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# Barrowmore Model Railway Journal



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Published on behalf of Barrowmore Model Railway Group by the Honorary Editor: David Goodwin, "Cromer", Church Road, Saughall, Chester CH1 6EN; tel. 01244 880018. E-mail: [david@goodwinrail.co.uk](mailto:david@goodwinrail.co.uk)

Contributions are welcome:

- (a) as e-mails or e-mail attachments;
- (b) a hard copy of a computer file;
- (c) a typed manuscript;
- (d) a hand-written manuscript, preferably with a contact telephone number so that any queries can be sorted out;
- (e) a CD/DVD;
- (f) a USB storage flash drive.

Any queries to the Editor, please.

The **NEXT ISSUE** will be dated September 2014, and contributions should get to the Editor as soon as possible, but at least before 1 August 2014.

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Copies of this magazine are also available to non-members: a cheque for £9 (payable to 'Barrowmore Model Railway Group') will provide the next four issues, delivered direct to your home. Send your details and cheque to the Editor at the above address.

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**The cover illustration** this quarter is of Wigan Coal Corporation locomotive SHAH, built in 1874 by the Wigan Coal & Iron Company for Kirkless Ironworks; it then went to various collieries associated with Wigan Coal & Iron (later Wigan Coal Corporation from 1930). Following nationalisation of the industry in 1947, it was at Clock Face Colliery (between Widnes and St. Helens) when it was scrapped on site about 1957.

Stephen Knott at Wigan Archives tells me that an early photo in their collections shows the locomotive with an open cab. We also thank Mark Jepson of the Industrial Railway Society for his help with prototype information.

In February 1940, when the photograph was taken, it underwent repair at the engineering works of Pearson & Knowles in Warrington – another firm associated with the Wigan Coal Corporation. The original print was part of the small collection described on pages 35/36 of *BMRJ38*, and all the other pictures feature my late wife standing on footplates, etc.; so why this photograph was included, I don't know. But it is a nice subject for our cover!

Notes: (1) *Industrial locomotives of Lancashire* by the Birmingham Locomotive Club, 1952.

(2) *The industrial railways of the Wigan Coalfield*, vols. 1 & 2 by Townley, Smith and Peden.

(3) *Industrial locomotives of Lancashire, part A National Coal Board* by V.J. Bradley and P.G. Hindley. I.R.S., 2000. ISBN 1 901556 19 0. £7.50.

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### **Forthcoming events:**

**7/8 Jun. 2014:** Wigan show ("Mostyn" is appearing).

**14/15 Jun. 2014:** Chatham show ("Johnstown Road" is appearing).

**12 Jul. 2014:** 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).

**23 Aug. 2014:** 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).

**20 Sept. 2014:** Cambrian Railways extravaganza, in collaboration with the Welsh Railways Research Circle (at Barrowmore).

**4 Oct. 2014:** 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).

**25/26 Oct. 2014:** Taunton exhibition ("Mostyn" is appearing).

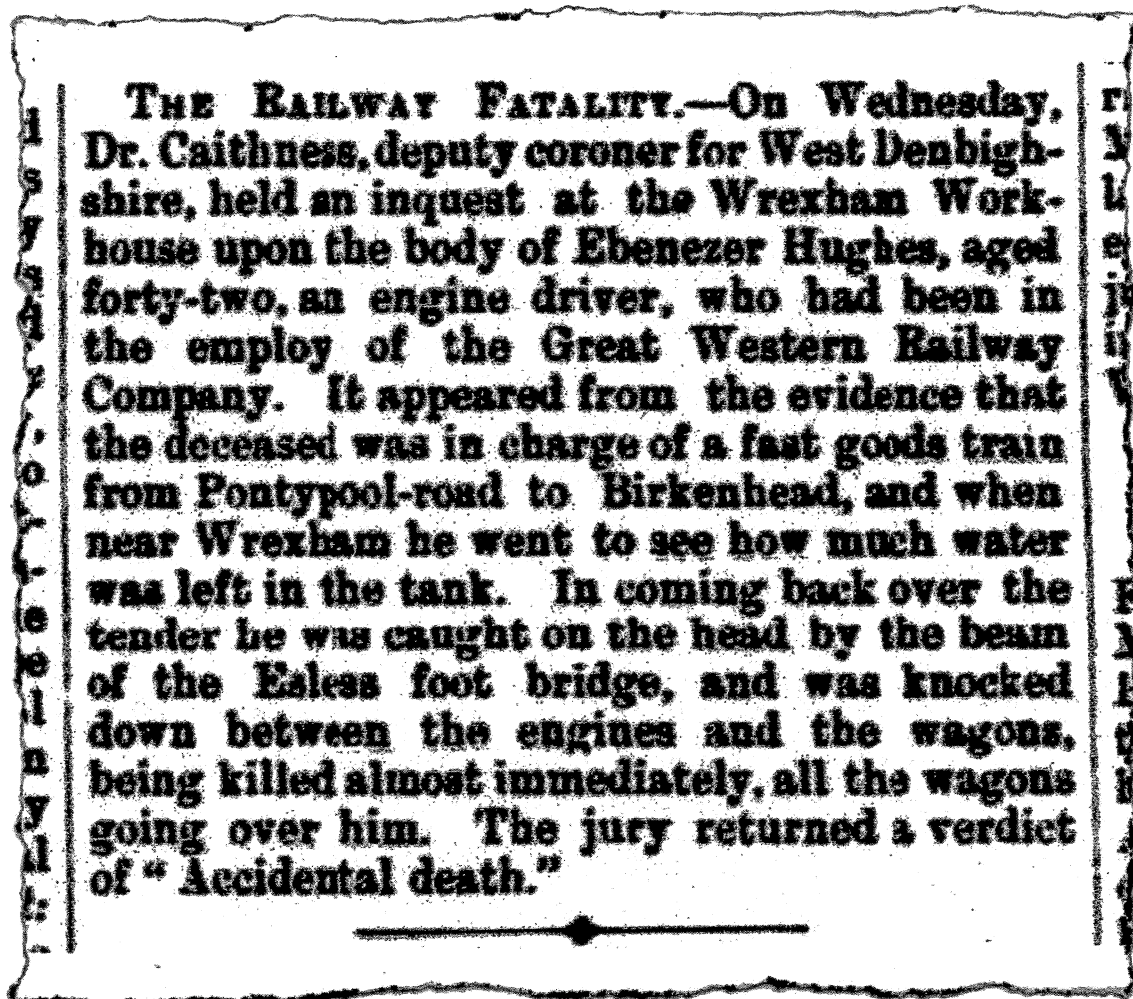
**15 Nov. 2014:** 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).

*Notes of other railway-related events for this column are welcome*

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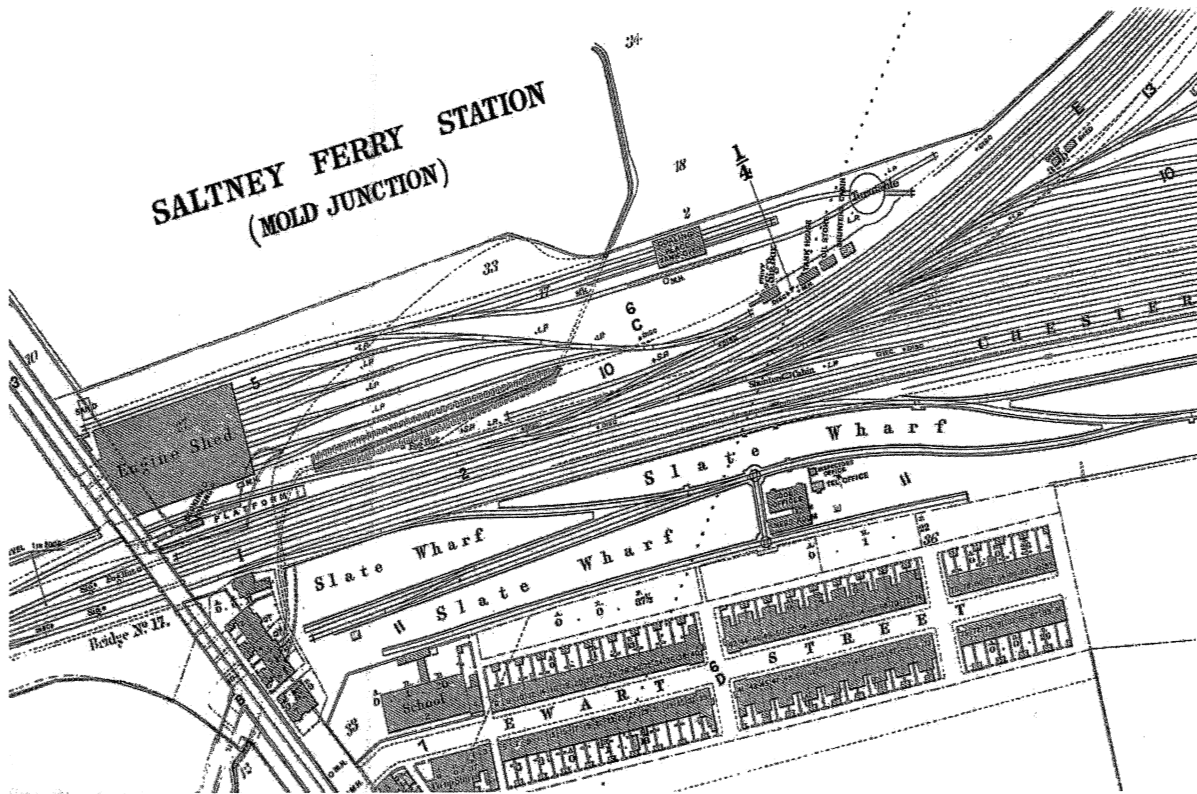
## Health & Safety (?) ... 1892

While looking for something else, I came across the following paragraph in an old issue of one of our local newspapers: the *Cheshire Observer*, for 27 August 1892 ...



Where or what was the "Esless foot bridge"? And I would have thought that a driver would most likely have sent the fireman to check the water?

