



## Quarterly Newsletter Spring 2015

### Chairman's News



This is the first edition of the Newsletter under the editorship of Dave Court and it is hoped to issue it electronically by e-mail in future to cut down on printed copies needed. Hard copies will still be made for everyone who does not have an internet connection, so please let us know if you require a printed copy. In order for the newsletter to continue Members will need to submit articles. The "meet the members" series was a popular feature which has fallen by the wayside so everyone is invited to submit something about themselves and how they came into the hobby in order to revive this feature. Photos and articles of railways and exhibitions visited are also welcome, as indeed is anything you think fellow members would be interested in.

The dust has settled following our 2015 exhibition and with all the invoices now paid, the net income has been established at £4,846.92 - lower than previous years despite the increase in attendance to a record 2860 visitors. The main reasons for this are a £1200 increase in the cost of the new venue and a doubling of visiting layout and accommodation costs to £2725. I believe however that this year's show was the best yet giving excellent value for money and would like to reiterate our thanks to Terry and Ian for all their hard work.

**Continued on the next page**

## Chairman's News - continued

Good progress is now being made on the 0-gauge layout and all the necessary turnouts have been purchased. Track is being laid on a Woodland Scenics rubberised trackbed product which as well as providing a nice ballast shoulder profile should give sound deadening qualities. An island platform arrangement has been adopted, and whilst not based on anywhere in particular a prototype was found at Trimmingham on the Cromer to North Walsingham section of the former Norfolk & Suffolk Joint Railway. Passenger access to the platform will be via steps down from a road overbridge to give some vertical relief. At the other end of the layout a narrow gauge 0-16.5 quarry line will feed in at a higher level in order that stone can be tipped into waiting standard gauge wagons.

Our tenancy at Barton Road ends on 31st October and the commercial rent on the building is now £9000 per annum so our continuing occupancy is uncertain. Although we have gained some new members over the last few months, unfortunately a number have left the club and we are now down to a core membership of 60, giving an income of £7200. With premises service, gas and electricity charges we would need to find at least £12,000 to stay here at commercial rates and that figure assumes we shall continue to qualify for 100% business rates relief from the Council. The Letting Agent will put our case to the new Landlord, but we are at the mercy of his generosity. It does not bode well that units on Barton Road have been taken at the going rate almost as quickly as they have been offered in recent months so it would be prudent for everyone to look out for possible new premises.

Chris Hughes  
Chairman

### Welcome New Members

Please join us in welcoming the following new members to the club.

- ❖ James Maher
- ❖ Ivan Angell
- ❖ David Icke
- ❖ Mark Slade

## Ceynix - Scale Model Railway Trees



A weekend course from absolute basics and a variety of methods so you find what suits you best. Interested? Send an email to [Jacqui@railwaytrees.co.uk](mailto:Jacqui@railwaytrees.co.uk)

30% discount on all trees for MKMRS members, email or at shows

**Phone Number** 020 8864 6596  
**Email** [Jacqui@railwaytrees.co.uk](mailto:Jacqui@railwaytrees.co.uk)  
**Website** [www.railwaytrees.co.uk](http://www.railwaytrees.co.uk)

## Your Newsletter

## Needs You

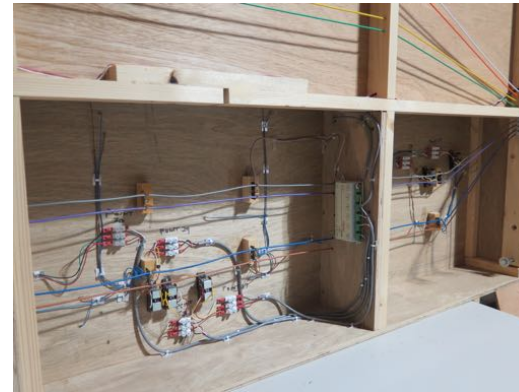


The MKMRS Quarterly Newsletter will only survive with your help, we need to provide articles -

- Provide any articles, these can be write ups on exhibitions you have attended, modelling titbits, or anything that you think other members would find interesting.
- The articles need to be sent in by email to [Newsletter@MKMRS.org.uk](mailto:Newsletter@MKMRS.org.uk) They need to be the words that you want to appear, include any pictures that you want in the article. All can be sent to the above email address for inclusion.
- Hoping for lots of copy for the newsletter.

