



# **A History of Southport Model Railway Society – The first 40 years**

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## – The first 40 years

### **Preface**

*Last year, your committee discussed how we could celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Club. One suggestion was a history of the Club. Unfortunately none of our current members was present at the Club's inception and an examination of archived committee minutes was of little help. Consequently we have had to rely on our longest-standing member, Jim Ford, who joined a couple of years or so after the formal inauguration of the Club. From early on in its existence, judging from Jim's and other's recollections, our club had a fairly nomadic history enduring a variety of premises each with their own characteristics of function, purpose and repair. Eventually settling into our present home, again with Jim's assistance in its 'acquisition', we now have all the creature comforts of home where we enjoy a friendly club atmosphere with a like minded fraternity keen to pursue their own particular aspects of modelling.*

*Moving from our historic past to the present, and to the future, many of today's model railway enthusiasts are old enough to remember the 'halcyon' days of steam when interest in our hobby was in part nurtured by trainspotting, childhood ambitions to become an engine driver when they grew up, and of course, pure nostalgia. Today's young generation is growing up in a more high tech environment with different points of interest and pastimes. These boys (and girls) might regard model railways as an 'old mans' hobby, which sadly is the general consensus of the model railway club today.*

*For our club to survive another forty years we particularly need to bring young blood into our membership. While we do have some younger members amongst us we need to encourage more to join us. So to young and old alike reading this I would like to invite you to come and have a closer look at us. You will be made very welcome. Who knows, you may like us and decide to stay.*

Frank Parkinson  
Hon Chairman 2013



Photograph of the nameplate for 45527 Patriot 4-6-0 on which the Club logo is based.



45527 'Southport' passing through Crewe, 1959



Basset-Lowke 'O' gauge model of 45527 'Southport'

## Contents

Chapter 1 - Growing Pains by Jim Ford .....	5
Chapter 2 - The Latter Years by Derek Pratt .....	8
Chapter 3 - The N gauge section by Ian Shulver .....	10
Chapter 4 - Recollections and Reminiscences.....	13
Recollections of a relocated train-spotter by Allan Trotter.....	13
A personal view by Frank Parkinson .....	13
Reflections of 30 years at Southport Model Railway Society by Tony Kuivala .....	14
Many years a member by Ian Shulver.....	15
Chapter 5 - 57A Portland Street by Ian Shulver .....	16
Chapter 6 – Club Competitions by Ian Shulver .....	19
Chapter 7 – Social Activities.....	21
Monthly Talks .....	21
Sleeper Trips - eighteen and counting .....	22
Newsletter.....	23
Chapter 8 – Exhibitions by Tony Kuivala.....	24
Exhibition Posters.....	25
Exhibition Guides .....	26
Chapter 9 - Club Officers over the years .....	27

## Chapter 1 - Growing Pains by Jim Ford

There was a model railway society in Southport which I believe had started before the Second World War, and was active in the 1950s and may be even the early 1960s. Its activities are recorded in contemporary model railway magazines. In fact it seems as if it was quite a prominent club judging by these records. I recall being taken by my father to an exhibition at the former Drill Hall in Manchester Road when I was under 10. Somewhere I have got the programme!

There was a model railway section at Steamport in its early days, and operating layouts for visitors was a regular feature there. I was not a member of Steamport, but I know that the model railway section was popular, and to some extent operated independently of the main visitor attraction. I recall that in the early 70s two exhibitions were held at the former St Andrews Church Hall, which stood on the site of the current Jobcentre (prior to that time the job centre was in Princes Street, in a building which today is a type of emporium). I believe that the first exhibition was held under the auspices of Steamport (to whom the profits were recycled!) and by this time the Southport and District Model Railway Society, as it was described in those days, was operating independently of Steamport. This was partially due to the wish of the modellers to retain the profits to invest in new layouts, rather than to support the mainstream Steamport venture.

I joined the club in October 1974, following my visit to the second of the St Andrews exhibitions, joining two weeks after my late friend Trevor Booth and two weeks ahead of Philip Delnon (who plans to move back to Lancashire soon, after teaching in the south-east of England, and may well rejoin the club). At the time that I joined I was a third-year medical student, still living at home and travelling daily to the University on the old class 502s via Liverpool Exchange and the 6D bus. I don't know which was more decrepit at the time, the units or the station!

In those days, we met every Friday night in the upper story of a stable block at the back of the Duerdens showroom in Eastbank Street. We had access to our clubroom by an external stairway and during the winter it was perishingly cold. At the time that Trevor, Phil and I joined, the existing members consisted of Ron Hillsdon (the treasurer), Alan Needham, John Ackers, Nick Wood, Roger Desforges, John Willerton, Chris Gray and Alan Johnson. Alan Needham had an electrical shop in Formby, where he also sold model railways, and he famously modelled Austrian Railways in HO, and later filled his garden with LGB! Unfortunately in her later years, Alan's wife Lou developed dementia and I suspect that his extensive garden railway kept Alan himself sane.

Not long after I joined, the rather mediocre OO layout became the subject of some discussion, and a vague resolution was passed at a club meeting that the layout should be dismantled and replaced with something which was closer to scale. Much to the dismay of those who regarded themselves as senior members of the club, they attended two weeks later, to find that in the

intermediate week, the rest of the membership had dismantled the preceding opus and started to construct its successor, which was known as Loss Arnoch. The result of this was a heated exchange and a minor schism in the club which resulted in those members who lived in Formby meeting at Alan's house, but also retaining a nominal link to the Southport club.

We were soon however to be relieved of the problem of heating this clubroom, for one of the outcomes of the Arab Israeli war at the time, was a huge increase in petrol prices and a collapse in sales of cars. As a result, Duerdens needed to demolish our building, to create more space where they could park the vehicles that they were committed to selling from Datsun. So we were homeless, and through personal contact with one of our members, managed to secure access to an attic in Grosvenor Road. This accommodation was just about adequate in size, and being an attic was quite cosy. However access to it was by means of a rather restricted staircase, and was not easy for older members. Unfortunately, this was not to be our home for long either, as the house was bought by developers for demolition and within two years we were once more looking for a home.

