

Left Hand Running

The April 2008 Newsletter of The British Train Society
www.britishtainsociety.org

A View From The Footplate

First of all a big thanks to all that participated in the display of our modules at the show at Lyons Township High School on March 28th. We had excellent support from all phases of our activity from set up, operations and running. This was our ninth time to appear albeit in different formats and in terms of organization I think one of the best and a big thanks to Harry for taking care of many of the details. The setup presented a fine display that drew many favorable comments but unfortunately it did not run nearly as well as it looked for a variety of reasons from correct leveling to poor and erratic conductivity and obstructions on the line. This has been the subject of much discussion and as a result it has been decided that our next meeting will be devoted to plans for our future efforts to correct these problems. There are a variety of issues to be addressed so if you have modules please plan on joining in on the discussion.

At the show I was approached by a reporter from the local paper, *The Doings*. She is interested in doing a feature article on our group and will be at our next meeting and plans to bring a photographer and wants to interview some of our members - so be prepared. Publicity obviously helps and we did in fact pick up a commitment from one of the visitors to our display to join our group as he wants to build a British outline layout.

Another issue we should mention is the plan for our annual picnic that will again be at Ralph's place on June 28th, so please put that on your calendar. Also the Great British Train Show in Toronto is fast approaching and I know some of you have plans to attend. I will be going and if you have specific needs for equipment or supplies

please let me know and I will be happy to try to secure them for you. There is much to cover at our next meeting and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Until then - Happy Modelling Don Buchanan

Calendar of Coming Events

April 13th, 9:30 am – 3:00 pm
Great Midwest Train Show
Wheaton (DuPage County Fairgrounds)

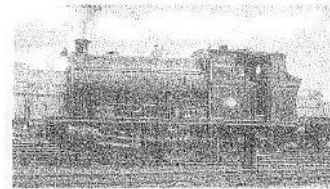
April 19th, 1:30 pm
BTS Regular Meeting
Clarendon Hills (Don Buchanan, 17 Golf Ave.)

April 26th – 27th, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Great British Train Show
Brampton Ontario (Archdekin Recreation Centre)

THE GREAT BRITISH

TRAIN SHOW

April 26 & 27, 2008



Jim Archdekin Recreation Centre
292 Conestoga Drive, Brampton, Ontario

Saturday
10.00 to 5.00

Sunday
10.00 to 4.00

- Operating Layouts
- Static Displays
- New & Used Collectables
- New and Used Sales Items
- Refreshments Available

For more information, contact
Mike Watts 905 683 0583
email: ls.w.bsc@sympatico.ca

- Adults - \$7
- Children & Seniors - \$5
- Family of 4 - \$15
- Free Parking



Visit our website at: www.theplatelayers.org

A Century of Model Trains

Now that we are well into the new century, perhaps it may be of interest to review the century just past with regard to model trains. A hundred years or so ago the railway was the dominant industry for inland transportation. The industrial age was well underway but for most workers, leisure time meant Sundays for church or a family outing. Time and resources for hobbies were reserved for the well-to-do.

Nonetheless, trains at less than twelve-inches-to-the-foot scale did exist, although generally as toys for children rather than as scale models for adult hobbyists. Toy trains in the early 1900s were made of lithographed, tin-plated sheet steel [from which the term “tin plate” comes], cast iron or wood and those which were powered generally had clockwork mechanisms or actually used live steam.

In the early 1900s the principle manufacturers of toy trains were German and, to a lesser extent, British. The German toy manufacturers were very aggressive in promoting their products worldwide, making more for export than for domestic consumption. Since most toy trains of the time were interpretations or caricatures of the original rather than scale models, simple changes in decoration would adapt their products to suit foreign customers. We should not forget that these companies did not make trains per se, but toys of all types: toy ships, toy carousels, toys for girls, toys for boys, toys, toys, toys of which toy trains were just a part.

In 1901 Joshua Lionel Cowen made a motorized cigar box running on a circle of electrified track as a store window display for a Manhattan merchant. The displayed merchandise did not sell well, but customers kept asking for the little motorized train. In 1902 the first Lionel-brand trains were sold to begin the rivalry with Ives [the dominant

American manufacturer of the time], American Flyer, Märklin, Bing and others.

Toy trains produced in the early years of the twentieth century fit a variety of track gauges, ranging from 3 inch gauge [variously called No. 3 gauge or No. 4 gauge] to the miniature gauge of the day, No. 0 gauge [1-1/4”]. Not content to be the same as others, in 1906 Lionel introduced 2-1/8” gauge trains to the American market and called it “Standard Gauge” to differentiate it from the gauges used by their rivals. Other gauges were also in use but standardization, as we know it today, was still in the future.

The years between the world wars brought many changes to the toy train business. Toy trains in all sizes became more accurate representations of the real thing and less caricature-like in appearance. In 1921 the German firm of Bing working in conjunction with Britain’s Bassett-Lowke took No. 0 gauge and halved it to create what was first called 00 gauge, which we know better today as H0 [half-zero]. In 1935 Germany’s Märklin Co. adopted the new miniature size which propelled it to a dominant position in the world-wide model train business and drove the largest sizes to commercial extinction.

Much has changed in the last 100 years but one thing has not – boys of all ages still like to play with trains.

