

Hello again from me, plus the usual greetings from the NOGGies to all GOGGers. I'll start with a review of recent events which have included the club annual Christmas meal. This year's was a more modest affair than 2009 which saw us dining on the Great central Railway. This year we decided to support the pub which has sponsored the costs of our exhibition programme. So on Thursday 9th of December a good number of club members gathered in keen expectation at The Malt Shovel Tavern in Bridge Street. The Malt Shovel is almost unique in Northampton for its mixture of good food, real ale and atmosphere and is always busy. The Christmas menu was competitively priced and the quality of the food was up to the usual high standard, helped down by the fine ales and beers. In short a good time was had by all present.

Less than a week later there was a very good turnout for a film night on 15th December, which was suggested by the club Secretary Richard who'd taken ownership of several colour cine films depicting many long-gone or long changed railway scenes. Amongst these were trips from the former Northampton Bridge Street station to Bedford and Wellingborough, with some scenes shot from the footplate. We also had some film of the last day of operation of the former Great Central Railway from Woodford Halse to Rugby and back. All this was followed by some photos of various scenes mainly around Northampton, but also some from further away, including one of the former Tottenham Grammar School where Chairman Les was educated and which was across the road from where Secretary Richard lived some years later. All in all it was a very good evening which all present enjoyed, even if a lot of it was quite poignant as it's been gone for so long.

There have been many recent website improvements to www.ndmrc.org, which have been driven by Les so thanks to him for the time and effort. It's now much more accurate and up to date and now has a calendar with the club activities along with nearby exhibitions. Some photos of the Christmas dinner have also been posted.

Turning to garden railways now, Les has built a detachable station, signal box and a few other things for his. It is now hibernating for the winter. When spring arrives he will extend into the shed building a turntable so that trains can run from there and locos can be turned in shelter. On mine, the track was re-laid around the rockery once the retaining wall had been constructed properly. A few test runs proved that it needs levelling and fixing properly – a task which we were unable to complete last autumn due to holidays and the change in the weather. Once that's done, then I'll need to check for any switches that are faulty or have succumbed to the vagaries of winter and it'll be ready to run.

In the last article I had my fingers crossed for good weather Sunday 10th October so I could have a day's running on the O gauge circuits at Lavendon after the improvements we made during August. My luck was in and the weather was indeed kind that day which allowed for a very good operating day. One thing I did notice was that one of my locos was side-swiped on the inside and the cab handrails were either bent or pulled out of their fixing holes which must mean that the tracks are too close to each other. The damage was remedied easily enough, but it does give me pause to consider whether I take more expensive items of rolling stock there for a run. Do we go for yet another upgrade of the tracks there? I don't know; it may be something we talk about in the coming months. The next thing will be to see how the points we installed for the twin loops have coped with the awful weather we've had through the winter when we are due to run again in April.

Our club layout Kings Thorpe continues to make steady progress. Now we've changed to layout work in two weeks out of three, the difference is telling. We've also had Les join the track laying team and have laid more than half the track now. There have been a few minor adjustments to the track plan as we've gone on, but this is to be expected. Two examples include using a three-way point for the entrance to the shed on the preserved line part and the likely inclusion of a head-shunt at the other end of the station on the BR half of the layout after it was found that the 'severed line' towards the blocked off tunnel would struggle to accommodate a main line loco as originally envisaged without shortening the fiddle yard at that end unduly. One problem we've still to solve at the time of writing is how to get trains into and then out again of the right hand fiddle yard.

NOGGie Tim has started work to upgrade his Stagsden layout, which will soon be available in three formats to suit exhibition managers' requirements. Up to now it has been a straight run through the station/yard area with small fiddle yard at either end. One of the other set ups will include a full circular run. He has added details of it to UK model shops directory website. NOGGie Ralph also mentioned that after his grandson dismantled his OO layout in Ralph's garage, he is now in the process of rebuilding his O gauge layout from an L shape to a U shape.

One final thought is that we hope to have a 12 foot space at the Kettering spring show on 5th March to sell of the remainder of Neil's things that were gifted to us some years ago. For those who like a project, this may be very good news as we have lots of bits and some loco bodies that need some TLC.

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