

THE E.M. GAUGE SOCIETY PRESENTS ITS . . .

# expoEM'99

PROGRAMME OF FINE SCALE RAILWAY  
MODELLING IN 4MM SCALE

LAYOUTS - DEMONSTRATIONS - LECTURES - MANUFACTURERS' TRADE STANDS

SATURDAY 15th MAY 1999

10.30am to 5pm

SUNDAY 16th MAY 1999

10.30am to 5pm

THE LEISURE CENTRE  
PRINCES WAY - BLETCHLEY - MILTON KEYNES

Who needs reminding that it is expoEM time again? Get these dates in your diary now. This two day event is one of three expoEM presentations by the Society in 1999. The next being:

expoEM North 99 - 18th and 19th September 1999  
at The Colne Valley Leisure Centre,  
Slaithwaite, (A62), near Huddersfield, West Yorkshire

This is expoEM - The show with a difference. The informal club atmosphere for all modellers irrespective of scale or gauge. Layouts, demonstrations and tractors. No crush barriers. It is where you can talk to the specialist manufacturers and where you can discuss with the layout owners any focal of modelling you wish, and even have a go yourself.

If you would like a map giving directions to either of the expoEM events shown here, please send your request to Doug Farhurst, 4 Meadow, Freelywalk, Enfield, Middlesex, EN3 6NU

ALL VISITORS WILL RECEIVE A PLAN OF THE HALL ON THE DAY

Further details of the Society:

Mail Box, Marston Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, MK43 0SS MKS  
Gate 2, Wymondley, 45 Wymondley Avenue, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, MK36 5JF



By train:

The Centre is a short walk from BLETCHLEY  
(MK35 Milton Keynes station)

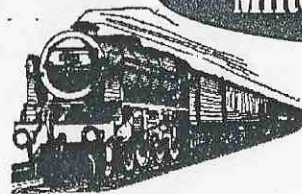
By car:

Use exit 14 of the M1 if travelling from the North  
Use exit 13 of the M1 if travelling from the South  
OR use the A52 A51 route which gives direct access  
to the Centre.

Admission £4  
(2 day ticket \*)  
EMGS Members £3

(\* This is a single entry "Weekend" ticket and accompanied children are admitted free. However, as this is a specialist show we leave it to your discretion whether you bring very young children as this may spoil your appreciation of the models, demonstrations and lectures available throughout the weekend.

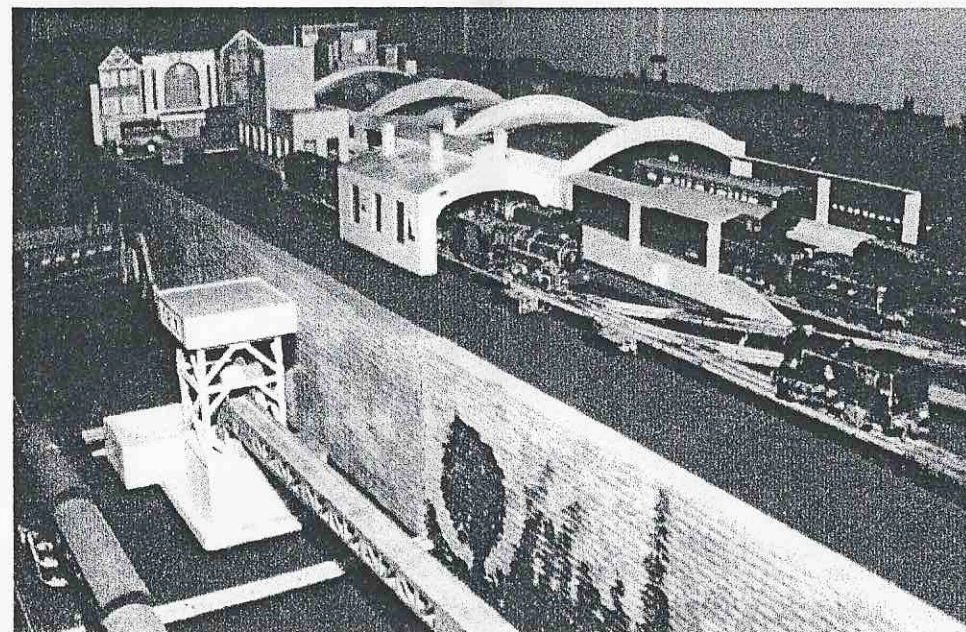
Milton Keynes Model Railway Society



# Newsletter ...

No. 86

May 1999



The MKMRS is a member of:

- The Chiltern Model Railway Association
- The Model Railway Club
- The World War II Railway Study Group



# Museum Notes . . .

The May Day Bank Holiday saw a surprising drop in numbers visiting the Bletchley Park Museum and consequently the numbers in the club rooms. The weather was very nice which might have had some effect and numbers were still the same as the same time last year. Maybe the 'X' effect is 'wearing off' although several visitors still gave the 'Station X' television programme as the reason they were prompted into making their visit.

