



**Issue 199**

**Winter 2019**

## **CHAIRMAN'S NEWS**

This is the first newsletter since we lost our good friend Terry, who had fortunately put in place most of the arrangements for the 2020 exhibition, which will proceed as usual. It does however mean that we need to set up an exhibition management team to arrange future shows as the workload involved has become too much for one person. Stantonbury have confirmed the kitchens will be available and have identified the caterer we used previously so that is major problem resolved.

The recent charter train on LBNGR seems to have been well received with around 34 members and their families enjoying the return trip to celebrate the Club's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We have a souvenir of the event in the form of the special headboard carried by the train which is now displayed in the Clubroom beneath our Milton Keynes station sign.



I was somewhat concerned when several members of the EM group resigned recently to join another club, citing that MKMRS had become stagnant as their reason. This came as some surprise as none of the people concerned had ever voiced any such opinion to me so let me take this opportunity to reiterate that if anyone is unhappy or has concerns about the way the club is run then please speak to me or any member of the Committee. Do not keep it bottled up. We need to be made aware of any issues then we have a chance to resolve them. As a result of these departures the Milton Quays layout is now seemingly redundant so we are currently seeking a way to dispose of it. A member of the Shildon club has expressed an interest and we currently await a decision from their committee, which seems not to meet on a regular basis. The layout has served us well for many years, having been started at our Victoria Road clubrooms and it will be sad to see it go but if it is not being used we could make better use of the space in the clubroom for new projects.

Looking to the future, our recent application to become a Charity Incorporated Organisation has been approved. The charity, MK Model Railway Club, will deal with day to day matters such as membership and premises rental. MKMRS Ltd. will finance exhibitions with all profits being donated to the charity.

Almost twenty years ago in our Bletchley Park days an Australian gentleman visiting England found himself at one of the former Sunday morning Woughton swapmeets. A chance remark about model railways to one of our members who was also at the event led to him visiting our displays at the Park that afternoon, since when the Gentleman – Peter Hunt has kept in touch with the Club from his home in Lowther, New South Wales, some 100 miles west of Sydney on the far side of the Blue Mountains National Park.

Chris Hughes  
Chairman

## **Layout from Australia**

### **By Peter Hunt**

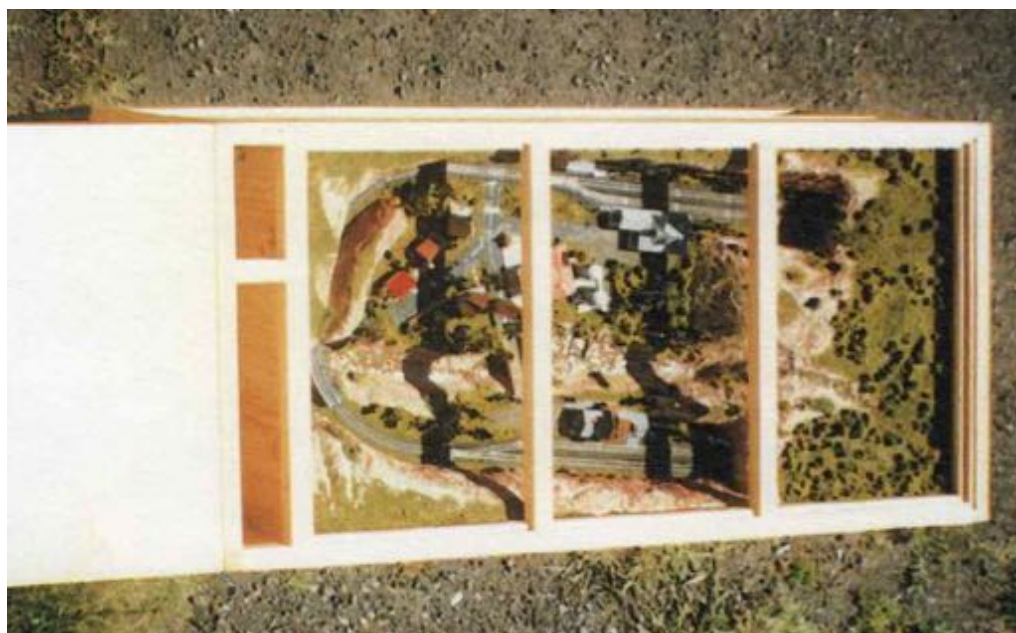
I live on a 117-acre homestead where I keep a 40 strong herd of Aberdeen Angus cattle for breeding purposes. Our home has no mains services in this remote location so we rely on generators and rainwater collecting tanks; consequently, I have no internet or email facilities. Being interested in railways and having been born in Liverpool, I have a soft spot for the old Overhead Railway, and am planning a small diorama layout of it. I am also hoping to build a small layout based on Cromford Wharf in Derbyshire, another of my interests together with a WWI diorama if I ever get around to it – being retired takes up so much time!

