
West Midlands "N" Gauge Club

Newsletter

Volume 13 Issue 2

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June has arrived, bringing the usual cold, wet and dismal weather one has come to expect at this time of the year. One of these days we'll have a 'barbecue summer' to complain about!

In this issue are the usual accounts of how the club layouts are progressing. This issue is not as well designed as usual, so my apologies that for news of *Tipton Hills* you'll need to go hunting!

All Ken's fault, of course, for the feature article describes his new layout, *Tennis Court Sidings*, with some splendid photographs from Ken's camera. The Ixion 'Manors' are reviewed. I'm sorry there's no photograph (they looked splendid parked up by the coaling stage), but Ken's pictures deserved to take priority!

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.

I hope there's some good weather just around the corner – have a good summer!

Volume 13 Issue 3 should appear in early June.

Copy deadline for the next issue is

7 August



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This is just a short note to remind everyone that you can visit the club on our meeting dates if you are in the area (you will find full details elsewhere in this newsletter). We are always pleased to welcome guests and passing visitors.

Currently we have no plans to put on a formal model railway show of our own, but we are always happy to help others, especially as our smaller layout, *Tipton Hills*, is also available for exhibitions.

Finally, we also welcome contributions to this newsletter, from members and non-members alike.

Looking forward to seeing you at the club, and do enjoy your modelling!

Ken Jones, Chairman

Chairman: Ken Jones

0121 777 7062

Email: info@kenjonestrains.co.uk

Treasurer: Edgar Mason

THE CLUB LAYOUTS

Waterstock . . .

The new trackwork is in place, and wiring is being undertaken before we re-ballast the area. Digging up track and fitting new points and crossovers is never easy. It would be great to think we could get the track layout right the very first time. However, on both big and small layouts, it isn't until you have been running trains for some time that you realise what you should have done at the start.

Once the electrics are in place, the operators can learn the new layout. I think Len is putting in a switch to stop trains hitting each other. Our thanks go to David, who has spent much time relaying the area, cutting sleepers, etc.

Water Orton . . .

Mike has put a plan on his laptop of where he needs feeds for this layout, and has started to put wires on the boards at the relevant places. Trains will be running after the General Election, though Mike has not said which General Election he has in mind.

Actually, Mike has bigger issues to deal with at the moment. The new proposed high speed line will run at the bottom of his garden (though not at eye level), so he is gathering the people of Water Orton (the real one, not the model) to campaign against the new line. Speaking on the campaign trail, Mike said: 'It's no good having the new line so close to Water Orton – I'll have to build an extension to the layout, and we just don't have enough room at the club.'

Tipton Hills . . .

The layout premiered at the West
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TENNIS COURT SIDINGS

Our Chairman's new layout

Just to set the record straight, this is not a layout built on a tennis court. So if you're expecting to see Basford Hall Marshalling Yard recreated in

miniature, you'll be disappointed. No, Ken is not one for basement-size empires – quite the reverse. Instead, he has made a name for himself as a builder of micro-layouts, in N gauge or even smaller. So it is here, where Ken has modelled a tennis court on his latest layout. There's a match

in progress, and this can be seen in the photograph of the layout reproduced below. It's obviously an epic match, and must rival the famous McEnroe/Connors marathon encounter at Wimbledon all those years ago.



Tennis Court Sidings – the tennis court can be seen at the top of the picture

While the match was continuing, Ken has erected a building on the inner station platform and has repaired the bungalow roof. The major work, however, was the setting-up of the bus depot. Ken's interest in buses, especially those of the West Country, is well known, and he has chosen to represent a bus preservation society's premises, an old depot removed brick by brick, erected on its present site and completely refurbished. Holding a bus rally there enables him to showcase a wide variety of vehicles. This now includes some of the nearly eighty he has acquired from the late Bill Avery collection, many of them



The Langley Newcastle Trolleybus

custom-made or painted. Your editor has to admit that this is a very impressive line-up, even though his own preferences lie somewhat further north where once could be seen the red-liveried buses of Ribble and Cumberland.

Ken's layout will make its first appearance at the International N Gauge Show in September. Go on both days – Ken will have different displays on the Saturday and the Sunday.



Members' Day at the Bus Preservation Group – a shot taken from the helicopter

ON THE ROAD

The club layout *Waterstock*, is at the International N Gauge 2010 Show in Leamington Spa on 11/12 September. Ken will also be showing a couple of his layouts. The show is held at the Warwickshire Exhibition Centre, at the junction of the A425 and the B4455, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (4 p.m. on the Sunday).

