
West Midlands "N" Gauge Club

Newsletter

Volume 15 Issue 4

December 2012

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HEADCODE

Welcome to the December Edition for 2012.

This issue, to round off 2012, we have some exciting (well, for us!) updates on the club layouts and an account of the 'Wings and Wheels' event at Coventry from Linn Dempster.

We also have a layout visit to Coed Helen.

You'll notice we have the meeting dates settled for 2013 too, always assuming that the Mayans were wrong of course. Pop them in your diaries. Lots of colour in this issue, so put the kettle on, put your feet up and enjoy.

Have a very Happy Christmas, and a very N-gauging New Year! TB

Volume 16 Issue 1 should appear in early March 2013.

Copy deadlines for the next four issues are:

Mar '13 Issue: 9th February
June '13 Issue: 4th May
Sept '13 Issue: 10th August
Dec '13 Issue: 9th November



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I'm preparing for our AGM which takes place at the beginning of December. Those of you involved in groups and societies know how much effort is needed behind the scenes to produce newsletters, minutes and such like. So my thanks to everyone who has helped the club during the last 12 months either behind the scenes, behind / in front of / or even underneath the layouts or just contributing to the success of the club.

Have a great time over the Christmas vacation.

Best wishes

Ken Jones, Chairman

Chairman: Ken Jones

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Treasurer: Edgar Mason

THE CLUB LAYOUTS

Waterstock...

Huge breakthrough after only twenty years or so...

Waterstock now has a working turntable.

OK, I'll give you a minute to pick yourself up off the floor.

Alright? Better now? Good.

Yes that's right, Waterstock's famous 'digital' turntable ("You stick your digit in and a-spin-it-a-round") has been retired.

Dave Evans has cunningly fabricated a new motorised one out of, well, a motor and gears and stuff. It is Electrically powered and controllable from the Shed end it turns in a very stately manner at a most realistic speed.



THE CLUB LAYOUTS *Cont'd*



Underneath, you can access and examine the mechanism. Dave has made a chassis on which to mount the motor and also made a 'U' shaped gearbox housing to mount the various drive shafts, half shafts, lay shafts, minshafts etc. The primary drive from the motor looks like it may be a worm drive or possibly bevel gears. The final drive is evident coupled to the turntable pivot and Dave's custom gear arrangement provides a reduction of approximately 'one' turn in 'quite a bit'.

Anyhow, it all works very well and we're all really chuffed. Thanks Dave. ☺

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

Wartson Hall...

The layout now stands atop some nice sturdy legs and Mike has been seen with soldering iron and track pins, which means he now has one line almost completed – so we might see a train run on it next year. It is really taking shape very nicely. Quite quickly too. These photo's are a little behind the times and do not really do it justice. More power to your elbow Mike.



Tipton Hills...

This layout has performed well at exhibitions throughout the year but has scuff marks around its frame due to transporting to and from the exhibitions. Rodney will touch up these marks and the club is looking at building a cage to protect the layout when in transit.

Recent progress has seen the development of the scenic caravan site next to the holding loops. Several caravans are now in place, sporting smart awnings made by Tony Minchin. These can be seen to good effect in the photo below.



CLUB MEMBERS & FRIENDS

Les Aldridge

We said 'Goodbye' to Les in November, who has now moved to Seaton, or Sidmouth or Somesuch in Devon. I'm sure it can't be for the weather.

It's always sad of course to see old friends depart and we all wish him the best for the future. He doesn't get away scot-free of course, we'll still press him to the odd newsletter (*aren't they all odd? – Ed.*), and I dare say he'll get a rare old surprise when we all turn up on his doorstep at ridiculous-o'clock in the morning demanding bacon butties before some future Pecorama trip ☺.



Ken Jones did his last exhibition for 2012 in November and currently has no commitments in the next few months regarding exhibiting layouts.

MEMBERS LAYOUTS

Kennington Parktray?

With the track down on the new and as yet unnamed tray layout, buses on the dedicated bus way came to a halt early one morning so that a locomotive could arrive at the layout.

“There were some anxious moments getting the lorry around” said Ken the owner, “Especially where the bus way is near the canal and has to negotiate under 2 railway bridges”. “Yes I know the engine was not anchored to the lorry” He continued – “We were running out of time - the buses wanted their dedicated bus way back”.

If the weather holds tomorrow the ballast gang will be out, but there's more scenery to complete, a narrow gauge railway to build and much more to do.



