

Wellington British Railway Modellers



THE TOTEM

November 2025

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RailEx 2025

Sound Effects

Sheds and the Law

HS2 Tunnel Breakthrough

Feel free to copy this PDF to anyone you think might enjoy it. – Editor

RailEx 2025 – Pictures from an Exhibition



The happy team at the club sales table did excellent business while club chair Roger Simmons led from the front with his magnificent traditional Triang display.

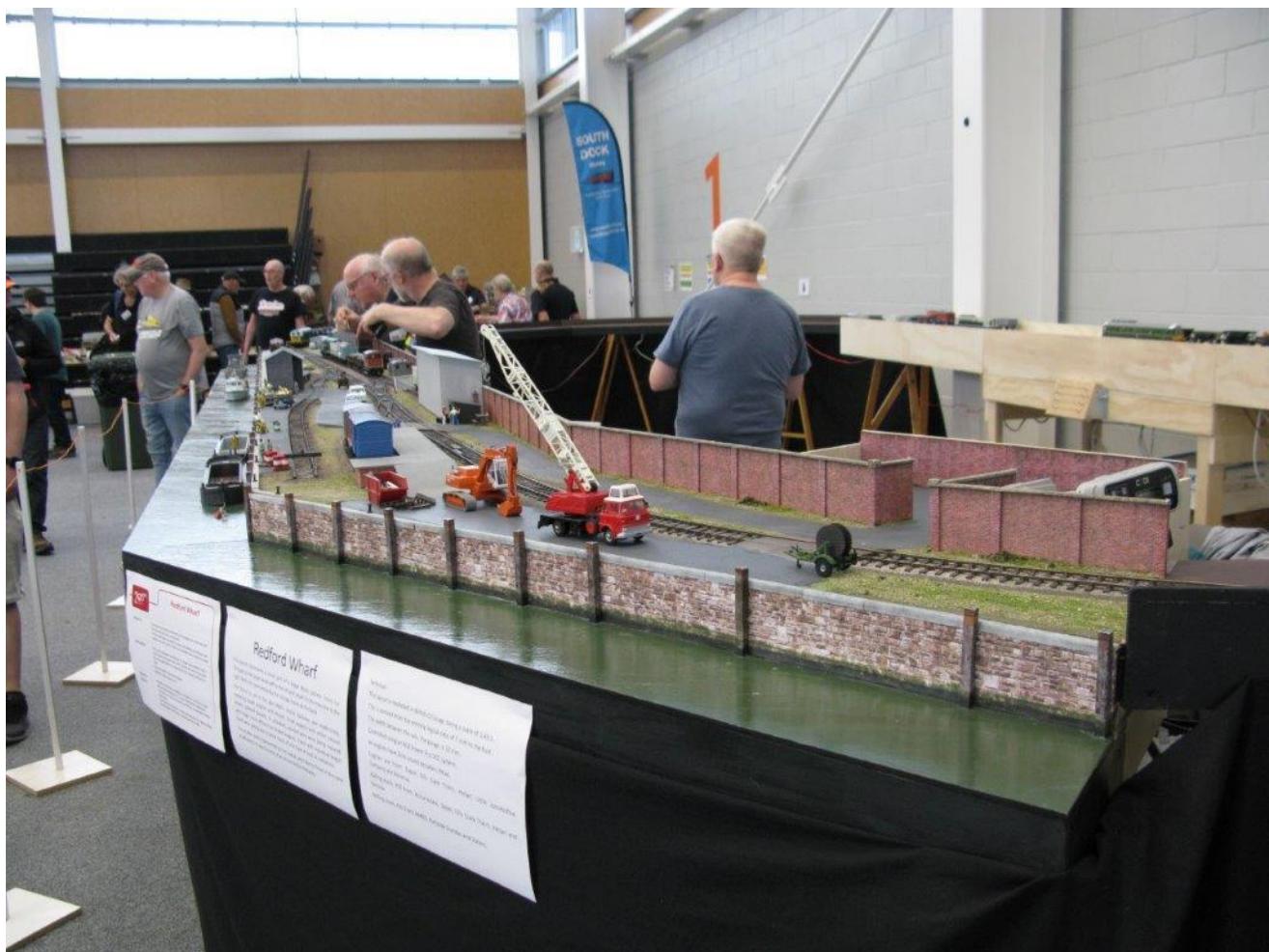


Club layouts:

Above, Wellington with its excellent wide-screen display.

Below, Ravenswold, which behaved better than Bill's expression would suggest.

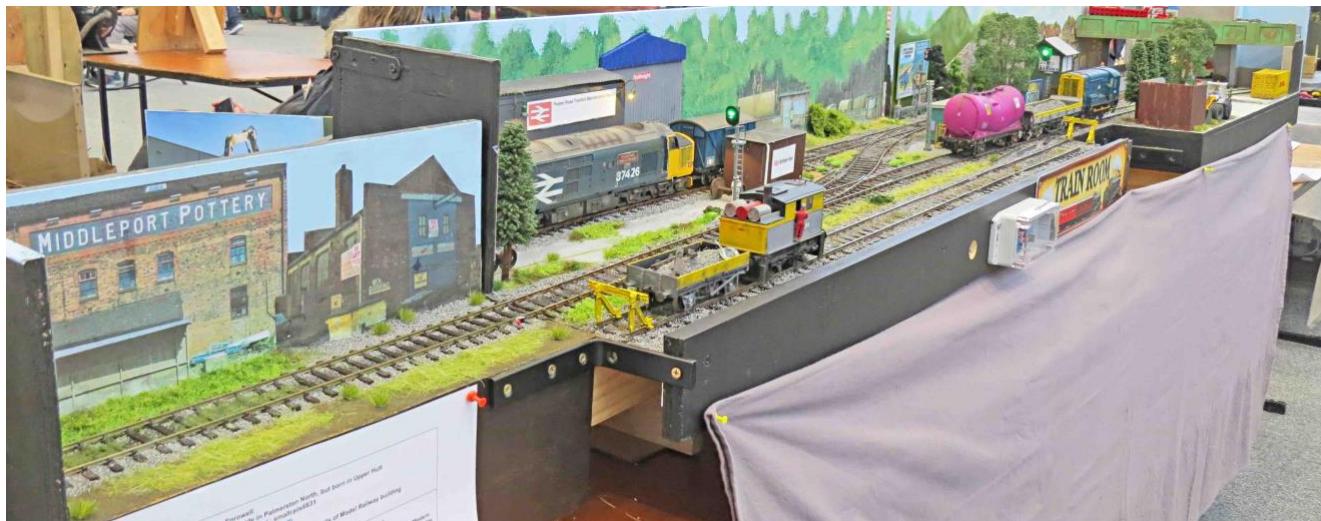




*Above, Roger Stanford's
O scale layout,
Redford Wharf.*



*Below Hexeter appears
at Railex for the last
time. The layout is not
worn out, the builder
and operator is!*



Above: we hold this truth to be self evident.