Again one of our members came to our rescue, for Phil Delnon had forsaken his teaching appointments and taken a market stall selling curtains. He rented a couple of very large maisonettes on Market Street opposite the market and used one of them for storing his stock. The other one he made available for Southport Model Railway Club and we remained there for several years. Unfortunately we failed to take advantage of the space that we had, and it very rapidly became filled up with clutter. However the plentiful facilities did mean that we were able to recruit quite a large junior membership, many of whom are still active in the town as modellers, including Austin Moss, Dave Richards, Alan Butchart and Alan Beattie.

All good things come to an end, and unfortunately in 1981 or thereabouts the maisonettes were bought up for development, and Phil decided to return to school teaching. So we were looking for premises again. For a few months we met in one of the upstairs rooms at the Red Rum hotel (later the Carlton), where discussions and talks took place, but no modelling as such. Yet again a club member came to our assistance. This time it was one of our new junior recruits, Dave Richards, whose father was an active modeller but never a member of our club. The Richards family, who lived on Southport Road Scarisbrick, owned a detached house which was by this time unoccupied, because like many properties on the Moss it had undergone subsidence and had developed a considerable lean. This venue was known as the "wibbly-wobbly house" by club members and served us tolerably well for a few years. However it was damp, with the wind whistling through ill-fitting windows, and clearly in need of major renovation. Nevertheless, it was the venue where some serious modelling was started. Of particular note was Dulverton (an N-gauge layout that saw many a show over a ten-year period) and Radstock (a fine-scale OO layout that saw only a couple of outings) as well as a number of layouts produced by the junior section. These included Telly-thyn, a narrow-gauge effort built within the confines of a television.

At the time, the mid-to late 1980s, I was a GP in Southport, and in the course of my visits about town I noted that the level crossing cottage at Portland Street was derelict and unoccupied. I spoke to my father-in-law, Ken Lamberton, who was working as a clerk in Merseyrail's civil engineering department at Lord Nelson Street in Liverpool. He reported that the building was due for demolition, but had not actually been taken down, as there was a disagreement between the operational railway and the civil engineers over who would pay for this operation. Due to the closeness of the building to the tracks, the building would have to be taken down brick-by-brick at a cost of £20,000, which was a great deal of money in those days.

Ken arranged for a group of senior officials from the British Rail Property Board to meet with myself and other club officers at the premises, which were in advanced dereliction. All services and windows were destroyed and psychedelic graffiti was all over the building, as applied by its most recent occupants, who were squatters and junkies. We were offered the building on a retaining lease, for a nominal sum in view of its state of repair and the difficulty that the Property Board found itself in. At the time, it was not uncommon for difficult-to-let properties such as this to be made available to model railway clubs and other community groups, and I recall that the Liverpool Model Railway Society also acquired a railway station on the former Cheshire Lines line at Aigburth.

We were warned that we would need to pay for replacement of the chain link fencing, but magically this was done for us by the local permanent way crew before we actually took possession, at no cost to us! This was a great relief, because to club members fell the task of making the building sound and comfortable. We had to reinstall the windows with toughened glass (courtesy of a generous donation from Pilkington Glass), open up a door onto the street (as we had been told we couldn't use the trackside one any more), fix the roof, re-plaster throughout and install basic services such as water and electricity! However club members rolled up their sleeves, and within a few months, we had a habitable and moderately comfortable clubroom, albeit smaller than some premises which we had been able to use previously.



At about the time we moved to Portland St the name of the club was changed from Southport and District Model Railway Society to the snappier Southport Model Railway Society, or SMRS. Apart from reflecting the then-current vogue of changing business names, it also reflected where the vast majority of the membership was based. Oddly enough we now have members based in the south of England and as far away as Queensland, Australia.

## Chapter 2 - The Latter Years by Derek Pratt

I joined the club in the mid-Eighties, when we were still in the leaning house of Kew. My first impression was of chairman Phil Delnon using a spray can to paint some enormous volcano-like model, an N-gauge American layout affectionally known as 'the Christmas cake' and liable to give one a hernia lifting it. I attached myself to the N-gauge group constructing Dulverton, not particularly because of a great interest in 2mm scale but because those involved seemed to be enjoying themselves and were willing to welcome an outsider. Incidentally the headboard for this layout has recently been rediscovered, and now sits in the downstairs back room above our current N-gauge layout, Monsal Dale.

The move to the new premises in Portland St. in 1989 was a watershed for the club. For the first time we were able to plan long-term without wondering if we would have to move again. Considering its age the house is in good condition, with occasional repairs needed but nothing too drastic. Which is just as well, as the lease requires us to maintain it. On winter evenings the coal fire adds both warmth and atmosphere. Outside the garden has been reworked from a rather scruffy patch of lawn and shrubbery into a low-maintenance gravel-and-wild-flower-bed external resource, complete with O-gauge railway. Currently the toilet and fuel store need re-roofing and there are plans for the garden railway to be elevated by a few inches and re-aligned a little to improve the running.

At present there are three layouts in the club. Monsal Dale is a 2mm scale representation of the old Midland main line through the Peak District. The line ran through tunnels, across a viaduct over the Wye and along the valley. Nothing remains of the station or trackwork, although the roadbed still exists as the Monsal Trail. The layout models a reduced version of the trackage with the tunnels at either end providing convenient scenic breaks. Monsal Dale has featured in its part-finished state at our exhibition, and hopefully will be seen on the wider exhibition circuit in the future.

The other exhibition-standard layout under construction is Talisker Glen, a model of a fictional distillery in the Scottish highlands, which just happens to share its name with another genuine distillery. It will feature all the main buildings involved in making whisky, plus a narrow-gauge railway to overcome the indifferent road access. An interchange siding will ensure raw materials and finished product can come and go via the main line to all points south, from whence a sleeper service also appears nightly.

The third layout is for internal consumption only, a combined OO and N-gauge layout called, with some lack of originality, Portland St. It has a two-fold purpose of allowing members to try their hand at modelling skills and to run their own stock on a casual basis, no questions asked.

Apart from layout-building (which in all honesty can be a touch sporadic at times) the club enjoys a busy social calendar. For the last couple of years we have run monthly social gatherings, consisting of a meal, a talk by a member on some railway topic, and a three-prize raffle. The venues are usually members' houses, occasionally Southport Football Club President's Lounge, which is not quite as impressive as it sounds, but more than adequate for our purposes.

These cover costs and provide a modest surplus, for which the treasurer is grateful.

