



Newsletter

Issue 75: July 2019 Editor: Allan Trotter
Email: eastbankmrc@btinternet.com

Editorial.

Is nostalgia really what it used to be?

Having had some more time than usual over the past month or so, I have had a great opportunity to peruse the back catalogues of Tri-ang Railways, Tri-ang Hornby and Hornby between 1955, when the first Tri-ang public catalogue was issued and the current Hornby Railways 2019 publication. It is absolutely astonishing just how much the model railway hobby has diversified over the past sixty four years and how the catalogues have matured from a sixteen page A5 landscape format booklet to the multi page full colour tome of today. If you would like to see a PowerPoint version of this catalogue, just ask.

In 1950 Hornby Dublo 3 rail basically had the 00 scale model railway market all to itself. At this time model trains or train sets were primarily considered toys for the use and entertainment of children. If an adult played with toy trains it was always behind closed doors. No adult would dare to come out of the toy box and admit their passion for model railways. There was one drawback with Hornby Dublo though. Because of the build quality, their prices were only affordable by upper working class and middle class clientele. This was about to change.

Along came Tri-ang Railways with a eclectic range of items, some of British outline but others branded under the Transcontinental label which was originally aimed at British Empire and Commonwealth customers. As the models were not really of any specific prototype, sales were much greater in the UK rather than abroad. Although not as prestigious as Hornby Dublo, these Tri-ang models outsold their rivals because of the cost. Hornby Dublo made a bizarre attempt at models for the Canadian market by applying a cowcatcher to a Stanier Coronation and a roof top cupola to an ex LMS brake van. The Canadians were not fooled and poor sales resulted in these models being much sought after today.

Despite introducing a two rail system in 1959, the public voted with their wallets and Hornby Dublo met their demise in 1964. The Tri-ang range was then renamed Tri-ang Hornby. The models did improve but without competition not much more happened until Jouef introduced the Playcraft range which ironically repeated the scenario of the 1950's and undercut Tri-ang Hornby on price if not on quality. With the later introduction of Lima, Airfix and Mainline, the competition heated up and significant advancements were achieved with all the manufacturers' models.

Things have changed significantly today with the two main players, Hornby and Bachmann leading but now many smaller but noteworthy businesses also are offering models. What is crucial to understand is the significant change in the clientele and the marketplace. Model trains that were once considered to be children's toys are that no more. The main purchasers could now be best described as born again mature gentlemen with an adequate source of disposable income who are not ashamed to come out of the toy box and play with their newly acquired models under public scrutiny. Competition has ensured that the detailing standards on models have reached incredibly high levels even if some of the quality of functionality and playability has not.

As already stated, the model railway hobby has changed significantly over the past years, generally for the better.

Events Diary.

Tue 2 nd July	Committee meeting, Clubrooms, 19:30.
Sat 10 th Aug	Big train show, Floral Hall.
Sat 23 Nov	SMRS Exhibition.

Chairman's Report.

Sadly I recently heard that one of our ex-members, John Rimmer, passed away last month. I am afraid that at the moment I have no more details. John had been a member of the Club for a good number of years and was a regular attendee at many of the Model railway shows around the region. Although not particularly interested in actual physical railway modelling, he had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the British railway scene. It was rare that he could not provide an answer to a specific question without reference to source book. If he couldn't, he knew where to go to get it. However, the internet was, to him, a completely alien entity. John's in depth knowledge of railways will be sorely missed.

After having been on holiday for most of May, I was amazed on my return to the club in early June at how much progress had been made to HS3 and the club rooms in general. Finally it seemed that we were able to start laying track for the 16.5mm circuit. First of all, the track needed to be prepared, old rail joiners removed and wire droppers soldered to each length. We had already rescued pieces of old track, as long as it was in good condition and was nickel silver. Colin, Mick and Graham did a great job with this. However, we still needed to agree on the actual configuration and number of circuits. I think we have now agreed this and have confirmed that a minimum of 3' radius can be maintained on each circuit. Hopefully, within the next week or so we will actually see some 16.5mm track finally laid.

Clairmont Old Quay, our 7mm narrow gauge layout has been erected and is available for operation. There is small amount of remedial work to be carried out this layout. One of the workmen is attempting to use a pick which has gone missing and also we seem to have a decapitated railway worker. We will

probably need to buy replacements for these items. The other issue is to investigate the short circuit on the "engine shed" road. Although not causing a problem at the moment, it means that we cannot stable a locomotive on the length of track.

Monsal Dale can be operated once move some of the books and videos that are restricting access to the front of the layout. It would also be helpful if the carpet that is presently under this layout could be used to replace the life expired one in the entrance hall.

