



# MagNnet

## *Newsletter of the Yorkshire Area Group of the N Gauge Society*



## October 2020

For All N Gauge Enthusiasts—Whatever their modelling interest.

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*Front cover photo : O Gauge with a T gauge as a garden railway  
(Ken Jones )*

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## Dates for the MagNnet diary

### Club Meeting Dates

2020

Oct 10th  
Nov 14th

Dec 12th

October 23rd –25th NMRA Convention Derby (Freemo)

**CANCELLED (now October 22nd to 24th 2021)**

### Meeting Venue

Meetings are held (normally) on the fourth Saturday of every month but this can vary so please check dates. All monthly meetings will be held at Heworth Without Community Centre, Stray Road, Burnholme, York YO31 0HG (off A1079 within York Ring Road).

The centre is situated behind residential housing with access between No32 Applecroft Rd, and Tang Hall Beck.

GPS Co-ordinates :Lat : N 53 degrees, 58. 105 ng : W 01 degrees 02. 774

Website: <https://yagngs.wixsite.com/yorkshire-area-group>

**EDITORIAL:** Welcome to the October issue. This is sent out a week before our next scheduled meeting, but since our successful first meeting back last month things have unfortunately taken a turn for the worse. We are now down to the 'rule of 6', and numbers in York are on the up ....the hospital there has now had to open a second Covid ward to cope with increased admissions. Sadly, the meeting next Saturday is likely to be cancelled and, even with my most optimistic hat on, I think that we will have to wait until 2021 before we meet again. Hopefully you will all have lots of modelling projects to do, write up and send in to share with everyone!! Virtual meetings on Zoom/Teams are taking place on a weekly basis, if you wish to take part send an email to Phil Swift at [cityofleeds@hotmail.com](mailto:cityofleeds@hotmail.com) and he will set you up.

## **NEWS**

### ***From Steven:***

Well, there was light at the end of the tunnel, but it turned out to be another train bringing more restrictions!

You will hopefully have seen last month's MagNnet extra which included photos taken at September's meeting. I couldn't go myself due to family commitments, but I believe the dozen or so group members who did go had an enjoyable time and importantly respected the face-mask and social distancing rules we find ourselves living with now.

I had hoped to join everyone for the October meeting but the rules have changed again (is anyone else struggling to keep up with the changes?!). We're now limited to a gathering of no more than six. We can still meet under these restrictions but each member attending will need to pay their share of the £60 meeting fee. The alternative for anyone working on a joint project (e.g. the new British outline Freemo modules) to meet at someone's home. Sadly for those of us living in much of West Yorkshire even this isn't an option!

Personally I can't see the current restrictions being lifted for several months so we'll have to continue to muddle through it as best we can. Hopefully things will return to something like they were early next year.

In the mean time, go play trains!

## **Notes of Meeting—Saturday September 12th**

There was also a brief discussion on future meetings, and it was mentioned that if the hall remained open, then it might be possible to have a meeting with just 6 people if a group had a specific task to perform—testing modules/ layout testing and refurbishment etc.. If this was to happen the small group would have to pay the cost of the hall (6 @ £10). This is something we could perhaps look at when future patterns of restrictions etc. become clearer.

The general consensus was that in spite of the restrictions and the wearing of masks etc. it was good to be back!

## The Landship Train (Part 2)



At the end of part 1, we left the landships on their bogie bolster wagon transporters about to leave their place of manufacture bound for Bristol, thence to France, where the standard gauge transporters took them as far as railheads behind the lines. The image below (© Imperial War Museum), shows the tanks at a railhead, Fins, (pronounced "fan"), in the Somme Department in northern France.



Q 7289. Tank "Hilda" of H Battalion (in which General Biles led the six-mile line of 350 tanks at the Battle of Cambrai) on a railway truck at railhead at Fins after the battle

A second image shows how the standard gauge trains were to be seen next to the narrow-gauge trench railways, so that materials could be transferred from the standard gauge trains for transporting to the Front.