## MOLD JUNCTION SLATE YARD



*A pre-war plan (north at 6 o'clock) of the eastern end of the slate yard. As is usual with L.N.W.R. plans, Euston is to the left).*

I am currently seeking information in an effort to establish how the old L.N.W.R. slate yard on the up side of the main line at Mold Junction functioned. My main query is thus:-

Were slates stored and sorted by the railway company on behalf of the originating quarry owners between being recieved and transhipped by the railway?

Or did the participating slate quarries i.e. those at Ffestiniog, Bethesda, Dinorwic etc have a hand in the operation of the yard?

Unfortunately the yard as such had closed before my father, the late J.E. (Jack) Robinson became the last 6B Shedmaster in 1952, and throughout his tenure the yard was used as an extension to the East End marshalling yard on the down side of the adjacent main line.

*A pre-grouping view of the slate yard whilst still functioning.*

If anyone is able to offer any information that would help clarify my queries please get in touch.

Many thanks,

**Tony.**

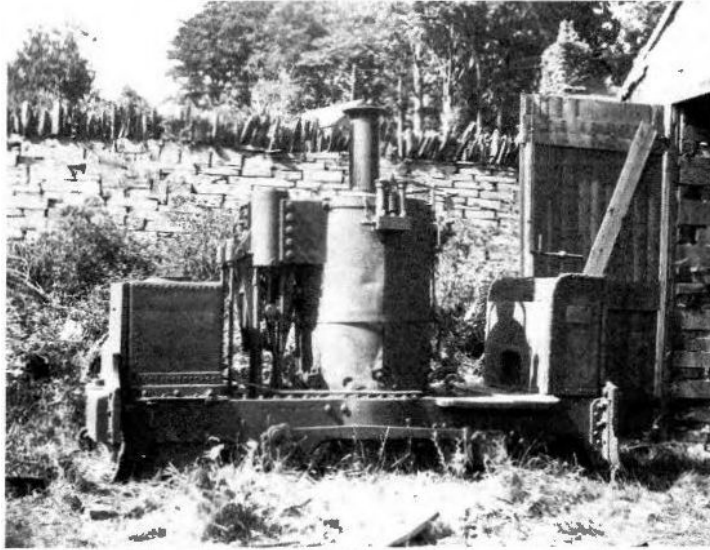
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# JOHNSTOWN ROAD QUARRY TRAMWAY ENGINES: 1

by Richard Stagg

## *De Winton Vertical Boilered Locomotive*



*"George Henry", De Winton 0-4-0 VBT of 1877; photographed by Max Dunn in 1953 at Bethesda. LNWR Society photos no.JMD270N and 271N (below)*

### Introduction

In order to blend the Tanat Valley (Blodwel / Porth y Waen) ambience of the original "Johnstown Road" with the coastal setting of the extension, some sort of quarry tramway leading inland from the quay was a 'must'. At Porth y Waen the Crickheath tramway was horse drawn and unfortunately no one has yet produced a realistic model of a working nag, so we had to settle for steam traction.

The Cambrian had connections with three differently gauged narrow gauge systems, 2ft 6ins at Welshpool (the Welshpool & Llanfair), 2ft 3ins at Machynlleth (the Corris) and Towyn (the Tal y Llyn) and 1ft 11½ins at Aberystwyth (Vale of Rheidol) and Minffordd (Ffestiniog). Mid-Wales also had the 2ft 4¼ins of the Glyn Valley Tramway, so we saw no real reason not to use 'off the peg' 7mm narrow gauge 16.5mm components, which are closest to the GVT in actuality.

First thoughts were to go for something a bit different and a De Winton vertical boilered locomotive (VBL) came to mind, so a kit was ordered from Wrightlines. (The site of the De Winton foundry is immediately across the road from the Welsh Highland Railway's terminus in Caernarfon and is a protected listed building).



*The De Winton foundry in Caernarfon, as it was in 2011 (photo by Meifion, courtesy Geograph).*

It also seemed a good idea to join the 7mm Narrow Gauge Association [Note 1]. Pure serendipity: the 7mm NGA joining literature includes a Getting Started Handbook and in that was an article on building the Wrightlines [2] kit just ordered!

The kit was described on the maker's web-site as one that was designed to produce a static model. A motorising component was recommended, so that was ordered as well.

## **Construction**

However once the kit was to hand it became apparent that fitting the motorising component merely produced a mobile static model, and it was quite obvious that the kit would need major modification to produce a truly working model. Hence what you see on "Johnstown Road" is a model of an engine awaiting scrapping or rebuild; and the quarry has had to hire in some emergency traction (it is since believed that standard quarry engines have been purchased).

The kit as supplied is a mixture of crisp white metal castings which had minimal flash, and some excellent lost wax castings in brass. But whilst the components supplied were good the same could not be said of the instructions. These were not as precise as they should have been, particularly if one does want to make the motorised version. Several "shadow" areas require cutting out, but precise areas are not easy to determine from the diagrams supplied, nor is the reasoning for their removal often obvious. In fact, the instructions, plans and drawings are now, in my opinion, rather dated. For instance, though all parts are listed and numbered on a parts list not all of them can be found on the diagram supplied. In particular there is no parts diagram for the lost wax castings, and it was hard to determine sometimes what was a sprue and what was a very nice bit of cast pipework. The kit/model seems to

date back to the mid-1980s. Kits put onto the market now usually contain far more information, both for prototypical background and for construction.

Construction started with the careful separation of components from the casting trees using a very fine piercing saw, cleaning off any flash, and the reaming out of various holes. The smoke box (top of the boiler barrel) needed very careful easing to allow the smoke box door to fit snugly.

One is guided to construct the kit in a certain order, starting logically enough, with part 1, the footplate. Fixing parts together can be done using low melt solder or superglue. Most of the kit goes together very well, and has been well thought out. However, there were some areas of marked difficulty, all really stemming from the lack of detail in the instructions.

Instructions on what to do with part 2 were particularly poor. In fact it needs dividing into three, - the middle section fits inside the boiler over some cast lugs to hold the captive fixing nuts while the front and rear portions form part of the running plate and fire door shovelling plate respectively, and so need to be fixed into the footplate, (or left off, if motorising as per the motorising instructions.)



*Another of Max Dunn's photographs of "George Henry" derelict at the Penrhyn Quarries in 1953 (LNWR Society photo no.JMD271N).*

The rods and valve gear of De Winton VBLs form a very conspicuous part of these engines. The parts supplied are ONLY appropriate for a static model. There is no way they can be made to "work". A truly functioning set of rods and valve gear would require an entirely different set of components. In my opinion the suggestion that by fitting the motorising component one gets a working model is specious. In fact I think it's a bit of a con.

The fire box door was an extremely difficult part to fathom. The instructions were particularly silent on how and where this went. Eventually I found the necessary information on a 7mm scale model engineering website. It's really quite logical once brain is in gear. Vertically boilered locomotives have horizontally placed fire box doors in their floors. After all, horizontally boilered locos have vertically placed FBDs on their back plates, - stupid of me not to have realised that you have to stick the coal in a hole in the floor on a VBL! Still, incomplete kit building information did give me an opportunity to spend ages searching the net, and you never know what strange nuggets you may stray upon in so doing. During this trawl I found a good picture of the right hand side of *Chaloner* [3]. While I could not see any feed pipework on this side of the engine (see under injectors below), the picture was useful for some of the detailing to be done later.



So far so good, part 14 (the lower boiler) is next to be fitted. It is not very clear where this has to go. In fact, it fits behind the frame, not immediately under it. A tap projects from it and the projection length of this tap is critical, too short - its handle fails to clear the frame; too long, and the tap itself fouls the coupling rod.

Axle blocks come next; regrettably there are no keeper plates in the kit, and in any case the horn blocks are too short to take any. The instructions ask you to drill out the cranks to get a push fit onto the axles. I found it much easier to use tapered reamers rather than drills.

The final major problem area relates to the injector(s). The kit indicates fitting two, and two excellent lost wax castings are provided. There are however, no detailed drawings of the necessary pipework; and my interpretation of what is shown suggests that no provision is made for the overflow pipe. There is, though, a superb photograph of all the necessary pipe runs on page 127 of *Victorian slate mining* [4]. This shows how the injector was mounted in effect on top of its pipework rather than the floor mounting hinted at in the kit's instructions. This photo also shows that at that time only one injector was provided, so that is all I have put on. The bending of the pipework and its soldering to the clack valve and to the injector itself took a surprisingly long time - not helped by the fact that my iron was too big so I had to get a really fine one to complete the job to my satisfaction.

One little nonsense in the kit relates to the beautiful casting of the regulator, which is half open, whereas the reverser is to be positioned in mid gear (neutral)!

Coming now to fitting some of the little details: First the whistle - There is no casting of a whistle provided, nor is the position of one shown on the drawings. Problem. So you either have to find one in your 'bits-and-pieces' box, or scratch-build something. Bearing in mind the need (for safety's sake) to keep the number of holes bored into the boiler barrel to a minimum I decided to use the same take off port as the safety valve, so I soldered my whistle casting to the side of the safety valve casting. The end result looks quite convincing.

- Grab rail. Both the photo of *Chaloner* and the one in [4] show engines sporting a grab rail on top of the boiler on the quadrant closest to the driving position. The kit as supplied lacks this detail. One was made up from some of the wire left over from the injector pipework and fixed into locating holes already showing at the top of the boiler.

- The boiler pressure gauge and gauge glass I fitted on the left side of the foot plate as per the illustration in [4] rather than in what I thought to be an awkward site beside the reversing lever.

- Finally when all the boiler/footplate fittings were in place the smoke box door and chimney unit was fixed into place.

Both illustrations show a seat of some sort on top of the bunker, indeed the one of *Chaloner* shows a line of riveting indicative of a locker or tool box under the seat which doubles up as a lid. Anyway a piece of Plastikard suitably scribed over the front two thirds of the bunker does the trick, and some of Emlyn's magic rivets post painting (minute spots of PVA glue) will suffice for the tool box.