**Deadline for articles for the Summer Edition is the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

## Barton Crossing Will Rise Again



I am sure to those readers who are desperate to run trains again on the new OO gauge layout, it must seem that it has been out of action for years. It certainly has taken a lot longer to complete the wiring than was ever planned for.

There where many reasons for this, the one that ate up the largest amount of time was the wiring for the points on the DCC layout. In an

effort to keep the costs for the new layout down as much as possible, it was decided that we would use as many of the items purchased for the Sherwood layout that was being built at Bletchley Park. This meant that we had sufficient Peco solenoid point motors and Hornby DCC point decoders for Barton Crossing. Installing the Peco point motors took considerable more time than we thought, but that was only the start of our problems. When we came to installing the Hornby point decoders we found that a large number of them would not accept the point number programming. After many weeks of frustration with these, they where sent back to Hornby for repair. This still did not resolve the issues with the points not working correctly, sometimes they would work, but the majority of the time they would not.

This caused many many hours of frustration trying to adjust the fixing of the point motors to get them to work. All to no avail, as it appeared that although the Hornby decoders are suppose to have a capacity discharge unit built in, they just where not powerful enough to operate the points. We got to a point where we did not know what to do for the best, when someone produced from the cupboard a Lenz LS100 decoder.

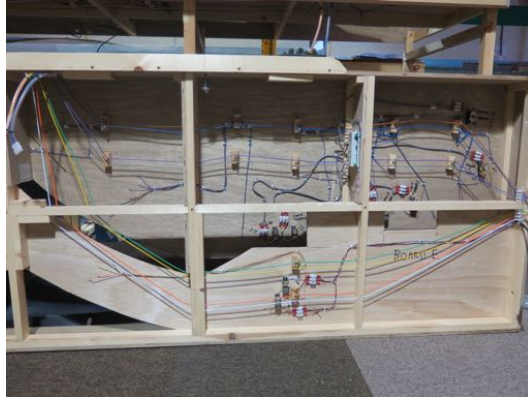
These units where from the old Central layout and although they had seen better days it was decided to give them a shot. These units require two inputs one is the DCC command from the bus and the other was a straight 16volt AC supply to operate the points. This took a little rethinking of the wiring of the layout as it had been planned to have two buses, one for the track and the other for any accessories. We abandon the second bus and changed that to a straight 16volt AC supply.

**Continued on the next page**

## Barton Crossing Will Rise Again - Continued

The first decoder was installed on board E, connecting all the points up to the decoder. Then we needed to find out how to programme them, the instructions that came with them were long gone, so we turned to good old Google for help. The decoders were duly programmed and it came to the moment of truth to see if the points would work.

Eureka every point worked first time every time. The decision was made to abandon the Hornby decoders and use the Lenz ones. We found two more buried in the cupboard, as these decoders are 6 ports we need to revisit how each board was to be wired. In total we needed 6 decoders for the layout.



So the next question was how we could get 3 more decoders without going over budget? Well at the exhibition we decided to try to sell the Hornby decoders on Nic's stall for £90 the lot. One of the traders bought the lot for the asking price, which was great news, so I thought I would take a chance and ask if he was interested in the Hornby Elite system, he was and bought it for £95 making a total of £185 for the lot. This then allowed for the purchase of 3 Lenz decoders for £100 and so also put back into the budget £85, so not a bad days work to get something that works.

At the time of writing this all of the wiring and board testing is complete, then boards H, A and C need to be reworked to use the Lenz decoders.