I have built an N-gauge coffee table layout as shown in the attached photo. It depicts a small village with a railway going to a quarry. – can you spot the sheep?

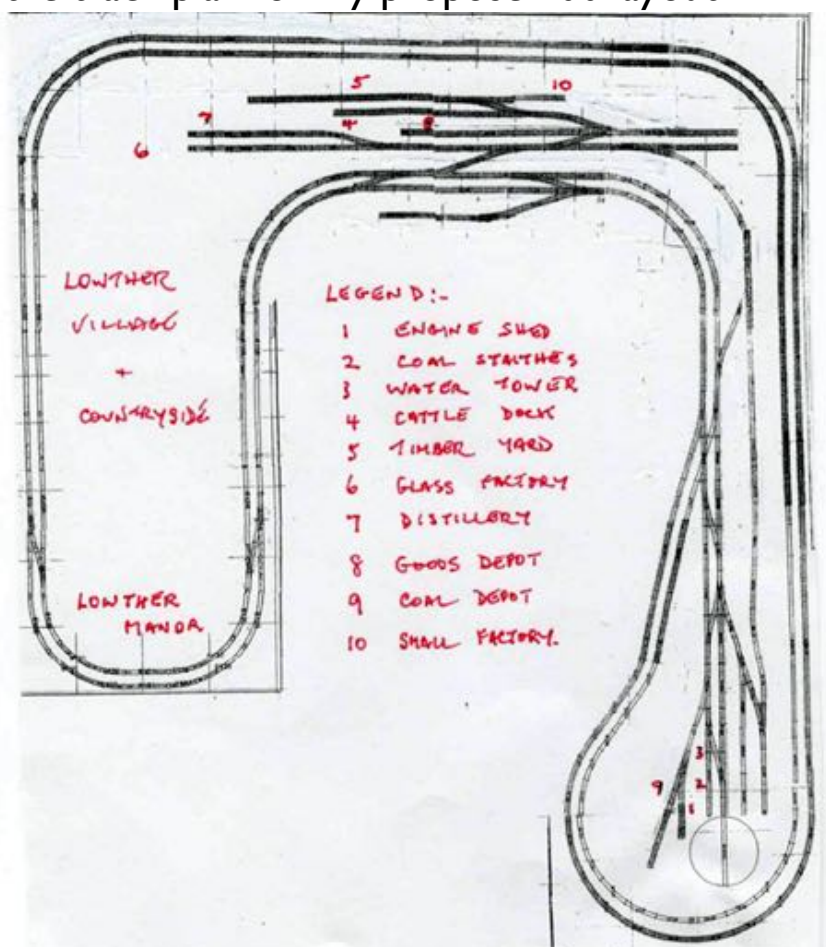




The picture below shows the layout in its coffee table location



And this is the track plan for my proposed 00 layout



I enjoy reading the club newsletters and hope they can continue but for now wish all members a very Happy Christmas.



## **50 NOT OUT**

### **Dennis Lovett takes a ticket to ride through 50 years of MKMRS history**

50 not out in any cricket ground will gain the batsman or woman a round of applause before raising their bat to acknowledge the recognition. Then it will be a return to the crease and heads down in the hope of getting it all again after another 50 has been accomplished.