The other main source of income, apart from subscriptions, is the annual exhibition. This has grown in both size and reputation over the years, with successive exhibition managers putting in more time and work than they would really like and the rest of us care to appreciate. A few years back we moved its location from Meols Cop school to Birkdale High, to take advantage of better and larger facilities. The visitors are mainly families rather than dedicated modellers and, so far at least, have come in sufficient numbers to make the effort worthwhile.

As well as internal club events, a number of members are also involved in external railway-related activities. Volunteering on heritage railways is a favourite, with the Welsh Highland, Corris and the Ravenglass and Eskdale all benefitting from the swing of our ballast shovels. Likewise the West Lancashire, the East Lancashire, Ribble Steam Railway and again the Corris and the Ratty have had the doubtful privilege of our members playing on their footplates or tinkering with their management systems. Garden railways enthusiasts are a small but energetic minority, building layouts in their back gardens and using hard-earned pension funds to acquire real live steam locos. As I write links are also being forged with Southport Model Engineering Club, not only for fraternal visits but also to ponder construction of a 16mm railway at their premises in Rotten Row, the better both to expand that section of the hobby and to increase the visitor head-count. The 009 Society has a following, and local swap-meets are regularly patronised by our more acquisitive collectors. Other clubs' exhibitions are also attended, to see what everyone else is doing and wonder if we could do it better, or at all.

And mention must be made of the Armchair Section, a large but surprisingly inactive section of the membership, at least with regard to actually making models at the club. No chairman has ever succeeded in changing their habits of a lifetime, namely that they model at home in loft, spare bedroom or cellar (or at least profess to do so), and come to the club for lively railway discourse and consumption of light refreshments in convivial surroundings.

Finally, we are now in the digital age, with a website available for all those who care to google 'SMRS' and scroll down past the management consultants and other johnny-come-latelys who have somehow clawed their way to the top of the search engine (and just how does Southampton MRS get above our entry?). The site is updated not only regularly but also quite frequently, with everything from current happenings to ancient texts of talks long ago delivered.

### Chapter 3 - The N gauge section by Ian Shulver

Prior my joining the Society in 1981 (I think), I had dabbled in N gauge from the mid 70's. Not very successfully as it turned out due to the quality of N-gauge locomotives at the time, my own inexperience of modelling and, probably more importantly, trying to produce something too ambitious.

Before this date, it appears that most, if not all, layouts were owned by individuals and this was certainly the case with the N-gauge ones. The first N-

gauge layout financed by the Club was Dulverton, with the principal members involved in construction being myself, Stuart Lawrence, Norman Jackson and Phil Wellings. However, during the time of its construction many members gave their time and expertise. Dulverton was



based on the GWR station of

the same name on the Taunton to Barnstaple line. Although the station and its immediate environs were to scale, some compromise at either end was made with the approach lines being changed from single-track to double-track, principally to ensure the model was easier to operate at exhibitions. All the railway buildings were scratch-built, using photographs to prepare detailed plans (these still exist in our club records). The non-railway buildings (a detached house and the hotel) were largely freelance, particularly the hotel which was built to cover the lever frames operating the points. It was pleasing to receive favourable comments at shows from patrons who had personal memories of the station. However, the one regret that I had with the layout was that without a significant amount of scratch building or kit-bashing, the stock and motive power available at the time was not sufficient to provide a realistic service. Dulverton was eventually sold to one of our members who passed it to another, who sold it on. It was last seen in about 2010 at Woodvale Rally and may still be an operating layout.



The next N-gauge layout was again based on GWR practice. This time it started out as a part-completed privately-owned layout. I had started to make a model of Brunel's famous Royal Albert Bridge at Saltash. After producing the two basic arches, I realised that I could not do the bridge justice in the space available at home, so I gave the Club the opportunity to take it over. Consequently the

layout based on Saltash and the Royal Albert Bridge was conceived and built. As far as practicable Saltash station, its goods yard and the Royal Albert Bridge were to scale dimensions. The only compromises were that the spans of the bridge approaches were shortened, so the bridge could fit on two 6ft baseboards, and that the curvature at the bridge ends was exaggerated. Consequently the area around Saltash station was somewhat compressed. The station, along with many of the buildings around it and on the Plymouth side of the bridge were scratch built to plans derived from scaling photographs. These were from books and magazines and directly from club members - unfortunately these plans have been lost. Other buildings are freelance and fill in where photographic evidence was not available. A feature of the layout was a working model of the old Saltash chain ferry, which operated until the new road suspension bridge was completed. Ideally we should have had two ferries, but space considerations meant that only one was modelled, to prevent mid-river collisions.



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We tried to operate a realistic timetable with appropriate motive power, but inevitably our good intentions fell by the wayside and all manner of locomotives could be seen. Our response to those who queried this atypical prototype operation was that it was required to provide a continuing interest to the paying public at shows, most of whom are not railway aficionados. Saltash has now been retired and is residing in a member's basement awaiting refurbishment.

Our section's current layout is once again based on a real location, but this time has moved to the LMS region and necessitated the purchase by club and members a whole new range of locomotives. The location this time is on the old Midland main line and is the section of Monsal Dale between the Headstone and Cressbrook tunnels. There has been a significant compression of the distance between the two tunnels, but the scale of Monsal Dale viaduct and of the station has been retained. Overall, this has probably enhanced the presentation of the layout, enabling us to present three distinct scenic elements (the viaduct, the station and the relief siding) in a



reasonable layout length. Unfortunately the length of the layout means it can only be seen in its entirety at exhibitions. However, the construction of the three baseboards is such that it can be partially erected at the club in three separate forms. The layout is still being developed both in terms of the scenery and operation. The Midland main line was home to lengthy mineral trains, with bankers. It is hoped to replicate this aspect along with the bankers returning 'light engine'. Also to be seen is the fabled Midland Blue Pullman, running in its correct location.

Based on our experience so far, it appears that a layout has a realistic lifetime existence of about 15 years - up to 5 years for the planning and construction stage (we cannot spend every available hour doing this) and about 10 years on the exhibition circuit. So that suggests planning for our next club N-gauge project should start in the near future.

## **Chapter 4 - Recollections and Reminiscences**

The following discourses are some personal recollections and reminiscences of Club members as to why they joined Southport Model Railway Society. They freely admit that dates and facts are not necessarily completely accurate, but they are their abiding memories of the good times that they have enjoyed.

