

Wellington British Railway Modellers

THE TOTEM

December 2025

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*RailEx 2025 – Matters Arising
Something Completely Different
Modelling the Talyllyn
Railway Employees Rarely Modelled.*

Feel free to copy this PDF to anyone you think might enjoy it. – Editor



Hon. Sec. just happened to be in the vicinity. Yeah, right.



Source: www.ianvisits.co.uk

Just what you want for Christmas, in tasteful 1930s District Line green, with the London Underground map printed inside. Price: £299.

I. RailEx 2025 – Matters Arising

In spite of the drop in attendance figures, we still cleared a profit sufficient to more or less cover our rental. Some problems occurred in layout assembly and damage was done when the wrong plugs were inserted in the wrong sockets. (NASA did the same thing on the Apollo 13 spacecraft.) This sort of problem can be minimised by simplifying wiring, but I would like to suggest that the medium-term solution is simply to attend more exhibitions, gain more experience, and thus get more adept at erecting and operating exhibition layouts. As a club, we invite others to our exhibition, but we rarely attend other folks' exhibitions. Are we being selfish?

Everybody, *please*, note that an exhibition is neither the time nor the place to learn how to operate a club layout. The more operators, the better – but get familiar with the controls beforehand.

2. AGM 2026

Straight after the summer break, on 15 February 2026. I will not be volunteering for Deputy Chair again next year, as I feel the job needs someone who lives much closer to the clubrooms and can provide more support to the overworked Chair. Members should bear in mind that our constitution prohibits anyone from holding the chairmanship more than three years consecutively. If Roger chooses to stand again this will be his third year. The years 2027 and 2028 may be our last in the present, excellent, clubrooms so we all need to start thinking ahead about how our club will manage what could be a major transition.

We will also of course require a new Treasurer.

3. Model Railroaders Have More Fun

A *Model Railway Journal* correspondent related the story of a modeller grimly setting up his P4 exhibition layout while repeating “this is my hobby and I am having fun... this is my hobby and I am having fun...”

For the longest time, as they say in the USA, the cover of the *Model Railroader* magazine proclaimed *Model Railroading is Fun*. The late Iain Rice put it best when he noted that in Britain railway modellers model stations while in the United States they model railways. What do railways do? They carry people and freight from one place to another. On British railway layouts we simply observe those trains pass by. Meanwhile American model trains travel from one location to the next, cross with trains travelling in the opposite direction, and switch freight cars. Those freight cars are large, colourful, and easily distinguished from one another. Switching (shunting) can be an intriguing hobby in itself. British railway modellers clearly feel the urge to do something similar, as evidenced by the popularity of gaudy private owner wagons.

Early pioneers such as Edward Beal, Peter Denny, and Jack Ray built layouts where trains ran purposefully from one station to another. Operation of trains constituted a whole other dimension to modelling. Unlike Beal or Denny few of us these days live in a relatively spacious vicarage where a room or an attic can be devoted to the model railway and those in apartments or rented accommodation do not have Jack Ray’s option of 0 gauge in the garden with 15-foot radius curves.

Contemporary British railway modelling has been warped and stifled by the idea of the exhibition layout. Chocolate box perfection to look at, but nothing much happens so it is boring to operate. Meanwhile, back in the real world, contemporary British trains are *fast*, with comparatively long distances between stations. How can we reflect that in a model railway layout and still have trains that actually go from A to B to C? Back in the

In the 1940s a writer in the *Model Railroader* suggested that for satisfying operation a layout needed a main line two scale miles (three kilometers) long. Even in N gauge we are looking at a main line of 18 – 20 meters. Or does British railway modelling become rather like Morris dancing, set firmly in the past, with trains that are operated like they were in the 1930s or earlier?

The Märklin folk are just as bad as we are. With massive model locomotives only slightly lighter than depleted uranium, highly dependable stud contact pickup, and wheel flanges so big they would look out of place on an O scale model, all of which contribute to thoroughly reliable operation, what do they do? Run trains round and round.

Nine years ago I set out to build an 00 layout loosely based on East Anglian practice. The Great Eastern Railway stations were always referred to as having a “Town” end and a “Country” end, “Town” being London, of course. My layout had a Town station in London and a Country station which would have been a coastal port with the name “Fenchester”. In between was double track main line which could be circled at will when you just felt like tail-chasing. When fully developed it would have kept 3-5 operators busy, and I had five potential operators. What happened next was that all five died, four of them within a three-year period. So now I too am back to running trains round and round.