Finally, I would like to thank those who have come down to the club on Tuesdays and Thursday to work on HS3, the garden or making the club rooms shipshape. **Ian Shulver.**

Secretary's Report.

It is difficult to believe that the year is nearly half gone and the nights are drawing in again! This means that the club's 25th annual sleeper trip has been concluded. The detailed account will appear elsewhere in its pages, but my purpose here is to draw the attention of members, especially our new members, to the fact that this is not an exclusive event and is open to all members to participate.

Derek Pratt (also our webmaster) has been on every one of these trips and points out to me that there are a number of options under consideration for next year and it is all up for grabs. New members would be especially welcome to join, and so while not wanting to spoil the surprise I can reveal that this year we managed to travel in a large circle around the Midlands, Northern England and Southern Scotland, all by rail. As expected we covered quite lot of steam railways and quaffed quite a lot of good ale, but along the way we also visited the set of Dads Army, several museums and cruised on a Scottish Loch and one of our number even took a day out at an Art Gallery, in between "copping" a few new Wetherspoons. It isn't all beer, Derek Pratt's behaviour after a couple of pints of rasperryade had to be seen to be believed.

This year as in recent years the trip was eight days long but participants would be happy to go for a shorter one if new members wished. Popular destinations in the past have included the west of Scotland and the Isles via the Deerstalker Sleeper to Inverness or Fort William and the Jacobite, and these are strong front runners for next year. Few experiences can beat waking up to a Scottish breakfast in the Highlands and then having a second one at a greasy spoon on arrival, before enjoying a scenic ride further west!

The Club has been very active, for which we owe an especial thanks to our new members who have been eagerly working on "HS3", our new club test-track. The entire infrastructure is in place and we are actually laying track! At least on the 16.5mm gauge section anyway. I say 16.5 gauge because it is being laid with sufficient space between the tracks to enable the lines also to be used by our 7mm narrow gauge rolling stock. The circuit will be double track with long and short loops to enable several members to have their trains on the

tracks at once. And next to it there will be a 12mm line for TT and 00N3 (narrow gauge but 4mm scale) use.

We need to be thinking about upcoming events that the club will be involved in. Firstly there is the big train show which takes place at the Floral Hall complex on the 10th August which effectively replaces "Woodvale". For us it has the advantage that it is inside and only lasts one day, so please put this event in your diary. It will also allow us to offer advance publicity for our own Autumn Show which will take place on 23rd November, which you might also wish to put in your diaries. Both events should enable club members to do a lot of what they enjoy most, running trains without having to hump barriers which is a relief to us as we get older. It is important that we have a really professional show of strength at both events.

Our next Committee meeting will take place next Tuesday the 2nd of July at the clubrooms from 19:30. Please come along and make your views felt. We have been invited c/o Merseyrail to take part in a railway heritage project and details of this will be discussed as well as our plans for the future. See you there! **Jim Ford.**

Where's Allan?

The answer to the June 2019 "Where's Allan?" quiz is Peel on the west coast of the Isle of Man where the pair of County Donegal railcars are ready to return to Douglas. I am pleased to announce that the first correct answer was again received from John Howard. John stated: *"Are you in the Isle of Man? The Irish connection could be the train which comprises two railcars which look very like those bought from the much lamented and missed County Donegal Railways"*.



This month I am back on home territory and a good old nostalgic scene of a British Railways Class 33-1 hauling a consist of Mk.1 passenger carriages in action, street running. It is not often that before crossing the road you have to look out for not only passing motor vehicles but also the odd full length, in service, passenger train, conveying passengers on their holidays. Where am I?

Members Miscellanea.

Merseyside Model Railway Society visit.

One grey cool wet early evening in June saw six undaunted members travelling by train (quite appropriately) to meet with members of Merseyside MRS to view the considerable array of layouts in their equally considerable premises.

They have seven layouts over a range of gauges including 2mm, 3mm, 4mm and EM some in DC others in DCC control, depicting local railway systems from days gone by and very finely crafted. In addition there is an extensive catalogued library of railway books of covering both UK and rest of the world plus an overspill of other books for sale. The club shop is stocked with modelling materials, kits and models in N and 00 gauges for sale. Also on the hospitality front there is a tea bar offering tea and coffee with light snacks.



Although extensive in size the property is not without its problems as much of it has suffered from leaks in the roof with much water damage to the walls. Temporary remedial action has been taken but they face the much greater task of more permanent repairs in the future.

