

Newsletter

Issue 69: December 2018 Editor: Allan Trotter
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Editorial.

The seven year price stitch up.

Now that Christmas is approaching, many of us will be dropping discrete hints as to what they would like to see running around their Christmas tree on Christmas morning. Browsing the current catalogues, there is certainly a plethora of items on offer but there is one proviso, the prices! One examination of some price lists from 2011, that's only seven years ago, most of the prices seem to have increased by up to three times or so. Possibly the most extreme example of this is the 00 scale Bachmann six car former Midland Region Blue Pullman which on introduction was listed at around £350.00 or so including internal lighting and DCC on board.



A new version in grey blue is now being offered, also with DCC and interior lighting and now with sound on board. An oval of track and a control unit are now included. Now real Blue Pullman trains became extinct in 1972 and as none are preserved, how does anyone actually know or even remember just what one sounds like? This newer version is a now a multiple unit fitted grey six car Midland

Blue Pullman as latterly used on Western Region but is now listed at an eye watering price of £949.95. Yes, you are reading correctly, that's £949.95 in real time spondulix! As the two real trains on Western Region generally operated together as a twelve car train, if you really want to represent true prototypical operation accurately, you actually need two six car sets!



For a sum of less than 10% of the Bachmann price you could purchase a pre owned Tri-ang Railways Midland Blue Pullman train. It is of course not as finely detailed as the current Bachmann model, does not have DCC installed (yes, it can be) no sound or interior lighting but once it is in operation on your layout or even around your Christmas tree, does it really matter that much? To make a rash assumption, most peoples' income or even savings would not seem to have increased by an equivalent amount in the past seven years so here is something to think about; just who is buying these products and keeping these manufacturers in business?

Answers please to the editor attached to a £20 note!

Events Diary.

Sat 1st Dec Visit to Manchester exhibition. **Only if Northern are operating.**
Tue 11 Dec Railway Architecture. Graham Whitehead RIBA. Clubroom.
Fri 21st Dec SMRS Christmas social, Clubroom.

2019

Tue 5th 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.

Over the past months I have noticed that there has frequently been some duplication in my report and your Secretary's one. Hopefully we have got our act together now and this duplication will be minimised (more space will be available for your articles!). Since I have been a little late (well almost too late) getting my notes to the editor, I have therefore had a sneak preview of your Secretary's report. Since he has covered much of what I was going to say, there is little else to report.

However, I must thank everyone for their efforts at the Autumn show. We made a modest but useful surplus from this event and hopefully all of you enjoyed yourselves. I must also thank John Ryan for his extremely interesting talk and slide show about the construction of the Merseyrail links. It was nearly a disaster in that the supposedly failsafe non-electronic 35mm slide projector failed mechanically. Luckily I recalled I had one lurking around in a cupboard at home and after a brief break to go and find it, the talk managed to go ahead.

Jim mentioned the "Racetrack" (I am still awaiting suggestion for a more appropriate and better name for this project) so I thought a brief update on progress would be in order. If you visited the clubrooms recently, you will have noticed that the basic structure for the OO and N gauge circuits have been constructed in the north room. There is still a little work to do in bracing the shelving, sandpapering and finally painting the baseboards before track laying can begin. Once Jim has finished working on the baseboard joiners on Fishy Tales, we can start on extending the work into the south room.

Well, all for now, and I wish everyone a very Happy Christmas although I do hope to see you before then either on a normal club night or at one of our forthcoming events. I should also mention that I now have available the Club membership booklet which you can collect from me next time you visit the Club. **Ian Shulver.**

Secretary's Report.

First of all, a Merry Christmas to you all as we enter the season of advent. As last year, Southport MRS will be putting on a Christmas Party evening at your

clubrooms on Friday 21st December from 19:30. Expect a nice welcoming fire, a quiz, a railway ghost story, some festive fare, some operating layouts and good cheer.

As in previous years, please send me up to 12 photos of your choice covering the last year (they don't have to be railway orientated but it helps!) for incorporation in our festive powerpoint which will be running on our very own digital projector. As previously, there will be no charge and we will also be welcoming friends and colleagues who have helped us throughout the year including at our recent successful Autumn Family Show.