### **Recollections of a relocated train-spotter by Allan Trotter**

From Weegie to Sandgrunder

Having been involved with train sets or model railways since the days of the inauguration of Tri-ang Railways, I found the best way to meet fellow enthusiasts was to seek out a model railway club. The club I joined initially was the incorporated school club, Eastbank Model Railway Club at the senior secondary school I attended, Eastbank Academy. This school is located in Shettleston, Glasgow. After an absence of a few years, I rejoined a now independent Eastbank MRC but eventually due to the relocation of the members, it evolved into a virtual club, now with no written constitution, no assets, no formal meetings, no office bearers and no annual subscription.

On my relocation from Helensburgh to Southport in January 2004, once all the necessary and mundane household tasks were completed it was time to seek out like-minded comrades in Southport to share mutual railway interests. After checking the Southport MRS web site, I made contact with the then club chairman, Keith Gregory, and he very kindly invited me to attend a club meeting and introduced me to the membership, where I was made most welcome.

Being able to meet with so many enthusiastic people with such diverse interests in model and real railways is of communal benefit, so much so the past nine years that I have resided in Southport seems to have passed extremely quickly. Something must be right.

### **A personal view by Frank Parkinson**

I joined the club in 2005 following a visit to the exhibition at Meols Cop, so my knowledge of the club's background and history is limited from that time. We had moved to Southport from the south in 1979 and as newcomers to the area the sight of the leaning house naturally caught our attention. It caused us to wonder what it might be like to live there with its sloping floors and leaning walls. At the time this was only a tenuous link for me, little realising what that link would hold for me in the future.

My modelling interest then, and now, lay in landscaping and scratch-build construction of stations and engine sheds, taking inspiration from modelling magazines. With a further interest in narrow gauge modelling (having joined the 009 Society) I was dabbling in these past times at home to a limited extent, in isolation. The next question was how, having acquired a few basic skills, might I go on in the construction of my own layout. Needing the advice help and experience of others plus someone to bounce ideas off, I thought what better place to start than to join a club. Simple!

A major benefit of joining has been that there were, not surprisingly, other members with similar interests, and I am now involved in the building of an exhibition layout in mixed gauge 00 & 009, so satisfying my earlier narrow gauge interest. There is also an interest in 16mm garden railway modelling among our members with our own garden layout. This has an appeal for a narrow gauge modeller like me but that's another story.

### **Reflections of 30 years at Southport Model Railway Society by Tony Kuivala**

I first joined Southport MRS in 1983 together with Darryl Halliwell with whom I worked in Liverpool. The premises were an iconic leaning house within which we were part of a group building "Radstock". Every week the first task was to level what we had worked on the previous week. One of my abiding memories was Norman Jackson's larger than life presence and enthusiasm. We always had interesting breaks for refreshments. The company was good, much of a railway nature was discussed, tea/coffee drunk and biscuits consumed before returning to a modest work break shortly into which we began preparing to wind up the evening's activity. The Ainsdale sub group (there were four of us who travelled in two cars) then adjourned to Railway Hotel on Liverpool Road for more refreshment and conviviality. Looking back over the 30 years I remember very little about "Radstock". My mental images of the house's interior remain vivid. It was always dry and sunny. Perhaps memory plays tricks 30 years on. Within twelve months Darryl moved southwards to Tunbridge Wells, another of sub group went to be a bus driver in Darwin. My personal circumstances altered and my membership lapsed.

Some years passed by - more than I care to recall. My interest in Railways and OO gauge remained intact. Domestic circumstances evolved. Around 1995, I rejoined SMRS. We were now in our current location with 24/7 access, reasonable kitchen and no onsite parking. The scourge of traffic wardens was largely absent from on road parking. Norman Jackson was now Exhibition Manager. His eyesight was deteriorating but the presence and enthusiasm were un diminished. There seemed to be a very active arm chair section but little actual modelling. One thing lead to another until out of the blue in 2000 Norman stepped down as Exhibition Manager. At short notice in run up to Exhibition, Keith Gregory took over the reins. For the next Exhibition I had been appointed Exhibition Manager. Fortunately this coincided with my retirement so I have been able to devote the time.

Looking back over 30 years has regenerated many pleasant memories. As with many of my colleagues SMRS has become part of our lives. The social aspects are significant. I value all our members as personal friends - most being long standing personal friends.

## Many years a member by Ian Shulver

Preamble – being brought up in deepest Suffolk, my nearest railway line was over 12 miles away and so during my early days I did not have the opportunity for ‘trainspotting’. However, along with my brother we did possess a Hornby-Dublo 3-rail train set that used to be set up on the living room floor with all the trials and tribulations that entailed (regularly kicked, trodden on and carpet fluff). A break of 20 years with the railway scene then ensued (O and A levels, University and early years of work).

As a result of needing some form of hobby that could take my mind off, if only for brief interludes, work and the stress of bringing up a young family, I decided to take up model railways but as a lone modeller – never even thought of joining a club. This was a bad decision. Over the next decade I kept up my interest, buying and reading magazines, but the construction of a working layout eluded me. In retrospect I believe there were two main reason for that – firstly being overly ambitious in my planning and probably more importantly a poorly constructed baseboard. On my return from South Africa in the early 80’s, I resolved to put this right by joining a local club – Southport & District Model Railway Society as was known at the time.

The first meeting I attended was in the Market Street premises in the middle of winter and my recollection of this was walking into a freezing cold dump where the members did not seem to be too welcoming. Perhaps this was perception rather than reality since I persevered with attendance. Only when we moved out of Market Street to the Red Rum Hotel (as it was called then) did I start to take a more active role in the Club by giving a couple talks, and then gaining the committee’s approval for construction of a ‘N’ gauge exhibition layout once we had some premises where modelling could be carried out.

Since then I been an active member of the Club, principally because my involvement with the three ‘N’ gauge layouts that the Club has built, but also as treasure and secretary. I believe that in general the Club is now much stronger than when I first joined. Having clubrooms that allow members 24/7 access helps immensely, but my one regret is that sadly the junior section, which on my joining numbered several members, is now non-existent. How we redress this has taxed our minds for some considerable time since these juniors should be the future of the Club.