## Museum Duty Roster May/June 1999

Weekend	Saturday	Sunday
May 15/16th		
May 29th/30th/31st Spring Bank Holiday	Tim Davey, Tony Winn, John Dibben	
	Monday	
12/13th June	Chris Symonds	Gordon Shrimpton, Chris/Nick Hughes
19/20th June	Chris Lester, Tim Davey, Phil Gilbert	Dennis Lovett, Les Wood

Holiday time is here again and the roster gets rather hard to fill. Any offers of help to Chris Hughes are greatly appreciated.

## And Finally ...

Mercedes van conversion minibus 01 D101 VRP, the first of 92 examples which took to the streets of Milton Keynes in 1986 *has been earmarked for preservation* by MK Metro. There is now only a handful of these 'popular' vehicles left in service. Any offers to MK Metro.

*I'm off to buy a bus! - J.D.*

## Milton Keynes Model Railway Society- 1969

**President:**  
Jim Wood

**Vice President:**  
Les Wood

**Chairman:**  
Dennis Lovett

**Vice Chairman:**  
Fred Collins

**Secretary:**  
Chris Hughes

**Treasurer:**  
Eric Bowman

**Committee:**  
Geoff Bell  
Colin Jamieson  
Bruce Garwood  
Gordon Shrimpton

**CMRA Rep:**  
Chris Lester

**Museum Curator:**  
John Hatton

**Librarians:**  
Ray Cousins  
Richard Cousins

**Newsletter:**  
John Dibben

**Published by/  
Contact Point:**  
Dennis Lovett  
Chairman  
☎ 01908 376750

## April

It is always nice to report everything is going well and the mood in the clubroom is generally upbeat which is exactly what I can do this month. Maybe the spring weather is partly responsible. Some years spring is a long time coming.

This was reflected at the QGM which lasted a bit longer than usual as some important subjects were discussed. The most important was the announcement that the N gauge 'Mandlebury' layout is to be sold. It has given great service to the club over several years and has formed the central exhibit at open weekends since 1995. It has been to many exhibitions up and down the country, including our last one at the Bletchley Leisure Centre in 1994.

It is felt that it has reached a point where the amount of work required to keep it in running order is unacceptable and the only alternative is to build a replacement.

It will remain in service this summer after which it will be replaced by the Fenny Stratford layout. Mandlebury's will then be sold to fund the new N gauge layout. The details of the new layout will be finalised during the summer.

There was some expression of regret that the only portable exhibition layout of exhibition standard is to be sold but it is felt that it has had its day and so much work would be required, to relay the track which would be a requirement if it was to be kept, meant that it was not a feasible option.

I am sure the layout which will give much pleasure a buyer who intends using it for occasional use.

The Wembley Exhibition was a great success and the club was given a number of 'first day covers' which were distributed to several members after the meeting.



John Dibben

## Cover Picture:

John Hatton's ever popular Trix-Twin layout at the Trix-Twin Exhibition at Banbury earlier this year.



# Diary



## MAY

15/16	Bletchley Park Open Weekend
15/16	Expo EM '99, Bletchley Leisure Centre
29/30/31	Bletchley Park Open Weekend (Spring Bank Holiday)

## JUNE

5/6	Exhibition, Sheringham (North Norfolk Railway)
12/13	Bletchley Park Open Weekend
13	Woughton Swapmeet
19/20	Bletchley Park Open Weekend
26	CMRA Modellers' Workshop, Beaconsfield

## Notice Board

### M&GN 40th Anniversary North. Norfolk Railway.

Everything is set for the model railway exhibition being held on various parts of the North Norfolk Railway on 5/6 June 1999.

It is a chance to visit our Honorary Member for Sheringham, Gordon Eckersley and visit his shop on the station platform.

Accommodation will be provided by the NNR and all layouts transported in a large vehicle by Gordon Shrimpton.

### SWAPMEET DATES Woughton Campus

The next Woughton swapmeet will be held on June 13th.

Doors are open from 1100 - 1500.

The admission is 80p Adult, 40p children/Senior Citizens and £1.60 Family (2 adults and children).

The dates for the rest of the year are as follows:

September 26th  
November 14th.



# CMRA

For an informative, participative  
full day on numerous topics related  
to practical railway modelling,  
come to the

# MODELLERS' WORKSHOP

Saturday 26th June 1999 at the  
Beaconsfield School, Wattleton Road,  
Beaconsfield.