As regards our Family Show, we can claim this was a great success as evidenced by the large numbers of happy and well-behaved children who attended. Once more we depended heavily on members, ex-members and our friends for putting together an entertaining assemblage of layouts with the emphasis on operations. Particularly obvious this year was the enjoyable atmosphere and camaraderie which pervaded the proceedings, even though with a large proportion of club exhibits, our members found themselves tied up with operating layouts. We also importantly made a respectable return on our relatively small investment and have signed up an extra couple of new members. A big thank you to all who contributed, especially to those members who additionally slogged round the takeaways and supermarkets with handbills, your efforts certainly paid off.

Last month I sounded out the possibility of our club holding a regular daytime opening at least during the Winter months; one or two members expressed support for the idea and indeed a successful trial opening was held last Thursday morning when three or four members attended and undertook development work on the "Race Track". In continuation of this theme, I will be away voyaging from the Southern to the Northern Hemisphere in January and February 2019, so I am suggesting that for the months of January and February that we suspend the Friday meetings. This will leave the club opening on evenings on Tuesdays only, however key-holders can attend whenever they want. If you need a key, speak to the Chairman. What do people think?

Shortly after our exhibition we had a talk from John Ryan with his contemporary record of building the Merseyrail system 40 years ago, which was attended by several enthusiastic non-members, and also made a modest return on our investment. Our autumn season of talks will conclude with a talk on railway architecture on 11th December, see elsewhere for details.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to one and all. **Jim Ford.**

Treasurer's Report.

No report submitted.

Exhibition Coordinator's Report.

No report submitted.

Tours & Events Report.

On Tuesday 11th December Graham Whitehead, who continues to practise as an architect and was at one time responsible for all government building in Bootle, overseeing much of the building work in the late 1960's, will present a talk on Railway Architecture. He has always had an interest in railway architecture, particularly stations. He took the opportunity whenever he was out to photograph railway buildings, at this evenings talk he will present a small selection of these photographs to the club.

On Tuesday 5th of March 2019, Pete Clair will offer an open house from 16:00 so members can see his layouts in operation. At 19:00 he will give a talk on the production of bespoke transfers for railway stock.

On a Tuesday in April 2019 renowned railway photographer Fred Kerr will present an illustrated talk "Forty years of the 507's and 508's". **Richard Jones.**

Contributions by Members.

Whistling without DCC.

Those of you who know me well, will be aware that I like to run my trains authentically, and this means sounding the whistle before you start off or enter, or leave a confined area like a tunnel or cross an ungated level crossing.

With OO gauge this has been quite challenging until recently unless you have chosen to become a train computer geek (also known as DCC!). Now, however for the small sum of around £12 you can have your own independent whistle run from your Bluetooth enabled mobile phone.

Bluetooth speakers have been around for a few years but there is now one billed as the "smallest Bluetooth speaker in the World" (also k/a the i-Star Micro) and available from many suppliers on the internet for around £12.



This is a cube of around 27 mm all-round as shown above and will conveniently fit inside a box van or guard's compartment. Just charge it up, pair it to your smart phone's Bluetooth settings, download some steam whistle sounds off the internet (or make some sound files yourself off your own videos) and away you go.

As Thomas would say, "Toot-toot!" **Jim Ford.**

Stoke Tunnel, Ipswich.

