



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

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Editorial

This month, before featuring the premier 16mm/gauge 1 live steam loco manufacturer in the UK, Roundhouse Engineering, I am returning to a subject addressed previously. It will not be of much interest to the younger generation but they will get old sooner or later too! I refer to what to do with our model railway ‘stuff’ when we are no longer around. I had that discussion with my wife recently. Her comment was if you don’t sort it out it will all just be thrown out. And she was being serious.

The second wave of the Corona virus pandemic has forced many people including me, to reassess their mortality. Unlike the first wave where we knew less than a handful of people who contracted the virus and only one person who died and he had a heart condition, we know lots of people who have caught the disease in the second wave. The youngsters have largely escaped unscathed but sadly there have been several deaths on the part of friends and acquaintances in the older generation, including 3 from the KZN chapter of the Hornby Railway Collectors Association of South Africa.

Another thread to this article occurred recently when a big collection of Lionel, Marklin and LGB came on the market in Johannesburg. The seller was the daughter of the person who amassed the collection but who had died some years ago. The seller knew nothing about trains and the collection and was faced with the daunting task of trying to sell it. To cut a long story short, she got lucky and a buyer purchased the entire collection mainly to get his hands on the LGB items.

Closer to home, a large collection of O gauge tinsplate Hornby and Bassett-Lowke items together with Hornby Dublo and more particularly gauge 1 models is still sitting in Kloof some 5 years after the owner died. Arguably, his offspring had an inflated idea of what the collection was worth. Yes, if the models are mint and boxed, and if the collection is in the UK (Hornby and Bassett-Lowke) or the USA (Lionel and Williams), collectors will pay fancy prices but most of the models to which I am referring do not have boxes and are far from being in mint condition. Someone has to catalogue the items, pack and freight them to their respective countries of origin where a dealer or auctioneer will take a big slice of the proceeds (directly or indirectly) so suddenly the fancy prices on the internet are not so fancy after all.

I know of another collection belonging to an elderly gentleman. You cannot move in his house for model trains. Nothing has been done by him to prepare for his demise. His poor executor who knows nothing about trains is going to be landed with a major problem at some stage. Enough. I think we all know of the problem, but what is the solution - getting your train affairs in order if you like?

Selling/recycling/redistributing is one solution but we rarely know exactly when we are going to die and it is often difficult to say goodbye to 'old friends'. I would argue that as we approach 80 the time has come to reduce the size of one's collection (whatever it comprises). With respect to the remaining items, the first thing to do is to catalogue them and if possible include an estimate of their value. I would however point out the obvious: if the item is not boxed and in good condition and is old technology, it is necessary to temper one's price expectations.

Next, a codicil attached to one's Will is a good idea. Do you want the items to be passed on to family members or friends with the same interest? If the items are to be sold maybe you can give your executor some direction e.g. the name of a dealer or auctioneer e.g. Chris de Witt (chrisdewit@absamail.co.za) or Mervyn Mark (hicky@megabits.co.za).

Another option is to donate the collection to a museum. Because the major portion of my collection originated from the UK I felt it would be appropriate if it ended up there. I became aware of what I considered to be an ideal museum candidate in the form of AIMREC (www.aimrec.co.za). The problem is, AIMREC, notwithstanding having obtained some excellent exhibition layouts, has been unable to obtain permanent premises so the project's future is uncertain.

The National Rail Museum in York, from a distance, has always seemed a natural destination for collections such as mine but a visit there soon dispels any such aspirations. There are boxes and boxes containing potential display items which cannot be exhibited because there is simply no space to do so.