## Chapter 5 - 57A Portland Street by Ian Shulver

The following was written in 1989 with a view to being published in one of the modelling journals although it was never sent off. It is largely unchanged and reflects the layout as SMRS inherited the building. Subsequent to the installation of new lifting barriers, there was some modification to the interior. The old wooden lean-to annex was demolished and a new wall built. A new entrance was established which meant the old 'dwarf' kitchen was removed and relocated where the site of the proposed museum was going to be. Sadly there is no longer any space for this vision we had although most of the exhibits are still to be found in the club.

“ What and where is 57a Portland Street you might very well ask,, and why should it be of interest to railway modellers and indeed railway buffs in general? As to the 'what', 57A Portland Street is a small four roomed cottage with a dwarf sized kitchen and a further small attached room to the side. There is the inevitable detached 'office' at the end of the garden. It is situated in Southport, Merseyside with the front door an uncomfortable four feet from the side of trains travelling on the Northern Line of Merseyrail (15 minute service throughout the day).

It is of particular interest to railway historians because of its association with early railway development in the area, and to local railway modelers because it is our HQ. The cottage was originally built to act as the northern terminus of the fledgling Liverpool, Crosby and Southport Railway and was opened for business on 24th July 1848. However, it managed to maintain this heady status for just over two years before a new station was built at Chapel Street, several hundred yards closer to the town centre.

After its brief sojourn as a principal station, we presume that the various railway companies (L&Y, L.M.S., and British Railways) took the building under their respective wings as a tied cottage for its employees acting as gatekeepers on a crossing that was becoming ever busier as Southport prospered.

Eventually the cottage was no longer used by railway workers, presumably because they demanded better facilities, with squatters and hippies moving in for a time. After the inevitable eviction of these tenants Southport Model Railway Society was fortunate in being able to secure the premises on lease from the British Railways Property Board.

Many backbreaking hours then ensued before we could even think about setting up a layout. There was the detritus of years of unauthorised inhabitants to be shifted. Leaking gutters and general damp had caused much of the plaster to deteriorate and this required replacing. Inevitably all the glass had been broken and we were fortunate in replacing this with security glazing with the grateful help of Pilkington Glass. Finally, because of the proximity of the front door to the existing railway, we had to install two new doors in the gable walls to satisfy the landlords. The building is now fully functional as a clubroom although as might be expected we still have some decorating to perform as well as many other small jobs.

One major effort the Society is involved in is the creation of a small museum in the old booking office. This will, we hope, be a representation of the ticket office as it might have appeared in its early days. Once this is completed we hope that the clubrooms will become part of the Southport Heritage Trail and will be open to the public on a regular basis. The building, as befits its status, has a Grade 2 listing.

Since this is a model railway magazine you will no doubt have now heard enough of the prototype and will want to know why I am writing this article. When we first obtained use of the premises we decided it would be interesting, and not a little unusual, to construct a model of the station as it might have appeared shortly after its opening. We realised that this would be quite a significant undertaking particularly when it came to producing locomotives and rolling stock of which very little is known and certainly none available on the market. So instead of tackling the job as a single project, we decided to split it into more manageable



portions. Initially a small diorama of the station building would be produced and once stock had been produced they could then be incorporated into a larger working layout. When considering this diorama I felt that just a simple building, part of a platform and a few people would be decidedly uninteresting. This dilemma was resolved quite neatly by setting the time of the model a few minutes before the very first train was due to arrive at the station. This allowed me to set a carnival atmosphere with the town dignitaries and local band waiting to welcome all the 'big-wigs' formally declare the line open. Of course there were also present various children and townsfolk ready to take advantage of the holiday. Totally oblivious to all the activity and jollity is the shrimper in his horse and cart on his way down to the beach to catch the tide (a much more serious event). Much of the scene is inevitably supposition but overall is probably fairly close to the truth.

The station building (in model form) is made from 3mm plywood, true scale thickness walls, covered with a thin layer of Miliput. When hardened this was carefully inscribed with the correct brick bond (English) including the arches over door and windows. This was very much a labour of love and had to be spread out over many weeks or else I would have gone mad (some might say this fact was never in question). The roof tiles were paper, individually laid although manufactured as a strip. Gutters and downspouts were made from suitably shaped and filed brass rod and tube, whilst the chimney pots were constructed from FIMO (nothing suitable was available commercially). The platform was paved with the characteristic square tiles seen throughout Southport and the short length of track was a much hacked piece of PECO Streamline. Acrylic paints were used to decorate the diorama and, although difficult to apply gave a pleasant translucent effect.

Detailing was with little people from a multitude of sources. Some were used as they were, whereas many were modified with the careful use of the craft knife and Miliput. The shrimper's cart was constructed from brass wire and sheet and was filled with the accoutrements of the trade. Finally it was decided that the scene would not be complete without bunting and flags and so these were laboriously made and hung to proudly flutter in the breeze.

Overall I believe that I have captured the atmosphere of that memorable day in 1848 when the railway eventually came to Southport finally putting the town well and truly on the map.

I.N.W. Shulver,

21/6/1989



57A Portland St. photographed in about 1983. Note the small wooden annex and no door in the north gable wall



Photograph taken some years later when the old style crossing gates had been replaced by lifting barriers. Note that the wooden annex has been removed to make space for the barrier mechanism and that a door has been established adjacent to the footpath.



## Chapter 6 – Club Competitions by Ian Shulver

Back in 2008 the Club’s committee decided that something needed to be done to stimulate members and get them away from being ‘armchair modellers’ and into the real world. As a consequence, it was deemed that we would hold an annual modelling competition to coincide with our annual exhibition. The committee would decide on a theme for the year and all entries would be judged by a distinguished visitor to the exhibition, be it one of the exhibitors, traders, Mayor of Sefton or even Deputy Lieutenant of Merseyside.

I have to admit that at times the number of entries has fallen woefully short of our membership number, but those entries we have received have been to a high standard and sometimes even quirky as well.

