

Preston & District Model Railway Society

Annual General Meeting Monday, 7th October at 7:30pm

Present:

Twenty-one members were in attendance.

1. Apologies for absence

Chris Wilkes, Paul Goskarth. Phil Grosse, Jonathon Cass, Dave Atkins, Karl Smith, Tony Gorton, Kevin Truby and Keith Cranfield.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Adopted.

Proposed by Jeremy, and seconded by Carl; taken on a general aye.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

None

4. Chairman's report

Good evening, and welcome to another AGM and again thanks to Les for arranging this room with the College.

Last year the committee felt that the usual format of the AGM had to be altered to allow plenty of time for the possibility of a lengthy discussion on the rent increase and a brief resume' is given below.

"Last year we were suddenly hit by a dramatic rise in the rent we pay for our club rooms, but we could not remember the last time the rent was increased so, the committee had to come up with a possible solution as to the best way of raising the subs to pay for the increase. After a lengthy discussion in our September 2023 committee meeting, we came up with a proposal which we felt would be fairest to all concerned and it was put forward to those present at the last AGM, this was accepted and those not in attendance were notified by email. The subs will be reviewed every year but it is hoped that future increases will not have to take into account as dramatic a rise in the rent payable as this has been. Thanks must go to the membership for their understanding and agreeing to an amicable solution."

Another issue raised was the monies held by the general club account and the exhibition account and why can't they be lumped together. It was explained that the exhibition account needs to have a healthy balance to be able to pay out monies well before the exhibition doors have opened and if funds permit it also pays towards some refurbishment of the club rooms and items on all the club layouts, any proposed purchase costing £20 or more will need prior approval from the exhibition manager and/or treasurer.

The club account is there to be used to pay for the property we rent and all the utilities needed (ie: rent, water, rates etc) also we need to have a healthy contingency should (God forbid) the club have to fold.

It has been stated many times in the past that, the membership has to pay for the club rooms to ensure we still have a club for all to enjoy and is available for use 24/7, 52 weeks of the year. It was mentioned that in the past the club has come very close to folding because of the lack of funds and now, due to prudent management of accounts, we find ourself in a healthy financial position and long may it continue, a big thank you to both treasurers who will give their individual reports later.

Using the funding and accounts in this manner ensures we will always have a club room paid for, but as, as happened in the past, the exhibition can always be cancelled meaning no income and a lot of those clubs that relied on an exhibition to pay for their upkeep no longer exist.

I spent a little time going through minutes of past AGM's and noticed that in 2018 due to the "Beast from the East" the exhibition had, at the last minute to be cancelled and that meant a loss of £5,500, so this is another reason we need to have funds available to cover every eventuality.

Something else to consider is if we did not have an exhibition how much would the subs have to be additionally raised by to pay for layouts and upkeep of the club rooms.

Other matters

There always seems to be plenty going on within the club when open, with some members working on layouts, some running their stock and others just watching the trains go by and/or chatting, it's nice to see.

We managed to send all of Neville's stock to an Auctioneer, normally we would ask for a 10% fee for our handling of this, similar to what we do for members sales at the exhibition, however it was felt that we should not ask for any remuneration from his daughters as they allowed us to acquire most of the tools that were left and any items off the layout that could be removed without damage. His daughters subsequently informed me that a condition of his will was that we had to have the 10% of the final figure of the sale of his collection, I, on behalf of the club, reluctantly had to agree to this and monies have now been received.

He also had a small 'Z' gauge layout that he had built and had been shown, in the past at exhibitions, Les has now got this layout and is hopefully restoring it to full working order.

To Neville's daughters delight it was suggested that we have a trophy in his memory for presentation at the exhibition for best layout, this has now been obtained.

On the 1st March Andy Joel had a phone call from a gentleman in Fulwood offering his entire collection (or almost) of stock on the proviso that we remove the layout from his loft. Andy and I visited and realised this was too good an opportunity to turn down so we agreed on his conditions. I returned a couple of weeks later and removed all stock and loose buildings bringing them to the club rooms. On a very hot weekend in May Tom Springett and I started dismantling the layout and made excellent progress, on the Sunday Bill Taylor joined us and we completed the job to the client's satisfaction. It's now up to the second hand stall to make as much money as possible for club funds, quite a lot of items have already been sold to club members.

Self appraisal

Not me but the club in general.

In the past people have come to the club rooms and have been impressed by what they see, say they will be back but rarely do return.

So, a questionnaire was compiled with regard to what we the membership felt about the club, circulated to all and the responses collated, the intention of this was to see what, if anything, was needed to be done to :-

a/ attract potential new members to the club rooms,

b/ once here getting them to join the club,

Thanks to Tom Springett for proposing this survey and the Committee for their approval in going ahead with it, it is something that's been needed for a while let's hope it pays dividends.

Following on from that, Dave Pallant produced a leaflet about the benefit of becoming a club member this was handed out at the exhibition.

