

NEWSLETTER 106 : Feb 2022

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Editorial

Andrew Chrysler



It's interesting to discover exactly how much helpful information exists on the internet for railway modellers.

Ian Shulver has contributed an article to this month's newsletter about the shortest railway line in London - the Bromley North branch line, and Google Maps provided me with this aerial view of the midway station, Sundridge Park, which shows the track layout, and also - for modelling purposes - the location of two road overbridges, which could provide convenient scenic breaks.

Google "StreetView" also has some useful references for nearby buildings, including a Garden Centre adjacent to the station and a Taxi office across the station car park.

A further search took me to "Kent Rail" with a history of the station, originally called "Plaistow" when it opened on new year's day in 1878, and a few photographs of the station, taken in 1970 and 2006.

<https://www.kentrail.org.uk/sundridge%20park.htm>

Wikipedia contains further information, including a section about the Class 465 "networker" electric multiple units currently in use on the line.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromley_North_Line



Coming up this Spring is the first Model Railway Exhibition at Statfold Barn Railway, which takes place on 9th & 10th April. Mark Pretious will be showing his 45ft model of Merstone, St.Lawrence and Ventnor West which is one of his three models of the Isle of Wight railways. I have previously seen his (much smaller) model of Bembridge at the NEC show so there will still be one more to await. Readers of the newsletter may already become aware that I could be said to be particularly interested in the railways in this part of the country, both old and (relatively) new.

Statfold Barn is just outside Tamworth, which is 2½ hours drive away from Southport (or even longer, depending on the M6) so an overnight stop will be my preference. We have previously stayed at the Premier Inn nearby which has a Beefeater restaurant attached so I have booked to stay here again.

Chairman's Notes

Ian Shulver

This last month has seen rather more activity and attendance at our clubrooms than over the previous two years. I am not certain whether this is due to the ambient temperature in the building being a little higher than is usual for us due to our new room heaters, or to us beginning to live with COVID - perhaps a bit of both. Anyway I find it encouraging.

For those of you who have not yet ventured back to 57A, we have plenty going on. Barry and Frank are leading a significant revamp of *Fishy Tales*, maintaining the Scottish theme based on a distillery but moving the supposed location across the country. The main change is to make it a more manageable layout for working on in the clubroom and for taking to exhibitions (if we get invites in the future). HS16.5, the OO track, is working well and is in great demand by our newest members. Staying with HS16.5, Colin and Timothy are making slow but steady progress with scenic work in the station area. More help would not come amiss here, and there is also the rural scenic work to commence. So if you would like to hone your skills in this area of modelling then do come and join in. Finally, HS9, the N gauge track work now has an operating circuit - believe it or not, a full scale 2 miles. Unfortunately, some of the tolerances are a little tight so OO9 stock will not run this as yet (we hope to rectify this in due course. Tracklaying of the second circuit is well under way and should be ready by the time you read the March newsletter (assuming that we can source some points for the loops).

But of course, there is always Monsal Dale available for anyone wishing to operate it. And let us not forget the magnificent selection of books in the library for those who wish to do a bit of armchair modelling.

As we move towards springtime, maybe we should be thinking more about building the garden railway which was part of our grand plan, and was incorporated within the crowdfunding schedule of works.

I would also like to welcome new members, Timothy, Lennon and Cooper (plus grandad Gordon). To them I would say "*please get stuck in with club activities*" and to our established members "*make them feel at home and part of the family*".

Where's Andrew?



Last month, I was at Statfold Barn Railway, with a seasonal wintry picture.

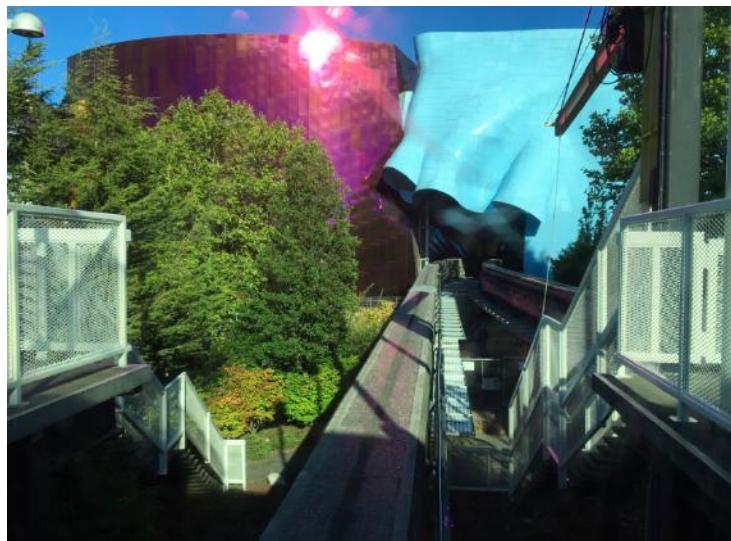
Congratulations go to Tony Kuivala who gave the correct answer.

