

the ditchlight

the newsletter of the thameside sub-division, nmra british region

issue #146

june 2023



highlights

special features:

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- ♦ Texas Convention 2023 Preview on page 5
- ♦ Tales from the Taxes Pacific Lines by Mike Arnold on pages 6-7
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From the Head End

Welcome to the June Edition of Ditchlight.

It is with great sadness that I pass on the news from Chris Coombes that his wife Kay after a long fight with cancer passed away on 30th May. Many of you will have met her at our Christmas Lunches, where we enjoyed the results of her cooking. Many of you have individually sent your condolences to Chris, this is to express condolences on behalf of the Group, and our support to Chris as he involves himself once again in the Group's activities. I hope the companionship of the Group will make his loss easier to bear.

Following the financial success of the Quiz Night raising approximately £500 for Group Funds we have decided to volunteer to host another event, hopefully, in 2024. We also decided that this would not be on a Meet date, and initial indications were that this would produce a larger number of members/spouses to make up a team. A specific date is yet to be agreed with the organisers.

You should be receiving this edition of Ditchlight just prior to our Open House on 24th June. EBL will be 5 x 0 with a Branch. The N Gauge. layout will be the normal "L" shaped configuration, in addition we will have an On30 demonstration layout, a T-Trak demonstration, and Kootenay Lake, a portable 6ft x 3ft layout. Trade will be represented by Coastal DCC/Orwell Models and we will be running a bring and buy stall. Refreshments will be cakes and hot and cold drinks. Cake donations are still required. Set up will be from 6pm on Friday, and members are requested to be available from 9am on Saturday. Dean has distributed a Rota, please ensure that you are aware of your allocations on the Rota. The event has received good local and NMRA publicity so we hope for a good turnout of locals and

local model railway clubs.

Work on Frating Pulp and the Reverse Loop has been suspended as these modules are now in store at St Osyth for the open day. However I have been doing track cleaning and maintenance work on Kootenay Lake in preparation for the Open House. I also decided to have a go at fitting decoders to the Kato Alco PA-1/B units I acquired from Dean. I chose soundtraxx decoders for both units. The A unit was fitted with a sound decoder that basically replaced the light board. The only hassle was milling the top of the chassis to make room for the speaker. I used a bench drill and milling bits to do this. Not something I would recommend, but as it only required a depth of 2mm over a small area I got away with it. For the B unit I used a Soundtraxx non-sound bare wired decoder, that took up very little space. It only required four wires to be soldered, as the unit does not have any lights. As the B unit will always run with the A unit I have given them the same address, rather than setting them up as a consist. Initial impressions are that speed matching is not bad. I just have to sort out a minor problem between the track pickup and a bronze spring, before I can say the conversion was a success. However it has encouraged me to try a few more conversions myself. That's about it for now. Hope to see you at St Osyth on 23rd/24th June.

David

21 June 2023



GROUP MEETS

NEXT FOUR MEETS

SATURDAY 24 JUNE 2023

THE OPEN DAY. Set up Friday evening from 6.00pm and finally from 9.00am Saturday. See opposite for details.



SATURDAY 8 JULY 2023

Virtual Meet at 10.00am. Watch for an e-mail from David Ammon with log on details/weblink.

SATURDAY 22 JULY 2023

Physical Meet at St Osyth. Usual timings but please be there from the start to help set up the layouts. It always takes longer than hoped for and the more hands make lighter work.

SATURDAY 5 AUGUST 2023

Virtual Meet at 10.00am. Watch for an e-mail from David Ammon with log on details/weblink.

DATES FOR 2023

As a general trend all meetings will be on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month so as not to clash with Region's "Brew & Natter" sessions on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays. Virtual on second weekend and physical at St Osyth in the fourth, unless otherwise posted.

ADVANCE NOTICE

The Ditchlight for August will be delayed as last year until September due to attendance at the Texas Convention in the second half of the month of August. But you will doubtless then enjoy a supplement featuring some aspects of the Train Show or Convention at large.

