
West Midlands "N" Gauge Club

Newsletter

Volume 13 Issue 1

March 2010

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Rock Battye
Whin Rigg
33 St Andrews Drive
Perton
Wolverhampton
West Midlands
WV6 7YL

Tel: 01902 745472

Welcome to the first issue of 2010!

Some slight excuse for the lateness of this issue is that I was awaiting the results of that all-important vote on the name for Layout 3. The votes are in and counted, and our Chairman has opened the envelope containing the name of the winner. Somewhere in this issue you will find out the result!

You will also find accounts of progress on the club's other layouts, and an account of lack of progress on the editor's. A couple of exhibitions over Easter which will be worth a visit, and a pleasantly surprising and somewhat unusual find that your editor 'discovered' recently.

News of exhibitions where you can see the club layout in action as well as some of Ken's collection of small layouts are included, and the dates of forthcoming club meetings just to jog the memory.

Volume 13 Issue 2 should appear in early June.

Copy deadline for the next issue is

1 May



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

For those of you who missed our AGM, perhaps the two most important things discussed were, firstly, that we needed to get on with the major changes needed to *Waterstock*, and, secondly, that, as we have not had many people attending in the last quarter of 2009, we might consequently have to increase the weekly subscription.

I'm glad to say that, so far in 2010, attendance has been good, and there are at least two working parties active on *Waterstock*, so that's one subject on which I don't have to moan. (I might moan anyway – some things are now expected.)

But the bad news is that rental for our premises will rise some time in 2010, so a rise in subscriptions will be inevitable.

Ken Jones, Chairman

Chairman: Ken Jones

0121 777 7062

Email: info@kenjonestrains.co.uk

Treasurer: Edgar Mason

THE CLUB LAYOUTS

Waterstock . . .

A list of priorities has been drawn up, and a decision has been made to add another point and slip by the engine shed, linking the main lines. The old track is up and most of the new track is in place, though unballasted as yet. Then, of course, we have additional electrics to look forward to – or, at least, Len does. At the other end of the layout, a point has been put in from the small sidings into the fiddle yard, to accommodate longer trains going down the branch.

Water Orton . . .

Mike has worked really hard to demonstrate that a locomotive will run round this layout, even though we had to do it with pliers and bits of metal to join electrical sections together. It worked, and we all stood in amazement as the loco left Water Orton station bound for the fiddle yard. Well done to Mike – it was very atmospheric, I guess like the first train on the Stockton and Darlington Railway . . .

Layout 3 . . .

This layout will be our reserve layout while *Waterstock* is being upgraded. Rodney and his team have made a nice wooden border for the layout, and have put the point motors in place, which Len has already wired up. And news is just in about a name for this layout, so, after a good turnout of the electorate and an anxious wait while the votes were counted, it can be announced that the winner is . . .

(please turn to page 3)

PROGRESS AT WINTHWAITE

No sooner does your editor start to implement one 'good idea' than he has another. It usually involves tearing up a few miles of wiring and several yards of track. Actually, although this latest wheeze was quite 'radical', the only effect it had on Winthwaite station was to turn it round (again). Let me explain.

Way back in the distant past, in another life and another gauge (OO, to be precise), I had a 'roundy-roundy' layout. One scenic section was of a wayside station (if I say I still have it and it lives in the garage, I hope I won't be drummed out of the society) and took up most of one wall of the 'spare room'. The other was a small MPD, taking up most of the opposite wall. These were connected by non-scenic sections which were removable and included a 'bridge' across the doorway.

There was insufficient room to set this up in our present home (which is why half of it is in the garage). I down-sized to N-gauge in order to use smaller baseboards, and avoid damaging either myself or (even more importantly) the decorating when the boards needed to be moved around. I imagined that, even in the smaller scale, a 'roundy-roundy' would not be possible.

