

N-Trak UK

December 2014

Here we are again, another Newsletter and this time I've had some material submitted which is very helpful. What's happened since the last edition? In my case, very little! Modelling had to take second place (a distant second) to building twelve inch to the foot structure kits – yes I've been visiting a well-known furniture store with a bright blue and yellow logo. I think they've got the idea by now that the average flat pack builder can't cope with words so there aren't any – just pictures! That seems to remind me of a well-known maker of plastic kits. I'm old enough to remember when Airfix kits came in plastic bags, the only picture was on the front of the header paper and you had to learn what ailerons and elevators were to build the content. Now those same instructions don't contain a single word of text – and all in the name of being international! Enough of this ranting; what is in this issue? The answer is a mixture: some nostalgia, some news, some product reviews and some travel news. So let's get on with a healthy dose of nostalgia.

Conventions

Now that our March 2015 convention has been confirmed, I thought you might be interested in this piece of history sent to me by Russ Cook.

NTRAK by the Sea

We come of age next year as it will be the 21st N Gauge Convention so I thought I would give you all a bit of history.

It all started from very small beginnings in March 1995 at Staines, organised by Barry Owen and Peter Smith with 17 of us for the Saturday night meal which included my oldest grandson Ben. We were there again in 1996, but Staines was a bit too small so it was suggested we go to the Barton Hall Holiday Resort in Torquay. So from 1997 to 2002 it was held there (*Some of us still recall the "Round the World Cruises" that seemed to be a feature of the weekend entertainment – all very "Hi De Hi" – Ed.*)



Steve Bunce's Rock Face Layout at Torquay 1998 (Russ Cook)

After we lost our President, Ray Hamilton, in September 2000, his wife Moira kept it going until David Ballam took over and we came to Bournemouth in 2003 staying at the East Anglia Hotel. The East Anglia was a great little hotel run by a family who owned it when the NMRA had a convention there back in 1983, but by 2007 they sold it on to another hotel group, who then sold part to the Premier Inn next door and the rest was demolished to make way for retirement flats. We went with the staff to the Tralee Hotel in 2008, but that was then sold to the Travelodge Group. We also lost David Ballam that year with Neil

Lancaster taking over. Our next hotel was the Connaught, which was a bit up-market and did not really make us welcome in 2009, so we moved to the Trouville in 2010. This hotel is very much like the East Anglia with very good staff and excellent food.



Black Diamonds at The Connaught Hotel, 2009 – Recognisable are Barry Peacock, Barry Owen, Bill Hamilton-Turner and Rex Nichamin (Russ Cook)

So next year will be our 6th convention at the Trouville and I hope it will be as excellent as the last 5 with no politics and plenty of train running. We have quite an international feel to the convention now with Neil coming over from the US each year and now I hear that 5 lads will be coming over from Holland, not forgetting Bill from the Isle of Man as usual, so I look forward to seeing you all in March.

Russ.

Still on the subject of Conventions, I received the following from Bill “The Banker” Hamilton-Turner

Hi Ralph,

Browsing through some old filing, I came across this Newsletter from David Ballam dated March 2003 sent out after that year's Convention.

Lots of names are still familiar. Also, interesting to note that the price of the weekend for 2004 was £88; in 2015 it

will be £109. I make that an increase of 23.86% over 11 years or 2.16% flat per year which is not bad and I reckon is very good value.

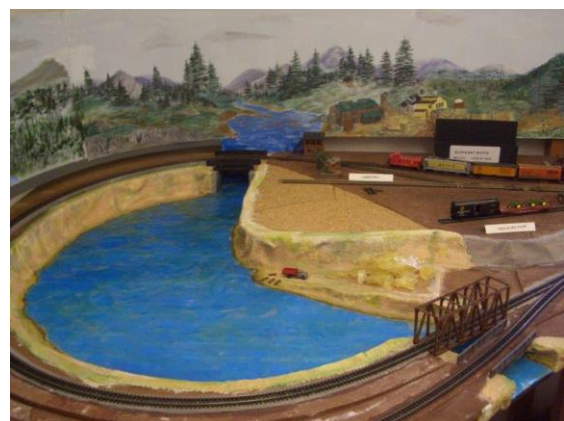
Bill

My thanks to Bill for this insight into how well our organisers have done, keeping the convention costs under control. I had hoped to include the document Bill refers to, but I could not get a small enough copy that would have been readable.

Although it's past the original deadline, if you would still like to attend the March 2015 Convention but have not yet booked, please contact Neil Lancaster as soon as possible.