Left: Conway Castle on Arun Valley.

Welsh Dragon on Conway Castle.

Bringing Sound Effects to Your Model Railway Clive Williams

While I'm waiting my move to another home, I am looking at a long-held idea of bringing sounds to my layout – cheaply! While I use DCC, I have no wish to buy sound decoders for all of my locos! Doing this would only bring sounds of the actual engines – I'm looking at all the ambience of the world of my layout.

In this article I'll look at the first part of my research which involves finding suitable sounds. In following articles, I will describe how I can play these sounds cheaply.

First of all, a slight diversion. Hornby produces a TTS Vent Van that responds to DCC to produce various sounds.



There are 2 versions. I have the earlier version, and this comes as a condemned van to sit in a siding. There's a number of different sounds ranging from ambient to station and industrial. Some are looped meaning they can play repeatedly. This gave me ideas to expand. My thoughts are that having just this set of sounds would be limiting. It also requires using a DCC throttle to control – I want something more free running.

I also have the Dapol Water Tower with its sounds. Nice but limited – especially if you're not GWR! So where have I found suitable sounds?

Train and Railway Sounds

What I looked for were high quality sounds in a file format of mp3 (or one that could be converted to mp3). I have initially concentrated on my era of modelling, 1930s to 1960s. While there are recordings from preserved railways, I have found more authentic ones. The first set is from the BBC Sound Archives. Years ago, I used to be Stage Manager at semi-professional theatres in London. As this was the 1970s, sound effects came from reel-to-reel tape or LPs. Luckily, I had access to the BBC recordings which were high quality. I have found a whole set of these recordings on the Avosound web site. You just need to register and can download for free many of the sound recordings. I found over 200 authentic recordings here and that just covers my steam trains. I'll come back for the diesel ones later!

The other source I've looked for is those of Peter Handford. Peter was a pioneering, professional sound engineer who has many feature film credits to his name. He also was a railway enthusiast and came up with a brilliant way to merge his expertise and love of railways. When he was not employed on films, he would journey around the country in the last years of steam recording the sounds of the railways on his state of the art recording devices. He then worked to get these recordings released. Initially these were vinyl records under the Transacord label. A discography can be found at:

<https://steamindex.com/library/handford.htm>

Although some CDs and later digital downloads were also released, none are commercially available at present. You can find some on the internet, however. The National Railway Museum holds the original recordings, and the copyright owner is working to get these re-released.

[In 1957 film director David Lean invited Peter Handford to be the sound engineer on his epic The Bridge On The River Kwai. To Lean's astonishment and annoyance, Handford turned him down – he was busy recording trains. These train recordings were made with what were described as 'transportable' analogue stereo tape recorders, powered by unwieldy lead acid batteries via a DC/AC converter. Although this was the best equipment available at the time, it was crude by modern standards, lacking both noise reduction systems and low noise tapes. There is more on Peter Handford in the June 2024 Totem, to be found on the club website:

<https://wbrm.org.nz>

–Editor]

There are a number of Peter's (and others) recordings on YouTube. One search is for a contributor called Bob Gellatly who has over 200 YouTube clips! There are free YouTube to mp3 converters to extract the sound. I use YTMP3. While this is simple to use, be careful as it links to some dubious other websites! Another problem is that you'll get the whole file as a single mp3. If you can find the track list (try steamindex or some of the railway fora), you can split these into individual files using a free music editor such as Audacity (others are available). If you play Bob's clips, you can see images of the sleeve notes at the correct time so you can see what is playing.

Ambient Sounds

There's a whole lot of sites that have different sounds that can contribute to the atmosphere of your layout. A good starting point is the Avosound site, but many others are around. Pixabay is another good source.

I've looked at a number of different areas such as:

- Church bells and clocks

- Farm noises
- Industrial sounds
- Vehicles
- Street noises
- Inside pub sounds (there's 2 pubs on my branch layout already!)
- General ambient
- Animal calls especially birds

The limit is your imagination!

Platform Announcements

One interesting idea that came from Chris Judge is to record and replay station announcements. While his approach to replay differs from mine, he's found two interesting sites. One is

<http://automatedannouncements.wikia.com/>

which has samples of typical UK station announcements. He takes the text from these and feeds these into a second site,

