



SWANSEA RAILWAY MODELLERS GROUP

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Opening times: Wednesdays 2.30pm to 6.30 pm and Thursdays 6.00pm to 9.30pm, both approx.

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MEMBERS' UPDATE NO 108 – APRIL 2020



London-bound Hymek D7004 entering Newport on a very wet January day in 1962

Photograph by Michael Macleure and used with thanks

Comment

With club activities suspended for the duration [I could have been writing this in the early-'40s], there is little news to provide for, as yet, no-one knows when normal social activities can resume. However, I'll keep providing a monthly newsletter to maintain a semblance of contact with all members and friends of the club: it's more likely to contain articles of interest than news of developments, but we'll see how things go....

If any members have interesting photographs or are prepared to write short articles for inclusion in the newsletter, just drop me an e-mail with an outline and I'll see what can be done. It *would* very helpful if there is anything out there fit for inclusion.

Members' news

First of all, I hope that the majority of you are distancing socially and are well! Inevitably – and sadly – some of our membership have not been in good health though. However, all that I know of are recovering.

David Williams and Chris Zajac have recently returned home after spells in hospital, David for a knee operation, from which he is recovering well. Chris, I'm told, is on the mend, too. Phil Skinner has been ill recently as a result of a chest infection and Mike Brooks is making a recovery from Covid-19, the only club member that I'm aware of yet who has contracted this serious condition. You'll all join me in wishing them all a speedy recovery to good health, particularly so for Mike.

If any of you hear of other members who are unwell, please let me know in order that we can keep in touch with them.

Swansea Model Railway Club in the 1930s

In the June 2019 newsletter, I wrote about an advert for the Swansea and District Model Railway Society that I had found in the March 1962 'Model Railway Constructor'. Some members [sort-of!] remembered it, and in July 2019 I was able to provide a little information about the society itself. Last week, Nick Kerslake provided me with a link to the following article which appeared in the July 1931 'Meccano Magazine'. I'm fairly confident that no members will remember *this* club however! I was able to find a copy of the publication on eBay and reproduce the photograph here for interest:



The Sketty Meccano Club, part of the old Swansea Model Railway Club, was one of many hundreds across the UK, the [then] Empire and beyond. The magazine regularly reported on

the activities of these societies and, as the above shows, Sketty clearly had an inventive and very active membership. The article went on to say:

A Splendid Model Dockyard

An interesting example of successful co-operative effort of this kind is shown in the illustration on the opposite page. This represents the exhibit of the Sketty M.C. at a Maritime Fair held in Swansea. The scene is a model dockyard complete with grain elevator and ship coaling plant. Electric trains carry goods to and from the dock, in which may be seen ships of various kinds, including a liner, a destroyer and a hospital ship. Many of the visitors to the Fair were familiar with ships and dockyards, for the proceeds were in aid of a fund for the benefit of seamen, and the admiration they expressed was a splendid testimony to the correctness and general excellence of the display.

The whole of the model-building involved in the ambitious scheme of the Sketty M.C. was the work of the members themselves, who were also jointly responsible for the design of the display. The success of the plan undoubtedly has helped to strengthen the feeling of solidarity in the Sketty M.C. Similar work also has been done in other Meccano clubs, and I hope that Leaders and officials of those in which co-operative model-building has not yet been introduced will consider the advisability of working on similar lines during next winter. Following out such a scheme has the advantage that preparations for an Exhibition are easily carried out, and it will be found that visitors are more impressed by an exhibit of this kind than by an array of separate models.

That last paragraph still rings true: the success of our layout building ventures helps strengthen solidarity in the club [if that doesn't sound too much like a maxim from behind the Iron Curtain, it's definitely straight from The Little Red Handbook of Chairman Blows!]

The magazine, incidentally, was a source of *sheer* nostalgia when I read it: articles about Dinky Toys, Hornby Dublo, Webley air pistols, tales of daring from across the Empire, model steam yachts and the latest bi-planes, not to mention Meccano itself. A bargain for 6d. I can remember this magazine from the late '50s, nearly thirty years on, and it still hadn't changed that much!

