

Milton Keynes Model Railway Club

Quarterly Newsletter



Issue 218

Summer 2025

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Chairman's News

Hello all, and welcome to the second club newsletter of the year.

As always, it has been a busy few months for the club, with plenty to report on. Of course, the biggest event has been our 2025 exhibition, so let's get right to it.

I'd firstly like to thank all of you who helped out with the show, whether that was in the planning over the course of the last year, those who helped on the Friday setup or the Saturday of the show. An especially big thanks needs to go out though to Carl White, for taking on the role of exhibition manager and leading us to such a superb show. Carl has only been with us at the club for less than a year and in that time has made such a positive impact.

The show was a huge success, with nearly 1100 adults and over 200 children attending. This marks a significant increase from last year and is comfortably our largest show attendance post Covid. This has also meant that the show has been a success financially as well. Whilst I don't have an exact figure to quote yet, as there are still a few final bits being sorted, I can confirm that we have made a four-figure profit. When we know the exact number, we will let you know straight away.

Moving on to next year's show, we are looking at moving venue, as the Ridgeway Centre has put the price up to well over £5000, over a 50% increase on this year's venue hire. However, Carl has found a potential new venue in the branch of Walton High School at Brooklands. Whilst nothing is confirmed yet, we are very hopeful that this will be our venue for next year's show.

Moving on from the exhibition, our second open day of the year is fast approaching, on Saturday 28th June. It would be great to see as many of you as possible there to show our club at its best and hopefully recruit some more members! A signup sheet is available in the club room, or you can email me your availability.

I'm also pleased to report that a new lease has been signed for the clubroom, covering the next 5 years. Whilst the rent has unfortunately increased, given the inflation since we signed our last lease 10 years ago, the increase is manageable. If anyone wants any further details, either email Paul Egerton, James Woodley or me, and we can give a more detailed breakdown.

This quarter there is much planned for the club, with the priority now being to start the new OO project. I know this has been on hold for a while, but now that we have got the exhibition and club room lease sorted, we can push forward with it. There will be another meeting for it soon, so keep an eye on your emails for the date. We're also looking at bringing back some more modelling sessions and competitions within the club. Over the coming months, there will be demonstrations from a couple of members aiming to help share their knowledge. As well as this, we are running a competition for building a model diorama. This can be anything you want, as long as it fits in the size specifications! The winner will be announced at the AGM next January. Look out in your emails, in the newsletter and also the club room noticeboard for more on this.

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

STEAM – The Museum of the Great Western

A band of intrepid members went along to Swindon on Saturday 22nd March to spend an enjoyable day, tripping around the exhibits. Meeting in the North Car Park, we first went for a coffee (and cake!) in the restaurant, before then spending a very enjoyable few hours perusing the exhibits, having lunch, and then going back to see the last bits we had seen.

Of course, being Swindon, if you are not of a GWR/BR(W) persuasion, it would be like pulling teeth, but that said, the exhibits were arranged in such a way that at every stage, there was an audio presentation to listen to, which explained how engines were constructed. Often this involved serious metal casting, and I found that the most interesting part of this, was how a pattern was made prior to the pouring of molten metal. All of this is common to other companies as well.

You can see the underside of 4073 Caerphilly Castle, by walking along one of the original inspection pits. It's only when you do this and look up into the bowels of the locomotive, do you appreciate just how many working parts went into the construction of a new locomotive. Did you know for example, that the locomotive carries two vacuum cylinders? One slung underneath the engine, the other underneath the tender.

Also worthy of checking out, was the display of 7821 Ditchat Manor, which is housed within the MacArthur Glen Designer Outlet Village, adjacent to the museum. This locomotive, which is normally resident on the West Somerset Railway, is currently out of ticket and a significant way down the queue before it is restored once again to steaming condition. So what a good way to preserve it, as it is under cover and serves to provide a good advertisement for the West Somerset Railway. I am sure its turn will arrive, as 3440 City of Truro, 4930 Hagley Hall, and 7819 Hinton Manor have beforehand.

Here are a selection of photographs from the day.









Paul Egerton

Obituary – Bruce Hankin



Bruce was one of our regular Monday Morning attendees in recent years and was a keen N gauge modeller. Bruce sadly died after a lengthy illness on 30th April 2025. He was 88. Eight members and former members attended Bruce's funeral on 27th May, at Crownhill Crematorium.

Bruce was born in Bletchley in 1937, his father worked on the railway at Bletchley shed. Bruce wanted to follow his father into the railway industry, but his father had been injured and lost two fingers in an accident and his parents did not want him to join British Railways.

Bruce joined Rowland Brothers in Simpson Road, where he trained as a carpenter / joiner, where he worked until called up for National Service. Bruce served in the Army, training as a wireless operator.

During his national service days, he was serving in the Middle East when the Suez crisis was reaching boiling point. Bruce and others were told to quickly repaint all the tanks in desert sand livery, to match their surroundings. However, tensions eased and the same group were told to repaint them back into the more normal green colour, just a few days later!

On returning to Civvy Street, Bruce joined Terrapin, who produced modular buildings for schools, factories and even churches. Whaddon Way Church was a Terrapin structure, until rebuilding took place. Schools in Queensway also had several in use as classrooms for many years. Terrapin was a new company set up in Bletchley during the 1950s and was initially based next to Stag Bridge in Fenny Stratford, next to the Bedford railway line. It later moved to Bond Avenue, on the same site as MKMRS, from which it still operates. Bruce was a production supervisor when he retired.