In my next reincarnation I am definitely coming back as a modeller of American railroads. In the meantime I intend to revive my South American layout. Railways in South America are a unique blend of American, British, and European practice, and even a small switching layout will be more fun.

Thanks to all of you who have contributed to *The Totem* over the past year. Everybody – have yourselves a merry little Christmas.

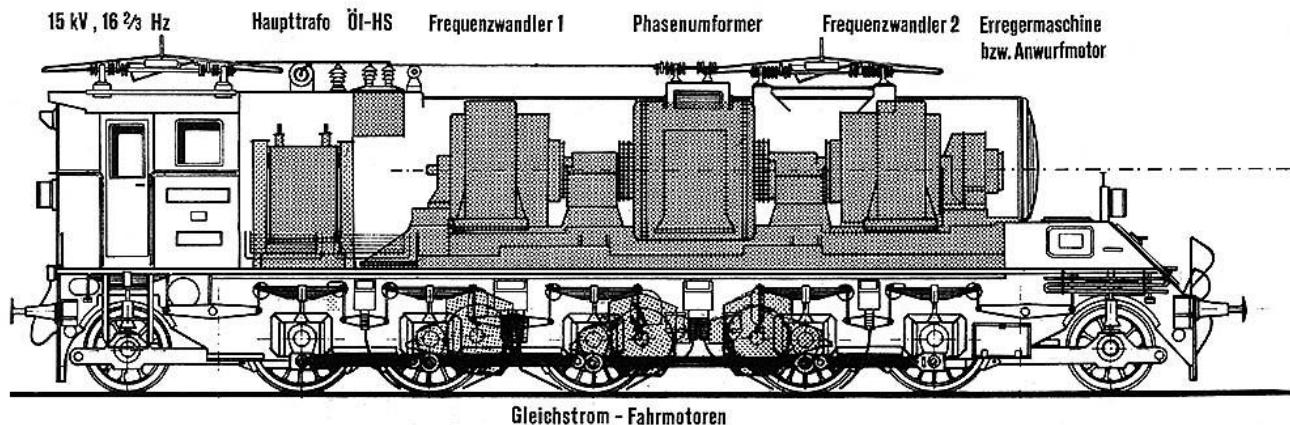
And Now For Something Completely Different

At this time of the year it is pleasant to have a look at outside the box of British railway modelling. Behold the Austrian locomotive of 1931, BBÖ 1082.01. You would be forgiven for wondering if this was some weird hybrid steam-electric engine. It was in fact an experimental engine, fifty years ahead of its time, designed for operation with 15 kV alternating current voltage at 16 2/3 Hertz, fitted with a rotating phase converter and DC traction motors.



The equipment converting AC to DC was seven metres long and housed in the cylinder adjacent to the transformer and the single cab. The result was a locomotive that looked like a steam engine with pantographs on top. The concept of power conversion on the traction vehicle is now achieved with semi-conductors. DC motors drove the three centre driving axles, connected by outside coupling rods to the two outer driving axles, a I – E – I arrangement.

Current from the pantographs was supplied to the main transformer, which reduced the current to 600v. The phase-converting equipment changed single-phase alternating current into three-phase current, from which two frequency converters generated direct current.



Photographer unknown.

There were two of these machines and they disappeared by 1945.

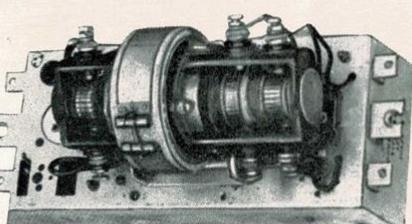
Of course there had to be a model and the construction of an etched nickel-silver, H0 scale, kit is described here:

https://www.rotaie.it/New%20Pages/Costruzione_BBO1082_Passo-Passo.html

Those of us not fluent in Italian can just look at all the pretty pictures.



SUPER POWER Galore.