THAMESIDERS MRG OPEN DAY

Just in case this had passed you by.....

On Saturday 24 June 2023 Thamesiders MRG will be holding an open day at their club premises in St Osyth, Essex. The venue is St Osyth Village Hall, Clacton Road, St Osyth CO16 8PE from 10.00 until 15.30 hours. There will be layouts in N and HO plus trade support from Orwell Model Railways and Coastal DCC. There will be Bring & Buy and displays in T-Track and On30.

Thamesiders are asked to attend Friday evening to help set up from 6.00pm and from 9.00am Saturday to get ready for opening.



Membership Renewal

Just a reminder that it is renewal season. If not renewing please also let me know your reasons - all feedback is valuable.



Presents their
OPEN HOUSE
St. Osyth, Essex

24 June 2023 (10am – 3:30pm)

*St. Osyth Village Hall, Clacton Road, St. Osyth,
Clacton-on-Sea, CO16 8PE*



Supported by the NMRA British Region, Orwell Model Railways and Coastal DCC

Admission, tea, coffee, and cake with donations. The hall is accessible for wheelchairs.

Featuring:

Bring & Buy (as well as the traders listed above)
Both HO and N Scale modular layouts
And demonstration boards including T-Trak and On30

The hall is accessible via public transport however parking is available on site or the nearest side street, Longfields.

GO EAST *this summer with the Thamesiders MRG*



thamesidersmrg.org.uk



Can you tell what it is yet?

REGION AND OTHER EVENTS

BRITISH REGION “UNION CITY” CONVENTION 2023

This will be held at the Derby Conference Centre in Derby hosted by Black Diamonds on Friday through Sunday 20-22 October 2023. There will be the following layouts:

- N Scale Modular
- Freemo HO
- On30 Modular
- HO Switching
- Radio Controlled Trains

Traders will include:

- Anoraks Anonymous,
- Mech Models,
- Neal's N'Gauging Trains,
- Anglo-American Model Railways,
- N Scale Architect,
- N Scale Laser,
- Sunningwell Command Control and
- Peter Harris—N Scale kits.

Website: <https://www.black-diamonds.org.uk/convention/>



SEABOARD SOUTHERN SHOW SATURDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2023

Times: 10:00 – 16:00

Admission: £7 Adults, £6 NMRA members, Accompanied U16s Free

Venue: The Charis Centre, West Green Drive, Crawley, West Sussex, RH11 7EL

For those on foot / public transport the main entrance is West Green Drive, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 7EL. It is walkable from Crawley Station or via Metrobus (<http://www.metrobus.co.uk/>) Route 1 or 2 (Crawley Hospital stop) from Crawley Bus Station, opp. Southern Trains station.

For those driving the car park is accessed via Town Barn Road (opp No. 38), Crawley, RH11 7ED

Hot food, snack and drinks will be available on site

Confirmed Layouts (so far)

- Stevens Point Servicing Point – (Chris Prior) – HO Wisconsin Central loco servicing point in minimal space
- Santa Barbara (Ian Lampkin) – An excellent representation of the California Coast Line in N scale with a choice of either modern Union Pacific or pre-merger Southern Pacific.
- Oak Creek Brewery – (Jean-Luc Pineau) – New England On30 industrial switching
- Kitwood Junction (Simon Cox) – Modular On30 set up
- Minocqua Falls (Bevis King) – A section of the old CNW in Wisconsin under CP/Soo line ownership modelled in O scale.

Confirmed Traders

- Kent Garden Railways – new and second-hand rolling stock and accessories
- Anoraks Anonymous – Pre-loved railway equipment
- Sunningwell Command Control – All your DCC needs
- Plus Daughters – N scale specialist
- JB Modelworld – stock boxes and modelling tools
- Barry Clements (Baztrains) – 3D printed details & scenic accessories
- Seaboard Southern Club Sales Stand

Contact: secretary@seaboard-southern.org.uk

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

2023 NMRA NATIONAL CONVENTION AND TRAIN SHOW

june 2023

UPCOMING NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

2023 - Grapevine, TX outside Dallas/Fort Worth (20-26 August 2023). Registration is open for this event which promises to be a whopper. Texas is known for everything being big: BBQ, Rodeo, Dallas Cowboys, Trains, Architecture.....

