



## NEWSLETTER 117 : Jan 2023

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**Editorial**

**Andrew Chrysler**



Following on from last month's editorial and our recent exhibition, I have heard that Caroline and Don Hesketh have now added to their "Hogwarts and Hogsmeade" layout with the addition of a model of "Diagon Alley" and a Quidditch arena, which made their debut at the Pendle Forest show.

Closer to home, work has started on our new 009 layout, with Colin Trigg posting a video on our WhatsApp group.

As with Caroline and Don's layouts, our new layout will allow for continuous running and Barry Miltenburg has written an article outlining the project which appears later in this newsletter.

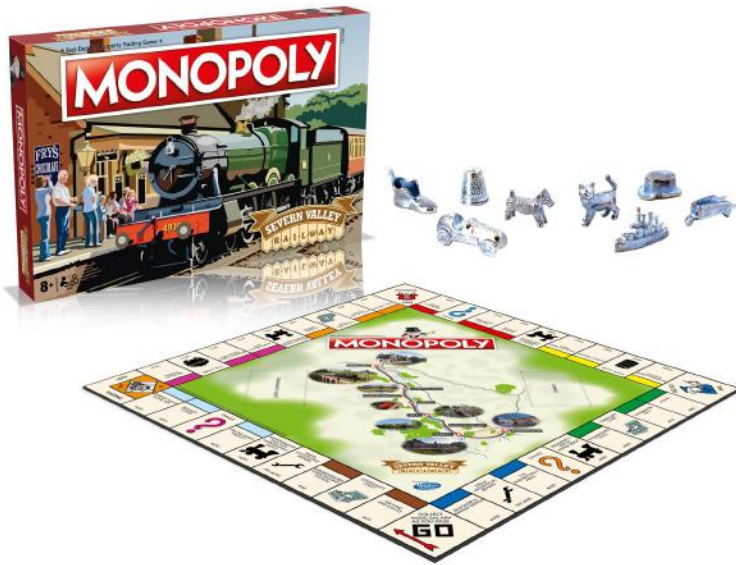


*Photos Credit - Model Railways with Caroline and Don / Facebook*

There has been quite a lot of discussion recently regarding fuel for steam locomotives on heritage railways, both about the availability (and suitability) of alternative fuels / coal, and just recently the increasing price of steam coal (from 150 to 750 Euros per tonne, has resulted in the ending of the early morning Lossnitzgrundbahn steam hauled service - which until 9 December allowed school children near Dresden to travel to and from school on a steam train - as they used to do on the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch railway. From 12 December, they will have to catch a bus service.

I wonder how different the Harry Potter films would have been if the schoolchildren had boarded buses at Victoria Coach Station instead of boarding the Hogwarts Express at Platform 9¾... certainly it would have made a considerable difference to a few toy companies' profits.

More information is starting to emerge about Vivarail's financial problems, and (with the exception of referring to Class 230 as "Class 320") the article in RailTech seems to be well informed. It can be read at <https://www.railtech.com/all/2022/12/09/vivarail-administration-what-now-f-or-british-battery-train-tech-pioneer/?gdpr=accept>



Did you play Monopoly this Christmas? The Severn Valley Railway has launched their own version of the game, with Chance and Community Chest cards giving a bonus for completing all pre-departure checks or a penalty for a locomotive blocking a running line. It's priced at £45, so instead I've ordered the P&O cruises one from eBay for substantially less. I am just

concerned about building houses or hotels, as surely the digging of adequate foundations would risk sinking the ship (and losing the game...)

*Photo Credit - Severn Valley Railway / Facebook*

Remaining on the subject of money, subscriptions are now due for 2023 and in case Ian's email has become lost, I have repeated the information regarding bank details etc. below.

### **Subscription rates for the year 2023 (due on January 1st.)**

- Lump sum rate
  - £55.00 payable by cash, cheque or bank transfer.
- Monthly rate
  - £5.00 per month by standing order only.
- 'Country' member rate -
  - £45.00 payable by cash, cheque or bank transfer.