They have a 60 strong membership predominantly, like many other clubs, senior in years and similar to the rest of us encourage new younger membership. This seems a very friendly group of enthusiasts and whilst not the whole membership, we were made to feel very welcome that evening. Although we visited on their open evening which is normally the first Friday of the month they are happy to receive visitors any Friday evening 19.00 – 21.30 with the usual courtesy phone call in advance. **Frank Parkinson.**

An anniversary, of sorts.

As we somewhat belatedly realised, 2019 marked the quarter-century of SMRS sleeper trips, possible some sort of record if anyone keeps tabs on such things. To be frank, the itinerary was chosen more on the basis of 'there's some interesting stuff in East Anglia which we haven't seen' rather than on trying to derive a route to celebrate 25 years of messing about on trains.

To go so far northwards in order to come back and go east does not at first sight seem the most logical option, particularly as the initial movement was a couple of hundred miles south to the big metropolis at the southern end of the sleeper service. However we have not got where we are today by being logical, so we pressed on regardless.

The start (for four of us plus one support staff member) was from a fairly sunny Southport, bound for Liverpool Lime Street and the promise of

significant rainfall on and off for most of the week. The lone supporter was Frank's significantly better half, aiming to visit a friend in Norfolk and monitor her husband's erratic movements around the country from a safe distance. Richard materialised at Lime St and took the lead in searching out the first objective of note, the Virgin First Class Lounge. This had been moved yet again, and required some perseverance to gain access, as the hi-tech Secure Personal Customer Access System Mark IV did not consider us worthy of its rather impersonal attention. Fortunately its minder was available to overrule it and release the door lock. We then turned our attention to worrying about whether it would ever allow us out again.

The journey south passed with no incidents of note, and we arrived on time at Euston. The weather had worsened considerably on the way, so the default option of lunch at the Doric Arch was an obvious first choice. Malcolm was already there, saving seats. Indeed it was tempting to make it the only decision of the day, but somehow we convinced ourselves that at least some exercise was needed, and a plan gradually evolved. This was to take the Tube to Ladbroke Grove to visit the Museum of Brands. This was nothing to do with racing cars but all about how products are advertised and sold, from Victorian times to the present day. It turned out a good choice for a damp day, although better weather would have allowed full advantage to be taken of a pleasant-looking garden to the rear of the building.



Dinner was in a local pub, after which we declined the offer of staying for the quiz night and returned to Euston, to find the brand-new sleeper carriages awaiting us. First impressions were positive, although it was noted that space was perhaps a little more limited than before, no doubt because of the need to accommodate the all-in-one shower and toilet compartment.

The latter facility did not function at all after the hours of darkness, leaving us to wonder if it was a designed-in feature to avoid sleep disturbance, or a systems failure. That it was accidental was the more likely, particularly as we discovered later that the following Wednesday's Glasgow sleeper was terminated at Stafford due to an unspecified technical issue. The unfortunate passengers had to endure the rest of the journey on a bus.

The lounge car had some comfy seats and non-comfy bar stools. I did not partake of the food, but those that did said it was good. The drinks included

various cocktails as well as a fairly limited range of beers. The ride seemed a bit bumpy, although the prevailing view was that it was more the WCML rails rather than the bogies, as the ECML which we experienced later in the week was better.

We avoided all such horrors and had both a reasonable night's sleep and a passable breakfast, which kept us going until the all-important second breakfast at one of Glasgow's numerous Wetherspoons. This was located only a few minutes walk from our base for two nights at the Premier Inn on Argyle St. The establishment itself looked a little careworn, but no doubt slowly climbing up the senior management's to-do list, as adjacent properties had their facelifts completed and a better class of clientele migrated from the city centre. The lift was novel in requiring a key card for full-featured operation, without which it would go up and down but not stop at the floor you pushed the button for.

The main target for the day was the Transport Museum at Riverside, warmly recommended by Richard as he disappeared to the Kelvingrove Museum, one stop earlier on the Subway. This particular transport system was a new experience for some of us, drawing comparisons with some of the smaller, older rolling stock on parts of London's underground. The museum itself was excellent, with a wide variety of exhibits displayed in novel ways. Highlights were the car and motorbike walls and the (model) ship conveyor, with an honourable mention to the tall ship berthed alongside, all with free admission. Meanwhile Richard kept us up-to-date with texts recording his cultural discoveries, including a Salvador Dali and the Mackintosh tea room. We regrouped back at the hotel and rounded off the day at Wetherspoons' steak night.

