

## NEWSLETTER 109 : May 2022

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**Editorial**

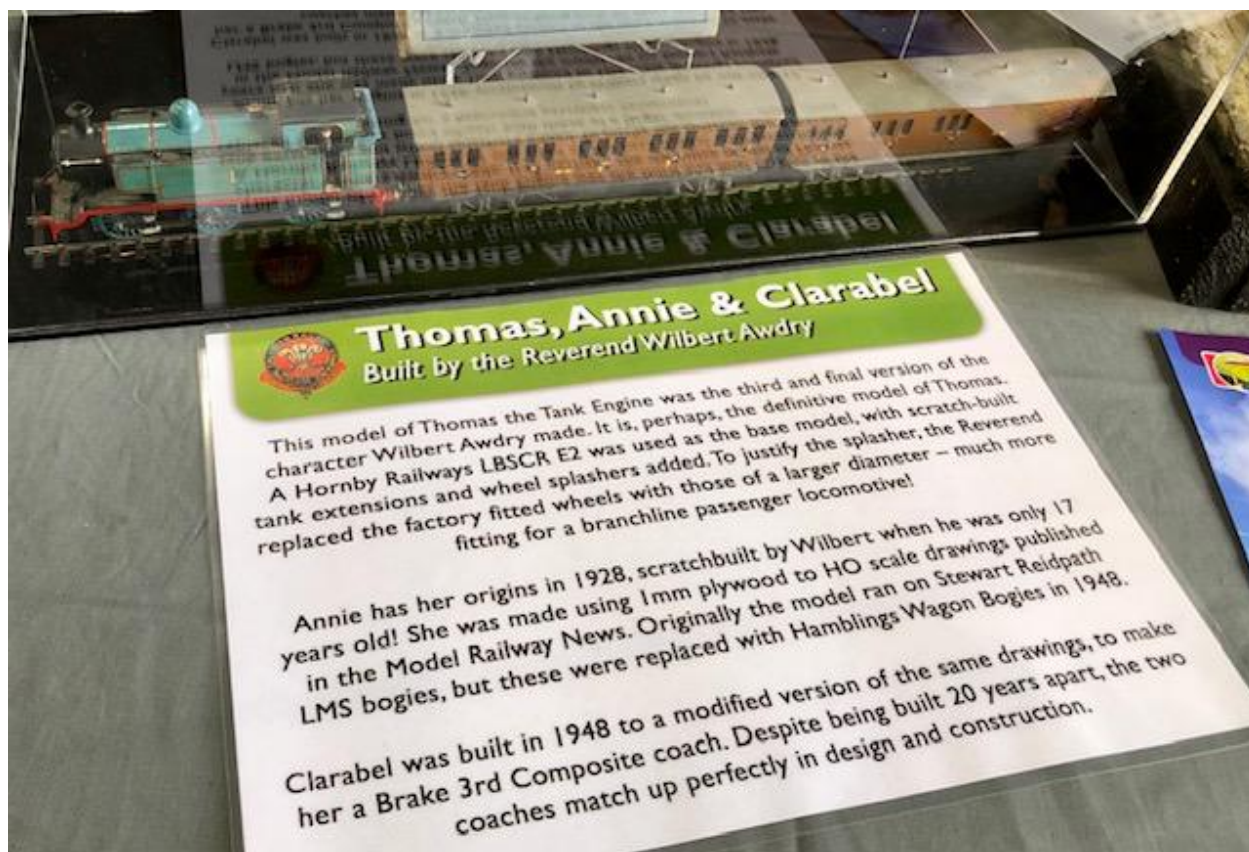
**Andrew Chrysler**

Yet again, the Isle of Wight features in this month's newsletter. Mark Pretious has modelled Ventnor West station, and exhibited it with models of St Lawrence and Merstone at Statfold Barn. This was the second outing of the complete 45 foot long layout, the first being in 2019.



For comparison, I have found two photographs of the location, one from before the line closed, and the other more recent, showing how the station buildings have been repurposed, and these appear later in this newsletter.

This month, I'm also really, really excited. Whilst at Statfold Barn, I met a celebrity. Not just any celebrity, but a world famous A list celebrity, accompanied by his two leading ladies. I even managed to get a photograph, beating the local paparazzi hands down. Here they are - and just like Cher and Madonna, they are so famous that they have no need of second names.



The crowds of children at the nearby Premier Inn were not all destined for the exhibition, as Drayton Manor theme park is close by, but I understand that several thousand tickets for the model railway exhibition were sold, so the nearby "Thomas Land" attraction did not manage to completely eclipse the original Thomas.

Next month I am travelling to Malta, where the only railway (from Valletta to Mdina) was closed in 1931. The railway tunnel under Valletta was used as an

air raid shelter during World War 2. Together with the adjoining bridge, it can still be seen. The Malta Railway was single track, 1 metre gauge.