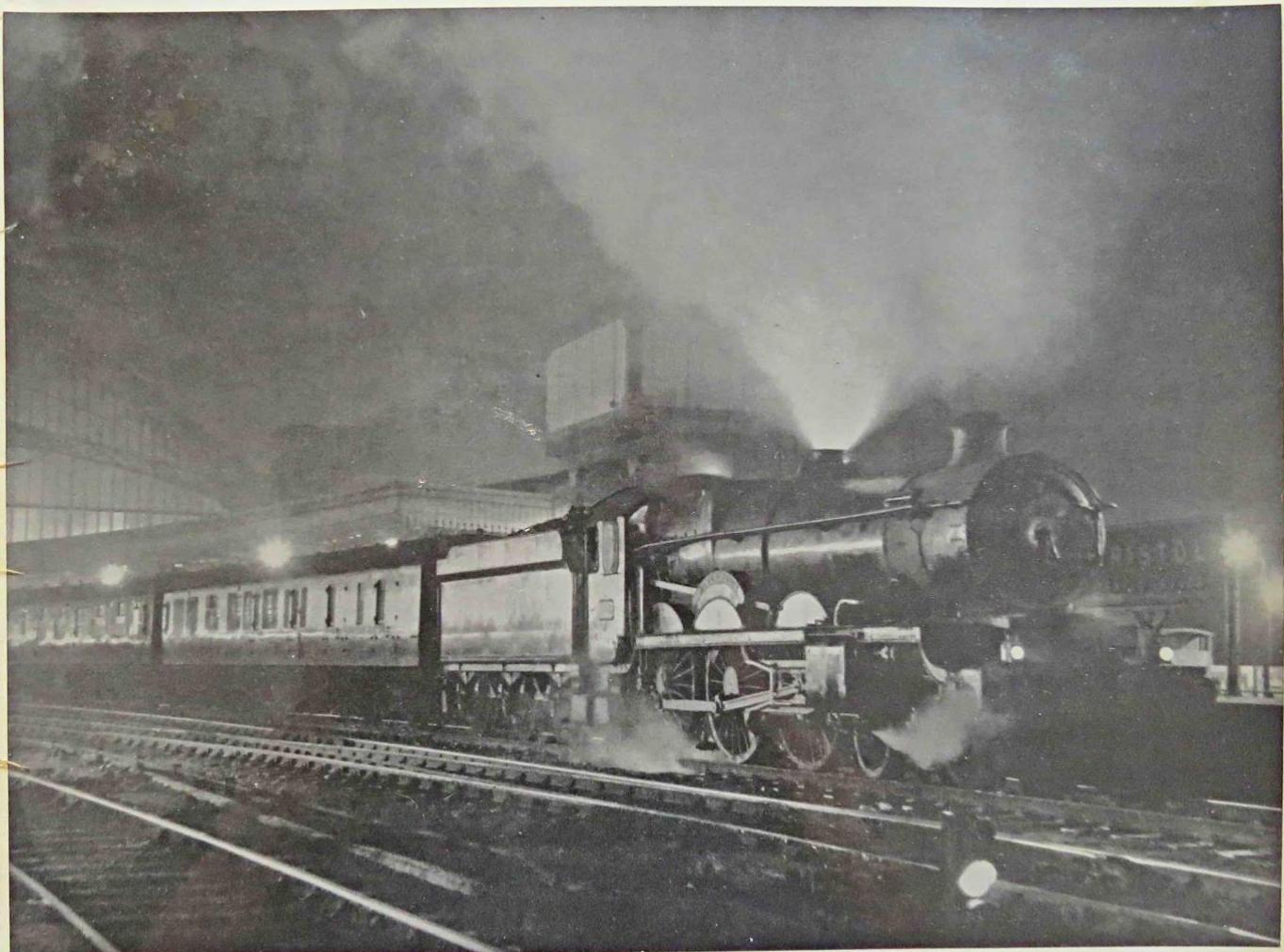
<https://www.naturalreaders.com/>

which converts the text to voice files using a variety of voices. While the second site has some free facilities, he found paying a month's licence fee allowed him to record many tracks quickly. While I have confirmed the existence of the sites, I haven't tried this approach for real. In Chris's article, he describes how to use a Raspberry PI to replay these sounds. I have the pdf but can't find it today. If anyone wants a copy, let me know.

In my next article, I will outline my approach using Arduinos and low cost mp3 players.