The Famous and Unrivalled Railmaster Rotary Converter D.C. 230V to D.C. 12V 2A. Complete with ventilated lid and Radio Noise Suppressed, with leads. £2 2s. 0d. plus 3s. post. Type B same plus 4V D.C. £2 12s. 0d. plus 3s. post. ARE you STUCK? State requirements S.A.E. and you will get FREE advice and list E.10.

LAWRENCE FRANKEL MAIL ORDER.
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134, Cranley Gardens, London, N.10.

All this talk about rotary converters reminded the editor of this advertisement, from the March 1954 Model Railway Constructor.

The background story to this is that some districts in Britain had lumbered themselves with Thomas Edison's system of direct-current urban electricity supply which needed conversion from 230V DC to 12V DC. Solid-state electronics were not yet available, but you could buy this contraption for just a couple of days' pay. An insulated, ventilated, lid rendered it "harmless to children".

Modelling The Talyllyn



The Talyllyn Railway has produced a video to assist those who want to model their railway. It is only available on their YouTube® channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyHahMjMGkQ>

A Winter Layout



Pictures of the layout *Moors View*, taken at the recent Swansea Model Railway Exhibition. Apart from twee Continental European-style layouts, layouts set in winter are rare. If you are tempted to build something similar, your editor, from personal experience, recommends that you keep the visible trackwork simple. This is because scenery techniques for making convincing snow, involving ingredients like matte medium and (expensive) Titanium White paint, are such that you may not be able to recover the track later. In addition, a predominantly white layout needs to be kept scrupulously clean – you don't want your snow to get dusty!

[As this was being typed, the temperature at home was over 33°C in the shade, and the layout below looked marvellous. - Editor]



Credit: pictures and information posted on Twitter, 'X' by @SleeperAgent01.



Barnetby, February 2015.

Source: [@SignaloftheDay on Twitter](#), 'X'.

A reminder, not that you needed it, that the 'green' glass in semaphore signals was actually blue, appearing green when illuminated by yellow lamps. A lovely photograph by Phil Wimbush.

Farewell to the British Rail Class

455 Electric Multiple Unit fleet

42 years of service on the British Rail, Network SouthEast, South West Trains and South Western Railway network, from 1982 to 2025. Thank you for the memories!

When tickets for the Class 455 Farewell Trip went on sale on 10th November, 9000 people applied for 400 seats, all of which sold out in 15 seconds.



Source: @CrécyRail on Twitter, 'X'.

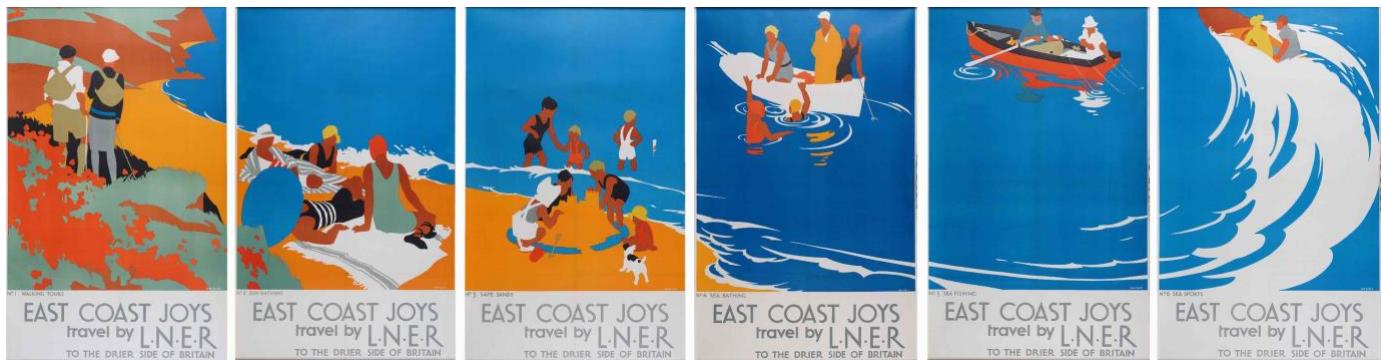
On 10 October 1979 Nos 09022 and 09108 shunting on board a train ferry at Dover. Both locomotives have been preserved. On a model this would be a handy way to get trains through the backscene into a fiddle yard or cassette storage.

Parallel loading using a simultaneous double shunt maintained balance on the link span and on the ferry.



Source: @RegalEagle12 on Twitter, 'X'.

