



NEWSLETTER 116 : Dec 2022

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Editorial

Andrew Chrysler

Last month, I started the editorial by pondering the “gauge” of a monorail. This has raised the question of the new Bangkok Gold line, which, although a monorail, relies on a “third rail” (or should that be “second rail”) for power. These are separated by around 4 inches, with an insulator between the two. The line, an automated people mover which opened in December 2020, serves as a feeder from the BTS Silom line and the Iconsiam shopping centre, is 1.7 km long. The centre rail (or rails?) is to guide and power the



Bombardier “Innovia” cars, but they also have outer tyres which run along the concrete sections beside the track, so perhaps this is not a true monorail after all. Answers on a postcard please...

Photo Credit - Wikimedia

I first came across "Suitcase Trains" at the Statfold Barn model railway exhibition. They build tiny layouts inside vintage suitcases (hence the name) and manage to squeeze into that small space a full loop of N gauge track and a siding. They recently took on a commission to model Ventnor station on an end-to-end basis. A video of the completed model can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sr5H-uJCyNs>

(There's also more about Ventnor station in newsletter 108 : April 2022)



Photo Credit - Suitcase Trains

On 31 October, the "A" car from ex-Island Line train 483009 was vandalised at East Somerset railway, where it had been restored to the original London Underground livery. This brings back memories of their being regularly vandalised at Ryde St John's Road depot. They are currently appealing for information from anyone who might recognise the "tags".



Photo Credit - East Somerset Railway

Back in March, Barry Miltenburg discussed "what the public want to see" in an article (newsletter 107) and concluded that movement and scenery were most attractive to the general public, whilst enthusiastic modellers were more likely to like the traditional end-to-end style of layouts. Our recent exhibition seemed to bear this out, and several layouts on display were of a continuous running style. Two layouts in fact only featured a plain oval of track, but the level of detail in Caroline and Don Hesketh's layouts - "Village in the Snow" and "Hogwarts and Hogsmeade" certainly seemed to attract an equal level of attention.



In direct contrast, my 3 year old Grandson's favourite was most definitely Austin's large layout. Less scenery, but lots and lots of movement, it held his attention for most of his visit, and he is still talking about the names of the engines he saw. Austin's layout was pretty unique at the exhibition, in being set up in a way more similar to a "train set" in that the pieces of track were transported to the exhibition separately, and the track put together on site, while all the other layouts consisted one or more baseboards on which track and scenery was already fitted.

Despite containing far less movement and scenery, our own layout still generated much interest, and I understand that the project is being rethought to fit a smaller baseboard for ease of transport, with the added

bonus of the ability to complete the scenic elements in a shorter time frame. Hopefully further articles on this subject will be forthcoming... in fact Barry has just submitted one which will appear next month.

I think it is one of the best aspects of our hobby that there is no single ideal exhibition layout - as indeed there is no ideal gauge or approach to modelling. There are enthusiasts that focus on running trains based on accurate signalling, while others rely on a "one engine in steam" approach. Some prefer to model the scenery, while others concentrate on the rolling stock. Just like there is a spectrum of scales, there is an equal spectrum of modellers and as long as you are enjoying your hobby, you're doing it right.

As none of my editorials seem complete without a mention of Island Line, I hear that VIVARAIL, the builders (re-builders?) of the class 484 stock have entered administration. Their re-engineered stock that started life as London Underground's "D78" stock reappeared as both the electric Class 484 and the Class 230 which run between Bletchley and Bedford. Apparently the Bletchley-Bedford service has been suspended with rail replacement buses now operating.

Finally, as this is my last newsletter before Christmas, may I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and hope to see many of you at Barry's "Mince Pies and Trains" event on 22 December.



The Yarlow 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



We have had a rather busy and productive November. Decluttering continued apace spurred on by the upcoming Exhibition. Colin H's mantra that if no use to us put on sale at Exhibition or straight to tip. If not sold at Exhibition then plenty of room at tip should put us in good stead. Maybe magic was more appropriate as Sales stock and income boomed beyond expectation.

