



THE NORTH STAR CHRONICLES – a newsletter primarily for the model railway fraternity

Volume 2 no 11, November 2014

Editor: David Cairns

e-mail: shares@iafrica.com

Website for back copies:

<https://sites.google.com/a/steamtrains.co.za/steam/garden-railways/the-north-star-chronicles>

Phone: +27 82 653 5642

Editorial

A brief trip to the UK last month generated material for the North Star Chronicles and also enabled me to tick off several long standing items from my 'bucket list'. These included visits to Pecorama and the Lynton and Barnstable Railway. This edition of the NSC is devoted to the former. Because detail is difficult to discern on some of the photos if they are reduced in size too much, the article on Peco will be divided into two parts.

Peco (more properly the Pritchard Product Patent Co Ltd)

It would be difficult to find a more unlikely place than Beer in Devon for the location of one of the world's major model railway factories, one of the few large manufacturing operations left in the UK, most of the remainder having moved their operations to China. Established in 1946 in Brandscombe by Sydney

Pritchard as a component manufacturer, (Pritchard's patented 'Simplex' coupling was adopted by Meccano for their Hornby Dublo system which required the payment of a royalty for the privilege). Peco then started manufacturing track initially with fibre sleepers but shifted to plastic sleepers (Streamline) in 1963. The company moved operations to Beer in 1973. The business has since expanded into several different fields. Today, in addition to manufacturing set-track and flexible track in all the major gauges and other mainly plastic orientated products including rolling stock for N and OO gauges, buildings and accessories sold under the Wills Kits, Ratio Plastic Models, K & M Trees, and Modelscene (formerly Merit) brands, Peco also runs a publishing business responsible for Railway Modeller the UK's leading model railway magazine and Continental Modeller. Finally the company operates Pecorama to which the remainder of this article will be devoted.

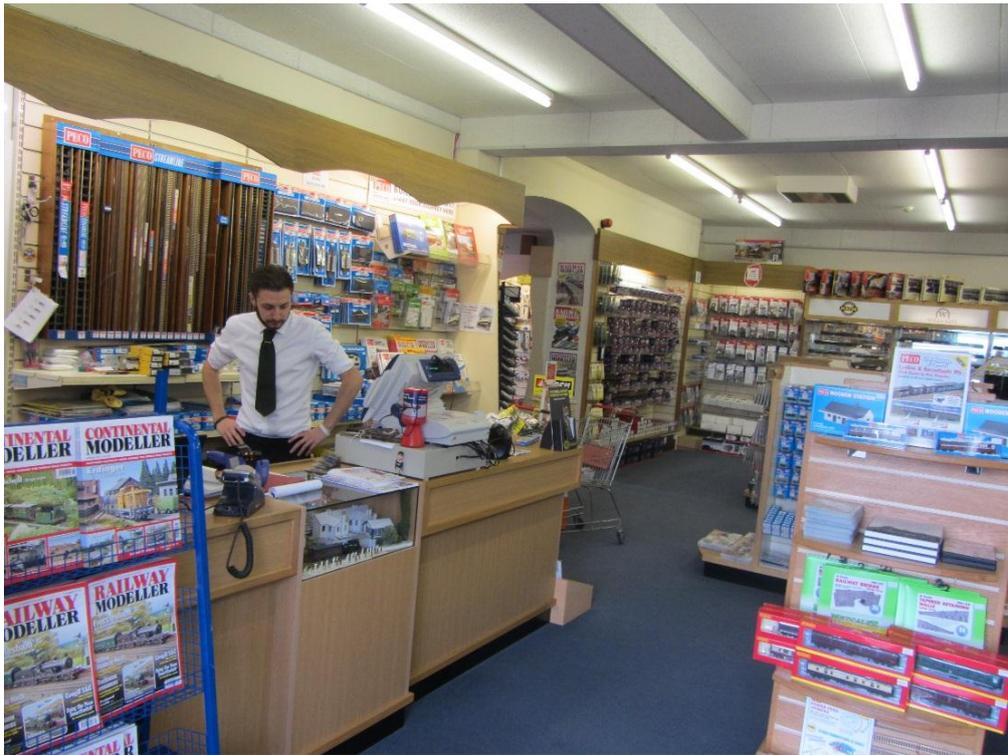
Pecorama

We were fortunate to visit Pecorama on a sunny day but even if we had not, the setting of the operation overlooking the former fishing village of Seaton is attractive with picture postcard views from the top of the hill. Having parked in the extensive parking area without having to pay (unlike the vast majority of places in the UK these days) visitors walk down to reception which is at the entrance to the shop.

View from the top of the hill and the front of the building



Views of the shop



The Peco retail outlet is one of the best equipped model railway shops in the UK, a veritable Aladdin's cave, particularly for the British prototype modeller. At present mail orders have to be placed via phone or e-mail. It is to be hoped that shopping via the internet will be added at some stage.



Having passed through the 'valley of temptation' you move into the layout display section which for many is the main reason for visiting Pecorama. This is a cleverly structured display or rather series thereof. The object is to inspire the public, particularly those who do not believe they have sufficient space (or the ability?) to build a layout, what the possibilities are if they permit their imagination to take flight. Thus the layouts range from the very small - Z gauge - to the very large - converted loft and custom built in a garage, via the study, the alcove, the bedroom, the passage way, the purpose built room, semi basement, the garden shed and of course the garden. The photos below which do not do justice to the quality of the modelling, particularly as is evident in some cases they were taken from behind the perspex shield protecting the layouts, show some examples.

Z Gauge replacement for a fish tank!



Aerial view of N gauge set-track layout



OO layout for a loft



What about end to end in the bedroom?!



“Catalunya” – Continental HO – special purpose room



O gauge tram layout for the garden shed



The Study? O-16.5mm (7mm scale on HO track)



Generally, the displays are of high quality but I make two observations: firstly more could be done with the outside O and 1 gauge layouts. There is little in the way of model scenery (but the views are good!) The accent appears to be more on operations rather than modelling with these layouts. Secondly, in my opinion generally the locos on the layouts are running too fast. However it needs to be remembered that these comments originate from someone passionate about garden railways and who spent many years operating an HO layout to as near the prototype as possible (timetables – scale speeds etc.). Next month I will cover the remaining attractions at Pecorama namely “Orion” – one of the remaining 7 Pullman coaches built for the Festival of Britain in 1951, the gardens, the children’s activity centre and the Beer Heights Light Railway.