Our bank details for bank transfers and standing orders are as follows:

**Southport and District Model Railway Club**

**Sort code: 20-80-33          Account no: 40822264**

*Notes for those wishing to pay monthly:*

*This can only be done by standing order and should be set up so that the first payment is in January.*



In common with most preserved railways, the Isle of Wight Steam Railway has been running Santa Specials each Christmas, and they have also added another event for the festive season. On Boxing Day, 27th December and on New Year's Day they will be running "Mince Pie Specials" which combine a steam train ride with a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie. I imagine that this would appeal to adults and older children with the absence of Santa, and this seems a good way of extending the peak of the winter season (and consequently much needed income) by three more days and I have noticed a few other heritage railways also advertising this.

The freezing cold weather of early December's "Troll from Trondheim" is now a distant - but chilly - memory which caused much disruption, not least to the eagerly awaited Santa Specials, with cancellations more reminiscent of BR (rather than brrrr) with several heritage lines cancelling some of their festive plans, but a very hearty "well done" is due to the volunteers at Wirksworth Station on the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway who, despite temperatures of -7, worked hard, thawing pipes by blowtorch, coping with frozen public toilets, a frozen locomotive water supply and other complications so that the children would not be disappointed. Meanwhile, at Idridgehay, every bottle of water was frozen so they had to cope without a brew until enough water had melted, but this was possibly for the best, as the Portaloo had also frozen! Photographed earlier in the month, the "Train Through Christmas Countryside" was topped and tailed with a steam loco on the other end of the train, but I thought this photo was worth sharing, if only for the inspired headcode...



*Photo Credit - Eric Hills / Facebook*

This was not to be the end to the trials and tribulations of festive specials, because once the freezing weather came to an end (end? hopefully!) on the West Somerset Railway, the thawing led to substantial track damage causing the cancellation of their "Winter Lights" service on the evening of 20 December. They have been busily moving the illuminations to an unaffected portion of the line and this evening service resumed on the 21st.



*Photo Credit - Peter Smith / West Somerset Railway / Facebook*

The festive season would not be so festive without all its traditions, and a relatively new tradition is Barry Miltenburg's "Mince Pies and Trains" event where many of us enjoyed this informal gathering at the Yarslow model railway, where we were able to see the year's progress, with refreshments kindly offered by Rowan (Mrs M) as we passed through her kitchen on our way to "The Shed". Once entry to the shed had been negotiated with varying levels of ease (or difficulty in my case), it was good to see that scenic work was in progress, which added to the spectacle of lengthy trains running around this spacious layout. I have made a mental note to "reverse out" on future occasions...

Finally, I hear that the owners of the Hythe Ferry in Southampton have announced that, unless a buyer can be found, the business will cease trading at the end of the year. This is certainly very bad news for the Hythe Pier Railway (which was the answer to "Where's Andrew?" in November). The ferry previously had its future cast into doubt in October of 2016 when staff were sent redundancy letters, only for the ferry to be saved by Blue Funnel Ferries who took over in April 2017, so perhaps there is still room to hope.

I hope you all have had an excellent Christmas with family and friends. For my part I must confess to dreading the days. Why was I feeling so mildly negative and insecure? After all because Christmas Day was a Sunday we have an extra Bank Holiday and again at New Year. The last two Christmases have suffered from the pandemic. Our lives and expectations have changed, perhaps more than we have realised. Was I looking to recapture 2019 or adapt to a new style, and if so what would this entail? So I tried to take on board the best of both options in the realisation that it was me who had to go with the flow of my family and friends' expectations and not the other way round. The ultimate results were the most successful, enjoyable and fulfilling Christmas that I have experienced for many years. I sincerely hope that you all have had similar results.

What other messages should I put into my words for the start of 2023? I had been contemplating some thoughts put into my mind by the three emails that Hattons sent me, in particular how they were offering customers the options of secure and reliable delivery of their parcels (at a relatively modest extra cost) for Christmas. Did you all receive the presents that you wished? But No, there is enough commercialisation around. One thought stuck with me. Nothing ever stays the same. Times change, expectations change, we all change (if only to get that bit older).

Except in rare circumstances, life does not always have the results that we had hoped or expected. This became apparent as I looked back over SMRS in 2022. We had a mixed 2021 that lit up towards the end of year with the results of our Exhibition. This was the cushion to move into 2022 with some confidence. When I succeeded Ian as Chairman I came with an Agenda and separate Strategy to achieve desired outcomes, these I shared around. Where are we at as 2023 dawns? As only six months has elapsed these are only reflections:

- Our most successful year for some time based around:
- The Exhibition was another great success in all respects
- 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary arrangements are ongoing, Club apparel is ordered
- Layouts – the hiccups have opened up new modelling opportunities
- Decluttering in the Clubhouse is spot on, Sheds is modest.
- We have welcomed four new Members – Chris Connelly, Mike Evans, Carl Rutherford and Martin Taylor.