Our 51st Exhibition was excellent. Everyone contributed and pulled together creating a wonderful example of teamwork in action with many hands making light work. The Friday afternoon/evening set up was seamless, even the rejigging to ensure adequate space at throat points and at Fire Exits. Richard's bacon butties were a great bonus. Saturday dawned well. We were 98% ready to open about 20 minutes before the appointed time. Exhibitor set up was smoother than usual. There were no undue worries. Usually there would be a small queue before 10am. This year there was nobody until 0956. But the usual patronage arrived. Some old faces were missing; some new families graced us with their presence. The absence of free issue Champion Newspaper was a negative replaced by Andrew's outreach through Social Media. The welcoming and open atmosphere we created was excellent which our patrons frequently commented upon. There is value in being a small Exhibition with a relatively local basis in good well decorated light open access premises.

The financial result matched that of 2021 where we had benefited from enhanced numbers through the door as being only the second North West Exhibition of 2021 in Covid recovery process. We were back in the general mix for 2022 and still generated a superb result. We can be respectably thankful for our support without being complacent – we must look to the opportunities and challenges for 2023 as we have done for 2021 and 2022. The feedback meeting ranged over organisation with newly identified growth points for 2023 taken on board.

One of the things that creates a good powerful Exhibition is the standard of Exhibitor and Public catering. Thanks to Richard and Marilyn ours was top notch. I am writing this note the day after Rainhill's One Day Christmas Exhibition. Their standard is reputed (correctly) to be well above average. We have always looked after our Exhibitors, Traders and Staff. My direct and indirect feedback confirms just how highly we are regarded. It is the overall offering that stands us well in these difficult times.

All these features are through your efforts, contributions and feedback. I am proud to be Southport Model Railway Society's Chairman. Thank you.

SMRS 50th Anniversary Logoed garments

Thank you to those who have submitted their requirements. We are approaching the time for me to submit our Order. There are some notable absence of responses so may I take this opportunity to remind everyone that I am thinking of sending the Order off on Wednesday 07th December. Hence I need to have your details for Tuesday 06th December.

The anticipated time scales were that we put an order in towards the end of November, although a few days makes little difference. This means we should have the garments around 10 weeks later in late January/early February well in advance of May. For all orders, payment is due 30 days from the date of the invoice which is sent the same day as our order is dispatched. So your payment will be in arrears of receipt of garments during January/February. As SMRS accounts are to 31st December annually this will not affect drawing up our 2022 Accounts. Whatever the additional logo supplement and carriage charge, if any, turns out to be will be shared pro rata based on the number of garments ordered.

Logo will be our usual (held already by Balmoral) plus embroidered underneath "50th Anniversary 1973-2023". This wording is suggestion and open to discussion, we have until Committee Meeting on 06th December to make a final decision.

Anyone who needs another copy of Catalogue & Price List should email me please at tony.kuivala@btinternet.com

Where's Andrew?

Last month, I was at Hythe, which is just across the water from Southampton. The pier train is the oldest continually operating public pier train in the world. It is a 2ft gauge railway, with 250v DC supplied by a third rail, and is operated by two Brush locomotives built in 1917, originally built battery powered for use at Avonmouth. The trains connect at the pier head with the Hythe Ferry from Town Quay, Southampton (close to where the Isle of Wight ferries run from).

Congratulations for the correct answer go to Ian Shulver.

This month, I am again by the coast, and by another narrow gauge line. But where am I?



Do you YouTube too?

Barry Miltenburg

YouTube is a bit Marmite – people either love it or loathe it and it's easy to see why. There is loads of content showing methods of construction, hints on design, electrics, scenery and prototypical operation. For those who need it, there are plenty of “unboxing” videos – a detailed review of new products covering everything from packaging to running qualities. Some of my favourites show running sessions on completed layouts, often to carefully planned timetables.

The biggest complaint about the channels is the quality of content. There are no restrictions on who posts what and this leads to hours of video showing poor layouts which run badly and where prototypical operation never seems to trouble the owner. Wobbly camera work (often hand-held), muffled sound and trains that stall or derail.

