

Hello again from me, plus the usual greetings from the NOGGies to all GOGGers. As the days get longer and the time remaining before our exhibition in late July ever shorter, we are still very busy planning for the event. We are hoping that the weather will be kind though we've decided we won't be having a barbecue as part of the catering on the day. With four months less planning time after the show date moved from late November to late July, we've all been keeping an eye out for layouts to attend. This brings me to a point which has been irritating me for a few weeks now. When is an invite not an invite? After a verbal invite was given to a nearby club, I was asked to confirm it in an e-mail, which I did the next day. That contained all the important details, such as date, location, times, basic directions, etc. The e-mail was duly responded to soon after with the club's 'layout movement requirements' and an overview of expenses details, and that it would be put to the layout operators for a vote. All this takes place around six and a half months before the show and before the layout is finished and makes its exhibition debut. Then in May, the 'official invite' which includes the form to be filled in for space needed, number of operators, etc follows from our exhibition manager. Shortly after that we find out from the club in question that most of the operators needed now have other commitments, and the club claims that not enough notice has been given. So obviously the members weren't asked in the early stages and the vote didn't happen as promised after the e-mail arrived. Does that sound right? Doesn't everyone use word of mouth to book layouts in the early stages? If the hobby in general and exhibitions or events which require others to participate are to continue and thrive, surely we need to rely on people doing what they say they will and then getting back to the requester in good time.

April, May and June have been busy months. Two NOGGie's member layouts, Eastbridge and Westbridge owned by Les and Chris respectively have been out on the exhibition circuit as far apart as Bushey in Hertfordshire and Tamworth in Staffs. There are further shows in the second half of this year and both already have some provisional bookings for next year too. I was lucky enough to go with both layouts when they were on show at Shepshed, near Loughborough in April. Although they were there for both days of the weekend show, I just attended on the Saturday. Roger, another NOGGie helped out on the Sunday when I was otherwise engaged. Operating layouts has always been something I've enjoyed but not done enough of over the years. That may be about to change with both 'Bridges' and two other O gauge layouts under construction at the club, plus a friend who is finishing his own O-9 narrow gauge layout which is due to make its exhibition debut at our show, I have plenty of chances to get out and about in the coming months and years, which I'm looking forward to.

There is also the opportunity of running my own garden railway, plus helping on others where I know the owners. Once again, I'm very grateful to Les and Roger for helping me sort out the electrical gremlins on the garden railway, which is now running, although there are some enhancements that we've decided to make after discovering some quirks in the factory wiring of Peco points. Actually, although I've mentioned quirks, I think it is a generational thing. Newer points have better wiring. We found that with a micro-switch helping to throw the current the way the point is set, some still have a dead bit on the switch rails. A solution has been found and will be carried out over time to improve reliability.

Another garden layout we get involved with as you'll know if you follow these articles is the Lavendon set up. I've been to two of their monthly Sunday operating days so far, with the one on June 13th being the railway theme day and featuring additional layouts for that day, including one from the club. The shunting challenge had only its second outing since it first featured at our November exhibition last year. On both occasions at Lavendon I brought along several items of my loco collection to run around the circuits. One thing I should hold up my hand to is causing a couple of collisions whilst running two trains around the same circuit. Like an England football game, you don't have to be distracted long before things deteriorate. I hope I have better luck next time. I also made an approach to the owner to discuss possible enhancements to the layout there. I thought it would be beneficial if we re-instated the loops around the platforms, so that some trains could be running whilst others are set up, then a smooth transition effected when the next trains are ready. He agreed to provide the points if we did the work. I put this to the committee about a week later, they agreed and Tony the owner at Lavendon has told us to buy the points and send in the bill. The work may be carried out on a Sunday in August, though at the time of writing we haven't made any definite arrangements.

On the Saturday and Sunday of the same weekend that the most recent Lavendon running day was on, our club resources were quite stretched with five of us helping at Lavendon plus both East and Westbridge layouts were on show at the Canal Museum Gala weekend at Stoke Bruerne, close to Northampton. Chris wasn't able to attend, so Ralph and his Grandson Josh operated Westbridge on his behalf, with Les running Eastbridge. As it was only a few weeks before our own exhibition, we took the opportunity to ask some club members out on both days to hand out A6 sized flyers advertising the event to the many local people attending.

Early May of course brings the ALSRM show in Reading. One I always keenly anticipate and try to attend whenever possible. This year NOGGie representation was a bit thin on the ground for several reasons, but I took with me an 0-6-0 black LNER tender 3 rail loco bought which had previously been part of Neil's collection to sell on behalf of the club at the bring and buy stand. We also were on the lookout for Lima trucks, and seven were found for us that will eventually become part of our Windcutter train. On the way back from Reading, I went to the SW Herts club's Bushey exhibition to see Les and Chris with their East and Westbridge layouts.

Les has started to build the kit for his Crosti-boilered 9F which was purchased at Kettering, but other demands on his time and expertise have meant it has for the time being gone to the back-burner. We still look forward to seeing the completed locomotive later this year, or early next.

By the time of the next article, we'll know how the exhibition will have fared and we'll have had the club AGM, which is due Wednesday 4th August.

Let me conclude by praising Roger. He has been doing some excellent work in several areas of model railways, from sourcing and replacing worn out motors in a model train, constructing a retaining wall for my garden railway single-handedly and building some splendid working colour light 7mm scale signals featuring searchlight, two and three aspects types. They do look the business!

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