The last remaining job will be the installation of the DCC cab bus

So to answer everyone who wants to know when they can run trains again, I would say that by early April it will be good to run again and the scenic boys can get started on making it look like a real railway.

I would like to thank James Maher, Terry Silver and Peter Jones for their help with the wiring and I can only apologise to everyone else for the extended break from running trains.

Dave Court

## Exhibition Diary - Continued

### May 2015

9

#### Association of Larger Scale Railway Modellers

Rivermead Leisure Centre, Richfield Avenue, Reading RG1 8EQ

9

#### Loddon Vale Model Railway Club

Community Centre, Sheerlands Road, Arborfield, Reading RG2 9ND

9

#### South West Herts Model Railway Society

Queens' School, Aldenham Road, Bushey WD23 2TY

9/10

#### Mickleover Model Railway Group

The Roundhouse, Roundhouse Road, Pride Park, Derby DE24 8JE

16

#### Burgess Hill Model Railway Club

Burgess Hill School for Girls, Keymer Road, Burgess Hill RH15 0EG

16

#### Ely & District Model Railway Club

Ely College, Downham Road, Ely CB6 2SH

16/17

#### EM Gauge Society

Bracknell Leisure Centre, Bagshot Road, Bracknell RG12 9SE

23/24

#### Risborough & District Model Railway Club

Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Harvey Road, Aylesbury HP21 9PP

30/31

#### Diesel and Electric Modellers United

Town Hall, B

Burton-on-Trent DE14 2EB

### June 2015

13/14

#### Chatham & District Model Railway Club

Medway Park Leisure Centre, Mill Road, Gillingham ME7 1HF

14

#### Corby & District Model Railway Society

Village Hall, Carlton Road, Wilbarston, Market Harborough LE16 8QD

27

#### Braintree & Halstead Model Railway Club

Bocking Arts Theatre, Bocking End, Braintree CM7 9AE

## Exhibition Diary April 2015

4/5

### Turner's Folly Model Railway Group

Barleylands Farm, Barleylands Road, Billericay CM11 2UD

4/5/6

### York Model Railway Show

Knavesmire Suite, The Racecourse, Knavesmire Road, York YO23 1EX

11

### Tring & District Model Railway Club

Pitstone Memorial Hall, Vicarage Road, Pitstone, Leighton Buzzard LU7 9EY

11

### Norwich Railway Heritage & Model Society

Hellesdon High School, 187 Middletons Lane, Norwich NR6 5SB

11/12

### Bentley Model Railway Group

Christie Miller Sports Centre, Lancaster Way, Bowerhill, Melksham SN12 6QU

11/12

### Crawley Model Railway Society

Tanbridge House School, Guildford Road, Horsham RH12 1SR

18

### 31A (Cambridge) Model Railway Club

Sawston Village College, New Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3BP

18

### Luton Model Railway Club

Christchurch Hall, Bedford Road, Hitchin SG5 1HF

18/19

### Scalefour Society

Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, 154 Northgate, Wakefield WF1 3QX

25

### de Havilland Model Railway Society

Methodist Church, Ludwick Way, Welwyn Garden City AL7 3PN

25/26

### Epsom & Ewell Model Railway Club

North East Surrey College of Technology, Reigate Road, Ewell KT17 3DS

25/26

### Ilford & West Essex Model Railway Club

St Edwards School, London Road, Romford RM7 9NX

26

### Stowmarket Railway Club

Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, Gainsborough Road, Stowmarket IP14 1LH

## Neal's of Bletchley

**Dennis Lovett takes a nostalgic look back at the shop, which once served local railway modellers and club members**

At our recent exhibition I met up with Edward Neal. Many of our current members will be unaware that Edward for many years worked alongside his father, also named Edward and his brother Phillip and sister Pauline, in the family toy and model shop in Queensway, Bletchley and Hockcliffe Street, Leighton Buzzard. The Bletchley shop was by the 1960s the major provider of model railways in the town stocking the products of suppliers such as Tri-ang, Hornby (Meccano), Graham Farish and PECO.

