

# WHISTLEBLOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FARNHAM & DISTRICT MODEL RAILWAY CLUB

21 March 2020 Special Edition

## EDITORIAL

In order to maintain contact with Club members whilst the Wednesday Club meetings are discontinued, Richard Puddephatt asked that Whistleblower be published fortnightly. The request for articles from members has been impressive which has allowed publication in very short order. This special issue has a broad spectrum of subjects including a suggestion for members to use Whistleblower to offer surplus stock for sales.

I am extremely grateful for this support and look forward to this early success being maintained.

Jon Faulconer

## SMALL IS (HOPEFULLY) BEAUTIFUL! – David Harrington

Some of us have the sublime ability to focus on one scale, one gauge, even down to one aspect, such as wagon building or scenics. Others, like me, are less focused and have a scatter-gun approach to the hobby. I started in N, was taught by Greg and others how to convert titchy old locos to DCC and learned from the Gravetts how to make trees and mould landscapes.

But I think I've moved (or rather drifted) on. I'm a tad less interested than I was in N-gauge (but certainly haven't abandoned my roots) and I'm dabbling in OO9. For me, it's a whole new world. No rivet counting but still a lot of careful attention to ad hoc detail.

As part of that I've scratch-built a few thatched roof cottages. That was fun, but they lack finicky detail – "rough and ready" might be a good description.



So, of late I'm trying my hand at kit building a few houses and I've invested in four laser-cut kits from Petite Properties. You can see the sort of thing they are offering at <https://www.petite-properties.com/railway-models>.

Thus far I've completed two kits. Each took me, including decorating, about 20-30 hours. Although a bit expensive at over 12 quid, value for money is excellent. Quality of parts, tiny sills and lintels and detailed instructions are hard to fault. The cottage walls are substantial (around 3mm thick in what looks like MDF), but window and door openings are

crisply cut. I followed the instructions, which are written around clear “exploded parts” diagrams. I was happy with most of it, apart from the “strong advice” to paint and decorate as you go along, rather than wait until the model is complete. If you do that you face the problem of trying to fit and glue tiny parts that might be carrying a coating of brick and plaster. Following either course is problematic, but for me the “finish the model before you decorate” route is best.

The wall covering on the twin cottages is B&Q’s interior filler which is then scribed to bring out the stonework. This is a task equivalent to ballasting Brixcombe and I didn’t complete it very well. The walls are then covered in a very thin honey-coloured acrylic wash and individual stones picked out in a deeper colour. The wall covering on the other cottage is N-Gauge ballast subtly tinted with Chinchilla sand and dark grey weathering powder. The roofs have been covered with a thin black wash and detail added by dry brushing strips out of thickish card for an extra fiver, but that’s about 40% of the kit price, which seems a bit out of balance. I prefer to make my own or download from somebody like Scalescenes for a fraction of the price.

I have only one significant beef. The kits contain no roofing material to make the card roof complete. Petite Properties will happily mail you a set of laser-cut tiling strips out of thickish card for an extra fiver, but that’s about 40% of the kit price, which seems a bit out of balance. I prefer to make my own or download from somebody like Scalescenes for a fraction of the price.



Pictured are my two completed efforts so far. Compare my camera-cruel pictures with the pro-versions on the website – and then keep your opinions to yourself. Please!

## **CHARITY LAYOUT – Noel Leaver**

As you may know, we have been donated a part-built N Gauge layout by Paul Dineen which we intend to complete and raffle at our show in aid of the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice, where Paul sadly recently died. Obviously, the virus rather affects our plans, but there is a lot of work that can be done at home, so we might be able to complete it quickly when meetings resume. This is to find out who is interested in helping.

The track is laid, I’ve sorted out a few running problems, and Greg (I think) is going to complete the wiring and mount the controls (which were supplied with the layout). There is then a job for someone to ballast it.

Most of the work you might help with is making buildings from kits. It came with card kits for the station, engine shed, and goods shed (there is also one for the platforms but that needs to be done on the layout to fit the curves). There are plastic kits for signal box, water tower, coal bins.

Mike Le Marie has 3 Metcalfe card kits donated by Kernow for the church, school, and filling station that he can let people have if they want to build them. I have one for a factory that I will build. I will probably download and print some kits for semis and other houses which I could send to people. It may be other people have spare kits or would be happy to buy one.

My next job is to do a rough plan of where the buildings will go so we can check we have enough - and not too many!

In addition, we can use a fair number of trees – David Harrington says he will make some.