Starting Over

I guess we've all been there... that point in time when we say to ourselves 'I could do this better' or 'How will I fit this in?'. We all have to start over with a new layout every so often and it can be traumatic. Bill Hamilton-Turner has sent me the following photos that illustrate his 'journey'.



The river on Bill's layout in May 2004. Track down and scenic work started. (Bill Hamilton-Turner)



The same scene in 2007. Scenic work nearly complete and a lot of detail added. (Bill Hamilton-Turner)



(Chris White)

My thanks go to Chris for sharing these pictures.

New to You?

Ali Smith has sent in these notes about three new products that may be of interest to members.

Scalescenes

Most of my modelmaking of recent months has been of British subjects and I am currently assembling some of Scalescenes' downloadable kits. The way these work is that you select the model at www.scalescenes.com and pay via Paypal. You are emailed back with a link to download the product which consists of a number of sheets of building parts. You then print these off and stick them to suitable card, cut out and assemble. Instructions are provided. The beauty of this system is that having bought the kit you can quite legitimately make as many copies as you wish.

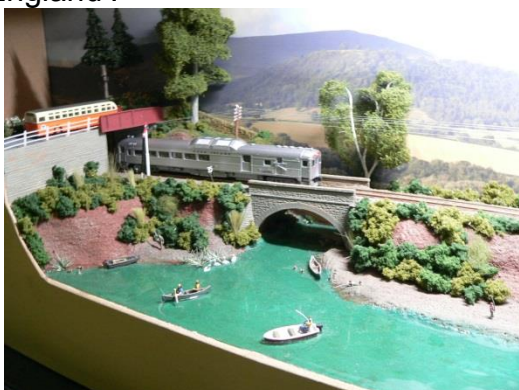
Most of their range is, in my view, quintessentially British in appearance but you might be able to use some of the industrial buildings. The most interesting item for US modellers is the roads and sidewalks kit. I've been impressed by the sidewalks/footpaths in the British kit; I found the road surface too black for my taste and



August 13th 2014 after a house move. Starting over again! (Bill Hamilton-Turner)

Who says a layout is never finished!

Talking of layouts, many of you will have seen, or heard about, the beautiful 'mini-layouts' and dioramas that Chris White builds. He's sent me some pictures of a recent creation. Although the scenery is essentially British with the RDC present it could just as easily be New England as 'Old England'.



didn't use it, but I feel it is well worth the money for the paths alone. I haven't tried the American kit because I've done all the roads and paths on our US layout.

OttLite 30

When I'm at my modelling bench I have an illuminated magnifier on an Anglepoise type stand. I don't use the magnifier all the time, but I always have the lamp on. This is a function of ageing, I'm afraid that opticians can't help with, so I'm sure one or two of you are in the same boat.

When I'm working directly on a layout or some other table I find the aforementioned magnifier a bind to move around and won't always clamp to the edge of the work surface, so I've just obtained an OttLite 30. Here's a picture of it with an N scale Bulleid Pacific.



(Ali Smith)

The sloping bit does the work, being fitted with LEDs, 30 of them you will be unsurprised to learn. The light is fairly directional as tends to be the case with LEDs, so you need to position it with care. When not in use, the LED carrier folds down into the body, which also switches it off. It runs off three AAA

batteries; I can't tell you the battery life because a) I haven't been keeping track and b) I haven't exhausted the first set yet!

You can get one from Craft Lamps who are based in Frome, and can order on line at www.craftlamps.co.uk. They can sell you a transformer to go with it you like.

Neo for Iwata TRN2 Airbrush

When I was still at school (post steam but there were still quite a few green diesels - you can work it out for yourself), I bought a Humbrol single acting very basic (and cheap enough for a schoolboy) airbrush, and I seem to recall did some moderately respectable work with it, once I'd learned the necessity of using fresh paint reasonably well thinned.

From time to time since then, I've tried double-acting airbrushes. The earlier ones only really sprayed water or ink; once you put paint in they lost interest. More recently I bought a used ModelMasters (now Aztek) double acting airbrush from a colleague. This was a considerable improvement: I could now spray stuff that would not only stick to a model but also change its colour significantly. In fact, it is a pretty good tool (or is it an instrument?) but I have never got the hang of the floating button control that double acting brushes almost invariably come with.