In 1955, Bruce met Eve at a dance in Wilton Hall and they had a son and daughter. Bruce was involved in rallying cars, but his sporting activities were later confined to Golf. Throughout he maintained an interest in railways and model railways, joining us in our Bletchley Park days. He also loved family gatherings and a party!

With Bruce's golfing ability to the fore, it was fitting that family and friends gathered at The Windmill Hill Golf Course to celebrate his life.

Dennis Lovett

Our 2025 Exhibition

I'm writing this the evening after the exhibition, and WOW, what a show!

Having taken on the role of exhibition manager in November, it seemed like that there was so much time to go until the show came around, but now looking back, it's just flown by.

We started with most of the traders booked in already and 3 layouts, provisionally. We added a few more traders to compliment the ones we had already, and I went on the search for layouts of high quality and at a value that the club could afford on the unknown budget we had from last year. We ended up with 27 layouts, 18 traders, 4 societies and 4 demo's.

For me, it was obvious that social media and advertising was key to improving attendance, and ultimately growth for the show and the club. For this I really have to thank Mike Biss for his creativity, I fired so many plans and ideas at him and I really think the artwork he created for the weekly promotion, leaflets and the show guide (I must say that I think it's a work of art and something that we should be proud of) have been nothing but exemplary.

I must thank Paul Egerton for keeping control of the finances and making sure that we stayed on track, and also dealing with my constant emails.

Now onto the show.

On Friday, we loaded up the van and cars and arrived at the Ridgeway Centre, hoping that we could sneak in early to mark up the floor. I have received lots of compliments about the CAD floor plans and how they enable everyone to help out with marking up. I was concerned beforehand about the two central aisles, as I knew they were complicated. It turns out I was right to be concerned, as the venue was actually 2ft shorter than the plans I drew from previous measurements, supplied to me from last year's show. Note to self: make sure I measure it myself in full next time. The result of this was we had to close up some of the gaps and move one trade stand slightly.



Setting up begins



Setting up continues



Setting up all done



The layouts begin to arrive

Next problem was we ran out of tables, even though I had a list of who was supposed to have what, this caused me to not sleep well at all Friday night. Turns out it was the Ridgeways fault, as I had asked them for 30 x 6ft tables and they had given us 27. We had been compensating for this with our clubs 4ft tables and that was causing us to be short of those. This problem was resolved on Saturday morning relatively quickly and we were back on track.

All layouts and traders were on site before our briefing at 9:00.

By 9:30, with the help of all the staff at the front desk, we started presales of tickets for people waiting at the front door. This allowed us to open the door at 10:00 and get the best part of 100 people into the venue by 10:05. The pressure was then off the front door and they were able to keep the constant flow of guests manageable. I'm really pleased to tell you that by 11:30, I was certain we had broken even and everything from that point on was profit.

I managed to spend some time walking around the show and speaking to guest, traders and exhibitors, and I heard so many positives about the show, including the below feedback:-

- Great selection of layouts
- Nice friendly club members who were able to help with a smile
- Superb selection of trade and I'm leaving with heavy hand and light pockets
- Well organised show, with easy-to-follow instructions in the welcome packs
- The best one day show I have ever exhibited at

Unfortunately, it cannot all be positives and there were some negatives that I will take on board and change for future shows:-

- The aisle by the stage was a bit too narrow
- Not enough O gauge
- The food vendor got lots of complaints and needs to be addressed somehow for next year

I was super pleased that playing the long game of having Network Rail spend a day filming at the club with Tim Dunn paid off, with Tim agreeing to come to the show and present the best in show award to the deserved winner Kelvin Grove. Tim loved his time with us and has expressed an interest to come again next year. I hope many of you got to meet and talk to Tim, he is such a lovely guy and does so many positive things for our hobby.



Tim Dunn presented the trophy



Winner - Kelvin Grove

While talking about "best in show", Kelvin Grove were a last minute stand-in after Fenchurch St Peter had to pull out. The guests loved the layout, as there was so much to see and take in. Second place went to the beautifully modelled Tony's Forest and our very own Brinklow came in third place.

Packing the show down went really smooth and we were out of the building by 18:00 and all unloaded back at the club by 19:00.

At the time of writing we don't know the final figures, but we believe we had over 1000 visitors. We only needed approximately 400 to break even.

I would like to express my gratitude to the committee for believing in me and giving me a chance. Having only been a member of the club for a couple of months, I appreciate their belief in my abilities to succeed.

I would also like to thank each and every person from the club who has helped out over the weekend, especially the families who gave up their time for us.

I really hope that everyone enjoyed themselves, had a great show and ultimately are proud of the show we put on.

Thanks and let's start planning for next year's show, that we hope will be just as successful, or even surpass this year's achievement.