The hunt is still on to find an alternative which has become even more elusive because of the impact of Covid on the finances of museums. In the meantime, I have listened to my own preaching, have catalogued the

collection and started thinning it. First to go are the brass and Hornby Dublo items which are destined for the USA and UK respectively. A codicil to my will stipulates how the remaining items are to be dealt with. The problem is, it is not just the 'trains'. What about the books, magazines, photographs and old technology videos? Magazines do not concern me much as most publishers are converting to electronic delivery and an electronic data base anyway. Thanks to assistance from Shand Jacobs the process of converting my videos to USBs is well advanced. Some of my photos have appeared in Brian Nixon's excellent Modeller's Photographic Reference website

<http://southafricannarrowgauge.co.za/>

In order to reinforce the idea of what has to be done to obtain value when selling a collection, Mike Leppan from Cape Town who was formerly the LGB agent in South Africa and who has assisted several people who were selling particularly LGB items, issued the following (edited) guidelines to the individual who was disposing of the aforementioned collection:

- 1) *Select a grouping of common pieces – i.e. all items made by one manufacturer. (e.g. LGB, Marklin HO and Gauge 1 and Lionel)*
- 2) *Create a spreadsheet (see below)*
- 3) *On this spreadsheet list columns such as those shown.*
- 4) *With LGB (and most other manufactures) they will have model numbers that are universally recognised by any collector who collects that specific brand or model.*
- 5) *I know LGB, so I have used LGB as an example.*

LGB used a very simple numbering system. Early models pre 1996 have a four-digit model number (i.e. 2043) By 1996 the company were faced with a problem that computer use necessitated the use of a five-digit number, so the company started to phase this five-digit number in 1996/7. Some four-digit numbers end with a letter D or S. This just signified that the loco had (D)= smoke or (S)= sound. Later locos in the five- digit number system did away with the letter, but used a last digit 1 to signify NO SOUND – or a 2 to signify the loco had sound. This ONLY relates to numbers starting with 2 = Locomotives.

So when you understand the numbering system it makes it easy to catalogue and list everything into groups and to check up on prices. I will also fwd a copy of the Price list from around 2006 – this will hopefully give you some guidance too. (Need to find this)

So numbers are:

1XXX or 1XXXX = all track components.

2XXX (S) or (D) in some cases or 2XXXX signify locomotives

3XXX or 3XXXX are passenger cars

4XXX or 4XXXX are freight cars

5XXX or 5XXXX are Digital components used for the Multi train System and power accessories.

6XXX or 6XXXX are accessories like lamps, lights, figures, catenary etc

7XXX or 7XXXX are starter sets (early sets can also start with 2...)
 9XXX or 9XXXX are Toytrain, RIGI cable car and Gnomy toys (part of the Lehmann brand).

The earlier equipment will in all likelihood be pure analogue. Most modellers now want the more modern DCC although this is not always the case. It is important though to understand that an early analogue model with no internal electronics to speak of may look identical to a more modern model produced at a later stage with working smoke and digital sounds and control, Therefore the value and cost will not be the same. This is where the part numbers come into play.

LGB						
Model Number	DESCRIPTION	Quantity	GRADING	Condition	working	Approximate value
TRACK						
1000 / 10000	Straights - 300mm	33	8	Good / Boxed	Y	R 3,300.00
1100 / 11000	Curves, R1	40	7	Good / unbox	Y	R 4,000.00
LOCOMOTIVES						
2040	Brown Croc	N/A	7	good / boxed	y	7500
2043	Red RhB 4/4ii GE electric loco #1	N/A	6	good / boxed	Y	R 8,000.00
2043	Red RhB 4/4ii GE electric loco #2	N/A	9	V/good boxed	Y	R 9,000.00
2055	Blue/ white WP&Y Alco diesel	N/A	6	V/good boxed	y	R 7,500.00
20130	Small Choloe Field railway Loco	N/A	10	V/good boxed	y	R 5,500.00
21211	Stainz Loco	N/A	9	V/good boxed	y	R 4,000.00
PASSENGER CARS						
3167	RhB Green passenger car - long #1	N/a	6	Good / Boxed		
3167	RhB Green passenger car - long #2	N/a	7	Good / Boxed		
FREIGHT CARS						

Example of Excel spreadsheet for a LGB collection

My suggestion would be to divide the huge elephant up into smaller chunks that don't choke you. Find all the LGB passenger cars – list them, then all the freight cars – list them,,, then all the locos and list them,,, don't worry about values yet. Try to look at each model and if possible, photograph each model with as many good quality photos as possible. By doing this you will soon see that some models are in better condition than others. Work out a scale of 1 – 10 that you can grade the locos on – don't be scared to put down a lower grading yet. (you can change this any time) Also remember this could change when you run each loco... you will get more \$ if you can say – YES it runs and has a box. Photograph and visible blemishes!

