

Newsletter

Issue 70: January 2019 Editor: Allan Trotter
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Editorial.

Why Pre-Order? An explanation from Rapido Trains.

In the 1990s, the unit cost for model trains was very low and the production runs were very high. Were we to bring out a new locomotive in 1992, we would produce about 10,000 pieces. All would have the exact same details; the only difference would be the paint and lettering. There would be about 100 parts on each model. We would start advertising them as they arrived, and thousands of hobby shops would order them. If we still had 3000 sitting on the shelf after six months, it didn't really matter. Once the first 2000 left the warehouse we were in the black.

Today the industry is very different. If we announce a locomotive in 10 paint schemes, chances are each paint scheme has numerous detail differences and will only sell between 300 and 500 pieces. Instead of having 100 chunky parts, the model has 400 (mostly) tiny parts. Our margins are very tight, which means that the cost relative to selling price is much higher than it was a generation ago.

So we can't afford to make hundreds of extra models hoping that people will buy them. If we tie all that money up in unsold models, we won't have the funds to make new models. Occasionally we make a small production run on spec, and we announce it in the newsletter as a surprise arrival. "Guess what - new gondolas are here!" This is usually determined by one of the factories saying, "The tooling for project X isn't ready yet - please let's make a production run of project Y in the meantime." It is the exception rather than the norm. An obvious thing to ask is, "Well if it sold out so quickly, why not do another run?"

We've discovered through very real (and costly) experience that quick second runs are a disaster. While we could easily sell another 500 Northern Pacific Boxcars or 200 Mid-Train Domes, we could not sell the several thousand needed for a second run. And then we would have thousands of cars sitting in our warehouse that we would be unable to sell, and the funds tied up in those cars would not be used for new models.

This means that we're only really getting one run of a given product every few years. With some models, like the RDC or the Alco FA-2, there are new road names to do which allow us to bring out a run every two years. But with something specialized like a Royal Hudson or a New Haven EP-5 locomotive, we're looking at four or five years between runs. In order for a second run to

work, there needs to be enough new people in the hobby who didn't get the model the first time around.

In summary, we're not trying to be jerks when we say "Sorry you missed that - you'll need to wait another five years." We're just reflecting the economic realities of this business. So if you read about a new Rapido product that interests you, please reserve your models before the deadline. You should not need to pay in advance. If a store asks you to pay in full upfront, find a new store. I can assure you the store isn't sending the money to us. You don't need to give anyone an interest-free loan.

So now you know.

Events Diary.

Tue 5 th Mar	Visit to Peter Clare. View layouts and making custom decals.
Tue ?? Apr	Forty years of the 507's and 508's. Fred Kerr. Clubroom.

Chairman's Report.

In terms of club activities, a couple of days ago we had a most interesting on station architecture around the UK and Europe through the ages which was well attended by club members and the general public (we all but ran out of seats to sit on). We must thank Graham Whitehead for the time and effort he put into this and look forward to a further episode sometime next year. To come will be the annual party, this year to be held in the clubrooms.

I think I should mention here that for January and February, we will be meeting on Tuesday evenings as normal but the Friday evening meeting is moving to Thursday morning to make use of the better light for modelling purposes.

Earlier this month I was testing out a servo motor controller with its associated servo for point changing. I had built this on a small test section of track prior to transferring units onto the 2mm fine scale model that I have started. After a few false starts, I eventually managed to get the unit working as it should, changing the point in a most realistic manner. The next task was to fit a micro switch in to control the frog switching and was feeling quite pleased with myself at how things were panning out and had thoughts of making up another six units to fit on the layout. Before I did that, I did a final test run. Guess what? Yes you are right, it did not work. After a bit of perusal, I determined that the power supply was OK but the control board appeared dead. Luckily I managed to find Dave Fenton's e-mail (remember Dave gave us a talk about 3 years ago on his Mega point controllers) and after some correspondence (various suggestions for rebooting etc) he asked me to sent it back for him to have a look at.

The long and the short of it was that it needed to go to landfill since to find the faulty component on an out of date device was not feasible. As it turns out I

was able to purchase an upgraded version of the control board at a special price so all was not lost. Watch this space to see how I got on with fitting it and its associated servos. **Ian Shulver.**

Secretary's Report.

It is that quiet time between Christmas and New Year and your Secretary is in Porthmadog enjoying a steam-filled break adjacent to the Ffesty, which briefly comes to life for 8 days between Boxing Day and the 2nd January, before resuming its Winter rest, or in this case, the substantial track renewals that are taking place. Each year, the same slightly faded Christmas tinsel reappears in the carriages in preparation for Santa and lasts until the New Year, evoking a certain nostalgia as a Baileys' coffee warms us up as we cross the Cob.....