I noticed an article in the Gauge "0" gazette which asked the question "Why Join a Club" I modified some of the questions to suit our club, also BRM were asking for articles about clubs, I had produced one for our club, but unfortunately, they had decided to not to proceed with printing these for the time being.

The Committee are in the long process of collating all the above and producing a document that shows all the benefits of joining a club, but in particular ours and we are hoping to prepare a "Strategy Plan" to further develop the club.

Exhibitions attended

I usually give a list of both club and private layouts that have attended exhibitions, but this list would be quite exhaustive so I will not be doing it this year, but to Dave Pallant, Jeremy Davison, Carl Bowden and Karl Smith, grateful thanks for taking their layouts out to exhibitions plus the club layout and also to those whom assist in running the layouts.

Special thanks also to Les for spending the majority of weekends at exhibitions both with layouts and also showing modelling skills to the general public, whilst at these exhibitions he also meets up with fellow modellers to get information on new layouts they are building and books these for our future exhibitions, I believe he is now working on the 2027 exhibition.

Our Exhibition

Again, another outstanding exhibition very well attended, a huge thanks to Les, Daryl and the team and a report from Les will be given later, also thanks to Sue and others for keeping us all in drinks and biscuits. A special mention and thanks to all those members who took the time to advertise the exhibition on their news feed on the various social media sites. We also had a good article in the Railway Modeller and Lancashire Evening Post.

One observation that was noticed and commented on by a few was that some members disappearing early in the evening to go for tea when there was still plenty of work to be done within the complex, not good for membership morale.

I would like to give a special mention and grateful thanks to all members who sat in the cold both days at the entrances dealing with the admissions.

Could the members who look after the second hand stall please have a rota so the stall is manned from very early on each morning, on the Saturday people were examining all the items with no one around to advise on prices plus I don't know if anyone had walked away with anything not paid for.

Layouts

New club "N" gauge fine scale layout

Good progress has been made on the layout - trackwork has been laid, point motors fitted and all wired and tested. Progress now continues on the upper level and some scenic items have been produced. It is anticipated that by the end of March next year the layout may be in a condition whereby it can come into the main club rooms for work to begin on the scenery, this will entail the disposing of Tellem Summit which has served the club well and an option has already been discussed on its disposal.

Chelthwaite Mills "009" layout

It has been a delight to see the return of this superb little layout to the club rooms and good progress has made on modifications to it, none of which have affected the front scenic area and hopefully it will soon be available to go onto the exhibition circuit.

New "N" gauge layouts

Karl Smith is making steady progress on both of his own "N" gauge layouts, one of which Wolverhampton Low Level has already been exhibited.

Proposed layout

A proposal was put forward by three club members to construct a layout based on "Coniston".

A questionnaire was given to the group to discuss between themselves before submission to the Committee for approval, once completed I had a discussion with them to collate the answers for Committee submission.

The submission was made to the February meeting and this was approved, funding was also been approved from the exhibition account and work has commenced on this layout.

Once the new "N" gauge layout is moved out of the work room the Coniston layout will be placed in there giving greater access for it to be worked on.

Old Fart Sidings

This layout is to have minor work done to it to make it user friendly, the two points will have motors fitted and there will be an additional board forming a fiddle yard.

Social media

All members need to be made aware that we have a web site, Facebook and Instagram sites available and it would be good to see information placed on these sites about the club – layouts attending exhibitions both club and club members with where and when details – progress/upgrades to new and existing layouts and anything in general which could be of benefit to the club.

The more ways we can promote the club to the outside world the better and in some way help to attracting new members.

Housekeeping

We had a problem October/November last year with the lighting at the entrance and in the store room, this was resolved (after three or four attempts by the electrician) in November, but it seems strange that this was the first electrical failure in our tenancy, after numerous attempts to fix it, it turned out to be just a faulty fitting.

Once again, the Christmas bash was enjoyed by all and thanks to Dave Winder for getting the mince pies and also to Bill Taylor for the quiz which Andy Postlethwaite won.

It was noticed that over the past few months the premises seemed to be being used as a dumping ground for model railway equipment, some of which I have to say was nothing but utter rubbish, this was not a good advert for the club as the state of the club rooms is the first thing prospective members see, hence that was the reason we put a hold on any items being brought to the club without prior approval.

Thanks to Tom for obtaining and fitting the carpet squares this does give a better appearance to the club rooms.

Can members please ensure if you are working anywhere and make a mess, please clean it up, we have purchased a new vacuum cleaner so no excuse.

Workshops

Various members have asked if we could have a series of workshops on “showing how to” with regard to building a layout, as there are new layouts being built in the club rooms, I would suggest that members who want to improve their modelling skills watch and/or get involved with these new layouts, there is no better way to learn than getting hands on. However, if what you need to know is more specialist then, we can hold workshops to cover.