See their website at www.2023texasexpress.com

Venue: Gaylord Texan Hotel and Resort, just outside Dallas.

Nearest Airport: Dallas/Forth Worth (4 minutes by taxi) or light rail to Downtown Grapevine then shuttle to hotel.

Local Attractions: Grapevine RR; Museum of the American Railroad (see next page), McKinney Avenue Trolley system, Southfork Ranch, Tower 55. BNSF HQ and more, lots more



ROOM RATE \$179.00
Double Occupancy
(includes a \$25 per day resort fee)

- FREE Internet
- 2 bottles of water per day in your room
- 2 passes per day to the fitness facility and spa
- 4 passes per day to the hotel's exclusive water park

MEMBER NEWS - TALES FROM THE TEXAS PACIFIC LINES by MIKE ARNOLD

june 2023

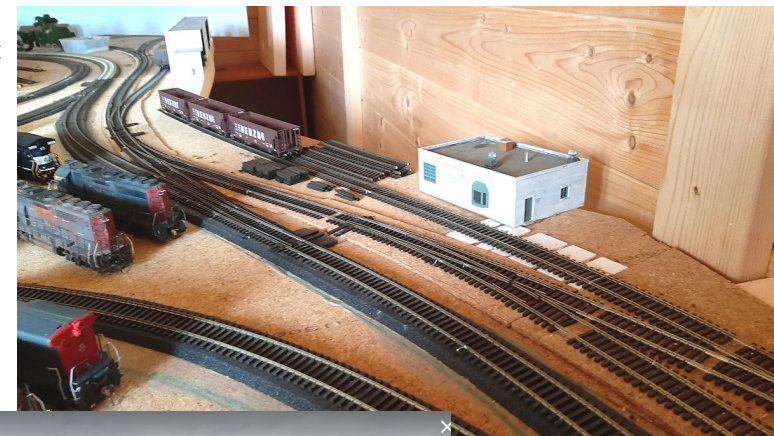
COLORADO COUNTY RICE MILL SILOS AT EAGLE LAKE, TX

My railroad was planned around Rosenberg TX as it was a location where two major railroads, originally SP and Santa Fe and now UP and BNSF, met and crossed, with a small yard between them. There were locals on both roads out of Houston to serve the industries in Rosenberg. Thus two major switching operations were born and are a regular feature of operating the Texas Pacific Lines. That was until I discovered that UP gave up the Rosenberg local to KCS but....

On YouTube I discovered that UP runs an Eagle Lake local - Eagle Lake is the next large township west of Rosenberg. It has a yard and a wye plus two long branch lines that leave the main line to serve an assortment of industries. One serves A&K Railroad Materials Inc (ties, track parts etc) and another on a redundant local line used to serve Eagle Lake Rice Dryer Inc - the rail connection has been removed. There is also one ricer dryer on the main line still served by rail, Colorado County Rice Mill Inc.

Having aborted the plan to have a higher level on the layout I had the space in the bottom right corner of the layout to introduce two more industries and add to the burden of the crew running the UP local. Below is the view of the mill from Google

street view. The main line runs along in front with one single industry track running off the main from the right behind the block of nine silos two deep to the right and in front of the larger block of silos on the left. By the way there is another block of nine silos four deep behind those on the right. There are drying houses off to the left of the photo grab. The plant is served by covered hoppers.



The start was made a few months ago to alter the track layout in that corner of the layout to accommodate an extension of the loop from Rosenberg Produce Center linking up with the former turnout to lead to the abort-

ed upper deck. In between a run round cross over and additional loop was installed plus a trailing siding/spur into A&K Railroad Materials and a facing siding/spur along the side wall of the cabin for Colorado County Rice Mills Inc. That was all tested and a dry run with a train was made to ensure it all worked, both electrically and logistically. Tick. Tick.