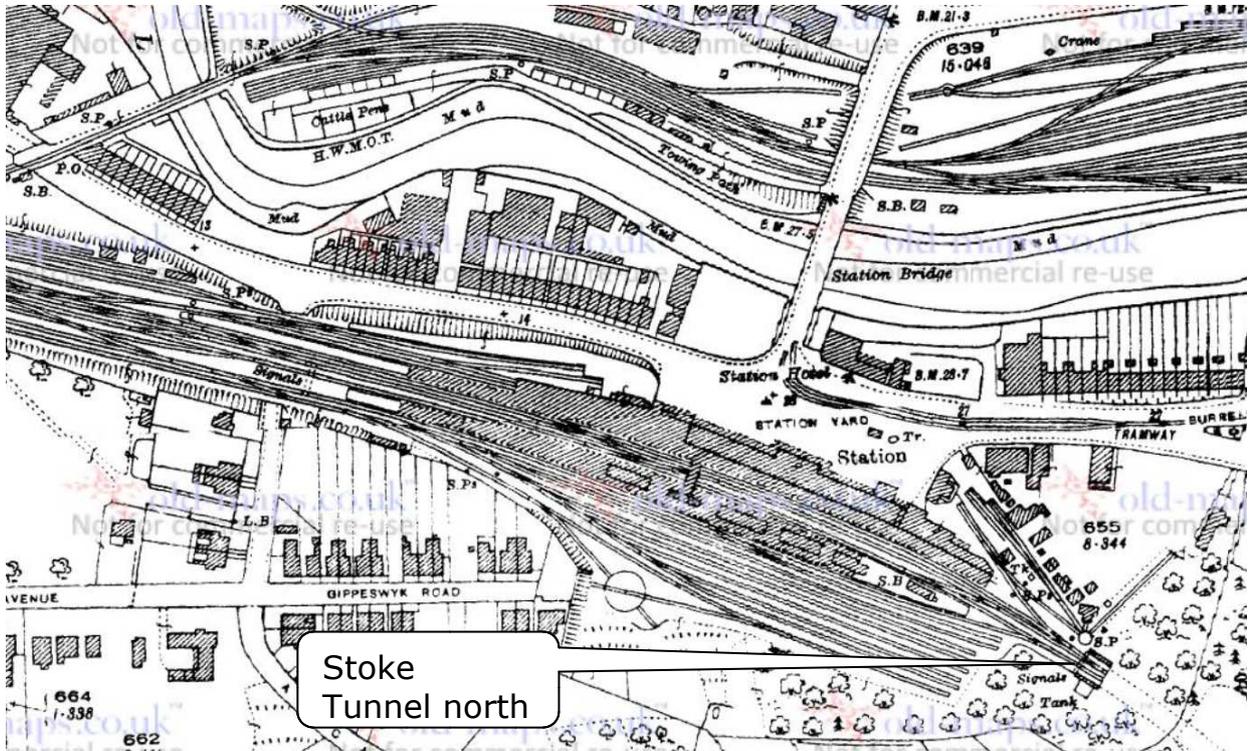
This photograph (*Historic England Archive AA98/11706*) featured in a recent e-mail I received from Historic England. It is of the northern portal of Stoke Tunnel in Ipswich and is situated only a few tens of yards from the end of the up side of Ipswich Station. I remember the view quite well from our visits to London in the late 50's and early 60's, and later when taking the Harwich boat train to Sheffield University (do people still use the train to get to university now?). However, I recall rather more vegetation present than is shown here.



On the up side, between the tunnel mouth and the station and just behind the photographer, was a small goods yard which was only accessible to the up line. I believe it was originally used for horses but I only remember seeing the odd brake van, covered van or odd locomotive in it. To access the down line from this yard, one had to pass through the tunnel to the main goods yard at the southern end of the tunnel and use the crossovers there. Again just out of view but on the down side was the access to an extensive (7 or 8 roads) set of carriage sidings.

The map below shows the area around the station. Of interest is the extensive set of sidings to the north which served the docks and which extended some considerable distance to the east. Another point of interest is Platform 1 which is the bay platform on the up line at the west end of the station. This was the platform for train to Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Felixstowe. Leaving Ipswich for these towns, you travelled North West for some way before looping back around the northern outskirts of Ipswich to head in an easterly direction thus avoiding the docks and river crossing.

Apart from the visual memories, Stoke Tunnel is interesting to me geologically in a professional sense. The tunnel cuts through a hugely important sequence of Quaternary rocks from which innumerable fossils including a woolly mammoth were extracted. Many of these fossils from minute shells to large bones from various animals were and presumably still are housed in the local museum and many happy hours were spent viewing these.



Ian Shulver.

Smoke but no Mirrors.

Today many model locomotives are supplied with supplementary enhancements such as DCC decoders, interior and exterior lighting and on board sound effects. Strangely, one addition that is seldom included today is smoke effects on steam and even on diesel locomotives. In the past, Tri-ang Railways and Tri-ang Hornby did include a smoke producing feature on some steam locomotives, initially utilising Seuthe smoke units imported from Germany but latterly evolving to develop their own patented (British Patent No. 961630) very effective synchronised smoke effect aptly called Synchrosmoke.



This system employed a heating element surrounded by an absorbent type material in a smoke box into which was applied their own brand of smoke oil. However if this Tri-ang Railways proprietary product was not available, light lubricating oil would suffice. A piston driven from the main worm drive

pumped air into the smoke box and the smoke was then emitted from the chimney in a most realistic fashion and of course was fully synchronised with the speed of the locomotive. Combine this with a Chuff-Chuff sound tender (see SMRS Newsletter 12, September 2012) and the overall visual and audible effect was impressive, all without the present day formidable complexity and price of DCC type electronics.

Perhaps today we have lost the way somewhat with the implementation of excessively complicated electronics and have neglected the basic principal of "Keep it simple, Stupid". **Allan Trotter.**

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