

Milton Keynes Model Railway Club

Quarterly Newsletter



Issue 217

Spring 2025

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Chairman's News

Hello all, and welcome to the first club newsletter of 2025.

As always, it has been a busy few months for the club with plenty to report on. Firstly, I'd like to say a welcome and thank you to our new editor of the club newsletter Mike Biss. Mike has very kindly taken over from Dave Court (who held the position for the last 10 years), who has decided to stand down from the club

We had our annual AGM on 28th January which saw the election of the new officers of the club. Thank you to everyone who stood, hopefully we can make this another positive year for the club. The one change was the standing down of Russell Horne, who we thank greatly for his contribution on the committee over the last 10 years or so. We are delighted that Russell is staying on as an honorary club member.

Over the coming months there will be lots happening at the club. Our first open day has been chosen as Saturday 5th April. We hope as many of you will be able attend as possible to make this another success. We are also rapidly approaching our annual exhibition on Saturday 7th June. A sign-up sheet has been put in the club for availability for the show on both the Friday night for setting up and, of course, the Saturday. It would be great if every member possible could sign up, as the exhibition takes an awful lot of preparation and manpower.

Since our last newsletter, our N gauge layout Brinklow has been having plenty of outings, with trips up to Crewe and the NEC last November and a visit to Tonbridge in February. Plenty more outings are planned for Brinklow, with the next being the London Festival of Railway Modelling in just a couple of weeks. Members' layouts have also been busy on the road, with Wayne's layout East Anstey appearing at Doncaster and Gerhard's Donnersbachkogel taking stage at Biggleswade.

Lots will be happening with club and members' layouts as well over the coming months. One important job is the cutting in half of the Junior Layout, Church Hill Road. This layout is an awkward size at present, requiring a hired van to transport it anywhere. We intend to rectify this by cutting it in half and putting it on hinges so it can be transported in a car instead. Our new OO gauge layout has not been forgotten, and there will be further news upon that soon, with the latest plan available at the clubroom on the wall near the sales stand. We are also looking to push forward and complete renovations to Dennis's layout Bowlers Croft and Paul Sucksmith's layout Toms Bridge Junction. As both layouts will represent the club on their travels, any member who wishes to assist with the ongoing work please speak to Dennis or Paul as any and all help (particularly regarding wiring) is most appreciated. Finally, later this year we are looking at reviving the club O.16.5 layout Odd-stones. This layout has been in storage at the container for a good number of years and it will be great to restore it and have it available for future exhibitions.

I hope to see most of you at the club and if anyone has any suggestions at all, please feel free to speak to either myself or any other committee member. Communication is key to our club.

Tim Byrne
Chairman

Festive Fun

One of Santas elves reports on the latest activities in the build-up to Christmas 2024

For the past few years, MKMRS members step outside their normal comfort zone and enter into the Christmas spirit. The turning on of the Christmas lights in Stony Stratford is a major event with the market square accommodating a fun fair and the streets closed to traffic and full of stalls from local organisations. In the centre stands the church of St. Peter & St. Paul and it is here where MKMRS members can be found.

For years former late MKMRS members Brian Barnes, Stan Pennington and John Forman, ably assisted by others, put together a large O gauge tinplate layout in the church of St Peter & St Paul in the High Street.

Following Brian's passing in December 2015 just a few days before he was due to provide trains for the lights switch on, Stony Stratford residents Bill and Shirley Marsden took over running tinplate O scale Lionel trains with lots of operating accessories. Sadly, Bill passed away in 2018 and for a couple of years, visitors expressed disappointment that trains were no longer a feature in the church. So the organising committee sought alternative operators and a phone call was made to MKMRS and that is how we got involved and plans were made to attend the 2020 event.

We were all set to take part and then along came Covid leading to the 2020 event being cancelled. The following year we eventually took part and with more trains available than previously, we duly fulfilled our commitment. With Covid restrictions still having an effect, we put on an impressive display, despite all the doors having to be open. We managed to avoid hypothermia and the trains, like us, gradually thawed out.



Without access to the previous equipment, we decided to continue with the Christmas village theme which we had employed at the Bedford Vintage Trains Group and at a local church Christmas Fayre. At these, we had displayed and operated 'tacky' Christmas trains, which back then originally

consisted of the cheap battery-operated trains found in garden centres etc. We had quite a few, some of which we used to put on display at Bletchley Park each Christmas when we operated out of there.

A month before, the trains are gathered together and taken into the club room from our container, so that the testing processes can begin. Each year we seem to accommodate more trains than before, so we can ring the changes when needed. These now include several Lionel battery operated sets running on plastic G scale tracks. These come with handheld remote controllers, which younger visitors are invited to drive and are given a certificate on completion of their driving turn.



Buildings and figures are mostly from the Lemax range found in garden centres etc. Scale is not important in such scenarios, as figures are often larger than the buildings. The choir outside the church is one example of scale compromise, whilst the giant turkeys (Schleich large scale plastic models) are bigger than some of the trains!

Stony Stratford takes some four hours to set up and is carried out the afternoon before. It operates on two levels, with the smaller trains operating on tables and below them at ground level, we operate three circuits of G scale trains and one of Tri-ang Big-Big O gauge. The three G scale circuits utilize Lionel Christmas Trains on two circuits and Hogwarts Express, also by Lionel, runs on the other.

Packing it up after the lights are switched on around 17:00 is achieved in some 90 minutes.

