



According to Chris...

Some people always go 'above and beyond', making a special place in everything they touch and everyone whose lives they affect. Chris remembers one such person, Allan Weare, who passed away recently.

“There's no 'right' or 'wrong'. Our hobby is a personal thing.”

The clubhouse at Hummer Road Car Park, Egham, is really Allan's legacy. No one did more to make it happen.
CHRIS LEIGH



Model railway clubs are an important part of the hobby. They aren't for everyone and I suspect that among those reading this there are a lot for whom club membership has never been a consideration. They prefer to do things their own way and to enjoy the hobby on their own terms. There's no 'right' or 'wrong'. Our hobby is a personal thing.

I'll let you into a secret. I've always been a bit of a 'loner.' Even as a small kid I can recall my parents and teachers saying things like, "he doesn't seem to mix with other children very much." I think I was probably about nine years old before I made a real friend at school. At least part of the attraction was that he had Hornby 'O' gauge and we could run track all the way through the bungalow where he lived! He passed the 11+ exam. I didn't, and so our ways parted and we never met again.

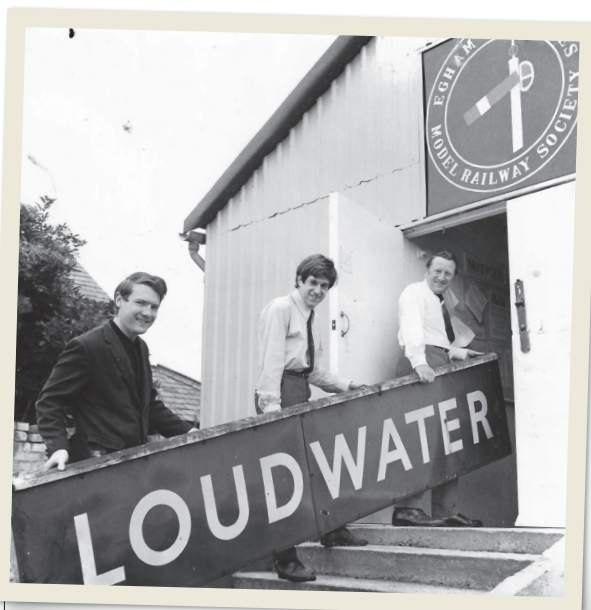
Once I started work, I had no option but to mix with others and when the 'Club News' page in *Model Railway Constructor* included a letter inviting modellers to form a new club in Staines, I braced myself to attend a meeting with lots of strangers. Two brothers-in-law, who were both modellers, invited half a dozen of us to meet to thrash out a constitution, and from that came a meeting at Staines Town Hall, where a room was hired and prospective members were invited.

A couple of dozen turned up and the wheels were set in motion with a committee and a membership fee. So started the Staines Model Railway Society, with regular Tuesday evening meetings in that basement room at the Town Hall nearly 60 years ago. We even started building a layout there but the room had to be emptied at the end of meetings and various members took baseboards home. It was not very satisfactory and things came to a head when one baseboard was left leaning against a car for a few moments, the wind blew, the baseboard fell on its face, and several scratch-built structures were crushed.

A move took place, to a village Scout Hall which was well appointed and had storage space for layouts. It was not easily accessible by public transport and when its heating system persistently failed, some very cold meetings began to adversely affect attendance.

Something needed to be done and one of the founder members, Allan Weare, began to spearhead a plan to find the club a permanent home.

Allan's role in the early years of the Society was pivotal. He not only resolved the issue of premises by obtaining a plot of land behind the High Street shops in Egham, Surrey, at a very reasonable rent, he did much of the work



I thought I was buying something much smaller! Allan Weare (right) and Jim Cotton help me lift it into the clubhouse.

towards creating a clubhouse at a price 'we' could afford. When a bricks and mortar building proved too expensive, he found a source of timber from the closed Staines stock-car racing stadium. When the owner gave us just two weekends in which to dismantle the structure and remove the timber, Allan borrowed a lorry from his work. The owners never knew that their truck was frequently bogged down to its axles in mud and that at one point we had to get a tractor to tow it out!

I've no idea what Allan's wife thought about having the timber, including several very substantial roof trusses, stored in her garden but the Society did have to re-imburse the cost of a new lawn!

In the meantime, Allan worked to negotiate the design of the building through the Council's planning system, largely by getting the council to tell him what we could have. The building would be 60ft long by 20ft wide and, at the Council's recommendation, a green-plastic coated steel sheeting called Everclad was used over the timber frame. Inside, it was plasterboard, and fireproof paint on the ceiling.

After the Scout Hall meetings were suspended and everything was concentrated on the construction work at Egham the membership fragmented. Not surprisingly, some members were not inclined to do building work. Allan managed to keep several of them 'on message' so that the membership numbers could be quickly rebuilt once the clubhouse was finished.

He went on to serve in every post on the committee, Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. He represented the 'TT' gauge layout on which he was the guiding hand and he did much to establish the 'junior' layout to encourage younger members of the Society. Clubs reflect life itself. There are always comings and goings, and at Egham there was always a turnover of members as the club was close to Heathrow Airport and members came and went as their jobs at Heathrow dictated.

Allan was, I believe, the last active member to have been at those founding meetings. He was always modest about his massive contribution to the Society but it won't be forgotten while Tuesday meetings continue on 'Macfisheries old shop site' at Hummer Road, Egham. If you're in the area on a Tuesday evening, look in. I know you'll be welcome.

Modeller CV: Chris Leigh

Thinks - am I now the last surviving complimentary life member paid off for work on the clubhouse construction?