Wednesday saw us back at the aforementioned establishment for breakfast, after which we walked the short distance to Central station for the train to Balloch, changing at Dalmuir. The objective was the Maid of the Loch, the last paddle steamer to be built in the UK. She was actually constructed on the Clyde and then deconstructed into railway-wagon sized portions for transport to Balloch and reassembly, hopefully with all the sections in the right order. After service as a pleasure cruiser on Loch Lomond she had been neglectfully moored for 20 years or so, until a group of enthusiasts bought what remained and set to restore her to former glories. This was in full swing as we arrived, with various parts roped off from the public. However enough was accessible to make it a worthwhile visit, not to mention the cafe on the top deck.

An added bonus was the fully-restored Steam Slipway, used to haul large vessels such as the Maid of the Loch out of the water for inspection. This consisted of a large oil-fired double-acting steam engine housed in a brick building at the top of a slipway. The engine powered a winch connected by cable to a large carriage which could be lowered down into the water for the vessel to float onto, no doubt with many a 'left hand down a bit' and 'dead slow ahead' commands from a master concentrating hard on the job in hand. The engine was not fired up on the day of our visit, but we were nonetheless made welcome (knock twice and ask for Colin). We were given both a

descriptive brochure and a viewing of a video describing the Maid's use of the slipway in the early stages of restoration.

The day would not be complete without a loch cruise, despite the weather turning a little damp. Jim had found a pub serving a particularly more-ish oatmeal beer, so he opted for a longer session there followed by the two-hour cruise. The rest of us made do with just one hour on the water, courtesy of the Astina, the largest vessel operated by Sweeney's Cruises. We then retired to the pub to try the beer for ourselves, several times. After a brief tour of the adjacent shopping mall we were reunited at the train station and returned to Glasgow, this time for an excellent meal at an upmarket Italian restaurant.

The weather forecast for Thursday was not promising, with large black clouds apparently lying in ambush for us as we proceeded south. Undeterred we set off by taxi for Queen St station, arriving in time for the 8.15 to Edinburgh, one of many such trains full of commuters. Waverley was if anything even busier than Queen Street but with the advantage of seats available while we waited for the train to Peterborough. We now had the benefit of first class, with food and drink provided gratis. The promised deluge did not materialise, just normal intermittent June rain and latterly the odd patch of blue sky. Another change saw us on the way to Norwich, and an impressive station well worthy of the name.

The hotel was not far but uphill, which slowed us a little, but we eventually arrived at an establishment with a smart exterior but a somewhat faded interior, rather like sleeper trip participants. However the staff were welcoming and we settled in for three days and four nights of fun and frolics. Top of the list was dinner, eventually achieved at a busy and labyrinthine Wetherspoons in the centre of town. The route we took was through the scruffier part of the city, full of entertainment facilities and young persons in, apparently, the latest fashions. Both might have been some interest, if only we were a half-century younger.



Friday saw an improving weather forecast, and after a Grab n' Go breakfast, which we consumed without actually going anywhere; we set out for Bressingham, via the train to Diss. A brief search for buses was not encouraging but a taxi was available with the necessary seating, albeit a little cramped in the back. Fortunately it was a fairly short ride, although Richard expressed his views on the

vehicle by throwing himself out of it onto the pavement, completely disregarding any injuries suffered. Exiting with style was the somewhat belated claim.

Bressingham Steam was a transport extravaganza, with a variety of travel modes available for our pleasure. Two separate narrow-gauge lines were open for business and a large engine shed held a number of standard-gauge exhibits, not to mention traction engines and static engines. There was also an indoor 16mm track, but luggage restrictions did not allow us to bring any locos with us. However we did meet one of the small group who ran it. Another feature was a large funfair galloper, which we dared each other to try. The experience was generally positive, although comments were made about the speed, with only one stirrup and no safety belts. Just to round it off, there was an extensive Dad's Army museum, a rival to the one in Thetford, and arguably more extensive and detailed.

Adjacent to the steam museum was Bressingham Gardens, created by Alan Bloom, who clearly felt a duty to make full use of the nominative determinism inherited by his surname, and get stuck in to some serious floral design work. The results were both extensive and pleasing, allowing Malcolm to reveal hidden depths of gardening knowledge, extending to naming plants that the rest of us could only classify by colour, such as 'oh look, nice red flowers'.

The return taxi was a somewhat larger vehicle, no doubt provided by a claims-wary company to avoid further any dismounting incidents. Back at Norwich we opted for a Chinese meal at a restaurant reputed for both the quality and quantity of their food. Both aspects were supplied in full, to the extent that doggy-bags would have been of some value, had we had the energy left to request them. An early night was called for, both to aid digestion and to prepare for the big event at the North Norfolk Railway.