We now start the chase for the second fifty in the hope of our organisation reaching the century!

Many new members may not be aware of how we started, what facilities we had or indeed how we have at times survived against the odds!

In 1969, the future city of Milton Keynes was in its infancy. Bletchley and Wolverton were large railway towns and were undergoing the uncertainty of a changing industry which had seen the closure of the Oxford – Cambridge line the previous year. Bletchley and the area around it were changing dramatically and many were moving into the area from London and elsewhere.

Bletchley had once boasted a branch of the Hornby Railway Company and had until the early 1960s had a small model railway club. Years ago, I knew one of the former members of that organisation but it had died out long before the year 1969 came into being.

Model railway suppliers in the town consisted of Neal's Toy Shop which had a very large and successful model railway department stocking most proprietary ranges. It was also the place where The 'Railway Modeller' could be purchased and this provided a useful source of market research for anyone contemplating starting up a model railway club. Ted Neal, would become a founder member and attended our exhibitions up until his passing last year, although Neal's had long since closed once having branches in Bletchley, Leighton Buzzard and Milton Keynes.

## **Arts & Crafts**

Each year, Wilton Hall in Bletchley staged a local arts and crafts exhibition. Many local organisations took part and it was quite a tradition in Bletchley to visit it. The 1969 exhibition was different however, it included a section of a model railway layout owned by Colin Stacey with a large motive power depot (engine shed) on which many model locomotives were displayed. Those behind the stand asked anyone showing an interest if they were interested in joining a proposed model

railway club. Yours truly, then aged 15 put his name on the sheet and 50 years later is still here!