Railway Records

an ARGO TRANSACORD recording 

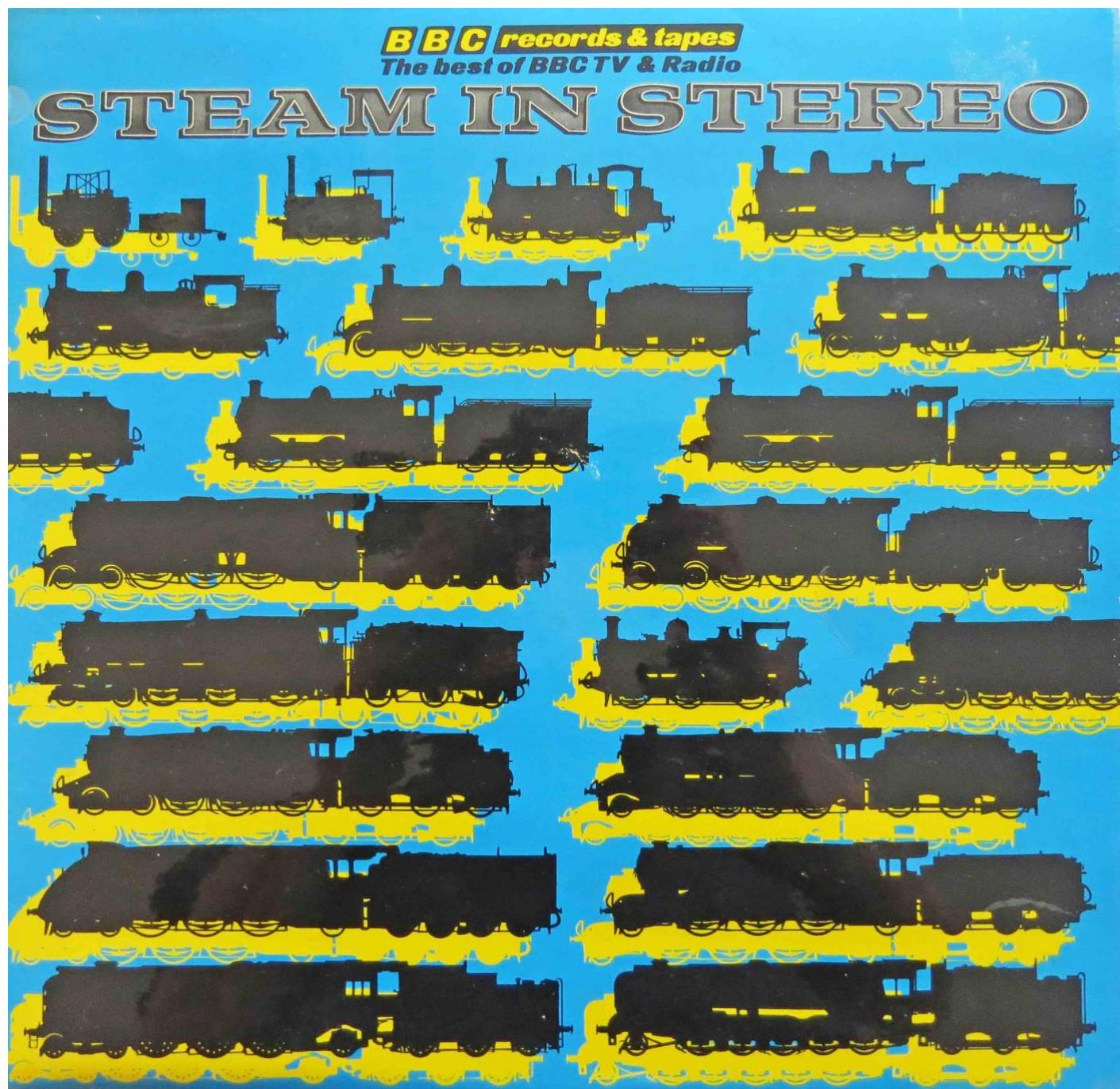


Trains in the Night

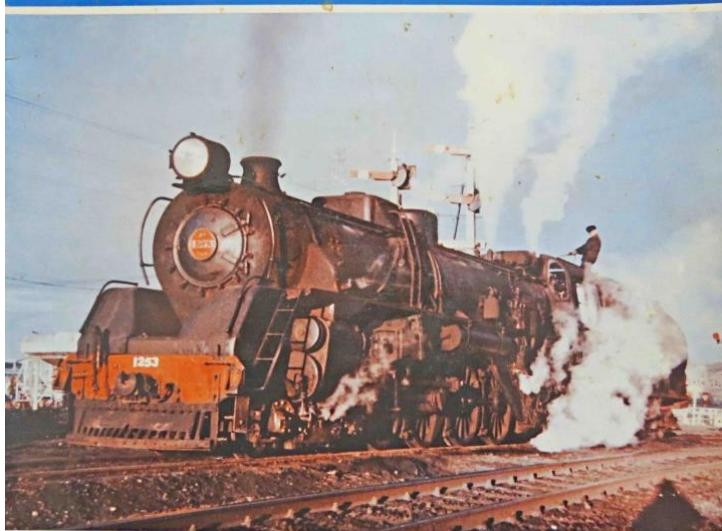
Recordings made on winter nights at Princes Risborough, on an evening at Bromsgrove, at night
at Llangunllo and at night and dawn near Riccarton Junction

With acknowledgments and thanks to British Railways Scottish and Western Regions for facilities and assistance

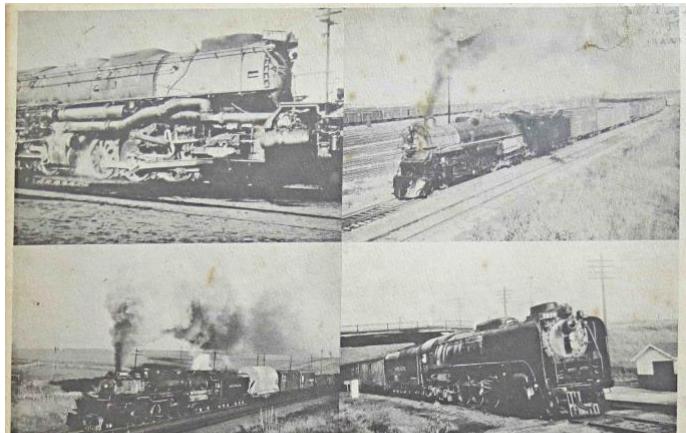
Railway recordings from the analogue age on vinyl LPs. Typically they cost \$2.99, more than an hour's pay in the early 1970s. What distinguished Peter Handford's recordings was that he set the sounds of the railway in a broader context – birds singing, children playing.



STEAM MILITANT!



THE "Ja", "Kb", AND "Ab" CLASS LOCOMOTIVES IN CANTERBURY,
SOUTH ISLAND OF NEW ZEALAND.



SOUNDS OF STEAM LOCOMOTIVES NO. 1

STACK MUSIC SAMPLER; OR STEAM, STEEL AND ACTION

2-8-2; 4-8-4; 4-12-2; 4-6-4; 4-6-0; 4-6-6-4; 4-8-8-4; 4-8-2; 2-10-2;

AND SWITCHERS 0-6-0; 2-8-0; NARROW GAUGE 2-8-2;

EDITED AND RECORDED BY VINTON WIGHT

FX 6152 • FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP., NEW YORK • SCIENCE SERIES

Sounds of Steam Locomotives

Volume IV



The Great New York Central: Hudson, Mohawk and Niagara

Recorded and Narrated by Harold S. Ludlow

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FX 6155

WEST COAST WORKHORSES

Historic sounds of locomotives in New Zealand

CLASSES: "A", "Ab", "B", "Dsc", "Eo", "J", "Ka", "We", and "Ww"
in Westland and Taranaki



Sheds and the Law

John MacDonald

A letter to the editor:

Kia ora Julian,

Since much of our membership is deeply interested in the question of sheds, it may be helpful to direct them to the new MBIE guidance on revised Building Consent exemptions for sheds in NZ.

<https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/check-if-you-need-consents/building-work-that-doesnt-need-a-building-consent/technical-requirements-for-exempt-building-work/2-detached-standalone-buildings/notes-for-single-storey-detached-buildings-2-1-2-5>

And see also the attached.

Something for the next Totem?

I think the best option is to direct people to the official guidance because attempts to summarise are fraught.

It may amaze some that they were not previously allowed to build their shed right up to the boundary without Building Consent, but anyway...