Year	Subject	Winners
2008	A modular board layout, 2’ x 1’ in size.	Frank Parkinson – Canal & narrow boat module 
2009	a model of Monsal Dale station building in any scale.	Frank Parkinson –OO model with a 16.5mm model in the background 
2010	<p>“An Animated Scene” . Should be of a railway related topic, or something that might be seen on a layout. A loco is not acceptable in itself. Typically, the maximum size occupied would an area no larger than 300mm square in 4mm scale (or equivalent in other scales). The model should work by itself, or be capable of being operated remotely (either manually or electro-mechanically).</p> <p>The model will be judged on; Originality, Reliability of operation, and Construction and detail. It should not be something straight of a box, but could be proprietary if modifications are made.</p>	Frank Parkinson – overshot water wheel 

2011	<p>“Rolling stock”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each entry should have a <u>minimum</u> of 5 axles (ie at least 3 four wheel wagons, 2 six wheel wagons, 2 bogie coaches or 2 six wheel coaches or a combination) and be accompanied by a brief description.</li> <li>- The entry can be in any scale. It can be kit built or proprietary. If the latter it must be modified, repainted/weathered, or with appropriate load(s).</li> </ul>	<p>Derek Pratt – weathered kit of coal hutch carrier</p> 
2012	<p>“Wagons &amp; Wagon Loads”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 3 proprietary wagons each with a different load.</li> <li>• At least 1 scratch or kit built wagons with load(s).</li> <li>• The entry to be in any scale or gauge.</li> <li>• All loads must be scratchbuilt – they must NOT be proprietary.</li> <li>• The wagons should be place on short length of track.</li> <li>• Accompanied by a short description which should include the wagon type, the load represented and the method of construction.</li> </ul>	<p>Derek Pratt – ‘Shedloads’</p> 
2013	<p>“A Layout in a Box”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The layout should be built in a box with four sides, a base and a top. A proprietary or scratch-built box may be used but should be capable of being completely closed up. Hinged and cut-out sections may be incorporated.</li> <li>2. There is no maximum dimension, but the overall <u>volume should not exceed 5ft<sup>3</sup> (0.14m<sup>3</sup>)</u>. The box may contain fold-out or lift-out sections which extend outside the box when in operating mode.</li> <li>3. The trackwork, which should include at least one turn-out but not forming part of a fiddle-yard, should be operable layouts rather than a dioramas (you may asked to demonstrate this).</li> <li>4. Power supplies and controllers may be either integral or external.</li> </ol>	<p>To be decided at our 40<sup>th</sup> exhibition</p>

## Chapter 7 – Social Activities

Prior to the mid 80's no record has been found of non-modelling activities although it would be surprising if there were none, even though it may have simply been a gathering at a local hostelry for a swift pint (or two). Following our ejection from the clubrooms in Market Street regular meetings were started in the lounge of the Red Rum Hotel. Inevitably it was difficult, if not impossible, to do any real modelling in these circumstances so these meetings became much more of a social gathering. However to preserve our status as a model railway society we did try to include talks on railway and modelling matters but this mostly degenerated to general chit-chat as well as putting the world to rights. The fact that these meetings were held in the lounge (comfortable chairs etc) probably was the reason for the inception of the 'armchair section' of the Club – a section that was to become ever more popular in later years. Once the Club moved to the 'leaning house' premises in Scarisbrick, there seemed to be a hiatus in the armchair sections – probably due to the draughty nature of the building, with there being no record of other social activities whilst we were there.

However, once we decamped to our current premises in Portland Street and the building made fit for purpose the armchair section came into its own and now upwards of a dozen stalwarts each Tuesday and Friday evening can be heard discussing many matters (railway and otherwise) in front of a roaring fire drinking tea and eating cake and biscuits. Occasionally they make a foray into one of the modelling rooms to run one of their locos.

As well as this rather sedentary side to the Club, we now have a varied range of activities which have been mentioned in a earlier section. There are monthly talks, usually with refreshments, Club outings to some of the major exhibitions (often with food and wine provided by one of our members), the occasional BBQ in the gardens at the clubrooms, and not forgetting the monthly newsletter. In addition, a major summer outer – the sleeper trip, has been going for a number of years and there a few hardly souls who give their time in all weathers to helping out with tracking laying etc on some of the area's narrow gauge railways.

### Monthly Talks

In 2010 we started a programme of talks on a wide variety of topics and given by Club members. The range of topics researched and presented has been extremely varied. Subjects included discourses on various railways (eg the Midland main line through Derbyshire and the Mineral Lines of North Somerset), history of some locomotive types (eg Black 5s and the Princesses), personal reminiscences (eg Steam in Italy and Tales of a Footplate Junkie), modelling topics (eg how to make trackwork look more realistic and modelling trees) as well as general slide and film shows. These talks are frequently held at one or other of our member's homes, and occasionally in the Vice President's Lounge at Southport Football Club, is preceded by refreshments (hot pot, pies etc followed by a dessert) along with a raffle. These talks are self funded,

usually providing a small surplus for the Club funds much to the Treasurer's pleasure. We must thank all those who contribute to the evening by preparing the talks and by hosting the event.

### Sleeper Trips - eighteen and counting

Every year, on or about the summer solstice, a small but persistent band of members swap their humdrum, monotonous lifestyles for a week of excitement and adventure. The annual sleeper trip, no less.

The destinations have varied considerably over the years, and have included those well-known Celtic outposts, Cornwall and Ireland. The full list of trips is shown in the table below.

1995 Inverness-Kyle of Lochalsh	2004 Crewe-Fort WilliamMull-Bo'Ness
1996 Fort William-Tyndrum(Upper and Lower)	2005 Inverness-Aviemore-Kyle of Lochalsh
1997 Inverness-Thurso	2006 London-Penzance-Kingswear-Ber
1998London-Penznace-Bodmin-West Somerset	2007 London-Fort William-Mull-Bo'Ness
1999 Fort William-Mallaig-Mull	2008 London-Inverness-Stromness-Orkney-Kyle of Lochalsh
2000 Fort William-Skye-Mull	2009 Dublin-Downpatrick-Bushmills-Downpatrick
2001 Fort William-Stornaway-Inverness	2010 London-Fort William-Skye-Barra
2002 Dublin-Cork-Tralee	2011 London-Inverness-Kyle of Lochalsh-Aberdeen
2003 Aberdeen-Dufftown-Boat of Garten-Inverness	2012 Edinburgh-Glasgow-Kent

The basic format has not changed much from the following description of early trips, although the length has gradually increased as the standard of sleeper breakfast has decreased:

**Tuesday** :- Meet at the Fisherman's Rest for kit inspection and issue of beer rations, before departure to Preston.

**Wednesday**:- Entrain at 0048 on the sleeper from Euston. Convince steward that the date on our ticket relates to the day of boarding his train rather than that of starting its journey ('Are we not a day early. sir?'). Negotiate with the now-harassed steward regarding availability of a cooked breakfast for the morning. This seems to vary with the tides, like so much else belonging to our many and varied rail franchisees.