Carl White
Exhibition Manager

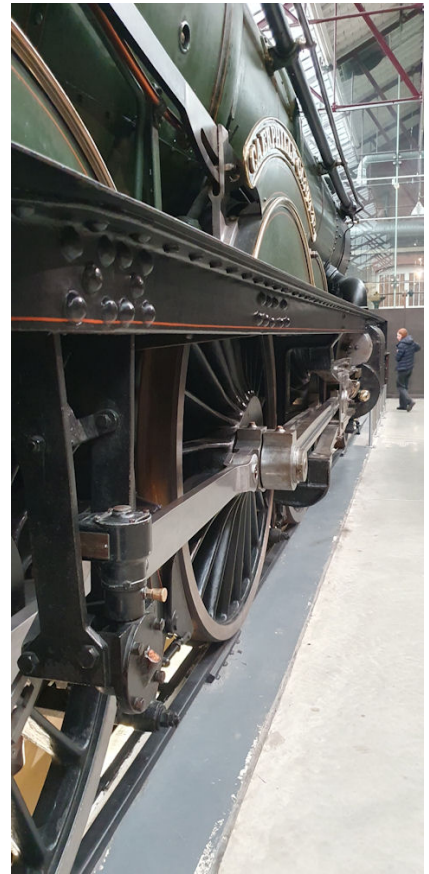


Mixing My Hobbies

I like my motorsport and earlier this year I attended the second round of the British Autotest Championship down in Herefordshire, as I'm the championship liaison. This fell nicely with the Club trip to the STEAM museum in Swindon, so after the museum trip, I carried on to Hereford, with a



nice cross country drive and stayed overnight at a hotel in Hereford, and ended up socialising with some of the competitors also staying there. The next morning I arrived to find a very muddy and cold venue, which wasn't that enjoyed by the competitors. On the edge of one of the tests, 'The Woodyard', there were about seven old railway vans, looking very much the worse for wear.



Mike Biss

A Grand Day Out

Back in the 1980s several club members took to the rails and travelled on a special staff promotion which allowed railway employees to take a friend on a trip for a nominal fee. Having travelled up the West Coast Main Line to Carlisle, they are seen here about to board a train for Leeds, over the famous Settle & Carlisle line. From Leeds, we travelled home via the Midland Main Line and thence cross country to Birmingham and home.

Left to right are club President Les Wood, Dennis Lovett, Gordon Eckersley (holding Les's grandson Craig), John Tennant and Austin Daly. Sadly Gordon and John are no longer alive, whilst Austin, an honorary member, returned to his native North-East after a lengthy spell working down here. Gordon ran Bletchley Railwayana for a few years, before relocating to the North Norfolk Railway, where his model shop stood on Sheringham station.



Dennis Lovett

A Little Light Running

A pessimist doesn't see a light in the tunnel.

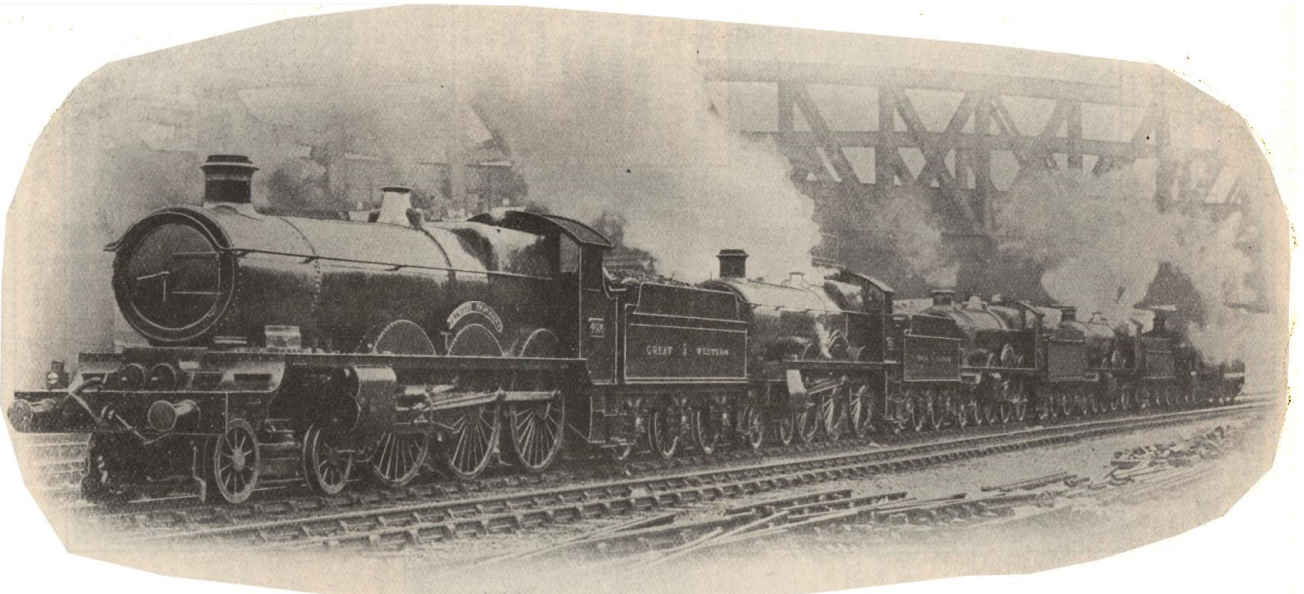
An optimist sees a light in the tunnel.

A realist sees a train in the tunnel.

The driver sees three idiots standing on the tracks in a tunnel.

Cornish Riviera - A Record Event

To accommodate the enormous number of passengers for the “Cornish Riviera” Express from Paddington on the Saturday before August Bank Holiday in 1926, the train was run in five portions. Here are seen the Five Engines arriving at the Station.