This month, I am rather further from home, with two photographs. The upper photograph is of the Light Rail which was built quite recently - in this century, and which runs between this City and the nearby airport.

The lower photograph is of the once futuristic "space age" monorail which was built substantially earlier - in fact around sixty years ago.

But where am I?

(For a bonus point, name the TWO local coffee shops - one is international and the other completely fictitious - but probably equally well known.)



Idea for a possible layout?

Ian Shulver

I came across this article today. I thought the station building at Sundridge (the only intermediate station) was rather charming and might have the making of a nice little model. I guess that one could use a shuttle controller and some spring loaded points or relay switch to provide an automated layout.



This tiny South East London railway line takes just five minutes to complete and could become part of the London Underground - By Callum Marius

At just five minutes end-to-end, the one and a half mile-long Bromley North branch line is London's shortest. Trains shuttle back and forth between its three stations at Bromley North, Sundridge Park and Grove Park and there is no direct service to any other station, although there is a track connecting the branch line to the rest of the Southeastern network.

The unique nature of the line means it has been pitched by transport groups, politicians and businesses for future conversion either to London Underground (given Grove Park's proximity to Lewisham, where the Bakerloo line is expected to end up by the 2040s) or the DLR (again, Grove Park's proximity to Lewisham), but nothing has come of these plans. Instead, the

line continues as somewhat an anomaly - a suburban branch line barely 10 miles from Central London.

The race to Bromley

South East London is famously National Rail territory. Largely devoid of Tube services historically due to the ground being harder (chalk) to dig through than north of the river (clay). It meant that in the late 1800s, a host of competing railway companies built and then operated railway lines to develop a passenger base as London industrialised and expanded. Bromley, then in Kent, was a target for both the South Eastern Railway and then London, Chatham and Dover Railway who built Bromley North and Bromley South stations respectively in 1878 and 1858, the former the terminus of the small branch line from Grove Park we know today.

Before car usage, the railway was the most effective way to develop the town, now linked to both London and the ports of Kent. In 1878, the two companies merged and right through to the present day, both of the Bromley stations are now operated by the same train operator, Southeastern. As Bromley South sits directly on the Chatham Main Line, offering a quick, 16 mins journey to/from Victoria, it became the principal station of the town. Bromley North, the end of the small branch line, dwindled in importance and in 1990 all direct train services to/from Central London were axed. For the past 31 years, trains have been 'stuck' on the branch, with only empty trains continuing to other destinations for operational reasons.

Boxed in

The track layout at Grove Park is what prevents the line from seeing through services to Central London or Dartford. In order for a train to get onto the branch line, it must use the "Up Fast" line, the track which is also used by Southeastern mainline trains coming from Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Hastings, Ashford and Ramsgate. All of those trains would have to wait several minutes for a train to Bromley North to enter the branch line, a wait which would delay more people than those who would have their journeys to Bromley North sped up. As a result, it is unlikely that direct services will ever return. It's a bit like trying to join a country lane to a

motorway at a flat junction with traffic lights - it's theoretically possible but nobody would seriously consider it.

The only way the Bromley North line could ever plausibly join the wider network and provide a significant transport alternative for Bromley is for it to be connected to a new track alignment which would either be built alongside, above or beneath the railway line between Grove Park and Lewisham, where it would meet either an extended Bakerloo line or a redeveloped DLR. Both of these options would cost hundreds of millions of pounds and have been discarded as poor value for money, despite being considered in official Bakerloo line extension studies.



Nonetheless, local and national campaigners are determined to use the line's spare capacity (gaps between trains which could be filled) to provide additional services to and from Bromley. Rail passenger campaign group Railfuture calls for "extension of Overground services from New Cross to Bromley North, creating new journey opportunities between Bromley, Docklands and the City to relieve the route from Bromley South" on its list of campaigns for London and the South East.