Then Kato produced their track in two smaller radii. I'd like to follow with the

word 'immediately', but unfortunately my brain is more Stockton & Darlington than HS1, and it was quite some time before I realised the implications. You'll be there before me, I realise, but I'll spell it out just the same: I could have two (possibly) scenic boards, connected by non-scenic Kato track sections, and still be able to accommodate the necessary width on the usual size of kitchen unit, the sort I have in the 'den'.

Reaching over would be no problem, though the rear 'scenic section' would be a non-scenic fiddle yard, since, tucked away behind the front section, you wouldn't really see it. As Winthwaite has two tracks exiting on one side and just one on the other, I'd need a double-track semi-circle on one side and a single-track (Radius 2) semi-circle on the other. The fiddle yard would have the two tracks merge into one, with one siding in each direction to serve as staging.

So much for theory, but would it work in practice? Kato track is easy to set up and dismantle, so I quickly had the semi-circles supported on spare pieces of timber. A fiddle-yard was put together on a spare 30 in by 9 in baseboard. The partially-finished Winthwaite completed the circle. One of my trusty Class 08 shunters took to the rails, power was applied, and the engine departed Winthwaite heading north. A few moments later, the engine arrived at Winthwaite from the south, having successfully completed the circuit.

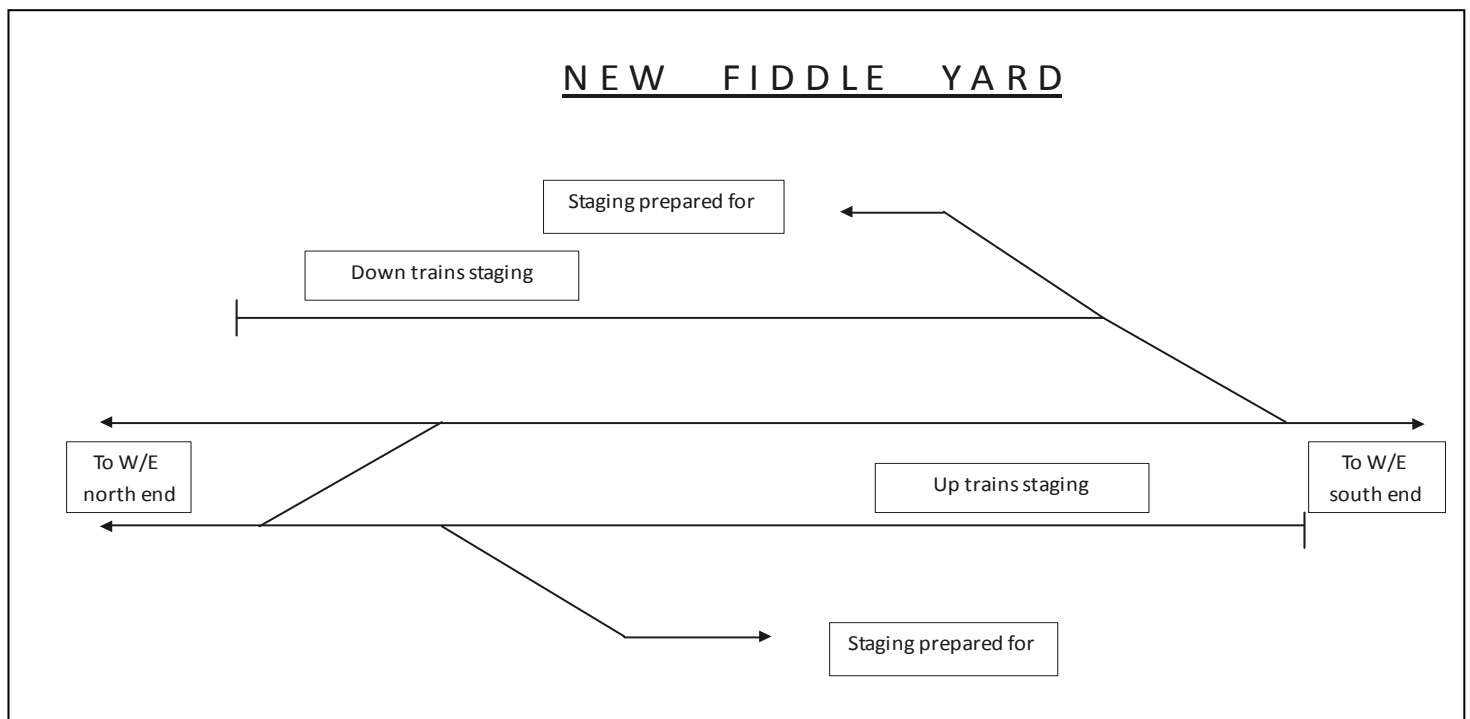
Some of the larger engines didn't take kindly to the smaller radius, so I guess the 'Duchess' will be rostered to always travel in the same direction. Saves having to worry about turntables!

