

N-Trak UK

September 2015



Here we go again! Christine and I made it back in one piece from the USA. A great trip with some interesting railway-associated activity involved. This included riding on 'The Royal Gorge Route', The Napa Valley wine train and one of our favourites, The Georgetown Loop. We weren't quite so railway focused this time as our main aims were the wildlife and geysers of Yellowstone.



Any of you who read the Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette, will be aware of the series of articles that have been published about Bodie ghost town in California. We were able to slightly change our itinerary to take in a visit to this site. While we were there, I discovered that they had actually built a railroad to this remote mountain location, though no trace of it remains today. Wandering among the buildings, many of which looked as if the occupants had just walked away and left everything, was an eerie and quite lonely feeling, even though there were hundreds of visitors around. I make no excuse, then, to include these pictures of one of Bodie's remaining structures, the Methodist Chapel, which would make a fine exercise in scratch building or a good laser cut kit perhaps.



Of course some things don't just work out right – guess who arrived in Sacramento the week **after** the N Scale Enthusiast convention! I really should check calendars! Still the railway museum is excellent and always worth a visit.

An Important Reminder

With this newsletter you'll find the booking forms for next year's N-Trak convention. This will be held at The Trouville Hotel again, over the weekend of Friday 4th March to Sunday 6th March 2016. And the price? Would you believe, exactly the

same as this year at £109 per person for the weekend!

Please can I implore you all to get your booking forms and money back to Neil as quickly as possible, and certainly by the end of October, so he doesn't have a lot of stress about whether we'll make the required 35 bookings. Thanks in advance.

Across the Pond

It's always interesting to hear about how other people do things and Neal Carnaby has sent this interesting article describing a N Scale meet in Pennsylvania.

The N Scale Gathering in Bedford Pennsylvania was another fun filled N Scale Weekend. Once again Mike Phillips and crew put on an excellent show. Clubs from New Jersey, Maryland, West Virginia and New York all participated, with a strong variety of n-trak and t-trak layouts to provide interest.

Groups start arriving just after lunch on Friday. The challenge this year was rearranging the clubs and their modules to accommodate one club pulling out at the last minute. This was accomplished quickly and with a minimum of frustration. I presume this was very successful as there was almost no aisle space in places! Set up continued into Friday evening.

Traders were arrayed along all 4 walls, with a double row along one side. (Trade over the weekend seemed decent for most....public crowd seemed light, but several club members did their best to atone for this lack!)

Friday evening dinner was largely individual clubs on their own, followed by many folks adjourning to the outdoor patio of one of the hotels for beer and camaraderie. The (frigid) pool saw some patronage while the hot tub was overflowing with lobster wannabes.

Saturday was a full day of running trains, renewing old friendships and making new ones, checking out the latest goodies from Ken Ray models, seeing who else had stuff that needed to change hands, and in general having a great time.

Saturday night featured the pig roast (actually a barbeque buffet style) that most of the attendees opted to attend. Nobody left hungry! The live auction followed this, with the bargain of the night being 2 modules for 11 dollars!

After that it was back to the pool and hot tub for more relaxation.

Sunday was extremely quiet! These photographs were taken around lunchtime.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 4



Photo 3



Photo 5

Norfolk and Western Caboose

By Ali Smith

This is probably a rather minority interest subject, but on the other hand most people have probably found themselves in a similar position with some piece of equipment for their own favourite road.

My interest is in the Norfolk and Western in the early fifties when it was all steam, the lightweight passenger cars had underbody skirts and there were boat-tail observation cars on the Powhattan Arrow. We have been fortunate in that the trade have provided us with ready to run models of three steam engine classes unique to the N&W in this period and more can be made by conversions of varying degrees of complexity.

There are passenger and freight cars that to a greater or lesser degree resemble those of the N&W and, in some cases, are even in the right colour schemes. What we have been missing so far is an accurate caboose in the right colour and lettering scheme. At the most basic level, we want a conventional-looking car with a central cupola and it shouldn't be too long. Offset cupolas, bay windows and portholes are right out. The Kato one catches the general look and is a good quality product but now there are other possibilities.

The first photo (*figure 1*) shows a C3 class caboose, built by International in 1958. It's an Atlas model repainted and lettered with Microscale transfers. It has been available in later N&W schemes but, as far as I know, not like this.



