
The West Midlands N Gauge Club



Chairman's Bit (and editorial)

Time for another newsletter, we're still in the Inter-regnum period so it's me again but I can report that we have a new editor lined up but she isn't quite ready to take up the reins. On an editorial note, thanks to Ken, once again for welcome copy and for those who followed the quiz activities last time, another offering from Jules with answers to the last quiz.

In the meantime, club life goes on as usual. So far, we've been exhibiting at two shows with club layouts; Gibben Quarry went to the Wombourne show in March and at the end of April we took the new slimline version of Whartson Hall to Bloxwich. More details of Whartson Hall will appear elsewhere but it was a major job to get the main alterations completed in just 8 afternoons. It's been a massive team effort from the vast majority of members attending to get the main alteration completed and the scenery upgrade started. As far as I can tell we aren't taking it out again until the autumn when we have several shows including on consecutive weekends.

Several members' layouts have been out including Tony and Jane's Ashburton and Nigel Harrold's new US layout, Sugar Creek, which I first saw at the Sutton Coldfield Show. It goes without saying that former Chairman, Ken Jones, has been out and about with several of his mini, micro and extremely tiny layouts. Our next club outing is to the Aldridge Road Transport Museum in July when we have at least one club layout and a good number of members attending including Jim Webster with his amazing Tipton Garden Railway for its (and his) debut outing.

Just after the Christmas break we moved the club into the Digital age with the purchase of an NCE Powercab controller for club use. Gibben quarry had previously been converted to permit either analogue or digital operation. We now have the facility to run either or both of the outer loops on Whartson Hall digitally (signalling on the bi-directional line has an electronic device sensing DC polarity which precludes digital use). I hope this encourages members with digitally equipped locos to run them to their full potential on club layouts.

A big thank you is also deserved by the membership as a whole. We're an active group on the local exhibition scene, as mentioned above, and this gives us a greater presence and more

publicity coverage. Whilst we have about five or six members who help when a layout goes to a show, everyone else is involved when we bring the layout back to the clubroom or prepare it for taking out. As I've mentioned elsewhere, it's a matter of teamwork.

Jeremy

West Midlands N Gauge Club

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Treasurer: Edgar Mason, assisted by Philip Hunt

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Whartson Hall – Update. Ready for the first exhibition of 2023

When we planned to rejuvenate Whartson Hall and make it easier to operate for everyone, we knew we had a tight timetable. The rejuvenation started in January and had to be to a state where the layout could be taken to an exhibition by 29th April as we had a booking for a show in Bloxwich. But for the fact we were due to be at the NEC at the end of November (sadly our appearance was cancelled due to Covid) we would have started earlier. Four months seems like a long time but bearing in mind that was only eight three hour sessions, what we achieved was nothing short of a miracle.



Dave Evans and Dave Griffin at work laying track

So, in eight sessions, what have we achieved? We have achieved our main aim, are well on course for the scenic upgrade and can operate part of the layout in DCC mode with a little fiddling of wiring. This is the result of a great deal of work on the carpentry, tracklaying and electrical side led by Dave Griffin with help from Dave Evans, Tony Minchin, Chris Thornton, Len Bane, Phil Hunt and Piers Milne. Jim Webster and I have been working on some of the scenic work and a few other jobs have been completed too.

By the end of the 1st April meeting, all track had been relayed and wiring had been completed and briefly tested. The centre operating well had shrunk to a 2 inch gap to allow the lighting rig to be fitted in place and the controller was on a new base over the fiddle yard. The lighting rig has been modified by Dave Evans over the course of time to make it easier to fit up. Dave has also fitted Perspex screens to the front of the scenic section to protect the scenery and particularly the delicate garden area. On the 15th April we spent the first half of the meeting testing the layout and sorting some cleaning issues bearing in mind that it hadn't been used since the start of January and then after our tea break we dismantled it and re-designed the packing arrangements.

Currently the scenic improvements are only on the embankments. We have removed the rather bright cheap trees from China sourced as an emergency purchase on Ebay. The embankments have been treated to three layers of static grass, albeit currently only in a single shade. Jim Webster has produced a number of realistic and stunning trees from some materials that the West Bromwich Club were throwing away and some electrical flex. This part of the upgrade has been held while urgent track and testing took place. There are more trees to fit, additional static grass and shrubs to plant and we have a number of figures to place.



Static grass by Jeremy Edwards, trees by Jim Webster

The late Dennis Fisher produced a 3D printed kit of the platform shelter; Jim has also managed to build this up with the aid of photos from the station. This and upgraded station buildings will be installed.