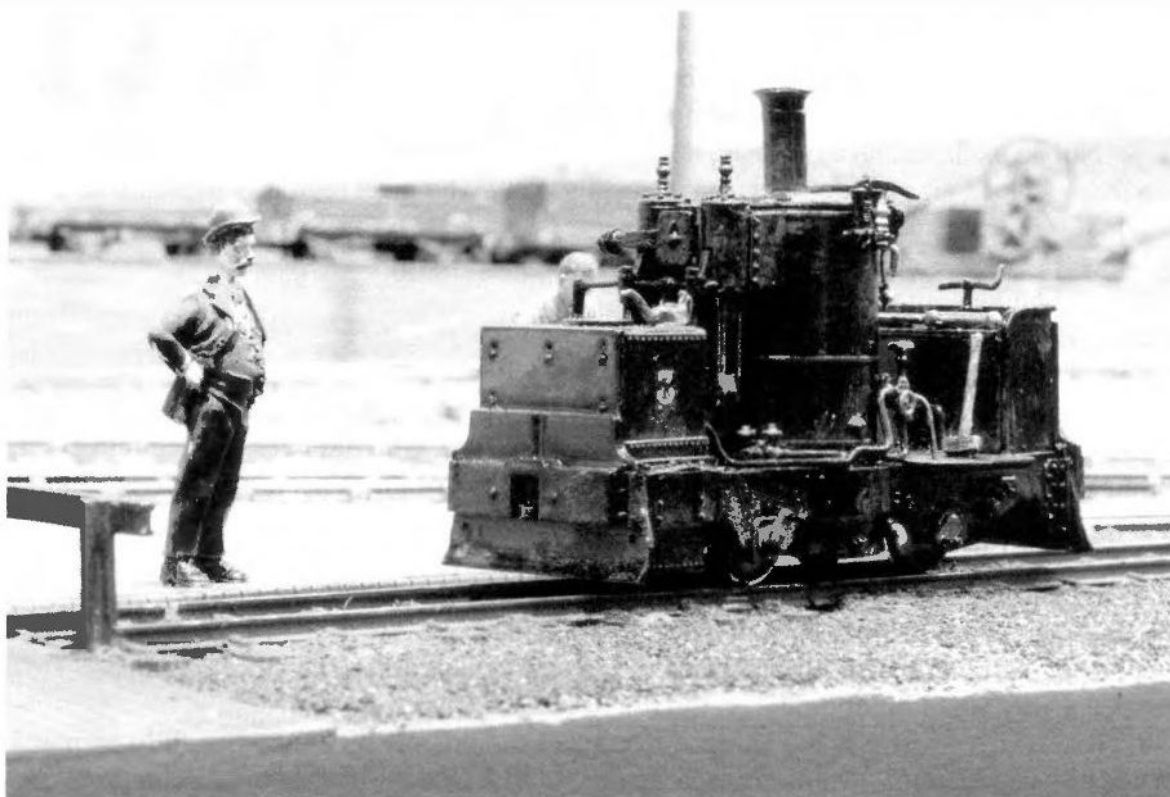
## Painting & Lining

I like black engines so that's what we have got, with some red embellishments and this engine was number 3 at one of its previous places of employment though the number now looks a bit worn (see photo below).



## Conclusions

A pleasing static model (in my eyes) of an uncommon, but, typical of the district, quarry engine which should enhance a corner of the new layout; though one that will not 'earn its keep'. It has now been positioned on the dockside headshunt, being repaired by the Quarry Tramway's fitter whilst management stands gloweringly by (photograph by Dave Faulkner).



Notes: [1] Details at: [7mmnga.org.uk](http://7mmnga.org.uk)

[2] ABS/Wrightlines, 39 Napier Road, Poole, BH15 0LX.

[3] "Chaloner" was built in 1877 for the Pen-y-Bryn slate quarry, Nantlle; it is now preserved and runs on the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway.

[4] *Victorian slate mining* by Ivor Wynne Jones. Landmark Publishing, 2003. ISBN 1 84306 073 6.

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## Letters to the Editor

From one of our lady readers:

"Sir, As a regular (involuntary) supporter of your publication it has occurred to me that although most of your readers, being dyed-in-the-wool Enthusiasts, would have no difficulty in correctly translating the peculiar terminology frequently used, there may be some younger members, or those not yet fully initiated (or even relatives of Enthusiasts) who may have difficulty in understanding some of the terms used. I have therefore compiled a short list of specialist terms and their real meaning (to Enthusiasts) which I hope will be of assistance to your less experienced readers:—

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MODEL RAILWAY TERMINOLOGY; or, WHAT EVERY ENTHUSIAST SHOULD KNOW

LOCO - Not an American slang term for 'mad' (although this is not precluded) but a RAILWAY ENGINE.

ROLLING STOCK - Trucks.

LAYOUT - Train set complete with toy houses, and a sprinkling of miniature farm animals etc.

TREES - Green sponges on sticks.

SLEEPERS - Not Enthusiasts having a nap, but bits of matchstick under the rails.

LIVERY - Not a footman's best suit but the paint on a train.

COACH - Not a vehicle for transporting OAPs to Blackpool, but a railway carriage.

0 0 - Not an exclamation of dismay, but a size of railway.

S 4 SOC - Not a size of footwear, but a secret society who meet regularly to play trains together.

P 4 - Not a page reference; another size of train.

2-4-2 - Engine with 8 wheels.

2-6-2 - Engine with 10 wheels.

12-10-6 - Engine with 28 wheels (!)

0-0-0 - Engine with no wheels.

CHARMING LADY - Weak willed female, usually related, who has been conned into giving house-room, to a large, smelly, noisy, EXPENSIVE, piece of machinery, e.g. lathe, drilling machine, etc.

MEAN UNSYMPATHETIC DITTO - Sensible female who firmly says "NO".

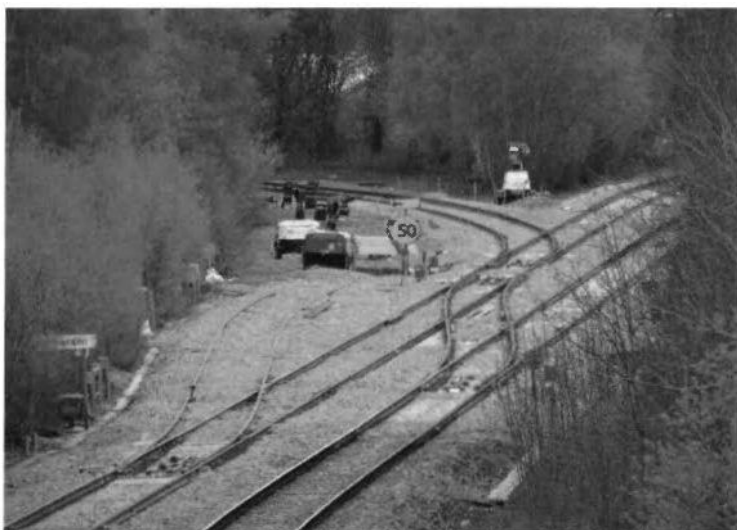
DISCUSSION TIME - Beer-drinking session at the local.

TECHNICAL FAULT IN THE WIRING - Train won't go.

S O D - Nothing to do with a piece of turf; an abbreviation for, "Oh dear me, I've dropped a very small bit of model on the floor AGAIN".

TOY TRAINS!!! - This is the ultimate insult and should only be used when fully prepared for a deadly and vicious reaction. If used in the CLUB ROOM will result in Excommunication for LIFE.

P. Uffert- Rayne (Mrs)."



Email from reader Tony Robinson:

"I thought you may be interested to see the progress being made to re-instate the double track to Wrexham at Saltney Junction, taken from a difficult to get at and now much overgrown 'Golf Course Bridge'!

A far cry from what it was in 'our days' but good to see a well-known error in the 1985 singling being corrected.

Best regards, Tony."

## **“Mostyn” at Wigan, 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

**by Richard Oldfield**

Our appearances at Wigan exhibition seem to mark significant points in the development of the layout. When we first turned up at the venue in 2003 “Mostyn” was in its early phase – still impressive at 22ft x 14ft but with limited amounts of stock. By 2009 we had extended the scenic sections towards both Chester and Holyhead and prepared for the eventual construction of the second fiddle yard. Wigan 2009 became seared in the memory as one of our more stressful shows – we were still painting new stock items on the morning of Friday set-up, plus we suffered the worst ever damage to trackwork when a now ex-member decided unilaterally to move baseboards unaided. The result was ripped up sections of fiddle yard trackwork at a baseboard edge – the most difficult place to accurately replace it.

For our third visit in 2014 “Mostyn” had grown to its final form with two fiddle yards and a massive 24ft x 30ft footprint. The stock list had grown by over 200 items since 2003 plus new curved backscenes had markedly improved the overall appearance. Although invisible to the general public, a revised CCTV set-up plus new control panels had significantly improved the quality of information available to “Mostyn” operators. Discussing it beforehand and taking into account the prominence of Wigan as an exhibition, there was a strong feeling within the team that we wanted to show what we could really do at what is, after all, a local event.

The early signs were promising. New stock had rolled off the lines in the preceding months, the new diesel fuel tank had been made and fitted for the dock branch, and we even had the luxury of not needing to be at the club on Thursday for last minute emergencies. We did know that we were short of operators but Philip had brought Andy Clayton in for Friday and Saturday (people who do not know Andy may recognise him from his involvement with the “Runswick Leamside” modern image layout from Macclesfield). Also David Goodwin, Dave Faulkner and I had paid a visit to the DEMU Showcase exhibition in Burton-on-Trent the previous weekend in the potential search for another operator and this had turned up Robert ‘Bertie’ Austin from the Midlands.

We arrived early at the venue, offloaded quickly and remembered to thank the organisers for positioning “Mostyn” close to the loading bay. Everything went really well during Friday and we checked in at the hotel for a quick shower before heading out to the delights of Wigan nightlife. Eventually we turned up at a Chinese buffet-style restaurant (imaginatively called The Chinese Buffet – see <http://www.thechinesebuffet.com/restaurants/wigan/> ) and ate/drank our fill of some really good food. This may have been why we all turned in relatively early.