On the subject of boxes – try to find every box you can and match the piece with its original box. LGB is particular – all early boxes were brown cardboard with the LGB Stainz steam loco printed everywhere (I can send u photos of the styles of boxes) Later boxes were yellow with the same printed design. By about 1974 the company were producing their signature Candy Apple Red boxes and they have not changed much since then. Every LGB collector knows these boxes!!!

Now if you are taking +- 6 photos of every piece you will soon have a nice collection of photos (I use my mobile phone) I then created a folder on my PC and broke the folder down into smaller folders for track (10000); Locos (20000) etc etc. Inside these folders I saved individual folders with the photos of each item. This way I could confirm later exactly what I had and its condition. Photos should contain every side and especially the wheels and slides on locos as this will give you and prospective buyers an idea of mechanical condition. The more worn the wheels – the more worn the loco, but in many cases this can also increase the value. I find with large collections – people tend to either run certain pieces a lot (thereby saving others from heavy wear and tear) or they spread out the load and run all their stuff but each piece does not run that often.

This may seem like a lot of work, but I can promise you that it is worth the work / time to get the additional money you will realise as every piece does have a value. It will also tell you if you are under-pricing or over-pricing if selling in larger lots. On my sample spreadsheet I will list some of what I know you have and how I break up everything and create some detail about the model. U can use this spreadsheet in conjunction with the photos you save. Don't worry if you do not know the specific name / description of the loco/ car – as long as you have a model number.

This is a starting point. And although sounds like a lot – really can be done in a morning if you just concentrate on say the LGB to start. I take it that you are not in a major hurry to sell – so be patient and in no rush to sell to someone just because they offer you what seems like good money. I think you would be wise to put a realistic value to the whole collection so that you know positively what you have and its value. Once you can set a value on it – you can then make an informed decision on the selling price. The idea of breaking the collection into smaller more manageable parts will also allow you to sell to specific collectors – and I'm hoping that by doing this you can get the highest possible value on each collection”.

My final thoughts on this subject are it is preferable not to wait too long after a person's demise to start disposal proceedings, particularly if the items concerned are not boxed in air conditioning premises which are inspected/treated regularly for fish moths, cockroaches etc. The aforementioned collection in Kloof is not stored in glass fronted display cabinets and is deteriorating.

Another point which was brought home to me by a former editor of Garden Railways, Marc Horowitz, is that if you wish your collection to remain intact give it to the museum of your choice on permanent loan rather than simply donating it outright. In theory, this should prevent the people concerned from simply just selling the collection.

Here endeth the lesson.

Roundhouse Engineering

The history of live steam model railway locomotives stretches back a long way, to the turn of the 18th century to be precise. In the mid 19th century German and French companies produced alcohol fired steam powered locomotives that did not run on rails but on the floor. (wonder how many fires started in that way!?!). At the turn of the 20th century, Marklin introduced rails for gauge 1 locos but it was the collaboration between the German firm of Bing and the British firm of Bassett-Lowke that saw a huge expansion in the model train market, although of course the engines were powered by clockwork and electricity as well as steam. The second World War and the introduction of OO scale reduced the interest in live steam. Various smaller manufacturers kept the flame burning but arguably it was the establishment of Roundhouse Engineering in Doncaster in 1982 by Roger Loxley that set the fire blazing. Although Roger and his wife have retired, the flame continues to burn brightly today and many live steam modellers the world over can be thankful for that and the role the Loxleys and Roundhouse played in getting them involved in the hobby.