Is it a shopping centre? Is it an art object? Could it even be a railway station? Whatever it is, Birmingham New Street on 28 November 2025 is not quite as bad as its immediate predecessor. Could only be modelled by scholarship-level 3D printing.



Source: @MrTimDunn on Twitter, 'X'.

This complete original set of six “East Coast Joys” posters by Tom Purvis for the LNER has come up for auction. Printed in 1931, Double Royal size (635mm x 1016mm, midway between modern metric A0 and A1). Auctioneers estimate of £3000 - £5000.



Source: [@DaveDiCello on Twitter](#), 'X'.

Dave Di Cello's excellent photograph shows a car on the Duquesne Incline at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, crossing over a passing Norfolk Southern train. There is an excellent Wikipedia article on the Dusquesne.

Peter Maunder has been looking at possibly installing a model of a cliff railway as a scenic addition to the club's layout, Wellington. He has in mind an etched brass kit which he would like the editor to construct. The editor is OK with that, preferably sooner rather than later since the editorial eyesight is noticeably aging. The cliff railway model would clip on to the existing layout, either front or back.

If the cliff railway model were provided with a separate power supply, it would be useful when everything else on the layout is refusing to work.

The editor's layout *Hexeter* employs two models, a windmill and a Newcomen pump, which both operate on a 16V AC power supply separate from the rest of the layout wiring. These two models can be trusted to continue to operate when all else fails. Back in the day model railway shows in New Zealand were more often than not held in school or church halls and no-one was too concerned about the width of passageways between layouts or other such health and safety considerations. So congestion in front of a layout could be a problem. If your layout was equipped with several operating accessories you could actually move the crowd along the front of the layout by turning these accessories on and off in succession.

