



The Redditch Model Railway Club

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the Redditch Model Railway Club. Club Secretary **GUY CRADDOCK** reveals the history of the club and discusses its projects past and present.

Friday June 1 2007 marks 40 years of the Redditch Model Railway Club, which was formed by eight members back in 1967. The club has grown from strength to strength, and now has three fully-operational exhibition standard layouts, a membership of 20 and hosts two annual exhibitions including the Birmingham Model Railway Exhibition.

For the last 40 years the Club has been based in the new town

of Redditch, around 15 miles south of Birmingham. Following the initial meeting to gauge support for the Redditch Model Railway Club, within days a large double lock-up garage had been found to the rear of a local shop and the first official meeting of the club took place on June 1 1967. Here 12 members met, including founder member Mick Clements. Mick has held the position of Club Treasurer from day one, and to mark his long service to the club Mike was made President of the club in 2005.

Since that first meeting much has changed. In 1970 the club relocated to an attic room in the Smallwood Alms Houses as redevelopment of the town centre meant that the original double garage was no longer available. This was then the Club's home for the next 27 years and it allowed the creation of a permanent layout, which even now - more than 15 years after its dismantling - enthusiasts still remember with affection.

In the late 1980s it became clear that the club needed to move forward to survive and the emphasis of activities changed from the permanent layout to the building of our first exhibition layout - Arrowmouth, which is based in the 1960s on the Hest Bank area. It was started in 1989, attended its first exhibition in March 1992 and, thanks to a

refreshing of the scenery and trackwork together with regular attention from the members, it is still on the exhibition circuit today.

In 1992 the Redditch MRC staged its first model railway exhibition in Redditch, and this has now become an annual fixture of our calendar. The 2007 show was staged on the weekend of February 10/11 at Redditch Town Hall, and it will be at the same venue on February 9/10 2008.

Gorcott and Chilcompton

After the construction of Arrowmouth the Club went on to build Gorcott, a slightly smaller Settle and Carlisle-based layout. Like Arrowmouth, the era of this layout is very much 1960s, featuring the steam to diesels transition era.

Like Arrowmouth, Gorcott is very much still on the exhibition circuit and has been exhibited at shows as nearby as the Warley National Model Railway Exhibition at the NEC and as far away as Wakefield in West Yorkshire, and Ipswich in Anglia.

As well as homing in on the north west in the 1960s, club projects have also taken on a Somerset and Dorset Railway theme through the enthusiasm for this much-lamented cross-country line of Mick Clements. We have built a total of four exhibition layouts based on an S&D theme.

Above: The Redditch Model Railway Club's Arrowmouth layout has been popular on the exhibition circuit travelling as far north as Cumbria and into Cornwall to take part in exhibitions. The bridge is a distinctive feature of this north-west based layout.



As well as having three fully operational exhibition layouts, the Redditch MRC is working on a new Southern Region layout called Dagnall End. The first sections of the layout can be seen in the background as members work on buildings for the project.



Club Layouts

Arrowmouth (4mm, 'OO' scale)

22ft x 8ft layout based on the West Coast mainline in the North West of England in the 1960s.

Gorcott (4mm, 'OO' scale)

18ft x 8ft layout based on the Settle and Carlisle line in the 1960s.

Chilcompton (4mm, 'OO' scale)

18ft x 9ft layout based on the former Somerset and Dorset station of the same name in the 1950s.

Buckshee (4mm, 'OO' scale)

Owned by a Club Member, but exhibited by the Club, this layout is 15ft x 18in in size and is based in Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s.

Under construction

Dagnell End: an 18ft x 10ft layout based in London in the 1960s.

- A 7mm scale layout based in the West Midlands is currently at the planning stage.

The latest is Chilcompton, which was first exhibited in February 2001 and is a scale representation of the real station on the S&D with curves at each end to reach the fiddle yard which is shared with Gorcott. Modelling a prototype has meant many happy hours researching it including a number of field visits to both measure and photograph what is left of the real station site today.

The Birmingham MRX

In 2004 the Club took the brave decision to create a totally new model railway exhibition. After searching for a suitable location without success, the club found the Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre in Kings Heath in South Birmingham, which is an ideal venue because of its proximity to the M42/M40 motorways and its 16,500 sq ft hall which allows the whole show to be contained within one room.

The Club held the first Birmingham Model Railway Exhibition in September 2005, and it has developed into a high quality and friendly show with a good reputation. This year's Birmingham Model Railway Exhibition takes place on September 15/16 2007 at the

Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre with iconic layouts including Charwalton, Dainton Bank and Halston Junction forming part of the 18 layout line-up with 20 trade stands alongside.

A new home...

Finding a home for a model railway club is not getting any easier, and in 1997 we had to leave the Smallwood Alms Houses and took temporary residence at the nearby former Methodist Church that was used by several voluntary groups. It gave the Club a base, but we didn't have much space to build new layouts.

And so it was, that due to the structural condition of the Church, the Redditch MRC became homeless again in 2006. The Council threw us a lifeline with the offer of one of their Enterprise Units on a local industrial estate, the only snag was the cost of commercial rent and business rates - a lot different to the free double garage we started out with in 1967!

However, we now have 24-hour access to our club rooms with the option to load and unload vans under cover when



Redditch MRC Secretary Guy Graddock works on buildings for Dagnall End. Due to the size of the workspace available most club nights are spent producing new buildings for Dagnall End at present.

we take layouts out to shows, but most importantly we have space to build new layouts and develop our existing exhibition projects. The move to the industrial estate has also seen us encourage a handful of new members and productivity has increased as we now meet twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday evenings - after all, we are paying for the clubroom so why not use it?

We don't usually have a layout up and running on club nights, but we are an active group of modellers and regularly spend the evenings building buildings and scenic items for our current project, Dagnall End. This new fictitious layout is based on the former LSWR Hounswell Loop line in London and features, with a little modeller's license, a working London Underground line across the front of the layout. Construction of the layout started slowly in 1998, but Club Members have also built Chilcompton and refurbished the scenery on both our Arrowmouth and Gorcott layouts since then.

The Club now has a self-imposed deadline to complete Dagnall End in time for an appearance at the Warley National Model Railway Exhibition in 2009, but before then it is planned to exhibit it at the fifth Birmingham Model Railway Exhibition in September 2009.

As a club we are always open to new members and, whilst we might not always have trains running, there are always plenty of projects to get involved whatever your modelling abilities. We've got an exciting future ahead with three layouts to maintain and Dagnall End under construction, so why not get in touch and join the team? [Hm](#)

Contacting the Redditch Model Railway Club

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Redditch MRC exhibitions

The Redditch Model Railway Club holds two annual model railway exhibitions, one in Redditch Town Hall in February and a second at the Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre, Kings Heath, South Birmingham.

The third Birmingham Model Railway Exhibition, at the Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre, takes place on September 15/16 2007. Doors open at 10.00am both days and close at 5.00pm on Saturday September 15 and 4.00pm on Sunday September 16. A total of 18 layouts and 20 traders are booked to take part.

The 29th Redditch Model Railway Exhibition will be staged in the Civic Suite of Redditch Town Hall, Alcester Street, Redditch Town Centre, on the weekend of the February 9/10 2008. Doors open at 10.00am and close at 5.00pm each day and there will be 12 layouts and seven traders at the exhibition.