

RAILWAY MODELLERS



Chris Harrop's fictitious narrow gauge layout, featuring period vehicles in the station car park, in a nod to the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway in Devon

# Train gang steams ahead on skills journey

**Geoff Evans and Chris Harrop** reveal the intricate process of designing and building layouts and locos at Aston Clinton u3a's Railway Modellers Group

**B**uilding a model railway requires a lot of skills, from historical research to carpentry and painting. The Railway Modellers Group at Aston Clinton u3a in Buckinghamshire was established more than 12 years ago and is still going strong today.

The 10 members model in various scales and gauges. As most of the layouts cannot be moved, each person takes turns to host a meeting every month. It is good to see what other members have been up to and also set deadlines to get a particular job done before your turn to host a meeting comes around.

Railway modelling is a very broad church, covering many skills and talents. For example, you will need to do some geographical research to decide where the railway you are modelling is located. It could be in this country or abroad. What era – post-1830, of course – is your model set in? This will lead to some historical research.

You will need to learn some carpentry skills to construct the baseboard on which your model will be built. It could be a fixed structure in a spare room or attic. Or it could be portable, as many model railways are shown at exhibitions.

What will be the setting for your railway? It could be a station in a town or in the countryside, by a canal or dock, or a factory/works/quarry setting. You will also need to design this.

Members develop craft skills to build the scenery using various materials including polystyrene, cardboard, wire mesh and Plaster of Paris. When you start to build the railway, you will need to design the layout of the track and points, either based on an actual location or a fictional plan.

Knowledge of low-voltage electrics is required to design the various circuits to power the track, operate the points, signals and so on, and the necessary wiring involved.

You can make your locomotives, wagons, coaches and buildings either from kits or from scratch. Then there is the artistic side of painting the scenery, as well as the technical side of correctly decorating locomotives rolling stock.

Each of the above can be the specific