Plans for a new Light Rail scheme have been released by Transport Malta, so perhaps in future years I will be able to report on the trains of more than one island, although while the proposal will serve Sliema and the airport, it appears to require a change of line. In any case, carrying luggage from the airport to the hotel is simpler by taxi. I imagine that the proposal will be valuable for commuters, although rumours of a tunnel link to the nearby island of Gozo remain just rumours at the present.

<http://www.tautonline.com/malta-publishes-metro-vision/>

Finally, a brief update from Merrivale Model Village - following on from the discovery of a "Banksy" last year, the stable has now been sold at auction for £1 million in January this year. Sadly Frank Newcombe suffered a heart attack in December and the decision was made by Frank and his wife Frances to retire for the sake of Frank's health.

A local couple, Dean Gray and Sophie Parks, have taken over the reins of running the village and have been busy carrying out winter refurbishments and have now placed a replica of the stable in the model village, as well as creating a trail based on his 2021 "spray-cation" series.

Well, after four, or is it five, years, this will be my last "Chairman's notes" for the newsletter - I have decided to stand down as Chairman and, with a busy two years ahead for me, let another worthy member take up the reins. My period of office has had its ups and downs.

Early on in my tenure, the decision was made to move from presenting a two-day annual exhibition to having one day shows. There were several reasons for this, but the two principal ones being the financial risk to the club that putting on a large show entailed, and perhaps just as importantly the demographics of the club membership meant that the physical effort entailed in setting up and closing the exhibition was getting too much for us. Perhaps if we get an influx of younger and fitter members this might be revisited but they would need to be exceptional since there is a superb reputation to live up to thanks to the exhibition stewardship of Tony and prior to him, Norman. The one-day shows are very different to the two day affairs, much less demanding on manpower and tending to showcase more local modelling efforts. Overall, they have been very successful both from the perspective of the club's public profile and financially.

For over a year we had the upset of having the exterior of the clubroom refurbished. However, I can honestly say it was worth it. The exterior of the building is hopefully in such a good state that it will last another 150 years and, of course, members pulled out all the stops to redecorate most of the rooms. The only downside to this activity was that our permanent OO layout, Portland Street, had to be dismantled. However, opportunity was taken to build HS3 with its multiscale/multigauge track and so help us aging modellers who were starting to find ducking under baseboards to get to the operating well increasingly difficult.

Then came the pandemic and the necessity for us to effectively stop all our routine meetings for various periods over almost 18 months. It was fortunate that Zoom was available which enabled us to have weekly virtual meetings. In general, attendance at these meetings was quite good and although it was not possible to do much modelling over the ether, at least we could "meet".

But for me, the worst moments were the sad loss of two of our members. Firstly Alan, our electrical guru, newsletter editor and general fount of railway trivia, passed away. And then a few months ago Jim. He was our

longest serving member, a modeller of esteem in numerous scales and gauges, and generally an all-round good guy. Both are sadly missed.

Overall, I have enjoyed my time as Chairman and wish the new incumbent all the best in post. I know that you will all support him and keep the Club vibrant.

By the time that you read this newsletter, you should have received the notification of our forthcoming AGM. This will be held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May starting at 7.30pm at our clubrooms. It was hoped to hold it at the Richmond but unfortunately, they were prebooked for that night (note – book now for next year’s AGM). Please attend if possible – it is the one time of the year when you can formally make known your views about how the Club is run, but you will need to give advance notice to John Howard for inclusion in the agenda.



And finally, those of you who are on the WhatsApp group will have noted earlier this month that Barry had seen the model of 57A that I made some years ago on display at the Atkinson Library and Museum. This week, on one of our regular walks, we visited the Atkinson to check it out and I was delighted to see that it was allocated its own special alcove, nicely illuminated.

However, further information that Jim had discovered about Eastbank Station, suggested that my model portraying the opening day was almost certainly incorrect. The actual celebrations would probably have taken place in the train shed which was situated some yards closer to what is now Eastbank Street. Our clubrooms were not a station per se, but they were where the stationmaster stopped the Crosby bound train and checked, or provided, passengers their tickets. How many times have we carefully researched and made a model, only for a later found photograph to show a significant error. But remember the modeller’s maxim “it is MY model”.

## **Where's Andrew?**

Last month, I was at Brighton, on Volk's Electric Railway. Congratulations to Tony Kuivala for the correct answer.

This month I am rather further afield, at the entrance to a tunnel which is used by both road and railway (or railroad) traffic. I travelled through this "multimodal" tunnel by train several years ago, but I wasn't quick enough to take a photograph. But where am I?