What to do?

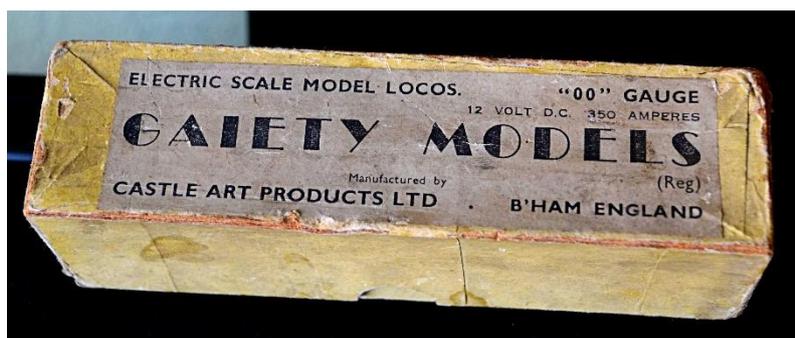
Well, after a couple of weeks of 'lock down', social isolation doesn't seem quite the blessing that it once sounded. However, I'd be remiss if I didn't remind you that when we open again for business, the 2020 modelling competition will be an early item on the agenda. For those who didn't complete their builds in time, this enforced delay gives you no excuse not to carry on. For those who didn't build anything at all, you've now got a good eight-to-ten weeks at least to pull something out of the bag.

And don't spend all of your spare cash on eBay! Don't forget, there will be a large stock-sale, with many interesting items, arranged during the early weeks of reopening.

Ready-to-Run in the '50s

Whilst the post-War years were ones of austerity, shortages and rationing, a surprising number of manufacturers made model railway equipment in a variety of gauges. Everyone will know that in 'OO', Hornby Dublo was very much the market leader with its large range of cast Mazac and tinplate stock. Trix was its more-expensive and smaller competitor Triang came a little later, making universal use of plastics and Wrenn accompanied them once Hornby was safely locked into the Lines Brothers' fold, providing diecast ex-Hornby Dublo locos at a price. But there were others too, although some didn't last that long.....

Exley made high quality coaching stock, now very much sought after by collectors [and expensive], Kirdon, Hamblings and Stuart Reidpath [Essar] made a variety of models too, as did Trackmaster and Pyramid. But for the purposes of this short article, Gaiety was one of the lesser-known of the short-lived manufacturers.



Gaiety Models were marketed by Castle Arts Products and entered the modelling world in January 1950. Their three- and two-rail models were manufactured by JV Murcott and Sons in Birmingham and all bear the initials 'JVM' on the inside of the casting.

This box, an uncommon survivor, is for a Gaiety GWR Pannier tank.

The first model that Gaiety released was a very generic die-cast ex-LNER N2 tank, a model released by so many other manufacturers during these years, including Hornby Dublo, Trackmaster and Pyramid [and, later, Wrenn]. The tank was issued with an LMS running number and 'British Railways' cast onto the side tanks. It does seem likely that the Gaiety N2 was a direct copy of a Hornby Dublo N2, as it carries the same number [46917] as the fictitious LMS black version of the N2 that H-D issued.

Fitted with their own 5-pole motor, the N2 retailed for £2/19/10d. The bodies could also be bought separately. On this Gaiety N2, the chassis has clearly been fitted the wrong way around. Examples with a 2-4-0 chassis are also known to exist and eleven different variations of the N2 body are known to have been produced!



Incidentally, both Hornby Dublo and Wrenn were extravagant in their choice of liveries for their N2 tanks, issuing them in all of the Big Four liveries and not too worried about prototypical

accuracy: it clearly made marketing sense. The photograph below shows a Wrenn N2 in LMS Black. GWR-liveried N2s are particularly collectible [and expensive]. Gaiety N2 tanks arise on eBay from time-to-time but are quite expensive.