Ngā mihi,

John MacDonald

[“Attached” was a 153-page, 7.7MB pdf from the bloated bureaucracy that is the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment:

“Constructing a sleepout that does not require building consent”

which obviously cannot be reproduced here. The essential point from John's email is that now more than ever you must get official advice before erecting a shed for your dream layout. –Ed]

People Define the Period



*Could only be London in the
Swinging Sixties.*

*Photo source: @OldSchoolUK
on Twitter 'X'.*



A rather glum lollipop lady of the late 60s.

The Ford Transit van was first manufactured in 1965. The Routemaster bus has a registration plate of the 1958-59 period.

Photo source: @OldSchoolUK on Twitter 'X'.



*This evocative picture was taken by Allan Hailstone in 1960.
Source: @OldSchoolUK on Twitter 'X'.*



1964: Mods and Rockers having a stoush at Margate.

Points to note: really skinny trouser legs, no-one is obese, and the world did not end.

The source of both these pictures is @mongsley on Twitter 'X'.





Two from the 1930s:

Pedestrians crossing Great Windmill Street, Soho in 1930. Hats are mandatory.

The source of both these pictures is @mongsley on Twitter 'X'.



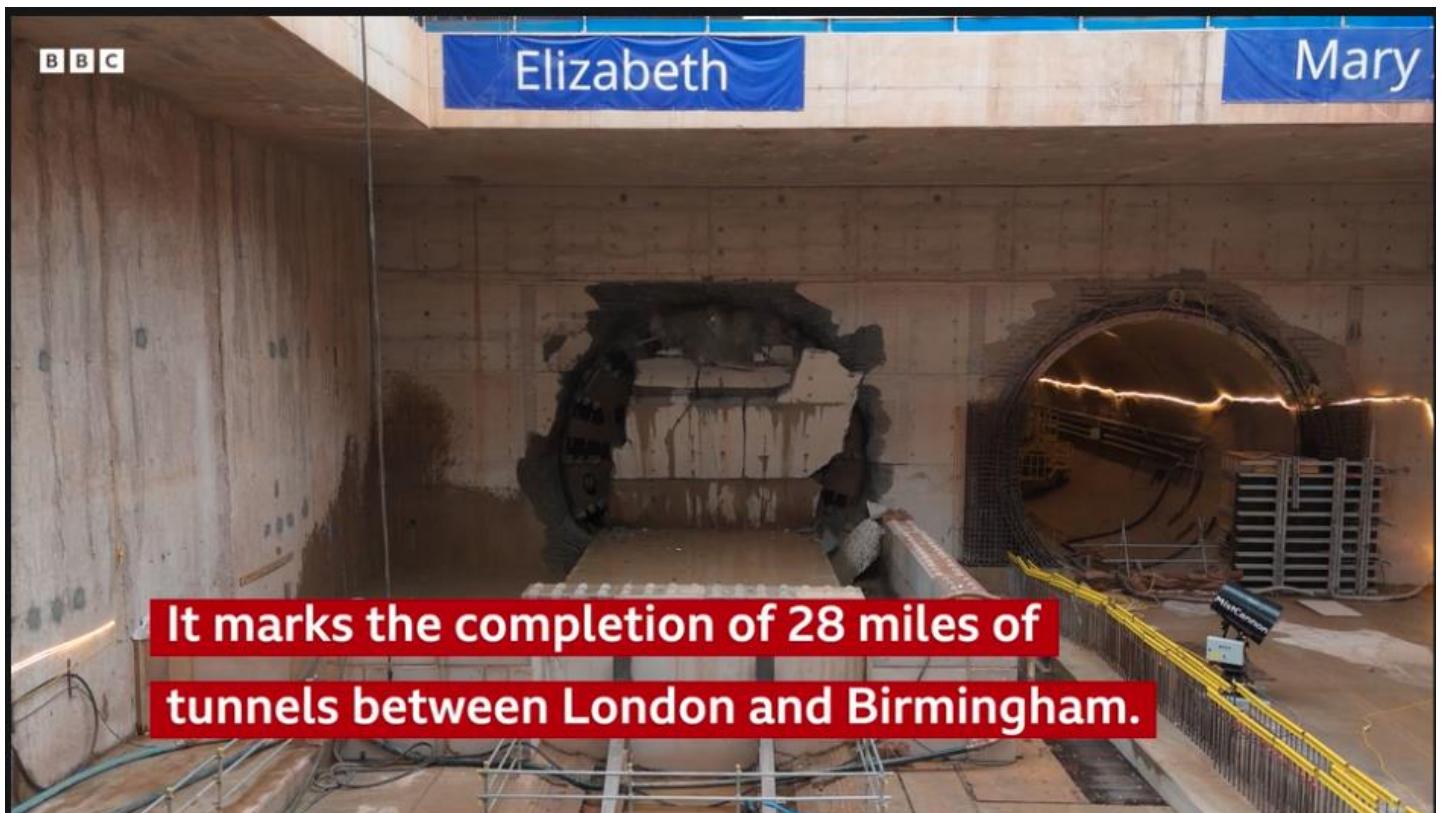
Wardour Street, Soho, Westminster, London, 1930.

The car is the M Type, the early Midget.

Two young women in a British sports car in 1930s London. What could possibly go wrong?

HS2 Tunnel Breakthrough

BBC



Tunnelling machine breaks through in Birmingham

A tunnel-boring machine (TBM) that dug HS2's tunnels has broken through in Birmingham.

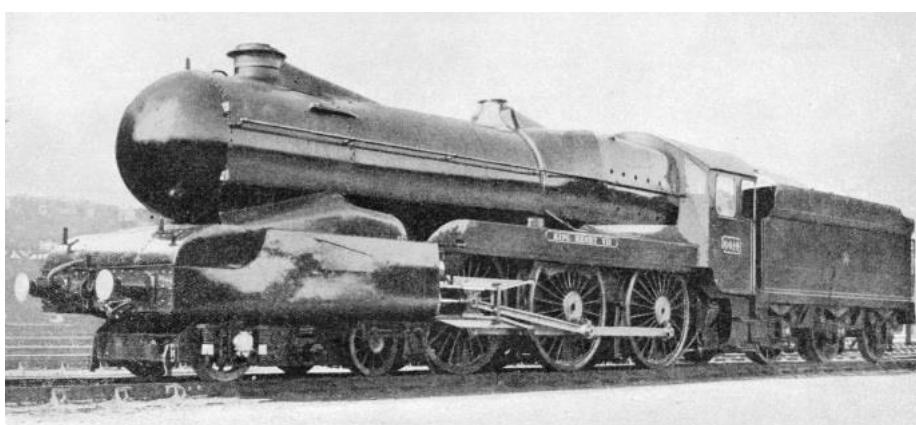
Named Elizabeth, the machine was launched in Warwickshire 19 months ago and arrived in Washwood Heath on Monday.