It took a while before structures were added as I had planned originally to use down pipe material for the silos but the purchase of a Walthers silo kit changed all that.

My rendition of the silos is somewhat more compact, just a representation. I had two materials sources for this project, a Walthers



MEMBER NEWS - TALES FROM THE TEXAS PACIFIC LINES by MIKE ARNOLD

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COLORADO COUNTY RICE GROWERS SILO AT EAGLE LAKE, TX (Continued)

grain silo kit with head house and end loading cabin and some assembled low relief industrial buildings from Pikestuff kits that had been given to me by the late Tony Harris when he ripped out his loft layout before moving to an apartment.

I started by cutting down the low relief structure using the guidelines on the reverse side to create the shed like structure that sits atop the silos and houses all the elevator equipment - the modern (ish) version of the head house. Fortunately it was exactly the length that I needed to sit on top of the silos in the space available.

New roofing material was taken from a kit in stock and six panels were glued in place in sequence with strengthened under neath at each joint. As you can see from the photo of the real thing there are a number of vents along the roof line. Fortunately I had a large number of these in my stock of kits and bits.

Space would only allow a single row of silos and not two deep as in the kit (and the real thing). The silos were assembled semi-low relief in that I used one complete side and coupled them with half a complete side to make a total of six silos wide (with open backs - you cannot see that!). Bases and tops were cut to fit - the ribs on the tops to locate the head house were not a problem as they would be hidden by the Pikestuff assembly. This would fit perfectly even with the end loading structure added at the right hand end against the cabin wall.

Although not finished yet, I have used the remaining parts of silo towers to represent in VERY low relief the silos beyond the tracks. Another part of Tony Harris's Pikestuff structures adds to the industrial back drop. All need to be painted some time.

So Eagle Lake TX now features in the operation of the Texas Pacific Lines with covered hoppers empty to Eagle Lake and loaded with rice for the return journey to Houston. A&K needs hoppers for ties and flat cars for track parts. Only a few cars at a time are shipped because spur length and run round impose a limit with fouling the main! And that would be a cardinal sin! For turning, there is the adjacent Y which there is at Eagle Lake TX. So very prototypical, if somewhat compressed.



MEMBER NEWS - WANTED, A NEW HOME FOR FLORENCE, IOWA, ROCK ISLAND

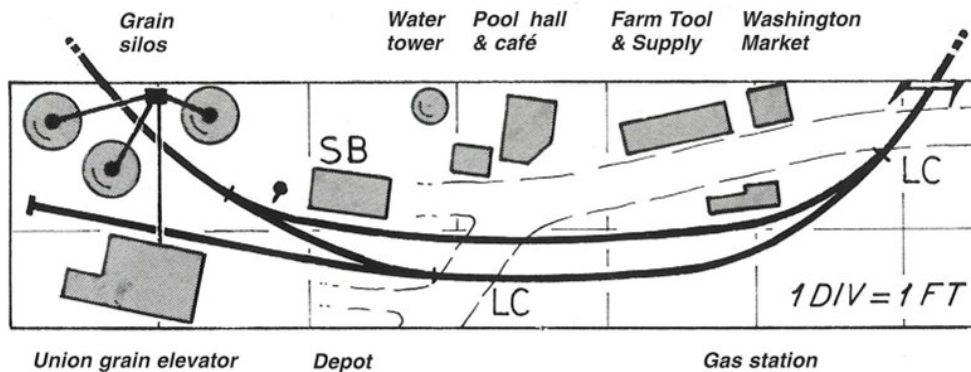
june 2023

MIKE ARNOLD IS DISPOSING OF THE LAYOUT BUILT BY PETER NORTH

FREE.... Yes, free, free to a new home.

Florence needs a new home. "Florence, Iowa, Rock Island" built by Peter North in the 1990s depicting the run down Rock Island in back-woods Iowa in HO is free to a new home, unless the new owner would like to make a donation to Region funds. The new owner just needs to collect it (estate car or small van) – the space is needed for another new Freemo project. The layout will require the new owner to provide a power supply.

