



West Midlands “N” Gauge Club NEWSLETTER

From our Chairman

Firstly, I'd like to thank Claire for volunteering to produce this newsletter. She has agreed to try the role out and I hope that she finds the role enjoyable. As I found out when doing the last two newsletters, it's not always easy to follow a successful, erudite and witty previous editor and I have to say that Vince Painter fits that description well.

We have some ongoing projects which are quite exciting for the next few months. The regeneration of Whartson Hall is close to completion; Jim Webster is working hard on the scenic elements and we now have a developing station with dummy lighting and finally a completed station building. It has recently returned from a successful visit to TINGS – more of that later. We are now working on the 009 layout donated by Tony Minchin; with Tony's agreement we are stripping it and renewing the track completely prior to reconstructing the scenery. Our excuse for this is that it runs on 9mm track. Once that task is finished we have ideas to develop the storage sidings in Gibben Quarry to allow us to run slightly longer trains. As a club we need to offer our members more than one activity so currently we are offering the ability to run trains, socialise and work on aspects of layouts.

For some reason, the Midlands exhibition scene seems to be squashed into the late summer and Autumn months from late July to the end of November. This has resulted in a lot of exhibition activity for the club starting with TINGS in early September and ending with the NEC at the end of November. Unfortunately we had to pull out of the Lichfield Show due to lack of available key operators but we are so busy that we needed to politely decline the chance to operate at Hinckley otherwise we would have had a layout on the road for three successive weekends. Our layouts prove popular as at TINGS we had an invitation to operate at a two day show in Abingdon.

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The International N Gauge Show near Leamington is one of our regular shows. This year Whartson Hall was back for its third visit – no longer really a work in progress. Once again we had lots of interest, whether it be about the geographical location (a Bachman rep walked up, without reading any blurb, and said “That’s Water Orton isn’t it?” As mentioned above, the organiser of the Abingdon Show was rapturous about the layout and wants to book it for 2024 or 2025. The show itself was very hot, particularly on the Saturday, and we have had to schedule a track repair due to expansion of the track in the corner by the station. I’m sure we’re featuring on some YouTube videos and we are on the Revolution Trains Facebook page, posted during the show, after Ben Ando spotted my train of Cemflo PCVs running and asked for a posed ‘run’. We also had at least one membership enquiry and another where we were a little too far for the potential member to visit.

Not only was Whartson Hall in residence, but we had several members showing their layouts. Nigel Harrold, aided by Phil Hunt, was running his large US layout Sugar Creek. Ken Jones was ever-present, this time with Jones of Taunton. Jules was showing two of his mini/micro layouts: Broccoilita (in a suitcase) and Bear Hunt (in a pizza box). Piers Milne was waving the ‘Continental flag’ with narrow gauge too, aided by his friend Colin Capel, running Oberdorf/II.

We are also showing at Cradley Heath, Birmingham (Castle Bromwich), Blackheath – not the one in London, and at the NEC. In addition, I have managed to obtain a stand representing railway modelling at the Aldridge Transport Museum at their Clubs, Societies, Hobbies and Pastimes event. This, while booked in our name, will be a co-operative venture with Trent Valley Model Railway Society and will also advertise all of the local clubs.

It’s quite a busy time as we move into the Winter and towards Christmas and I’d like to thank everyone who has or is helping to run club layouts or is supporting the club by running their own layouts at shows.

Jeremy

West Midlands N Gauge Club on Tour

by Jeremy Edwards

On Saturday 22nd July the club were out in force at Aldridge Transport Museum for their 'Models at the Museum' event. Thanks to Ken Jones spotting that there was a request for items, I put together a package of club and members' layouts which I offered to Dave Goodwin, the organiser. This was rapidly snapped up and we ended up with six of the twenty four exhibits and six of the eight N Gauge items. I think it is testament to the strength within the club that we can offer such support to a show.

I'd like to say that the 'day dawned bright and fair' but it didn't as we were plagued by heavy rain and strong winds. The weather wasn't too bad when we were unloading and fortunately packing up took place in the lull between the daytime storms and the evening and night time weather events. During the day there was heavy rain and a lot of gusty wind which didn't seem to dampen the enthusiasm of the visitors.

