



NEWSLETTER 103 : Nov 2021

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Editorial

Andrew Chrysler

"Would you like to come with me and visit a village so small that you will tower above the houses? Would you like to know what it would be like if you visited Fairyland, and felt like a Giant, because everything was so tiny, and the people hardly came up to your ankles?"

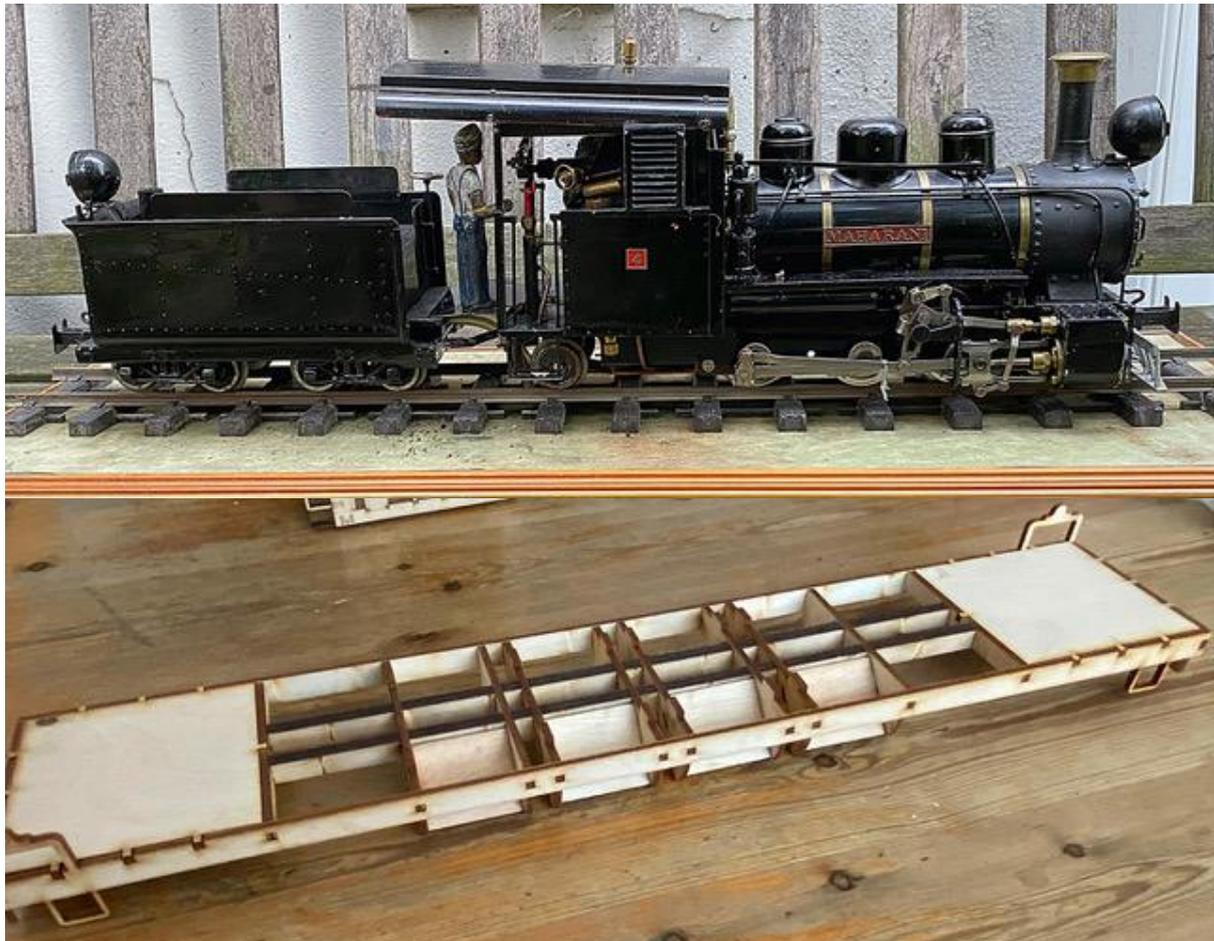
So wrote Enid Blyton in 'The Enchanted Village', and perhaps this goes some way to explain the eternal fascination that models hold, be it either airfix kits, model railways or even model villages, such as the one in Beaconsfield (called Bekonscot) which was close to her home, "Tall



Hedges".

The house was demolished in 1973 and replaced by a development of new homes, but her memory is commemorated by the road sign and also by a model of her house in the Bekonscot model village, and in the garden of that model are the well known - possibly even famous - four children and a dog. Could this go some way to explain our fascination with models and model making? Or is it the thrill of creating a "world" that is entirely under one's control? There is surely room here for much discussion to fill the winter evenings.