Digital Archive - Great Western Railway Magazine

At Paddington Station just before the Departure of the “Cornish Riviera” Express on the Saturday before August Bank Holiday.



Digital Archive - Great Western Railway Magazine

To provide for the heavy passenger traffic during the August Bank Holiday period, it was necessary to duplicate many of the through expresses on several days. On Saturday, July 31, the principal through express trains, from and to Paddington, and also the cross-country services, were duplicated, and in some cases triplicated; the holiday traffic to the ever-popular West of England was exceedingly heavy; the "Cornish Riviera" express had to be run in as many as five portions, constituting a record for this train since it commenced to run; the "Torbay Limited" was run in three parts, and the various portions of these trains conveyed in all nearly 5,000 passengers. Eighteen excursion trains were run from Paddington on Friday, July 30, conveying 10,300 passengers.

The provincial period excursions were also very well loaded, and the short-distance excursion traffic over the whole of the August Bank Holiday period was well above the average.

On Sunday, August 1, seven half-day excursion trains were run to the Wye Valley district, Weston-Super-Mare, and the Midlands, and conveyed a total of 3,500 passengers.

On August Bank Holiday Monday, the ideal weather conditions resulted in considerable passenger traffic between local stations, and large numbers of passengers were attracted from populous centres to adjacent seaside resorts.

Mike Biss

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway – Club Visit?

Recently, a bit of research has led me to a past visit made by the Milton Keynes Model Railway Club to the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway, which runs for 8½ miles between Duffield and Wirksworth in Derbyshire. As some considerable period of time has passed by since we last visited, I wondered if the Club might wish to consider a return trip on Saturday 3rd October, when the Incline service will be running – for those not in the know, this is a ½ mile branch that climbs a 1 in 27 (or 3.7%) incline to Ravenstor.

Services start from Wirksworth at 10:50, so it is easily reached without having to rise for an exceedingly early start from Milton Keynes. Travel time is about 1¾ hours.

Fares are normally, £21.50 which gives day long rides but by booking online in advance, this can be reduced to £19.50 or £17.00 for concessions. However, if we get together a group of more than ten people, group discounted rates of £15.50 for a return journey can be obtained. One option would be to add an afternoon British Cream Tea or Luxury Afternoon Tea to the booking, which of course would be extra and depend on numbers.

If you are interested in a day out, please drop me an email at treasurer@mkMrs.org.uk by the end of June, and I'll investigate further and advise the membership.

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway
Wirksworth Station, Station Road, Coldwell Street, Wirksworth DE4 4FB

Paul Egerton

The Story Behind Barnes Junction Name



The name Barnes Junction can be found on the sign alongside our multi-gauge test tracks in the club room. Newer members may wonder what the name signifies and why it was chosen. Whilst there is a Barnes station served by South Western Railway in South London, our own layout has little in common with the prototype. Let us explain the story behind our own version.

Brian Barnes was a long-standing member of Milton Keynes Model Railway Society and was an active member in both the Train Collectors Society (TCS) and the Hornby Railway Collectors Association (HRCA). Brian was of course the man behind the Christmas Train displays in his hometown of Stony Stratford and sadly died on 15th December 2015, just before he was due to take part in the 2015 event at St Mary & St Giles Church. His usual assistants ensured that despite Brian's passing, the show went on as a tribute to him.

Brian was not a native of Stony Stratford having been born in Rushden, across the border in Northamptonshire. Born John Brian Barnes, he was universally known as Brian. He moved to Stony Stratford at the age of 13 in 1937 when his father opened a café/restaurant on the High Street. The main road through the town was back then, the main trunk road from London to Holyhead and followed the route of the Roman built Watling Street. The café attracted visitors who were travelling through the town, there being no motorways back then and certainly no motorway service stations! The café was also well used by locals and a good number of the town's residents worked in nearby Wolverton Works, although the steam tramway between the two had ceased to operate following the General Strike in 1926.

Whilst in Rushden, Brian became acquainted with the branch line through the town that connected Wellingborough and Higham Ferrers, Rushden having the only intermediate station on the line. It is today, a working museum. and trains run towards Higham on a short heritage line. Each Christmas, a young Brian would be drawn towards a local shop which would have a Hornby O gauge train running around its window and hoped that Santa would take notice of his interest in Hornby products. His wish eventually came true, and this started Brian on the road to a life-long interest in tinsplate O gauge trains.

After wartime service in the RAF during which Brian spent a lot of time riding trains at home and abroad, Brian joined the family restaurant business which eventually he took over. Married to Audrey in 1953, two children followed, and the business continued to flourish. Following Audrey's passing in 1983, Brian ran the business on his own for the next four years before selling out, the restaurant becoming a Chinese Restaurant. For a while the new owners lodged with Brian before he moved further along the High Street. The restaurant is now known as Indian Chefs. It did not take Brian long to build a new layout in his new home.

Brian's tinsplate train interests were reignited when a customer presented him with a Hornby 'Royal Scot' locomotive and some wagons. This was a generic 4-4-2 model which was far removed from today's scale models but nonetheless has a certain charm about it. Brian displayed it in the restaurant and was soon joined by others. Realising that the days of Hornby O gauge trains were numbered, Brian set out to relieve various local establishments of their lingering stock purchasing remnants from newsagents, toy shops, bike shops,

hardware stores and even chemists (several chemists in North Bucks were Hornby stockists!).