The event was an excellent showcase for members' modelling skills, talents and innovation.

From the club stock of layouts I initially offered Tipton Hills and Gibben Quarry, both of which were accepted but a later discussion with Dave Goodwin resulted in me withdrawing Gibben Quarry as it was going to get a good showing later in the year and we concentrated on Tipton Hills. Dave Griffin and I were ably assisted by Dave Evans and I'm pleased to say that the layout ran faultlessly all day. It's one of those exhibits that you put a couple of trains on, let them run all day and then chat to the visitors.

The rest of the club members were scattered around the building in various locations. Webmaster and YouTube Supremo Jules was sited next to us with two micro layouts – shades of Ken Jones.





Jules had brought Broccolita, a suitcase layout with an amazing standard of scenic modelling and 'Bearhunt' which is based on the childrens' book "We're Going on a Bearhunt". This is in a pizza box and tells the story really well; it was a massive success with children of all ages who remembered the book and was coupled with Jules' amazing storytelling style.

Elsewhere, in the wind tunnel by the entrance, Ken Jones was situated with "Jones of Taunton"

Jane and Tony Minchin were close by, in fact opposite us, with Ashburton which is a good N Gauge replica of the station in early post war days ad well known locally.



Elsewhere, in the wind tunnel by the entrance, Ken Jones was situated with “Jones of Taunton” his bus layout with static trains. In a more helpful situation, this is a really nice little layout on a picnic table with moving buses based on a fictitious fleet owned by Ken. Ken had a few mishaps and was susceptible to the wind which caused numerous problems including buses ‘running out of fuel’ due to the conditions.



Around the corner, we had the garden contingent. Phil Hunt, aided by Nigel Harrold, had brought the Greenwood Garden Railway, based on a mountain logging camp (its garden title arises as it was designed to fit on an old garden table). Many visitors were mesmerised, as usual, but the empty logging train climbing the spiral around the mountain only to return to the sawmill fully laden.

The other garden contender was Jim Webster's Tipton Garden Railway making its exhibition debut. This is a 'dolls house scale' model of a railway within a garden using N Gauge track and mechanisms as a base. Jim uses innovative materials such as coffee stirrers etc. to achieve great effects.



The event was an excellent showcase for members' modelling skills, talents and innovation. Hopefully we can put together a similar package for organisers again.

Jeremy Edwards

Ken had his layout "Jones of Taunton" at TINGS this year - with many people seeking out him and the layout. The funniest was the man who thought it was a name of a shop and came with a list of railway items he needed - that's despite it being listed as a layout.

Many people knew him and wished our new newsletter editor every success



Fontaine Quarry – Aug 2023 update by Ken Jones

Since our June newsletter I've been doing much to this layout and as I write this piece, I can summarise the work to date [in no particular order] as:

- A) running our first train around the layout and up to the top loop. This made the Nn3 summer 2023 newsletter that has not been published for 4 years (See next page)
- B) having a customised 3D bridge built by Colin Campbell to fill a missing gap on the layout and at the same time having Nigel Coward to produce some really small mineral / mine wagons, one of which is shown on my Pola quarry building also completed recently



- C) Jeff Cox has produced a lid to cover the layout as well as some bespoke plastic to stop fingers touching the layout.

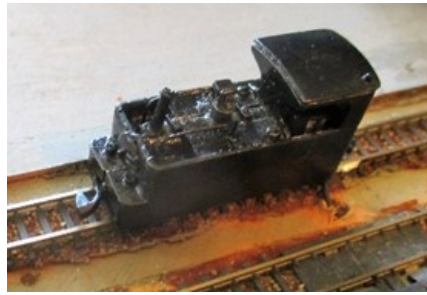




First train running on Fontaine Quarry

D] This means I'm now concentrating on bits to add to the previous bland scenery, testing various rolling stock – some of which haven't seen the light of day for years. Lots more detailing to do still.

