



NEWSLETTER 115 : Nov 2022

Newsletter Editor : Andrew Chrysler

Email apc253@gmail.com

Editorial

Andrew Chrysler

Perhaps it boils down to a simple question of gauge. The “Daddy Long Legs” that I wrote about last month was billed (by its inventor) as being 18 foot gauge - although this was actually the distance between the outer rails of the two parallel tracks that it ran on, themselves a rather less impressive 2ft 8½in gauge. But how do we calculate the gauge of a monorail? Perhaps the width of the running rail is the nearest that can be used for comparison?



While monorails are commonly found on theme parks, and used relatively less for “serious” purposes, I happened along a YouTube video of the *Doppelmayr Garaventa Monorack* which combines the best of a monorail with a rack railway and certainly has a practical purpose that it seems to serve admirably.

The monorail is well suited to narrow curves, possibly even more than a narrow gauge railway, while the addition of the rack means it can also cope with steep inclines. Take a look at the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ei6LKHNFpeE>

I hear that the London Transport Museum has taken over the Kingsway tramway subway, which recently featured on "Secrets of the London Underground". This follows the opening of the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) when it was used as access for a grout shaft - the purpose of which was to stabilise the ground in preparation for tunnel boring. It is now to be opened to the public - according to rumours this will be at the decidedly "London" price of £46.50. There's also a virtual tour (via Zoom) for "just" £20.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jul/04/hidden-london-tram-station-opens-to-public-for-first-time-in-70-years-kingsway>

Closer to home, I see that the recent Wigan exhibition with Claremont Old Quay went well, and it's not very long to go now until our own exhibition in November. Colin Trigg has visited several exhibitions recently, and some of his photographs are featured in this newsletter.



Following the success of last year's event, Barry Miltenburg has extended an invitation to what is poised to become an annual tradition - so make a note in your diaries! Mince Pies and Trains - what more could we ask?



The Yarslow Model Railway
Annual Mince Pies & Trains Morning
Thursday 22nd December 2022



Three Chimneys
10 Lansdowne Road

All club members welcome
10.00am to 1.00pm



Do you remember Rubik's Cube? For those who may not it was a craze about 40 years ago. This 3-D puzzle was a square with three rows of three individual squares on each of six faces. There were nine individual squares of



one of six colours. Each row could be twisted in whatever direction you wished. The ambition was to arrange each face with one of the colours. This reminded me the other day of the uncertain times we are currently in. International worries, Government changes, Domestic challenges, Industrial unrest. All have their separate causations yet possess interlinked consequences of immense complexity. Getting each of Rubik's colours onto a full side was achievable but next to impossible. Attempts usually absorbed many hours of rather demanding brain and wrist strain to achieve very little progress. I speak from experience.

Where do these uncertainties affect SMRS the greatest? My reflections produced no easy answer as largely we are not in control of external events. I did conclude that SMRS as a body is the sum of its individual Members. It is through our Members that we operate and prosper on our Member's behalf. Perhaps our most positive role is that we can be an oasis of calm and friendship amidst the strains of life. We all have our own checks and balances. SMRS provides each of us with a break away from domestic and working lives. From my experience over the last six months I recognise that this is so.

Within the gloomier aspects of the reality of life I have seen three bright lights shining in the last twelve days. The first was trying to book a day visit to London on 15th October for a rare afternoon face to face meeting rather than by Zoom. I needed to use Avanti from/to Penrith. No tickets were available until two days before and then only at very silly prices. I wished to travel by train, not buy it. The day before Meeting I went into Penrith Station Ticket Office. A very friendly chap offered me very cheap outward fare but was unable to sell me a return ticket as there was no guarantee that after

5pm there would be any trains north of Preston. The drivers change at Preston and there might not have been enough signed on earlier that afternoon. Maybe I could go via Carlisle and Newcastle? Timings were excessive though. The whole chat was positive and focussed on my needs. So I sent my apologies as did 65% of the others.

