



December 2009

ROUNDHOUSE



The atmospheric old time engine house on Devil's Creek HO layout, by Vanessa Howells, at the Swindon Convention. Photo Mike Hughes

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"Modelling the North American Way"



Calder Northern Division 'Eastern Roads' Themed Meet – Sunday 4 October

Terry Wynne

Well, what a great show it turned out to be! 400 people through the turnstiles, diesel train rides, full-size locomotives and signal boxes to see and get close up to, great atmosphere, and visitors from as far away as Elgin and Plymouth, from East Anglia and North and South Wales who all enjoyed their day. Calder Northern also achieved what it set out to do, and that was raising enough profit to buy the DCC requirements outright without having to ask for a Region grant.

Many of you will remember that Calder Northern Division was to put on an "Eastern Roads" Themed Meet in 2008 but unfortunately this had to be cancelled due to a number of circumstances. However, Jack and Tim Brown had already obtained some very nice gift items from model suppliers as prizes for the raffle, and so it was agreed that we try and put on the same titled event at the end of the Crewe Heritage Centre 2009 summer season.

Following the success two years ago (October 2007) of the "Canadian" Themed Meet, we suggested layout owners and traders try to come along on the Saturday to set up and take advantage of reasonable local hotel rates for an overnight stay. 2007 saw 15 people getting together the evening before the meet to enjoy a meal and some jollity across the dining table.

Nobby Clarke suggested we do the same for this year's meet. We are extremely grateful to Nobby for taking the lead on this, a scenario which could become a regular feature for similar meets in the future. So on the Saturday evening, after all the guys had set up their stalls, 36 people sat down to dinner at the Crewe Arms Hotel. The Sussex guys (with the "Othmar Yard" layout), the Worcester N scale team, JHW from the "Cultural North", some of the traders plus some BoD members, local members and guests certainly ensured this was a precursor to a very enjoyable and relaxed Train Show the following day.

Mother nature worked her magic on the Sunday, allowing us to enjoy a generally fine, dry day. Those bringing layouts, as well as the traders, were all in place well before 10 am when the gates opened. A steady stream of punters paying their dues kept everyone occupied, but the Exhibition Hall and North Junction Signal Box (NJSB) were never crowded. This was perhaps due to the fact that the Heritage Centre has plenty of attractions for visitors to spread themselves around. As many members' cars as possible were parked on site to ensure that the remaining car parking space, in and just outside the Heritage Centre gates, was available to other visitors. This worked very well, and credit must go to those members who acted as stewards on the approach road and within the main gates. Heritage Centre volunteers helped staff the pay desk and hand out information sheets. Grateful thanks go to all of them.

The Mayor of the Borough of Cheshire East (now part of a split Unitary County arrangement) arrived at 11 am in the official Bentley car and was met by Terry Wynne and Les Herriot. They conducted the Mayor and her Consort around the exhibits and the rest of the Heritage Centre. We were assured they enjoyed this very much. The Mayor was given instructions by the Snake Bend team on how to control a DCC loco around their layout, prior to her giving a short address to the gathered members. At this time she also declared open the Crewe, Virginia display and presented "merit-award" certificates to Terry and Les.

In the Exhibition Hall visitors were able to see HO, N, On30 and 3 mm layouts. The 3 mm layout brought along by Calder Northern's Jim Barry featured a local scene, "Willaston" station, which used to be first station stop of the Crewe to Shrewsbury local trains back in the '50s. Many local people were able to recognise the location very easily! Many too thought Nick Quinn's "Wheelock Mill" was going to depict a local scene, as there is a mill in a village of that name only 4 miles from Crewe! I am sure Nick was bombarded with questions from local visitors on that subject.

The Canadian interest was provided by Les Herriot and Tim Shaw/Keith Popple, with further support from Eric White and Brian Neville whose layout was interestingly still under construc-

tion. Many visitors like to see this and talk about the problems of building layouts.

The Worcester "Snake Bend" layout proved to be a big attraction, with continuous operation and working colour light signals. I understand the younger visitors liked this feature very much.