Saturday went remarkably smoothly thanks to the efforts of the whole team but I would like to single out Andy Clayton and Bertie for special mention. They both rose to the challenge and operated both safely and attractively – at one stage I counted nearly 30 people around the layout admiring the action. The only problem area was the dock branch where both YEC 0-4-0 Shunter No.2 and Mike’s debut locomotive, Class 08 shunter 08300, decided to be

troublesome. Luckily, with the layout in good hands, Gavin and I effected the necessary repairs to put them back into service.

Sunday saw the average age of the team shoot up ( ☺ ) when both Richard Stagg and Norman stepped up to the challenge. It did, however, prove difficult to prise Richard away from shunting operations by his brand-new buffer store which has finally provided an attractive back-drop to the otherwise undistinguished dock reception sidings. This building is the largest structure on “Mostyn” and, whilst unremarkable architecturally, it has a solidity which pulls the Chester end of the layout together. Gavin has built a transit case for the buffer store (it spans two boards so cannot be permanently fixed) and other removable buildings like the YMCA and Mostyn Hotel garages.

‘Mad’ Iain turned up on Sunday with his minders, Helen and father-in-law, and proceeded to add another nine new vehicles to our roster. This made a fine total of 24 new vehicles for Wigan 2014. I am particularly pleased that this includes Mike’s first P4 item, 08300, as well as Iain’s 5 vans and 4 opens – the total being made up by 9 BR Mk1 CCTS and 5 BR Mk1 BGs from my own production line. Thanks are due to Gavin for wielding the airbrush plus Mike and Philip for some rapid weathering assistance.

The show closed at 4pm on Sunday and we were ready to leave for the short journey home by 7pm. Thanks are due to everyone who made this such a successful and smooth outing.

“Mostyn”’s next exhibition is Taunton in October and I’m already working on new stock for it. Who knows, maybe David Faulkner’s long-running Mk 2 project may finally step out into the limelight? We may even have to start dual occupancy on some of the 34 fiddle yard roads.

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## **Cambrian Railways 150<sup>th</sup>**

2014 sees the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Cambrian Railways.

The Welsh Railways Research Circle in conjunction with Barrowmore MRG and the Cambrian Heritage Railways preservation groups in Oswestry have arranged a programme to celebrate this anniversary. The date for this is **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014**. Precise timings are still to be confirmed, and available nearer the time from **Richard Stagg** (tel. 01492 583219; [richardstagg@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:richardstagg@dsl.pipex.com) ); **Richard Oldfield** (tel. 07840 167 613; [richardoldfield@btinternet.com](mailto:richardoldfield@btinternet.com) ); or the **WRRC website**.

The provisional arrangements include a series of talks to be given at the Training Centre at Barrowmore in conjunction with BMRG operating Johnstown Road.

Speakers include Peter Johnson, author of “The Cambrian Railways – A New History”; Emlyn Davies who will talk on his modelling of the Cambrian; and a speaker from the Cambrian Heritage Railways.

On **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> Sept.** the Cambrian Heritage Railways are operating at both their sites (Oswestry & Llynclys): Oswestry from 11:00 – 15:00 and Llynclys 11:00 – 16:00.

This should be an interesting week-end with the opportunity on the Saturday for BMRG to entertain a number of people, to show off Emlyn's work, to exhibit JR and to put some business into Barrowmore Estate; and on the Sunday to visit the Cambrian Heritage Railways and travel on part of the Cambrian Railways old main line.

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*The Editor cannot remember where he found the following article; it is in no way railway-oriented, but, I hope, of local interest. It was apparently commissioned by the Manpower Services Commission in about 1973 – a 'non-departmental public body of the Department of Employment Group':*

## Smugglers and wreckers on the Wirral

"Wallasey for wreckers, Poulton for trees, Liscard for honest men and Seacombe for thieves"      Old saying

It has been said that Wirral had the worst reputation for wreckers in Britain in the early nineteenth century. At this time a Royal Commission which enquired into the establishment of a police force in England picked out this part of the world, along with Cornwall, as being the worst in the kingdom for wreckers:

"They will rob those who have escaped the perils of the sea and come safe on shore, and mutilate dead bodies for the sake of rings and personal ornaments".

This comment comes from *A history of the police in England*, published in 1910 by Melvine Lee. Mr. Dowling, Commissioner of the Liverpool Police, stated that 'in Cheshire parish constables never interfered with wreckers. The Borough police on salvage duty had to go armed against the hostility of neighbouring villages'. In *Recollections of a nonagenarian* by James Stonehouse published in 1863 the author describes the Cheshire wreckers of his youth as "very fiends".

'Wirral was a desperate region. The inhabitants were nearly all wreckers and smugglers - they ostensibly carried on the trade and calling of fishermen, farm-labourers, and small farmers, but they were deeply saturated with the sin of covetousness, and many a fierce fire has been lighted onto the Wirral shore on stormy nights to lure the good ship on the Burbo or Hoyle Banks there to beat, strain, and throb until her timbers parted and her planks were floating in confusion on the stormy waves. Fine times, then, for the Cheshire men. On stormy days and nights, crowds might have been seen hurrying to the shore with carts, barrows, horses, asses, and oxen even, which were made to draw timber, bales, boxes, or anything that the raging waters might have cast up. Many a half-drowned sailor has had a knock on the scone (head) whilst trying to obtain a footing that has sent him reeling back into the seething water, and many a house has been suddenly replenished

with eatables and drinkables, and furniture and graniture, where previously bare walls and wretched accommodation only were visible.'

As for smuggling, Stonehouse wrote:

'Fine time the runners used to have in my young days. Scarcely a house in north Wirral could not provide a guest with a good stiff glass of brandy or Hollands [gin], the fishermen used to pretend to cast their nets to take fish that then abounded on our coasts, but their fishing was of a far different sort. Formby, on this aide, was a great place for smugglers, but the smuggling they did was nothing compared to their Cheshire compatriots. I don't think they wrecked as the Cheshire people did - these latter were very fiends.'

In many cases the evidence is inconclusive as to how the ships were wrecked - deliberately or by the forces of nature, but in the latter case, too, the stricken ships, crews and passengers were picked clean.

However, Wirral was probably no worse than other parts of Britain. But whereas in other places the ships that were wrecked could be bound for a variety of ports those lost in Liverpool Bay were heading for one place only, Liverpool. Consequently losses from wreck-looting fell on one port, which naturally resulted in the ship owners concerned creating a bigger fuss. In 1664 the Liverpool ship-owners protested against the building of the New Brighton Lighthouse in case its beam was simulated by wreckers.

Looting from wrecked ships was also rife. Cora's *Liverpool Advertiser* for February 1780 published a letter addressed to certain unknown persons in Mostyn concerning goods from the wrecked French East Indiaman ship, 'Deux Amis'. 'Any persons having in their possession any silks, calicoes, nankeens [a Chinese textile], cotton, Japanware, tea, coffee, tutague, arrack [an eastern liqueur], wine or canes to surrender these to the customs officer at Chester or to the owners in Liverpool. Failure to do so will result in unpleasant penalties.' It is not recorded if any of the goods ever were returned. The *Liverpool Mercury* published in December 1809 gives a clearer description of the Wirral looters:

'They would assemble on the beach, men, woman and children, equipped for their nefarious activities. They would even bring along horses and carts to remove the goods, and as the wreckage came ashore it would be grabbed and fought over on the water's edge. If, as happened on several occasions, casks of spirit would be broached the attempts of the few customs officers or the police to deal with these mobs was quite hopeless.'

The ship-owners petitioned the War Office to station troops in the area, and suggested that the Admiralty establish a properly manned coast guard station but the authorities refused to take any action.

In January 1839 a gale swept the coast and three big passenger ships were lost off Hoylake and Leasowe. Wreckers came down to the shore in large numbers, lining the water's edge to seize whatever came ashore. When the gale subsided they swarmed over the wrecks with axes and crowbars, and began to break their way into the cargo holds. Passengers luggage as well as ships' gear was taken, even the dead bodies were stripped of any valuables. Police armed with

cutlasses were drafted in from Liverpool, Birkenhead and parts of Chester. For three days the looting went on. Henry Aspinall of Birkenhead, a local author, described the scene:

'On the 6th January 1839, the day was fine, a fair wind blew for outward bound ships. Many left the Mersey under sail, among them the 'St. Andrews', the 'Lockwoods' and the 'Pennsylvania', first class packet ships loaded with valuable cargoes and emigrants together with a few saloon passengers bound for New York. On the morning of the seventh, the barometer fell to a very low point. The vessels had almost reached Holyhead, when suddenly the wind changed to a north-west and took the three vessels on to the Burbo and West Hoyle banks. The sea rose to a fearful height, and the vessels settled into the sand until they were literally smashed to pieces. No boats could live. The moment they reached the water they were swamped and all on board were washed ashore at Leasowe, Hoylake, and the neighbouring coast. Such a sight I never saw before or since, nor would I like to. The scene deeply impressed, the beach was covered with wreckage and dead bodies. I vividly recall the latter – it was indeed a most pitiful sight. For three days the looting continued, with fighting eventually breaking out among the police and the mob. Numbers of looters were given heavy sentences. The Liverpool magistrate sentencing one wrecker said that he knew many respectable people who would not have stolen from their neighbours, but who, when a wreck occurred, changed into 'grabbing grasping' monsters ready to steal anything they could without a moment's hesitation. Everybody and anybody became wreckers. There is the story of the parson of a Wallasey church who, when the news of a wreck was brought to him during a church service called to his church warden: 'Lock the doors whilst I get down from the pulpit and take off my gown, then we all start fair.'