The layout measures 6ft 6ins by 6ft. It was last exhibited at Benson in 2020. Mike acquired it in 2018 from the only other owner after Peter North sold it. For further details see November 1995 'Continental Modeller' or any enquiries and genuine offers please contact Mike Arnold 01892 459967.



Track plan courtesy of Continental Modeller

DIESELS IN DETAIL

B UNITS

Some B units are built that way - see the GE B30-7As and EMD GP60Bs - but others get converted to B Unit status, either in looks or in terms of control. Here we start with the GEs: BN 4045 in a manifest freight at Caliente CA in the Tehachapis in 1998 and BN 4064 at the same location. Note #4064 is of the later build with brake housing prominent (there is a kit for this!)



DIESELS IN DETAIL

B Units (Continued)

B30-7A BN 4064 again, this time farther up the climb at Bealville, CA again in 1998; and EMD GP60B #337 at Needles CA in 1998.



DIESELS IN DETAIL

B Units (Continued)

ATSF GP60B #341 at Caliente CA in 2000; close up of rear end of GP60B #337 at Needles CA in 2000; and ATSF 335 exiting Abo Canyon, NM in 1998.



DIESELS IN DETAIL

B Units (Continued)

EMD SD45-2B rebuild ATSF #5514 - rebuilt as a B unit from ATSF #5701 at Caliente CA in 1998. Note position of dynamic brake blister; and BNSF #7504 an SD45-2B but with conventional dynamic brake blister.



THAMESIDERS SUB-DIVISION OFFICERS AND CONTACTS

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NMRA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Varying discounts and offers are available to NMRA members on production of their current membership card from the following suppliers:

- 10-20% off at Malc's Models (Ilkeston, Derbyshire)
- 10% off at Plus Daughters (Basildon – N scale specialists)
- 10% off at Grainge & Hodder (laser-cut base-board kits) with code nmabr 19
- 15% off Lenz Digital Plus at A&H Models (Brackley, Northants)

Please note not all the above supply USA/Canadian models.

The following do not offer any discounts but the following stock North American models: Invicta Models at Sidcup, Kent, and Kent Garden Railways at St Mary Cray, Orpington, Kent. Model Junction is trading from home now and will remain open for business until at least 31 December 2021.



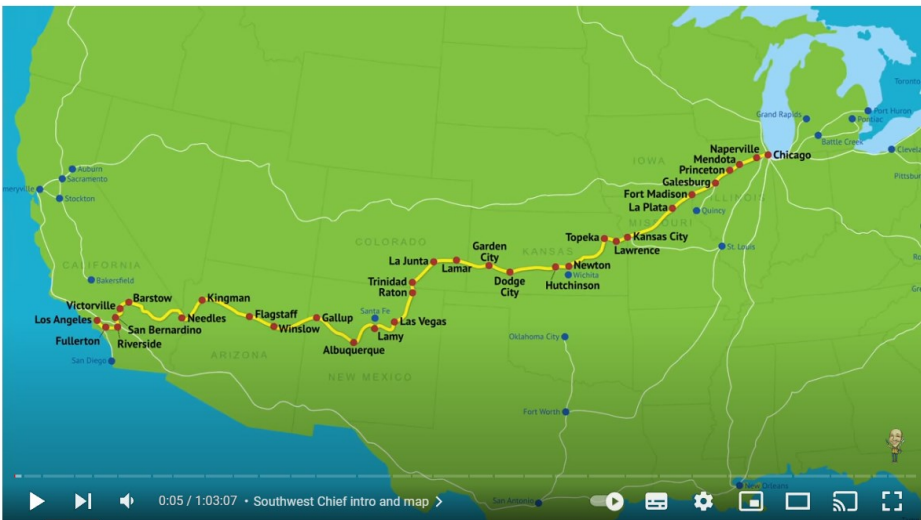
YOUTUBE VIDEO SUGGESTIONS - TRAVELLING BY AMTRAK