The second light was an email from Scottish Power saying that the first 1/6 of our £400 Government rebate had gone through. This was unexpected as we are not really a domestic customer. And will go a long way to helping pay our electricity bill for the winter period!

My third beacon of light was our Exhibition Briefing Meeting on Tuesday night. There was a very vibrant and positive response. All the issues in pulling together our 12th November Exhibition were addressed and resolved. We have put together a great selection of interesting layouts to provide entertainment as well as modelling prowess. These will improve our already significant reputation. I still need to hear from some of you about Friday and Saturday commitments though – when you can please.

Would I be alone in wondering whether we can turn our small oasis into a positive beacon of mutual Model Railways hope and satisfaction? Many of the requirements are already there. A very positive and successful Exhibition would provide a concrete platform into 2023.

And in the meantime there are early Christmas presents available from Hatton's Mega sale....

Where's Andrew?

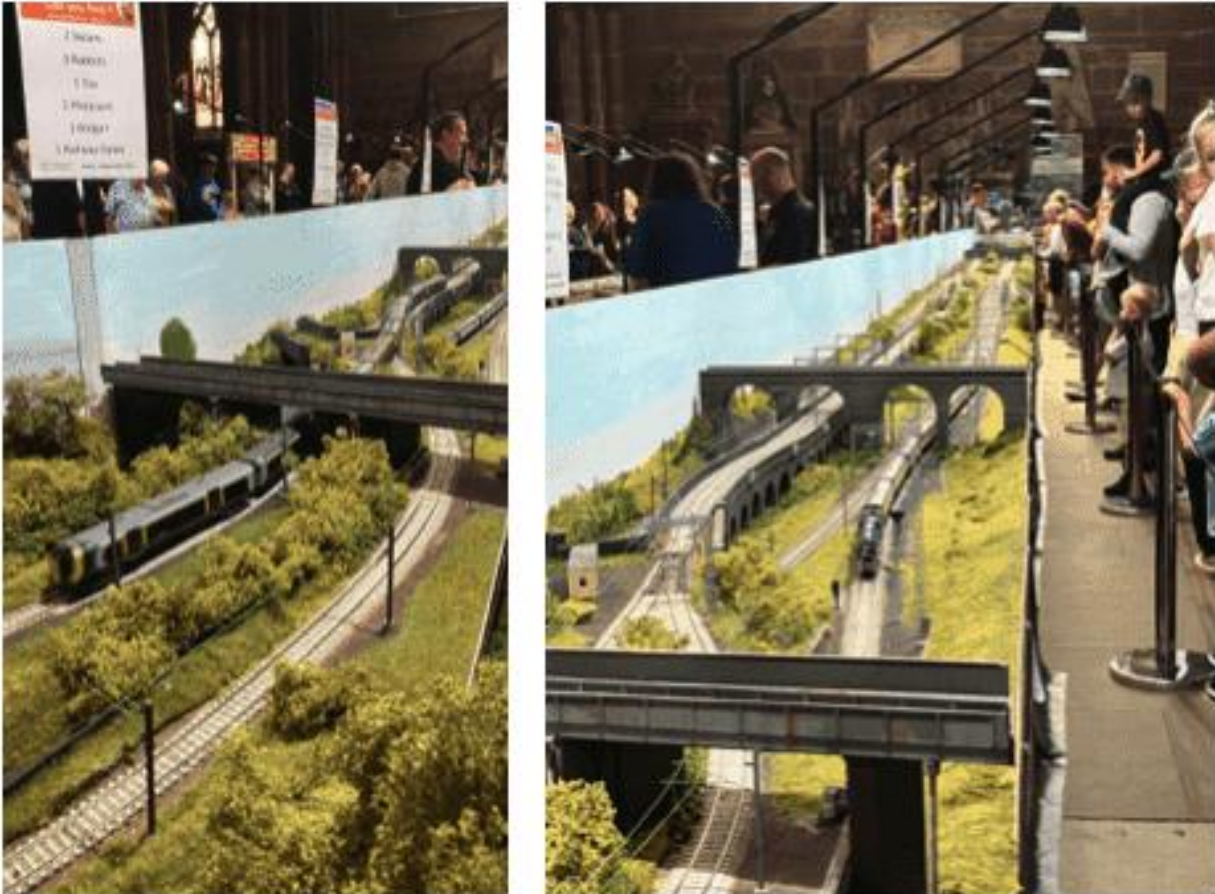
Last month, I was on the Cierny Hron Railway, where the track passes in front of the grandstand of the TJ Tatran Cierny Balog football club.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Čierny_Hron_Railway