The upper circuits comprise four ovals of Hornby OO track loose laid on tables, with white sheets providing the snow scene. Santa Express locomotives run hauling the annual Hornby Christmas wagons full of toys. The trains, of course, get longer each year as Hornby introduce a new dated wagon every year! The residents of our Christmas village also drink a lot of Coca-Cola, which arrives in various Hornby trains. Coca-Cola's Christmas TV advertising featuring the large lorry is well known, perhaps one year they will deliver Christmas cheer by train! In the past we have also had trains operating in the livery of Del Boy Trotter's "Only Fools & Horses" livery, not that purchasing Christmas presents from that source is recommended. I would not be surprised if 'Ivor

the Engine' does not represent the top left-hand corner of Wales in future, following the release of the sets from Rapido Trains later this year. Lemax also produce a battery-operated Christmas train which runs on its own dedicated circuit of plastic track, whilst four Lemax Christmas trams were operating on straight tracks which have automatic reversing systems at each end. These shuttled to and fro all day, with only one tram requiring a battery change. Alongside this, 'The Polar Express' set from Lionel is another recognised by visitors, as several heritage lines now operate illuminated trains in the lead up to the festivities.

We also have several static trains on show, one featuring Postman Pat and another representing Peppa Pigs grandpa's train, which appeal to our younger visitors. Fireman Sam was also spotted riding around on top of a caboose.

Each year a bucket collection takes place, with visitors invited to drop coins in. This year we raised £74.43, which was down on the previous three years average of around £100. This was put down to less people carrying cash and the charity next year will be supplying card readers!

Having already been invited back, we are already making plans to improve our displays next time, with new tunnels being planned and additional sheets to cover them as mountains. We may have to source a dragon for a Welsh mountain scene, if 'Ivor' puts in an appearance during Christmas 2025.

Whilst we still support the Bedford Vintage Trains Group's Christmas meeting with a village scene and three operating OO circuits, this is a much more modest display, as we only have a very limited time to set up for an evening event and breakdown afterwards. Combined with the seasonal fayre from the Christmas buffet car, it gives us a second excuse to don Santa hats and run festive trains for fun. We know that visitors to Houghton Conquest appreciate it even more these days, as the trains are now quiet and a "Silent Night" is guaranteed for all.



Santa (Chairman Tim Byrne) was helped by this year's team of elves notably, James Woodley, Phil Ramsden, Claire Harris, Tom Harris, Richard Seward, Frank Pedro, Ashley Goodall and Dennis Lovett.

Dennis Lovett

WHO DO I BELONG TO?

There is much confusion about the differences between Milton Keynes Model Railway Society Limited and Milton Keynes Model Railway Club. To try and clear up the confusion, I will attempt to explain the differences.



Some time back, the committee took a decision to take advantage of charitable status to gain exemption from paying commercial rates on the clubroom and to gain other benefits that charitable status brings. Therefore, to make the change, and to remain compliant with company law, two entities were created.

An application to the Charity Commission was made and was successful which created the Milton Keynes Model Railway Club. This is the body to which we all as members of the club belong and to which we pay our subscriptions each month or year as appropriate.

Following the granting of charitable status, to ensure that the Club does not infringe the Charities Act of 2011, it was necessary to form an arms-length, not-for-profit company registered at Companies House, whose sole purpose was to support the charity (the Club). It does this by covenanting all its trading profits derived from running the annual exhibition and by sales made through regalia throughout the year.

The benefits to the Club through becoming a charity are that we now benefit from mandatory and discretionary business tax relief which results in a saving to the Club of around £1,300 a year. Had the Club been required to pay this, then the subscription rate which you are asked to pay, would certainly have seen a steeper increase than was requested at the Annual General Meeting. There are other benefits, but in the interests of keeping this explanation simple, I will leave matters there.

To put it concisely, we all belong to the Club (the Charity) and are supported by the Company (the Limited not-for-profit company).

Paul Egerton
Club Treasurer

TT Anyone?

Of my own interest and not connected with anything the club or its committee, are there any members who would be interested in the TT 1:120 scale? If you are interested, can we get together on a club night to see if the club should have a layout dedicated to this scale. Currently there is only one manufacturer of locomotives and two, possibly three, of coaches and wagons, with two makers of track and points. Should we consider this scale within our club's remit and add to its wide range of layouts already in the container. You can email me on psucksmith@gmail.com if you are interested.

Thanks

Paul Sucksmith

Why I Became A Train Driver

"Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life."



Shortly after I got back into the hobby in 2017, I wanted to find a way to make my hobby a part of my day job. It all began in 2017 with a real life “sliding doors” moment, when I bumped into Roger White, completely by chance, in Houghton Conquest Village Hall. Roger is a family friend, having got to know Roger when my family used to regularly attend All Saints Church in Wilstead, where Roger was a member of the clergy. I would go to exhibitions with him and help run a clockwork train stall at the village Advent Fair! Roger even read a statement on my behalf at my Dad’s funeral when I was 11. However, when I bumped into Roger and Frances in 2017, I hadn’t seen him for a good few years at that point. It was at that “sliding doors” moment that Roger invited me to the first Beds Vintage Train Group meeting, which was being held at the same hall the following week. I hadn’t run, or even looked at, my trains since we moved house in 2013, where they were subsequently buried at the back of the garage, when I followed the common pattern of School and then University work taking precedent over trains. I was always into trains growing up, largely thanks to my Dad, who was also into trains. He even had to demolish his model railway to make way for my nursery, when I came along in 1991!