Thank you to all who responded to my recent appeal for articles, photographs etc. Please keep the contributions flowing as there is always a subsequent month's newsletter to be filled! Derek Pratt has been in contact with a couple of photographs, firstly of a coal-fired locomotive, based on a Roundhouse Bangalore Bell, itself a Fowler derivative. It belonged to the late Rob Bilsborrow, who was a member of the 16mm Merseyside & West Lancs Area group. His widow Maria kept the loco in a glass case, but has now downsized her home and the engine had to move on.



Derek's second photograph was accompanied by a question, regarding his current build (pictured) asking what it will be when completed and giving as a clue that there are at least two prototypes in Wales. While he promises the answer next month, I can only wonder if the prototypes in question are

the ex- Island Line Class 483 which are now in the vicinity of Llanelli, as seen in this photograph taken last week by Thomas Conner.



One thing I won't be doing this weekend is setting an early alarm to follow events on the Isle of Wight, where the first train is scheduled to depart St John's Road at 0535 on Monday morning 1st November. I am visiting the island next summer, so for those who haven't yet had their fill of Island Line, I will be taking photos and reporting back on the improvements that took much, much longer than promised. Hopefully the islanders will consider it well worthwhile.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 13 November

Autumn Exhibition

Chairman's Report

Ian Shulver

Early in October we held our open day which I believe went down very well. I had great hopes that of the four people who really only showed a particular interest in joining the club (ie took away an application form) so far only one, Lennon, has actually signed up. Lennon is our first younger member for many, many years and so we give him a warm welcome. Maybe we will hear from the others in due course. But back to Lennon. He is incredibly enthusiastic and is extremely knowledgeable about the more modern railway scene - steamers seem to be bit of a black art to him. One of the areas that Lennon would like to learn more about is scenery and landscaping so this is a good excuse to get stuck into "scenifying" the two ends of HS16.5. There is the basis of an urban landscape in the south room, but the north room is an "open book". Perhaps it might allow me to progress 9mm track-laying a little quicker (some has been done but there is a lot more to do).

The date of our Autumn show is rapidly approaching. So if you have not already done so, please put Saturday 13th November in your diary. I know one or two of you are unavailable on that date for various reasons but It is most important that we have a good turnout to help set up and dismantle the show, as well as showing the public that we are a vibrant club. This also goes for the Friday night when we have to set up the hall and welcome our guest exhibitors.

I will finish now so that I can go to source a new pair of reading glasses to replace those that I broke yesterday - might then be able to see the laptop without struggling too much.

Where's Andrew?

Congratulations to Tony Kuivala who had the correct answer. I was on the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch railway, at New Romney. Tony also offered his photograph of the interior of the loco shed, taken in 2016.



This month, I am at another railway location from my summer travels, on an even smaller gauge railway than last month, but where am I?



Cab Control – a modeller’s invention?

Barry

Most model railway layouts could be split into at least 2 sections – station and storage area, 2 stations etc – and most layouts could accommodate 2 operators. It is therefore logical to assume that such layouts should have some form of control design that ensures two trains do not try to occupy the same bit of track at the same time, nor do two controllers try to control the same stretch of track at the same time. This can present problems, whether you model DC, DCC, radio-controlled live steam or even clockwork!

The simple answer to this problem on DC/analogue layouts (and some DCC ones) is some form of cab control. In its simplest form, cab control takes the track feed from each section and allocates it, via a DPDT (a.k.a. a double-pole 2-way centre-off) switch to either one of two controllers. The switch can be set so that the section is allocated to controller A or controller B or neither. If each section of the layout is wired like this, the Cab Control Panel contains all of the DPDT switches and allocates bits of the layout to each controller as required. When operator A wants to run a train from station B to his own, the sections for B and A (and any sections in between) are simply allocated to controller A and the operator knows that operator B can't interfere with his train.

The gaps between the sections need to be marked and each operator needs to know if he has the authority to pass the boundary (i.e. has control of the next section). A "Home" signal will do this job for us. The signal protects entry into a section and can, by those so desirous of the requirement, be

interlocked with the DPDT switch that allocates the section to a controller so that power is only provided once the signal is pulled off.

I have used this method of layout control on numerous occasions but cannot claim in any sense to have invented or developed it. It is simply a pretty good mirror of the practice used by real railways. In steam days, the sections were short and controlled by signalmen whilst these days, the sections are vast, the electronic equipment far more complicated and computer control does all the hard work.

Signals have always been (and still are) used to permit access into a section and on running lines, further signals pre-warn the driver of the status of the next "stop" signal. These used to be yellow Distant signals, now replaced by multi-aspect colour light displays. If the warning, or "Distant" signal shows danger, the train can pass it but the driver must be prepared to stop at the next Home signal.



This is not a real requirement on our layouts because we can stop a train within a few feet if the signal is at danger or if we encounter an obstruction. However, to adhere to prototype practice, the inclusion of Distant signals should be given serious thought.