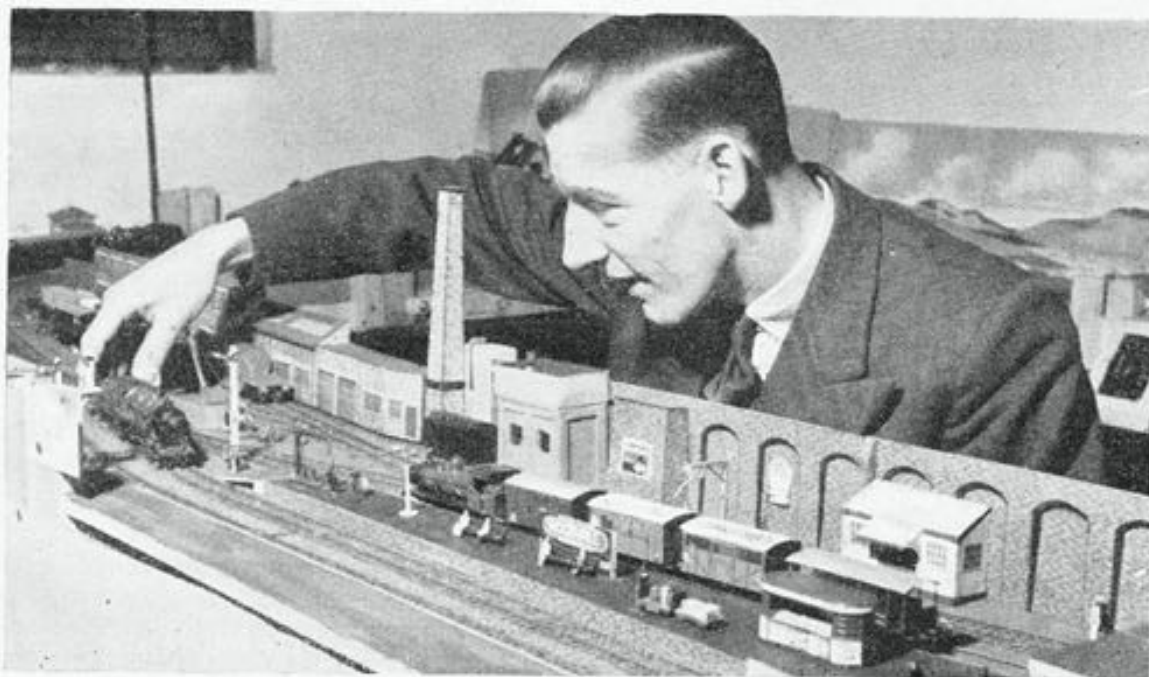


## **The Pioneers**

It soon emerged that the people behind the proposal were active railway modellers and one, Jim Wood was an award-winning scratch-builder of many fine 4mm locomotives who had moved from the famous Norwood Model Railway Club in South London. Jim would go on to become our first Chairman and until his passing our President.

John Symons who would become the first club secretary was involved in the Civil Defence movement which had been established during the Cold War and was finally stood down in the year before our formation.





Jim Wood explains a detail of his "Schools" when operating his 16.5 mm. stud contact layout at this year's Norwood Model Railway Club Exhibition

Photo by Ronald Wood

They had previously worked from two locations both of which would have a role in our story. One of these was under Holne Chase School on the Buckingham Road but had been incorporated into the new Bletchley Fire station in Sherwood Drive which had moved from its previous small premises in Church Street, Fenny Stratford in October 1965.

It was in the former Civil Defence facility that the first meetings took place in order to set up the club, form a steering committee and set out a constitution. The first formal club officers and committee were officially put into place at the first AGM in January 1970.

Of those members who were part of the initial club, I know of only three others still around namely Dr Peter Jarvis, Colin Stacey and Les Wood, who later became Chairman and President.

I was only a school-boy so my presence was tolerated on the basis that a considerable number of early members were employed on the railway. They all knew my father, a Bletchley train driver, so misbehaviour was not likely to be experienced – and it wasn't!

Back then, ready to run locomotives were toys! Scratch-building was proper railway modelling and kit-building was tolerated. I began building Airfix rolling stock kits – about all I could afford on 2/- a week pocket money which was spent in Woolworth's, where the manager Eric Preston was another club member. His son Nicholas was in my class at junior school. Eric is remembered by us all as the former Woolworth clock is above our test track facilities, complete with plaque to remind us of Eric.

### **Our first club room**

The former Civil Defence premises underneath Holne Chase junior school became our first home. The basement still had the various charts and maps abandoned when they moved to the fire station. Set at the bottom of the steps was a well, which if the pump failed during heavy rain then the inevitable happened. All layouts had to be well off the floor but as the rent was £10 a year who was complaining.



Part of Holne Chase School with the now blocked steps down to the old club room (right)

We eventually took over a second basement but even with a pump it was more suited for the activities of a model boat club and was subsequently abandoned due to the move to our second home. The Holne Chase facility was retained for storage for many years – the rent never changed. Eventually the school wished to seal it and there may still be an O gauge layout down there today!



Our first OO exhibition layout down in the basement at Holne Chase. On the far left is Chris Mann, whose father John was Station Master at Verney Junction and Editor of our first club magazines. Centre is then Chairman and later President Jim Wood. On the extreme right is Gordon Etherington who became our Treasurer for the first 25 years of our existence.

## Victoria Road

Local Government reorganisation in 1973 saw various local authorities amalgamated to form a new Milton Keynes Borough Council which moved initially from the old Bletchley UDC premises to Sherwood Drive whilst the new offices in Central MK were built.

This rendered the Victoria Road Bletchley UDC headquarters redundant and these were purchased by the Masonic organisation whose own premises in an old school building opposite St. Martins Church in Fenny Stratford were about to be compulsory purchased for road improvements to what was then still the A5 through Fenny Stratford, today it is the V4 and the A5 diversion is still known to many of us as the A5D!



Behind the impressive façade of the old council offices could be found our second home

The former two storey computer block was let to a dog training club initially but after a few months the masons were looking for new tenant. Our then Chairman was a member of said organisation and we were offered the facility, although the rent was considerably more. Due to its previous tenants the floor needed considerable work to remove the damage caused



by excitable 'doggies' being unable to control their bodily functions! The building needed airing for several weeks whilst members became decorators rather modellers for a few weeks.