Figure 1

It's not a perfect likeness, but pretty close. My chief objection is that it is from a later date than is ideal and is somewhat longer than is typical of the period.

The most common types in the early fifties were the CF, CG and CH classes. These were all the same shape. The CF had vertically boarded sides, whereas the CG had plywood smooth sides. These two classes had no end windows other than those in the doors. The CH was identical to the CG, but had a window either side of the door at each end.

A few years ago Atlas introduced a "C&O type" caboose in their Trainman range. This is very similar to a CG or CH but need some mods to be just so. Here's one straight from the box. (*figure 2*)



Figure 2

Apart from the colour scheme which I'll come to later, it needs passenger car steps rather than the tender steps

provided, a small window for the toilet on one side only and the smoke jack moved. There is also the matter of the end windows. This model has a window to the right of the door only, so you have to blank this off for a CG or cut a second identical one for a CH. I recommend the former, especially as the roof is part of the body moulding. As for the livery, bright red is good, but not on the roof. I get the impression that some people believe it was painted that hue, but a study of colour photos soon gives the lie to that and, even if it were true, they wouldn't remain so for long in service. Perhaps the lettering is a bit on the small side, but then the Microscale transfers seem a bit too big.

Here's one with the alterations done. (figure 3) The steps are from a Gold Medal etch for detailing heavyweight passenger cars, I think I had to reduce them by one step. It looks like I used a Kato smoke jack rather than moving the original; perhaps I couldn't get it off in one piece. I did this conversion two or three years ago, hence my imprecise recollection of how I did it. I try to make notes these days.

One other change I will make when I do some more of these is to replace the roof walks. These don't stand out enough. I have some Microtrains 50ft boxcars I've robbed the doors and trucks off (they had 8ft doors which I used to replace the 6 footers on Microtrains 40ft boxcars that were masquerading as N&W class B8) that can donate their roofwalks.



Figure 3

If you particularly want a CF, I suppose you could file the sides smooth and scribe them or use a scribed plastic overlay. Alternatively you could buy the Laserkit er... laser kit for one. This is well done but is a major faff to put together. (figure 4) I bought three a year ago. One is finished. There it is now. It comes out a bit larger than the Atlas conversion. I could find out which is the more accurate but I prefer not to know.



Figure 4

As you can see, laser cut wood isn't the ideal material for end railings. Ho hum.

Well that was exciting, wasn't it? Maybe next year I'll tell you how to turn a USRA switcher into an S1a (the tender is nearly done) or how to make a D1 diner from the Kato lightweight diner (it looks quite easy). But if you'd rather I didn't, just let me know.

(Thanks Ali – and bring on the S1a and the diner – please! Ed)

An Interesting Problem

Posed by Bill Hamilton-Turner

HELP.

Here's a problem that I need help to solve. About three years ago, I bought an Intermountain FP45 loco. Superb runner. Unfortunately, due to dithering, I missed also getting an F45 at that time. However, this year, after a considerable pre-order wait, I got my newly released Intermountain F45; another superb runner. Now comes the problem. Both locos are running on DC, not DCC. MU-ing them is proving to be near impossible due to the (surprisingly) different running characteristics. The FP45 is the faster. How can I get the speeds matched sufficiently without going over to DCC on both? Maybe put a resistor in the faster one? It's worth a try, but how do I calculate the value of the resistor required?

Answers, please, on an electronic post card in Noddy-style plain English to billht@manx.net

New to You

Bachmann seem to be trying to become the 'Kings of Steam' these days with lots of new releases. They also seem to have decided that a model of a steam loco needs to sound like one as well as look like one. I've just obtained the new model of the Chesapeake and Ohio Kanawha (that's a Berkshire on any other road). This is a fine looking model. I don't have references to check dimensions against so I can't and won't comment on the detail or accuracy. A review in the September – October N-Trak magazine pointed out a number of very serious defects in the running of

these locos. I'm pleased to report that mine doesn't seem to have any of these problems though. That may be because I obtained mine from a dealer who tests all the locos leaving his premises or it may have been from a later batch. My C&O Kanawha looked the part, sounded great on the test track and was very responsive to the controller, so I'm happy!

I'm also told that Bachmann will soon release a Pennsylvania K4s pacific to a similar specification. Now that should be worth waiting for!



I also understand that Model Power will be offering their range of steam locos with a DCC/Sound option soon. Model Railroading just got louder!