One of the many legends about wreckers concerns the schooner 'Mary Betsy' which set sail from Wexford bound for Liverpool. Two days later she was off Leasowe and had taken on board a Mersey pilot to assure a safe passage down to the river. The vessel was destined never to reach port. A wind blew up from the north which in a short time reached gale force, and despite all the crew could do they found themselves drifting towards a point opposite Leasowe Castle. Grounding was inevitable and the 'Mary Betsy' struck the rocky shore where she keeled over. Attempts were made to launch a small boat, but it capsized in the giant waves that were breaking all around and several of the ship's company were lost. The rest took to the rigging where they remained soaked to the skin for many hours.

Daybreak came with the tide turning, and looking down from the rigging the half drowned men were alarmed to see a crowd of over a hundred hostile-looking men on the shore, with them several horses and carts. The sailor who told the story of his escape, describes how he slipped over the side, and pretending to be one of the wreckers, he waded ashore and was given shelter by two carpenters working for a Mrs. Boode at Leasowe Castle. Had it not been for these two strangers he would not have survived. As for the crowd on the shore, when the tide went out further still, they boarded the schooner, looted the cargo and completely stripped her of all her valuables, even to ropes and sails.

The sailor's benefactor in this incident was Mrs. Margaret Boode, 'the kind old lady of Leasowe', who became a friend of the shipwrecked and turned Leasowe Castle into a receiving house for survivors. Her fame as the sailors' friend spread far and wide, and seamen from all parts of the world came to know and respect her name. She died in 1829 when she was thrown from her horse. A memorial tablet was erected at the spot where she



fell on the Poulton road. It stands above the busy twentieth-century motorway as a reminder of the kindness of that lady in those brutal, wrecking days.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was a substantial smugglers' trade entirely peculiar to the Wirral. It stemmed from the mining of high quality salt in the Northwich area. Large fortunes were made from the illicit trade in salt, described by John Stonehouse in his book of 1863, *Reflections of old Liverpool*:

'The Northwich salt-flatmen used to tell queer stories about the salt trade and the fortunes made therein, and how they used to land salt on stormy and dark nights on the Cheshire or Lancashire borders, or into boats alongside, substituting the same weight of water as the salt taken out, so that the cargo should pass muster at the Liverpool Custom House. The duty was payable at the works, and the cargo was reweighed in Liverpool. If found overweight the merchant had to pay extra duty, and if short weight, he had to make up the deficiency in salt. The trade required a large capital and was therefore in few hands. One house is known to have paid as much as £30,000 for duty in six weeks.'

This account seems ridiculous for a part of the country which for centuries has been one of the world's main sources of salt.

The reason was, however, that while salt could be exported without duty, £30 per ton in duty had to be paid on sales within Britain, a burden bitterly resented by the local makers of Cheshire cheese. Salt cargoes which were 'doctored' with salt water in the way described in the passage, were probably on their way to Ireland or the Isle of Man. Until the salt tax was abolished in 1825 the salt smugglers used ingenious ways of evading it, and always had a ready market for their spoils among the cheesemakers.

On a much smaller scale rum, sugar and tobacco were landed from incoming vessels and found a ready market amongst those who asked no questions.

As the nineteenth century progressed, so reports of wreckers activities grew less. Wrecking still went on but gradually decreased as the changes in shipping and port organisation reduced the number of wrecks. Customs men were not over anxious to arrest people if instead they could scare them into dropping their loot and running off.

In November 1866 one of the last wrecks resulted in the death of several of the wreckers. A barque or sailing ship was lured onto the Wallasey sand bank. Her cargo - coconuts and Demerara rum. The following morning the cargo began to drift ashore at New Brighton near the area known locally as the Devil's Nest - the spot where the donkey drivers lived. The five available policemen could do little to restrain the mob that gathered. Casks were broken open on the beach and anything that could hold liquid was used. Soon the shore was littered with the drunken people. All the police could do was drag them to a safe spot above the high-water mark before the tide turned. Even so, several people died from drinking this raw spirit to excess. The customs men brought a horse and cart and recovered as many barrels as they could. When they had finished the police used the cart to take the drunks to a spot where they could sleep off their excesses in safety. This incident may be regarded as the wreckers last fling. Thereafter their activities passed into history, and gradually the sinister reputation of Wirral died away.

But there was an echo of the bad old days, when the Palace Theatre at New Brighton was being built. A pit or grave was discovered that revealed undoubted evidence that it had been used by wreckers. From it came the most sickening stench, so bad that it was only by the use of strong disinfectants that the work of removing the contents could go on. The authorities never fully disclosed what the contents of the pit were but the general impression was that they were human remains, those of sailors deliberately slaughtered and whose bodies, had they been picked up on the shore by more law-abiding persons, might have led to awkward inquiries. A full account of the discoveries has never been given, and even to-day the information is 'classified', unavailable to the general public, and only under the most exceptional circumstances can it be revealed.

### MOTHER REDCAP

On the shore of Egremont, Wallasey, once stood the headquarters of the Wirral smugglers. The site was first occupied by a private residence in about 1595. In 1697 the house was enlarged and became a tavern as a 'front' for the smugglers. There was no other reason to have an inn in such a remote place. Its very isolation made the Inn a place to be feared by ordinary, peaceable folk. No road led to it, the only approach was from the shore. Behind it lay Liscard Moor, and further inland stretched Bidston Moss. This moss was so boggy and treacherous that no sensible person would attempt to cross it without a guide. Good smugglers' country, but even the smugglers had to go very carefully. At a particularly dangerous spot they would cross the morass on a bridge formed from a large pair of whalebones - a macabre addition to the scene as the smugglers stumbled along by night with their illicit packs. They also told people the mosses were haunted, a further incentive to keep unwelcome visitors away. Its windswept, isolated position made it an ideal haunt for the notorious wreckers who would lure ships aground and then kill the crew and steal everything movable from the ships.

Some years later the tavern was bought by Poll Jones who was also known as 'Mother Redcap'. In 1863 the historian John Stonehouse wrote about the tavern:

'It was known as 'Mother Redcap's' from the fact of the owner always wearing a red cap. She was a great favourite with the sailor-men and had their entire confidence. She had hiding places for any number and the men used, on returning from their voyages, to deposit with her their pay and prize-money until they wanted it.

From another post hung the Inn sign showing Mother Redcap holding a frying pan over a fire, and underneath these words:

"All ye that are weary come in and take rest, Our eggs  
and our ham they are of the best. Our ale and our por-  
ter are likewise the same, Step in if you please and  
give 'em a name. Mother Redcap."

But as we already know she was in league with the smugglers.

This old tavern has all the ingredients for an action-packed historical novel. Outside stood a pole with an unusual weathervane. The vane was supposed to work round with the wind, but it was a dummy, the staff fitting down into a round wooden socket in the shingle. It could be turned in any direction and was used by the smugglers for signalling. When the vane pointed towards the house the smugglers who used it knew all was well and it was safe to enter; when the vane pointed away from the house it meant there was danger and to keep away.

If you were an unwanted visitor and managed during 'closed' hours to break through the Inn's five-inch thick oak-door in spite of its bars, the intruder unknowingly stepped on to a trap door. This would drop him into a dark cellar eight feet below, where he might fret and fume until the latest cargo was safely stowed away. The Inn's red sandstone walls were three feet thick, and if that were not substantial enough, were further 'fortified' with stout planks from the plentiful supply of wrecked ships. The windows were fitted with strong shutters.

The Inn was amply provided with emergency exits and hiding places, both for men and money. Under the house-stairs seven or eight steps led down into a cellar. If the front door lid or trap was down, the smugglers, or those who wanted a hiding place, could go straight upstairs. If there was anyone in the cellar he could run up the steps under the staircase and get out at the back of the house and into the yard away from the clutches of the customs men or press-gang. At the rear of the house was a well about twelve feet deep, dry and partly filled with earth. There was a hole in the wall of the well which led to an underground cave. From it a passage led to a place of safety, mentioned in some books as 'Red Noses' in New Brighton. There were concealed cavities in the chimney breasts of the two ground floor rooms. Their removable entrances inside the flues were at the top of the chimney breasts. There are numerous authentic stories of strange goings on in and around 'Mother Redcap's'. On one occasion a few of the smugglers were anxious to move some of their booty from its hiding place in the cellar, but unfortunately the local customs man was in the Inn having a quiet drink. A plan had to be hurriedly made to get him out of the way. One of the smugglers sneaked off down to the beach and lay fully clothed at the water's edge. The rest of the men drew the attention of the customs officer to the 'drowned man' and he dashed off to the shore. However, he was not entirely honest himself and stole a watch from the so called 'drowned man'. He was just about to steal the wallet as well when the 'corpse' jumped up and knocked him out. Meanwhile the smugglers had successfully removed their ill-gotten gains from 'Mother Redcap's'.

There is another story of several bales of cloth being hidden at 'Mother Redcap's' until the hunt for the thieves had died down. Later the material was distributed among the villages of Liscard, Wallasey and Bidston. The following summer, practically every resident of the three villages was walking about in identically patterned outfits of extremely high quality material!

Mother Redcap always found room for her 'regulars' even if they had to be hurried into some tunnel normally reserved for contraband. One of those hidey-holes was found as late as 1930. A manure heap and some coal concealed the entry to this back-yard cavity which in turn gave access to a ditch beyond. The ditch, leading off in the direction of Liscard, meant freedom. Growing near the exit of that escape ditch there was a willow tree. Many fugitives must have peered cautiously through its overhanging branches before speeding off into the dark. Political refugees were sometimes smuggled over to England, resting at Mother Redcap's before continuing their journey. With the wreckers' activities naval casualties were high, and fresh crews had to be found somewhere. So the press-gangs stalked

the seaports and even the country wakes and fairs, seizing any likely looking man they came across. Mother Redcap used to hide these men too, at a price.

Just before Mother Redcap died in about 1812 a rich prize was brought into port which yielded every sailor on board at least £1,000. Such was the confidence of the sailors in Mother Redcap that they almost certainly hid their money with the old lady. Yet when she died a few days later, after a short illness, very little money was found, and the treasure, if it existed at all, has never been discovered.