Members of Cheshire Railway Modellers kindly brought along layouts to exhibit. We are starting to work closely with these guys, as we have a common interest and can support each other's events – Roy and Rachel Harris brought their "Wisconsin Rapids" HO switching layout, John Gough exhibited his "EFZ" Continental layout. Bob Hughes' "Pampa y Fernandez" South American On30 layout had many fascinating little cameo scenes if you looked closely – like the two guys secretly planning the result of the next local election behind the station building, or it could even have been a coup. Then there were the two policemen on a roof watching the activities in the back alley of a local lady flaunting her charms – or there should have been, but Bob tells us he has lost the "lady of the night" at a recent exhibition! Please advise Bob of her whereabouts, if known, but responses must be in a "plain brown envelope"! Chris Gilbert, another N American modeller, who was recommended by Bob Hughes, brought along his "CSX Grain Facility" – a small but beautifully detailed switching layout. Another potential NMRA member here, once the online membership facility is cured of its hiccups!

Down in the NJSB there were HO, N and Z scale on view. Dave Dawes showed his very nice California Coast layout. Bevis King and the "Sussex boys" with the "Othmar Yard" layout drew plenty of interest, but where were the assisting operating crew? They were working Calder Northern's temporarily wired new HO layout across the room!

Mike Lenz also saw action on his diesel servicing facility layout, plus there were young Heritage Centre volunteers operating CN's small N scale layout. Visitors were also able to see the new display on Crewe, Virginia and read about the association of our two towns, both built by railway companies. Many were fascinated by the views out of our "clubroom" window straight into Crewe Station and the passing trains. That is, if they could get Mike Ingham to move to one side from his table by the window!

Many people commented during the day on the variety of exhibits on show. We had tried to obtain a mix of layouts, traders, bring and buy tables, displays of "Eastern" railroad models (PRR, N&W, NYC and NH) interspersed with the Heritage Centre displays throughout the whole Train Show, and it seems the mix was very successful. These principal Heritage Centre displays include a prototype Bentley GT in British Racing Green (Bentley cars are built in the town), an Ice Cream Van (80% of the world's ice-cream vans are built here in Crewe), the restored 1908 L&NWR Travelling Post Office vehicle, and many other visual displays. At the bottom of the yard Exeter West Signal Box with its large lever frame was open for viewing. The group who operate Exeter West Box were on duty showing the realistic working of a manual box so visitors could see and understand the complexity of its operation. Of course our younger visitors enjoyed the rides on the 7.25" gauge Miniature Railway traversing the full length of the site. We offered visitors the opportunity to drive an ex-BR Class 03 diesel loco up and down the yard, and they were able to walk up to and around the many steam locos on site. In the NJSB visitors were able to wander around the signal displays or even go up onto the roof to sit and watch trains go by. Here at the NJSB was the NMRA members' refreshment counter – as this was a Division Meet, NMRA members were able to partake of free tea, coffee and biscuits all day. The ladies on duty in the kitchen provided a steady supply of drinks, and thanks must go to them all for their kind assistance. For those wanting more substantial fare, a hot food trailer was parked outside the exhibition hall.

Following advice from those involved with Ardenrail, we decided to run a Tombola stall instead of the usual raffle. John and Mary Hey spent the day looking after this, and what a great job they did

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Here and on page 25 – CPR Holiday Train photos to get you in the mood for the festive season

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– takings of over £250 were a fantastic effort, and some very good prizes went to members and visitors alike. In addition to the prizes held over from last year, we received others from the traders, NMRA members and local supermarkets. Thank you to everyone who donated prizes.

At the end of the day many people came to me to say that they had enjoyed the day. Kind words from “Penguin” and a request to put him down for the next event; Geoff Poulter of Contikits said he liked the relaxed atmosphere and the friendliness of the punters; Jonathan Clay, the railway artist, wished he had brought along more American outline prints and would like to attend another NMRA event. ABC Model Sport, the local Crewe hobby shop, whilst not dealing in trains brought along paints, weathering powders, scenic materials, styrene strip and many other smaller items that we do not have in great abundance at most of our events. Paul Brickles, the proprietor, is also thinking of joining

British Region. I will make sure I follow this up. Page Components also had a good day, as did Brenda Porter of Porter Wynn, Clitheroe.

Calder Northern has made a donation to Crewe Heritage Centre and to the Heritage Centre Volunteers Fund in gratitude for their help and assistance in the days running up to the event and on the day itself. Calder Northern is very fortunate to have facilities such as those at Crewe, and is proud of the association it has with the other Heritage Centre groups in striving to ensure the Centre's role as part of the local tourist scene. It is an ideal location for events such as the Themed Meet, and hopefully in the future other similar events can be incorporated into the Division's calendar.

Thanks to all who made the journey to Crewe, and let us hope other groups around the country will also try and stage themed meets in future.