Prior to the coming of the railways, Bletchley was a small insignificant village centered around St. Mary's Church dating from the 11th Century. Fenny Stratford was the town but that all changed with the opening of the branch line to Bedford and the provision of a station in 1846, eight years after the line had opened between London and Birmingham on what is today the West Coast Main Line. It was not surprising therefore that in a railway town, model railways were very much in demand. By the late 1920s the houses along Bletchley Road were being changed into shops, although it would not be until the early 1960s that the transition would be completed.

Neal's opened in 1946 on the corner of Oxford Street and Bletchley Road which



became Queensway in 1965. Prior to it becoming Neal's, the shop was known as F. W. Bollen – The Bletchley Bazaar. It sold Tobacco, Confectionary, toys and gifts. A second shop opened in Hockcliffe Street, Leighton Buzzard with a flat above. Edwards

Grandfather and Grandmother ran the shop in the early days, having had a retail shop business in Croydon until moving to Bedfordshire.

**Continued on the next page**



## Neal's of Bletchley – continued

In the 1950s there were several dealers in the town selling model railways. My first train set arrived when I was five from Axford's in Aylesbury Street, who sold Tri-ang. Most of the additions to the train set, including my first Transcontinental Baltic tank locomotive and a diesel shunter came from Neal's, as did most of the items after that which came at Christmas or Birthday's. Saved up pocket money or contributions from visiting relations would enable modest additions to be made at other times. It was only after the demise of some of the other shops that Neal's were able to secure the coveted Hornby dealership and was able to sell Meccano products made in Liverpool.



In 1969 a small team put on a display of locomotives on a section of Colin Stacey's layout, which featured a turntable and locomotive depot at the Bletchley Arts & Crafts Festival, held annually at Wilton Hall. This was a major local event and featured local history from Bletchley Archeological Society, the photographic club, art club and many other organisations. At the event names and addresses of interested railway modellers were collected and it was this event that as a 15 year old, I filled in the form. In the early days of MKMRS it was surprising how many club members you met in Neal's buying items. Neal's were also instrumental in promoting the newly formed MKMRS and Edward himself signed up and was a member for many years.

Neal's also commissioned their own items. Towards the end of the Graham Farish OO models they commissioned the A. Sharpe, Bletchley wagons of which your author has a number. They also commissioned a number of road vehicles and some of these are illustrated here.



When the new shopping centre now known as Centre MK opened its doors in 1979, Neal's had expanded by moving into Silbury Arcade and remained there until they were forced to close due to the lease of small independent retailers not being renewed in favour of the larger multi-national companies. By 1992 the premises were occupied by the larger multi-national The Entertainer, which today has over 100 shops across the UK. Surprisingly The Entertainer faced the same problems.

**Continued on the next page**

## Neal's of Bletchley – continued

In renegotiating its lease and as a result closed the Central Milton Keynes shop in January 2013. The concentration of regional shopping into Central MK in the 1980s resulted in Neal's shops in Bletchley and Leighton Buzzard closed in the late 1980. After the closure of Neals in CMK Edward continued in business in a smaller shop in Lake Street, Leighton Buzzard until 1995 selling the remaining stock left over from the CMK shop. Edward then turned to his other interest buses and continues to drive them on occasions.

During its long association with the area, Neal's had an interesting number of road



vehicles including a van which represented Noah's Ark. Those who watch the sale of old toys on the Antiques Roadshow will know the significance of it and that due to the Ark's religious associations it was the only toy which children could play with on Sunday's! Neals used their

vehicles for deliveries and also in the run up to Christmas as a mobile shop touring the neighbouring villages from which Santa could purchase.

Generations of Bletchley youngster's would press their noses to the glass to see the latest toys and models. To many of us Neal's was an institution that it is still sadly missed. The corner of Oxford Street is today host to a number of small units that no longer generate the same interest for MKMRS members that they once did.

*The author would like to thank Edward Neal for assistance in writing this article and for supplying the photographs from his collection.*