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

THE CLUB LAYOUTS

(continued from page 1)

Bromwich show, and, as a result of that, several things are happening. At the show it ran using three temporary controllers, but since then Len has built a control panel. Edgar has built a transformer for the layout, a copy of that used on *Waterstock*, so that it can be used as a spare on the main layout. The plaster tunnel walls have been dispensed with – they were just too much trouble on the day – and we have gone back to cloth walls as on

(continued in the next column)

GOOD NEWS!

We are pleased to be able to say that Mike Walker has made a good recovery from his recent operation and has been well enough to attend club meetings. He will have been back to work by the time you read this newsletter.

the original layout. Rodney has already fixed and painted these. The layout is designed to run UK, continental and USA stock. Unfortunately, the ballast caught out some of the American stock, so this problem remains to be sorted.



More of Ken's superb bus models – a photoshoot on a sunny day in June

HERE AT LAST!

The new Ixion 'Manors' on test

As a schoolboy, I was never very enthusiastic about those funny green engines with copper-capped chimneys. Born and brought up in the north, the products of Stanier (yes, I know he was an ex-GW man!) when home, or Gresley's finest when away visiting grandparents – those were the engines to set the blood racing.

Strange how one's perception can be changed, and it only takes a really good model to do the changing. We never took our holidays by the seaside in Devon or Cornwall, so I haven't seen a 14XX and auto-coach in its natural habitat. But the Dapol model had me enthusing. Now, the recent arrival of the 'Manor' class locos from Ixion is having a similar effect.

Charles B Collett designed these locomotives for use on secondary main lines. Introduced in 1938, thirty of these engines were built, numbered 7800 to 7829. They saw service on the Cambrian lines, notably on the 'Cambrian Coast Express', and also in Devon and Cornwall. No less than nine have been preserved. Being very suitable flagship 'big engines' on a small railway was maybe a factor here. This too may help the models to sell, as modellers with small layouts may not feel one of these engines to be out of place as a 'King' or a 'Castle' would be.

I ordered two of the locos, 7823 *Hook Norton Manor* in BR black with the early 'cycling lion' totem, and 7800 *Torquay Manor* in BR green with the later emblem. Out of the box and placed on the track, the effect was immediately convincing. Engine and tender were realistically close together, the proportions looked right, and number plates, nameplates and shed plates well reproduced. Some may find the unblackened motion not to their taste, but I like my locos 'ex-works', so it suited me fine. The appearance can be further enhanced with the 'bag of bits' supplied. Crew,

fire irons, lamps and bufferbeam detail are all there ready to fit, and all that is needed is a bit of patience and a steady hand (don't leave it until you get home from the pub).

I have (non-scenic) curves of down to eight and a half inch radius, so I naturally left off the front steps and bogie guard irons. After light oiling and running-in on a 'rolling road', all was set for a test run. As is the tendency these days with model steam locos, the motor is in the tender, driving the locomotive wheels through a cardan shaft and gearing. Surprisingly (to me, that is!), the locos had no problem negotiating the small radius curves, so I can give them a blanket route availability ticket on my layout (the real engines were rated 'blue', the only 4-6-0 so treated). The 'Super Creep' motor needs the throttle advanced quite a way before anything happens, but slow running is a real pleasure, particularly when 'on shed'. I couldn't really test the haulage capacity, as we don't do long trains, but Youtube has visual evidence of twenty-five coaches being trundled around, so a three- or four-coach 'Cambrian Coast Express' isn't going to give any trouble.

It seems a long time now since we first placed our orders, and Ixion have done really well in taking the action that they have. For me, it was well worth the wait. Inevitably there must be the odd slip-up. A few days after my order arrived, a duplicate order appeared on the door-step. A quick call to Dapol produced a very courteous and helpful gentleman who gave me a Freepost address to return the models. When my credit card statement arrived, the amount had been taken off. All put right quickly and with no fuss – well done!

I guess I can't finish without mentioning the packaging. We had one of those OMG moments when, somehow, one of the locos in its box found itself hurtling groundwards. There was a sickening crash. I anxiously inspected the damage. Damage – what damage? The box

wasn't even dented and the loco unmarked. The cardan shaft, always the 'Achilles heel' on such models, remained in place. As they say over the water, 'Wow!'

WEBSITES

Ken's website is now back up and running (I was visitor number 22086 when I last looked in). Details of his layouts can be found there, with some excellent photography. Do pay him a visit on:

www.kenjonestrains.co.uk

The club website also is fully operational. Visit it at:

www.ngaugewmg.co.uk

2010 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:

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:

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email:

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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.