The London Borough of Bromley also looked at the viability of extending London Trams services from Beckenham Junction to Grove Park via a mixture of on-street tracks and a converted Bromley North line.

Going nowhere

At present, the Bromley North line's passenger figures do not warrant such significant investment, meaning all of the above options are highly unlikely within the next few decades. The number of annual passengers entering/exiting Bromley North has only exceeded half a million once in the past five years. In comparison, Bromley South hovers around eight million over the same time period.

The entire line is also duplicated by bus route 261, which has the added benefit of terminating at the transport hub, Lewisham Station. The route has seen buses every 12-20 minutes for the past 20 years with little sign of massive overcrowding or rocketing ridership suggesting there is massive untapped demand.

There could be some immediate minor improvements should the line be absorbed by London Overground which has been speculated following the government's takeover of Southeastern. TfL's funding crisis could throw a spanner in the works but its improvements on the similarly oddball Romford to Upminster line show there could be a passenger benefit on the horizon (new trains, extra staffing/CCTV, more accessibility provisions).

For now, during the pandemic, trains are continuing on their reduced timetable running every 30 mins and there are still no trains on Sundays or public holidays. The line might be a nifty little way to cut across one part of South East London but it's likely to do much else in the near future.

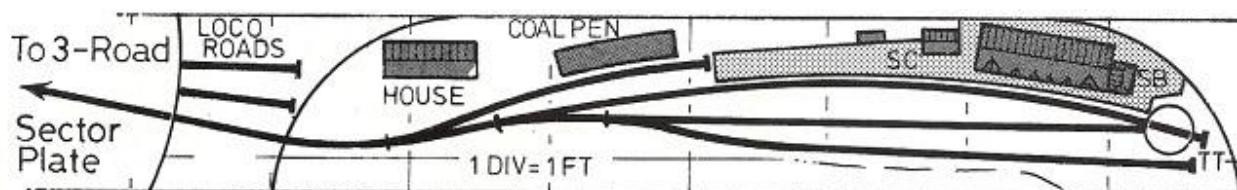
Bembridge Station

Andrew Chrysler

While Bembridge is nowadays a relatively sleepy village at the easternmost point of the Isle of Wight, it was not always so, and it used to be the busiest harbour on the island. Bembridge station was opened in 1882 as the terminus of a branch line, which left the Ryde - Shanklin line at Brading and proceeded for 2¾ miles, across Brading marshes with an intermediate station at St.Helen's (but not THAT St.Helens...)



A sector table was used instead of points to allow locomotives to "run around" due to the relatively cramped site. It closed in 1953 and nothing now remains on site.





Above- Aerial view of Bembridge Station and the Pilot Boat inn
Below - Model of Bembridge Station. (photo- Railway Modeller)



"A multitude of rulers (sic) is not a good thing" **Barry Miltenburg**

Back in my school days, when I should have been paying attention to my Classics teacher's monotone dissection of Homer's The Iliad, I was often to be found scribbling model railway track-plans in the corner of the pages of my form workbook.

Later, when I was at the "train set" stage, I could happily spend a few hours juggling a half-dozen sets of points around trying to make interesting formations. I was still a scribbler and would frequently get home from school with another great idea, keen to see how it would look on my baseboard. The trouble was, when my scribbles were recreated in real life, the plans never quite came together as I thought they would – run rounds too short, platforms too narrow etc.

Similarly, plans seen in the Railway Modeller never quite converted into my limited range of "Hornby Series 6" track pieces – a situation that was not to get any better long after I moved onto Peco Code 75!