Tickets £5 including lunch.

For further details see your  
CMRA Representative  
or call Steve on 01707 264824  
or David on 01438 715580



John Symonds was in many ways the perfect Secretary for that period. He was dedicated, tireless and 'driven' and got things done! The manner in which he did it though, could be alarming. Armed with an 'Austin Cambridge' with an MGB GT engine, journey times were cut drastically! Cornwall his 'home' county, could be reached faster than any HST. One evening a trip to Pendon Museum was arranged, using a fleet of cars. No prizes for guessing who got there first!

Every year 'lifeboats' were issued to the unwary! Collection boxes that is. Trying to collect money for the RNLI about as far inland as you could get was not easy! However, three motor-cycle clad youths, including myself, on a dark night did extraordinary well!

At that time, it was more like an 'extended family' than a club. Members with layouts would welcome other members into their houses to see their layouts. Peter Jarvis, who lived 'next door' would invite groups of members to inspect the latest developments on 'his daughter Hilary's' layout which was an extensive 009 layout, complete with 'Loch Ness Monster'!

Eric Preston as manager of Woolworth's in Bletchley could always be relied upon to find a 'dented' tin of paint of a suitable colour when required! Upon retirement he was not given a watch but the 'clock' which now adorns the lobby!

However, clubs do not live on goodwill alone and an enormous bonus arrived in the shape of the Bletchley Leisure Centre. This was the 'final fling' of the Bletchley Urban District Council. The debt incurred caused problems for many years. It did, however, provide a perfect exhibition venue which has been used by the MKMRS and others since.

From our 'little bunker', Les Wood, with others organised successful exhibitions which in size and quality of layouts rivalled any other! Even with some factors in our favour, it was no mean feat with the success or failure of the club depending on it!

At that time exhibitions were a 'must' to provide revenue and the club as a whole rose to the challenge. I am sure everything did not run smoothly and behind the scenes there was much discussion and debate.

Space, of course, was a problem. However, the 'test tracks' were built. Many members will not even know of their existence but they consisted a large oval with all popular gauges included. This allowed anyone to test and display their latest creations or acquisitions.

The other major problem which has been discussed at length over the years was the 'flood' that occurred after every significant rainfall. Often, the first job was to remove the inch or so of water from the club room. Surprisingly, this became part of club life. It was cleared up and the meeting went ahead.

The move to larger premises was obviously welcomed but even today space is still a problem even though the amount of space available today would have been beyond our 'wildest dreams' at that time!

It is these memories which form the basis of my attitude towards club matters. In the words of Harold Macmillan, *'we have never had it so good'!*

## Club Notices . . .

### Outside Layout

Working parties are being held regularly now spring is here. See Geoff Bell for details of the next one. I am sure all are welcome. The list of members assisting is too numerous to mention but most of us know who they are and are aware of the amount of effort that is being put into the layout.

### MKMRS Sweat-shirts

The polo-shirts mentioned last month are now available at £12.50. Orders to Gordon Shrimpton. He informed us at the QGM that for £3.00 you can have your name included on your sweat-shirt or polo-shirt. 67 sweat-shirts or polo-shirts have been supplied or ordered to date. After the QGM, all those members wearing their sweat-shirts or polo-shirts were herded into the room recently cleared for the 'Tinplate Team' and a group photograph was taken by Chris Hughes.

### Northampton Swapmeets

The next one is Sunday May 23rd and is held at The Moat House Hotel, Silver Street, (off Horsemarket). It is open from 1100 - 1530.

The dates for the rest of the year are September 5th and December 19th.

## On the mend

**Brian Barnes**, one of the 'Three Musketeers' on the 'Tinplate Team' has been in the clubroom after a few weeks absence following a knee operation.

**Les Wood** has had his hip operation but is unable to drive and therefore come to meetings at present.

## QGM

Other matters arising at the QGM were the 'space' problem in the library. The MKMRS has long taken pride in its comprehensive library. The space for it is 'finite' and a certain amount of reorganisation is required to ensure the space is used effectively and books are accessible. Some publications e.g. those in a foreign language may be offered to members to make space for publications which are likely to be of use to members.

A problem has arisen concerning the lack of female toilet facilities, highlighted by the doubling of regular female members by Tracey. The Committee has sat, looked into the problem and passed a motion whereby the urinals are to be removed from the toilets and 'his' and 'hers' cubicles provided. The Committee regret any 'inconvenience' caused!



# Milton Keynes Model Railway Society

## 'The Early Years'

by John Dibben

As you will now be well aware, this year marks the 30th Anniversary of the MKMRS which after some discussion occurs in September. The following is a description of the club from its earliest days to the move to the old Council Offices in Fenny Stratford. It is in no way a full account of the club's activities in great detail. It is simply a personal account of the members and activities at that time from the viewpoint of a young, enthusiastic teenager with acne!