This month, I am closer to home - by the coast, as evidenced by the cruise ship in the background. But where am I?

I have been able to visit a few exhibitions recently, starting with Making Tracks II, the layout in Chester Cathedral backed by Pete Waterman, where I was able to speak to the man himself.



The layout has been developed with running trains as the main objective, it is DCC controlled via £30 tablets using WiFi to give operators freedom of movement without wires. The control boards are all connected by just two wires and each has an Arduino microprocessor board to provide feedback to panel display to show the trains location. Each board can be run separately for testing and speed of installation.



The next visit was to the Liverpool Model Railway Society exhibition, where I met up with some members of the newly formed N Gauge Society North West Area Group. I was kindly invited to travel with a couple of them to the International N Gauge Show (TINGS) the following week.



At TINGS, purely dedicated to N Gauge, there were a number of layouts, manufacturers and traders at the show with layouts in British and other country outlines. There were a number of modular layouts which allowed members of the groups involved to model in their own style and come together to create a larger layout.



Sybil (and surroundings)

Derek Pratt

This is a photo of an SM32 diorama which I am starting to put together. It is based on Dinorwic slate quarry in North Wales, and depicts the Quarry Bagnall *Sybil* with some coal wagons at the bottom level of the quarry.

The premise is that coal is delivered in bulk by narrow-gauge train from the port at Y Felinheli, the same line which is used for slate exports. The coal is then distributed to the various levels for use by the quarry's numerous steam locos, with a small amount being bagged for use in heating buildings and fuelling the blacksmith's forge.



The model depicted is a kit of a Quarry Bagnall supplied by Boot Lane Works. It will have attached three Dinorwic coal wagon kits (basically slate wagons with sides added) currently on order from H Jones Engineering. The building and water trough are from Pendle Valley Models.

The majority of the quarry's steam engines were Hunslets - *Sybil* is unusual in being fitted with a circular marine-style firebox. Regular readers will know that *Sybil* is currently being restored at the West Lancashire Light Railway. The diorama will go on display there in due course.

When the postman delivers the December 2022 edition of Railway Modeller magazine through my letter box, I will have completed 50 years of subscriptions. 600 issues of the country's "favourite" railway modelling magazine.

As a reward for my bravery(!?) after a dentist's appointment, my mother treated me to a magazine and I chose the January 1972 edition of RM – then, as now, a Peco Publication. At the time, I was the proud owner of a Triang Hornby train set – the Freightliner – with an A1A-A1A diesel in blue with 6 wagons and a brake van.

Birthdays and Xmas added more track, engines, wagons and coaches until I had a decent set up but here, in the pages of my new magazine was a new World full of **model railways** instead of **toy trains**.

The last 50 years has seen a number of layouts started, some finished, new skills acquired, lessons learned, friends made (and lost ☹) and plenty of might-have-beens that didn't progress beyond a scribbled track plan. I have heavily favoured OO although I have had brief flirts with N, O and 009.

But what has changed in the hobby over 50 years?