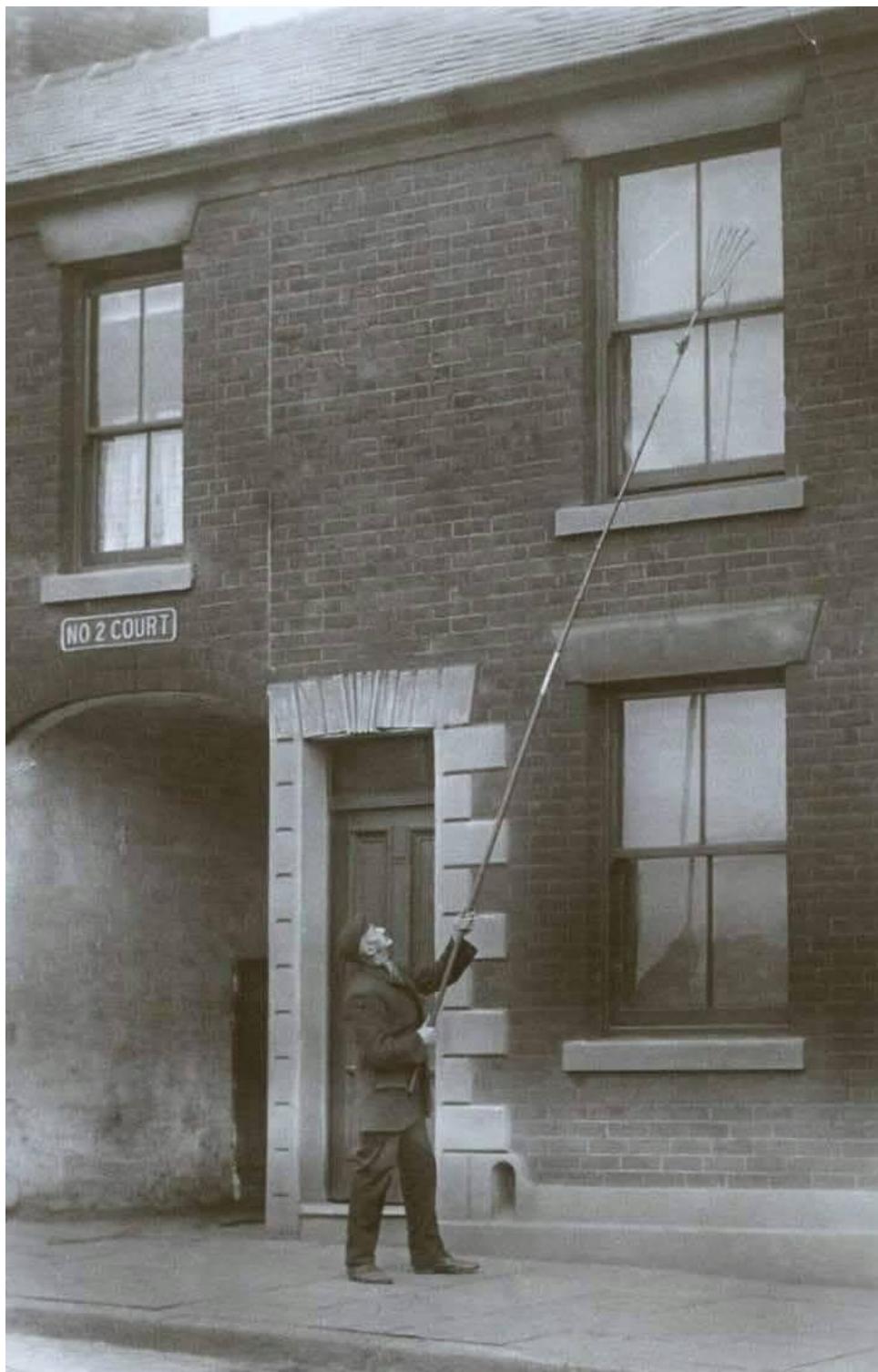
Railway Employees Rarely Modelled



Source: @mongsley on Twitter, 'X'.

An official ratcatcher for the Southern Railway, photographed in 1924 with his terriers and quarry.

Do Modelu® make rats? How do you get a rat to 'pose' for the scanner?



Source: @mongsley on Twitter, 'X'.

Charlie Woods of Oldham, a 'knocker-up' responsible for waking footplate crews and other railway employees in time to get to work. The photograph is from the 1950s.



Source: @Vivie1508 on Twitter, 'X'.

Another 'knocker-up', a formidable Mary Smith in an undated photograph employing a peashooter to rattle the bedroom windowpane. Presumably she continued to do so until the railwayman made some sort of acknowledgement.



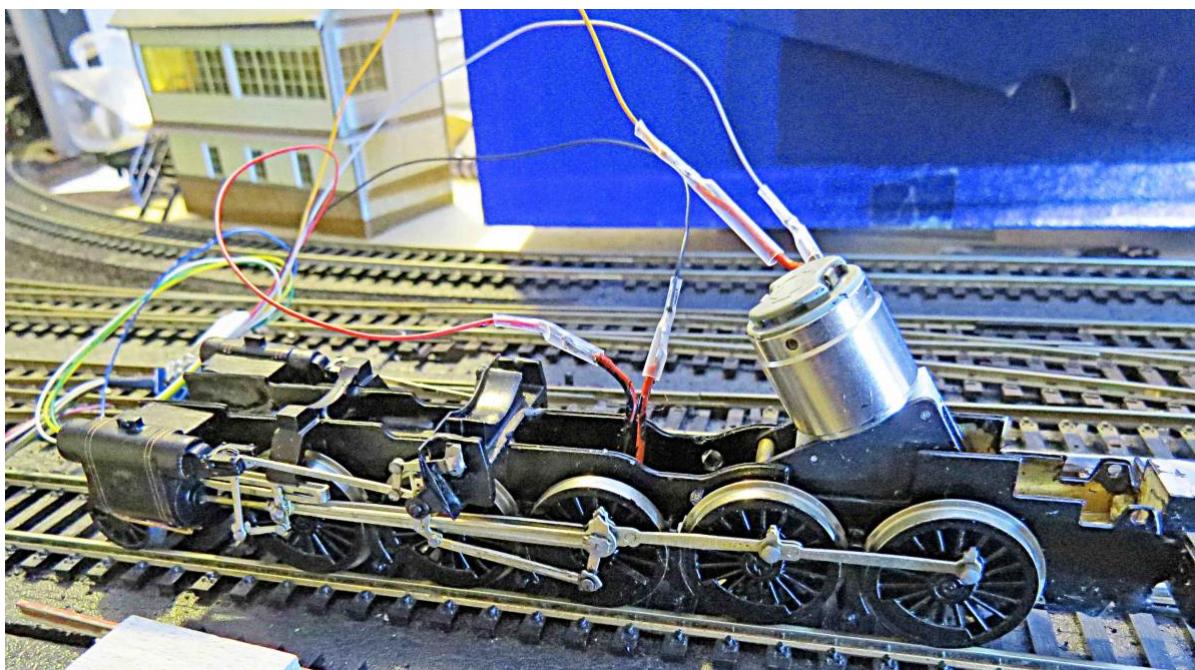
Source: @DaneTank656 on Twitter, 'X'.