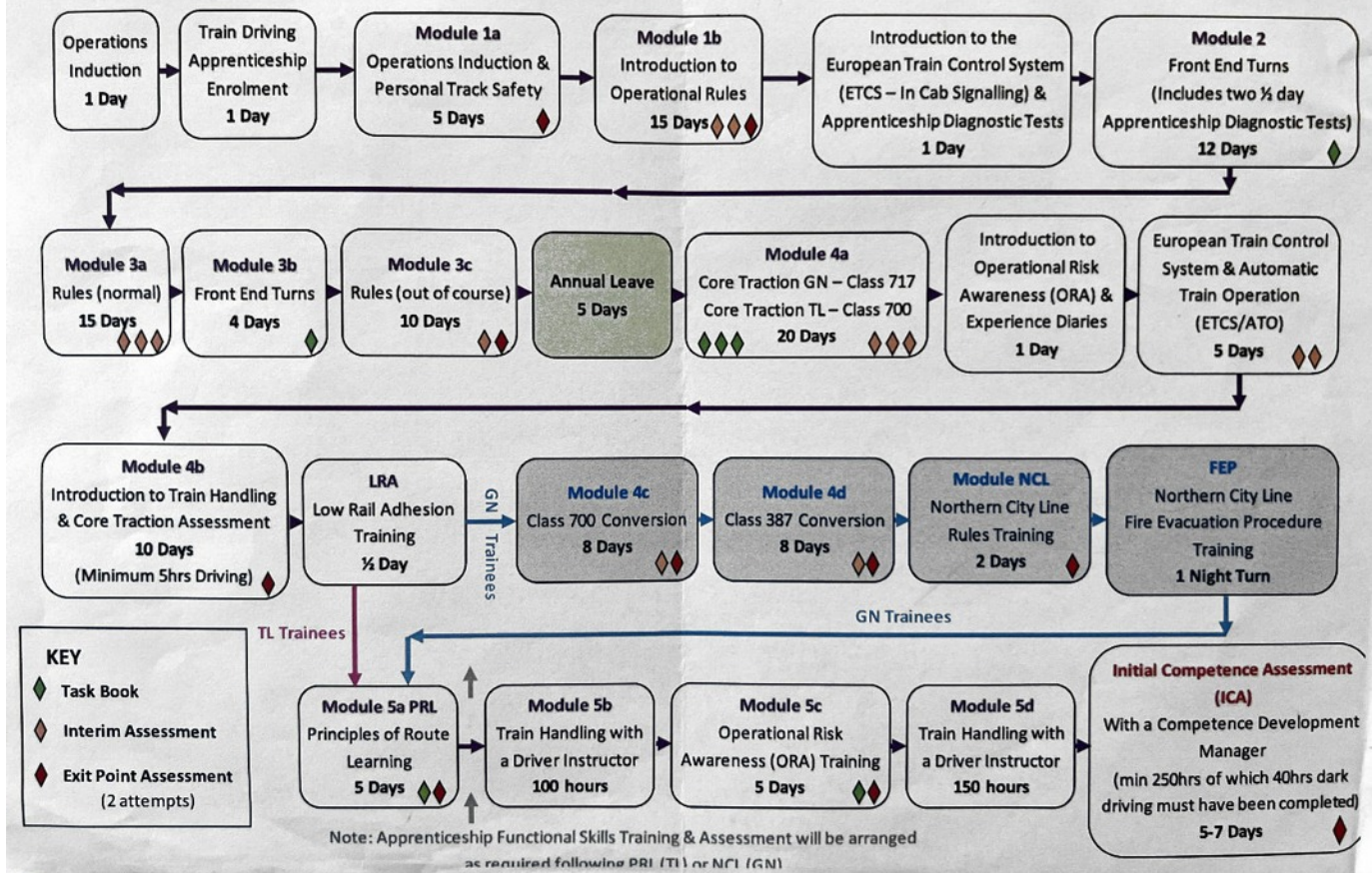
At the BVTG meeting the following week, it felt like a switch was turning on in my brain, as I was rediscovering my passion for trains! My interest in trains had never gone completely and I didn’t realise just how many photos of trains I took when I went to India after finishing university. A few days after the BVTG meeting, I recovered my trains from the garage and took over the dining room table for longer than I thought I would get away with. I cajoled my sister into a trip to the NRM in York and then Roger suggested I go over to MKMRC with him and the rest is history! When I joined MKMRC, I was working at Autoglass and spent nearly 10 years there. Whilst I enjoyed my time there, and met some great people, it was something I largely fell into and I didn’t really want to be there forever. After rediscovering my passion, I wanted to try and turn it into my day job. I applied

for a few jobs at Network Rail in Milton Keynes, but I couldn't even get to the interview stage. Then, in 2019, I heard East Midlands Trains were advertising for drivers. I submitted an application and I was selected to take part in an assessment day in Derby. During an assessment day, they put you through psychometric tests (there are around eight in total) to see if you are suitable for the role of a driver. To my surprise, one of the other candidates at the assessment centre, was an old teacher of mine from Wootton Upper School, which was a strange moment for me and for her! During my day at Derby, I did around four of the tests, which included concentration tests. During one test, you had to look at lists of the letter O and pick out the Q as quickly and accurately as possible. Another test entailed listening to different sounds and picking out how many high and low tones you could hear. This was all quite daunting and to make matters worse, if people didn't pass the tests as the day progressed, they were informed they could go home. It was like a cheap version of the Apprentice! Thankfully for me, I passed the first assessment day and I was ecstatic, but still very aware I was very far off being successful. The next stage of the East Midlands selection process was a sort of self-tape interview, where you had to log on to their website and interview questions would flash up on the screen for you to respond to instantaneously, in the allotted time. This was before anyone had heard of Zoom or Teams and I was not a natural at speaking to my laptop to record a video. Looking back, I was probably a little unprepared for the interview as well. When I submitted the video/interview, I had a sinking feeling it had not gone very well and I was not surprised to receive an email after a couple of days, to say I was not successful and the application would not be taken further. This was a disappointing blow, but I was still hoping something might come up along the way.