There are some full-sized spray guns in the garage that are used for repainting motorcycles (or lending to a friend for his custom cars). These I get on with much better. They have a pistol grip and a stop on the back that you can adjust whilst spraying. Even the touch-up gun is far too big for N-gauge (and considerably larger)

models, which it would simultaneously drown in paint and blow across the room. Clearly what I needed was a miniature spray gun.

I was aware of Iwata airbrushes with their high quality and relatively low price, so when they announced the Neo for Iwata (not sure exactly what that means) trigger airbrush range with a pistol grip and a stop on the back, I took notice.

Eileen's Emporium (www.eileensemporium.com) had the full range (of two) at the recent Peterborough show. I was going to have the TRN1 as this has a finer nozzle but was persuaded that this was unnecessary and I would be better off with the TRN2 for modelmaking purposes. As they were the same price I guess this was his honest opinion. It comes with paint cups in two sizes and a bottle big enough to spray a Cadillac (as long as it's no bigger than 0-gauge).

The next day I was keen to try out my new toy and started setting up to weather some hopper cars. Part way through I discovered that it doesn't come with an air hose and I didn't have a suitable one. One was sourced from The Airbrush Company (www.Airbrushes.com). They are also the Iwata importers. So the following Saturday I tried again. Brilliant! I was able to spray either side of each rib of a hopper, except where I missed. Looking at the photograph I should have put more black around the hopper bottoms and found a nicer section of track. Two batches of hoppers are as much as I've attempted so far, but I look forward with confidence to trying some other jobs.

I used Lifecolor paints from their railway weathering set. These are very

thin and ideal for spraying with very little thinners, but not really suitable for brush painting as they come. They do offer a thickener and I even bought a jar but have not tried it so far. These paints are available from the Airbrush Company amongst others.



(Ali Smith)

(As an aside, the Neo range of airbrushes is made in China for the Japanese firm Iwata. Hence the price difference between NEO and Iwata. They come with a 5 year warranty rather than Iwata's usual 10 but are every bit as good the parent firm's equipment. I use a NEO CN myself and can vouch for the quality – just not the user! The Airbrush Company, above, are the main UK importers for Iwata and NEO products and carry the full range plus spares and even training workshops.)

Some Other News

At the recent Warley Exhibition I met and had a brief chat with Jason Schron from Rapido trains. Jason was over to publicise their forthcoming OO scale APT-E but he also had samples of the N-Scale GMD-1 on show, and beautiful they looked too - in a sort of ugly way. The prototype was not exactly flowing curves and lines but did 'what it said on the tin'. It could go over almost any line anywhere in Canada and pull a useful load at the same time. Anyway Jason told me that these little gems should be chugging out of Rapido to dealers soon after Christmas - if they can sort out a coupler issue. The other notable change from the original spec is the decoder. The sound equipped locos will still use an ESU Loksound

decoder, but Jason was not happy with the performance of the non-sound version of the ESU chip when running on straight DC. As a result the 'silent' version will now use a dual mode Digitrax decoder which is more DC friendly. He's also announced some more Canadian coaches to the same high standard as the previous releases. For more details I recommend visiting the Rapido website <http://www.rapidotrains.com> By the way, these new releases will not only be of interest to Canadian modellers. I suggest that Great Northern and Milwaukee modellers take a look as well.

Home Thoughts...

I don't know if you're like me, but when I go away I like to find the hobby shops in places I visit. Several recent trips have taken us to Austria and Germany and I've found a few shops that were of interest so I've listed some below. It's by no means a comprehensive list and US image isn't always to the fore but...

Austria

Rainer Model Railways
Amraser Strasse 73
A-6020 Innsbruck

(One of the biggest pure model railway shops I've been to outside of Caboose Hobbies)

Germany

Technische Modellspielwaren Lindenberg
Blaubach 6-8
50676 Cologne

Angermann ModelAutos und Eisenbahn
Rathaus Strasse
Bonn

(Angermann's is one of my favourites – it's madly chaotic, friendly, even though they don't speak English and a good deal cheaper than

Lindenberg's in Cologne. However they don't take credit cards so go armed with cash.)

Modelleisenbahn Berton
Ernst Berton
Schulstraße 87
68199 Mannheim

(Something of a chance find this is a real old fashioned model railway shop with a good range of stock both on display and 'in reserve')

And finally...

On our recent trip to Cologne I looked in a leading chain newsagent and found:-



I'd not heard of this magazine before and, although my German is schoolboy at best, I could make out a lot of what was going on. It's a high-quality production, which can only further 'N' in Europe.

All that remains now is for me to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year. I'll be back, hopefully before the convention, with the next issue.