Platform shelter by Jim Webster

What are the benefits so far? By removing the operating well, we now can operate more easily at a show as we don't get cramped together in the middle. The other benefits of this include removing the need to crawl underneath to get to the operating area so every member can operate the layout. Whilst the curves at the end of the layout are quite tight, the alignment is sorted with PCB copper clad and rails cross the board join at 90 degrees. The other main advantage is that it boxes up into two parts not three and we can actually transport it in one larger car rather than requiring two. It's a bit of a squeeze but it can be done. We probably won't normally do that but for the first show we are doing it just to prove that we can.

The project has some way to go and certainly we will need to troubleshoot and modify a few things as we go to make it more efficient. It's been a massive effort but well worth the time and patience. The whole project is an example of West Midlands N Gauge Club teamwork as

I think everyone has been involved in some way whether working on the layout, giving advice or filming progress for our YouTube channel.

The 29th April was to be the first showing of the new version of the layout. To some extent it was going to be a baptism of fire as we hadn't really had much chance to test it thoroughly. It had taken eight Saturday afternoons including half a session testing it before we started to get the sides altered, track re-laid, wired and a half session test. As a result of the clash of the event with a club meeting and only one set of keys being available on the day we managed to load it into my car and I took it home with me (for a similar reason it came back with me too).



Team Photo

Setting up had to follow a slightly different routine but it worked well. There were a few adjustments needed before we got it running well and a couple of minor alterations were noted for action in May. The layout ran pretty well otherwise and the scenic modifications looked good although they are far from complete. We had some good comments from visitors and I believe we already have another invitation (for 2024, I think – and one for 2025). Thanks to the crew for your help in setting up, running and dismantling the layout.

Jeremy

QR Code

We now have a QR code which accesses our YouTube Channel. See below and the end of the newsletter to see how it is displayed when we go to a show.



Update May 2023_ - Ken Jones

(Ken has another small layout and here is his update)

Fontaine Quarry

The story. "Fontaine Quarry" has been dormant for over 20 years and a group of people are trying to open a narrow-gauge museum and operate trains on the former internal railway system. Volunteers have been tidying up the area, but you can see the roof has collapsed in one of the small tunnels, and the road bridge on the other side has collapsed and disappeared. Nonetheless the area which will become the car park has been flattened and rubble all removed. The layout was rescued from Lincolnshire earlier this year.

Update

Steve Pilling, a professional model maker who produces bespoke layouts in Z and N gauge has rewired this former z gauge layout for me so that it now is live when attached to a controller, but has two isolated loops and three sidings, made possible by the use of new toggle switches. The idea is to run it as a Nn3 layout. We originally thought the points were electrically operated and seized but they are actually manual which suits me and Steve was able to get them all working again. There was one broken point but we have been able to replace it by using an existing one and changing the layout of the fiddle yard

The picture shows just one corner of this layout following the rewiring, with a Nn3 saddle tank loco testing out the track.



Cleaning the track after 20 years out of use has been time consuming and access to the tunnels is restricted – why do model trains always stop in tunnels? There is still a lot to do on this layout. Currently the plan is to get it ready for Wombourne show next March. Currently I'm rebuilding some of the scenery and looking for a new road bridge to span the gorge which currently exists.

Vince Painter has provided a sign for the quarry which has now been installed and thanks to Piers Milne for making up a wagon that links between the two sets of couplings, Marklin at one end and Microtrains at the other.



The Nn3 locos are on Marklin chassis with Marklin couplers but commercial rolling stock has Microtrains couplers. Piers Milne has produced a wagon with a Marklin coupler on one end and a Microtrains coupler on the other end.



The wagon on the left is a standard Nn3 wagon, the one on the right has mixed Marklin and Microtrains couplers..

An update from Phil Hunt on Levisham

Update on Levisham Station

I thought I would do a quick update on my progress with Levisham Station since the last Newsletter. This is the current view; it does have back panels to hide the fiddle yard but not put up this time.



Trackwork

All the track is now laid; and the joints are aligning when I take the layout down and re-erect it; I did find one fault in the fiddle yard where I had got one fishplate wrong, so it meant taking up a bit of track for the point to work right. The points are wired up on the boards, but I need to build the control panel and do the interconnecting wiring. Points in the fiddle year are manual. Touch wood the double slip has worked okay, and the locos are running through this okay on the test runs both a mixture of steam and diesel. The fun will be connecting this to the control panel to get the trains to run into the right siding.

Scenery

I am currently working on the main board at the front getting the scenery installed; this is where most of the detail is in terms of the builds and the signage around the area. The second main front board just needs the platform installed but finishing off two of the station buildings as the moment. The two tea shops are open for custom; with a queue at the one in the field which has a few picnic tables if you want to watch the trains go by.

Key area now is doing the work around the level crossing and getting the buildings sorted out so that I can then fill the ditches with water; and finishing the ballasting around it and the barrow crossings.

The one building I need to start; at first glance I thought was a number of separate buildings, toilets, waiting room and house but they are all interconnected; few views of Google maps required to get the sizing right.