Amtrak Texas Eagle. Dallas to Chicago. 7/6-7/2021



4 DAYS on AMTRAK across the US: CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR and CAPITOL LIMITED | TheNewFatCat CVA22 P.1



Guide to Southwest Chief – 2,265 miles of history and sites

Top left: Texas Eagle Dallas to Chicago ([429](#)) [Amtrak Texas Eagle. Dallas to Chicago. 7/6-7/2021 - YouTube](#)

Top right: California Zephyr and Capitol Limited.... ([429](#)) [4 DAYS on AMTRAK across the US: CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR and CAPITOL LIMITED | TheNewFatCat CVA22 P.1 - YouTube](#)

Bottom left: South West Chief—History and Sites... ([429](#)) [Guide to Southwest Chief – 2,265 miles of history and sites - YouTube](#)

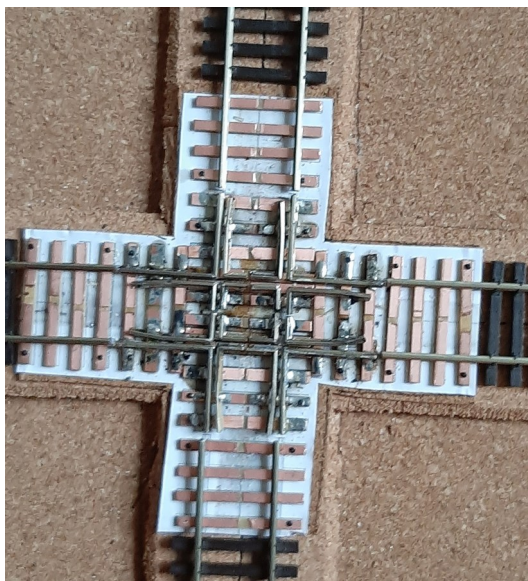
FROM THE CABOOSE - Mike Arnold

I have no idea where the last two months have gone, but gone they have!

A trip over to St Osyth last month for the physical meet proved both productive and frustrating. Productive in that my extra module for the end of Laxton was an electrical success - Mike Meadows would have signed it off had he still been a member. It was made from a spare board that doubled as a step at our kitchen door when we hosted tea parties for older folk. We have a proper concrete and brick one now - and we have stopped doing the tea parties! I have spent a good few happy hours since applying ballast, ground cover and general scenic effects. As I write it is almost ready and just needs a lick of black paint on the baseboard sides. As it will double as a Freemo board there is no backscene.

Frustrating on two fronts: the mystery of the whereabouts of the craftsman kit-built Peach Meadows passenger depot building continues as it was not amongst the buildings Paul Harman found in his loft. Nonetheless the new replacement building has been put in nicely. The other frustration was that my train of auto-racks kept uncoupling and parting company - some even decided that the ballast looked better to run on. For me the day was a joy and made the two hour drive each way a pleasurable journey.

Back to that extra board. Although the original offer to provide a run round lead for Laxton ad implicitly just some plain straight track, it did not end up that way. The board itself was a rectangle, 16" by 23.5". As I could not decide which way round would be best I decided to run two tracks across each other and thus, foolishly, to scratch-build a 90 degree crossing to accommodate that. I had a drawing from Real Tracks website so I set about it. The objective was to scratch-build another piece of track-work for Civil Engineer in the Achievement Program. It just needs to work in both directions - no scores, no beauty parade with scenery etc. I tried it with a Bachmann pannier tank



and hey presto. I just now need to video it operating to show it works for the sign off by Keith Webb or one of his assessors. Foolish? In hindsight no as it certainly ticked a box for AP. IO would also add that it was a learning curve for me to solder it together from PCB ties and rail pieces cut, bent and filed to shape. Do you know how many pieces of rail there are in it? And by the way the lower track was only tacked in place! It does line up now.

