Wrexham Area Group

Latest News

Last weekend saw a lot of Steam activity around Chester and Wrexham.

Train 1Z92 was the 'Christmas Cheshireman' excursion from Bristol Temple Meads to Crewe via Chester. The advertised traction was 'Battle of Britain' pacific 34067 Tangmere but this was unavailable so Ian Riley's stalwart 'Black Fives' **44871** and 45407 The Lancashire Fusilier stepped into the breach. This was at both Chester and Wrexham (pictured).

Train 1Z85 was the London Euston-Chester 'Cathedrals Express' charter, hauled by A4 pacific **4464 Bittern**.

Bittern is sister to the Mallard. Built in December 1937 at Doncaster works for the LNER, it was the 24th of 35 A4 Class locomotives. Bittern's working life was largely spent working the world famous 'Flying Scotsman' from London Kings Cross to Newcastle. She has 3 cylinders, 6 driving wheels and a firebox of just over 40ft and originally out-shopped in LNER standard garter blue.

Withdrawn from use in 1966 she was privately purchased and operated various enthusiast rail tours until a cracked firebox forced the locomotive's withdrawal in the 1970s. Cosmetically restored and painted to look like sister engine 2509 Silver Link, Bittern went on Display at the NRM for a long period before being removed for restoration. After a thorough overhaul Bittern returned to mainline charters, after a gap of 40 years in 2007.

Picture © George Jones

Picture © Anthony Thomas

Club Officials	**Exhibitions**
Chairman: Pete Jones	**Prestatyn Charity Show**, Saturday 6th December 2014.
Treasurer: Barry Parker-Twist	**Chester**, 2015
Secretary: Ian Coe	**Wallasey** 2015

Layout News

Following the Wrexham Exhibition there is more work to be done. The general feedback from the visitors was very positive and there's no doubt we saw more problems then they did.

The top tracks suffered from derailments behind the quarry and housing estate. It was found to be very difficult to sort out due to the backscene being in the way and no view (unless standing on a chair).

To resolve this issue it was agreed last week to move the backscene forward and Norman has already completed one of the boards with a bit of ingenuity.

Now starting at its original position on the board a dog leg has been created moving the backscene behind the houses and quarry.

A very tidy job and it fits in well with the existing scenery. By putting all 3 back boards it was clear that this new arrangement would solve the problem of the derailments on the top line at the rear and there is plenty of clearance from the top scenery.

Norman has taken the other end board home this week and is planning to make a right angle join at the rear of the quarry. The backscene will then directly behind the housing estate and quarry but in front of the lines.

Discussion was then held between all present regarding the top track as currently it is not working as intended.
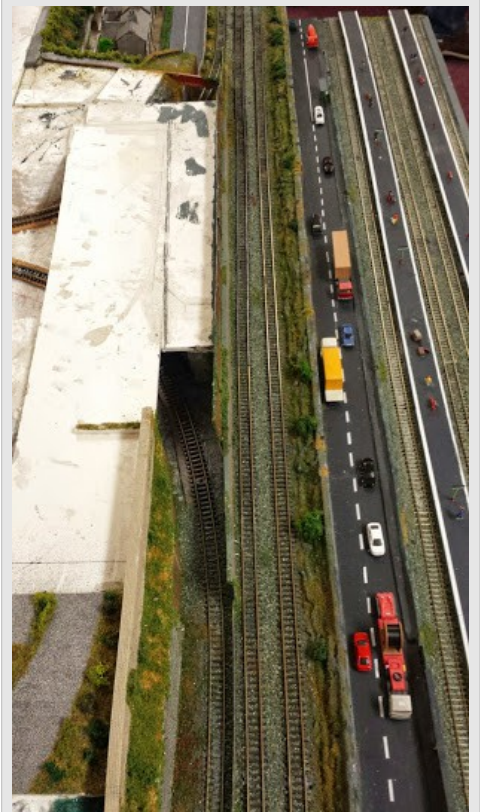
The following was unanimously agreed:

- We want to run trains on the top with minimum of fuss. This we can't currently achieve.

- The twin loops aren't working and the radius of the curves is 9 inches which is too tight and they are not currently aligned properly.

- It was agreed we should scrap these loops all together.

- They should be replaced at the rear with straight track so there is a continuous run behind the backscene. This will prevent derailments under the housing estate too.

- At the front of the board this would give us 2 lines running in opposite directions which will add to the viewing pleasure of the 2 lower lines. One could be a DMU with the other running freight. This could be run by 1 operator with a double controller. The lines would have 2 points at the front and 2 at the rear.

- The two lines at the front would have a siding under the hopper.

- Finally all agreed before the layout is exhibited again the points should be powered at the back. Currently there is not enough juice to throw all the switches together on one circuit. If this can't be resolved then we may have to consider going back to old fashioned studs and throw the points one after the other.