Before the advent of modern signalling, signalmen communicated by bell codes, one signal box to another, and block instruments were used to illustrate any occupancy of the line and as a reminder of the permissions given between boxes. We too can emulate this with bell code communication and simple block instruments – easily manufactured from bicycle bells and basic electronic components.

On my Yarslow layout, there are 14 sections, each of which can be allocated to any one of 10 controllers. DPDT switches are replaced by 2-pole 12t Rotary switches (where 12t means that they have 12 positions/settings). The section track feed is wired to the centre pin of the switch and there are 10 options (plus "off" and a spare pin) to allocate the section to a controller. In some cases, a controller usually only controls one section (the PW sidings for example) but elsewhere, running a train from storage, through the main line station and up the branch can involve one controller taking over 6 or 7 sections.

In these days where we spend vast sums of money on sound-emitting miniature masterpieces to pull our trains of highly detailed rolling stock and hours are spent producing model scenery and architectural wonders, should we not dedicate similar efforts to the operation of our trains? Securing permission to move about the layout might sound a bit authoritarian but that's how the real railways did/do it and, surely, we are obliged to follow suit.

The development of my Yarslow layout can be followed on YouTube – search "Yarslow Model Railway". The channel also includes some of my other model railway videos including more information on Cab Control.

Rigby Road

Mike Sharples

So I booked a week off work with not much planned so on Sunday night it popped up on my Facebook time feed that blackpool heritage tours were doing tours around the depot "our tram town" as they call it for the grand sum of £6 so booked it for the following Wednesday.



The day arrived I was up early to get to Rigby Road for 1300 which is when the tour started. I turned up a bit earlier than expected, the depot gates were shut but there were a few people hanging around waiting to get in. A member of staff opened the gates and the tour started, we were shown into the metal workshop as they call it where they were building a new chassis for balloon tram 704 which is privately owned but being restored by Rigby Road.



We then moved onto the paint shop with a Blackpool bus and one of the brush rail coach 634 in my favourite livery, the all over advert for Coral Island, then next door to the woodwork shop where we found the stripped body of balloon 704 the lower saloon of Lytham tram 46 and Glasgow 1016 Lower saloon.

Model Villages (and Railways)

Andrew Chrysler

Continued from last month...

Bekonscot model village is believed to be the world's first. It was originally built as a hobby in Ronald Callingham's garden in the 1920's and subsequently opened only on selected "Open Days" before becoming more widely known after 1930. Bassett-Lowke was commissioned (for £179 - a lot of money at the time) to build a large model railway, extending to 10 scale miles, and some of the original running stock is still in daily use, albeit with new running gear. There is also a 7¼ inch gauge line that is a more recent addition, opening in 2001. The railway theme continues with the gift shop, which is a repurposed (and extended) railway carriage.





Bekonscot - a contraction of Beaconsfield and Ascot - is now operated by the Church Army (since 1978) and to date has raised almost £5 million for charity. These photographs were taken in August 2021, when we stayed at nearby Gerrards Cross, a convenient halfway point between Southsea and Great Yarmouth and just off the M25, which was - rather surprisingly - the only motorway that we did NOT experience a traffic jam!

Finally to Great Yarmouth, and to another model village built by the Dobbins brothers, opened in 1960, just three years after Southport. Merrivale model village has also recently hit the national news, after "Banksy" left one of his distinctive artworks as part of his 'Great British Spraycation'.

When we first visited, the trains were not running - possibly due to the "wrong kind of rain" - so in this respect the model village is faithful to the prototype. Less so were some of the models, because as well as the traditional buildings, fairies, unicorns and dragons also feature - not that any of the visiting children seemed to mind, and I think that "rule 1" applies here. Merrivale gardeners are kept busy, and as well as caring for the grounds they also offer some plants for sale. Merrivale have recently increased their ticket prices (although at still under £10 they are less than

Bekonscot), but they have also increased the validity of the tickets to allow for unlimited visits for 7 days. Our first visit was on 7 August, before "Banksy" confirmed that the artwork was one of his - subsequently they have benefited from the publicity, but it has proved to be something of a double edged sword as they have also had to massively increase their security.



Merrivale also contains a small (but well maintained) crazy golf course, and play is included in the ticket price. It was also the only village to make use of sound as well as animation - to entertaining effect.



These photographs were taken on our visits between 7-11 August 2021. Since our visit, the "Banksy" has been placed in a secure clear housing, and Merryvale have added their own twist by adding a model stable girl who, surprised by the paintwork, has dropped her basket leaving her apples to roll away on the ground.

Merrivale continued to display the "Banksy" until the end of September, after which it was removed to protect it from the worst of the weather. It will appear at Peterborough Museum as part of an exhibition of urban art and then will return to Great Yarmouth for summer 2022.

And Finally...

Pictured on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway, there is a fairly obvious reason why railway wagons - as opposed to certain road vehicles - traditionally have an even number of wheels.

