

Model Railway and Train-Spotting Memories

Roger Brian

You mentioned his love of trains and displayed some of his models. I recall going to his house and seeing his layout and his first model of the LMS express passenger engine. "Duchess of Atholl" I had a similar layout in our house, as did Gary Mitchell whose photo we have seen.

Between Crimond (No. 20, Alistair's house) and no. 16 was the home of Gary's cousin, Roy Travis. At school he came under the influence of teacher Kenneth Oldham, a train buff of an earlier generation who had taken train pictures before the war. In wartime this was not allowed, but this did not stop him. He sought out a woodland location, Tollery Bridge, to the west of Broadbottom station, and only a mile away which allowed concealment. His pictures were later published in a book called "[Steam in Wartime Britain](#)."



Gary and pet pooch on the left; Alistair on the right

Roy and his contemporaries were introduced to this idyllic spot, which is now part of a Country Park, and Alistair and I followed. From here you could see expresses from London Marylebone to Manchester, sometimes hauled by "Flying Scotsman" itself. Also, Gorton Works in Manchester was the repair shop of choice for a class of smaller locomotives, built to pass over weak fenland bridges and mostly named after East Anglian stately homes Sandringham, Holkham, Hatfield House etc. A "Namer!" A prize for train spotters!



Alistair or perhaps his father, Harold's photo of Stalybridge station

The electrification of the line in 1954 brought an end to this joy. Our only hope then was to cycle or bus 4 miles to Stalybridge. Here were Liverpool to Newcastle expresses, but we were barred from the station. So our only chance to see both the goods and the passenger lines was to stand on the bleak stony bank east of the station. Not idyllic.

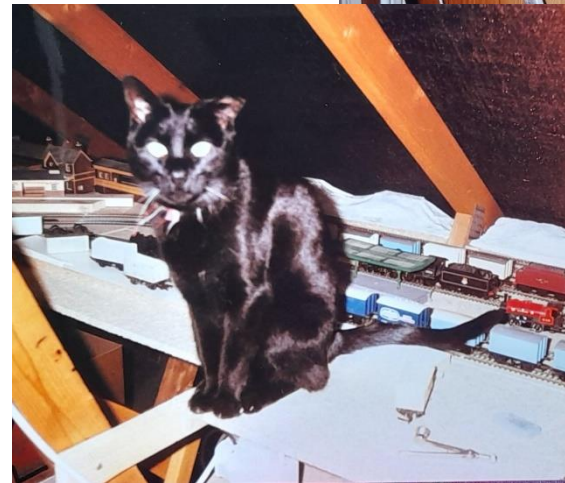
And not welcomed by the children from the poor terraces above. They used to hurl half-bricks at us. One of our number christened them "The Grid Grenadiers."

Alice's afterthoughts

My father had an extensive model railway set as long as I can remember. In our house in Hull Road, Cottingham, he built a large layout above his office - a complicated rabbit warren of various desks surrounded by shelves and files. I guess it was an early form of hotdesking for one researcher with multiple simultaneous interests. Anyway, on the top of this warren of workspaces he built a model railway layout. Edward and I used to climb different step ladders so we could get up to play with the trains.

Alistair recreated the model railway in the loft of his flat at Blackhorse Opening, Norwich. Again, there was not only a model railway up there, but another complicated warren of home-made shelves with countless maps and files, and at least one exercise bike. Since my dad spent so much time up there, an elderly family cat called Sable, who had come to live with him when Edward and Gail moved to

California, practised hard until she could go up and down the loft ladder. He and a Norwich friend called Jeff would 'play trains' one evening a week. All was well until Norwich City Council, who officially owned the loft space, discovered this major fire risk and we had to move everything out. One of many man-caves that required clearing out (not by him!) in the last decade. Maia, his granddaughter in Norwich took some video footage before it was packed up, but sadly the footage has vanished from the digital archives.



The model railway was resurrected yet again in the attic of Telegraph Lane. While Joyce was still at work, he would sneak up the loft ladder not only to play trains but also to

put up yet more files. Hundreds of files and hundreds of bits of model railway. In the last few years, when his mobility was too limited for ladders, young visitors would still enjoy going up to the attic and playing trains. Although the full set is far too extensive for one person – even for Alistair – his other granddaughter, Angharad, who has fond childhood memories of playing trains with grandpa is going to keep some of the family locomotives chugging down the generations.



With Maia at Sheringham



80th birthday treats
steam engines and chocolate steam engines