## **Lock in (not Lockdown)**

**Malcolm Evetts**

Much of 2021 left a great deal to be desired and in the ongoing mess there were long periods of time when motivation was hard to come by. Progress on double-tracking my 32 mm line ground to a halt and neither line on the Gormenghast Light Railway saw traffic for 8 months. Work on the Railway Inn also stopped. A return to normal seemed unlikely, but salvation glided



into view in late April, in the form of an eBay find I'd been after for a long time. The purchase was followed by the acquisition of the right materials for incorporating the model into my railway, with the option of moving it easily onto other layouts, such as the modular type, should the opportunity to go there ever arise again. In short, I've always wanted to model some sort of water-borne goings on in the foreground of a layout and Dave Skertchly's efforts in Garden Rail had only made the wish more pressing.

Building should have been quite rapid because, similar to Dave S, we already have a pond. The new 45 mm line passes behind it, but unfortunately, assorted difficulties slowed progress and so it came to pass that

the lock was finally put in place on 26<sup>th</sup> January. A major hindrance has been the state of the pond, so the construction of the lock was complicated by the need for some filtration. I used a 12 mm Stokbord from Filcrist; a bit over-scale in thickness, but I have to lean on stuff more and more, so it has to be robust.

It's not cheap, but it will survive as long as the sleepers on Peco and LGB track: much longer than me! A solar powered pump will lift water into the lock and, hopefully, the filtration foam underneath the polycarbonate surface will do its stuff.

Moonraker, the eBay purchase, is not waterproof, hence the imitation water. The filter pump will be switched off when running days are possible and Moonraker will be kept in dry-dock at all other times.





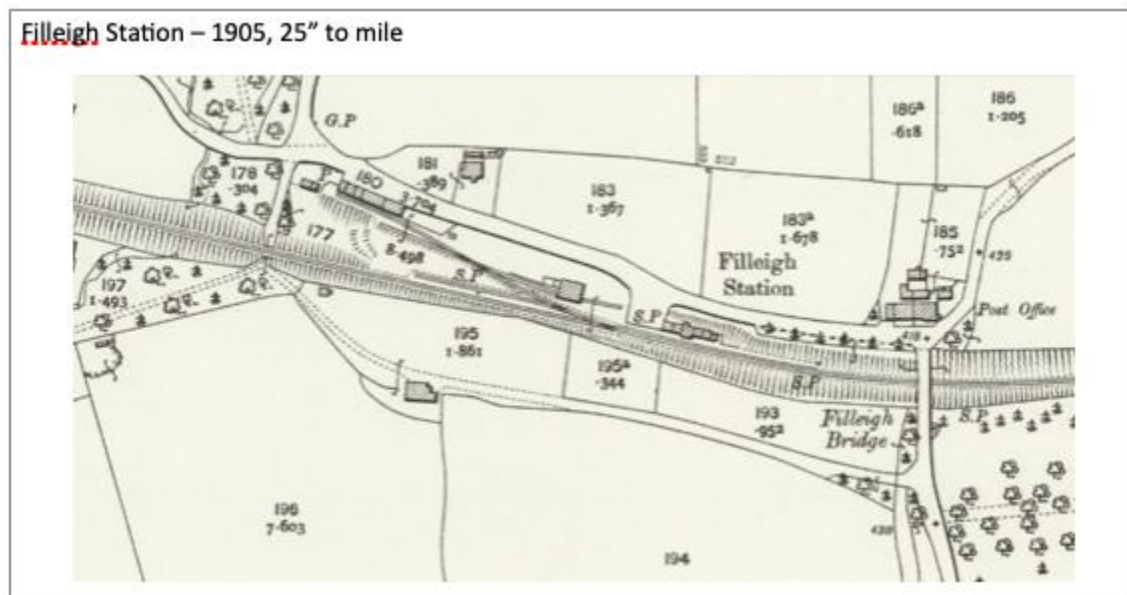
## Aerial Photographs – a new resource.

**Ian Shulver**

As you are probably aware, my preference when designing and building a layout is to base it on a real location. I have been careful to use the words “based on” because an exact scale model of an actual location is usually impracticable because of space constraints, but more importantly the distances involved with the railway infrastructure is huge and visually on a model just does not look right. Nevertheless, it is possible to preserve the overall impression of that real life location by means of selective compression or even leaving part out. However, to do that location justice (be it station, bridge or engine shed) you need access to photographs and maps.

Nowadays we have access to the internet to find these and in recent days this has been enhanced by a collection of aerial photographs made available through the Historic England website. This can be found via the following link

[Aerial Photo Explorer – Over 400,000 aerial photos in Historic England's digitised collections | Historic England](#) .