This being the weekend, we were treated to a proper, sit-down breakfast at the hotel, to fortify us for the day ahead. The main feature was the Mixed Traction Gala, featuring a large variety of steam and diesel locos of varying vintage. This was reflected in a timetable of some complexity, which was already nearly 25 minutes in the red by mid-morning. However the sun shone and there was enough vehicle movement to keep everyone occupied, up and down the line. The highlight was a ride in the three-car heritage set, which featured the coach used in the Titfield Thunderbolt, but without the well-stocked bar of the original. Fortunately there was a bar in our last train of the day, a fish-and-chip special. The price included a beer, so we felt an obligation to indulge. I can recommend the raspberryade, thinly disguised as Purple Haze cider.



The last day was also train-filled, this time with narrow-gauge railways. After a short mainline ride to Wroxham we visited the Bure Valley Railway, a 15inch gauge rail-replacement enterprise on the track bed of the old branch line to Aylsham. It bore some resemblance to the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway, although with wider, more comfortable coaches and some impressive engines. A significant discount on the fare had been arranged, courtesy of a certain Peter Mills of the RER, although this took a while to filter through to the counter staff at the booking office. The journey was a pleasant one through scenery that might well be considered as strong evidence by any members of the Flat Earth Society that might venture this far east. Whether they would risk the journey would be a matter for conjecture, they might balk at the significant risk of falling off the edge of the world, which everyone knows is just up the road between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft.

After dodging a couple of badly-timed scattered showers, we returned to Wroxham and visited the adjacent preserved signal box. This was a large structure that originally served parts of both the branch line and the main line between Norwich and Cromer. Apparently the first act of preservation was to move the whole thing a few yards back from its original position to improve the sighting for the new-fangled colour light signalling that had replaced the old semaphore signals. The restoration work took the box back to its heyday in the early 1900s with a large and impressive set of levers, interlocking devices and various other period paraphernalia. The ground floor was given over to an excellent information display telling the story of the signal box and the line it served.

A walk back through the village took us to the River Bure, full of weekenders playing boats on a crowded section of water. Our destination was the Barton House Railway, an idiosyncratic, not to say unusual, 7 ¼ inch garden railway line. Access was by boat from Wroxham Bridge, fending off a large group of swans intent on taking full advantage of said weekenders and their endless supplies of stale-but-still-very-edible bakery products. The boats, of which there were two, took us to a small jetty upstream, where we disembarked and bought tickets for the railway. A confusing set of options were presented, involving a choice of standard or first class (the latter with free use of cushion) and of all-inclusive or pay-as-you-go rides. There were several lines to choose from, a loop from the jetty to the main garden area, a circuit of the lawn, and a drive-you-own out-and-back mainly intended for children. The cafe provided some excellent cake, after which we felt fit enough to visit the museum, containing local railway artefacts and an excellent model of part of the local Midland and Great Northern Railway.

Rumours of a real-ale pub in the vicinity encouraged us to return on foot to the village, via boatyards full of 'no public access' signs, in the middle of which was The Shed, containing the sought-after hand pumps and a handful of local drinkers. We took advantage of the facilities and then navigated back to Wroxham station fully intending to dine at the adjacent Smokehouse restaurant. Unfortunately it was fully booked, so we changed tack, took the

train back to Norwich and visited the Coach and Horses, a burger specialist pub near the hotel.

Monday saw us with another Grab and Go breakfast, part of which was consumed in situ and part carried off to supplement whatever lunch awaited us on the train to Liverpool Parkway. A second breakfast was clearly called for, and satisfactorily delivered at another local Wetherspoons, The Queen of Icen. As Jim remarked, another Boudicca, to supplement the cruise ship of that name we had embarked on a couple of sleeper trips previously. The train was a crowded two-car unit, but we benefitted from reserved seats, if not from the rather minimal luggage space. At Thetford we were rejoined by June, ready to receive reports on Frank's behaviour over the week. To avoid any possibility of an embarrassing domestic incident we glossed over the worst aspects and gave a (mostly) positive account.



Thus ended our 25th sleeper trip, as enjoyable and successful as all the others, which is remarkable in itself. During the final evening we discussed the format of future excursions, including the need to balance itineraries using the sleeper as a means to reach far-flung parts, with those where it is more a prelude to visiting a completely different part of the country. The desirability of

encouraging other members of the club to join us was also agreed. Next year may therefore see a return to our roots, with a trip to Fort William and the Jacobite. Or it might be something completely different. **Derek Pratt.**

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