During this time, we restored a set of outbuildings and made them into a workshop and kitchen. Much of the work was undertaken under the direction of Fred Collins, a council buildings manager and club member ably assisted by many other members.

With rent moving towards a commercial price in the mid-1990s, we were faced with a difficult situation. Fortunately, we were able to secure a move to Bletchley Park, when the setting up of a museum complex was taking shape.

### **Bletchley Park**

We moved over several weeks into temporary accommodation, we had to empty our eventual home in Hut 11 which was full of old computers and various other bulky items. Those of you familiar with our Bletchley Park facility will recall we had to stop the roof leaking by paying contractors to seal it (it was asbestos), rewire the whole building and install a new water supply to the kitchen and toilets. Although we lived rent-free we did spend a lot of money on the actual building over the 18 years we were there.



Daniel Death drives 'Wellington' on the outside miniature



Our signalling display at Bletchley Park was donated to the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway. Left - Chris Hughes presents John Hastings-Thompson a regular fireman on the line with a fireman's shovel. Right – EVR volunteers assisted by our own Matt Rayner get to grips with trying to remove the signal bases.

The signalling equipment was donated to us by Janet Hughes and belonged to her late husband John a former railway public relations manager with whom I worked at Waterloo. Janet was delighted when we removed it from her garden, the signal having dominated the West Bletchley skyline for many years following its removal from the Leighton Buzzard to Dunstable branch line.





Our working signal display was popular during school visits. The signals were lit too!



One of the many rooms in our old Bletchley Park building. This one is seen after the removal of our Verney Junction layout.

As a club we suddenly found ourselves in the museum business and for 18 years we played our role in opening-up every weekend, Bank Holidays and for school visits – not to mention at other times as well. During our stay at Bletchley Park our club room was visited by over 200,000 people!

When they won the lottery money and professionals came in, the writing was on the wall for us. It was not long before we and many other organisations who had kept the place going were given notice to leave. I will not go over it again, for many of us it is still a painful memory of endless bonfires and stripping out in weeks what had taken years to put together. We were on the move again!



## 28 Barton Road

Commercial premises come with commercial costs as we soon found out. If we were going to keep going there was only one thing to do – raid our bank account. Although smaller than Bletchley Park, we did have the benefit of everyone being in one room. The problem was it came with a huge heating bill and yet we were often frozen – it often seemed that we were paying for everyone's warmth than our own.

Three years we were there before moving to our current home.



Our home for 3 years at Barton Road

## Bond Avenue



Our current home is our fifth!

We were desperately looking for new accommodation and were fortunate to be offered our current facility.

It may be smaller, it is certainly a lot warmer (indeed we have had to have fans fitted to cool it down in Summer) but it has enabled us to stay together and continue into our 51<sup>st</sup> year.

### Conclusion

Little did I realise when I joined back in 1969 that I would be writing this for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication. I doubt, that I shall be around to write it up for our 100<sup>th</sup>!

MKMRS has given me many friends of the years although sadly many of them have passed. I am sure in the great model railway

club in the sky that they will look down on us with pride that we have survived against the odds and hopefully, will do so again in future.



An article from the MK Citizen in January 2016 taken at Barton Road shows we are never far from the spotlight!

## Ceynix - Scale Model Railway Trees



Phone Number  
Email  
Website

30% discount on all trees for MKMRS members, email or at shows just produce your membership card when you see me at an exhibition.

### Contact Details

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## Member Updates

Please join us in welcoming the following new members to the club. If you see them in the clubroom please introduce yourself.



Peter Hoare



Steve Groenestein





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

- ❖ These can be write-ups on exhibitions you have attended, modeling titbits, or anything that you think other members would find interesting.
- ❖ If you would like to be included in our “Meet the Members” articles in a future Newsletter, please send in your notes for inclusion.
- ❖ 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 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020 with the Newsletter being published by the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020.**