Transfer of ammunition from standard-gauge railway to trench railway during the [Battle of Passchendaele](#). (image: Wikipedia)

I had sketched a possible design for a diorama in Part 1, and the concept of the railhead became clear after seeing the above images. I wanted to link the diorama to Passchendaele, however, and one image came to mind. During the centenary year of the outbreak of the war, in 2014, I visited an exhibition in Leeds City Art Gallery, where an entire wall in one staircase was filled with an image of soldiers walking through mud in a wood of skeletal trees. This is an iconic image, and one that inspired the backscene for this diorama, albeit with some licence.



The image (left) that inspired my backscene (below).  
Acrylic paint on canvas, 500 x 200 mm



The diorama would be a pastiche of the battlefield, and therefore also needed to incorporate elements both from the photographs and from the wider WW1 context, for instance planking at ground level (from the Fins photo), and waterlogged ground with shell-holes and duckboards, as well as a trench.



The whole diorama is built on a 600 x 250 piece of melamine shelving, salvaged from an old kitchen cupboard. The terrain is modelled from a mixture of egg box papier-mâché, and household filler, mixed with a base colour of acrylic paint and covered in a clay-coloured scatter. Planking and duckboards are made from match stalks. "Trees" are twigs from a bush in the garden. The shell-holes are achieved by leaving the flat surface of the base visible through the landscape, and applying a coat of dilute PVA with a little colour to reflect the light.

The trench railway system operated by the British Army was a 600mm gauge highly portable and quickly built system. 600mm cannot be modelled using the standard N scale system for modelling narrow gauge, which is to use Z gauge track (which equates to 3ft gauge), with N scale rolling stock (known as Nn3). Since this is a diorama and not an operative model, there was a solution provided by "Pendracken Miniatures," a company in Middlesbrough producing 10mm (which corresponds to 1:150), war-gaming figures and accessories. They produce a trench railway system, including a "Simplex" 20hp internal combustion locomotive, with wagons and handcarts. These, and the other items mentioned later, come as cast white metal models. Modern photographs and video allow colours to be properly matched to the prototype. Fortunately, Boyes stock a full range of war-gaming paints.



The Simplex 20hp tractor model on the diorama.



Wounded being transported on trench railway wagons hauled by a Simplex petrol locomotive. Wagons of this type which were used at the Western Front can be seen on the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway, as illustrated in the article included in the September 2020 edition of *MagNnet*.

Wikipedia describes the Simplex locomotive as follows:

In January 1916, the company [Motor Rail, based in Bedford] answered a [War Department](#) tender for [military supply railways](#). The specification was for a 600 mm (1 ft 11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in) gauge locomotive, with no more than 1 ton of axle load per axle, capable of hauling up to 15 tons at 5 miles per hour (8.0 km/h).<sup>[2]</sup> The company designed a new locomotive, with outer longitudinal "bent-rail" frame, mounted on two driven axles. The 2JO petrol engine manufactured by [W.H. Dorman & Co](#) of [Stafford](#) was centre-set in the frame along with its Dixon-Abbott patent [gearbox](#), which drove the unsprung axles through a [chain-drive](#). At one end of the frame the operator sat facing to one side allowing him to drive equally well in either direction, and at the other end was the silencer and the water-cooling radiator mounted with fan to provide transverse air flow. A large flywheel gave relatively smooth operation.

The country railway station is based on a typical design for stations in northern France, such as the one pictured in this old photograph from Pinterest of the station at Morsain, (Aisne Department, Hauts-de-France region), which are usually rendered, with red-brick details at the corners and around the windows.



The ruins are scratch built using Metcalfe building cut-outs as templates to get the scale right. The building is balsa wood; "debris" is made from horticultural alpine grit.

**Below:** The landships finally arrive at the railhead. The trench railway model in the foreground

*Additional details (military personnel, wagon loads and the unloaded tank), are from the Pendraken WW1 10mm range.*



Lastly, the addition of coloured lighting can change the mood. The diorama uses the colour-changing LED strip (bought from Amazon and also used in the “Night Shift at the Depot” diorama).