Around eighteen months after my failed application with East Midlands Trains, I saw Thameslink were advertising for Trainee Train Drivers, on Instagram of all places! I thought I had to have another go at it, so I submitted my application in December 2020 and I was invited to another assessment day to complete more psychometric tests. Luckily the tests are an industry wide standard, so because I had already completed some tests with EMT, I did not need to sit those tests again. I worked through the practice material they provide to help candidates prepare for the tests and I practiced over and over again, up until my assessment day. Some of the remaining tests had to be completed on a computer, although they don't tell you in advance exactly which tests you'll be sitting during the assessment day. I turned up to the offices in East Croydon early, full of a heady mix of nerves and excitement, only to be told there had been a break-in overnight and the computers were out of action. I presume they had been stolen, but that was never confirmed! As I didn't need to sit the first set of tests and I couldn't attempt the computer tests, I was told I wasn't needed until well after lunchtime! I discovered there is not a lot to do in East Croydon that day and I just opted to pick the best bench I could find and watch the trams roll past. I completed the assessment day and received an email to confirm I was invited back to complete the computer tests another day, which thankfully also went well. After this, I had two separate interviews, one at the depot in Hornsey and the other at the offices in East Croydon. Then I had to attend a medical assessment as well and I'm glad to say that all went well. With each stage that I got through, the prospect of becoming a driver became more and more exciting.

After completing the selection process, I was given the start date of 23rd October 2023, nearly 3 years after applying! I turned up for my induction at the offices in East Croydon with other people who were doing all sorts of different roles across the railway, there were guards, signallers, platform staff and some fellow drivers. The induction lasted a few days, with some tasks to be completed at home, so naturally I did some of this whilst playing trains in the clubroom! At the end of the first week, we had our induction at the training school in Hornsey. This is where I met the rest of my training group; there were eight of us in total. Something I have been surprised by on the railway is the range of backgrounds that everyone has, in my group alone there was a fireman, lorry driver, communications technician, an engineer and a shunter. We were all destined for Cricklewood depot upon qualifying, so we soon gelled as a group and supported each other through the classroom-based learning. At the start of training, it felt like there was a huge mountain to climb and that qualifying was an age away, but the training was broken down into different sections and we were given a training plan which I have included on the next page.

GTR DRIVER TRAINING COURSE MODULE LAYOUT

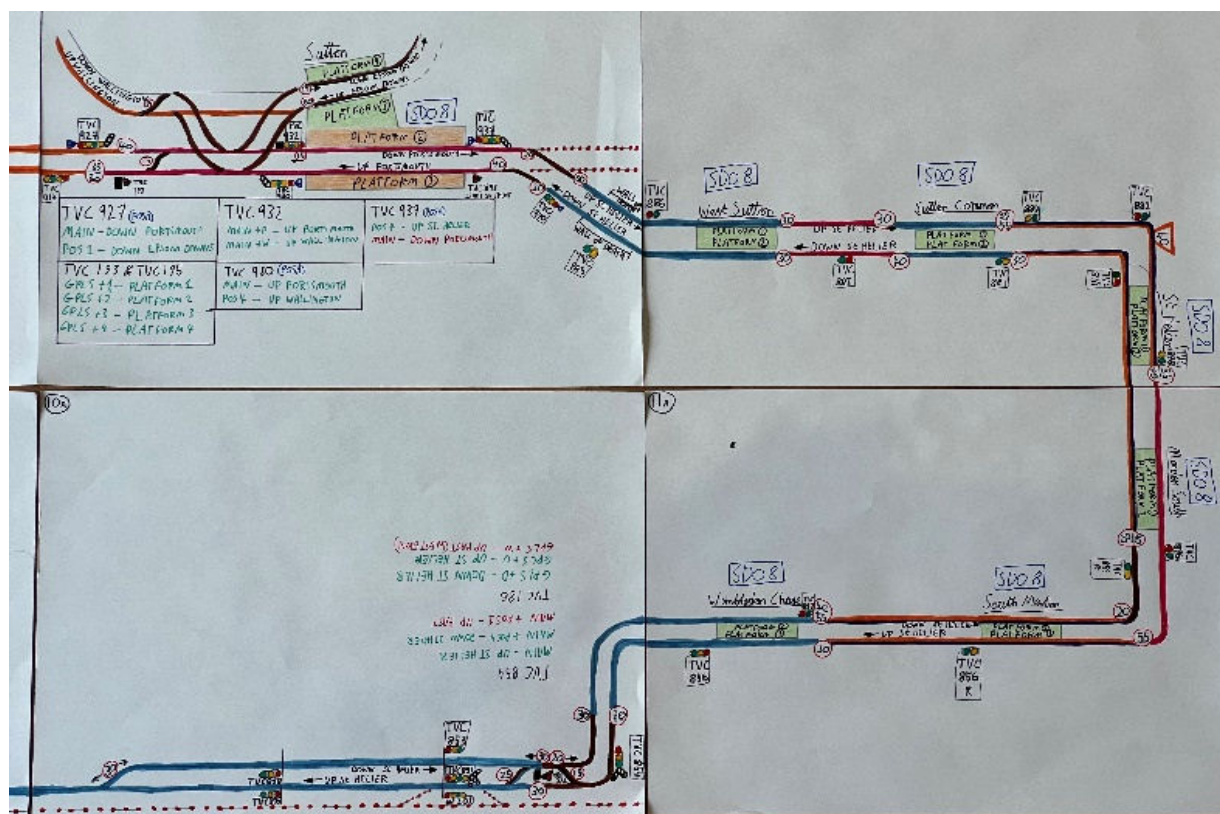


We began our training with Personal Track Safety (PTS), which lasted a few days with the exam at the end of the week. This was a taste of the pattern to come, as when we started our rules lessons, there would be a test set every Friday, to check our learning was progressing at the right pace. Overall, our rules lessons were interesting, although some days it was very much death by PowerPoint! In many ways, it felt like being back at school, because you were expected (and needed) to complete some studying at home, to make sure you were taking in all the necessary information. Around halfway through our rules learning, we had a week of “front ending”, where we spent a week shadowing a driver. This was a great insight into the role we had all signed up for and a chance to get used to the shifts and unsociable hours.