A locomotive so beloved that it has its own 'X' account.

The Nene Valley Railway was comparatively late off the mark in the preservation business, so they bought a number of European locomotives, and rebuilt their line to the European loading gauge. Their collection of exotic-looking rolling stock now makes the railway a favourite with the TV and film industry, and a nice real-life excuse for running models of European prototypes, albeit 7/8 of the scale of 00.



The latest of the John Fox collection of locomotives to be brought back to life is this DJH kit for a British Railways 9F 2-10-0. I would rather have had almost any other example of the 9Fs rather than the silly, sentimental, 92220 *Evening Star* but I am not about to spoil a well-built and very well painted model. The model runs well but there are transient, fugitive, electrical shorts which impair its DCC performance. The source of these shorts are the six right-hand locomotive tyres and finding them all is proving problematic.





Browsing in the craft section of a local store, I came across these so-called “Glitter Shapes”, which turned out to be perfectly acceptable washers, just right for Romford™ axles. At \$2.68, even if I keep just the black ones, that's a cent each.



One engine, one coach, one elderly staff member, and one passenger at Hatherleigh station on the North Devon and Cornwall Railway, about two miles from the community it purports to serve. The sum of all those parts equals zero chance of commercial viability or social purpose in AD 1964.

Photo: Crécy Rail

Traders in Secondhand Model Railway Equipment

These traders in model railways are even more important now that the number of model shops is dwindling. If you are aware of other traders who handle models of British railways, please let the editor know.

MARCUS LECKY

<mailto:marcuslecky47@gmail.com>

TRAINMANIA©

022 605 5415

A reminder that Trainmania's new shop is now open in Warkworth.

<mailto:lionel@trainmania.co.nz>

<http://www.trainmania.co.nz/>

TONY DRAGICEVIC

027 872 3630

<mailto:tony.dragicevic@gmail.com>

JOHN HESLIN

Invercargill

021 188 9049

<mailto:tootroom@gmail.com>

Point to Ponder

“Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.”

– *Albert Einstein*

Next Totem

The January 2026 edition of *The Totem* will be published on 16th January. If there is anything you would like to contribute to the editor, Julian Lermit, email:

<mailto:kiwiscrooge@xtra.co.nz>

Events of Interest

2025

December 2025

14 Club Christmas festivities in the clubrooms.

2026

January 2026

7 Gold card group meet at clubrooms. (Everyone else welcome.) Bring lunch and a project to work on.

18 Monthly club meeting in clubrooms.

17 – 19 Tauranga Model Railway Club Annual Show, Tauranga Boys College, Devonport Road, Tauranga. Entrance off Devonport Road opposite 14th Avenue.

February 2026

15 Annual General Meeting of the Wellington British Railway Modellers Club (Inc) at the clubrooms in Waterloo Station (Lower Hutt, not the other one!) Pizzas at 1pm, meeting commences at 2pm.

The above events are those which in the editor's judgement will go ahead, in the absence of interruptions outside the control of the organisers.

Events of Interest is compiled from a number of sources, the principal ones being the What's On page of the New Zealand Model Railway Guild website: <http://nzmrg.org.nz> and the Model Train Shows website <http://trainshows.co.nz/>. Information is published in good faith but no responsibility can be accepted. Always check with organisers before travelling long distances.

Club Officers

Chair: Roger Simmons email <mailto:rogersimmons@nz>

Deputy Chair: Julian Lermit email [kiwiscrooge @xtra.co.nz](mailto:kiwiscrooge@xtra.co.nz)

Treasurer: Clive Williams email <mailto:treasurerwbrm@gmail.com>

Secretary: John MacDonald email <mailto:secretarywbrm@gmail.com>

TM Magazine

July

Christmas 1937

