in a cutlery box 2009, and mothballed since 2013, this is actually an O gauge garden layout with O gauge scenery and the garden railway in T gauge. Part of an affluent household, their gardeners are still on site whilst some friends have popped round for lunch to see the trains running and take some pictures.

It only went to 5 exhibitions before being mothballed. It was lightly damaged at a church hall with a sprung floor when children running around the hall caused the trains to jump off the track and crash. It was more severely damaged in 2013 when a visitor with a back pack trying to reach a trader's stand turned round and sent the whole layout to the edge of the table pulling out wires and sending the trains flying within the layout. It was lucky the layout didn't end up on the floor. I wish people with back packs at exhibitions would carry them if they have to bring them in to the exhibition – end of rant.

What the lock down has enabled many modellers to do is to go back and look at such mothballed layouts, and I've just done that with this T gauge layout. The scenery was not affected by the damage – the main flower beds and lawn were made for me by our very own Rodney Hodge. So, the wiring was out, easily fixed and then clean the track. After this, and the usual questions like – so why is nothing happening? are the wheels dirty? why is this happening to me? – the 2 power cars of the HST started up.

T gauge, and the original controllers for it that I'm using, have since been improved meaning my trains, when running, just wizz round, but at least they were running. Next try the other track by taking off one of the power cars and cross fingers – that's optional. Great, 2 tracks running, time for a coffee.

Now what else will work – well after a while, and more coffee, my blue 4-car Japanese EMU started up, and I also got the single locomotive, actually built for a garden railway, to work as well. The rolling stock involved in the 2013 crash didn't work. They are a brown 4-car Japanese EMU and a Japanese single car unit. I will need to send them next year to Alan Ramsay at www.tgauge.com to see if they can be repaired.

Following the article in WM N Gauge Club interim newsletter number 5, I did send the two non-running units, damaged by the man with the rucksack, to Alan at www.tgauge.com for his assessment. He removed all the wheels on the 5 carriages, ultrasonically cleaned and re-fitted them and the 4-car unit was working again. Not so lucky with the single unit and he had to take it apart, where he found a split gear. We decided while the unit was apart not only to change the gear wheel but to upgrade the motor to give me better overall running.

Update 2025

Well, nothing happened because of Lockdown and exhibitions where the layout was due to attend were cancelled. Jeremy asked me to bring it to the Tamworth show this year, and the problem is with the stock being idle for so long I've had to pay to have 4 locomotives serviced

again, so at the moment they are running but whether we get a train to run is a different case. So, I've decided to mothball it again after the Tamworth show [29th March] as I have other layouts which need to be seen and are less expensive to repair.

So, hoping as many of you came to see it at Tamworth, here's a picture of locos under test in January this year.



West Midlands N Gauge at Dosthill

by Jeremy Edwards

Trent Valley Model Railway Society ran a new show at DBC Club for Young People (formerly Dosthill Boys Club) on Saturday 29th March. The show was managed by Peter Garton who is a Trent Valley member and a leading light in DBC Club. The aim of the show, which was run jointly, was to raise funds for the DBC Club and a small amount for TVMRS. Trent Valley had been involved, as a supplier of labour, to a couple of shows in Tamworth about 25 years ago but there had been nothing in the built up area of Tamworth since then.

As a part of the organising group I ensured that WMNGC were present in the form of Ken (supported by Vince) and Jules. Although in my TVMRS role, I was operating part of the TVMRS German layout (Bad Durkheim Ost).



Bad Durkheim Ost – TVMRS Layout run by Jeremy Edwards (Photo P. Garton)



Anyone for T – Ken Jones (Photo P. Garton)



Udford Wood Halt and Bear Hunt – Jules



Brocolitia – Jules (photo P. Garton)

I'm pleased to report a good attendance for a first show with a good financial outcome for DBC Club.

Jeremy Edwards

Where to see us in 2025

Club Layouts at Exhibitions in 2025

To be announced

Member Layouts at Exhibitions in 2025

Ken Jones

2025

Exhibition

Layout



Sat 8 th March Bus Station – confirmed	Wombourne	Waterfall Junction and The
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>

Piers Milne

2025

Exhibition

Layout

March 8	Wombourne	Trifoulou
March 22	Bournville I&NG +ERA	`Gottingen Sud
April 12	SRS AGM	Trifoulou
April 26	Blackheath	El Cremallera
September 13/14	TINGS	El Cremallera
September 20	Trent Valley	St. Frazal d'Ardeche
October 11/12	Warley Statfold	Oberdorf/II

West Midlands N Gauge Club

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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

Scan the below QR:



Facebook:

West Midlands N Gauge Club

Meeting Dates for 2025

4th January

18th January

1st February

15th February

1st March

15th March

5th April

19th April

3rd May

17th May

7th June

21st June

5th July

19th July

2nd August

16th August

6th September

20th September

4th October

18th October

1st November

15th November (alternative date for AGM)

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