In 1972, TT gauge was fading into the background whilst N gauge was becoming established, despite the crude standards and limited RTR items. Graham Farish dominated 2mm whilst Triang/Hornby and Mainline had the best 4mm offerings. Wills, Jamieson and K's offered a number of loco kits for those many classes not covered by RTR models. There were plenty of small cottage industry style businesses offering whitemetal and lost-wax brass castings for the builders. Peco, of course, dominated the trackage market but you could elect for Graham Farish "Liveway" track which included live frog pointwork for those brave enough. (36 inch radius points were, astonishingly, 81 pence each in 1972!). For those wishing to actually build the track, Marcway Models provided parts for OO, N and 009. In the March 1972 edition, a report on the Nuremberg Toy Fair included the announcement of a sensation – Z gauge had arrived.

That magazine included articles on kit conversion, signal box track plan diagrams and drawings for buildings and the Stanier 2-cylinder 2-6-0. Editor Cyril Freezer used a house style that included a Letters page, Exhibition guide and the "Scrapbox" – a collection of news snippets.

There was a distinct divide between the layouts in the magazine. The Railway of The Month always featured a layout with modified RTR stock supplemented by kits and scratch-built items but the Junior Modeller section showed the efforts of (invariably) younger modellers who relied solely on Hornby and Mainline. I was firmly in the latter group but was very eager to get my promotion into the Premier Division. I would need to build something rather than buy it.

A decade later, the magazine had become full colour and Freezer had left to be replaced by John Brewer. Plans and ideas continued to be presented as line drawings with fine curves and slender pointwork but most of the layouts featured continued to use small radius track and unrealistic 90 degree bends to maximise the available real estate. There was no sign of Hattons or Rails of Sheffield in the adverts – W&H dominated the full-page spreads and there remained plenty of small manufacturers providing “after-market” (as we would now call them) products to jazz up your Hornby locos and rolling stock.

In January 1990, the magazine’s strap line of “For the Average Enthusiast” remained but the cover price had gone from 18p (Jan ’72) to £1.40. Also apparent is the focus on British outline articles – Continental Modeller had been launched by Peco to cater for all of the overseas interest. The house style remained, showing off the wares of Peco, Hornby, Ratio, Branchlines and a growing host of small manufacturers making the most of cheap plastic-injection moulding and brass etching processes. Suppliers still quoted addresses and encouraged an SAE if you wanted a catalogue (SAE = Stamped Addressed Envelope for our younger readers). The rear cover carried a joint advert for The Engine Shed and Gaugemaster – evidence that bigger players, created by mergers were appearing.

November 1990 featured Martin Welch’s “Hursley” - a 7mm layout that moved modelling into a new era – super finescale track, locos and rolling stock BUT super finescale scenery as well. I saw Hursley at the Westminster show in 1991 and it was as impressive in the flesh as it was through Barry Norman’s camera lens. In the same issue incidentally, reviews of OO gauge locomotives from Dapol, Hornby and Bachmann Industries Europe Ltd appeared.

The 90’s were fairly nondescript although it is interesting to note that there were no website or e-mail addresses and the “Sales” columns were full of second-hand items. Today, eBay has rendered such adverts extinct. At the

start of 1993, G&R Wrenn announced that they were ceasing production of models – a sign that standards had improved to levels far exceeding those Wrenn chose to adopt or could afford. (Dapol started re-releasing the wagon range a few years later). OO and N gauge layouts were, by now, frequently featuring decent rolling stock. Indeed, how many of us still have or remember those “scale” locomotives of the era?

There was a new kid in town though, sneaking in through the side door and mentioned in a brief article in November 1999. Digital Command Control, a more advanced and altogether better system than the one Hornby had tried earlier (remember Zero 1?) was discussed as an alternative control system. It had its snags, amongst which were cost, complexity, competing systems, incompatibility with Peco trackage systems, the need to “chip” every engine you owned etc, but it was seen as a contender. Most of us thought it would just go away.....



Throughout this period, I built a series of layouts called Midworth – the Midland Railway in the 1930’s in all its glory. Modified RTR and white-metal kit engines, kit-built wagons and coaches (and a few scratch-built items as well) and Code 75 track. I now considered myself a Premier Division player – I mean, I owned an airbrush, a lining pen and a toolkit capable of building loco kit frames!

