

WHISTLEBLOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FARNHAM & DISTRICT MODEL RAILWAY CLUB

February 2019 Edition

EDITORIAL

Please could members submit articles for Whistleblower. My stocks are running very low!

Julian Evison (Editor)

WORKSHOPS

The new series of workshop classes has kicked off and details can be found in the diary. The session will last for about 60-90 minutes. A new addition this year is a workshop on electrics:

- Controllers, DC and DCC. 230VAC vs controller output
- Track wiring – PECO booklets, points, droppers, busbars
- Actuators – point motors, CDUs, solenoids and servos.
- Switches
- Lighting.

If you haven't signed up on the sheet on the clubroom door, please let David Harrington know if you intend to attend. His e-mail address is dharrington@tiscali.co.uk

You don't need to attend all of the workshops, just any that you find useful!

OO9 PROGRESS – David Harrington

It's hard to understand where the last 15 months have gone since the first suggestions of a OO9 Group morphed into a realistic proposal. Eleven interested members agreed to cooperate in a layout design consisting of individual boards that could be joined together in any configuration or which could be operated in isolation. Julian drew up a physical and electrical spec, a budget was created and individual members undertook to buy one or two boards each. The Club kindly approved a lump-sum loan to the new Group to enable a bulk purchase and 14 boards were ordered from the laser-cut supplier, Tim Horn.

During the past 12 months or so much progress has been made. Members of the new group have familiarised themselves with electrical and physical specifications drawn up by Julian. The first milestone was reached in November when two boards were physically joined to exhibit as a "work-in-progress" at the Club's Open Day. Later, Mike and I succeeded in proving the electrical spec by joining two of our boards just before Christmas and running a loco from one end to the other. But real progress was achieved on 16th January when five boards were electrically connected and trains were run through end to

end under the control of a single operator. We also proved that individual, local control (of single boards) was possible.



The “quarter-boards” we bought as part of the bulk package last year have yet to be taken out of store and track laid on them to enable running through 90deg. Two half-boards have recently been acquired by the club to serve as common-user stock yards.

Mike and I have taken the opportunity to design, build and incorporate things like a traverser and a turntable into our boards. Julian has created an impressive station on two boards. But there’s much work still to be done, especially in the scenic and backscene area. We look forward to the day when all 14 boards are up and running, in the form of a square or oblong layout. Our target for this to happen is the Club’s annual show in

October 2019.

Current Group members are: Alexander and David Holt, David Harrington, Ian Welch, John Yarham, Julian Evison, Mike Frost, Mike Le Marie, Peter Capon, and Pete Tigg. A potential new member of the Club, Peter Bridger, has expressed an interest in OO9.

AFON WEN AND A NORTH WALES RAIL RAMBLE – Ian George

I have been trying to plan a rail trip around the scenic lines in north Wales, and no doubt like many others my plans have been frustrated somewhat by the fact that Caernarfon is no longer connected to the national rail system. Had the rail connection still existed it would have been possible to take the Welsh Highland Railway from Caernarfon to Porthmadog, then from Porthmadog on the Ffestiniog Railway to Blaenau Ffestiniog. From there, take the Conwy valley branch line to Llandudno Junction, change onto a north Wales main line train to Bangor, and finally onto the branch train from Bangor back to Caernarfon. Spread over a couple of days it would be a thoroughly enjoyable trip. It can still be done of course by taking a bus from Bangor to Caernarfon but that spoils some of the fun.

Until the cuts of the late 1960s Caernarfon was on the long single tracked branch line that left the LMS / BR London Midland region north Wales coast main line at Menai Bridge just west of Bangor and headed south, ultimately to join up with the Western region Cambrian coast line. From the opening of the railway between Bangor and Caernarfon in 1852 the LMS recognised its potential for tourism both into the town itself and onwards via the secondary branch from Caernarfon to Llanberis for Snowdonia and the Snowdon Mountain railway. Caernarfon and its impressive castle were used for the Investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1911 and again of the current Prince in 1969, on both occasions the Royal parties and thousands of visitors arriving by train. There has always been strong local pressure to re-instate the rail link between Caernarfon and Bangor which has intensified with the growth of tourism following the re-opening of the Welsh Highland Railway back into Caernarfon.