Word must have spread about Brian's exhibits as one visitor, Stan Pennington from Bletchley, called into see him. Stan was a well-known train collector and had an extensive O gauge tinplate layout. Soon after Stan and Brian joined MKMRS in our days behind the old council offices in Victoria Road. Together they travelled far and wide attending TCS and HRCA events and somehow, we persuaded them to put on an operating O gauge layout at one of our exhibitions then held at Bletchley Leisure Centre. This was at a time when mainstream model railway exhibitions did not usually include such things, but the Stan/Brian partnership was a trail blazer that has since seen such layouts at many shows today. These layouts remind us of the rich heritage of our diverse hobby.

When we moved to Bletchley Park, we suddenly had space to develop layouts and to open them to the public in a museum environment. One of the rooms was cleared and became a dedicated tinplate room where trains would run to the enjoyment of thousands of visitors each year. Brian and Stan were soon joined by others including Mick Clements, Roger White, Roger Mills, David Ramsey and John Forman.

When the club moved from Bletchley Park to Barton Road, a new test track was built. This was rebuilt in our club rooms and carries the name Barnes Junction. Brian was able to see the current set up before he passed and witness trains running on it but sadly none of his own managed to operate on it. Brian received Honorary membership during our Bletchley Park days.

Brian was not only a well-known businessman in Stony Stratford he was also a local magistrate sitting on the Stony Stratford and later Milton Keynes benches. He was chairman of the Ansell Trust in the town and his love of classic cars saw him become President of the Hillman Register. Alongside tinplate trains, he maintained his lifelong passion for local history and classic cars. He was a highly respected authority on all three!

Brian's funeral was held two days before Christmas in the very church where his trains ran for the annual Christmas lights switch on. Bill and Shirley Marsden carried on the tradition for a few years until Bill too died.

After a couple of years with no trains, an approach was made to MKMRS and since 2021 we have managed to keep Brian's legacy alive by running a variety of Christmas themed trains. We are expecting to be invited back and perhaps this year we can commemorate in some way the 10th anniversary of Brian's passing. Visitors to our own offering often talk about Brian and his displays of Christmas past.



Former Chairman Dennis Lovett presents Brian with his honorary membership in the old tinplate room at Bletchley Park.

Dennis Lovett

How I Got Interested In The Railways (And Became A Driver)

Hi, I'm Stephen. A new member to the society since last year, having come to one of the open days to learn more about MKMRS (or MKMRC if you prefer!). I moved from Luton to Milton Keynes four years ago during a Covid lockdown to be nearer my work, whilst I was still in training to be a train driver at Bletchley depot. I've now been qualified for three (and a bit) years.

I grew up in ECML territory, Hitchin, in the early 1980s. Typically back then I would've seen staple traction all in blue & grey. HSTs, Class 31s hauling freight, 47s on lesser express workings, 101 DMU shuttles to Huntingdon, 312s & 313s working Letchworth/Royston – Kings Cross, and the odd station pilot 08 shunter. I have a vague memory of a Deltic, but they were all but retired by time I could say the word Deltic!



Well, here I am in the picture, aged about six at Letchworth Garden City's model rail exhibition. This was my first visit to such an event, and a photographer from the local paper picked a few of us out. I think I got in the shot because of that Thomas the tank engine t-shirt.

How did I get interested in the railways though? Hmm... it wasn't when I became a driver five and a bit years ago. It wasn't when I joined the railways 21 years ago. Let's blame Great Yarmouth model village in 1981. Having gone to the seaside town for a family holiday, I was fascinated by the large model trains roaming the tracks of the model village, crossing the suspension bridge, and bursting out of the tunnel that I'd be standing upon. I'll also blame local family walks along the Icknield Way, which included Cadwell Foot Crossing (now a bridge) across all four tracks of the ECML. We would picnic next to the crossing and watch the trains roaring past. Crossing was always exciting. In one

direction, you could see for at least two miles, the other was a blind bend. You could hear the HSTs before you saw them appear doing full beans 125mph. No wonder that bridge got built!

A lot of my vintage train models were acquired by my father around this time. His mum, my grandmother, worked for a local department store. It was closing its toy department to concentrate on DIY & Homeware, and so, my father used the staff discount and the closing sale prices to buy up most of the OO stock they had. I have had most of them run at the club over the past year, and it seems they run better than I do for a 40+ year old model!

I was around the age of six when our class went on a school trip to Cheddington, for a canal boat ride. Of course this was exciting, boats and locks etc. However I was more drawn to the WCML, high up on an embankment next to the marina and the canal. Electric locos, different EMUs, 310s, pseudo-cousins of 312s. When we returned to school, that same week, we were tasked to make a group collage of our visit and stick it up on the wall. Some picked to do people, boats, scenery. Of course, I elected to make a class 87 and accompanying coaches flying across the embankment! I coloured it all in, gave it to the teacher to be stuck on the wall. The next day, my mum collected time from school and I was in a mood. "What's wrong?" she asked. "Teacher cut the pantograph off!!" I complained.

I mentioned I've been in the railways 21 years. I sort of fell into the job. I was studying at university, I wasn't enjoying the course nor doing very well at it. The one thing I got out of it was a year abroad working in France. When I returned to the UK, my dad was being made redundant so I decided to get a job. My mum was only working part-time, and my younger brother was still at school. Eurostar was recruiting heavily for customer service staff as the first section of HS1 (CTRL1) had opened to the channel tunnel. It was exactly what I was looking for. A job requiring french language skills in the UK, I lived within commuting distance, and railway knowledge was an advantage. I had a whole day of recruitment assessment at Sadlers Wells theatre in Islington. Two days before my 24th birthday, I got a call to say I was joining the railway. Best birthday present ever!