My Yarslow Model Railway has a YouTube channel, so am I perfect and able to critique all others from the “High Ground”? Certainly not. But I have made most of the mistakes and, with 1300 subscribers gained in the first 18 months, am happy to share the highs and lows. Before we begin, a few YT basics. Channels are run by individuals who can post videos on anything inoffensive – YT HQ check for this and for copyright infringement before uploading your video. Making a movie is easy using Microsoft or Apple software that comes bundled with most devices. If people like your videos, they “subscribe” – that is, they save your channel to make it easier to find when they want to watch again. They can also get “notifications” – a notice when you post a new video. As on most social media platforms, the viewer can “Like” your video and massage your ego!

So, what if you want to run a channel? Firstly, there is a great deal of advice out there for YT users, including the You Tube Creation Studio which gives hints and tips to ensure your video gets to the widest possible audience. These hints are aimed at maximising the income that can be gained from monetisation. If you agree, YT sells advertising space in your videos and you earn from those adverts. It is not something I do but there are plenty of people making a living out of this. Similarly, you can attract Patrons that make a physical payment to you in return for exclusive videos or early access to your new content. I don't do that either. But in return, those money-earning YouTubers have videos out every week (some, every day) in order to drive adverts, clicks and income. In the railway/ modelling arena, such YouTubers are rare. They are easy to spot – one or two videos a week

covering every topic you can think of, mostly telling you what you already know or giving information that sometimes borders on the questionable.

Some YouTubers offer advice on running a channel – Charlie at Chadwick Model Railway made one a few years ago which is packed with sensible advice. The better channels, like a good TV programme, has an opening, titles, logical content and perhaps a summary. End titles tell you how to find more or ask for subscriptions, notifications and Likes. That all adds up to developing a “House Style”. The opening credits, style of presentation and end credits are always the same on my videos. I have tried different presentation styles and its interesting to review the many and varied stats that are available to gauge feedback.

I have deliberately avoided doing pieces on “How to...” and prefer to discuss “Why” I do a certain thing. There are plenty of instructional videos for track-laying, ballasting, wiring, painting, etc so I have nothing to add. However, few modellers discuss why they chose the style of layout they did, why the storage sidings look like they do and why they built things they way they did. I have also tried to make my videos something of a diary, charting progress from an empty shed to the present state of play. However, my viewers like to see trains running so I make sure that there is a train-spotting section or two. These give me a chance to talk about train developments, the various trains I operate (there are 55 of them to chose from) and things like passengers, wagon loads, weathering, etc.

Viewers can leave comments and, in the model railway world, the vast majority are supportive or come in the form of questions. From time to time, I respond to specific questions with a “Quick Bites” video. These have covered topics from Loco head codes and live frog pointwork to using relays, freight train formations and catch points – in fact, I have a few more planned on storage siding options, signal-box bell codes and making timetables.

So, is my channel a good thing or bad? Overall, it’s a good thing and I have chatted with various people through forums or directly, sharing tips and hints and photos of what each of us has done. [Through another channel I run on a different topic, I have even met a Southport-based fellow modeller/guitar player and joined his guitar group!!]. I enjoy making the videos and they sit alongside my own private collection of layout pictures charting progress. Not every picture makes the videos – not everyone wants to see loads of pictures from different angles of that kit I just finished!! If

there is a down side, it was identified by Charlie at Chadwick Model Railway. He found himself becoming a YouTuber who modelled whereas he wanted to be a modeller with a YouTube channel. I try to do one update a month and to make that update worthwhile. That drives progress to an extent that may not agree with everyone's idea of a retirement hobby – but I always knew that Yarslow was going to be a part-time job.

My advice to anyone interested is to have a go. It's easy to set up a channel and, using any half decent camera with good lighting, anyone can make a video. Showcase your layout, painting skills, recent trips or anything else that takes your fancy. Peter Mills has a channel that covers a whole load of stuff and I enjoy the variety. On the other hand, I also subscribe to Bath Green Park, a 7mm S&DJR model that has a video series solely depicting the actual Working Timetables across the early 1960's. One thing is guaranteed – if you have an interest in something, however obscure, someone will be running a YouTube channel for it!!