I first heard of the existence of the MKMRS through my grandfather who knew George Read. George was a retired guard who would tell of his encounters with the Luftwaffe during the War when they separated him in his guard's van and the locomotive at the front of the train with a bomb at Willesden, just one of many such stories.

To my surprise, the club met in the cellar underneath my old school at Holne Chase where I had spent many happy days. The cellar though was not so inviting. It had been used as a Civil Defence 'bunker' where at the outbreak of World War III, a map and a telephone would have stood between 'us' and the 'Red Army'. These were still in place but obscured by about 15 to 20 railway modellers. To say things were cramped would be an understatement but great things were to come forth from that little cellar in the next few years.

Everything looked very organised but I suspect they were filled with as much anticipation and trepidation as I was. I joined and was given the number 32. Presumably there were 31 others. What would happen if they all turned up?

Everything was new, enthusiasm abounded but required channelling. Amongst those chosen to do just that were Jim Wood, Chairman with all the attributes required for the job, John Symonds, Secretary whose enthusiasm knew no bounds and Gordon Etherington, Treasurer who was meticulous in his approach to the job throughout the many years he held it.

One of the most important members at that time was a Mr Hancock. His main hobby was making jewellery but he was married to Mrs Hancock who was our 'water supply'. Living next to the school she supplied 'yours truly' with a container filled with 'the necessary' to keep the members supplied with tea every Tuesday night. The cellar had no amenities whatsoever which was very 'inconvenient'!

The first layout to be built was 'Buckingham Road' a small end-to-end layout. It was decided that the track would be hand built. There were several reasons for this, not least because it was cheap and money was tight also we had several members well capable of the task.

However, having the ability and having the time are different matters and this simple fact has caused more trouble in the past 30 years than anything else! When it was exhibited at Wilton Hall and despite much 'last minute' activity, it has to be said it was not a success. This was what Fred referred to last month and where the phrase 'we have continuity' was coined.

The wealth of 'characters' in the club at that time more than made up for any setbacks. Colin French was a prominent member at that time and with his long-time friend Les Wood, took his fine Somerset and Dorset layout to Wilton Hall and a great days operating was had by both. The layout was operated to a strict sequence with 'block bell' operation. Anyone watching might have wondered at the amount of parcels trains signalled but not appearing! However, anyone who knew them both knew that the code 1-3-1 with the reply 1-1 signalled the appearance of a far more attractive piece of two-legged 'motive power' at one end of the layout.

Colin, a 'larger than life' character, was a 'four millimetre' man at the time as was most of the club, many 'switching' to 'seven millimetres' around the same time some years later.

I travelled to work in Euston each day with Les Wood and it is difficult to believe he was only in his late-twenties at the time. In fact it is difficult to imagine how young some of the other 'originals' must have been at that time but as a 'teenager' everyone over twenty-five is regarded as 'old'!

Les had just completed a coffee-table 'rabbit-layout' in 009, popular at that time. We exhibited this at exhibitions and schools at their 'open days' and it was very popular with the youngsters. We had rather a good time 'sending the children mad' by waiting until they had worked out where the train was going to appear next and then, with no discernible hand-movement, switch two points at the rear of the layout, sending an identical train with 'reversed-polarity' in the opposite direction. This would cause much confusion and take them some while to work out.

At this point it is a good time to set the scene as to the club's position in the town in 1969. The population of Bletchley at that time was 24,980, Wolverton 13,570 and Stony Stratford 3,626. Milton Keynes was a small village famous only for its insignificance. Bletchley was devoid of almost any entertainment and you could sell tickets to watch the traffic-lights change in Fenny Stratford.

The railway cut Bletchley into 4 parts and the railway could be heard wherever you lived. Not just any railway but one of the most advanced at that time. Railway modelling had entered a new era with higher and higher standards being set. This was a good place and a good time to start a model railway club.

We must have been one of the first organisations to use Milton Keynes in its title as there was no 'tangible' evidence of the 'city' for another eight years. It was just a 'concept' with an outlandish scheme for a 'monorail' among many others. The reality bears little resemblance to the original 'concept'.

We would try just about anything in the early days. One night we used the school hall for a showing of the 'Ghost Train' a black and white film about forty years old even then.

John Mann produced a newsletter when there was enough news to fill it and it contained many relevant facts and some curious ones. John Symonds would report attendance's at meetings on a monthly basis, informing members that it had risen from 11.5 to 13.8!

John was stationmaster at Verney Junction and lived in the house adjoining, hence the 'Verney' layout and the interest in the area.