Progress to lounge car (equipped with real, movable tables and chairs) for additional beer rations and the option of second dinner. Play guess-the-station as lights flash past in the darkness of north Lancashire and the Lakes. Retire to bed sometime after Oxenholme.

Reveille at approx. 03.30, thanks to much shunting and banging at Edinburgh Waverley, as the train is cut in three to serve Aberdeen, Inverness and Fort William. Drift off to sleep again hoping that we are still going where we thought we were.

Secondary reveille at 0700-ish to better appreciate early morning over the Grampian, Cairngorm or West Highland mountains, depending on sleeper route

selected. Take breakfast in the day coach amongst superb scenery, either real or imagined, depending on the weather.

Arrive at the sleeper's destination and switch to a Class 156 for onward travel, to such exotic places as Mallaig, Kyle of Lochalsh or Thurso. Fraternise with fellow travellers, mostly of antipodean or North American extraction, whose common feature, apart from shorts and sandals, seems to be financing their trip by winning the Design-a-Giant-Rucsac competition.

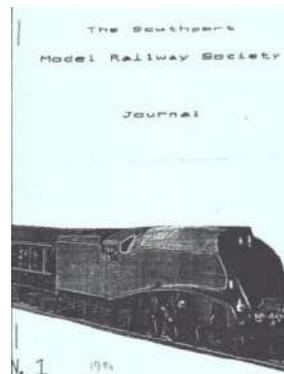
Arrive at pre-selected bed and breakfast accommodation to deposit bags and seek advice on the availability of local cuisine (the nearest curry house).

**Thursday:-** More travel, either astride the breadth of Scotland from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh and back again, across the water from Oban to Mull or a return from Caithness to the deep south (Inverness). Sample more of the local cuisine (the nearest Chinese).

**Friday:-** Morning at leisure stocking up on the duty-paid and similar valuable souvenirs. Afternoon train back to Glasgow to connect with the Euston-bound service. Haggle en-route over the ubiquitous mobile phone to persuade, encourage or require selected friends and loved ones to attend Preston station, to pick up assorted weary travellers. Back in Southport in time for debriefing at the weekly SMRS meeting.

## Newsletter

The Club's first newsletter was back in 1994 when an A5 booklet was produced with, we believe, Mike Smale as the editor. At the time this was called "The Southport Model Railway Society Journal" with a targeted quarterly publication frequency. However, the editor's preamble complained about the shortage of articles although many had apparently been promised (where have we heard this before?). It included just four items – two articles, the Club accounts for the year, and the AGM agenda. Perhaps this was why the Journal did not progress beyond this initial copy.



In October 2011 we started to produce a monthly newsletter, under the editorship of Ian Shulver. The intention was produce a document to keep members informed of what was happening in the Club. There was to be sections on our monthly talk programme, progress on Club layouts and other newsworthy items. It subsequently expanded to include short articles submitted by members. Although we still have the problems of getting copy, we have managed to keep it going and currently the size runs to about four A4 pages. The benefits of modern technology compared to the earlier effort mean that the document is easier to produce and distribute, and can include colour photographs.

## Chapter 8 – Exhibitions by Tony Kuivala

The first recorded Exhibition that the Club organised was in 1974, although in Chapter 1 we learn from Jim Ford that he recalls exhibitions being held at St Andrew's Church Hall. Our records give no mention of St Andrew's as a venue so it is presumed that these predate the 1974 exhibition and were probably organised under the auspices of the Model Railway section of Steamport. It was held in the United Reform Church Hall on Lord Street West and ran on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September – being a Church Hall, it was not possible to open the Exhibition on a Sunday – it was needed for its primary purpose.

The next three Exhibitions were also held at the same venue but in 1978 it moved to a new location – The Royal Clifton Hotel. This meant that the show could now open on Sundays and had the potential to attract a greater number of patrons. The previous exhibitions did not appear to have any representation from the trade, but from then on trade support has become very much an important element, allowing both visitors and members to view and purchase a wide range of model railway related items. Unfortunately, opening on a Sunday attracted the attention of those charged with ensuring the observance of the "Sunday Trading Laws". This aspect taxed the Exhibition Manager for many years to come, resulting in numerous letters to the Council and to the local MP.

By 1985, and our twelfth exhibition, we had moved again, this time to the Floral Hall. Although an excellent venue, the time there was not ideal since we did not have as much control over the running of the show as we would have liked. So in 1987 we upped sticks and went to Meols Cop High School where we remained for the next twenty one years. We had the use of three large halls, many yards of corridors (for Society stands and demonstrations), the school management and caretaker were most supportive and, most importantly, it had good catering facilities. The only downside was that parking was a bit of a nightmare until the final years.

However, in 2008 we reluctantly had to move on, and after much searching around the town we were given the opportunity to use Birkdale High School. It is also an excellent venue with plenty of space, good parking and splendid catering facilities. As with Meols Cop School, the management and caretakers could not be more helpful and we hope to continue our association here for many years.

During our forty exhibitions we have only had eight Exhibition Managers – Nick Wood (who started the ball rolling), Trevor Booth (1), Roger Desforges (1), Phil Delnon (9), Trevor Gibson (9), Norman Jackson (6), Keith Gregory (1) and our current incumbent, Tony Kuivala (12). All of these have put in a tremendous amount of work, not only in the immediate run up to the exhibition, but throughout the year. To ensure a good mix of Layouts and Traders at each Show, the Exhibition Manager visits many other Exhibitions to view what is on offer and, most importantly, network and build up an extensive list of contacts. At the start of each Show, the Exhibition Manager usually wears a worried look and frequently is on a short fuse, but as the weekend goes on and the public rolls in (mostly heaping praise on the quality of the layouts) his attitude softens and by the time we pack up he is generally beaming.

The philosophy behind the Exhibitions we put on is to give the public entertainment and good value for money in a welcoming and family friendly environment. To this end we aim to have a well balanced layout mix obviously with a preponderance of N, OO and O gauges. Over recent years it has been increasingly important to offer family related facilities including enhanced catering and some layouts that are “quirky” and have wider appeal to youngsters and the ladies. Public expectations evolve very swiftly and particularly in the current economic climate we need positive developments year on year.