At the end of the weeks of rules lessons, we had our big “Week 14 Test”, which was an exam which lasted around four gruelling hours. I remember feeling completely drained after the exam and then I had to go home and revise what I think I may have got wrong, because on the next day, you have to review your incorrect answers with a member of staff from the training school, to prove you do have the correct underpinning knowledge. Luckily, I didn’t have too many “reviews” to go over and everyone in my group progressed to the next stage. The following week was set as annual leave, to give us a chance to recover and prepare for the next phase of training, which was traction. During traction, we learnt all about the trains themselves, such as the safety systems, how to control the train and which button to press and when! The traction course lasted for four weeks, still with a test to complete each Friday. The fourth week was supposed to be largely for revision, but we had issues with train availability in the yard at Cricklewood, therefore we were split into two groups and sent to different yards to basically cram everything we needed into the last week! After we completed our traction course, there were a series of shorter courses to prepare us for starting with our Driving Instructors (DIs). These courses were things like Operational Risk Awareness, ETCS (in cab signalling), Low Rail Adhesion, Train Handling and Principles of Route Learning.

After completing the classroom-based courses over several weeks, we were finally ready to start with our Driving Instructors. My group was quite fortunate that we didn’t have to wait for too long for

an instructor to become available. I have been told stories of previous groups having to wait around six months for some DIs to become available. When my group got to this stage, there weren't enough DIs available at Cricklewood for all of us, so some of us started with DIs who were based at Bedford. At the time, this felt like a negative thing, but it actually worked out well, because we got more experience driving the route between Bedford and St Albans, which Cricklewood drivers don't do very often, but we still need to know. I was with my Bedford DI for just under two months, before starting with my DI at Cricklewood. We needed to complete a total of 250 hours before we could be considered for our Part C (Final assessment), which usually takes around six months. When you are with your DI, you learn all your required route knowledge and how to drive the train, with shut off and braking points, line speeds, signal locations, platform lengths, stations, line names, what signals you can and can't take etc. One of the best ways for me to learn all of this was by drawing all my routes out such as below.



I knew there would be a lot to learn, but I probably still underestimated the amount of knowledge that we needed to absorb. I also didn't expect the level of stress and pressure that came with trying to learn everything. My DI Rob, was very supportive and most of the pressure I felt came from myself, but things went OK and eventually after being with Rob for around five months, I had worked the required number of hours and Rob said I was ready for my Part C. He put me forward and I was informed that my Part C would start on the 6th January and would last for just under two weeks. Over the course of the Part C, you are tested on everything you have studied since the beginning of training, including PTS, Rules, Traction, ETCS etc. as well as our ability to safely drive a train! This was a very daunting experience, although the manager that carried out my Part C, did his best to put me at ease. Thankfully, everything went well and I passed out as a qualified driver on the 16th January 2025.

Passing out was a completely surreal experience, because it had been such a long process to get to that point, it was hard to believe the moment had finally come. I feel incredibly lucky to have found something I love to do and given that there were 3,000 applications for every train driver role, I have to pinch myself that it has worked out for me. I'm incredibly grateful that I bumped into Roger in Houghton Conquest back in 2017 and that that "sliding doors" moment set me on the right track to where I am now!

James Woodley

Re-emergence of Club Sign

The emergence of the club sign from storage in the container has a history as long as the club itself. It was produced in our very early days by one of our founder members Colin Stacey in the style of a GWR nameplate and alongside it a cabside number plate showing the date of our formation – 1969.

It adorned the club walls at our four previous locations and for 18 years it welcomed thousands of visitors to our former Bletchley Park premises. It was also used on the club information stand at exhibitions in the past.



The picture shows it at our 25th Anniversary Dinner held on 15th October 1994 at Bletchley College attended by 48 members and guests. In the centre of our picture is then President Jim Wood and his wife Joy. Jim was a long-standing member of Norwood Model Railway Club and a committee member who moved to Bletchley when the company Jim worked for relocated to First Avenue in Bletchley, the family joined him. When the club was set up in the summer of 1969, Jim chaired the initial steering group meetings and not surprisingly became our Chairman for the first eight years of our existence, the club being formally established in October 1969. He then became our first President and was active in the club during our Bletchley Park days, taking regular turns to meet our many visitors and run trains for their enjoyment. Jim sadly passed away some years ago. To the left of Jim is well known S Gauge modeller, the Rev. Canon Ian Pusey who was also a long-time member of The Model Railway Club in London. Ian was also the Rector of St. Mary's Church, Bletchley and is still an honorary member of the club. Ian is pictured with his wife Ros and gave the Grace at our formal club anniversary dinner. To the right of Jim are local Gauge O Guild committee members Mike Vincent and his wife Janet. They lived in Leighton Buzzard and Mike was a regular exhibitor at our club exhibitions in the past, His American O gauge layout Black Canyon was well known on the exhibition circuit. Sadly, both passed away some years ago.

Colin Stacey still lives in Stony Stratford and is a railway photographer running the photographic archive Initial Photographics.

Dennis Lovett

Sound Affects

No I haven't spelt that wrong! Have you noticed the increase in our hobby of sound effects? I think we all have. When running them on our own layouts at home you probably turn down the volume as with, in these days of DCC, you may have as many as five or six locomotives running and with sound! Now that's OK at home, but then in the club room, I and some others, have noticed that the volume levels seem to be turned up as due to the number of members in the room talking, the answer is turn up the volume! We all like to look at our models and comment on the level of accuracy and the sound effects, but when it comes to the volume it goes over the top!