In 1862 the Inn came into the possession of a Mrs. Maddocks who promptly cancelled the liquor licence. She was a teetotaller and completely against drink. Presumably she used the cottage as a home or cafe. In 1888 it was bought by Mr. J. Kitchingham, a Wallasey born solicitor. He made extensive alterations turning it into a beautiful house. When the promenade was built he donated the portion of land in front of his property to the Council on condition that it should never be used for traffic. When he said 'never' he meant 'NEVER'. When the authorities on just one special occasion, allowed some carriages carrying royalty - on an official visit - to pass over it, he was so angry that instead of leaving the house to Wallasey in his will, as he had stated, he bequeathed it to the people of Warrington where his business was located. He specified that it should be used as a convalescent home. The house was not suitable for that purpose, so powers were obtained to set aside the will and the property was sold.

Over the succeeding years it had a chequered life as a cafe and several kinds of club, but eventually it became empty in the early sixties. During the past few years various protests and petitions urged that the house should be taken into public ownership and restored but they were turned down. The property deteriorated and was vandalised. After a bad fire nearly destroyed it completely, the house became derelict and was declared unsafe.

On the 20th October 197\*+ the demolition gang moved in. Now all that remains is the empty site, the smugglers' caves and cellars buried deep beneath bulldozed earth. A private developer has plans to rebuild on the site, but many people feel that building should be delayed until the site has been properly excavated. Who knows - the fortune might be unearthed which many people believe may still be hidden there.

## THURSTASTON, HILBRE ISLANDS AND THE NOSES

These other local spots are linked by reputation and hearsay with the activities of smugglers and wreckers, but with little documentary evidence. An old rocky glen known as 'the Dungeon' at Oldfield, near Thurstaston, is reputed to have been the haunt of smugglers, its rocky clefts forming ideal hiding places for their goods. The Hilbre islands were so notorious that a Customs House was actually set up there. The three islands stand about one and a half miles off the north western tip of the peninsula, and consist of Hilbre, twelve acres, Middle Hilbre, three acres, and Little Eye, only half an acre. They are connected by a sandstone reef. Ships would slip up the Dee estuary, unload their contraband and stow it in 'the Devil's Hole' - a tall, narrow cave in Middle Hilbre.

Red Noses and Yellow Noses are rocks at New Brighton shaped as their name suggests. Their passages and caves, now blocked up, were links in a chain of places used especially by smugglers from Ireland. Goods first landed on Perch Rock were brought here to be hidden,

then distributed via passages said to link with Mother Redcap's at Egremont and St. Hilary's church, Wallasey Village. Both were notorious for their smuggling connections. In the garden of a private house above the Noses is a trapdoor with steps leading down to a narrow passage. This in turn leads to a larger, higher cave with low, narrow passages leading off it. On the sandstone walls are dates from as far back as the seventeenth century - perhaps carved by shipwrecked sailors hiding from the murderous wreckers, or smugglers in hiding with their booty.

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## Editor's page

This issue is running late, because of a combination of factors: the most important is the retirement of Dave Watson, our printer. He operated from his house in West Kirby, a converted private dwelling, and obviously now finds it more profitable to sell for re-conversion into a private house. He was also happy to work from hard copy, and this suited me, partly because of file size limitations in word processing packages. I have identified a possible replacement and this issue will be a trial run! But this raises another hurdle, in that the works is in Watford so that copy will have to be presented on-line and delivery of finished result will be by courier. So we will have to play it by ear.

A few weeks back, Richard Oldfield acted as chauffeur for Dave Faulkner and the Editor, on a visit to the DEMU Showcase exhibition in Burton-on-Trent, which included (as befitting a visit to that town) sampling the wares of the Burton Bridge Brewery! Among the many 'modern image' layouts on display were several which were let down by poor modelling in one way or another. Particularly disappointing on several layouts which displayed otherwise very nice modelling of diesels, was poor weathering of wagon stock; and it occurred to the Editor that there must be a way to avoid this - perhaps by organising a 'standards committee' which would 'vet' items of modelling before they were displayed at exhibitions? This may be overly bureaucratic: what other possibilities can readers suggest?

In the last issue - due largely to my illegible handwriting - I referred to the Industrial Railway Society's 'Mark Jepson' as "Alex Jackson"! Apologies!

Recent books: *Model Railway Constructor annual, 1985* edited by Chris Leigh. Ian Allan, 1984. ISBN 0 7110 1409 4. [Article pp18-29 on *Cross-channel ferry wagons used on B.R.* by Paul Bartlett and Trevor Mann].

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## **Johnstown Road at Chatham 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

### **a report by Richard Oldfield**



Taking Johnstown Road to exhibitions is usually a stress-free process but, thanks to the vagaries of the van hire market, our trip to Chatham was more of a challenge than normal. Apparently the demand for tail-lift fitted Luton-bodied vans has grown in recent months to such an extent that the hire rate has increased dramatically from around £200 to £330 for Fri/Sat/Sun. We very much prefer this type of van because its regular sides make packing easy, it has more capacity than the alternative and the tail-lift is a bonus. However, when the price of the alternative (a long wheelbase high-capacity Sprinter) remains around £200, it seems sensible to make the change to avoid passing on higher charges to the exhibition organisers.

And so it was that Gavin turned up at our clubroom on Friday morning with a Sprinter. Perhaps predictably, history has taught us that the loading of vehicles is a fertile breeding ground for argument, nit-picking and delay. I was therefore agreeably surprised when the layout was loaded quickly and securely but also thankful that we had space inside my estate car to transport those boxes and personal belongings that would not fit in the Sprinter (see below).

Suitably fortified with a quick breakfast from the Bluebell café at Barrowmore, we set off at 11.00am with Norman, David F. and Gavin in the van and Mike/myself in the Volvo.

There is no joy to be had on the motorway network on Fridays and we had to endure a 4-mile queue to cross the M25 Dartford bridge before arriving at the venue at 4.15pm. Greeted by BMRG member Kevin Bays, we were shown our position in the hall and offloading passed without problem – unlike some events Chatham allow plenty of space around exhibits. One of the joys of Chatham is that the venue, hotel, a decent pub and a great Indian restaurant are all in close proximity so the hire van and car could be parked, locked and left in peace until Sunday.

As a team we were fairly disciplined in our socialising at Wigan with Mostyn the previous weekend (perhaps with one exception, eh, Mike !) so, perhaps un-subconsciously, we let our hair down at Chatham and enjoyed two good sessions at The Cannon in Brompton plus an

excellent meal at the Alisha (see their website). ). The exhibition has a happy relaxed feel to it and the organisers invite layouts from all sectors of the hobby - this includes a number of exhibits from the continent. Amongst the features that Chatham really 'get right' is the continuous hot drink service plus a lunch offer that can be brought back to the layout or eaten in a separate room. I also noticed their members helping traders and others with offloading/loading.

The Sports Hall venue may lack the charm of the Chatham dock slipway but no-one can doubt that it is the better place for a model railway exhibition.

Johnstown Road operates to a timetable designed to show off the wide range of stock that Emlyn Davies has built over the years and we can normally complete two cycles per day. We didn't quite manage that frequency at Chatham but this can be explained by the regular opportunities to interact with a wholly admiring public. There is something indefinable about JR which pleases many, often older modellers – one gentleman told me that this was his first return visit to Chatham since JR's last appearance and he had made the journey solely to see our layout. I think there is a 'happy', 'chocolate box', feel created by the bright colouring and that, combined with scenes that are not over-stuffed with the railway itself, allow the viewer to enjoy the complete package and not just the running of trains.

What did not go to plan? Although the hall floor was sprung, our Dexion stands were not, and standing for a couple of hours operating on them was enough to leave you flat-footed – it's high time we carpeted the surfaces. We also need to modify the operating schedule to include the locomotives and vehicles that are not fitted with Alex Jackson couplings.

On Sunday, dismantling proceeded amicably enough until it came to re-loading the van - when Gavin was overcome by the urge to continue his search for the Holy Grail of van packing. I must admit that my easy-going and placid nature was tested by Gavin's compulsion to express his layout loading creativity. The net result, of course, was that even more items ended up in the back of my Volvo. This is probably just as well as I had already thought of somewhere else (less comfortable to Gavin) where any remaining items might go....

Suitably fortified by a visit to Macdonalds, our team returned to Barrowmore without problem and JR was back in its home by midnight. All in all a great weekend and we also picked up a potential invitation to take our layouts to York exhibition.

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## **Cheshire Lines Manley station**

Manley is a small village ENE of Chester, and on the route of the former Cheshire Lines railway linking Mouldsworth (not all that far from Barrowmore!) and Helsby. It is less than a mile from Mouldsworth Junction and the line dates from 1869/70; the station at Manley (why was it ever built?!) was opened for goods on 1 September 1869 and for passengers on 22 June 1870 and was closed to passengers less than five years later. Goods traffic, however,



lasted until 1961. The photograph on this next page was taken by Bob Miller in 1976 when it was a private residence and the line was still there: the line closed in 1991 but the track was only lifted in 2000.



At one time a short (20chains) branch diverted from the 'main' line to Manley Quarry. This quarry branch is very poorly documented, but probably dates from Victorian times. The following local reminiscence (from the 1930s) is relevant:

"Manley Quarry was one of the few quarries in Cheshire which produced a white as opposed to red sandstone. In reality the newly hewn stone, which could be extracted in very large blocks, was a buff cream colour which weathered to grey. The stone takes a fine ashlar finish and is readily carved and finished especially when new. Its weathering qualities are excellent for it does not flake or decay like the red sandstone. Although it has been used for local buildings it has also been used for many major ones such as Thomas Harrison's great neoclassical castle at Chester, Chester Town Hall, Eaton Hall, St. Michael's Church and the Trustee Savings Bank in Chester. The great exploitation of the quarry began around 1790 and from that time to 1820 the County Justices spent a good deal of money on the improvement of roads around Manley to facilitate the transport of the stone. It was also used in the construction of railway bridges and in the Manchester Ship Canal.

Local men worked in the quarry, including Mr. Keeling's grandfather whose early death at the age of 40 may have been attributed to quarry dust. There was an accident in the quarry with injury and death to some men and it was subsequently closed down. It was reopened by Mr. Armitage for extraction of stone with which he could extend his house in the 1920's and then left so that it developed into a natural nature reserve. Unfortunately it was subsequently used as a rubbish tip".