A near-mint Wrenn die-cast N2: essentially a re-release of the original Hornby Dublo model, but no less worthy for that.

Finally, for the N2, this is a Gaiety body-variation on the remains of its push-along 2-4-0 chassis. It will not go around curves! At the time, push-along models were quite common and Morestone / Budgie [amongst others] also made a Jinty.



The second engine released by Gaiety was a GWR 57XX tank. Whilst it was better received than the N2, it, too, had a number of strange defects, including oddly shaped square windows, an over-scale steam dome and a very odd safety valve bonnet. More expensive than the N2 at £3/1/10d, it is also far more common today. At the time of its release, it was the only r-t-r GWR Pannier on the market [and remained so until Triang produced its own].

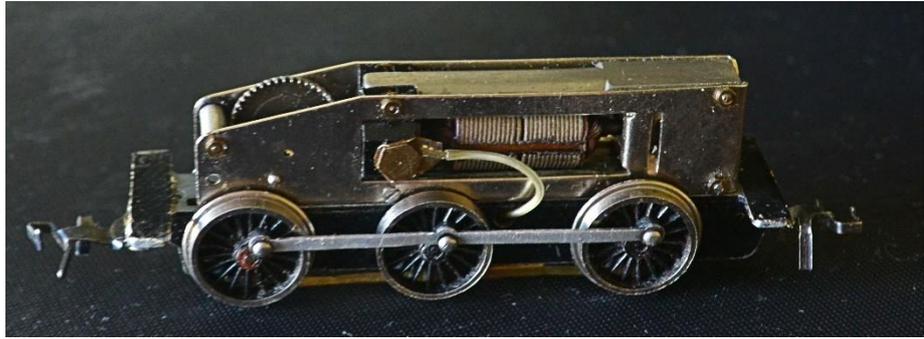
Available fitted with either Gaiety's own 5-pole motored chassis or your own contraption, the body would not take the Hornby Dublo 0-6-0 chassis without some adaptation, which seemed a bit of an own goal. Had it done so, it might well have increased sales. The Pannier also has the distinction of being the source of the character of 'Duck' in the Revd. Awdry's 'Thomas the Tank Engine' series. If for that reason alone, it deserves a place in history!



This Gaiety model has been fitted with a safety-valve bonnet that I have not seen before. It is exactly the same size and shape the cast ones normally seen but is made of brass.

It is far more attractive if still over-scale. I do not know whether this was a commercial accessory or a home-made 'improvement'.

An original Gaiety chassis with a five-pole motor. This is from the GWR Pannier Tank and it still runs well for a c.65 year old unit [if rather noisily]. The gears on this model are becoming a little worn through use however, although that problem can be easily rectified by reversing them on their shafts. To separate the body from the chassis, simply unscrew the four buffers.



The N2 and the GWR tank are the only engines which Gaiety were definitely known to produce. No other models have been seen although Gaiety did produce an all-plastic GWR-type brake van. As a marque, Gaiety simply drifted into the mists.....

Gaiety Panniers appear quite regularly on eBay and prices vary considerably from the reasonable to the plain stupid. They are often mis-described also, their vendors not recognising their origins and believing them to be white-metal kits.

And of JV Murcott and Sons? What of them? Well, surprisingly, they still exist as die-casters. Whilst at the time of Gaiety they supplied large numbers of chromed castings to the Rover Car Company and others, more recently they have supplied parts for the [new] Triumph Motorcycle Company and other concerns. But with the demise of Gaiety, they were out of trains for good.

Finally, SRMG's 2020 show...

We have been asked by members, traders and exhibitors for some clarity over the club's intentions for the September show. I'm afraid that no clear answer can be given yet as too much remains unknown. The likelihood of the show taking place is under continuing review and it has not, at this time, been cancelled. We have to be aware of the uncertainties which remain however, not least the fact that the venue is currently closed, and a decision will be taken before the issue of the May newsletter [mid-May].

Best wishes all and take care.

Tony