First of all, thanks to everybody for their Christmas cards and for attending our Christmas Party. You will have seen that despite the wet Autumn, we have been able to press ahead with the various Club projects.

The track has now been finalised and laid on Fishy Tales and the joining pieces have been manufactured. The track joints have been a major problem because nine of them are oblique and the fragile nature of the Peco code 75 sleeper base means that the traditional means of joining by means of either sliding fishplates or soldered butts were ineffective. A subsequent attempt to correct this by making separate jointing units (to obliterate the oblique angles) also foundered because of the fragility of the code 75 sleeper web.

The ultimate solution was to re-make the joining units using code 100 which shares the same sleeper size and spacing as its' stablemate, but has more robust chairs to hold the rail; however the height is greater and the nine joining units have had to be filed to reduce the height so as to ensure a smooth transition. The joining bases themselves were made out of thick black plasticard, but a problem then arose because the sleeper base for Peco track is made out of polythene to make it flexible (the points are polystyrene) and there is no adhesive which will stick to polythene. After a little thought the base was joined to the sleeper units with '60's Triang track pins as per the picture below:-



Lessons for the future include not using code 75 track for "portable" layouts and not designing oblique joins on baseboards. Anyway, Fishy Tales has now been dismantled and the carefully made joining bases stored with work on installing electrics, one baseboard at a time commencing in the New Year. This will enable work to proceed around it on completing the clubs' multi-gauge test track or the "Race Track" as our

Chairman calls it.

Apart from our Party, the enjoyable talk and all of the construction work, December has proved busy with the club receiving three substantial donations.

Firstly we were given a much cherished set of original Hornby clockwork O gauge items which we hope to use on our new 0 gauge test track.

Next we were kindly given a number of framed art prints of steam-age paintings from the Derbyshire area by an enthusiast who is down-sizing and moving south.



Finally, just before Xmas, a nice lady contacted me with a collection of mostly Hornby Dublo items. These latter are significant, not only for their intrinsic interest to us but also because they had belonged to her partner who was the firemen on one of the legs of the "Fifteen Guinea Special" which was the last official steam run on British Rail, some fifty years ago. Here is a picture of him leaning from the cab of what had been 'his'

engine.

It has been quite a long Secretary's report this month because a lot has happened, but it is very unlikely that I will be able to send much in next month or the month afterwards as I am going off on the final leg of my world voyage.

As a seven year old I was fascinated by the story of Captain Cook, not least because he was a northerner and sailed around the world in a collier from Yorkshire called Endeavour, surveying the coastline with such accuracy that his charts are still in use by the Admiralty today, 250 years later.

Over the last three winters we have been following Captain Cook, only aboard Black Watch rather than the Endeavour – and with the advantage of the Suez and Panama Canals. So this year, I will be flying to Australia on the 4th January, initially with my brother Simon (whom some of you have met), and when our ship arrives in Dubai, Simon will fly home to California and I will be joined by Fiona for the return through the Mediterranean, arriving in Southampton on 28th February. **Jim Ford.**

Treasurer's Report.

No report submitted.

Exhibition Coordinator's Report.

No report submitted.

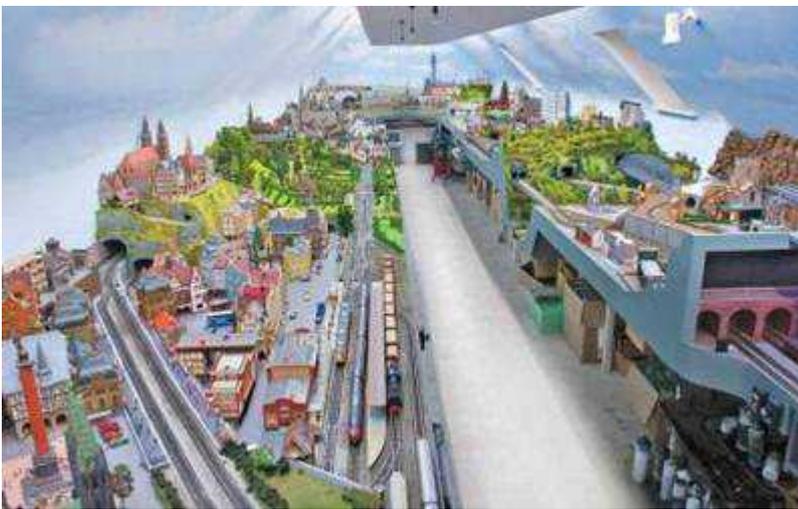
Tours & Events Organiser's Report.

No events submitted.

Contributions by Members.