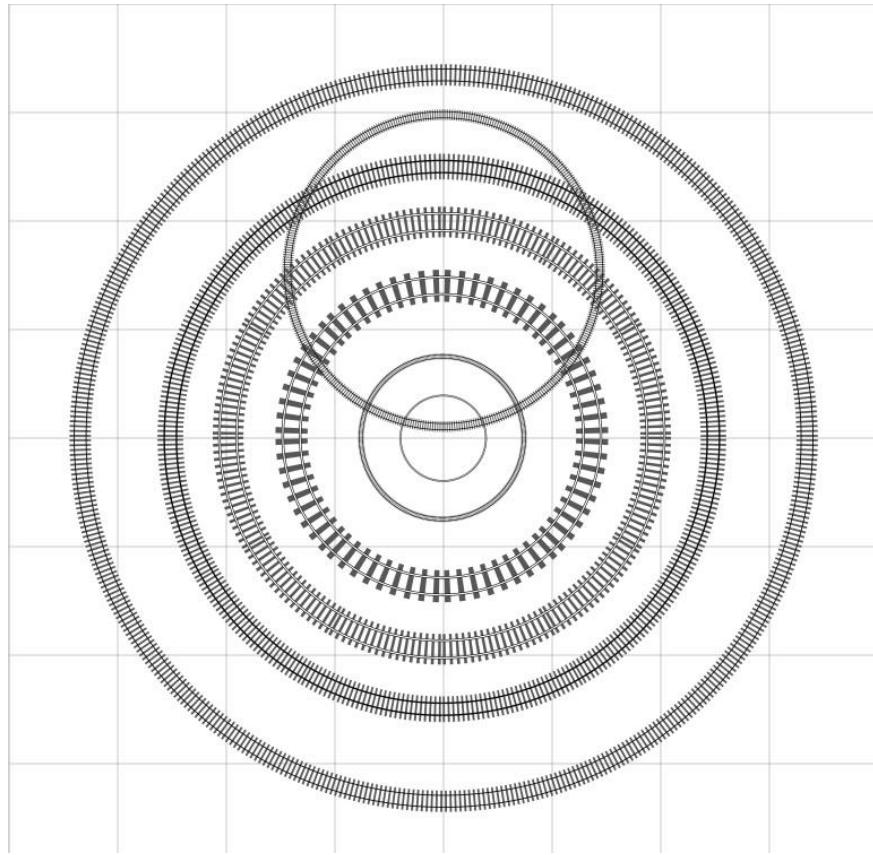
That state of affairs took a turn for the better a few years ago when I chanced across the track-plan design software AnyRail. At first, I used the free version, limiting my options to 30 pieces (I think it was) of track. For small designs, that was fine but as my aspirations headed for the current mega-project, it was clear that I would need to invest in a licence and, having done so, I have never regretted it.

Now, I accept that there may be better software packages out there, but for ease of use, variety of trackage systems loaded, general flexibility and cost, AnyRail takes some beating. The (now obsolete) Hornby software option was restricted to Hornby track pieces and whilst you could drop in locomotives and rolling stock and actually operate the trains (one at a time), it was crude by comparison. Other CAD packages may offer the Earth, but most are difficult to get your head around if you are not a natural CAD user. AnyRail has an attached tutorial and that is handy for dealing with gradients, transition curves and the like but, on the whole, it is intuitive to use and quick to get the hang of. It is ideal for planning whole layouts or just a specific section.

There are, of course, tolerances written into the programme to allow tracks to connect but I have found that over the length of my layout (26 feet), the discrepancies thrown up are little more than an inch or two. Tighter

tolerances could be adopted and these discrepancies can be reduced if that is vital.

The programme allows you to add basic scenery and trees whilst platforms and backscenes can be added with the "Shape" and "Line" tools. Newer updates have allowed Users to add in a range of their own favourites like buildings from popular manufacturers. Thus, Wills or Ratio kits can be dropped into your plan along with Metcalf houses and Harburn Hobbies trackside bits. The files produced are in a format that only AnyRail users can open although a larger plan cannot be opened by someone using the free version if there are more than 30 track pieces present. However, it is possible to capture a plan and convert it to a jPeg format – just as we have been doing with the new Talisker layout ideas.



If AnyRail has a weakness, it is in the 3D option. In 3D view, the track appears on a basic green surface and whilst gradients are shown, buildings, scenery and any rolling stock that you have added are not. Furthermore, navigating around the baseboard is not easy and so it is not always possible to view your plan from all angles.

AnyRail plans can include everything from Scalextric, Lego, LGB and large scales right down to N and T gauge track systems. The size of the work area and the grid size are all adjustable to suit your project. Views can be zoomed out for best viewing whilst zooming in close (up to 4 times normal size) can help with details.

If you are planning a small Inglenook or a scale-length layout of Exeter St Davids, it is always a good idea to plan things out first. AnyRail allows you to do that on any laptop or tablet when you have a few spare minutes and certainly without having to clear the dining room table and find your tape measure. I would recommend it to anyone.

And Finally...



Southern Railway wishes all it's
customers a happy 2014 and
apologises for the late arrival of
this message.