It means the 28 miles excavation of tunnels between Old Oak Common in north-west London and Birmingham are now complete, a milestone described as a "significant achievement" by the HS2 team.

"I'm immensely proud of the men and women who have worked round the clock to bring our TBMs and their crews home safely, and I look forward to seeing more progress inside the tunnels in the years ahead," HS2's Alan Morris said.

Follow BBC Birmingham on BBC Sounds, Facebook, X and Instagram.

A screenshot from the BBC.



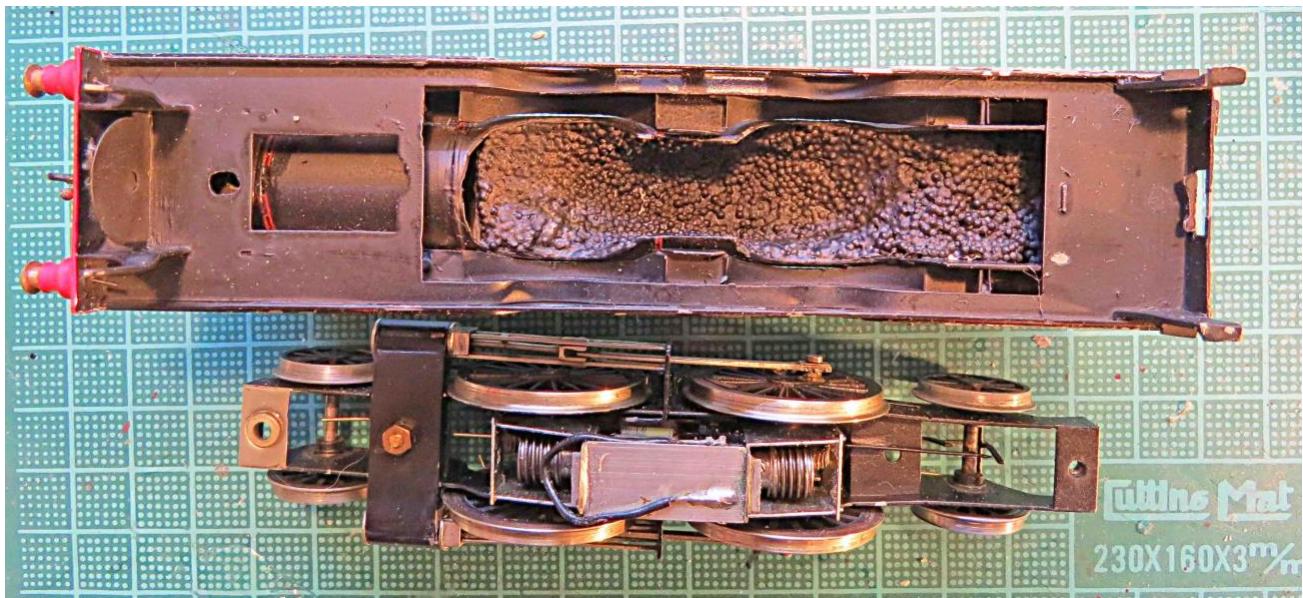
OK, GWR Board of Directors – you wanted streamlining, you got it.

Satisfied?

WEBB 2-2-2-2 "Greater Britain Class" London and North Western Railway



Club members will have read about this model by way of John MacDonald's email. Roger Simmons alerted me to it, and making up my mind to buy it took no time at all! It is a London Road Models nickel silver kit. The finished model has all the hallmarks of a professionally built model. It runs smoothly enough, though it could do with a bit of running in. What was immediately apparent was the evident neatness of construction. Whoever built the kit was clearly experienced. There are a few dents and scratches and one screw is missing, nothing major.



I joked with John MacDonald about putting two motors and two DCC decoders into the engine to replicate the alleged behaviour of the Webb compounds on starting – namely that it was possible for each axle to rotate in opposite directions! Fortunately there is no room to do this in the model as built, but would be entirely possible if you were building the kit with that in mind.

The legend that Webb compounds could rotate their axles in opposite directions is probably an apocryphal yarn. A principal source of the legend is the historian E. L. Ahrons, who was a knowledgeable writer on engineering matters, but was also an engaging writer with a lively style and a dry wit. Ahrons himself declared that he knew little about the Great Britains, and the sequence of events that would have to occur for the drivers to counter-rotate is most unlikely.

After Webb died the legend was given wide circulation as part of the campaign by the new generation of managers to circumscribe the authority (and salary) of those locomotive superintendents who had reported directly to the chairman of their companies' boards and reduce their status to chief mechanical engineer, reporting to the general manager. Richard Deeley of the Midland Railway had similar troubles, but quit with a handsome pension from the Midland (later the LMS) and happily outlived all his critics.

The whole saga of Francis Webb's reputation is one which makes interesting reading, but is beyond the scope of this *Totem* article. Sufficient to say that Webb was responsible for the construction of around 3,000 locomotives, most of which were entirely successful and were economical to construct, operate and repair. In addition Crewe made its own steel, bricks, gas, electricity as well as its own signals and associated equipment. All of this and more were Webb's responsibility, and for that the always-parsimonious LNWR board were happy to pay him 40 percent more than the general manager.