This small branch's closure is not recorded, but it still appeared on the 1905 Ordnance Survey map:



*A portion of the 1905 Ordnance Survey map shows the Quarry at the top/left.*

The quarry eventually was incorporated into the gardens of Manley Knoll house.

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## **Mostyn's new control panels**

### **by David Faulkner and Richard Oldfield**

By now all BMRG members will know that Mostyn has new control panels for both scenic and fiddle yard sections. Right from the start of planning the extension it was obvious that we would need a new FY panel; there was going to be double the number of storage roads! The new scenic panel came later in the build process, and that we needed one at all came as a surprise - why would we need to replace something that so far been reliable? Read on...

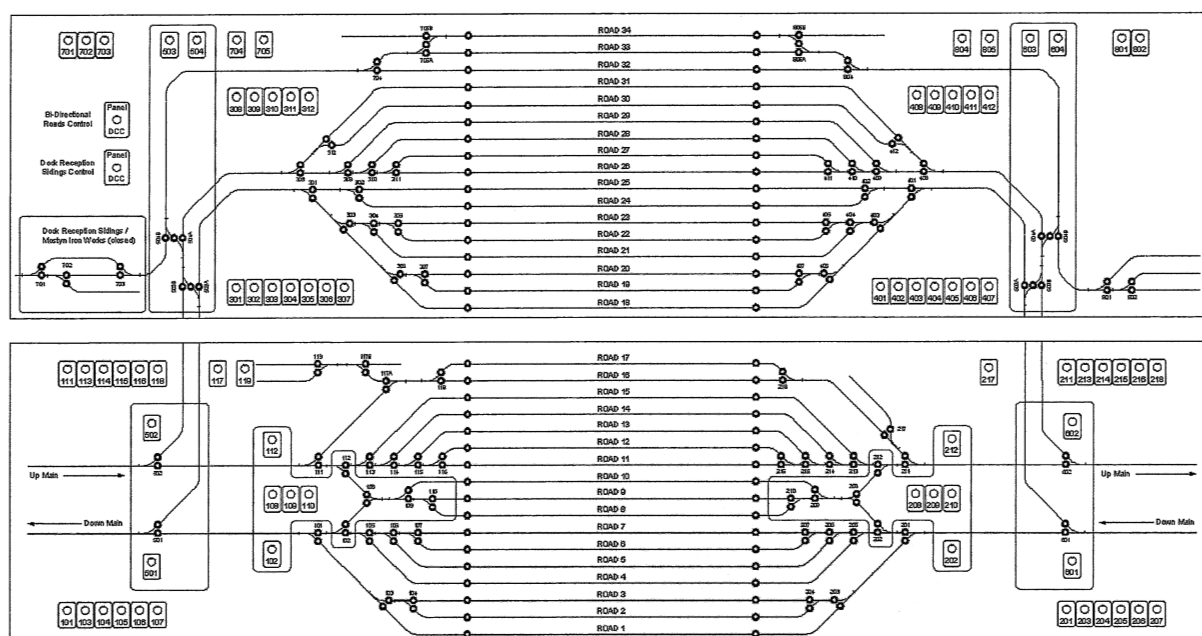
#### **Mostyn's Fiddle Yard Panel**

OK, so visually the panel would need to be twice the height of the existing one to cater for the number of new roads – easy! Well not quite, for a start as well as the new roads there was the question of: (i) how to show the new double junctions; (ii) where would we put the controls for the new dock reception sidings at the Chester end; (iii) how to manage the mental load on the operators with the increased number of points and possible movements available; oh and (iv) how to keep the size of the panel down so that we could still see the layout!

There were several iterations of drawing the panel fascia to get us to the point where Mostyn operators were happy with the overall panel diagram layout; this process allowed us to take what was good about the old one (and I'm not aware that any of us had any particular problems using it) and add in the new information for the extension that needed to be shown to operators.

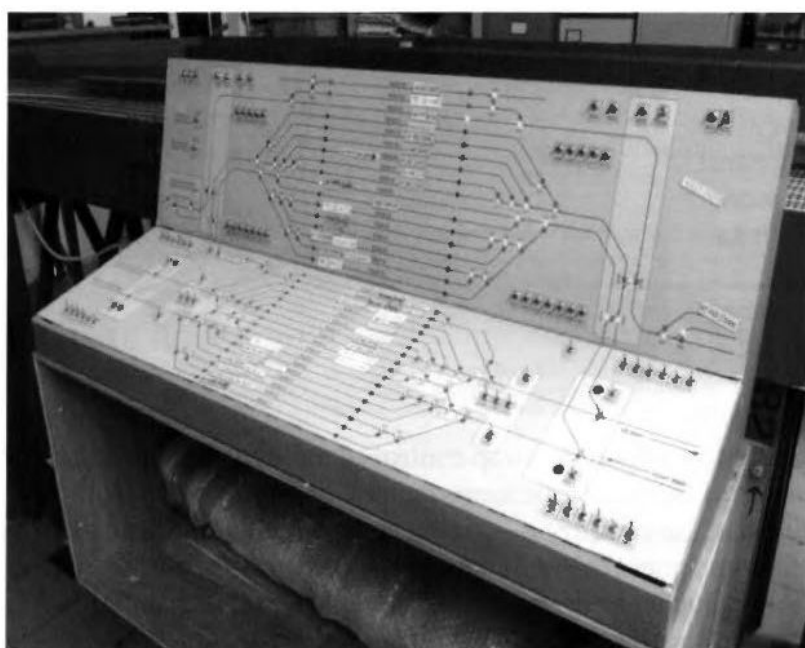
It's all in the width - that's what they all say! I came to this conclusion after the first drawing attempt at the new panel tried to keep the overall width of the original (and retain the handy cup holders at each end). Anyway, after four attempts, we arrived at something pleasing to the eye and the new panel is now 1000 mm compared with 750 mm of the old.

As regards seeing the layout over the top of the panel, this was easily answered by using a two-part horizontally-split panel, each part angled differently.



**Figure 1 - New FY 2-part Panel**

Figure 1 shows the panel solution we arrived at, in this you can see where the space has allowed me to emphasise clearly the double junctions, and the connections to the old and new bi-directional roads. When deciding what angles the split fascia should be at, I made several sketches of possible solutions, discussed them with Richard [Oldfield] and Gavin [Liddiard], and once we had agreed the best option, Gavin drew up the carcass of the panel in SketchUp 3D software to plan out the cutting list for the wood. Oh and losing those cup holders, no problem as Gavin's solution of a carrying case that doubles as a layout mounting provides a suitable shelf under the panel during shows – see Figure 2.



**Figure 2 – New Fiddle Yard Control Panel**

The features that I have incorporated to ease the mental load on the operators are:

- (i) interlocking the points of both double junctions so that it is impossible to set a conflicting route (and there are also indicators that flash if an attempt is made to do this!); and
- (ii) route-setting indicators at the entrance and exit of each road that confirm to the operator which road has been set by their individual point switching. These show red or green for a correctly set entrance or exit respectively in normal direction running.
- (iii) Switching between panel control and DCC handset control for the dock reception sidings and/or the new fiddle yard bi-directional roads 32-34. This is not yet a critical feature but will assume great importance when the dock sulphur and steel traffic trains are built.

The route-setting indicators are a godsend. There is no longer a need to work your way through umpteen point indicators to check which way has been set for a train to depart and/or arrive. There is only one red light and green light in the up direction and the same applies for the down direction. This greatly eases the stress when a heavy train thunders into the yards at line speed!

### The New Main Panel

I'm not sure any of us realised that we would need a new main panel after we had built the extension - why would we when the track layout of the scenic part of the layout was not going to change? Indeed, it was only when we started on the new backscenes following the Merseyside show in October 2012 that we realised we could no longer mount the existing panel to the rear face of the baseboards due to the increased depth of the scenery.

Solutions to the problem - at first we thought that simply devising a new method of mounting the existing panel was the way to go, but trying to work out how to do this proved difficult as its base now had an access panel underneath. This was the outcome of

it growing organically as the layout developed: first with the addition of the wiring to control the signals, then

the four power districts, then the 'secret switch' to swap control of the exchange sidings from panel to DCC control, etc. The last of these modifications had involved the addition of nine new power districts for the extension, the circuitry of which was underneath; hence the access panel. Figure 3 shows the comparative mess that the inside of the panel had become with some of the loose wiring now somewhat fragile.

**Fig.3 - Internal view of original Main Control Panel**

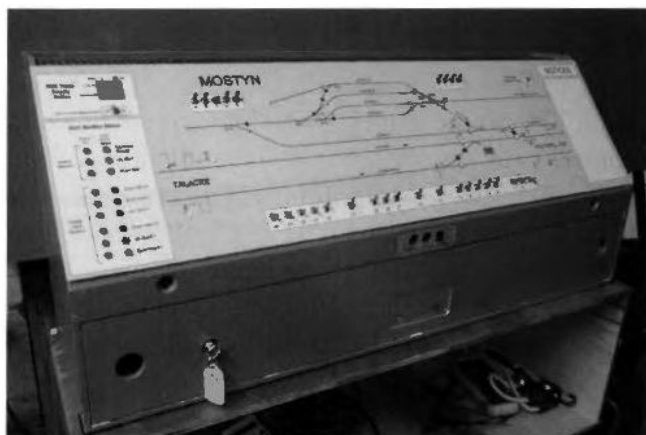


Anyway, as it was becoming unclear exactly how the old panel had been wired up over time we were convinced that a new main panel was needed. This could be mounted in the same way as the fiddle yard panel (and thus have its own carrying case) as well as giving a fresh start.