The collections include RAF overflight photos used for mapping purposes, as well as bespoke photographs of various well known and not so well known buildings and sites taken from back in the early 1930's through to more modern-day examples. I have included some examples to show you what is available. Sadly, there are many places of interest not included at the

moment even though there are nearly half a million items to browse, but I understand the database will be updated regularly.

Whilst on the subject of internet resources, one site that I have found extremely useful is the old map site accessed through the National Library of Scotland – link [Ordnance Survey Maps - National Library of Scotland \(nls.uk\)](http://nls.uk).

This has a vast library of Ordnance Survey maps from the very earliest ones through to more modern ones, with scale the 1:2500 and 6" series being most useful. The larger scale maps even show track plans and positions/plans of buildings. If you purchase a map, then you do get it to the correct scale. However, printing it from your computer does need a little bit of work to determine distances.

Dulverton station – RAF 1952



Dulverton station – Aerofilms 1967



Saltash – Aerofilms 1924



Royal Albert Bridge eastern end – RAF 1946

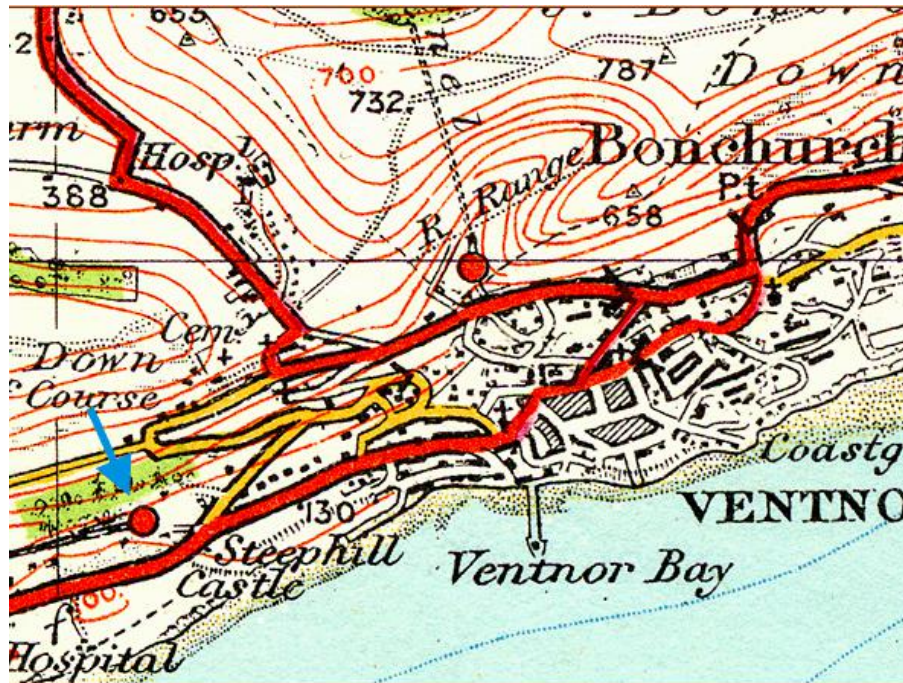


## **Ventnor West Station**

**Andrew Chrysler**

Ventnor West was originally named Ventnor Town when opened in 1900 by the Newport, Godshill and St.Lawrence Railway. This name was rather misleading, the station being situated almost half a mile to the west of the town, but renamed - rather more accurately - in 1923. The branch line left the Newport - Sandown line at Merstone, with stations at Godshill, Whitwell and St.Lawrence, where the line terminated from 1897 to 1900. Ventnor West was built on the site of the former staples of the Steephill Castle estate.

Plans were made for the line to continue to a more convenient terminus in the town centre, opposite the Royal Hotel, but the railway company's finances did not initially stretch to this and housing was subsequently built along the planned route. The line closed in 1952. The first station in Ventnor had been built 30 years earlier, by the Isle of Wight Railway on the line from Ryde (which now terminates at Shanklin) and although closer to the town centre it was up a steep hill, almost 300 feet above sea level. This closed in 1966 and Ventnor residents are now reliant on buses which, albeit slower, at least depart from far more convenient locations.



This map shows the location of Ventnor West station (bottom left) and also Ventnor station (centre).



Ventnor West station, seen in 1952. (photo - John L Smith)



The station building is now two domestic properties. The trackbed alignment is now Castle Close. (photo - Google Street View)

## **And Finally...**

I must apologise for the lack of a railway connection this month, but I simply could not resist posting the following from the Isle of Wight. Any comments I could add would be completely superfluous.

To clarify, this article appeared on 28 March - so unless the Isle of Wight uses a different calendar it isn't an April Fool joke!



**Island Echo**



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**BREAKING: Police have confirmed the discovery of a body at Mountjoy Cemetery on the outskirts of Newport this morning (Saturday) - the second such incident today alone.**

**It comes hours after a body was found at a graveyard in Cowes.**