RENNIE 2-2-2

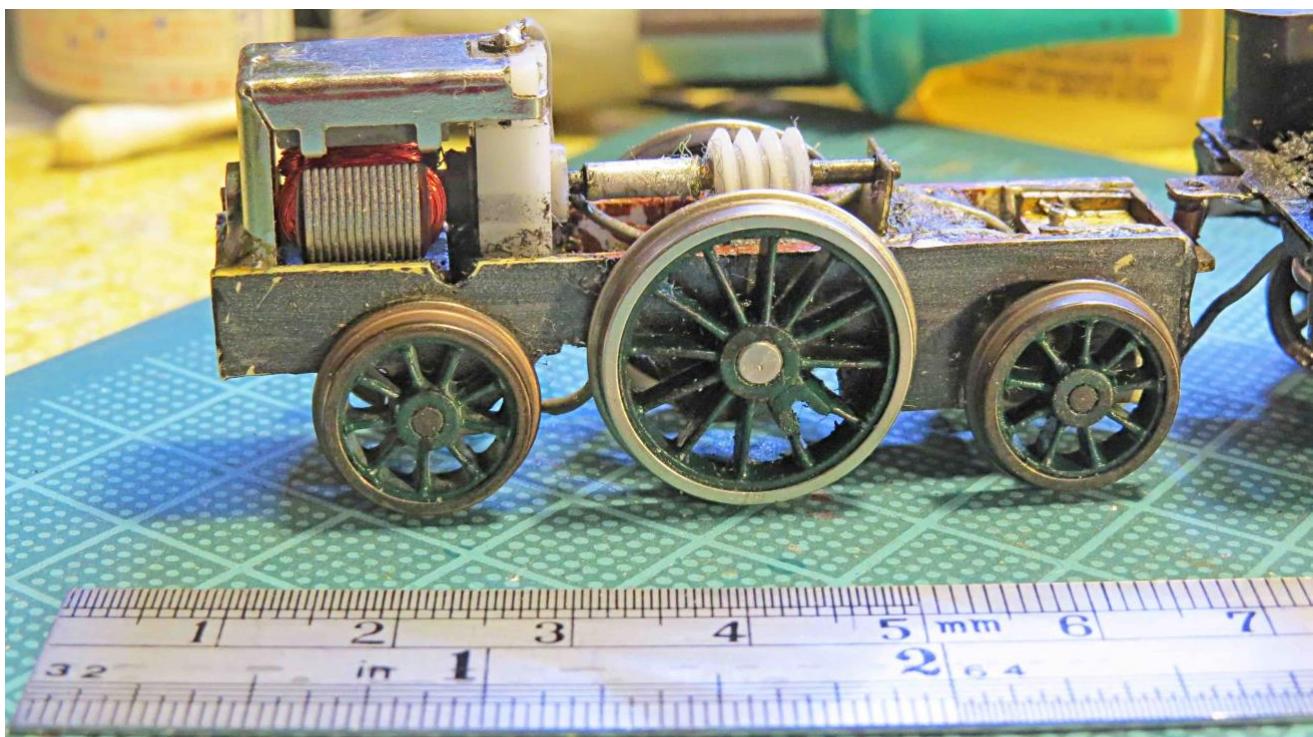
London Brighton and South Coast Railway



This model was constructed more than twenty years ago and had not run on Hexeter in recent years, but in view of my decision not to take that layout over the Remutakas again I decided to restore this locomotive and run it one more time at RailEx this year. It is one of my earliest attempts at a scratch-built model in H0 scale.

The real thing was originally built in 1840. The model represents the locomotive as it may have appeared at the end of the 1840s, and is painted in the LBSC paint scheme of about 1850. The model was built from several different sources of information: a drawing of a similar locomotive used by the London and Greenwich Railway in 1860, modified to backdate the design 15 years; and 1840 print of the opening of the Shoreham branch which was indistinct, but gave the only rudimentary details of the design of the tender; and brief notes on the paint colours in E.F. Carter's book, *Britain's Railway Liveries, 1825 – 1948*. That is as much as I can

remember from more than twenty years ago, and no correspondence will be entered into!