Eurostar's training back in 2004 was comprehensive and how I imagine BR would've been. Don't forget, this was at Waterloo, and the move to the remodelled St Pancras was three years away in 2007. I didn't realise until more recently that until the government sold off its stake, Eurostar was run by British Rail Board (Residual), so it still felt very BR, customer-focused, and not like a privatised franchise.

I had a customer service role but that encompassed duties at check-in, ticket office, passport control queue assistance, unaccompanied minors assistance, boarding, arrivals helpdesk, and departure lounge helpdesk ('The Donut'). Yes, the inner Homer Simpson in you is saying "mmm do-nut", but the desk was called that due to its ring shape. The service back then was much more precarious than it is today. Eurostars had to mix with 3rd rail commuter trains on their way to Fawkham Junction to join CTRL1, introducing complexity and frequent delays. We look through rose-tinted specs about Waterloo International but it was bursting at the seams during peak periods, the glass roof gave it conservatory characteristics (roasting in summer, freezing in winter!), and the arrival helpdesk staff was frequently organising taxis for delayed inbound passengers. The helpdesk role was carried



over to St Pancras but because CTRL2 (and the completed whole HS1) was so much more reliable, it was done away with eventually, and all assistance and disruption was handled from the ticket office.

Although I broadly stayed in the same role, I got to do some memorable things during my time with Eurostar. Here in this photo, I was pleased as punch to be able to sit in the driver's seat of the brand new Class 374 (Siemens 'e320'), being launched that week. I didn't realise a few years later I would be starting on my journey to becoming a driver myself.

I closed the Waterloo check-in for the last Paris & Brussels trains over the station radios, bringing an end to 13 years of international service. I got to go on a Disneyland Paris training day, which consisted of a direct train to Marne-la-Vallée, learning the layout, features and benefits of the parks, and to go on as many rides as possible in four hours before taking the return train back to Blighty. I joined the Business Premier team, which had a separate ticket office, check-in, and executive lounge for the highest class of service. This led to dealing with VIPs, escorting them through to/from trains. Politicians, royal families, rock stars, Hollywood actors, we looked after them all. The London 2012

Olympics was also a highlight for me, meeting and greeting Olympic teams from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. I received some Games tickets via the company for my work behind the scenes as a 'Games champion'.

A colleague of mine called Helen, whom I got on very well with, had decided to try for external train driver jobs. She had to leave because Eurostar do not train newbies, only qualified drivers with a minimum of several years experience. She was successful, and I still remember when she had passed her tests & interviews, but nervously awaiting her medical as the final hurdle. She left for Gatwick Express, and I couldn't help but thinking we both had similar characters. Maybe I could do the job too? I applied for Heathrow Express when they recruited the following year. As our very own Secretary James has said, the multiple rounds of psychometric tests are a bit like X Factor or similar talent contests. Rounds of testing eliminate people throughout the morning, and you find yourself still in the room with dwindling numbers. Passing the initial tests, I got to the final psychometric tests in Watford. There were only three of us there, two by lunchtime, and then to the psychometric interview. I failed it, I asked for my score and feedback... which was 19 out of a possible 20. Yep, 19/20 was a fail! So devastated, I didn't apply again for another eight years!

I'm not sure what made me apply again, possibly boredom and stuck in the same job. I applied to Overground in Feb 2018 for trainee driver roles at Willesden. I went through the whole testing rigmarole again, but this time passed the psychometric interview at Watford. Then April came, the driver manager interview at Overground HQ in Swiss Cottage. They told me that there were no longer vacancies at Willesden depot, only at New Cross. That's the diagonally opposite side of London. I left that interview confused and disappointed, thinking it had all been a waste of time. This is when the UK rail forum (<https://www.railforums.co.uk/>) came in handy. It's a mine of useful information on careers, amongst all rail related matters. People had posted on the forum that my test results were banked, I just had to apply to other TOCs. A Bedford Thameslink driver had posted in early March 2019 that Bletchley depot was recruiting. Within a day, I had whittled off my application and cover letter. Closing dates are usually two weeks after the advert goes out, however I was acutely aware they get pulled as soon as they reach their quota of applicants. I applied on the Monday, the advert had disappeared from the website by Thursday. And bish bash bosh, that was it. Tests already done. The May interview was in Birmingham, they emailed me the next day to say I'd passed, the medical was in June, and they wanted me to start in July! I needed more leaving notice than that, so they put me in a different training group with a September start date. If I had been home, I would've screamed reading that email. But I was on a train, going home from work. I did that thing where I put my fist in my mouth, and reread the email just to make sure. The train manager came round, "Tickets please!", and while showing my ticket, if I had to share the good news with someone, it might as well be train crew! I played a joke on my dad that afternoon. Having calmed down, I phoned him and said, "Oh I've just got my results and feedback from the interview, "I'm so gutted...(longish pause)... that I'll be leaving Eurostar after all these years...". My dad was slow to react, "...oh never mi... oh...OHHH MY GAWD!!"