The Daily Telegraph

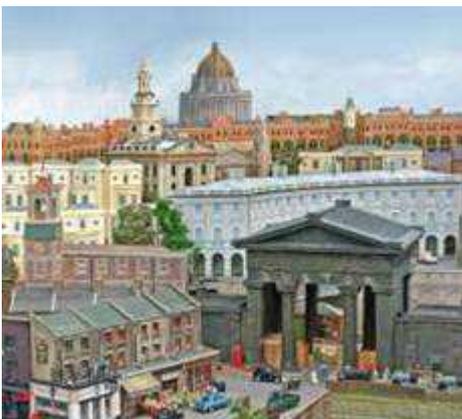
Jools Holland's giant train set lovingly brings a lost world to life. Musician recreates the London of his youth as part of 100ft model railway at his home.



Many musicians turn to unusual means to unwind and get away from the world of late nights and screaming fans. For Jools Holland, relaxing is building a 100ft model railway in the attic of his home.

Up a winding staircase in his Kent castle is a room that transports him back to his childhood, full of miniature buildings and painstakingly

painted trains. It took the pianist 10 years to build his model, which covers a journey from Berlin across the English Channel to London.



Holland told *Railway Modeller* magazine that he turned to model trains to escape from the hustle and bustle of his life, explaining: "There isn't a very good phone signal in here." He said he liked "sitting in a small chair and watching the trains go by" as a means to relax. The train set was a great source of joy and had also provided much amusement for his family and friends, he added. Holland has been fascinated with trains since childhood, when he had a "modest train set in the corner of a small room in a small house" as a

boy, a far cry from the gigantic layout he now controls. In the evenings, he builds trains and buildings before turning on some music, pouring a glass of wine and switching on the trains.

He began building the railway as a reflection of the Greenwich of his youth and based his first trains and buildings on photographs and paintings of London

during the 1960s.

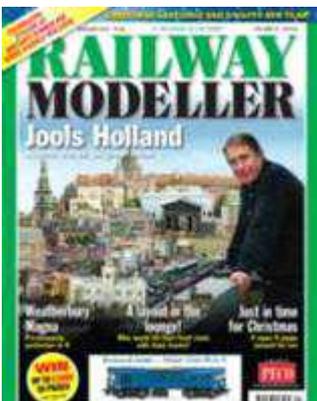
He said: "To my mind, a model of a real place creates a personal take on history. Photographs can provide the stimulus but cannot evoke that special atmosphere in a way that models can."



Parts of London lost to history can be seen in miniature in his attic sanctuary, with reproductions of old landmarks and vintage adverts and not a skyscraper in sight.

He said he also enjoyed recreating London's demolished pubs – joking that he was reversing the trend of pubs closing down.

Other buildings include Euston Station, the Channel Tunnel, the Greenwich Observatory, a European container port and a 1960s KGB headquarters in Berlin. The trains take him backwards or forwards in time, depending on which way they are going, from the "tatty post-war London of the 1950s" to the present day.



"Each 10ft or so the scenes move chronologically along through the decades from the 1950s to the present," Mr Holland said. This gave me the great excuse to enjoy creating architectural capriccios, a working motorway network, underground rail connections and much more. Canal boats can be seen floating on water at a miniature version of the London Docklands, while bombed-out buildings – victims of the Blitz – have been faithfully recreated, along with a miniature version of a Piccadilly Line Tube station. There is even a model of the Greenwich house that appears in the opening titles of *Later with Jools Holland*, his long-running BBC show. His work is not finished, however.

Next, he hopes to build St Pancras railway station and recreate some landmarks from northern England.

Holland is not the only well-known musician to appear in *Railway Modeller*: Sir Rod Stewart has an impressive train set, featuring the Manhattan skyline.

From the Daily Telegraph by Ian Shulver.

A Canterbury Tale.

On Wednesday the 12th of December 2018 we embarked on our final train excursion of the year with a day trip by a West Coast Railways charter train from Preston to Canterbury.



After an extremely early start at 06:35, it was time to settle in to our comfortable British built at Birmingham, Metropolitan Cammell (MetCam) Mk.1 Pullman Parlour Second 348 Topaz but now being operated as a first class carriage, in fact just like British Railways did in the 1970's. Motive power to Canterbury was Class 47826 whilst Class 47851 trailed on the rear, in readiness for the return journey. Some time was lost on the way south especially whilst

traversing London via Kensington Olympia resulting in a somewhat curtailed visit to Canterbury. This was not all that bad though as refuge had to be sought in a coffee shop due to the bitter cold wind.



The return journey was at 15:51 and a warm passenger carriage and welcoming small libation of Prosecco was already waiting on our table. This was enjoyed whilst we slowly thawed out. Later a traditional Christmas dinner was served along with some appropriate lubrication and appropriate coffee and liqueurs to finish off. Christmas had come early this year. **Allan Trotter.**

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