E] Some of the Nn3 stock not seen for a long time

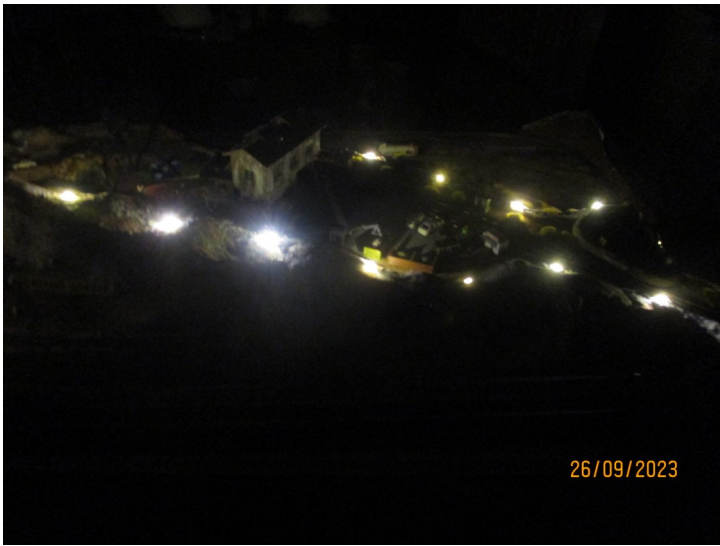


News from Fontaine Quarry

It is not intended to run our narrow gauge Nn3 locos at night although at sometime in the future we may do some twilight running. It would take a major effort to fit street lights around the large site and they would not be in keeping with the idea of the quarry. We have been working on an old generator at the quarry to provide some lighting along the main footpaths and bridge. This work is not yet finished but the following pictures show the site late last night. If any crews or volunteers do work in such hours of darkness they will be expected to bring their own torches or oil lamps

Fontaine Quarry remains not open to the public

Ken Jones - site owner



Belgian Railways (SNCB) class 12 Steam locomotive

by Piers Milne

This has to be one of the world's most beautiful engines with its perfectly streamlined shape. Six were built during 1938 and 1939 by Société Anonyme John Cockerill for the Belgian State Railways, primarily to operate the high speed route from Brussels to Ostende to meet the night ferries to the UK. Although they were passenger trains, the main reason for this service was to carry the mails. They were also used on Brussels–Liège expresses.



These inside cylindered, coal fired, high stepping 4-4-2s (2'B1' in European notation) with 2100mm (almost 7 foot) drivers, were designed by Raoul Nottesse, weighed 116 tonnes and on a test run achieved a speed of 165Kmh (103mph) although in service, they ran at 140Kmh (87mph) and on the Ostende service, with one stop en route, they maintained an average speed of just over 120Kmh (75mph). They were rated at 2500 hp and were withdrawn from service in 1962. No.12004 is preserved at the Belgian State Railways museum in Brussels.

Working models have been produced in HO by Märklin, Trix and others but none have been made in N scale - until now. This is because no 4-4-2 or 4-4-0 locomotives have been produced by the European makers in N, which could also provide the power chassis for such a small build loco.

