

---

---

# West Midlands "N" Gauge Club

---

---

# Newsletter

Volume 14 Issue 3

September 2011

## EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Anthony Butler  
43, Severn Way,  
Cressage,  
Shrewsbury.  
Shropshire.  
SY5 6DS

Tel: 01952 510133



## HEADCODE

**Welcome to the September issue of 2011**

In this edition, together with the usual club members' news and the thoughts of Chairman Ken we have another 'One Evening Make' by Tony Minchin who surely was a Blue Peter fan in his youth. Here he relates an experiment with automatic uncoupling.

We also have some layout news, an obituary and the regular 'Tail Lamp' column.

This quarter we have the first of an occasional series of prototype outlines with an article for 7F fans.

We also have a new 'Mixed Traffic' column, which will give news and occasional articles of club members outside interests.

TB

**Volume 14 Issue 4 should appear in early December.**

**Copy deadlines for the next four issues are:**

December Issue: 12<sup>th</sup> November  
March '12 Issue: 11<sup>th</sup> February  
June '12 Issue: 5<sup>th</sup> May  
September '12 Issue: 11<sup>th</sup> August

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

It's a question of trying to rally the troops at the moment following the death of Mike Walker and news of the personal circumstances of Mike Turner. It's been a tough, sad time but we are bouncing back and preparing for the N Gauge Show in September and looking forward to the future. We will always be pleased to see you at our meetings.

Best wishes

*Ken Jones, Chairman*

**Chairman: Ken Jones**

0121 777 7062

Email: [westernsultan@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:westernsultan@hotmail.co.uk)

**Treasurer: Edgar Mason**

## THE CLUB LAYOUTS

**Waterstock . . .**

The layout is being prepared for The International N Gauge Show and a picture of it is on the front of issue 4/11 of the N Gauge Society Journal. This may be its last outing away from its base for some time. The cost of hiring a van, and the lack of operators willing to travel may make it impossible to attend other exhibitions – so go see it at Leamington because we don't know when you'll see it again unless you visit us at Tipton. The club is grateful to Rodney who has secured a one off use of a van for us to honour the commitment to attend the show. Our attendance at the show is dedicated to the memory of Mike Walker.

**Water Orton . . .**

With the personal circumstances of Mike Turner this layout is currently moth balled. In the next newsletter we'll be able to tell you if we have decided to dismantle it or grab the nettle and get on with it.

**Tipton Hills. .**

Considering where we are with our two big layouts detailed above this will possibly become our club's exhibition layout for the foreseeable future as it will fit in a car and can be worked by 2 members. The aim is to finish outstanding work on this layout by the end of this year

*KJ*

## DEPARTURES

### Mike Walker – an obituary.

The club is sorry to announce the recent death of Michael Walker who was one of our keenest and youngest club members. He also did much to promote the Severn Valley Railway.

Mike was not only one of the club's main operators but had hand built the signals for "Waterstock" and was in the process of replacing the plastic signals with more robust brass ones. He was also the club driver for taking "Waterstock" to exhibitions and securing the use of a lorry from his kind employer.

Truly a gentle giant Mike never lost his temper and was always there when we needed help. In 2010 he had a major operation to remove cancer and fought it off to return to both work and railway modelling. The cancer returned this year with fatal consequences, and our thoughts are with Mike's family.

It's a testament to the kind nature of Mike that his funeral was attended by many of his colleagues from his work as well as from this club. Many people will surely miss him. *Ken Jones*

## CLUB MEMBERS

We've heard from the family of **Alfred Hill** who now lives in Huntingdonshire. Alf was a member of the club from the start and it was poor eyesight that made him give up model railways and move nearer to his daughter. Alf has recently been on a trip organised for people with sight difficulties to Cumbria including a trip on Lake Windermere and a ride on the Lakeside and Haverthwaite railway. He still receives this newsletter, which is now read out to him. Good for you Alf – next time stop to tidy our cupboard, please!

**Mike Turner** is facing personal problems over HS2 despite appearing on TV for 10 seconds which most of us missed. It's a real strain on his health and he faces a large devaluation in his house, which he had made his home. His battle to stop HS2 continues. The views of HS2 on the club's website are Mike's personal opinions and not necessarily those of the club or other members.

**Ken Jones** [our chairman] has continued to take pictures of vintage buses several of which get published on websites and one of which has become a star picture on a classic bus website, the second one for Ken this year. He's getting one of his N gauge layouts ready for the Leamington show and his z gauge layout for Zedex in October.