- Attendances are well up - 16 at our Social, same number at Yarslow.
- Our Electricity bill is well under control
- Our real fires on Tuesday nights are effectively free of cost

Going forward into 2023 we should turn our resources towards the garden and sheds (as soon as weather permits) in anticipation of our 50<sup>th</sup> Celebrations in May. In the immediate future we can look forward to (inside) scenic modelling and potential film events during the dark winter nights (as well as everything else – new layouts, revamped layouts etc!).

We have three H's for 2023:

1. Hope – our basics are realistic and secure so we can proceed with anticipation
2. Health – every good thought to you all, families and friends
3. Happy – not a word being used much. We are a happy club, let us build on that

With every best wish for 2023

Tony Kuivala

## **Where's Andrew?**

Last month, I was at Porthmadog, looking towards the harbour station of the Ffestiniog Railway from the Cob. Congratulations to Tony Kuivala who correctly identified the location.

This month, I am beside a train - but there's a noticeable difference. It's made from bricks. But where am I?



*Photo Credit - Wikimedia*



## Talisker Dhu Dhu

Barry Miltenburg

Amongst the attractive list of exhibition layouts at the recent Club show, one display stood out. Devoid of scenery and with some bits proving unreliable, Talisker Dhu was a project conceived too quickly and built with haste.

At 10ft x 2ft, it proved too large to handle and transport easily whilst the split-level trackwork was both complex and awkward. I take full responsibility for all the failings but have learned some valuable lessons as a result.

Amidst the wreckage of the project, however, there were some good points. The layout was intended to revamp Jim Ford's Fishy Tails and incorporate Talisker buildings produced by (amongst others) Frank Parkinson. It meant that SMRC was, once again, a club that produced layouts. It offered a showcase for member's 009 engines and stock ranging from Ian's lovely Ffestiniog double Fairlie to Mike's wacky and wonderful collection of loco bashes!



Photo Credit - Colin Trigg

The reality was, however, that Talisker Dhu stalled after Frank's loss and, despite the best efforts of Mike and Colin T, my heart was not in it and progress was much slower than anticipated leading to that bare-board display at the exhibition.

From the gloom, however, as in all the good movies, the ending is proving to be a good one. There will be a new Talisker layout in 009 but with none of the "cons", only "pros".

The new layout will be 4ft by 2ft – small enough to fit into the smallest of cars (including my Fiat Panda) and therefore offers us the ability to be able to present a layout for exhibition in November 2023. This is considered a key requirement. The Talisker distillery scene will feature as will the local Laird's castle/manor house whilst his private coach may yet be seen parked in a short siding. The layout will show three scenic areas – Talisker, a passing station and a wharf – meaning that traffic can flow between the distillery and the canal giving the layout purpose (something the original lacked). These scenes sit on a continuous run allowing us to make sure that we can entertain the public with movement.

Final track plan? That one will evolve over the next few weeks but we have a start. The old layout will be stripped of track and electrics shortly with the new track plan using as much of the rescued pointwork as practical. Electrics will be DC, simple and robust – no more baseboard joints, D-connectors, and wire-in-tube experiments. The standard gauge bit will be axed in true Beeching style – it added very little to the old layout whilst providing a few headaches in terms of scenery and geographical authenticity.

We hope to get trains running again as quickly as possible so that we can get messy with ballast, glue, polystyrene, and static grass to make it look like ~~Scotland, Wales~~, well actually, we don't know so don't ask!!

***There will be a running blog of developments on the club website (Members section) with updates posted on the main site for visitors.***

***This article appears on the "Lickey Incline" website, [www.lickeyincline.co.uk](http://www.lickeyincline.co.uk) and is reprinted with their kind permission.***

*The Lickey Incline, south of Birmingham, is the steepest sustained main-line railway incline in Great Britain at a gradient of 1 in 37.7 for a continuous distance of two miles. Opened in 1840 by the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway it is located between Bromsgrove and Barnt Green stations.*



*Above - Looking southward from about a half-mile below the summit at Blackwell, Burcot Hill is on the right. An Up express from Bristol struggles up the two miles of the 1-in-37 Lickey Bank, banked by the 0-10-0 'Big Bertha'. Photo credit - Wikipedia.*

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There have been models and toys of trains for as long as there have been real railways. Indeed some early 'models' of locomotives were made first as sales promotional tools for the early railways, even if they later might have become playthings.