We understand from hacking his cellphone ...erm...from sources close to Ken... that some spare motors from Japan are needed for the buses, but they will need to wait until Ken either gets a new job or Father Christmas arrives.

The intention is to update www.kenjonestrains.co.uk in the New Year with details about this layout.

Meanwhile the lowloader was captured in the attached picture trying to negotiate the second bridge. Later a special train ran to test the electrics on the layout, using a Len controller

Rodney Hodge has started another layout to add to his projects list, which include excavation work on Charlieville.

“CHARLIEVILLE” CUT OFF DURING RAILROAD UPGRADE

Report and Photographs by Rodney Hodge.

Charlieville has been temporarily cut off from the main highway during its long awaited railroad upgrade. Excavations are taking place to remove material for a second through line for the interstate express and heavy freight, to go on past Charlieville without holding up the local services which have now grown with the increase of visitors.



It is contracted to complete in February 2013 when the tourist season starts, but there will be a temporary road built into the town during the upgrade.

This upgrade will also see the Heritage section of the line having an overhaul, with new services and further additions to the rolling stock donated by philanthropic shareholders. Due to the nature of the terrain, construction vehicles have been loaned to the contractors by the Sandwell Valley Mining Company, who are based at Warley MRC Oldbury Birmingham.

Expertise and Technical help on the track laying is being contracted from Tipton Track Team West Midlands N Gauge MRC Inc.



The **Imex Diner** is being repositioned, and some **long established buildings** are being transported to new locations. It is expected that on completion of the new upgrade it will be formally opened by a VIP, yet to be confirmed.



“CHARLIEVILLE” by Christine Hodge has been provisionally booked for view at Bloxwich and Warley NEC, 2013.

Derek Gibbin and **Tony Minchin** both have new layouts which were seen at the Coventry event.



Here Derek Gibbin shows off his new layout to an admiring fan in Coventry. Photo Ken Jones.

TRIP WORKINGS

Coventry Transport Event

Club Visit to Coventry Air Museum on 21 October Report by Linn Dempster

A group of club members made an early start on a cold and foggy morning to arrive at the museum for 8.00 am. Our welcome was, however, warm and friendly and we were shown into a room where we could set up the layouts. We had the left side of the room and the other side was allocated to those with an interest in buses.

The visitors first met Ken with his suitcase and box file layouts also his new partly made diorama showing a bus running on its own power round a circuit stopping to pick up passengers and moving off. It may well have tracks and a train before it is complete.



Our Ladies Sylvia and Jane at the helm of Ken's layouts while he takes photos.

Next was Tony Minchin's newly completed Arley station set in the 1960s era having its first public showing. When Tony wanted a break to look round all the exhibits outside Linn took over as driver and station master. Several people recognised the scene at once having visited the Severn Valley Railway at some time.



Then we had David and Phil with our Tipton Hills. Trains were going nonstop up and down and round and round. None seemed to be fitted with a smoke producer which was probably just as well. The layout height seemed to suit the younger visitors so it had a special appeal.



Finally we had Christine Hodge aided by Rodney with her American layout showing typical scenes from the countryside away from the big cities that we see on TV. Her inspiration did not come from cowboy films but from time she spent over in the USA.

We wondered how our tiny 'N' gauge railways would fare standing next to a full sized Vulcan Bomber, but the general interest was very rewarding. We all got time to look round the museum which has an amazing selection of warplanes from earlier days. On a more peaceful note there were quite a few classic cars brought by enthusiasts for the day. Nostalgia perhaps for some of us belonging to that age.



It was nearly 5.00 pm when we left for home, but we did not go home hungry. Our ladies Sylvia and Jane kept us well supplied with drinks, sandwiches, pork pies and cakes through the day. A vote of thanks is due to them from us all at the show.

The organisers of the day at the museum were very grateful for our efforts and a nice sum was raised to help fund the air ambulance service.

Photos by Ken Jones.

