



A half-century for Redditch Model Railway Club

One of the many clubs formed in the 1960s, the West Midlands-based Redditch MRC is 50 this month. Secretary and Exhibition Manager GUY CRADDOCK traces the club's activities up to the present day.

Redditch Model Railway Club was formed in June 1967, thanks to the efforts of a group of model railway enthusiasts from the town who shared some common interests. An inaugural meeting took place on 1 June 1967.

Twelve people attended the gathering which took place at the White Hart Pub in Redditch. One of the founding members present that day was Mick Clements: he took on the mantle of club treasurer from day one. He is still our club treasurer to this day, and we all wonder if that's a record for any model railway club? Following the inaugural meeting a large double lock-up garage was found in the town centre which became our first club room.

In 1970 the club relocated to an attic room in the Smallwood Alms House block, Mount Street, Redditch and this became its home for the next 27 years; crucially it allowed the creation of a large permanent layout.

In the late 1980s the club changed the emphasis of its activities, changing from permanent layout building to the building of our first real exhibition layout – *Arrowmouth* – which is based on the Hest Bank area in the 1960s.

It was first exhibited back in March 1992 and, thanks to a refresh of the scenery and trackwork, is still on the exhibition circuit.

After the construction of *Arrowmouth* the club went on to build *Gorcott*, a slightly smaller Settle & Carlisle-based layout. As well as homing in on the north-west in the 1960s, club projects have also taken on a Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway theme, again thanks to the enthusiasm for this historic line by Mick Clements. To date four S&D-based exhibition layouts have been built. The latest is *Chilcompton*, which is a true-scale representation of the real station on the S&DJR.

In 2004 the club took the brave decision to create a totally new model railway exhibition at the Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre in Kings Heath in South Birmingham. This was an ideal venue, being close to the M42/M40 motorways. The first exhibition there was in September 2005, and it was well received by visitors, but after five years the event was no longer viable so we decided to concentrate on staging shows in Redditch.

Finding a home for a model railway club has



▲ Members Derek Collett and Pete Hancock get *Oakenshaw* ready for the 2016 show.

always been a challenge, and it is not getting any easier. In 1997 we had to leave the Smallwood Alms House and took residence in a former Methodist church. It gave us a base, but we didn't have much space to build new layouts: nor was it permanent for the club became homeless again in 2006 due to demolition of the building.

The council threw us a lifeline with the offer of one of its Enterprise Units, the only snag was it costs a commercial rent and business rates are levied – a lot different from the free double garage we started out with in 1967! However, we now have lots of space to build new layouts and recent ones have included *Dagnell End*, *Oakenshaw* and our latest, *Smallwood*.

The latter will make its exhibition debut at our 50th Anniversary show, over the weekend of 16 and 17 September, details of which can be found on our website.

The club has grown from strength to strength during its 50 year history and the current membership stands at 30. We are always keen to welcome new members from around the West Midlands area. Our club meeting nights are every Tuesday and Thursday evening from 1900 – 2230.

In the first instance and to get information on how to get there, contact myself Guy Craddock, club secretary, by sending an email via our website www.redditch-mrc.com

▲ One of the founder members of Redditch MRC, the late John Jones, is seen preparing his layout for the 1972 show.



▲ *Oakenshaw* is one of the more recent RMRC OO gauge exhibition layouts, reflecting a BR North Eastern Region through station.

A 9F passes over the canal on *Oakenshaw*, as an original LMS Patriot approaches on the opposite track. All photos via the author