“The first commercial model from the Roundhouse stable! 'Victoria' was a model of an 0-4-0 vertical boilered tram locomotive that ran on the Plynlimon and Haffan Railway and was launched in February 1982. She had a single cylinder operated by slip-eccentric valve gear and a spirit fired vertical boiler.”

All Roundhouse photos and adjacent text used with permission

If different versions of basically the same loco are counted, over the next 29 years around 80 locomotives have originated from the Doncaster factory. The increase in demand has required one factory move and several subsequent factory expansions.

In 1988, Roundhouse purchased and then put in production the former Beck range of locomotives which had previously been manufactured in Germany.

Steady upgrades and improvements to the range have taken place over the years. Technological changes include a switch from spirit to internal gas firing. In 1995 Roundhouse, after considerable expensive research, introduced its own FG burner to replace the previously bought in item which suffered from a number of shortcomings.

Those interested in the technological developments/improvements over the years should visit the Roundhouse Engineering website

www.roundhouse-eng.com and the History & Museum section under the 'About Us' page.

A good example of the advances that have been made is Lady Anne which started off in 1982 as an 0-4-0 spirit fired slip eccentric model with tinplate superstructure.



Lady Anne Mk 1

As the Roundhouse website says she quickly acquired a polished brass dome with one or two other refinements.

The loco was offered with radio control, the radio equipment being housed in a tender. This was a useful addition, particularly for the older generation who don't have so much difficulty in bending down as getting back up again!



Lady Anne Mk 2 in 1984 now with a cab. In the same year tinplate was replaced with photo etched brass platework,

In 1988 Lady Anne became an 0-6-0 with adjustable gauge wheels and modified Walschaerts valve gear.



Lady Anne Mk 3 updated again in 1995. Photo of radio controlled loco pulling kit built Brandbright freelance coaches taken on the Giva dam wall on the North Star Railway.

A manual Lady Anne costs GBP1225 VAT exclusive, Radio control adds another GBP160. In my view you obtain a lot of train for your money at that price.

In 2007, the first of seven (so far) battery powered models of diesels was introduced, the later ones available with sound.



Crieccieth Castle Roundhouse's first battery powered loco

With respect to the diesels that did not have sound it is a relatively simple exercise to retro fit that feature which enhances the realism of the models.



Merseysider

Introduced in 2018 and is available with sound (and of course radio control) at GBP729.17

There is another major contribution Roundhouse Engineering has made to the hobby. For many years the company has sold several of the live steam models in kit form. So you can buy a chassis or a boiler or just cylinders which enable the hobbyist to build to his own design. For example, I have a Roundhouse Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Prairie which was converted to coal firing by John Shawe.

One of the problems which we as South Africans face is the appalling decline in the purchasing power of the Rand. This makes buying a live steam engine even in kit form an expensive business.

Ideally, one needs to visit the factory in Doncaster or get a friend from South African to do so, buy what you want and then bring in the loco or the bits as hand luggage having reclaimed the UK VAT (20%) at the airport of departure.

As far as I can see from the Roundhouse website, the cheapest live steam loco (one of the basic series) costs around GBP582 (VAT exclusive) equivalent to over R12200 at current exchange rates. Ours is not a cheap hobby!

On the other hand, should you be in the fortunate position of winning the lotto you might like to consider purchasing one of the following:

The prototype of the first loco, David Lloyd George was only completed at the Boston Lodge Works of the Ffestiniog Railway in 1992. The model

was introduced on the 1st January 2019. Cost for the radio controlled model would be GBP3500 VAT excusive or GBP4200 including UK VAT.



David Lloyd George



Darjeeling D class Garrett

Introduced in 2015, this radio controlled loco will set you back GBP 3329.17 or just under GBP4000 including UK VAT. Start saving now!
The end