Among the earliest of all commercially produced metal toys dating from the second half of the 19th century are tinsplate and cast iron trains. During the Victorian period toy and model trains and locomotives fell into a number of categories. There were the live steam engines, some expensive and usually only for the wealthy, but also cheaper ones often made in Birmingham hence the nickname "Birmingham Dribblers". There were pull along trains in all shapes, sizes and materials, penny toys in lead and tin and latterly clockwork engines. The steam and clockwork engines might be intended to



run on the floor, or a simple track assembled by the user, but there was no real sense of system about these trains. Most of these toys were made in Germany. Britain and France tended only to make the better class of steam engine. There was an indigenous US industry, with considerable use of cast iron rather than tinsplate.

The defining event in toy train history was the launch by Marklin in 1891 of the first complete system of trains. While the first models were derived from earlier products, what Marklin introduced was a series of standard track gauges, ready to use track sections for those gauges, and a range of locomotives, rolling stock and accessories to match. Now you could have an initial train set, but continually add and expand till your miniature railroad empire was complete - which it never was! This was of course good for the toy manufacturer, indeed this is possibly the first example of the expanding range, with items at various price points for Christmas, birthdays, parents and relations and pocket money sized, which is one of the basic features of most successful toys since.

The first Marklin models were made in three gauges. Gauge 1 was 1¾" track gauge; gauge 2 was 2" and soon became obsolete and gauge 3 was 2½". Painted and soldered tinsplate was the main material and clockwork provided the driving power. Marklin expanded and improved its range, after a few



years adding a fourth small Gauge O 1 quarter; inch whilst the range of accessories was greatly expanded. Other German toy makers introduced competitive products, most importantly Bing (then probably Germany's, and hence the world's, largest toy maker) and also Carette. Despite the odd divergence these makers generally adopted the same standards as to gauge as Marklin, while developing new production techniques, in particular the use of lithographed (printed) tinplate. The lithographed technique facilitated the production of much cheaper and more colourful items, at the expense of some robustness.

By the start of the 20th century other methods of propulsion were being applied. Live steam and electric powered models had taken to the model rails, although clockwork was still the prime mover. More importantly the first ranges of Marklin and Bing and others were growing and improving each year, and as with the rest of the German toy trade, was strongly export oriented and thus spreading toy trains world wide. The main markets were Britain, France (and their Empires) and the US. Britain at the time had no indigenous toy maker to compete with, nor really had France, but there was home based competition in America. Britain however had something else - model railways.

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The hobby of model railways can really be said to have been founded in the U.K. at the start of the Edwardian period. There were already active amateur model engineers building live steam locomotives who shared a keen interest in the real railways. One of the embryo suppliers to this group was W J Bassett-Lowke of Northampton. Bassett-Lowke saw the potential of using the German toy trains, particularly the track and mechanisms, with more accurate bodies to sell not as a toy to children but rather to adult enthusiasts. He used the services of Henry Greenly to design his models.

Greenly was something of a polymath and worked both in full size railways, models and miniatures. Among other things, he established a system of scales using the Marklin gauges as the starting point and he founded the first periodical devoted to model railways! Thus from the beginning the hobby of model railways was in part a toy and in part the effort of amateur and professional model makers co-existing, sometimes comfortably and sometimes not!

Bassett-Lowke tended to use the services of Bing and Carrette for its own models, but of course once the idea of British outline models was established the German makers started to produce models for sale by other importers, for example Marklin made for the Gamages store in London.

**Continued next month...**

*Photos credit - Nick Booker collection.*

## **And Finally...**

Gisborne City Vintage Railway in New Zealand is unique, as it runs the only steam train to cross an operating airport runway - requiring Air Traffic Control clearance in addition to the other (rather more normal) safety & signalling procedures.



*Photo Credit - Gisborne City Vintage Railway*

Air Traffic Clearance for other forms of transport is not limited to this sole location; it is also a requirement for cruise ships entering and leaving the harbour at St Lucia in the Caribbean, as ships pass close to the runway's end, requiring a rather different type of Pilot to contact ATC.