At the southern end of the branch line the junction with the Cambrian coast line was made at Afon Wen, which was roughly half way between Porthmadog and the Cambrian line terminus at Pwllheli. Afon Wen was one of those typical Cambrian / Western rural junction stations in the middle of nowhere with no road access and no local traffic, whose sole purpose was the interchange of passengers and goods between the 2 routes. Normal traffic along the branch consisted of 6 local passenger trains and 3 pick-up goods per day, the usual motive power being Bangor shed's ex LMS class 4 tanks, the LMS/ LM region having running rights from Afon Wen onwards onto the Cambrian as far as Pwllheli to the west and Porthmadog to the east.

Afon Wen station would make an excellent subject for a model with its mix of ex GWR and ex LMS stock and its variety of operations, but especially because there was much more to this rural junction than just the local trains. The summer holiday traffic required Afon

Wen station to be much bigger than what was needed for this local branch traffic. The station had 2 long platforms each capable of handling 12 coach trains and a 72 levers signal box for controlling what was up to 100 train movements on peak holidays when both the Cambrian coast line and the branch to Bangor were being worked to maximum capacity with holiday trains. In addition to the usual "Western" holiday trains along the Cambrian coast line, 3 other types of holiday train would make Afon Wen particularly interesting as a model.

During the 1950's both the Western and the LM regions operated daily "Radio Land Cruises" around the north Wales rail network. These 6-8 coach trains were typically headed by a Standard 4 4-6-0 carrying headboards such as "The Cambrian Radio Cruise" and "The Welsh Chieftain Cruise". According to the advertising "these magnificent trains, representing the acme of luxurious holiday travel, provide an individual armchair for each passenger, facilities for light-meals and refreshments, with music and a descriptive commentary of the passing scene over a loudspeaker system." During the holiday season up to 5 cruise trains ran each day starting from different departure points in the region, each using a circular route taking in the north Wales resort towns such as Rhyl, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno, then to Bangor and on the branch to Caernarfon, then on through Afon Wen and east along the Cambrian coast line through Porthmadog and Barmouth, then on through Dolgellau towards Llangollen, then north back to the north Wales coast. Trains ran both clockwise and anti-clockwise round the route and operated until the early 60's, ending due to increased private car ownership and closure of many of the lines making up the circular route. What would an enthusiast give to be able to do those journeys today?

The second major source of holiday traffic down the branch and through Afon Wen was the large Butlin's holiday camp located between Afon Wen and Pwllheli. The volume of traffic to the camp was such that it had its own station, Pen-y-chain, which had 2 platforms each capable of handling 10 coach trains. To handle the volumes of traffic the normally single tracked Cambrian coast line was double tracked from Afon Wen as far as the camp station, and unusually both tracks were signalled for 2 way working between the 2 stations. On summer Saturdays there would be a flow of 10 coach trains along the branch from the industrial towns around the north west each headed by tender engines up to the size of Black 5's or by double headed tank engines. At Afon Wen the trains would reverse and be taken on the final short journey to the camp station by a single class 4 tank using either of the two tracks; another feature making Afon Wen an interestingly different location to model.

The third type of holiday traffic which would give added operational interest to a model of Afon Wen was the use of the branch from Bangor then on to the Cambrian coast line by specially advertised "cheap day excursions" from the north Wales resorts to, amongst others, the Butlin's camp which sold day entrance tickets, or to the resort of towns of Pwllheli, Criccieth and Barmouth. During the summer there were 7 trains per day from Llandudno alone to these resorts. In addition, there were advertised excursions to Porthmadog and including a trip on the Ffestiniog, or to Tywyn including a trip on the Talylyn railway. Most of these were steam hauled but from 1963 a regular service ran

from Llandudno to Pwllheli operated by Derby Lightweight DMU's.

During the summer there was another passenger working which would add further operational interest to a model of Afon Wen, namely "The Welshman". This was advertised as "a through restaurant express between London and north Wales ". It was operated by the LM region in competition with the Western's "Cambrian Coast Express". The "up" Welshman started with between 2 and 4 coaches departing Porthmadog at 11 am, hauled by one of Bangor shed's tank engines, and called at Criccieth then Afon Wen, where it joined up with 2 to 4 coaches which had left Pwllheli, also at 11 am. The combined train was then taken up the branch via Caernarfon to Bangor where a further 6-8 coaches including a restaurant set were added and the tank engine exchanged for one of Holyhead shed's class 7 Scots or Brits for the onward journey to Euston. Strangely, on the return working when "The Welshman" arrived down the branch at Afon Wen, Bangor shed's tank engine was taken off and the coaches were handed over to Western Region engines for the final journeys to Porthmadog and Pwllheli.