Contact me if you want to help: [n.leaver@btopenworld.com](mailto:n.leaver@btopenworld.com)

## GWR SIGNAL BOX – Jim Edwards

Jim has shared some photos of his GWR signal box:



## **SALES OF STOCK BY MEMBERS**

Gerry Gerrard has suggested Whistleblower could be used by members to advertise any surplus stock that they wish to dispose of. I have discussed the proposal with the Chairman and he is happy for this to go ahead on a trial basis, albeit that 15% should be donated to the Club, in line with the commission used for our sales at our Annual Exhibition.

My suggestion is for Sellers to e-mail me the following for each item:

- Description, with relevant information such as Gauge, DCC, Condition, etc
- Picture - just 1 per item please
- Sale Price

Couple of important points, the use of Whistleblower to advertise does not mean that I will be an intermediary in this process; likewise, neither the Club nor myself accept any responsibility for the transactions in the event of dispute.

On this basis, I will list each item along with the name and e-mail address / telephone number of the Seller. A potential Buyer should establish direct contact with the Seller and, between them, to come to agreement for the transaction. The list will be published as an Annex at the end of the Whistleblower.

## **INSTALLING A PECO TWISTLOCK POINT MOTOR, AFTER THE POINT HAS BEEN LAID – Julian Evison**

I have been building a layout called Selborne as part of the 009 Group's modular layout effort. I installed the trackwork and point motors (Peco solenoid motors recovered from my previous layout 'Khan') some time ago, but they have never been 100% reliable. I recently went in for another bout of tweaking and got two working properly by repositioning the point motors slightly and using bigger screws to keep the mounting more firmly in position. A third point motor has not responded to treatment despite drilling a new (bigger) hole for the drive pin to go through the board. I therefore decided to take a different approach and try the new Peco Twistlock point motor. This is easily recognisable as it is bright red and does not look like it was manufactured in the 1930s.

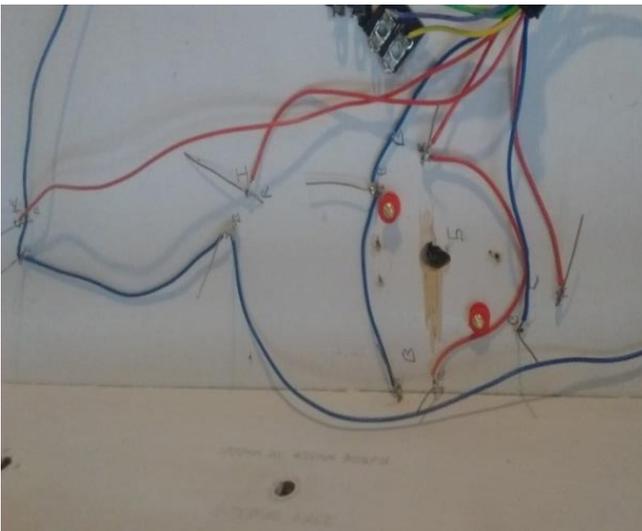
The big advantage of the new system is that the positioning is done from above the baseboard by drilling holes for the driving pin and for the motor mounts through a template placed on the baseboard surface. The theory is that you do all this before laying the track, but it was too late for that in my case as everything is laid and ballasted. I therefore had to take a slightly different approach. I started by carefully aligning the template with the point, lining up both the rails (the green lines for N/009 points) and the hole for the drive pin. This is not completely straight-forward but can be done.



*Photo 1- Template in place*

The template is apparently on upside down because I had already drilled the hole for the pin drive to the left of the point. The 1.5mm holes for the motor mounts are clearly shown, but for 009 points (and N gauge ones) one hole is very close to the rail, so take care

Now I could work from the underside of the board and install the two motor mounts (the small red pegs). These are made up by passing a screw through two small round pieces of plastic and screwing into the holes drilled in the previous step. I would have found this much easier with a cross head screw rather than the standard kind, but overall it only involved a small amount of cursing.

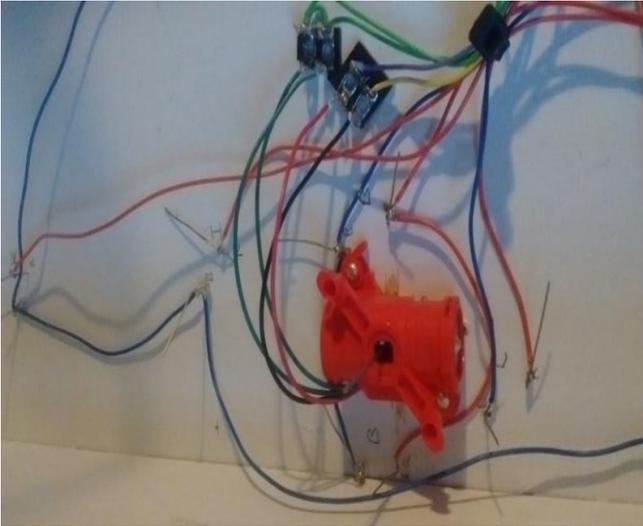


*Photo 2 – Pins in position*

I didn't have to change the position of the big hole for the pin drive or further enlarge it. If you do need to do this, remember it is under the tie bar if the point has already been laid. This is very fragile and you can easily wreck the whole point (been there, done that). If I do need to work in this area, to protect the point mechanism, I slip in a piece of brass sheet between the top of the baseboard and the bottom of the tie bar area. This stops you accidentally drilling through the tie bar itself. Instead of brass sheet, nickel silver sheet will do, but not plastic.

