
West Midlands "N" Gauge Club

Newsletter

Volume 15 Issue 1

March 2012

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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HEADCODE

Welcome to the March issue of 2012 and a Happy, if slightly used, New Year to you all.

Once again I feel obliged to start with an apology. This quarter it is for the lateness of publication rather than the size of the newsletter. I recently had a spell of enforced idleness following a short hospitalisation all of which has put me behind somewhat. However, I'm now up to full boiler pressure and once again ready to roll.

So, this issue, we get a railpass to Chritine Hodges USA theme layout Charlieville, Some exciting news of a new club project – Waton, to be built on a shoestring as far as possible

There are also some updates on Club members various activities, a super sized layout news column and the regular 'Tail Lamp' column. *TB*

Volume 15 Issue 2 should appear in early June 2012.

Copy deadlines for the next four issues are:

June '12 Issue: 5th May
Sept '12 Issue: 11th August
Dec '12 Issue: 12th November
Mar '13 Issue: 9th February



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I'm now 60 and seem to have been the club chairman for a very long time, but it keeps me off the streets so they say. This year the club became a subscription one after free membership from the day we started. There has always been a levy when people attend to pay for room hire etc but with less people attending and costs going up we were forced to charge a subscription like most clubs do, and we will make it pro-rata so that if you join in July you'll only pay 50% of the subscription in that year. If you just want to visit us because you are in the area then there is no charge.

If you want more information about the club contact me or pop in and see us during one of our meetings.

Best wishes

Ken Jones, Chairman

Chairman: Ken Jones

0121 777 7062

Email: westernsultan@hotmail.co.uk

Treasurer: Edgar Mason

THE CLUB LAYOUTS

Waterstock...

Work on the turntable in the engine shed area has faltered recently. The previous plan to turn the thing using an un-prototypical Fleischmann turntable mounted below seemed to work at first but the turntable exhibited a strange rocking motion like some demented nodding donkey. Tony M has since put together a bespoke drive with worms and spur gears but this too appears a little jerky. It may just be that there is not sufficient play in the mech to overcome periodic error in the spur gear. Further experimentation is required but right now it seems we may have to have prototypical wheels on the turntable deck running on the pit rail. I guess there was a reason this was how it was done on the real thing!

More recently there has been some effort put into driver training whilst Waterstock is in its enforced 'close season'. Generally this involves members turning up and having fun just running stock, but there is a more educational side as it provides a safe environment for us to rehearse and familiarise ourselves with the more complex manoeuvres possible with our largest layout. Essentially we can attempt the sort of things we dare not try during exhibitions in case we get the switch settings wrong, screw up completely and then have to give the appropriate incantation in order to invoke the hand of God. Things

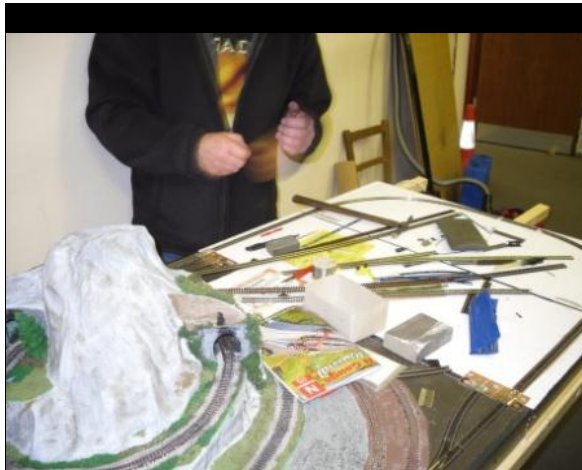
THE CLUB LAYOUTS *Cont'd*

like Branch to Branch running (which we've pretty much sussed now) or Branch to Main Line trips. There is always the shed area to operate too, so that needs some practice.

This layout is promised for the Warley show for 2014. Now, this seems a long way off but a quick back of an envelope calculation tells me that we have approximately 58 meetings until it is upon us. That's 174 hours, or less than 22 days (assuming an 8 hour day (I wish!)). So, around one working month to get it prepared and we will want it looking its best of course. I know we have a new and exciting project to be getting on with, and nobody is keener to get cracking on something new than myself, but we now have a commitment to face up to and I expect that Dave G, our exhibition co-ordinator will be around cracking the metaphorical whip fairly soon. I'm happy to help Dave, just find me a job.

Tipton Hills...

Has now been permanently erected in the clubroom now that the second room is no longer suitable for model railway activities (It has received new paint and carpet). Work comes along in leaps and bounds (that's like the usual club pace of fits and starts but with bigger steps!). Dave G has now all but completed the storage yard trackage and Rodney the demon modeller has put in a good few hours work with the scenic side. There's still plenty to do in terms of making the electrical connections and isolated sections, not to mention scenicing the yard – YES! You read it here first – a "scenic storage facility". Oops, I said not to mention that bit.