Electrostatic grass applicators

Ian Shulver

All model railways need scenery, but unless you are creating a purely urban scene then you will need to have grassed areas, whether fields or the railway embankment. Modelling realistic grass is probably the most important aspect of scenic modelling and when well done adds immeasurably to the layout. There are numerous ways of modelling grass, but apparently one of the easiest and most effective is using static grass.

Whilst on a personal level I have never tried this technique, I have seen the results and, yes, it does look good. So much so that I have resolved to buy an applicator and some grass. Maybe the Club should consider investing in one.

The article below is based on one found on the World of Railways website, to whom I make acknowledgment. I have made changes, which also reflect my experience with using traditional scatter materials.

How to add static grass to your model railway

As with using any scatter material, it is necessary to paint the surface to be grassed in browns or greens - since the fibres will stand upright, the base colour of the scenery is likely to be visible when looking from above through the fibres.



To fix static grass to the landscape, glue needs to be applied to the area. Work in small areas, say about 100 cm² (4" x 4") at a time (less if you are new to this) - to ensure that the glue will still be tacky as you apply the grass. But before you cover the landscape in adhesive, half fill your grass tool (electronic device or puffer bottle) with the chosen (length and colour) static grasses.

Not all the static grass fibres stick to the glue the first time, so any excess can be reused if collected either by shaking the layout (if

small enough) or using a vacuum cleaner with the nozzle covered with a gauze (old tights are ideal).

What's the best static grass glue to use?

PVA is widely regarded as the best glue to fix static grass in place and adding a little water seems to help the grass stand upright when using an electric applicator. However, there are plenty of different glues available that are specifically designed for static grass application, just ensure that you select a glue designed to be used for your baseboard and that it is quick drying.

When it comes to adding further layers, painting on further glue will flatten or glue over strands already in place. In this case try spraying a dilute glue solution or even hairspray (use the cheapest "high hold" that is available. Whichever method you choose, have a practice run first.

The static grass applicator

Although it is possible to use a 'puffer bottle' (cheap) as the application tool, an electronic static grass tool would be a better investment – more controllable and easier to cover larger areas. There are quite a number of these electrostatic applicators on the market so make sure you do your research on which one to buy, some will only do 2mm grass, as the mesh is not big enough for the longer grass to go through.

There are several designs, and they all work in the same way. You fit batteries in the handle and there is a hopper with a 'fine' mesh in it that unscrews so you can pour grass fibres in and a flying earth lead. Remember that once loaded with fibres keep the mesh facing upwards until you wish to start applying the grass fibre -, otherwise things can get rather messy!

The grass applicator tool must be earthed. Push a pin into the glue and clip the flying lead to this. However, do not clip it to the rails. Switch the tool on and gently shake so the fibres fall out onto the glue. As they fall through the mesh, they will be charged with static electricity and should stand up straight when they land in the glue.

What about length and scale?

Fibres are available in lengths from 1mm up to 20mm - which length you opt for is down to the scale you're modelling in and what type of grass you're hoping to depict. Generally, size variety is key for a realistic turf. Most grassed areas are not the same length. Lawns and pastures grass length will be reasonably similar, but embankments and roadside verges will be

much more variable in length. Typically grass length will be anywhere between 3" and 12" (I will leave you to work out what is right for your scale).

What is the best colour to use?

It is advisable to mix up grass fibres using a few different colours to create a more realistic look. As a bare minimum, use a green and beige mix - a 50:50 mix for summer grass. A bit less beige for spring grasses and a bit more for autumn and winter. Look carefully at photos, or better still the big outdoors, to gauge the right colours. Mixing different manufacturer's materials will also add variety and hence realism.

Finally, adding other scatter materials to your already grassed areas can provide even more realism, for example to simulate brambles, nettle clumps, ragwort, rosebay willow herb and so on.

And Finally...

He's making a list

He's checking it twice

He's going to find out who's naughty or nice

Santa Claus is in breach of Data Protection Regulations ...