All this was 'displacement activity' while I was marking overseas GCE papers in November and December. Then the exam board 'invited' me to mark January GCSEs (you never say 'no' to an exam board), so four weeks of good modelling time in January and February was taken up with the marking of 700 scripts.

As a result, there hasn't been much progress since, but I now have the new fiddle yard with the track permanently laid, wiring of track feeds and point motors being above baseboard (a great incentive to keep it tidy). Two staging sidings will eventually be provided for trains in each direction (only one each is installed at the moment).

Finally, for hawk-eyed readers, the 'sidings' at Winthwaite will of necessity become dummy roads where stock can be displayed, and the diesel MPD can become a 'scenic section' to replace Winthwaite whenever I fancy a change.

The possibilities of 'replacement sections' is endless – steam MPD, American or Continental, tramways, industrial, etc. etc. – I can 'pipe-dream' away for years and years – and, with all the papers I've been marking, it will all be funded by the exam board!



EASTER BUNNIES

It's that time of year again, when we like to encourage those lucky enough to get away on holiday at Easter to sample an exhibition or so. If you are travelling north there's a couple that might tempt you.

If you head for the Lake District, then Barrow-in-Furness, in the south of the county of Cumbria, is hosting the Furness Model Railway Club's 48th Annual Easter Model Railway & Transport Exhibition at Forum 28, Barrow-in-Furness.

Held on Friday 2nd, Saturday 3rd, Sunday 4th April.

Opening times are:
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
each day.

Admission charges are:

| | |
|----------|-------|
| Adults | £4.00 |
| Seniors | £3.00 |
| Children | £2.00 |

Family Tickets are available (2 + 2) at a cost of £10.00.

Advance tickets are available at a 10% discount from the Forum 28 booking desk.

There will be at least 8 working layouts, including:

Loch Dore (OO)
Apethorn Junction (O)
Sykes Bridge Shed (O)
Perrapswill (Swiss HO)
Santa Barbara (US N)
Sweethome Chicago (US HO)

There will be many society stands, including NMRA (British Region) and the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway. On the Cumbrian Railways Association stand, you will be able to buy their latest publication, *The Ulverston & Lancaster Railway*, by Les Gilpin, or (not for the faint-hearted) a kit of 'squirrel' seats (though not, alas, in N-gauge!).

There will be trade stands and displays, including a Barrow Transport Group display.

Contact: 01229 588 082

If your destination is the Yorkshire Dales, or maybe by the sea at Scarborough, then York needs no recommendation as a railway 'Mecca'. It will be the venue for the 48th Annual York Model Railway Show, at the *Knivesmire Stand, York Racecourse*.

Held on Saturday 3rd, Sunday 4th, Monday 5th April.

Opening times are:

Daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
(Last paid admissions 45 minutes before close)

Admission charges are:

| | |
|------------------------|--------|
| Adults | £8.00 |
| Seniors | £6.00 |
| Children | £6.00 |
| Family Tickets (2 + 2) | £22.00 |

Advance booking is available, when the charges are:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Adults | £7.50 |
| Children & Seniors | £5.50 |
| Families (2 + 2) | £20.50 |
| Weekend Ticket, Adult | £16 |

and these give access to the Show 15 minutes before the official opening time.