If you scale up the volume to the real thing, the sound pressure would kill the crews and passengers! Sometimes less is more with sound effects and I have found on the quieter nights, sound effects are lower but clearer in the room and you can still have a conversation.

I do not want to be a moaner about the subject, but I and some other members have to wear hearing aids and with the volume of sound effects and members talking louder, it does make having a conversation harder as you struggle to talk about our trains and hobby. So please carry on with your sound effects and lets all enjoy the sound effects of our models, but at a level we can all enjoy.

Thank You

Paul Sucksmith

MILTON KEYNES MRC NEEDS YOU - AND YOUR FRIENDS



It is well known that the Club has regrettably, had to increase its membership fee to meet not only last years' shortfall, but also to be able to cover the expected increase in the rent we pay on the clubroom, workroom and container which houses some of our layouts and equipment. Against this background, we have seen falling membership because of members becoming older, moving away or for reasons of health.

The Club's budget is predicated on a membership of around 60+, but to meet the current shortfall, we need to recruit and attract more members. This is where you come in.

Do you have a friend with a passing interest in railways or modelling, or both? If so, bring them along to the Clubroom on a Tuesday evening to show them what the Club has to offer. Those that decide that they would like to join us may benefit from an introductory offer of £10 per month for a maximum of 3 months; thereafter, if they like us and decide to stay, they will be asked to pay the full rate of £16 a month. This offer is also being made at our regular open days and annual exhibition on 7th June which we expect will act as an incentive to join.

Paul Egerton
Club Treasurer

St Kitts Railway - aka - The Reggae Railway

This narrow gauge railway is located on the Caribbean island of St Kitts. Originally built to serve the sugar cane plantations in Basseterre, it is now a tourist railway.



It's a circular railway of over several miles with a gauge I believe of 2 foot 6 inches and uses diesel locomotives. When we arrived, I did see a Hunslet diesel loco in the yard.



I was unable to identify the diesel loco that would be hauling our train, it may of been a Hunslet or a Ruston or some other make. The coaches were interesting, they were bogie double deckers. Downstairs, they were air conditioned with tables and chairs. Upstairs was open to the elements with a canopy. Needless to say, everyone ended up upstairs.



Once we got going, it was rather noticeable how tight the curves were and the rocking and rolling of the coaches was quite noticeable. Right behind our loco, was what I called a generator van, which I guess powered the air-con and electric systems and compressors for the air brakes. The speed of the train was about 5 to 10 mph max, depending on the tightness of curves and gradients.



Refreshments, rum punch fruit juice etc., were freely available. So after a few rums, you didn't notice the rocking and rolling of the coaches, ha, ha.

The highlight of the trip was crossing a bridge over a steep and deep valley. At first glance, the bridge looked like it was built using some RSJ's that you use on building jobs.

Have to say, the Mrs and I did enjoy the ride.

Peter Hoare

Club Open Day

The first club Open Day of 2025 will be held on Saturday 5th April, so please make a note in your diary. Open days are a great way to welcome potential new members and show people what we do, although successful open days rely on club members getting involved! So why not ask your friends, neighbours or work colleagues about having a look at what we do and see if they will like to join in with the activities we do.

Therefore, we will soon have a sign-up sheet on the notice board in the club room, so we have an idea of how many members will be able to help out on the day! If you can't get to the club room to add your name to the sign-up sheet, then please contact James at secretary@mkMrs.org.uk and he will add your details.

Future Open Days are provisionally planned for 28th June and 25th October.

STEAM

Museum of the Great Western Railway

The Club is looking to organise an outing to **STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway** on Saturday 22nd March at Swindon. For those who are less inclined towards railways, the museum is next to the Swindon Outlet Village with the various shopping and café experiences that delivers!

You would need to make your own transport arrangements, but the Club can take advantage of Group Booking rates. A large car park is nearby (chargeable, see below) or, if desired, the museum is a short walk from Swindon Station. The museum opens at 10am, so we can meet up at 10:30 for a 11am group entry. There is a cafe on site, open from 10am, serving hot and cold food.

Group Booking rates are as follows:

	Without Highlights Tour	With Highlights Tour
Adult	£11.75	£17.25
Senior 65+	£9.45	£14.95
Child 3 – 15 years	£8.70	£14.20

If you are interested, please leave your details on the form below besides the signing-in book in the Clubroom by no later than Friday 14th March 2025. Further announcements will be made at tea during Tuesday Club nights.

I would like to attend the trip to **Steam – The Museum of the Great Western** and would like the following number of places.

Adult ticket numbers []

Senior ticket numbers []

Child numbers []

Name (Block Letters)

Membership Number

Contact email

Contact phone number

Send form to Paul Egerton at: pegwr33@gmail.com

PARKING: To find the Designer Outlet Shopping Village using Sat Nav, for the North car park enter Kemble Drive (SN2 2NA) or for the West car park enter Penzance Drive (SN5 7JL). The bus lane next to the West car park should NOT be used (you will be fined). The parking system is ticketless. You will need to enter your registration on exit at the payment machines to pay, or tap your card at the exit barriers. The car park fees are free for the first 15 minutes, then £2.50 for up to 5 hours, £12 thereafter. Free parking if you spend £100 or more (*but not in the STEAM gift shop*).

Brinklow Updates - Part 5

With a few shows now done, the new CDU units have worked very well and the non-firing problem seems to have been fixed, fingers crossed.

The way the layout is erected at shows, and on return to the club room, has changed and we now assemble it one board after the other. The layout is built as five baseboards, with the two ends and the middle board having the legs fixable underneath and the other two boards suspended between. Previously it took four people to assemble, as we would put an end board and the middle board up and then two people would hold the non-leg board onto the end board, whilst the other two people moved the middle board into place. This was then repeated for the other boards. Now the layout can be assembled by just two people, with the aid of two bits of wood clamped to the non-leg board to act as temporary legs, this is then piggy backed onto the end board and then the middle board can be brought up and connected. The temporary legs are then removed and put on the other non-leg board and the process repeated. This has worked out to be a lot easier way of putting the layout up and getting it correctly levelled.