And finally

As always, a grateful thank you goes to all the Committee members and Exhibition team for their support over the past twelve months, there is a tremendous amount of hard work that goes on behind the scenes into making sure that the club is here for all to enjoy and long may it continue.

Questions:

An issue was raised about the chairman's comment with regards to the second-hand stall at the exhibition. Traders will pester those on the stall, trying to get as a low a price as they can, so they can then sell them from their own stand at twice the price. Is the objective just to sell as much of the items as possible? A possible solution could be to cover the stall with a sheet until the exhibition opens.

5. Treasurer's report

The most important thing to report is that our rent rose by 43% in the last year. We hadn't had a rent increase for a number of years, so this was expected. Our auditor reported that the rent we pay for the size and location of our premises is still very reasonable. However, this has meant that the overall cost of keeping the premises going went up from £6449.42 last year to £9228.98 this year, Our water bill also went up, as did our club room insurance, but our electricity bill went down.

Income from subs increased from £6972.94 to £7669.08. But you will see that the differential of sub income to premises expenses is around £1600. This year we have benefitted from donations from Neville's estate and Don's sale of locos.

Our reserve account has not been touched, and this will stand us in good stead should we ever have to move premises and need to pay deposit on the new location (often 6 months rent these days), plus any work that would need to be carried out to accommodate a model railway club.

Our auditor, Mr Gray, audits our accounts every 3 months and does not charge us anything for this work. With fewer cheques now being written, and more bank direct payments being made, this is much more efficient than in the not too distant past.

Questions:

Is the rent fixed for two more years? Yes.

It was noted that we currently have 45 members, and all are paid up. The treasure asked if people could pay by standing order if at all possible, as it greatly helps keep things in order.

6. Exhibition report

This year's exhibition was well attended and we managed to make a profit. Daryl has the accounts.

The 2055 exhibition has 21 layouts. They are Vals (HO), Euxton (OO), Lockwood Street (N), Nazareth Portland Cement (N), Studio Tour (OO), Port Solway (P4), Chalstocks Halton Quay (O 16.5), Alston (2mm) Finescale, Worm Hill (N), Nice Layout (N), Londonderry Sidings (O), Hunslet Engineering Works (O), Poulton Le Fylde (OO), Llwyn Grug (N), Barton Road (N), Calla Mountain Crossing (N), Hafan Autenbach (HO), Porthgain (OO9), Farbine Road W.R.D. (OO), Maesog (OO9), Elm Bridge Depot (O).

We have 16 traders booked. One new as JS Models cannot make up his mind, so Les made it up for him and booked MMR Models instead.

Three demo stands: Les Green and Co.; Steve Roberts; and Tony Wright.

Three association stands: Wyre Railway; Cumbrian Railways; and West Lancs Railway.

Together with the second-hand stall, 44 stands in all.

Thanks to all the club members for their hard work especially on Friday and Sunday afternoon. Everyone seems to know what to do and gets on with it.

Here's to another year and we can do it all over again!

Questions:

There was a request that barriers get put up later, or at least for gaps to be left, to facilitate getting layouts in. Passed to AKJ!

Are admission fees going up? Yes, will be £9 up from £8. This is still cheap that many of the big shows.

The cost for traders was discussed. This has not changed for about 40 years! However, this ensures traders do come back, and we get the traders we want. And some exhibitions are even cheaper.

7. Exhibition treasurer's report

The exhibition accounts are now done on proper accounting software, provided free from the bank. Still some learning, but should be fine now!

It was noted that traders tend to give us more than we pay to layouts, at ca. £3900.

Some comments about the second-hand stall at next year's exhibition:

1. Money owed to members from the second-hand stall will be paid by bank transfer. Members will need to let Daryl know their bank details in advance.
2. Labels on items must match what is on the form/
3. Multiple items on the form must be listed individually. If you have eight coaches, list eight separate items.
4. On the other hand, multiple items can be bagged together to make a single item
5. It would also be helpful if the list is typed.
6. We have an additional card machine

Questions:

There was a request that traders payments get broken down in next year's accounts.

We made a profit of about £1300

Is there a savings account? No.

Are we VAT registered? NO, we do not meet the threshold.

8. Elections

All existing committee members have agreed to restand, and no one else sought election.

Proposed by Les, and seconded by Dave W; taken on a general aye.

9. Subscriptions

As agreed last year, subscriptions will be increased by £2 for standard members, as from 01/Nov/24. It was noted that an increase is likely to be required next year, to be reviewed at the time.

Subs will be £22 a month for adults, £11 for juniors and £16.50 for seniors.

Questions:

Is the increase working? Membership is more-or-less the same, so finances are where we predicted them to be.

10. Any other business

Les asked that anyone taking a layout to an exhibition take out banner and leaflets.

Daryl said Chiltern have a new web site and would be grateful of details of any layouts that go to exhibitions.

The date of the Christmas party was set to 16/Dec/24. Bill agreed to provide a quiz, and Dave W will bring mince pies.

Meeting finished at 8:30 pm