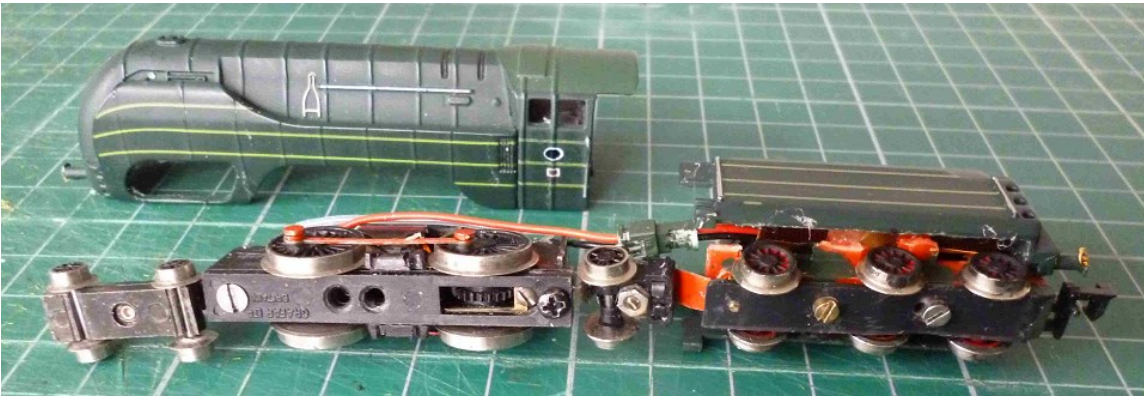
I collected the del Prado series of nominally N scale locomotives produced between 2006 and 2008 which included a very fine model of a Class 12 almost exactly to N scale and have been considering a working version ever since. I obtained another copy of the model, removed the running gear and cleaned out the body shells of both loco and tender with this in mind but got no further for quite a number of years. Interest was rekindled a few months ago when I encountered a model of a Graham Farish British Railways class 2P 4-4-0 on a stall at a Toyfair in Malvern and at a reasonable price. I don't buy new models to do such conversions.

This was duly acquired and the loco body and tender were discarded. I added quite a bit of lead weight into the "nose" of the del Prado loco body and in the cab to give adhesive traction to the drivers.

I also pared down (or perhaps pared up might be a better description) quite a lot off the bottom of the fairing round the front end of the loco body to permit the front bogie to swivel round curves. Most model manufacturers cheat on this by cutting away part of the fairing which mars the look of the loco.

The loco chassis itself required no modification which helped a lot. I happened to have "in stock" a pony truck, relieved from some mechanism awhile back, from which I removed the coupling and made two connecting strips with holes at each end to attach it to the loco mechanism and to the tender. I don't recall there being tender wheel pickups on this model so, in order to create a working model with some reasonable likelihood of decent running, a power pickup tender was clearly necessary as just four drivers were unlikely to be sufficient. I happened to have a Piko BR 55 tender, so equipped with contacts on four wheels, from a failed loco which provided the power pickup and this was duly fitted, after some modification, into the previously hollowed out del Prado tender body together with as much lead weight as I could squeeze in too.

There remained the task of connecting the power from the tender to the loco. I had bought, quite cheaply, a pack of sub miniature wire-to-wire connectors some time ago on the basis that such things would prove useful in the fullness of time. This was clearly one of those fullnesses. The connectors are 4mm long when coupled and came with about 40mm of twin wires at each end. The coupler was split apart and two wires were shortened at one end to match the distance from the feed points in the tender to a position between it and the loco mechanism and soldered to the feed points. The other end was not so easy as, in common with many N scale mechanisms, the feed to the underside of the motor was inaccessible, being just a slender brass pickup mounted between chassis body and drivers. The easy part was to connect to a screw on the motor body which connected in turn with the upper motor brush and a shortened wire was soldered to this. The only way to get power to the underside brush was to solder the other wire directly to the brush holder. This was a little tricky, to say the least, as there was only a small gap between the body of the mechanism and the leading driver on that side but was achieved with some care. The coupler halves were then joined together.



Showing the coupler (top) and Underside of the chassis (bottom)

A little appearance work then needed to be done. The sides of the red underframe and wheels of the tender needed to be painted black and the red rear end of the underframe and the white coupling needed to be painted dark green to match the loco. The connecting rods were painted red as in the prototype

I considered it was not worth trying to replicate any of the outside valve gear (not the piston rods themselves as the cylinders are inside) since the one rod is only partly visible anyway. When in motion this not noticeable as the red con rods give a good impression. The loco wheels were left black to match the prototype. The silvered wheels on the del Prado model are a figment of the model maker's imagination.



The reassembled model

Tales from TINGS 2023

By Piers Milne

Having taxed Pauline McKenna that there were hardly ever any European layouts at TINGS shows to justify calling them International, I finally got an invite to go this year, having had to pull out last year due to an impending house move, Colin and I had an interesting couple of days exhibiting my Metre gauge N Oberdorf/II layout which performed pretty well but hampered a little by a much used disintegrating point - fortunately in the fiddle yard - which has since been replaced - somewhat expensively. However, it was the first Maerklin Z point I have had fail in over 40 years exhibiting with them, which illustrates well the quality of the German product, unlike the Japanese Rokuhan Z points on my two French layouts which have failed regularly. I was invited by Pauline to take another layout there next year before the show ended.