Dave Griffin setting a cracking pace with the storage tracks on Tipton Hills... See how his hands are just a blur... Indeed, we felt compelled to erect a traffic cone in the corner in case a visit from the H&S inspector classified him as "unguarded machinery". The latest N Gauge journal is much in evidence. Obviously our favourite publication. Witty, Informative and Thoroughly Absorbent, there should be a place for it on every modeller's bench.

Waton...

This is a new layout build following a suggestion at the AGM that a new model of medium size be started in order that we may have a more substantial model to offer the exhibition circuit now that Waterstock is so severely restricted because of its size and the cost of transportation. The model itself will be an exercise in how to build a substantial exhibition model from the bits and pieces of other models and household items and projects so must be created without resorting to further expenditure. So far, Mike Turner has been successful in terms of the baseboards and traverser unit, but track-work may prove the exception to the case.

So, there is officially no such thing as scrap plywood. Or probably scrap anything else for that matter. Reduce, reuse, recycle and all that. We will have to take a leaf out of George Nutter's book...

<http://www.simplytrains.com/pages/layouts/skipdale/skipdale.htm>

A more in depth and indeed interesting description of this shoestring project can be found at ...www.ngaugewmg.co.uk

P.S. Appropriately, this item of news contains approximately 70% recycled material. Mike will recognise his own words.

P.P.S. May contain nuts.



Appearances can be deceptive. What you are actually witnessing here is a serious “driver training session” on Waterstock (having fun running stock). If you look closely John C, by the window, can barely contain his excitement. But don’t be put off coming along of a Saturday, things are rarely this intense.

On a slightly more serious note, new layout notwithstanding, it is important that continued work is carried out on Waterstock to keep it maintained and bug free. That includes “Having fun with Trains” as Joe Fugate would say.

CLUB MEMBERS

Derek Purves is also active in 12”/ft and writes...

“It looks like being a busy year on the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway. More trains are planned with midweek services (Tues – Thurs) being extended in the second half of September. We also start a week earlier in May and will have extra Vintage Trains.

The usual Workshop week ran 11th - 19th February where a lot of work was done on ‘The Earl’, ‘Countess’, ‘Joan’ and No 19, the Resita which has had a lot of work done already to fit new stays etc This loco has had a hydraulic test. These locos were prepared for steam tests after their visual boiler examinations, to satisfy Boiler Inspectors. Other work on No 19 involved re-shimming and re bushing various components etc and providing a new cab to give about 5” more headroom. This loco has been troublesome since we acquired it and hopefully all this work will have solved the problems.

Thoughts are being given to our September Gala as to what should be new this year to fetch more people in.

The W&L Hedgebash Gang have already been in action this year, opening up views and sight lines for crews.

Further weekends are planned in March and we stop then until the autumn to leave nesting birds undisturbed.

Also during March, a playground is to be built at Llanfair, planned by the Group in Welshpool.” DP

Ken Jones has already exhibited his T gauge layout and has updated his website www.kenjonestrains.co.uk to show dates already agreed where you can see some of his layouts.

Ken has also been working with Kevin Ellis on a list of commercially produced N gauge buses to British outline that they are aware of. The list has gone on line at

http://www.modelbuszone.co.uk/tmb/lists/Models_N_Buses.htm

It excludes continental, American and other foreign buses and bespoke individual models such as those by Bill Avery or Rodney Hodge.

It also shows the future releases for both Graham Farish and Oxford Diecast where known. If you can fill in the blanks, add to the list or can circulate the above link that will all help. This is the first time such a list has been made freely available on the internet and is the result of a lot of effort. *KJ*

Christine Hodge now has an invite from Sutton Coldfield Railway Society to exhibit at their show on 28th & 29th April 2012, and also to exhibit at Leamington for the N Gauge International Show in Sept 2012.

Christine has also received two other requests which I will inform you of when confirmation is obtained.

This small American Plains layout has created a lot of interest since first shown at the Tipton West Midlands N Gauge Group club room in January 2012. *RH*

Rodney Hodge has been very busy of late, bringing some of his latest dioramas up to the club for us to admire, notably a cleverly executed fifties style garage scene and also a tram depot. These are somewhat clouded in secrecy at the moment, and no photos are yet available. So if anyone asks... "You ain't seen me. Right? And I didn't tell you."

Mike Turner has made a most welcome return to our Saturday shenanigans. Livening our discussions with his legendary keen sense of humour. Apart from keeping the website up to date and alive he has also kindly surprised the club by making baseboards for a new layout – Waton (see club layouts section and the website article at: www.ngaugewmg.co.uk. You can't keep a good man down you see.

LAYOUT GALLERY An occasional series featuring your layouts at home.



Charlieville By Christine Hodge

This is a 5ft x 3ft 6in N Gauge table top, circular layout plus rear fiddle yard, based on the Great N-Pire Railroad by Kent Wood and Ric Laban.