Write to :

Mr J L Wills, 17 Danebury Drive,
Acomb, York, YO26 5EQ
Please enclose an SAE for reply
and make cheque/PO payable to *York Model Railway Show*.

There will be 42 working layouts, including (only space to mention N-gauge or thereabouts!):

Buffalo River Railroad (HO n3)
Dingle (OO9)
Moorton Bottom Yard (OO9)
Ghylldale (OO9)
Larpool and Easington (TTn3)
Mini-MSW (2FS)
Lea Bank (N)
Claydon (N)
The Long Line (N)
Bridgford (N)
Great Burden (N)
Dyna Hyfryd (N)
Nevermoor (Z)
California Coast (Z)

Contact: 0165 694 319

LAYOUT 3

Sorry – I just couldn't resist indulging in that infuriating practice certain newspapers have, when after getting readers all excited with a big fat headline, after a single paragraph you are requested to 'Turn to Page 3, Column 4', which is usually totally the wrong place anyway, and you then waste ages trying to track it down. But, in this case, it is on page 3, like I said it would be.

The suggested names for Layout 3, on which members were entitled to vote, were (in alphabetical order):

38DD
Aldridge Alps
Berleigh
Black Country Crags
Far Away
Layout Three
Over the Hills
Phoenix Point
Sandwell Peaks
Thisledo
Thiswildo
Tipton Hills
Twin Peaks
West Midlands Mountains

Voters had three votes, and could send in the names they preferred in 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Ken gave 3 points to a first choice, 2 to a second, and 1 to a third. The layout name which received the most points was to be declared the winner.

Compared with this voting system, proportionate representation must be a doddle. The intention was to avoid having umpteen names with just one vote. However, by a substantial majority, the winner was declared to be

Tipton Hills

and by the time you read this it will have had its first outing, to the West Bromwich show at the chapel in the High Street on 13 March.

Many thanks to all those who cast their votes.

A MINING TREAT

A visit to Keswick a few weeks ago gave me a very pleasant surprise. As you drive in from the south, past County Corner, on the right just opposite the car park is a white-washed building called Otley House. In it is a mining museum, relocated from Threlkeld about six years ago. I hadn't seen it before, not having had reason to go down that road, supposing it only led to the shops (wrong again, dumbo!), and it was a pleasant surprise.

Ian Tyler (seen at work painting one of the old mine cars) runs the museum, and he gave us a splendid introduction, covering the geology of the area, the arrival of the first mining experts from Germany in 1564, and a description of the many and varied mining activities which were carried out in the area.

The museum itself was a fascinating Alladin's cave of treasures to explore, and far too many to describe here. I enjoyed seeing the bell code notices, detailing the signals given by banksmen and onsetters to the winding engineman (my maternal grandfather was a winder).

ON THE ROAD

Ken will have a couple of his layouts at the N Gauge Society AGM in Urmston on 22 May.

They will also, together with club layout *Waterstock*, be at the N Gauge 2010 Show in Leamington Spa on 11/12 September.

Ken's layouts make further appearances at Zedex on 10 October, Birmingham on 23 October and Solihull on 6 November.

A vast collection of books included many of railway interest, and covered so of the more out-of-the-way industrial lines which were once so much part of the landscape and of which so little remains.

It was well worth the £4 admission charge for the 2-hour video show alone, and there was a rock and slate garden to explore, in which you could see the biggest roofing slate in Cumbria (much better than that inferior Welsh stuff). For an extra £2 you can try your hand at panning for gold – it's good fun, but don't expect to make your fortune!

WEBSITES

Ken is sorry to have to tell us that his website is currently down, and will remain so until he has worked out what to do. Hopefully it will re-emerge, and be brought up to date in the near future.

However, the club website is unaffected, updated and remains on line. Visit it at:

www.ngaugewmg.co.uk

2009 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, except in December, from 2pm to 5pm.

Meeting dates for the rest of the year:

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

There will be no meeting on December 18th.

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:

info@kenjonestrains.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.

