



# Newsletter

Issue 76: August 2019 Editor: Allan Trotter  
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## Editorial.

### Horseshoes are lucky, aren't they?

It may have been noticed on the news that a rather bizarre derailment occurred on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July on Horseshoe Curve on the Norfolk & Southern main line across the Alleghenies in Pennsylvania, USA. This line was opened in 1854 by the Pennsylvania Railroad but was difficult to operate due to the 1.85% ruling grade and extreme curvature. Originally four tracks, Conrail removed one of the lines in 1981 so now there are three. Up until 1985, PRR K4 Pacific 1361 was on static display in a cage but has now been replaced by PRR GP9 7048. It's not often you see a stuffed and mounted diesel locomotive in a cage.



Now those of us who have played with toy train sets, or model railways if you are really that fussy, know that the formation of long freight trains is important especially if your layout has sharp curvature included. Making up a freight train with lightweight and empty 80 feet long

spine cars immediately behind the locomotive, heavier loaded wagons towards the rear and no rear pusher or banking locomotive on a grade is a recipe for disaster as soon as the first severe curve is encountered. The lightweight wagons will attempt to take the shortest route which is of course a straight line, not the track, derail, overturn and cut the corner off. In model form this is only an irritation but in real life a bit of a disaster especially on a route carrying almost one hundred train operations per day. This scenario is exactly what happened on Horseshoe Curve recently.

The question that must be asked is who was responsible for assembling the train consist at Altoona. Obviously it was someone with little or no experience of practical dynamics or on a more realistic note, someone who had never enjoyed playing with toy train sets and experiencing why things go wrong on the playroom floor. Something you don't learn from formal further education or from playing about with computer simulations. After the first incident on the 5<sup>th</sup> July, an identical derailment took place on the 26<sup>th</sup> July at the same spot. Definitely need a new train dispatcher at Altoona!

## Events Diary.

Wed 31st Jul	Canadian Pacific, the company that spanned the world. 19:00, Southport Model Engineers, by Jim Ford.
Sat 10 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Big Hobby & Model Show, Conference Centre, Promenade. SMRS exhibiting Claremont Old Quay.
Sat 23rd Nov	Southport MRS Model Railway Exhibition. All Saints Parish Hall, Park Road, Southport, PR9 9JB. 10:00-16:30.

## Chairman's Report.

It is Thursday lunchtime on what I suspect will be the hottest day of the year. I have just returned home from the club rooms following our regular Thursday session and the temperature in the upstairs rooms was getting almost too warm to work (a far cry from earlier in the year when brass monkeys comes to mind).

Anyway a quick update on club activities. HS3 is progressing smoothly with the two 16.5mm circuits now completed and operational. Each circuit has a passing loop so we can run two longish trains in both directions although at the moment we only have one controller available. I think we were pleasantly surprised that we had good electrical conductivity without the need for each track length being connected to the bus bar. The aim with the 16.5mm track is to be able to operate Hornby live steam, conventional analogue dc or dcc on each circuit, albeit not at the same time. To this end, our erstwhile secretary will be sorting out the connections to the bus bars and to the controller connecting sockets (instructions for the worker bees please). As a matter of interest, the Club has acquired two FCC trains and controller so we will need to learn all about this modern and esoteric method of opening trains.

The next stages for HS3 will be planning (physically and financially) for the 9mm 12mm and 32mm tracks. I think the 12 and 32 mm ones will be relatively straight forward (one circuit for each one with a passing loop if it can be arranged). The 9mm tracks will require a little more thought since, being much smaller, allows for more ambitious plans. We may also wish to incorporate Z and T gauges if club members have an appetite for those minuscule scales. I mentioned financial planning above and this would really mean buying track for all four gauges mentioned each circuit (£150 for the 32 mm circuit and £60-80 for each of the other ones). This excludes any points. As you can see, a not inconsiderable cost but obviously something we can aspire to.

John is busy revamping our display board. If you have any good pictures that he could potentially use the please speak to him. It is expected that the board will be present at the Big Hobby and Model Show which will be at the Convention Centre Complex on Saturday 10th August. Speaking of which, Clairmont Old Quay will be representing our club at this event and I am still looking for volunteers to help (all day, morning or afternoon). I currently have

four volunteer offers but still need more to cover the day. Please let me know whether you can or cannot, help.

If anybody has green fingers or even a destructive element to their nature, the garden could do with a little TLC. For anyone who has ventured to the toilet recently, will have noticed that the rain we have had has given an almost tropical feel to the journey.

I think that is all for now. No doubt as soon as I press the 'send' button, I will remember something important. I do hope to see some of you who have not been down to the Club for a while to see what progress we have made.