The point motor drive pin is then pushed through the big hole, passing through the small hole in the tie bar. The motor body is then twisted so the arms engage with the motor mount pins. (Just FYI, the pieces of plastic on top of the point motor are for positioning an optional microswitch). I then marked the drive pin just above the tie bar with a felt-tip pen to give the length required for my own baseboard. The whole point motor is then removed again (just twist off and pull away), the excess pin length cut off (take care!) and the motor reinstalled.

The point motor comes prewired with reasonably long pieces of wire. This would be very useful if doing an installation from scratch, but in my case, they had to be cut short and mated with the pre-existing wiring via a clunky piece of tag board I installed.



*Photo 3 – Completed Installation*

And so, it is complete and it worked! Overall, it is much easier to install than the traditional Peco solenoid point motor on its plastic base and would be even easier if done before laying track. The only improvement I can think of is to supply cross-headed screws which are so much simpler to drive in to holes as they self-tap.

## **DOUBLE HEADING – Noel Leaver**

Double heading was usually done because the train was too heavy for the allocated loco to haul at the required speed, but that was not the only reason. Sometimes it was done to get a loco back to where it was needed. For example, on branch with a single station a morning goods train arrived, the loco shunted the wagons to where they were needed, then the loco returned double heading the next passenger train - as with most country stations goods were only loaded and unloaded during the day so no traffic had been created overnight. A mixed train at lunchtime dealt with any urgent traffic during the day, and an evening goods train collected the loaded wagons and spare empties. On the Southern, which had no water troughs, a train was sometimes double headed because the loco would have run out of water if it had done the whole trip unaided (the usual reason Bulleid Pacifics were double headed).

The decision on whether to double head was usually a judgment call by the shed controller, who if a train was particularly heavy would try to use a recently overhauled loco that could manage an extra coach or two. But the Midland (and later ex-Midland lines), where double heading was very common, did everything by a rule book: the loading and train engine class were looked up and an assisting loco added if it was too much, whether or not the driver thought it necessary. The Midland had a large number of 2P 4-4-0 locos which were pretty useless for anything else: too feeble to haul a decent length express, and too little acceleration to be used on any but the shortest local service (where a tank loco would usually be preferred).

The crew in the front loco was always in charge in terms of looking for signals and deciding when to brake. The front loco had the train headcode and the second loco had to have no headcode.

Sometimes a loco was added just for a short distance, to help the train up a bank. The headcode had to be transferred to the front loco (or the extra loco coupled behind), except the GWR and later WR had an exception that if it was attached for no more than 12 miles the front loco could have a single lamp on the chimney and the rear loco had the train headcode.

There were detailed rules about where double heading was permitted, which locos could be coupled together, and sometimes which order – these differed considerably by region.

The commonest restriction was what if any double heading was permitted over certain bridges. For example, over the Royal Albert Bridge a 'red' classification engine (the largest locos) could only be assisted by a blue or unclassified engine; and only one of the two locos could be pulling the train while going over the bridge (which was limited to 15 mph).

Regions differed in rules over the order of the locos. Generally for convenience the assisting loco was on the front, but the GWR required the lighter loco to be the second one unless only attached while going up a bank, and the LMS/LMR usually required the lighter loco to be first: they had the most complex rules about permitted combinations of locos.

## **AND FINALLY ....**

Nothing to do with our hobby, but for anyone interested, the link below provides an explanation of the exponential growth of the COVID-19 virus currently impacting us. To ensure readers have paid attention, Andrew Wrobel may consider pertinent questions at the Christmas Dinner quiz. To open, use "ctrl and click":

<https://nam03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DKas0tlxDvrg&data=02%7C01%7C%7C0ce9e13aba1c45c4938508d7ccb100b7%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637202932895723058&data=zLCNy2i%2B0qFBwcHd2ilAbYI5pcPZHUKosVWjFAhuevg%3D&reserved=0>

## **AND A FINAL THOUGHT .....**

End of Week 1 without going out playing trains  
Found a lady sitting next to me on the couch  
She says she is my wife  
She seems like a nice lady