**Rodney Hodge** has retired from work although he seems to be busier than usual. He continues to build some unique N gauge items both in terms of rolling stock and scenery, his N gauge steam unit and six wheel coaches have appeared as guests on other layouts at exhibitions this year.

**Derek Purves** is also very active in 300mm: 1ft as well as 2mm:ft and has been busy on the Welshpool & Llanfair Railway during the summer with Memorial trains, Magic Weekends complete with conjurers and has also been working on Monarch to refresh the paintwork before the forthcoming Gala weekend on September 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>. Derek announces some forthcoming attractions elsewhere in this issue.



Dougal at work during the magic weekend.



Monarch, splendidly turned out.

**Tony Butler** has been busy with some structure modelling scratchbuilding a LNWR pattern Coal Hole and Water Tank in 2mm, hopefully some photo's of it will appear here sometime in the future. Maybe he will bring it up the club one Saturday for general perusal. He has also been busy structure modelling in 300mm/ft following the catastrophic failure of his hot water cylinder at Whitsun. He has been working alongside builders, plasterers and decorators to repair the damage to his house and cites this as reason for lack of progress on the modelling front and his 'patchy' attendance at the club. He should be finished and moved back in by the time you read this. Oddly enough, he didn't seem to do any more modelling before the burst tank though he presumably had more time. (My modelling output only ever *creeps* along at best anyhow – Ed).

## ONE EVENING 'MAKE'

### An Automatic Uncoupling Idea Using Opposing Magnets

By Tony Minchin

I have been thinking of a quick and easy way of automatic uncoupling using opposing magnets. I claim no originality for the idea; it may have been thought of before for all I know, but either way, it works for me.

I purchased the magnets from a site called "Guy's Magnets" trading on e-bay (I have no association other than a satisfied customer etc.).

The size of each tiny magnet is 2mm x 1mm. At the time of purchase they were running at £2.94 for 50.

Yes 50! Though if you have anything like my experience you'll need all fifty as they are constantly either attracting or repelling each other and so they tend to fly around and go missing. They usually turn up again stuck to the most unlikely things. The fridge, tools, spectacles - almost anything.

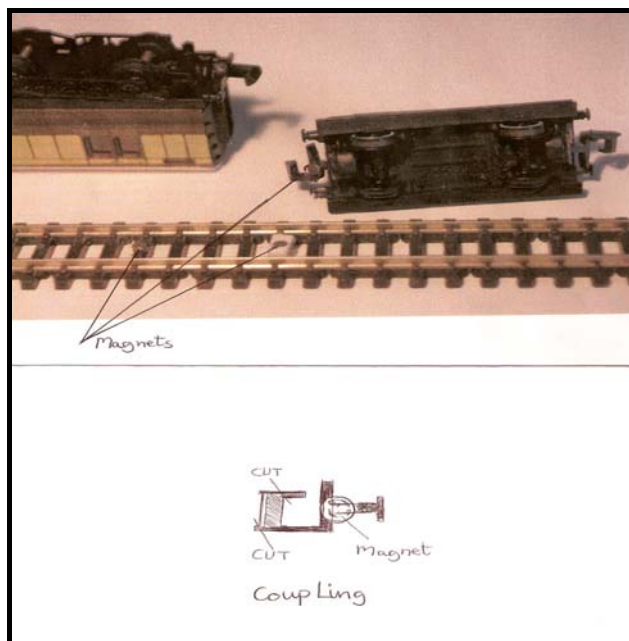
You need to use the magnets as a pair. Glue one magnet to a sleeper on the track or, if you prefer, they will fit between the sleepers so that you can embed them in the ballast.

The other magnet will be fitted to the underside of the coupling. You will need to ensure that the coupling mounted magnet has the right 'face' or pole presented to the track mounted magnet so that when the coupling passes over the track magnet the coupling is repelled in an upwards direction. This can be a little tricky and is another opportunity for magnets to 'disappear' if they are not firmly gripped with tweezers or some such.

Before gluing the magnet to the underside of the coupling, it is best to cut and sand paper it with some fine wet and dry (see diagram).

Remember, it only needs a magnet on the end that will be uncoupled.

I found that Peco brake wagons and a shunter wagon on a Peco chassis were the most suitable subjects for this modification. Tony Minchin.



## **MIXED TRAFFIC**

I am indebted to **Derek Purves** who has sent me details of the Annual Gala to be held on the Welshpool & Llanfair Railway. TB.