Once Levisham is finished, I would welcome some help as I will really need three operators. (Updated list for Phil is at the end of the newsletter – Ed)

Phil Hunt

The Bond Bug (in N)

The Bond Bug is a small British two-seat, three-wheeled automobile which was designed by Tom Karen of Ogle Design for Reliant Motor Company, who built it from 1970 to 1974, initially at Bond Cars Ltd factory, but subsequently at Reliant's Tamworth factory. It is a wedge-shaped microcar, with a lift-up canopy and side screens instead of conventional doors. Now thanks to Simon Coward at Replitek you can have one on your N gauge layout. The model is 3D printed and comes already painted.



Ken Jones

Following on from the article about an N Gauge model of the Bond Bug, my friend Richard Bryant has sent me a picture of a couple of larger scale versions.



The model on the left is the 1/32nd scale Airfix kit and the one on the right is the Corgi Whizz Wheels version which should be about 1/43rd scale.

Jeremy

Oxford Diecast Update from ken

Two new N gauge models from Oxford Diecast came out last week

NVWS001 VW T1 Samba Bus in Sealing Wax red and beige grey

NFTC001 Ford Transit Connect in Royal Mail red

Available from places like Hattons or direct from Oxford Diecast

Ken

It's Quiz Time with Jules

Jules' Lucky 7 Train Quiz!

1. In film, when does the train arrive in Hadleyville?
2. What was the name of Freddie Laker's no frills bring your own lunch service between Gatwick and JFK airports?
3. How did William Huskisson make headlines in September 1830?
4. Who sang "I'm a train I'm a train I'm a chook a train"?
5. What is the rail destination in the song 'King of the Road'?
6. Measured in the amount of passengers, the two busiest railway stations in the world are both found in which city?
7. The French high speed trains are called TGV's. What do the letters TGV stand for?

The Carlisle-Settle Station Quiz!

Re Arrange the letters to find famous stations on the line!

1. HGIAtuLc
2. AhgTLbyAnW

3. dEtN
4. yBAnZol
5. pLYBepa

Answers to last edition -

Wordsearch should really be solvable without clues!

'What's the Link?' - Colour was the link - **BLACK**burn, **RED**car and **WHITE**haven

Club Layouts at Shows 2023

22 nd July	Aldridge Transport Museum	Tipton Hills & Gibben Quarry *
9 th /10 th September	TINGS, Nr Leamington	Whartson Hall *
16 th September	Lichfield	Whartson Hall *
24 th September	Aldridge Transport Museum	Club Stand
	Hobbies and Pastimes event	
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

Members Layouts at Shows 2023

Ken Jones has the following dates in his diary:

22 nd July	Aldridge Transport Museum	Jones of Taunton
9 th /10 th September	TINGS, Nr Leamington	Jones of Taunton
16 th September	Lichfield	Le Club 143
7 th October	Telford	Waterfall Junction
21 st October	Hinckley	Layout TBC
28 th October	Birmingham (Castle Brom)	Jones of Taunton
11 th November	Solihull	Kenstadt (Z Gauge)

Jules has the following dates in his diary:

22 nd July	Aldridge Transport Museum
26 th August	Bournville
9 th /10 th September	TINGS, Nr Leamington
16 th September	Lichfield

28th October Birmingham (Castle Bromwich)
11th November Solihull TBC

Nigel Harrold these dates provisionally in his diary. All bookings are for 'Sugar Creek Missouri'.

3rd June Craven Arms MRC, Ludlow Racecourse
9th/10th September TINGS
16th/17th September Redditch
7th October Telford
11th November Solihull (provisional date)

Philip Hunt has the following dates in his diary.

22 nd July	ARTM	Greenwood Garden Railway
16 th September	Trent Valley	Greenwood Garden Railway
7 th October	Cradley Heath	Levisham Station
21 st October	Hinckley	Greenwood Garden Railway

2024

March	Wombourne	Levisham Station
May	Severn Valley Railway	Levisham Station
August	Shoeburyness	Greenwood Garden Railway

Jane and Tony Minchin currently have these dates in their diary.

22 nd July	Aldridge Road Transport Museum	Ashburton
4 th November	Blackheath	Arley

Jim Webster currently has two dates in his diary for Tipton Garden Railway.

22 nd July	Aldridge Transport Museum
16 th September	Lichfield

Piers Milne is exhibiting on the following dates.

7 th October	Cradley Heath	Trifoulou
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Proposed Meetings Dates for 2023:

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)

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.

Thanks for reading our newsletter. For more information on our club and activities visit our website www.wmngc.co.uk or our YouTube Channel “West Midlands N Gauge Club”.



WHAT?!

You've NOT seen the latest video from the West Midlands N Gauge Club?

Point your phones camera at the QR code below...