By the end of the Millennium, I had 30 years of magazines that covered layouts, track plans, drawings, ideas, photos and reviews. The styles and standards had improved, the photos were now in colour and of a better quality, and I had developed a liking for certain authors whose output I poured over often and thoroughly.

Following the anti-climax that was 1/1/2000, a new phenomenon appeared in the pages of the magazine. In the December 2000 edition, Peco quoted a website address! Those of us on "dial-up" connections could only dream of making the link across the ether! In November, mention had been made of a new UK manufacturer called Heljan – twenty years later, there is still some debate on how to pronounce it. It was also the year that Ian Beattie – draughtsman and artist *extraordinaire* – passed away leaving a huge legacy of detailed drawings of locomotives and rolling stock, and a huge space which, even today, is unfilled on the staff of The Railway Modeller.

2004 saw the first DVD release as a freebie with a magazine and the start of the great micro-revolution had begun. For the next few years, everything was focussed on the teeny-tiny – layouts built in box files, on miniature baseboards, ironing boards, cupboards and everywhere else. It was no longer cool to have a 30-foot exhibition layout with continuous running. No, we all wanted shunting layouts (apparently?).

In 2009, Peco celebrated 60 years of publication. In these modern times, we now bought rather than built our locomotives and rolling stock although there was still a good selection of articles on how to improve and modify stuff. The big suppliers had eaten into the small players and most of us shopped at Hattons, Rails or Cheltenham Model Centre. The reviews focussed on decorative items more – cars, trees, buildings and the like (the explosion of new locomotive releases was still a few years away) and books were still selling, if the number of reviews was to be a guide.

A few years later, the magazine had become the vehicle through which the major retailers competed for our custom – Hattons, Rails, Cheltenham, Hereford, Kernow, Modelzone and The Signal Box all had full-page adverts inside the front cover (and before you got to the index and editorial). Not all of these names would survive but this was the era of heavy competition. That forced up standards – a race that Bachmann were to win comfortably in OO to the detriment of Hornby. The Margate giants would fight back after their re-employment (in 2017) of the High-Elf of Marketing, Simon Kohler –

a man who, apparently, made his reputation importing stuff from Bachmann to the UK.

The last few years have seen a flurry of obscure prototypes, several manufacturers producing the same class in the same scale, highly detailed rolling stock (at highly inflated prices!), Bullhead track in OO (although the sleeper sizes and spacing remains wrong for UK track), photo backscenes, many and varied DCC gizmos for automating and digitising everything and the ability to have yourself scanned and 3D printed. 3D printing has led to many more useful models, especially of small, lineside items and resin casting has become *de-rigueur* for larger buildings. We've seen Dapol motorised signals in OO and N, a recent explosion of 7mm and 009 RTR stuff and, in very recent times, a whole new (?) scale in TT-120.

To pinch an old quote, "We've never had it so good". Maybe, maybe not. Railway Modeller has created greater accessibility so the owner/builder of a layout is often pictured. Most are "mature" or retired – that is where the money and time is these days. In 1970, Bill Hudson, Iain Rice, David Jenkinson, Bob Essery, P.D. Hancock, Rev Peter Denny and Vivienne Tompson were all relatively young modellers. The hobby required a certain degree of dexterity to cut, shape, solder and fashion models from card, plastic or metal – and a younger pair of eyes to see it all. The elder statesmen of the hobby – Beal, Maskelyne, Freezer, Keen were all editors of magazines or Chairmen of clubs, societies and the like, Guardians from on high. Those with money - Hoare, Norris etc - employed others to do their modelling for them. "Cheque-book modellers" we called them. Very few of us model anything anymore – we collect and display. Does that make us any better than the junior modellers of 1972 – because that's what they did.....?

And finally...