Having done all the scenic work on that small module I now realise how much work there is still to do on the layout - more than half has no scenery at all and ballasting will take an age. The issue I have is matching the ground cover as my supply of silver sand is running out and getting a colour match will be a gamble to say the least. I have plenty of ballast in SP colours - a blend of greys and cinders, all by Arizona Rock & Mineral. In fact I was surprised how many bags I must have brought back from the USA as it is not available here in the UK. In fact I am not sure it is still available over there as the family run business, a real aggregates company, was wanting to sell on and the owners retire. And if I have one pack of grass in fine or medium or tufts I have dozens of them. I do not need any tufts. I used to buy them whenever I saw them but COVID and lockdown taught me a lesson - do not buy scenic materials! Rainy day never comes does it.

Planning for my trip to the Texas Convention continues - checking out Amtrak videos on YouTube and the rail cams at St Louis, Big Sandy TX and Forth Worth Tower 55 to see what the consist is. By the way Tower 55 is no longer there as it was demolished in November last year but the location is still as busy as ever. We should be in for a great time there on those days we get out trackside or take the local passenger trains.

The Open Day beckons - let us hope all our stock is on its best behaviour and the layouts all go together in good time on Friday evening. See you all there at 6.00pm. Come equipped with tools and soldering irons etc

Mike Arnold

20 June 2023



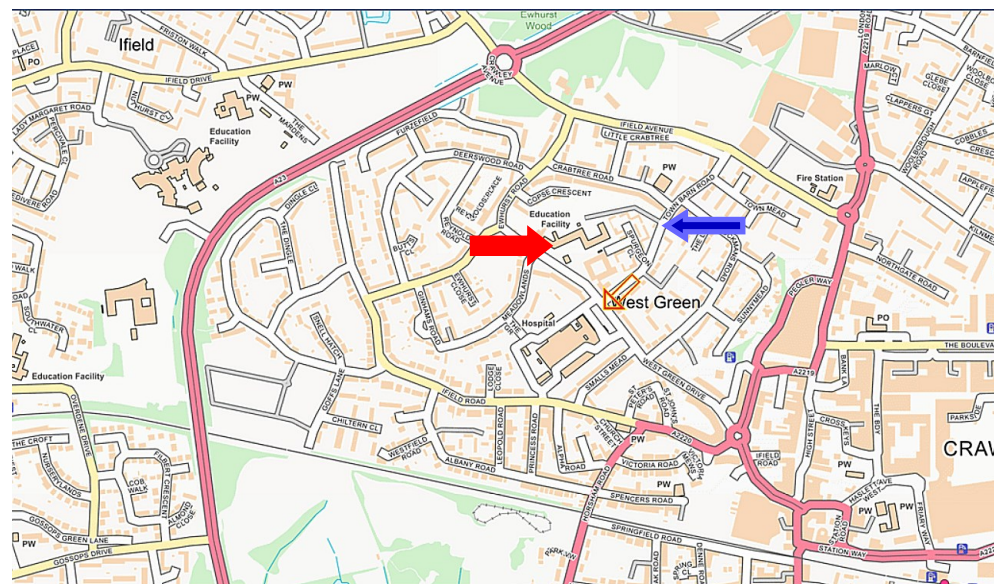
NEXT MEET



june 2023

MONTHLY MEET AT ST. OSYTH VILLAGE HALL, CLACTON ROAD, SEABOARD SOUTHERN SHOW AT CHARIS CENTRE, WEST GREEN DRIVE, CRAWLEY RH11 7EL



Take the A133 towards Clacton (past the Frating turnoff) until reaching the St Johns roundabout where the fire station is. Take the B1027 St Johns road exit towards St Osyth. After a few miles just after the Pump Hill BP filling station take the left turn towards St Osyth and the village hall is a little way along on the left set back from the road. Follow the one-way system around the hall and park in one of the marked bays at the front. You will come in from the right on the map on B1027 - Clacton Road is the yellow road running off the B1027 in a WSW direction. The Hall is circled.



 Charis Centre
 Car parking entrance

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