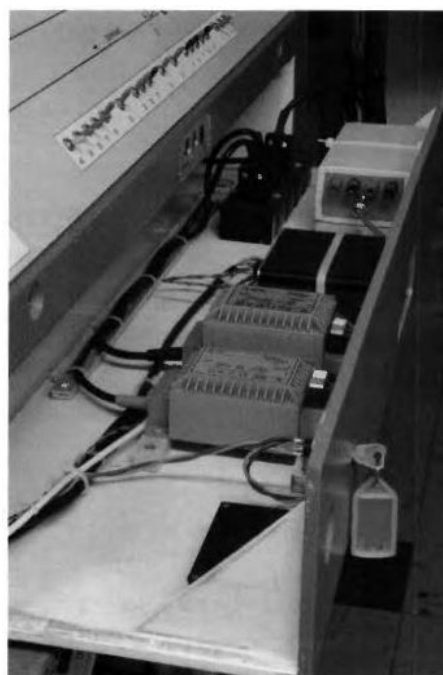
### **What's on the New Panel?**

So what do we have on the new panel - well, all that was on the old one, plus track power status indications, and a track volt meter. This time things are laid out neatly inside the panel and more importantly documented.

The size and format of the schematic track layout has not been changed; we had not had any problems with this so I saw no point in changing it. As with the new FY panel, we have lost the small shelves at each end but gained from the combined carrying case / mounting / shelf space. Figure 4 shows the new panel fixed to the layout.



**Figure 4 – New Main Control Panel**



**Figure 5 – Layout Power Supplies & DCC**

There are of course the extra functions - the panel now provides visible indications for the state of the ground signals; though these are yet to be actuated on the layout these new indications give the operators feedback when operating the relevant signal switches (levers). The DCC power districts reuse the DCC Specialties [2] PSX series intelligent DCC circuit breakers that were added on to the old panel when the extension was built, the indicators for these, previously on a separate makeshift panel, are now on the left-hand end of the new panel. Above these is a DCC Specialties RRampMeter for 'live' DCC voltage and current

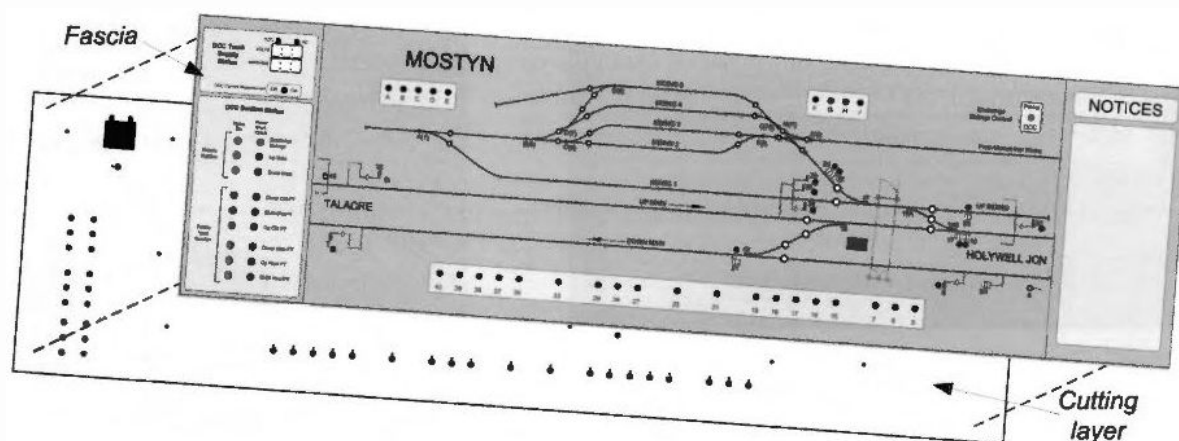
readings. Finally, there is a DCC programming track along the top edge, though usually this is only used whilst in the clubhouse.

The wooden carcase was again designed and built by Gavin. Into this was fixed the various power supplies along with a Lenz DCC system [3] – we finally replaced our trusty SET 01 (LZ100 + LV101) with a SET 100 (LZV100 combined Command/Power Station) as this allows increased current loading and enables us to apply future firmware upgrades from Lenz as and when they become available. Because the power supplies (points, signals, DCC) are now enclosed in a drawer (see Figure 5). I've added fans to keep things nice and cool.

## Design Tools

Because it is readily available on the various computers I have access to, Microsoft Office Visio [4] was the weapon of choice for designing the panel fascias. Whilst not strictly speaking CAD software, Visio can nevertheless produce accurate drawings with layers (see Figure 6). This layering not only allows a fascia to be drawn, but also a cutting layer; this cutting layer was used for laser cutting of the apertures for switches etc. in 1 mm sheet steel. The fascia for this was printed on a continuous sheet printer and laminated for protection.

**Figure 6 - Panel Artwork Layering**



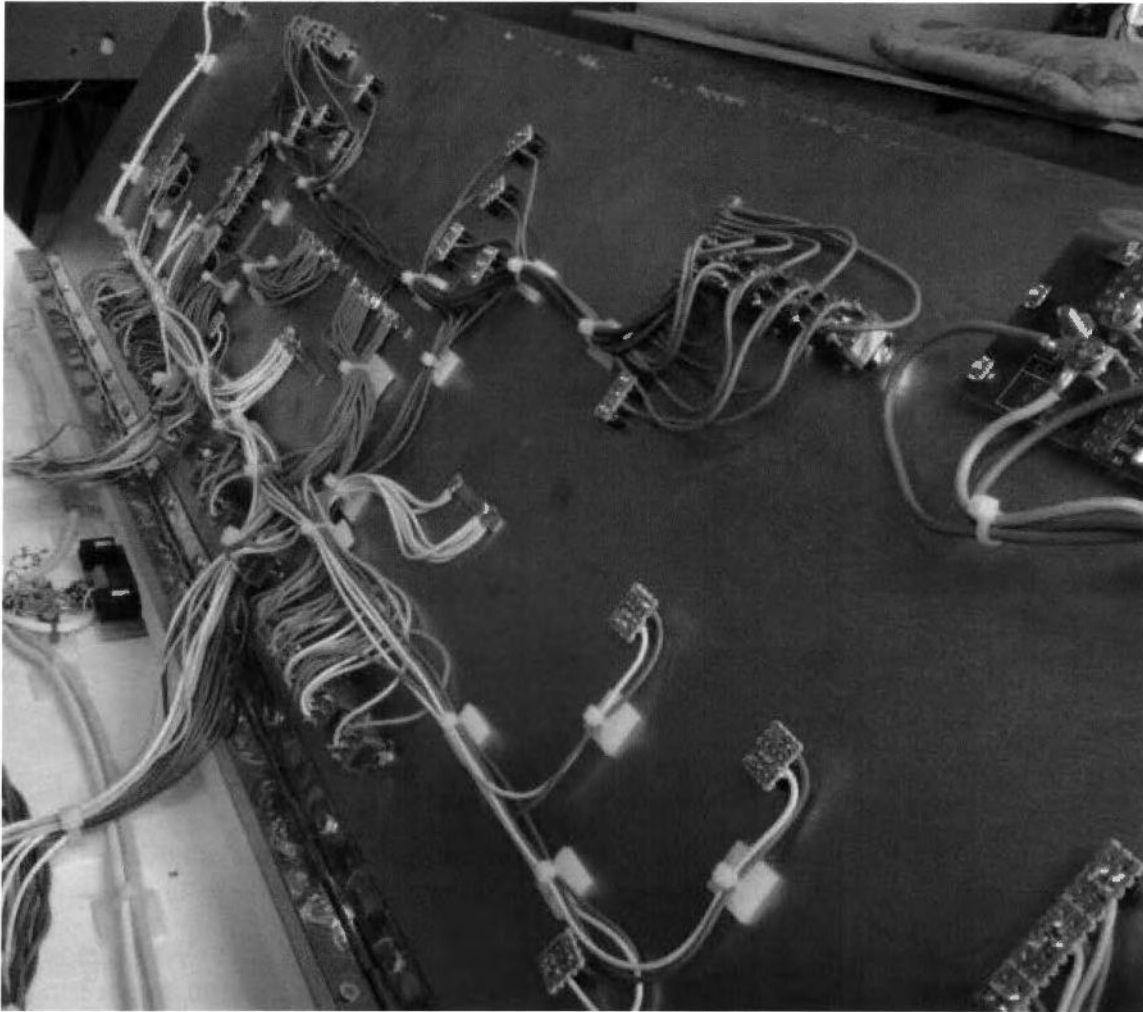
## Electrical Build

After Gavin constructed the wooden carcasses of both panels this left the electrical 'fit-out' to me! Except for when people damaged them, the switches and LEDs in the existing panels, had proved reliable over more than 10 years of use, despite this I've never been a fan of trying to reuse small components like this, so purchased more of the same – Figure 7 shows the new installation; compare this with that of the old (Figure 3). DCC and power supplies were then transplanted from the old main panel.

When building the new panels, I had the opportunity to discontinue use of several 25-way D-type connectors; this style of connector has not proved to be the most robust in intensive exhibition use and is prone to damage if care is not taken during connecting them. My



connector of choice has for some time been the ITT-Cannon Trident connector system [5] – this has individual contacts that can be assembled into connector housings of varying size. The one thing I can't recommend though is assembling a 36-way interconnection lead during exhibition setup!



**Figure 7 – Internal wiring of New Main Control Panel**

#### References

- [1] Sketchup3D software  
<http://www.sketchup.com/>
- [2] DCC Specialties  
<http://www.dccspecialties.com/>
- [3] Lenz Digital plus DCC  
<http://www.digital-plus.de/e/index.php>
- [4] Microsoft Office Visio <http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/visio/>
- [5] ITT Trident Connectors <http://www.ittcannon.com/p/566/trident-snap-together-rectangular-tst>



## Wigan Coal Corporation no.7



Another picture featuring my late wife, Lorna (then aged fifteen), this time with Pearson & Knowles workers (or were they Wigan engine crew?) outside the Warrington engineering works where her father (John Plews) worked. The Plews family at that time lived in Stockton Heath. They are posed on the footplate of the Wigan Coal Corporation's no.7 (RS 2848 of 1897) from their Low Hall Colliery. It had just been repaired when photographed on 13 September 1946.

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