**Ian Shulver.**

## **Secretary's Report.**

First of all, on a sunny morning, a thank you to all of those who turned out with their wives to attend my Birthday 'BBQ' recently. As we saw the deep blue lines solidify on the weather maps earlier in the week we realised that it wasn't going to be the usual sun-drenched afternoon watching steam trains puffing round my garden, so a change in plan occurred and we had inside food and a log fire to cheer us up!

There was a record attendance and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves and we did at one point manage to run some battery trains but the one attempt to run a steam engine provoked the return of the rain. Thanks again for attending and making it such a merry occasion and thank you for your presents which will continue to make Fiona and myself merry until Christmas!

As will be recorded elsewhere, progress continues to occur on our club test-track and we have even been able to run 16.5 gauge trains right round the upstairs with the golden spike being applied last week. If you haven't seen it, do come down to inspect progress.

Sadly I also have to advise you that one of the club's founding members, Alan Johnson from Formby is seriously ill in hospital, as I have been advised by his son Peter. Alan, a friend of Chris Grey, who is still active in O gauge with the West Lancs, were more senior members of this club when I joined in 1974 as a twenty year old student, when the club was based in a cold and drafty outbuilding in Eastbank Street.

We were given notice to quit shortly afterwards, when due to an oil crisis caused by war in the Middle East, the motor trade collapsed and Duerdens needed to stockpile Datsun (before they changed their name to Nissan) cars.

Alan was a keen follower of LMS practice in OO.

**Jim Ford.**

## Where's Allan.

The first correct answer received for the July quiz was from Tony Kuivala who stated *"It is the Weymouth Tramway which connects Weymouth Town Station to Weymouth Quay and the Channel Islands ferries"*. Well done Tony.

The August "Where's Allan" is not very difficult. Come on, have a go.



If you had just alighted from the Alexandra Hotel after partaking in one or two or more large drams and arriving at this station to find a Southern Region Class 73 electro-diesel waiting on your train, you may be forgiven that you are seeing the ghost of the Night Ferry after some forty years since its demise, especially when the nearest third rail power supply is some 309 miles away at, ironically of all places, Southport. Where am I?

## Members Miscellanea.

### Running the Gauntlet.

On real railways there are many types of track formations but one that at first seems a bit peculiar is gauntlet or interlaced track. Although not that common in Great Britain this type of track may be found around the world especially in the United States of America. Dating back to the nineteenth century, this type of track formation is still in use today and is still being installed even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as and when the situation requires it.

Why then is it necessary to provide gauntlet track? There are two main scenarios where this is required. One situation is on older double track lines when very limited clearances exist such as in tunnels. With the larger freight cars now in service, track may be interlaced to create greater clearance. This avoids a single track section and the requirement for points or turnouts. It may also be required where a weight restriction exists on bridges. Of course the signalling interlocking must treat the line as single track to avoid any conflicts. The other scenario, especially on the Eastern Seaboard and Northeast Corridor is where many stations do not have the standard low level platforms found elsewhere in the USA but have high level platforms which are level with the floor of the passenger cars. This is extremely convenient for passengers boarding and alighting but raises a problem on trackage which is shared with freight traffic. Modern freight cars tend to be larger and crucially wider than passenger cars and without gauntlet track these freight trains would be unable to pass through stations without fouling the platform edge.





The first illustration, taken from a sleeping car on Amtrak's southbound Crescent en route between New York Penn Station and New Orleans is at Beltway Station Maryland, ten miles north of Washington DC Union Station on the Northeast Corridor and shows northbound Train 124, a Metroliner service, AEM7 plus Amfleet, bound for New York Penn Station. The gauntlet track here is to allow wide freight cars

sufficient clearance to pass by the platform.



The second image is at Gary, Indiana on the South Shore Line (Chicago, South Shore & South Bend Railroad) and allows over wide freight cars to pass through the station. As the South Shore Line once operated some of the largest electric locomotives in the USA, the General Electric 2-D+D-2 "Little Joe" locomotives, the extra clearance was absolutely essential.



The third image shows that gauntlet track is still very relevant in the 21st Century. This is Old Saybrook, Connecticut on the ex New Haven Northeast Corridor and in the background is an Amtrak HHP8 locomotive hauling eight Amfleet cars from New York Penn Station to Boston South Station. As high level platforms are about to be installed this new trackage is required to allow the

freight trains of the Providence & Worcester Railroad who have trackage rights on this part of the Northeast Corridor to bypass the platforms.

A practical solution to what would initially appear to be a conflict of interest between passenger and freight traffic. **Allan Trotter.**

**END**