The version built, is a small Plains Mid West town of the 50's and 60's. The small population has a collection of steam loco's, which used to run to the outlying farms and mine workings in the distant hills, to deliver supplies and pick up produce and cattle for onward shipping. Charlieville now runs a tourist heritage line and is served by the cross-state Super Chief Santa Fe line, which stops on its way through. Tourists are catered for with the old style cars, some of which have been added to assist with the expanding tourist trade, and are offered trips to the plains and old mine-workings in the hills behind. The town is a hub for the surrounding district with a stockade for cattle and horses, and a freight yard using old freight cars as storage sheds.

The layout track is preformed Bachman track on a cork and MDF base, with switch points by Bachman and Atlas. The buildings are a mixture of ready made, kit built and scratch built by Bachman, Model Power, Lifelike and Walthers Cornerstone. The engine house is the remains of a Faller Old Stone Crushing Plant kit, modified, and with added workshop facilities. The town hall and cinema are Kato Japanese buildings suitably modified to American design. The Motel is a Faller Café redesigned and repainted. The general positions of the buildings on the layout outside of the town are based on visits to the Mid-West towns of the USA and personal observations.

The back-scene is reminiscent of the Mid-West and has been hand painted. Paint used on buildings is Humbrol enamels, with acrylics used on the scenery. The scenery is a mixture from many different suppliers to give a sense of diversity, and change.

Vehicles have been chosen mainly from the Atlas and Mini Metals range to reflect the time and the era, with old and new cars in existence.

The rolling stock consists mainly of small steam 4.4.0 or 0.6.0 loco's and relevant freight cars, which used to support these areas, with a couple of diesels for yard shunting.

BRANCLINES AND BYWAYS Ramblings off the cinder path

Overheard in a Shropshire lane:

- What's that man doing mummy?
- Gathering leaf litter
- Why mummy?
- Probably to make scenery
- Why mummy?
- He is probably a railway modeller. N-Gauge judging by the haunted, distant look in his eyes
- What's en-gaje mummy?
- Shhh dear. Daddy will explain when you get older. Do you want an ice cream?

GOODS TRAFFIC The small ads...

Due to a change of circumstance Melvin Tighe now has an American themed DCC'd layout for sale. The layout is unfinished but comes with loco's and some stock. All trains are as good as new and only run to test at the club.

Additionally some wood and an ironing board is available to make an ironing board layout. This is free to collection. Enquiries via e-mail to Ken Jones please or direct to Melvin if you have his address.

TRIP WORKINGS

We will be exhibiting Tipton Hills at the Chasewater show 7th & 8th July.

Ken's Suitcase layout will be making an appearance at the International N gauge show in September.

Waterstock is booked for the Warley Show at the NEC in 2014.

2012 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.

There may or may not be a meeting on December 15th 2012 Watch this space.

Meeting dates for the rest of this year:

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

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

Most of us have a ceiling to the amount of money we can spend on anything and these amounts have a tendency to get progressively less as the objects upon which they are spent get further away from the essentials for living. Hobbies generally come well down the line for money allocations and this often seems to worry a lot of people. On many occasions we hear that the reason for no layout is no money, a logical statement until one investigates the amount of money the would be operator considers a minimum. This figure sometimes proves large enough for some sharp comment as the answer to this hobby is not what one spends on it, but what you put into it by way of other ingredients, plus a perfect understanding of the financial situation. Perhaps the word acceptance would be better than understanding because it is not until you stop bucking against the inevitable restrictions that a goal likely

to produce the desired pleasures can be effectively worked out.

If you cannot tear the mind away from thoughts of enormous track yardage, motive power rosters requiring four road sheds and scenic spreads like a miniature National Park when the largess from the family coffers runs to only a 4x2 baseboard and a couple of tank loco's, then there can surely be no hope of enjoyment.

There is nothing wrong with large layouts made up solely of purchased equipment or commissioned models if they produce the correct formula for the owner's happiness. Equally, there is nothing wrong with a motto like, Make Not Buy. You can strive for perfection in a mound of old battered drinks cans, cardboard and a few modest hand tools even though the chances of realising the ideal would be considerably improved with better materials and facilities. One only has to inspect the fine work some do in scales like 2mmFS, 3mm or S, where much, if not everything has to be scratch built to see that this is so. Consider also the fine work consistently turned out at Pendon, and with the most basic of tools and materials.

It boils down I suppose to a question of being very honest with yourself; realising that participation in this great hobby of ours is often a case for a strong and sensible exhibition of mental control. What you cannot afford you cannot have, but you still posses a magnificent hobby with plenty of potential for enjoyment without reducing yourself to poverty.

It is evident that many members of our fraternity apparently achieve their highest aims with no more models than would fill a small holdall, and after years of modelling too. By no means should the quantity of a chaps equipment be taken as a guide to his financial status, but those cases may often prove to be extremely enlightening to those with big ideas, no cash and very little else.

To this end, in these straightened times, we must applaud the idea of a shoestring layout project and cling to the purity of its ideals with the greatest of tenacity.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, the Chairman or indeed any individual club member. On the other hand - they might.

Seen on T'internet somewhere...

Neddie: I'm Toulouse-Lautrec, the famous French impressionist.

Bloodnok: Alright, do Al Jolson.