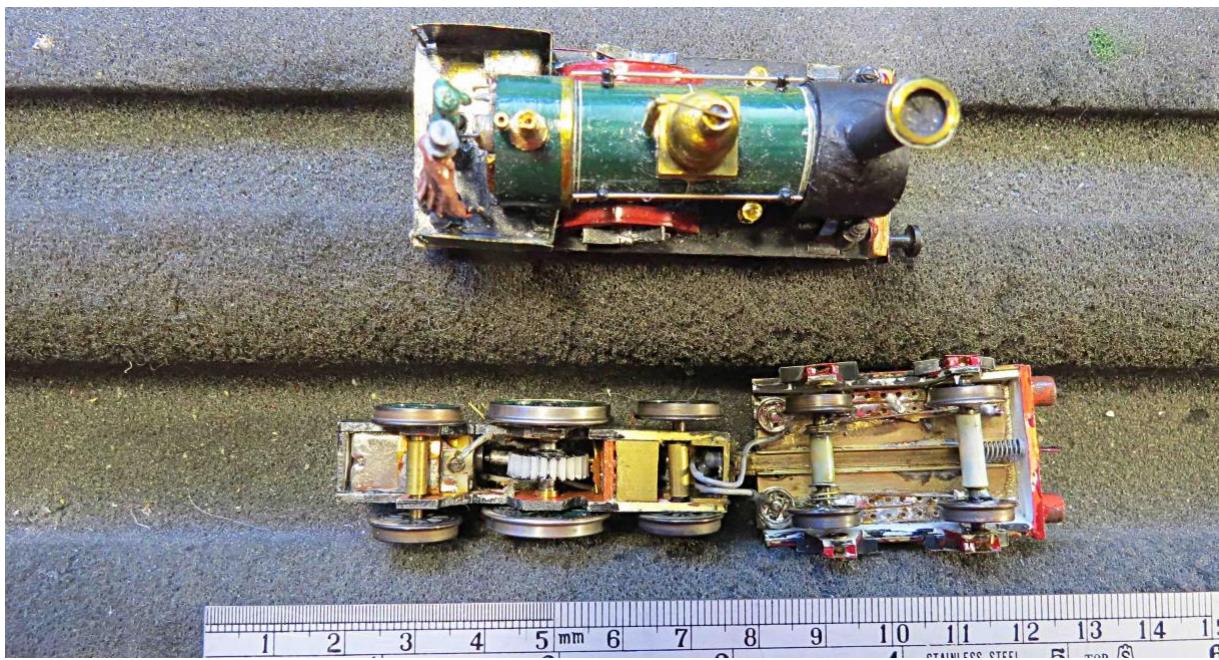
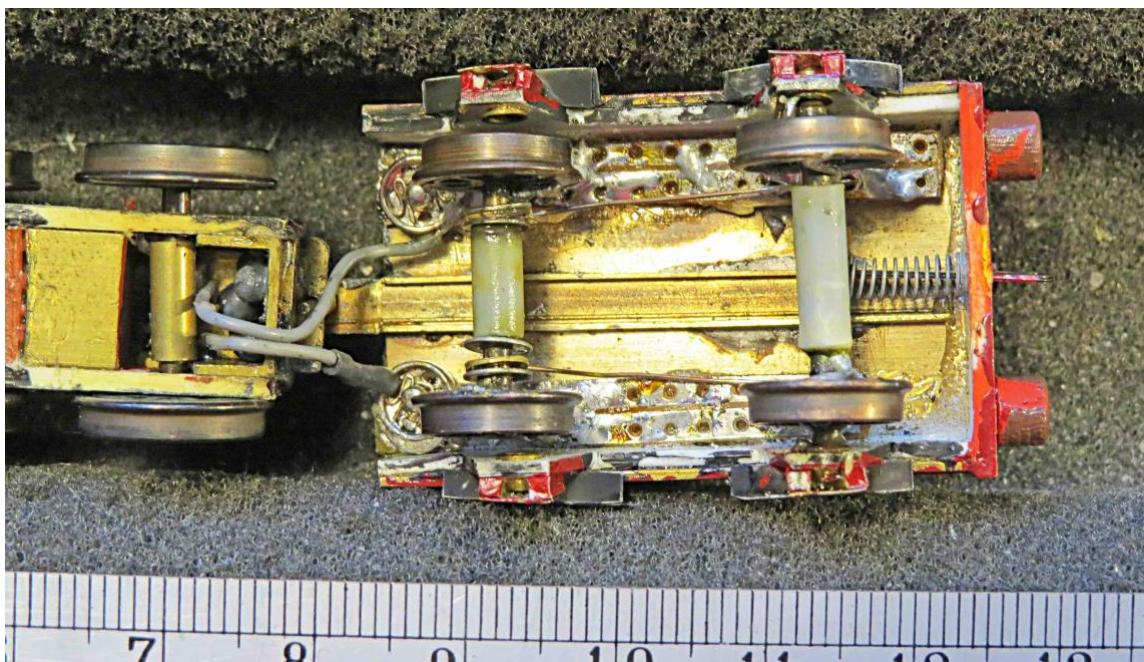


The 'cheap Hong Kong job' motor has been running smoothly for more than 20 years.

The model has a plastic(!) frame with axles running in brass bearings. The carrying axles are sprung and have sideplay. The motor was once described by *Model Railways* editor Roy Dock as a "cheap Hong Kong job" but I have two models which employ it, and both have run smoothly for more than twenty years. Note that the shaft carrying the worm is supported at both ends.

The gears are plastic and were formerly sold by Dick Smith ® for use in their electronic hobby kits. They were cheap, quiet, and reliable.

All wheels are from North Yard ®. Electrical pickup is via the tender axles which are split. I like to separate electrical problems by putting them in the tender where they are isolated from the mechanical transmission difficulties in the locomotive.



The locomotive can pull 12 carriages in a straight line (exactly what the prototype could do), but only six or seven around model railway curves. It ran flawlessly during RailEx. Twenty years on I can see much that is wrong with this model, but as the old saying goes:

“If you’re not failing, you’re not trying.”

Traders in Secondhand Model Railway Equipment

These traders in model railways are even more important now that the number of model shops is dwindling. If you are aware of other traders who handle models of British railways, please let the editor know.

MARCUS LECKY

<mailto:marcuslecky47@gmail.com>

TRAINMANIA©

022 605 5415

A reminder that Trainmania's new shop is now open in Warkworth.

<mailto:lionel@trainmania.co.nz>

<http://www.trainmania.co.nz/>

TONY DRAGICEVIC

027 872 3630

<mailto:tony.dragicevic@gmail.com>

JOHN HESLIN

021 188 9049

Invercargill

<mailto:tootroom@gmail.com>

Point to Ponder

“Your ‘Good Old Days’ are still ahead of you, may you have many of them.”

– Sam Levenson

Next Totem

The December 2025 edition of *The Totem* will be published (earlier in the month than usual) on 12th December. If there is anything you would like to contribute to the editor, Julian Lermit, email:

<mailto:kiwiscrooge@xtra.co.nz>

Events of Interest

2025

November 2025

There will be no formal monthly club meeting in November, because of RailEx. The clubrooms remain open at all times to members.

December 2025

- 3 Gold card group meet at clubrooms. (Everyone else welcome.) Bring lunch and a project to work on. Christmas bakery courtesy of Mrs Hoey.
- 14 Club Christmas festivities.

2026

January 2026

17 – 19 Tauranga Model Railway Club Annual Show, Tauranga Boys College, Devonport Road, Tauranga. Entrance off Devonport Road opposite 14th Avenue.

The above events are those which in the editor's judgement will go ahead, in the absence of interruptions outside the control of the organisers.

Events of Interest is compiled from a number of sources, the principal ones being the What's On page of the New Zealand Model Railway Guild website: <http://nzmrg.org.nz> and the Model Train Shows website <http://trainshows.co.nz/>. Information is published in good faith but no responsibility can be accepted. Always check with organisers before travelling long distances.

Club Officers

Chair: Roger Simmons email <mailto:rogersimmons@nz>

Deputy Chair: Julian Lermit email [kiwiscrooge @xtra.co.nz](mailto:kiwiscrooge@xtra.co.nz)

Treasurer: Clive Williams email <mailto:treasurerwbrm@nz>

Secretary: John MacDonald email <mailto:secretarywbrm@nz>