\*\*\*\*\*

Coming up- September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, our Annual Gala with an intensive service. Intensive because, on the Saturday and Sunday, there will be around 15 departures from Llanfair instead of a typical 3 departures. The Timetable should now be on the website [www.wllr.org.uk](http://www.wllr.org.uk). Usually supported by Traction Engines, Morris's Sentinal Wagon, Organs, booksellers etc. Free minibus from Llanfair Station to the Leisure Centre for the Garden Rail exhibition.

(Derek and Pam will be there at about 9.00am on the Saturday to take over, or help, with the Bacon Butty stall until they run out. Pam is then in the Tearoom for her stint with Teas etc and Derek will probably be Stewarding in the Workshop).

## PROTOTYPE OUTLINES Austin 7's

Doubtless some irony led to one of the largest locomotives on the LMS being nicknamed 'Austin Seven'. OK, both were 7's and came out at around the same time, but they had little in common – apart from a tendency to run hot if worked hard.

The 0-8-0 minerals loco was introduced in 1929 to fill a gap that would be appropriate for a more powerful engine than its elder sister, the 4F. Its purpose was to alleviate the common double-heading practice inherited from the Midland Railway small engine policy. This was also the intention of the Bayer Garratts introduced about two years earlier.

The design called for an improved and standardised version of the LNWR G1 and G2 locos which had already proved their worth. A G7's boiler was fitted, operating at the higher pressure of 200lb sq.in. This supplied two inside cylinders of 19in. diameter by 26in. stroke, driving 4ft.8 in. diameter wheels, with Walschaerts long travel valve gear.

The loco had the stamp of Fowler and Derby in its appearance and was partnered with the Fowler 3,500 gallon tender, later fitted with coal rails to increase capacity. A good front-end layout gave very favourable steaming, with lower coal consumption than its LNWR predecessor, the G2. However, as with the Garratts, small axle bearings to the 4F specification were used which proved to be the Achilles heel of the 7F. Only low mileage was possible between overhauls, with much bad performance as rapid wear prematurely set in.

Withdrawals of the 175 strong class took place between 1959 and 1962.

## 2011 PROGRAMME

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

---

Meeting dates for the rest of the year:

|           |                       |                  |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------------|
| September | 3 <sup>rd</sup>       | 17 <sup>th</sup> |
| October   | 1 <sup>st</sup>       | 15 <sup>th</sup> |
| November  | 5 <sup>th</sup>       | 19 <sup>th</sup> |
| December  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> (AGM) | --               |

There will be no meeting on December 17<sup>th</sup>.

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](mailto:westernsultan@hotmail.co.uk)

Website: [www.ngaugewmg.co.uk](http://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

Visiting recently a number of exhibitions, large and small, has exposed what I think is a tendency on the part of the layout operators to overlook the primary purpose of their presence at such venues, namely, to entertain the visiting public. Now, I'm not decrying timetable operation, fly shunting and other attempts at miniature realism, far from it, I consider these essential if a layout is going to bear any resemblance to the real thing, *but*, and it's a big but, there is a time and a place for everything. If you have ever stood back at a show and studied the faces of the people who, having exercised considerable patience in line and often then extraordinary physical effort to simply get near a layout only to see the operators holding an unheard debate or, possibly just a grubby blackboard with the words "Next Demonstration at..." then you will know what I mean.

No show organiser expects exhibitors to run their layouts until ice is needed over the power units but some thought should be given to the expectant public who pay to come and see us.

The argument that exhibitions are held for real enthusiasts hardly holds water these days when so much emphasis is put on attracting greater footfall or bigger 'gates'. No, if we are going to attract everybody who is even mildly interested in model railways, and so, ultimately to be able to draw on this crowd for new recruits into the hobby, then to start with, value for money is required.

If the watching public contain a portion of would-be modellers whose tastes run on higher planes than continuous, circuitous running and dizzy spiralling around gradient loops, then they will make themselves known to the exhibitors I feel sure. This being so, a temporary return to feasible operating practice, accompanied by explanatory dialogue will prove effective with everybody; the uninitiated, the borderline cases and even dyed-in-the-wool clubmen alike. So please, kind operators, remember that the bulk of your audience like to see things moving, and, whilst using the receptive grey matter, engage your audience in conversation if you can, many of whom will be just bursting to ask a question or two but are either displaying that famous British reserve, or perhaps just plain shy. And always bear in mind an old theatrical rule "Never turn your back to your audience". Go on folks, give them what they want. You know you want to.

This issue is for Mike.