My driver training I think might be a story for another time. It includes only the best drama a TV soap can conjure up. Buying a car for the first time, moving house, allergic reactions, Bedfordshire fire brigade, and a worldwide pandemic. Stay tuned, don't turn that dial!

Stephen Taylor

A Divided Junior Layout

The problem we had with the Junior Layout was its size. It was too big to fit in a car, so would need the use of a van to get to a show. With our own show coming up, and the van we had used previously not going to be available, it was decided that we couldn't afford to hire one, just to take one layout to the show.

So a plan was made to cut the layout in half and bolt it together for transit, so it could fit in a small car. After finding where we could cut the board with the least amount of disruption, we only had to remove the three-way point in the sidings. We fixed two new batons under the board with a very small gap between them and we then drilled holes for where the connecting bolts would fit. Then we inserted a very thin bladed saw between the batons and cut across the layout. Hey presto, two layout halves. For the wiring, this only required a couple of chocolate block connectors either side of the layout. For transport, a piece of plywood is bolted to either side of one half and then the other half is bolted to the plywood above the first half.

So an evening's work has saved the Club the cost of a van hire for the exhibition. The picture shows the layout after the cut has been done, and then the layout bolted back together, followed by some of the necessary attention to the scenery done.



Mike Biss

A trip to the South West

With my Nan living down in Somerset, when I visited last year in February it was wet and damp, so I thought this year I would go at a later date. So this got me thinking, how could I do something which I would enjoy, making a nice little break for myself. So here I go checking the West Somerset Railway website, seeing the steam spectacular being the first weekend of May (with numerous guest engines), sounded perfect! So, trip was booked! As some of you may know, it is a fair old trek down to Somerset.



As I was approaching further towards Minehead, where I was staying, the road happened to be right next to the railway, right next to Washford station. I seemed to be in luck, as visiting loco 45596 'Bahamas' happened to be there, so I very quickly pulled over, just to get a photo. As seen in the photo to the left of Bahamas departing Washford station, heading towards Bishops Lydeard, and possibly even on to Norton Fitzwarren, as throughout the gala, they was frequently running up there and then turning the loco on the triangle. This meant the loco was running smokebox first in both directions (note they have a turntable at Minehead), which I personally think was brilliant. I would personally say Bahamas was a highlight of the gala, with it being a mainline registered loco too.

I would say that there was a Western theme to the gala, with there being five Western locos, including visiting locos, 2807 heavy freight, 2999 Lady of Legend, 6695 Taffy Tank, and 7812 Erlestoke Manor. Also, there was 9351 the Mogul, a home fleet loco from the WSR. Definitely my cup of tea!



At the gala there were lots going on, including at Minehead, with loco's shunting up and down. I must admit, I am not too sure on the loco's that were shunting up and down, I should have paid more attention, but I am aware that the small Boots Bagnell has just been restored. It is a fireless locomotive, so that does make it really unique and is quite interesting. Also throughout the event, there were stands at stations, which were selling model railway related items, however, I managed to resist myself!

Below in the two pictures, which are taken at Minehead station, we have on the left 2999 'Lady of Legend', which was running as 2986 'Robin Hood' over the course of the gala, as the railway put a vote out to the public for a different name for the loco to run as, and that was the chosen name. On the right is 7812 'Erlestoke Manor', which has just been turned on the turntable and is starting to make its way towards the rake of coaches to make a service towards Bishops Lydeard. Also, DMU class 115 can be also seen in this picture, which was used for short occasional local services. I might be wrong, but I believe it might've come in to cover 6695, which unfortunately failed (but not sure why).



Possibly the highlight for me is getting this picture, which you can see to the left. Bahamas '45596' had brought in a service from Norton Fitzwarren and had just been turned on the turntable. The driver very kindly drove forward and stopped just by GWR



heavy freight loco 2807, which was on a double headed train with 2986. At this time the platform was absolutely heaving, with there being three steam locomotives, together in one shot, so it did mean I had to get on the floor to get this photo. The advantage of being young, definitely playing on my side there! Definitely very glad I made this trip, as it was well worth it and I may potentially go back next year. However, I am on a mission to visit heritage railways that either I haven't been to for a long time, or not before.

Ian Egerton

MKMRC Annual Diorama Competition

A new club idea. It's to have a sort of cake box challenge.

Having a baseboard of 500mm x 200mm, the person can build a 'railway related' diorama. It can be any height, but not go beyond the size of the baseboard dimensions. This would be a great way to try out different ways of doing things, of using materials or practices wise, possibly prior to working on your actual layout. This can be done in any scale (although G scale might be pushing it James!), so you could have a go in a different scale to what you normally work in.

This will run from June up to the AGM, with the judging then taking place at the AGM. Those getting an award for best diorama will receive a small trophy 🏆.

So get your thinking caps on and start building that little bit of 'railway life'.

Wayne Webb

Mid Suffolk Light Railway

The Mid Suffolk Light Railway, or “Middy” as it is affectionally known, is Suffolk’s only preserved standard gauge heritage railway. It was therefore with a degree of expectation, that I planned to make a visit whilst staying in the immediate vicinity. Therefore, it was surprising to discover that the railway was non-operational over what might have been a busy May Day Bank Holiday, but no, nothing at all was running, with the station at Brockford deserted and locked up. This is a pity, as the railway clearly has some gems, which are well worth the visit.