BRANCHLINES AND BYWAYS Ramblings off the cinder path

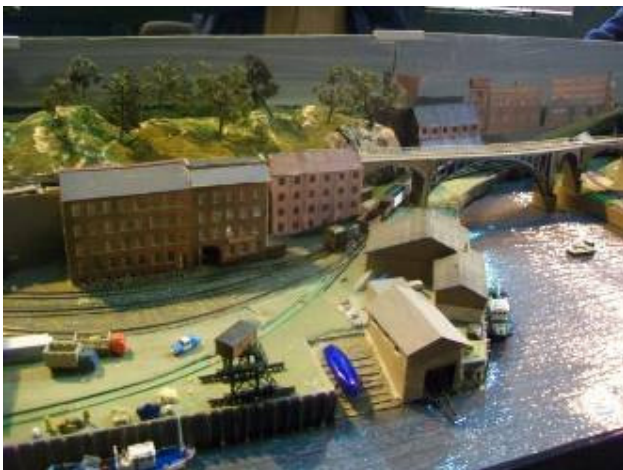
A Visit to Coed Helen

With magnificent views in every direction, stretching out across the Menai Straits over to Anglesey and a superb range of facilities, Coed Helen offers an unrivalled holiday experience.

The busy market town of Caernarfon is just a short drive from Coed Helen. Whilst the surrounding area is an obvious choice for lovers of the great outdoors. Endless open sandy beaches, majestic mountain peaks and an array of outdoor sports including sailing, fishing and mountain climbing are all just a stone throw from this unique holiday location.

Coed Helen lies on the southern side of Caernarfon. A55 take the Caernarfon exit A487 and follow the Caernarfon/Porthmadog signs. After passing Morrison's continue on A487 for 1 mile through Caernarfon, turn right signposted for the Park and Golf club. Turn right immediately onto Coed Helen road, follow the road for approximately 1 mile and you will come to the resort itself.

Well, maybe...



The Coed Helen I'm referring to is an N scale layout featuring standard gauge working serving the sort of quaint but lively fishing harbour only Wales and Cornwall can provide and a charming narrow gauge line on the higher level.

Built by Ian Coe, primarily as a series of small static dioramas, it won the Graham Farish Trophy in 2010 for the best small layout at the N Gauge Society's AGM.

It is now fully operational, and it was my pleasure, indeed honour, to be invited to help operate it at the International Show in September. It really must have been quite an undertaking to electrify and mechanise an originally static exhibit in this way, a sort of 'reverse engineering' if you will and I'm sure it's not exactly the easy way to go about things.

Points in the scenic section are operated by wires sunk within and below the baseboard and the layout can be provided with three separate controllers to give a degree of autonomous operation to both the narrow gauge, the main line and also to the harbour for shunting. Additionally the town section boasts a working miniature railway to give novelty rides to the holidaymakers along the seafront (actually using 'T' gauge track and rolling chassis).

Scenery is well detailed with plenty of cameos and things for the youngsters to spot. A fine set of static caravans up on the cliff tops drew admiring glances from the visitors, as did Ian's novel and nicely executed depiction of the sea.

Thank you for the opportunity to 'play trains' on your layout Ian. I had a thoroughly grand time. TB.

2013 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.

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

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

The serious modeller often shudders upon hearing remarks of “playing with trains”, even more so if the word ‘toy’ is inserted. Perhaps because of this many enthusiasts avoid publicity, and many would not admit their interest to any casual acquaintance. When questioned about leisure pursuits all sorts of side interests are mentioned first before finally, if at all, admitting with a furtive whisper akin to some sort of secret and possibly taboo society to being a ...Shh...railway modeller.

Most members of the rest of society are only too keen to be known as amateur photographers, radio operators, philatelists, bird watchers, ferret jugglers or what have you. Not so railway modellers it seems. Is it fear of derision? Or maybe fear that the reply will be met by the dreaded phrase “Oh, you play with toy trains” often said in that patronising voice that implies that one is barely out of short trousers.

Some club exhibition layouts do not help matters, particularly when trains depart from the station with all the

acceleration of a military jet, often bursting into the next station to stop within six inches flat from a scale 200mph.

Realistic operation is the key at public showings, with the un-railwaylike operation confined to testing on track nights at the club. Temper this thought however with the need to run more intensive timetables than would be prototypically correct. Exhibitions are as much about ‘entertainment value’ as anything and there is not much entertainment in one train a fortnight.

Consider perhaps what would happen if the gremlins got in and the power was cut. Would the layout’s scenery and cameos alone be enough to hold the public’s attention?

Some means could be found to educate the man in the street, explaining the intricacies, the skill, patience and dedication required to produce a really good model. The local press often report on an exhibition with some bias towards the un-interested, often because the reporter whom, ordered to attend, has no knowledge or feeling for the subject.

In the end it is up to us, the individual to assist more than anyone else. So, do not hide your light under a bushel, come out into the open, step out from your modelling closet, loud and proud proclaiming that **you** are a model railway enthusiast. *TB.*

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.

A Prototype for everything... even lousy trackwork?