Although we had previously got the ends of the boards flat, so there was no overhang anymore, the boards were still not going together properly. We could tighten the bolts up, but you could still pull the sides together. What we think has happened is that the main spine down the length of the boards is somehow pushing the ends out slightly. So what we have done is to plane the ends down on the problem areas and this has allowed us to get a closer fit on all the joins when they are put together. Although they now go together a lot better and the gaps have been reduced, there are bits of the scenery that have dried out and pulled away from the edges. These will need either building back up or maybe adding something extra to hide it. We still need to do all the rail joins on the scenic section, but this will have to wait for a break in taking it to shows.

Our next outing is at Alexandra Palace, on the 15/16th March.

Mike Biss

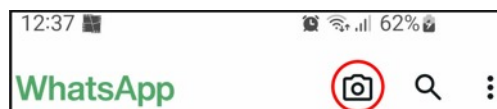
WhatsApp Group For The Club



After a suggestion by Richard Loose about having a way to have informal discussions outside of the club nights, possibly via WhatsApp or another means, the committee have agreed the suggestion is a good idea. So a WhatsApp group has been set up for the club, and if you are not sure what this is, then it is an App on your mobile, a bit like text messaging, but you can send pictures and videos and it goes to everyone in the group, so a question can be asked and anyone in the group can supply an answer. Obviously, there could be a chance you get two or more different answers to your question, but that just gives you more answers.

WhatsApp is available to download from your usual mobile phone App store.

To get access to the group (**which must be adults only due to legal reasons**), there is a QR-Code image on the club notice board. Open WhatsApp and then click on the camera symbol and point it at the QR-Code. It will then allow you to join the 'MK Model Railway Club' group.



Alternatively, you can use this link <https://chat.whatsapp.com/JWo9Pc1ynRU3vhxYm8Smyj> on your phone's browser to gain access. Any questions, just ask someone who uses their phone a lot!

NOTE: Younger members can have their questions asked via their parent/guardian, using the group.

A Trip To The Great Central

One of my greatest passions is visiting the preserved railways up and down the country and these railways are probably my largest inspiration in my railway modelling. One of the railways I visit most frequently is the Great Central Railway, running from Leicester North to Loughborough, and today I'll tell you about my recent visit with James Woodley.

The original Great Central Mainline was opened in 1899 and ran from London Marylebone, through Leicester, Nottingham and up to Sheffield and finally Manchester London Road. It carried both passenger and good trains, but particularly became known for the latter. After nationalisation though, goods traffic began to decline and sadly it was announced to close as part of the infamous Beeching cuts. The full line closed between 1966 and 1969. Despite the closure of the Great Central mainline though, all was not lost, as enthusiasts opposed to the closure managed to purchase a section of the line and over the decades this has expanded into the Great Central Heritage Railway that many of us know today.

Now to my recent visit. Generally speaking, I find the best place to park is at Quorn and Woodhouse Station, as there is a good amount of parking in the station yard, and on galas and other special events, a nearby large field is opened up. The beauty of the stations on the preserved Great Central is that they are all beautifully restored and each to a different period of the line's history. Quorn is in 1940s condition, with several nods to the wartime period. There is a goods yard and a turntable there, which is frequently used in galas. Today though, the yard was static but filled with a beautiful array of tanker wagons in a variety of liveries, from the early to some only recently withdrawn. With a while to wait before the train, we decided to go and get a cup of tea at one of the absolute gems of the railway, the station Naafi. The Naafi is a real step back in time to wartime Britain, beautifully laid out, it is the perfect place to head and get a proper brew. The fire was roaring and there was a real friendliness to the place, where strangers strike up a conversation and it really does feel like a throwback to the camaraderie of wartime Britain.



Once it was time to get our train, one of the visiting locos pulled into the station, GWR 5600 Class No 6695 in GWR Green, with a rake of MK1 carriages. We boarded and settled down for the run to the next station, Rothley. Before getting there though, you pass over the stunning Swithland Reservoir. With the sun in the right position, it really is picturesque and often a variety of water birds can be seen when travelling over it. Shortly after the reservoir, you pass through Swithland Sidings where a lot of the goods rolling stock is kept and it is a sight to behold, passing dozens of mineral wagons, vans, more tank wagons and the TPO set. This is also where the branch to Mountsorrel splits from the railway, although this was not running on our visit.



Upon arriving at Rothley Station, you are greeted with another immaculate station, this time as it was during the Edwardian period. We got off to have a look around and the first thing we (naturally) headed to was the Garden Model Railway, which was in operation. Named the Charnwood Forest Garden Railway, this lovely railway was running live steam, 16mm I believe. Whilst not finescale, the railway has a real charm about it. After that, we headed to the other end of the station and had a peak into the carriage sheds, where the main carriage restoration is done. We then awaited our next train, which would take us to Leicester North.

The next locomotive to haul us was the new build GWR Grange locomotive, 6880 Betton Grange, with a rake of MK1 carriages. Only completed last year and immaculately turned out in BR Green with late crest, this was definitely a highlight of the day. The Grange carried us with ease to Leicester North, which is one end terminus of the line. This station is turned out in 1960s condition and besides a small booking office and tearoom, there isn't too much to do there. The main highlight of this station is watching the locomotive run around the train, which provides great opportunity for photography and videos.