For someone modelling Afon Wen and looking for something even more exotic operationally, in August 1963 the station was graced by the Royal train, operating under its usual code name of "Grove". This was worked down the branch from Caernarfon by a pair of Black 5's through Afon Wen where it was handed over to a pair of Western "Manors" for the onward journey along the Cambrian coast line to Harlech where the train spent the evening in a siding, an ex-works Ivatt mogul being coupled on to provide steam heating. The following morning the pair of "Manors" took the train to Aberdovey and Barmouth for the Queen to carry out her duties, and subsequently on to Chester.

In conclusion, Afon Wen, with its rural quaintness, its mix of Western and LM region trains, and a surprising variety of operational opportunities has the potential to make an excellent model. The station closed with the closure of the branch, its purpose gone, and today there is no trace although the Cambrian line still runs through the site of the station. A modeller would be fortunate however because numerous railway books cover the area; track-plans and photos of the station and its variety of trains are plentiful.

As a footnote to this article, I have realised that while it existed it, Afon Wen along with Criccieth and Porthmadog were all members of the exclusive group of stations from which it was possible to depart on a through train to London from either end of the station. Passengers from these 3 stations had the choice of departing for London either by heading east on the 08.00 am "Cambrian Coast Express" arriving in Paddington at 4pm, or heading west on the 11.00 am "Welshman" arriving in Euston at 6.35 pm. Three more stations added to the collection!

CLUB DIARY – Andrew Wrobel

Recent changes in **yellow**. Please let Andrew know of any updates.

DIARY 2019			
Date	Run'g pm	Workshops 18:00 60-90mins	Event / Layout at Exhibition/Show
Wed 06 Feb	0	Baseboards [Tutorial] (Andrew W.)	
Sat 09 & Sun 10 Feb	--		St.Mary's (7mm NG) [J.Evison's layout]: Bournemouth MR Exhib'n, The Hamworthy Club, Wimborne, BH21 3AP
Wed 13 Feb	N	Practical applications of Electricity [Tutorial] (David H.)	
Sat 16 Feb	--		Greenfield Sidings (00) Tonbridge MRC, The Angel Centre, Tonbridge
Sat 16 & Sun 17 Feb	--		Wickwar (N): Milton Keynes (MKMRS) 50th, Stantonbury Leisure Centre, MK
Wed 20 Feb	P4/009	Decals [Demo/Hands-on] (Noel)	
Wed 27 Feb	00	Rolling stock – couplings, back-to-backs, wheel cleaning, etc. [Demo/Tutorial] (Julian)	
Wed 06 Mar	0	Card buildings Part 1 [Demo/Hands-on] (Noel)	
Sat 09 & Sun 10 Mar	--		Haydon Sq. E.1(0): Basingstoke and North Hants MRS, Aldworth Science College, Basingstoke, RG22 6HQ
Wed 13 Mar	N	Card buildings Part 2 [Demo/Hands-on] (Noel)	
Wed 20 Mar	P4/009	GPC (General Purposes Committee) Meeting at 14:00 Scenery Part 1 [Tutorial] (David H.)	
Sat 23 & Sun 24 Mar	--		Wickwar (N): The London Festival of Railway Modelling, Alexandra Palace
Wed 27 Mar	00	NO WORKSHOP	
Wed 03 Apr	0	Scenery Part 2 [Tutorial/Hands-on] (David)	
Wed 10 Apr	N	Scenery Part 3 [Tutorial/Hands-on] (David)	
Sat 13 & Sun 14 Apr	--		Aldermouth (0) [J.Edwards's layout]: Crawley MRS, Tanbridge House School, Horsham. RH12 1SR
Wed 17 Apr	P4/009	Trees Part 1 [Tutorial/Hands-on] (David/Terry)	
Wed 24 Apr	00	Trees Part 2 [Tutorial/Hands-on] (David/Terry)	
Wed 01 May	0		
Fri 03 open 1pm, Sat 04 & Sun 05 May			Haydon Sq. E.1(0): Bristol Model Railway Exhibition, Thornbury Leisure Centre nr. Bristol, BS35 3JB
Mon 06 May (Bank Holiday)			00 Gauge Open Day, Hall & Club rooms
Wed 08 May	N		
Sat 11 May	--		Kinlochlaggen (N) [Mike Le Marie's layout]: Loddon Vale MRC, Swallowfield
Wed 15 May	P4/009		
Wed 22 May	00		
Sat-25 & Sun-26 May	-		Wickwar (N): Railex, Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Aylesbury, HP21 9PP
Mon 27 May (Bank Holiday)			0 Gauge Open Day, Hall & Club rooms
Wed 29 May	--		

