

MERG Virtual Area Group

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How do I contact the Virtual Area Group?



[MERG Virtual Area Group contact form](#)

Who is the leader of the group?



Dave Mason, who is a retired chartered engineer with relevant experience in electronics and control system software, but little experience with railways, model or otherwise. Dave is a member of the South Hants Area Group and piloted the first virtual Special Interest Group exploring “analogue/DC” systems.

(“Acemason” on the Forum. Website: www.townace.plus.com)

Would you like to join today?

Not a member? then

[Join MERG Here](#)



and sign up to this Area Group. If you are already a member

[Join the Virtual Area Group](#)

Select **Virtual Area Group** from the drop down list in **Other Area Groups** and press the **Subscribe to Area Group** button.

How do you meet?

The Virtual Area Group (VAG) is for MERG members only and was started primarily for those too distant from their nearest Area Group. It only meets using Zoom.

During the first two years of the VAG we regularly welcomed members from Australia, Canada, Iceland, Ireland, UK, USA etc and varied weekly meeting times to try to make the calls work for different time zones.



Many Area Groups have switched to using Zoom during Covid and so, temporarily we hope, created many other options for joining in.

At the start of 2021, after a break in the programme and with those other MERG Zoom options which are accessible to members in the western hemisphere, the plan is to resume VAG meeting only once a month on a Tuesday at 10am UK time which suits members in Europe and the Australian times zones.

Meetings are nominally for an hour but typically Zoom will open 15mins before and for 30 mins afterwards for informal chat.

Calls may be recorded and made available all MERG members.

And the Next Meeting?

Date	Event	Description	Location	Link
20:00 07-Jun	Monthly Virtual AG meeting		Online Zoom Meeting	

How are Topics Chosen?

In April 2020 we carried out a poll of VAG members and the following topics were identified as the most popular: -



- How kits work - a series of calls, each discussing the how one particular kit works - now scheduled
- Types and use of baseboard connectors - covered in Demystifying Components - Wires and Connectors
- Oscilloscopes and logic analysers for hobbyists - now scheduled
- Using the FCU - a multi part course is being considered including the use of the FCU to configure individual 2nd generation modules.
- Testing boards (use of various pieces of test equipment and the way to go about it) - A Test Gear Buyers Guide has already been presented.
- Neater Methods of under board wiring
- Best practice for wiring different bus types
- Layout control buses
- CBUS wiring strategy on a large club O gauge layout - scheduled
- CANPAN wiring
- Servo and Servo Mounts
- Building CANVOUT
- Prusa 3D Printer
- 3D scanners
- Photogrammetry - generating 3D models from multiple photographs
- CBUS Beginners Kit.

Members can suggest topics at any time using the member email system.

How do Video Calls Work?

The calls last one hour and to participate, members need a mobile phone, tablet or a PC / Mac with a camera and microphone.



Calls are scheduled in advance and are held on each Tuesday of each month at 10:00, 12:30 or 18:30 GMT or BST. Topics are agreed in advance.

When it is time to start a call, a voice and video conference is opened up which has thumbnails of each video participant and any shared presentations or desktops. The call leader facilitates the call and the discussions and tries to get through the agenda in the

agreed time. Zoom has two views available. The first is the speaker view which selects the video stream from the person speaking. The second is Gallery view which shows streams from all participants.



If you would like to try out Zoom, then there is a test meeting service where you are the only participant and you can experiment with the various options available.

[Test Zoom](#)

This link is available to anybody, not just members of the virtual area group.

[VAG Members Page](#)

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