After re-boarding the train, we decided to head all the way to the North end of the line at Loughborough. As it was now getting on for lunch time, we decided to get a bite to eat on the train. This is another highlight of the day, the authentic MK1 griddle car full English breakfast. I'm not sure what the science is, but to me, a full English always tastes nicer when cooked onboard a griddle car and I'll let the picture do the rest of the talking!

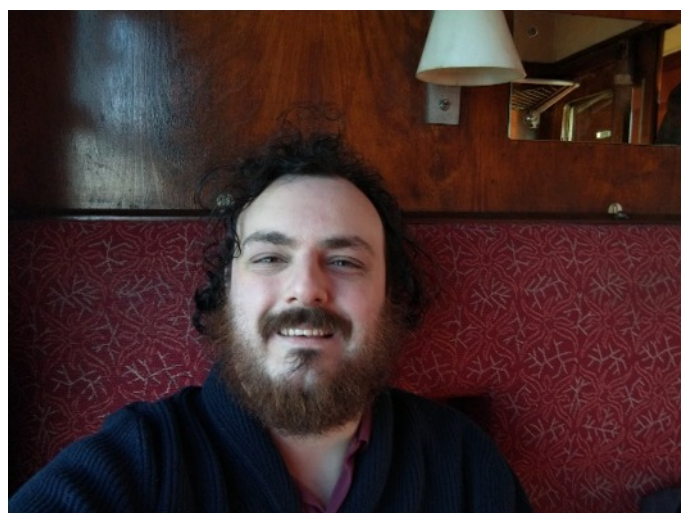


We travelled through Rothley, past the Swithland Sidings and Reservoir, through Quorn again and eventually reached our destination of Loughborough Central. This station is in 1950s condition and has plenty to see. There is a small museum at the near end of the station, which contains a great many artifacts relating to the original Great Central Railway and the trains that ran on it, as well as

a small coin operated model railway. Also on the station there is the usual gift shop, as well as the treasure trove that is the station emporium. This contains a great many books, as well as some second-hand models and a great number of other nicknacks and railwayana. Impressively, I managed to resist buying anything this time!



After walking to the North end of the station platform, you cross over and can walk down a path towards the locomotive shed and MPD. On the way, you pass most of the railway's diesel locomotives and operational steam locomotives. The majority of the railway's home fleet are in British Railways liveries and all are near immaculate. The shed unfortunately wasn't open, but you could see more locomotives in the MPD, as well as a variety of boilers and a newly acquired tender for a new-build locomotive. Upon the return walk, we saw the premium dining train arrive back from its journey, with a variety of MK1 carriages in the Pullman livery. We then watched the locomotive (Betton Grange again) go to the depot for coal and water.



After this, we decided to do a couple more up and down runs of the line, this time the locomotive hauling us was a GWR 2884 heavy freight class locomotive, no 3850 in the GWR wartime black livery. Sitting in the comfortable MK1 compartments trundling up and down, you could easily drift off to sleep, certainly the comfort levels put today's modern trains to shame! Eventually we reached Quorn and Woodhouse station again, just as it was getting dark, which marked journey's end for us. A thoroughly enjoyable day and who knows, maybe in the future we should have an official club outing there?!

Tim Byrne

MKMRS Exhibition 2025 - 7th June



The club's annual exhibition is fast approaching and your help will be appreciated with tasks and activities to set the show up. There is a sheet in the club room asking for help on either, or both, Friday and Saturday.

We will certainly need a lot of help on the Saturday during the show, so please offer your services to help make this show a success. There are roles suitable for everyone's ability.

Currently we have 28 layouts going to be on display, together with the support of 19 traders. In addition, we also have an additional room this year, so more floor space has been filled.

If you are unable to get to the club room, then please let me know via email info@leap-som.co.uk of your availability to help please.

To help make the show a success, we also need your help with advertising. For those of you with social media, can you please "Like" and/or comment on some posts we make on the club's Facebook page, as this helps with the algorithm and will make Facebook show the posts to more people. Can you also share the Event on your feed, so that other people can see it as well.

Also, if you know any local companies that might like to place an advert in our Exhibition Guide, which will be A5 sized and is currently 40 pages, the costs are ¼ page advert is £25, ½ page advert is £50 and a full page advert is £75. There doesn't have to be any connection to railways, as they can be advertising to the many local people who will be attending the show.

Carl White
Exhibition Manager

Where's Tim & Wow, Cake

A couple of things from recent shows and how different the experiences can be.

At the Doncaster Show, where we were displaying Wayne's layout East Anstey, on the Sunday morning when we took both cars to the venue, we had a situation where I walked over to the garage to get a paper and when I returned, Wayne had already left. I then drove over myself and when I got there, we both looked at each other and said "Where's Tim?". I had got the communications wrong and I then drove back to the hotel to find Tim sitting in the hotel foyer, wondering where we were! A short drive, thankfully, back to the racecourse saw us all back together again. Whoops.....

The following weekend we were down at the Tonbridge show with Brinklow and this event had a very good way of looking after their exhibitors. Lunch was a sit down table service of roast chicken, followed by pudding, and then in the afternoon at 3pm, there was a tannoy announcement saying that for exhibitors, cake was now available. This was a nice treat, but you had to be quick, as some of the crew went up later and only found a choice of two cup cakes!

Mike Biss



MKMRC

Your Newsletter

Needs You



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

- These can be write-ups on exhibitions attended, modelling titbits, trips out, holidays, modelling updates on your layout or anything else.
- Members will find a variety of subjects interesting.
- Articles can be sent either as an attached file or with the words in the email. Pictures that you want in the article can either be in the attachment or sent separately.
- No need to spend time making it look nice, that's the Editor's job!
- Please email articles to newsletter@mkmrs.org.uk

Deadline for the Summer Edition is:-

31st May 2025

**With the Newsletter being published
in the second week of June 2025**



*Mike Biss
Newsletter Editor*