

Northampton O Gauge Group (NOGGies)

Hello (and at the time of writing, 1st January, Happy New Year) along with the usual greetings from the NOGGies to all GOGGers. I'll start by reviewing the exhibition we held in late November. The new venue was great – four halls on two different levels, and unlike the County Cricket club's hall, not everything could be seen from any one place, which added to the appeal. Attendance was excellent with very heavy footfall in the morning which gradually then eased off during the day. But we had over 500 people attend and most that I spoke to were very pleased with what they'd seen. There are a couple of things we do have to address next year, to make it even better. One is signage; there's no question, we didn't get that right at all. And the other is catering. For a second year out of three, we hired someone in to do the catering. It seems that whenever we get someone else in, we get ripped off. We thought we had it all sorted out this time, with 300 baked potatoes, (and an option on 300 more), giant sausage rolls, various sandwiches, tea/coffee and soft drinks. We may have thought we had it sorted out, but that feeling only lasted until lunchtime when our Chairman was given the catering bill, which included 600 baked potatoes. We hadn't even been open for three hours when the invoice was handed over. So how we could be billed for the optional 300 spuds? Two months on, not one of us has yet to fathom it. As a committee, it has led us to a lodge a formal complaint, which has been taken to the company's head office. We wait events.

I signed off last time by saying that I might have some news about our exhibition next year. Well I can now tell you that for 2010, instead of November our next exhibition will be on Saturday 24th July. When the idea was first raised at a committee meeting, we liked the sound of shifting the date, but we weren't sure how it would be received by the traders, exhibitors and public. We did a survey at the exhibition and a large percentage of people were supportive of the idea; two traders even booked in there and then. We will use the same venue, but make our own catering arrangements.

Moving on, the club website is now back up and running with a new look, though there is still some updating to do. We have a new webmaster who has done an excellent job and we are very pleased at its appearance. It will take some time to fully populate again though.

On the two Wednesday's either side of Christmas day, I've been to visit the St Neots club which Gazette Editor John Kneeshaw attends. I was contacted by a former member of the NOGGies, Bruce who lives mid-way between the two clubs so finds it easy to attend either, but he is concentrating on the St Neots club as they have their new 28ft two-level Helmthwaite layout nearing completion. In fact by the time you read this it will have been to its first exhibition at St Albans on 16th/17th January. I must say it is very impressive, and has excellent attention to detail.

In the last update, I mentioned that we had our Christmas do - a dining trip on the Great Central Railway on Saturday 12th December to look forward to. Well the day duly arrived and 22 of us went and were allocated seats inside a beautifully restored BR Mk 1 FO. Mike, a NOGGie who is also a member of the Railway Vehicle Preservation Trust (RVP) at Loughborough had arranged the seats for us. We were all impressed with the coach and the train as a whole. The RVP do excellent work in restoring such vehicles. I asked Mike what state the coach had been in when it was acquired, a wreck, was the reply. It was worth the time (years) taken to restore it to 'as new' condition.

A week before that was the Reading trade show, again, very well organised with many impressive stands. Several of us attended, enjoyed it and spent some of the Christmas budget on items seen within the hall, or ordered for later delivery.

I hope that our Kings Thorpe 35ft layout will make significant progress in 2010, and I'll keep you posted. I look forward to seeing if Santa has been kind to the other NOGGies at the next club meeting.

The closing thought must go to Les, a stalwart of the NOGGies and the club as a whole, who we all wish a speedy recovery after he sustained a broken leg after a slip and fall at home on the Monday after Reading. He missed the Christmas trip on the Great Central, but his wife Kathy has promised him they'll go when he's fully recovered and mobile again.

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