Coaching stock is genuine 4-wheeled Victorian wooden bodied, but as the information leaflet and timetable reveals, an appeal is being made to fund a carriage shed, to bring these under cover and prevent long-term (and expensive) decay, due to the ravages of the weather. Despite the railway being deserted and locked up, I was able to take a picture of the carriages over the gate as is shown.



Two steam locomotives are currently considered operational on the line, namely LNER Y7 no 985 and Andrew Barclay 0-4-0T no. 2315 of 1951, which is named “Ingrid”. 2315 was built for the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

2315 worked at the Braehead Power Station at Renfrew, on the South Bank of the River Clyde. In preservation, it has steamed at the Strathspey Railway, where it carried the name “Clyde”, before moving to the Spa Valley Railway, but appears to have also spent some time at the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway in between. At the Spa Valley Railway, the locomotive gained the name “Lady Ingrid”. In April 2025, and following a change in ownership, the locomotive was moved to the Middy, where it will become a long-term resident.

The Y7 is currently receiving a boiler restoration at the North Norfolk Railway and is hoped that it will be returned in time to cover most of the summer.

Also present on the line is Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0T no 1604 of 1928. This spent all its working life at the Bardney sugar beet factory in Lincolnshire. In 1975, the locomotive moved to the Nene Valley Railway, before going to the Kirton Museum in Lincolnshire in 1981. In December 2022, it was reported that a 15-year restoration project was nearing completion and that it was planned that the locomotive would be in service in 2023. That was clearly a pie in the sky hope, as there is an appeal contained within the timetable leaflet, to bring the locomotive back to life once more.

As is often the case when visiting these small lines, you can come across some interesting objects, and the Middy was no exception. Parked right up against the stop block was a Cockerill Tramway Engine. Now, as regular visitors to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway will know, the NYMR Chief Mechanical Engineer, Paul Middleton (or Piglet as he is known) owns a working example called "Lucie", which is used to steam heat the carriage stock off season, and to provide shunting demonstrations and rides at gala events, within the loop at Levisham.



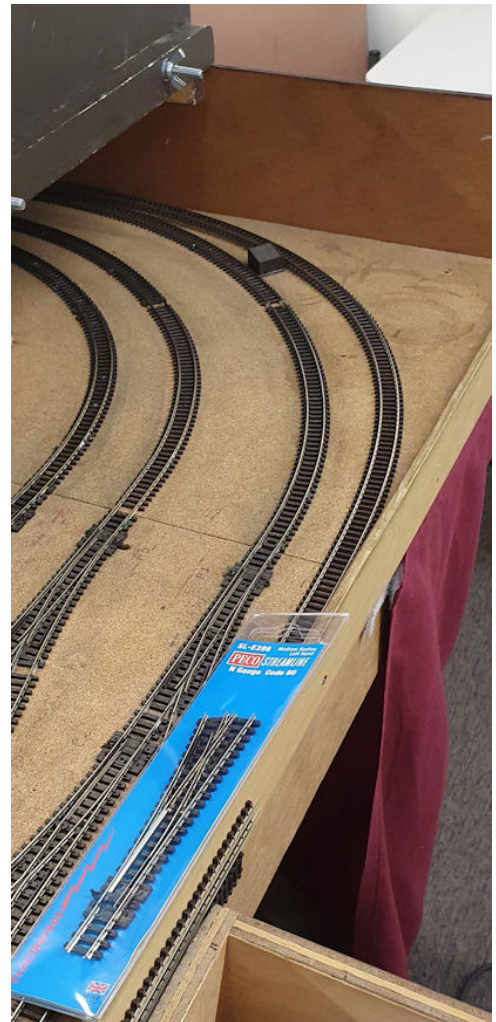
Quite why there is an exhaust pipe sticking out of the roof of the example at Brockford, is not known. Perhaps there was an attempt at some time to convert the vehicle to run on diesel. Perhaps someone who has a better knowledge than me, could suggest a reason.

Paul Egerton

Brinklow Updates - Part 6

With regard to the CDU problems being fixed, mentioned last issue, it turned out that the power unit for the CDU's subsequently kept blowing the thermal fuse and we couldn't work out why. We finally found out why, when we put an ammeter in the circuit and the two twin capacitor ones were drawing less than an amp when operated, but the four capacitor one was drawing over 10 amps when fired! We don't know the actual figure, as the meter only went up to 10 amps! It later was ascertained that this can happen when one of the capacitors fails. Having got a repaired power unit and a different CDU unit installed, all seems to be well (fingers crossed).

Another planned upgrade to Brinklow includes the installation of an additional siding in the fiddle yard for the Blue route. This will allow a train to be stored and pulled out for an occasional run round, without having to keep taking it on and off the track. This will entail another little box being built on the end of the baseboard, the same as the one put on the other end of the layout, which will allow a kick back siding to run around to just before the scenic section.



Mike Biss

WhatsApp Group For The Club



The WhatsApp group for the club is up and running, and has been used to good effect to answer some questions and also to see if something can be looked at on a clubnight. Join up and have a look, it can become a useful tool for the club.

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/JWo9Pc1ynRU3vhxYm8Smvj> 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.

Club Open Day

The second club Open Day of 2025 will be held on Saturday 28th June, 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 25th October.





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 Autumn Edition is:-
24th August 2025**

**With the Newsletter being published
in the first week of September 2025**



*Mike Biss
Newsletter Editor*