The next outing will be at Cradley Heath on 7th October with my little French Metre gauge N layout Trifoulou.

It was a hot weekend and it turns out the upper section where I was became the hottest part of the exhibition hall during the weekend. I took "Jones of Taunton" - my moving bus layout built on a picnic table with no moving trains. Lots of interest and several people made the effort to come and see me and this layout. I ran two buses at the same time on the Saturday using 6 at different times, but it was hard going with the heat. Thanks to Vince for repairing 4 motorised units I was able to change these and the batteries Saturday night and made the decision to run only one bus at a time on the Sunday.

Picture taken before opening of exhibition on Saturday morning. The layout will be at the Birmingham show on 28th October



Breaking News

Ken's working Eheim trolleybus layout which features in the current N Gauge Society Journal will be appearing at the Hinckley show on October 21st. This is it's first major public experience following a private visit to the Grimsby and District N Gauge Modellers Group

It is hoped that it will be at TINGS in 2024.

Puzzle Time

Can you solve the below anagrams?

FLOTSAM SYNCING

AND ROOT

ABC HIM MORTIFYING

DR LLAMA

CERES HENS TOPKNOTS

COROT FRUITY

LEERILY SNIGGERS

LLANO LOTH

Where to see us in 2023

Club Layouts at shows in 2023

7 th October	Cradley Heath	Whartson Hall*
28 th October	Birmingham (Castle Brom)	Gibben Quarry *
4 th November	Blackheath	Gibben Quarry *
25 th /26 th November	Warley MRC, NEC	Whartson Hall

*Members layouts also present

Member's Layouts at shows in 2023

7th October—Telford

Ken Jones with Waterfall Junction
Nigel Harrold with Sugar Creek Missouri

7th October—Cradley Heath

Philip Hunt with Levisham Station
Piers Milne with Trifoulou

21st October—Hinckley

Ken Jones with his Eheim Trolleybus layout—FIRS
Philip Hunt with Greenwood Garden Railway

28th October—Birmingham (Castle Bromwich)

Ken Jones with Jones of Taunton
Jule with "Layout TBC"

4th November—Blackheath

Jane and Tony Minchin with Arley

11th November—Solihull

Ken Jones with Kenstadt (Z Gauge)
Jules with "Layout TBC"
Nigel Harrold with Sugar Creek Missouri

West Midlands N Gauge Club

Chairman: Jeremy Edwards

jeremyedwards606@hotmail.com

07720 902490

Treasurer: Edgar Mason,

assisted by Philip Hunt

Newsletter Editor:

Claire Fisher

Catch up with us here:

www.wmngc.co.uk

YouTube:

West Midlands N Gauge Club

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Proposed Meeting Dates for 2023

Saturday 7th January

Saturday 21st January

Saturday 4th February

Saturday 18th February

Saturday 4th March

Saturday 18th March

Saturday 1st April

Saturday 15th April

Saturday 29th April*

Saturday 20th May

Saturday 3rd June

Saturday 17th June

Saturday 1st July

Saturday 15th July

Saturday 5th August

Saturday 19th August

Saturday 2nd September

Saturday 16th September

Saturday 7th October

Saturday 21st October

Saturday 4th November

Saturday 18th November

Saturday 2nd December

(AGM)

***This date is in place of Saturday 6th May (Coronation Day)**

Meetings may be subject to local or national restrictions and guidelines. For information about the meetings contact Jeremy Edwards on 07720 902490 or via the website.

Any changes will be circulated via the newsletter, email, text, Facebook posts or if necessary by text or phone call

1. Flying Scotsman 2. Tornado 3. City of Birmingham 4. Mallard 5. Stephenson's Rocket 6. City of Truro 7. Sir Nigel Gresley 8. Olton Hall

Anagram Answers:

