



Wycombe Flyer



The official newsletter of the High Wycombe and District Model Railway Society

Issue 26, August 2008

Welcome to the August 2008 edition of the Wycombe Flyer.

EXHIBITION NEWS

Dave has just gone on holiday, so everything must be under control (or he has got his hands on last years "surplus").

One of our long standing traders will not be with us this year. Maurice Pearce, the owner of Osborn's Models, has decided to move west from his shop in Abingdon, and set up in Bideford, Devon. Maurice did offer to still come to Wycrail 2008 if his withdrawal - he was booked to come - would cause us problems. However Dave had something up his sleeve, and we have acquired a replacement trader. We would like to wish Maurice all the best in his new venture.

Things have been quiet lately, but Rod has been firming up on advertisers - persuading them that they really must contribute more this year. I have been placing the national magazine adverts - this year we will have one 1/2 page advert in Railway Modeller (last year we also had a 1/4 page "taster" advert as well), and 1/4 page adverts in the remaining magazines.

This year Pauline Paley is organise the "public" catering, and a big thank you to her for taking this on. We really are indebted to Josie and all the ladies who help out each year. Both Josie and Pauline will be requiring extra help, so could you please ask anyone in your household or family or friends if they could help out.

Andrew was seen last week patrolling the clubroom muttering "Tombola". So be warned, he will be accosting you soon for prizes. Can I suggest you beat the rush (and possible abuse) by getting your contributions to him soon.

RMweb MEMBERS DAY By Graham Muspratt

For those that have not come across it yet RMweb is one of the largest and liveliest forums about model railways on the internet. It is free to join, free to read and free to contribute.

It acts a place to seek advice, learn about modelling techniques, be inspired by some quality modelling on display or use it as a showcase for your own modelling. A number of members of our Society are also members of the forum.

This years members day was held on July 26th in the engine shed of the Chasewater railway , just to the North of Birmingham. The event was free of charge to all members of the forum and over 20 members layouts along with other members demonstrating a variety of techniques and also a small select number of trade stands. One of the layouts was a huge DCC controlled four track figure of eight / dumbbell on multiple levels, which was basically open to anyone who could fathom the trackplan to have a go at operating!



I attended with my layout Fisherton Sarum, flying the flag for both the Southern Railway and steam in general, as there was in fact only one other steam era layout there, but as the layout owners had all volunteered to bring their layout we could not be picky. I was ably assisted by Mark and Daniel Riddoch, Alan and Simon Paley and also Chris Dove who are also contributors to the forum, and I thank them very much for their valuable help.

The day was very enjoyable, the layout performed as it should and the whole atmosphere was relaxed and friendly and pretty much unlike any usual exhibition that I have attended.

If you have not yet taken a look at the forum it can be found at www.rmweb.co.uk



LAYOUT REPORTS

American HO by Roger Tatton or What's Brewing (Is it Lumber Camp Moonshine ...?)

Change is in the air down at Prospect Valley ... So what's next?

The answer is a new layout, and Secret Weapons to end the Wycombe Modeller's Nightmare ...

In building Prospect Valley we've learned a lot. We enjoy working a local terminus with its shunting operations. Visitors to the layout like watching locos turning on the wye, or grinding up the seemingly impossible logging grade. Along with that has been the fun of working smaller US locos, some of them very odd to British eyes.

So now there are early plans for another, but very different, L-shaped HO period terminus layout.

This will feature late-steam US logging. There will be lunatic grades again, but with switchbacks as the operating feature instead of the wye. There will be the small locomotives again too; this time some of them will be narrow-gauge. There will be fiddle yards on two levels – and great patience with one another as we learn to operate the thing!

With so much logging now being modelled in On30 – often with plenty of intimidating verticals - it will be interesting to see how much more can be portrayed in HO. It would be great to capture some of Prospect Valley's sense of open space in a new layout with steeper terrain. However we need to accommodate both sawmill and pulp mill (contributed by Mike Carter) and a double switchback, with one of the headshunts in a precipitous position.

Plans are very much at the design stage at the moment. We found from past experience that good track design needs a range of contributors over many sessions. (Reporter's Code for that mixed blessing, "many good ideas!") It will take a while, this one, even to finalise the design.

Construction will take longer too - more complex and time-consuming than Prospect Valley.

And solving the Wycombe Modellers Nightmare? You all know that nightmare; it goes "There's spare space in November's exhibition; get that new layout ready!"

We don't work quickly. The last layout had to be finished in haste for the 2006 exhibition. A real nightmare that was, particularly as we find there's a great deal of self-help and problem-solving going on as we increase our experience of DCC.

But now we have two Secret Weapons to protect us from such urgent demands. When Dave comes to us again we can say either

"Have Prospect Valley!" or

"There's that other US modern-image HO layout; they started first!"

American N scale by Rod Coombs

Hamilton.

As you may have noticed the layout has been disassembled and stored in the corner beside Oceanside.

For those who are in frequent visitors this is to provide room for the DCC BR layout to be assembled and worked upon. If, and we trust it won't come to it, any layout has to cancel on the exhibition it will become longstop and need to be erected to ensure everything works before Wycrail in November.

Oceanside.

Well, we all know about our excellent visit to Railex and we are now looking forward to The 'N' gauge show at the Warwick Exhibition Centre in September. We have also been accepted at the Brighton 3 day show in February next year and have just had an invite to York in April for another 3 day show.

Due to Dave's work patterns we are restricted to certain dates and fortunately he can do all these shows.

We are pleased to welcome a new member to our American N scale section, Antony Quinlan, and to his enthusiasm and willingness to join in with the group. There are 3 main things to do on Oceanside and those are to ensure all the Branchline is electrically sound in so far as that power is to all small sections to ensure no stuttering of engines when an unpowered section is encountered.





The second is to install a new controller into the panel with a computer fan to cool both controllers. The third is to get the signals workings. There is also a routing switch to replace but that's a minor matter. Roll on Warwick.

NEW HO LAYOUT by Peter Smith

Despite my indisposition of late, Ronnie, Ian and I have made some progress on the new layout.

Built on top of the old US O scale layout (which remains intact) track has been laid on 3 of the seven 4 foot baseboards and a train actually ran in DCC mode this week!

The first three boards in fact required 6 points, nearly half of the planned number and point control rods and micro switches have been successfully installed for four of them.

Some buildings generously donated by master-builder Mike Carter have been dotted around and the effect is quite pleasing.

We will be able to run quite long trains, mostly in modern image US format, and we are now sufficiently encouraged to move on to board 4

Some work is done outside club nights but there is usually one of us at least on Mondays and Wednesdays so feel free to have a look especially if you are familiar with the Pacific North West of the USA and can help with the scenics!

CHALFORD by Len Rickards

The budget for Chalford has been agreed and work must now commence in earnest as the Committee have decided that the layout is wanted for Wyrail 2008. The back scene boards have been erected but the straight section across the scene at the station end was too narrowing for the scenery so, through a very kind member's donation to the Club, we have sufficient grooved MDF (the bendy quality) to stretch across the length of the layout meaning that we can follow the back curves of the layout. Decisions have been taken on the positioning of the tunnel entrance at the 'hill end' and the road bridge over the railway line at the station.

An extended horizontal hole has been cut in the back scene at the 'hill' end of the layout to give access to the line for track cleaning - and replacing the occasional derailment.

The 2nd double-slip followed the 1st in that the flanges became detached causing the points to malfunction. I sent both double-slips to Peco with a suitable letter of complaint emphasising that this detaching has happened twice. Within a week, both slips had been repaired and returned with no charge. The accompanying letter highlighted that this malfunction was not normal but that these double-slips are delicate and require great care when fitting and/or cleaning. Point taken!!

The slip point has been refitted but, initially, 'sod's law' reared it's ugly head and we found that the double-slip points were not responding to the switch commands and the same with one of the crossovers. The problem was left unattended for a week and, lo & behold, the double-slip points decided to obey the switches (there must be a ghost technician) but we're still faced with solving the problem on the crossover points nos. 2/3 - I shall never understand electrics !

Ballasting has commenced and over the next few weeks there should be weekly visual developments on the scenery with more members giving a hand. If anyone feels like making a few dozen 'N' scale trees to create a large area of woodland, their help would be much appreciated.

NEW MEMBERS

I am pleased to report that Antony Quinlan has now signed up, after spending a few weeks looking over the club, especially Oceanside.

Prospective new member Nigel Cornish has been seen trying out Hinton Parva for size on a number of occasions, and has promised to fill in THE form shortly.

In addition we have been visited by Roger Harris, and also Hugh McCarthy and grandson Harry.

It's always nice to see some new faces, and we look forward to seeing more of them.

SPINNEY LIGHT RAILWAY by Harry Fielding

"STOP!", "STOP!" came the shout from behind me. So, there I was, a total novice in driving a steam loco, with my mentor (and back seat driver, and owner of the fine loco) yelling in my ear. Bearing in mind that I was breathing in smoke, surrounded by steam, being buffeted around on the speedy descent from the tunnel, you can understand my state of panic.

Thanks to Graham Machin's initiative we were invited to visit the Spinney Light Railway on Saturday the 5th July.

The railway has a fascinating history, being built by a retired ex-pat, ex-railway civil engineer. He started the railway in 1973, and built a masterpiece of civil and railway engineering before his death in 1993. The family were committed to ensuring that the railway lived on, and insisted that any prospective new owner of the property would have an active interest in the railway. That is where June and Alan Ainslie enter the picture, buying the house (and railway) – or did they really buy the railway (with the house) – in 2000. Every other Saturday, June and Alan open their gardens to the "Friends of the Spinney Light Railway" - a motley collection of live steam enthusiasts.

Looking on their website gave an insight into the pleasures awaiting us. The railway has some 2000 feet of track (7 ¼ inch gauge) and is laid out in a dumbbell arrangement to provide a continuous run. A double track comes off that into a terminus, and a single track leads to another terminus. The layout is fully signalled with mainly ex-LNWR pattern semaphore signals from four signal cabins all with authentic lever frames.

Throughout our day we were made totally welcome by our hosts, both June and Alan and also the "Friends" who own much of the stock, and do much of the operating. Really nothing was out of bounds to us.

As we were making our exploratory way around the railway, we could see locos being prepared. The star appeared to be a magnificent looking rebuilt Merchant Navy, with a Black Five, BR Standard 2-6-0, and an original Royal Scot all looking the part.

Some of us had been allocated driving or signalling turns, and very eventful they turned out to be. Simon Moppett, Paul Ebberson and myself were selected by Alan to drive his King Arthur look-a-like loco "King Jack" (it is actually a 2-6-2), whilst Daniel, Simon and Rod were shown to the Royal Scot.



Wycombe Flyer

Page five



I looked on whilst Alan showed Simon all the controls – regulator, cut-off, injector, boiler water level gauge, cylinder drain cocks, whistle, steam brake, hand brake, firebox. Having been shown the controls, Alan asked Simon to run down to the end of the platform and reverse back, just to get the feel of the loco. Practice over, they hooked up to the train, and off they went.

Knowing that it would be some time before they would return, I asked permission to enter the adjacent signal box at Dingly Dell, and was immediately invited in. Having asked a few questions on the operation of the box, I was handed the metaphorical duster, and told to get on with it. The signalman was the spitting image of our dear friend Dave Potter, as you will discover. A number of trains had come into the terminus (to the accompaniment of the signal bells – yes full absolute block working is in force), and I had coped. Then came the downfall. A light engine was coming off shed. I set the points for the correct platform road, and pulled off the shed exit road signal, but couldn't pull off the platform signal as one of the points was still moving. Unfortunately the driver assumed the first signal was all he needed, and drove over the point which was still moving. Well, you should have heard the language. My bobby friend really told the driver the error of his ways, and I have never seen such a crestfallen driver.



SPINNEY LIGHT RAILWAY continued

When the bobby inspected the points and found repairs were required, the driver's face fell even further. Then the bobby pulled out his toolkit (Property of BT, I noticed), and proceeded to dismantle the point mechanism, rushed off to the stores, came back with a new micro switch assembly (that's a 7 ¼ inch type micro switch by the way) and replaced the damaged unit. All the while he was hand signalling through the pointwork, holding the point closed with a screwdriver, and holding a yellow flag. Dave – you have a twin brother living in Surrey – even the ***ing language was the same!!!

Then Simon pulled in, and I received my tuition from Alan on driving. I was now all fired up, and then Alan said "it's time for afternoon tea now". So we all de-camped for the lawn where June had laid out tables, tablecloths, tea, soft drinks cakes and goodness knows what else. Picture the scene, a load of grimy, sooty railwaymen tucking into fairy cakes. I have to say that some of us had to be dragged away from lunch to get back to driving.

My final instructions from Alan, before we moved off were all about the tunnel. He said that the track drops down sharply after entering the black hole, and I would need to shut off steam, and apply the steam brake – "so make sure you have your hand on it before the lights all go out – it's pitch black in there".

So, here we go, a toot on the whistle, a look behind to find I had the grumpy crew coming along for the ride – Stan, Mark, John and Rod. Plenty of advice to be expected!!

All sorted I thought. The most noticeable challenge I discovered in driving the loco, was adhesion. It was so easy to cause a slip on such a hilly route, and I was so pleased with myself as we attacked the hills, even getting away from being stopped at the level crossing, on a curve, on an adverse gradient. Then came the tunnel, and again no problems, steam off, brake just holding the train. Out of the tunnel we rattled, signals were off and all is well. Then came Alan's warning shout - on went the brakes and as the steam cleared I could see one of the resident drivers on an oncoming train waving his arms about. As we shuddered to a halt, Alan asked him what the problem was. "No problem" said the driver – "just waving to you". Alan was not amused.....

On we drove....



Later on, I tried my hand at another signal box. After a time my friend from Dingly Dell came walking along the track, saying that he had left his new mate in charge, whilst he popped into the shed marked "Looe". Peering down the track I could just make out the distinctive shape of Mark pulling the levers...

We all had a wonderful day at the Spinney, and we are most grateful to June and Alan and the whole crew for making us so welcome, and letting us loose on their precious railway. They even hinted that a return visit is possible.



RAILWAY MEANDERINGS OF TIM SPAFFORD - Part Two

During my membership of the Middlesborough M.R.Club, a number of us developed an interest in the narrow gauge lead mining industrial railways of N.W. Durham. We used to check out the remains of the lines in the Allenheads area which was just north of Wear Valley. After one of these fact finding trips we were snowed in at the Tan Hill Pub on the N. Yorks./Durham border.

Much more information was gleaned from a S.L.S. publication called railways of the Wear Valley.

A long thin 009 layout was constructed called Burnhopedale and proved quite popular on the northern exhibition circuit. The thing I remember most about it were the then new fancy L girder baseboards which allowed us to model the rugged scenery and steepish gradients.

After moving south in 1978 I helped occasionally to operate the large 00 layout Biggleswade at a few exhibitions. This was due to the liaison between the M'bro club and Tony Wright's Wolverhampton group.

Railway modelling then took a back seat for a number of years as I concentrated on my motor rallying. I regularly co-drove for drivers from Middlesex Car Club and Stockton and District Motor Club on events all around the country and won quite a few trophies. By the late 1980's the sport was getting rather expensive so I decided to hang up my helmet.

At about this time Margaret and I decided to have a proper loft extension built onto our house and half the new large room was designated railway space. My initial idea was to build a G.E.R., light railway interchange layout based on an Iain Rice plan called Dunmow High Level.

Benchwork was quite complicated but just about finished, track was well on the way to being completed on the lower level but I always had the feeling that the rolling stock and loco stud wouldn't be up to much as the only kits available would have to run on R.T.R. chassis.

With these misgivings in mind we embarked on our first U.S. holiday, spending some time with a friend of Margaret's who was living in Bakersfield California. We flew down the west coast into San Francisco, Snow covered Mount Shasta was an incredible sight.

Next morning was a damp 68 degrees F. as we left by Greyhound bus for Bakersfield, but the weather improved. The half way halt was at Fresno and we alighted to be greeted by this wall of fire, temp. 112 degrees F !!! I'll never forget it!!

Our stay in Bakersfield was great, I bought my first Model Railroader, and there were nodding donkeys everywhere.

Valerie our friend took us around, we stayed in a log cabin in Kings Canyon N.P. and saw many of the massive Sequoia trees. The desert scenery was covered with many Joshua trees. When you go to the States you have to be impressed by the vastness of everything.

Bakersfield had a really impressive open air museum of old reconstructed buildings and a large section was dedicated to the oil industry. Most of the old drilling equipment was made out of wood and these wood derricks were huge, and what a fire risk!!

I didn't see many trains until the day Valerie took us up to the Tehachapi Loop. We had a wonderful view, Southern Pacific and Santa Fe mile long trains, yes I thought, I wouldn't mind modelling something like this.

On our return to San Francisco we rushed around, 1982 was the year before the cable car system and barn were to be closed down and revamped, Alcatraz trip, shopping. I bought my first railroad book: America's Colourful Railroads by Don Ball Jr. from the model shop Chan's Trains.

We walked from Pier 29 right down to the Golden Gate bridge on a cloud free day, and returned by trolley bus. We rode BART and Muni tram cars to various destinations, and dined out in Chinatown.

I lost my camera and had it returned to me within the hour. The American Bar convention was eating in the same building and on my realising my loss it was soon returned. Saw many fantastic buildings including ones with all glass lifts creeping up and down like spidermen. The most amusing one being the Quoit Tower shaped like the a certain part of fireman's anatomy.

On leaving Frisco by hire car we made our way over the Golden Gate Bridge to visit Sacramento and the railroad museum. The Cab Forward was huge (see Graham's piece in June issue).

From there we made our way down the old gold rush route, now route 49 through Sonora.





MEANDERINGS OF TIM continued

The Sierra railroad was then non working and looked rather sad, however we did manage to take a trip behind a massive 3 truck shay through the woods on the Roaring Camps and sugar Pine R.R.

Next day our route took us through Yosemite and onto Mono Lake just east of the Sierras. I remember an American ordering the last large steak, denying me the chance. He then proceeded to leave half of it! I was gutted.



Sacramento railroad museum

Next day was spent exploring the old gold mining town called Bodie which was located north east of the lake way out in the desert. Everything there had been fossilised in time and reminded me of the Clint Eastwood film High Plains Drifter.

The following day was spent motoring down the eastern front of the High Sierra to Lone Pine.

We stopped off at the fascinating station museum at Laws which was once on the Southern Pacific three foot system. The yard was full of old stock and also included a wooden water tower and a gallows turntable. The one loco, a 4-6-0 used to be known as the slim Princess.

Next morning we set off really early to beat the heat. The jaw dropping scenery of Death Valley and The Grand Canyon proceeded us staying with an obvious Mormon family in Flagstaff. You could drink anything as long as it was orange juice.

Our final drive was down to Phoenix where we started our way home. Three flights to London and the meal on each one was a breakfast.

What a holiday and what an experience.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Harry

Maidenhead to Reading route

IN 2005, the Department for Transport (DfT) consulted relevant local authorities on the possibility of safeguarding land, for the potential extension of Crossrail, in the railway corridor between Maidenhead Station and Reading West Junction.

Building on this earlier consultation the Department now proposes to issue formal Safeguarding Directions for the Maidenhead to Reading route. This latest consultation seeks your views on this proposal, including the geographical coverage of land that is to be safeguarded. The closing date is 17 October 2008

This consultation does not provide a commitment to extend Crossrail to Reading.

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/maidenheadtoreadingsafeguarding/>

Andrew Walker

ROUND UP TIME

Thanks to those members who have sent me articles recently. I really do appreciate it when I get unsolicited contributions. Even better when the offering says "and this is Part1" and part 2 arrived the following week.

Reading the Layout Reports of late, I have to comment on the number and quality of Exhibition Invitations being received. It is a real credit to the club that we are being invited to go to such places as the International N Gauge Show at Warwick, Wigan Finescale Exhibition, BRM Festival of Modelling at Peterborough, York and we will have one layout at Warley in 2009 and then two in 2010.

I can't remember this level of activity in years gone by, and it is to the credit of the members that we are achieving such acclaim.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Please remember that it is your newsletter for your society and is written by the members for the members. We would welcome any contributions for future issues no matter how great or small.

Editor: Harry Fielding
harry.fielding@virgin.net

Design: Graham R "Muz" Muspratt