### Exhibition Posters

The earliest poster that we can find is for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Exhibition held in 1976 at the United Reformed Church Hall but is in poor condition. It shows the entrance fee for adults as being 20p, a far cry from what we pay nowadays. Unfortunately we only have a few posters from the early years but the following is a selection, many of these winning “best model railway poster in the North-West”.

Of interest is how the style of the posters has changed over the years and reflects the style and technology prevalent at the time. The early posters were in monochrome, usually on an eye-catching coloured background compared to the multicoloured and glossy finish of the current ones. The early posters were also much larger, usually the equivalent of A3 size whilst now we produce them at A5 size. To some extent this reflects the target audience, being given out at various exhibitions and through the tourist office rather than posted in local shops.

1978 Exhibition



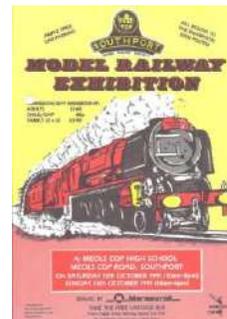
1983 Exhibition



1989 Exhibition



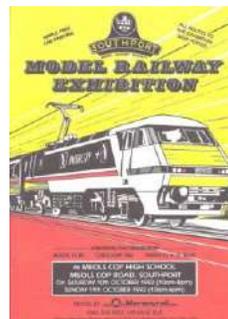
1991 Exhibition



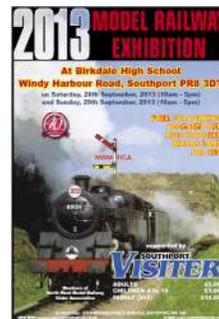
Proof copy for 1994, 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Exhibition



1992 Exhibition



2013 Exhibition



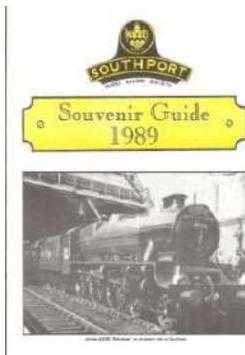
## Exhibition Guides

As with the exhibition posters, the style of the exhibition guides has changed markedly over the years. We are fortunate in having a copy of the guide for the very first exhibition which was held in the United Reformed Church Hall on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 1974. The venue being a church hall, it was not possible to open on a Sunday. These early exhibition guides tended to be “roneoed” and attracted a small charge. We then moved to simple printed booklets and finally to glossy colour booklets. The guides are now free to visitors to the show.

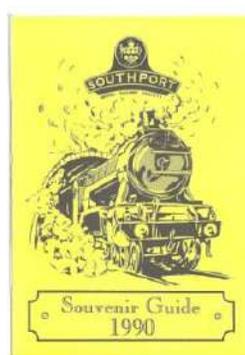
1974 guide



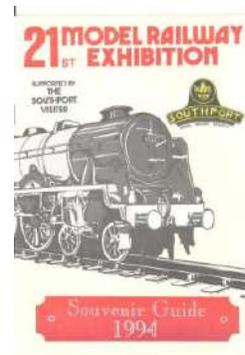
1989 guide



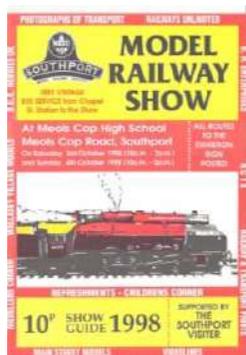
1990 guide



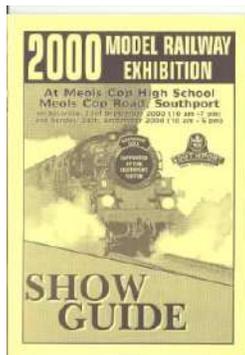
1994 guide



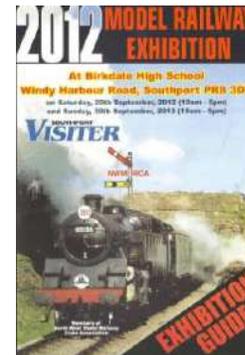
2000 guide



1998 guide



2012 guide



## Chapter 9 - Club Officers over the years

	<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Vice Chairman</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Exhibition manager</b>
1974	A Needham		Chris Gray	Ron Hillsdon	Nick Wood
1975	J Ackers		Trevor Booth	Ron Hillsdon	Trevor Booth
1976	Nick Wood		Phil Delnon	Ron Hillsdon	Phil Delnon
1977	Nick Wood		Phil Delnon	Ron Hillsdon	Roger Desforges
1978	Nick Wood		Phil Delnon	Ron Hillsdon	
1979	Nick Wood		?	?	?
1980	?		?	?	?
1981-82	D Cross		Phil Delnon	Jim Ford	Phil Delnon
1983	Phil Delnon		Dave Richards	?	Phil Delnon
1984	Phil Delnon		?	?	Phil Delnon
1985	?		?	?	?
1986	?		?	?	?
1987-88	Jim Ford		John Willerton	Ian Shulver	Trevor Gibson
1989	Jim Ford		Derek Pratt	Ian Shulver	Trevor Gibson
1990-93	Jim Ford		Kevin Williamson	Ian Shulver	Trevor Gibson
1994	Jim Ford		Peter Mills	Gordon McKinnon	Trevor Gibson
1995	Trevor Gibson		Peter Mills	Gordon McKinnon	Norman Jackson
1996	Keith Gregory		Peter Mills	Gordon McKinnon	Norman Jackson
1997-99	Derek Pratt		Peter Mills	Gordon McKinnon	Norman Jackson
2000	Derek Pratt	Tony Kuivala	Peter Mills	Gordon McKinnon	Norman Jackson
2001	Derek Pratt	Tony Kuivala	Peter Mills	Mike Smales	Keith Gregory
2002	Derek Pratt	Tony Kuivala	Peter Mills	David Reames	Tony Kuivala
2003	Keith Gregory	Tony Kuivala	Peter Mills	David Reames	Tony Kuivala
2004-05	Peter Mills	Tony Kuivala	Robert Yelland	David Reames	Tony Kuivala
2006-11	Peter Mills	Tony Kuivala	Ian Shulver	David Reames	Tony Kuivala
2012-13	Frank Parkinson	Tony Kuivala	Ian Shulver	David Reames	Tony Kuivala