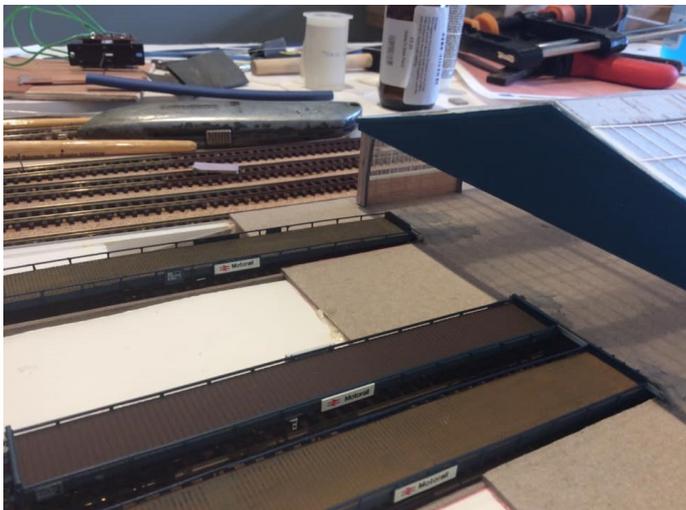
.....from Dawn



.....to Moonlight

DS

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**From group Facebook group:** Andy G has started on the Motorail loading platforms and ramps on Kensington Olympia

**More on**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/818951228609601>



## Maintaining Faller Road vehicles

This was taken from a post to the [ngauge@groups.io](mailto:ngauge@groups.io) list with a request for help with non-working Faller battery powered vehicles. It was replied to by Noel Leaver and his reply is below:

*I don't know of one, and would be surprised if there was. They do need a lot of maintenance, they pick up fluff etc very easily and it does not need much to stop them working, and if the steering gets at all gummed up they will not steer. Below are my notes on maintenance, from a Journal article some time ago.*

*If the battery fails to hold a reasonable charge (try draining completely then recharging a few times, if this does not work replace.*

*There is a small magnet under the reed switch that biases it in the on position - if this drops off the motor will not run (wave a magnet near the switch and it should turn it on). You need to replace the magnet.*

Noel

### **Maintenance**

Of the 10 vehicles available on Wickwar we often found only a few were usable at any time – anything slightly wrong can make them slow down or fail to follow the road. However, reliability is much better now as we have learnt what causes problems and how to maintain the vehicles.

**Tyres.** When you pick a vehicle up it is easy to push a tyre sideways so it is not straight on the wheel, and this will usually prevent it steering properly. The Faller ones are very prone to this, so check them every time you put them on the road. A little glue on the wheel rim can help – but don't get glue elsewhere!

**Fluff.** The vehicles pick up fluff and flock from the road, sometimes the rear axle can have a complete washer of fluff. Running a vacuum cleaner over the road before each session reduces the problem. Remove the fluff from the axles regularly with fine pointed tweezers. If this is difficult, pull the wheel off the axle and clean the axle, then push the wheel back on.

**Gears.** Any bit of grit or fluff in the teeth of a gear wheel can make the vehicle move kangaroo fashion, with occasional hesitations. Clean the slots in the gear wheel with the tip of a scalpel blade, you can rotate the wheel by turning it on briefly while holding the tyre to limit rotation. If this does not work, try cleaning by dripping isopropyl alcohol on the gear and running it, or you may be able to access the worm gear from above to clean that.

**Lubrication.** Don't use oil on the vehicles, particularly not on the steering mechanism: it will go sticky and make the steering stiff so it does not track the wire. Instead use the special Teflon lubricant Faller sell. If the steering or rear axle has got gummed up wash it with isopropyl alcohol or lighter fluid, wobble the steering around, then re-lubricate. If this does not work take the steering unit off (withdraw the pin at the front on Faller), disassemble and clean thoroughly. As a last resort, you can buy a replacement steering mechanism.

**Steering arm.** The end of steering arm on Faller vehicles should rest flat on the road – put it on a plastic box lid to see how flat it is, bend if necessary. Even more important the arm needs to be able to move up and down to cope with uneven roads. The screw that holds it on should be quite slack; check the arm has at about 1 mm of movement up and down – bend it if necessary. The magnet is attached to a bent over flap at the end of the arm: it is possible to raise this up to reduce the effect of the magnet if it is sticking to the guide wire too much

Similarly on Tomytec chassis you can move the magnet upwards in its black plastic holder by pushing the magnet with a pin, or move it down by pushing from above. If its supplied position which is as low as it will go in the holder the arm will stick to the wire and prevent the vehicle running. It needs moving up about 1 mm, but move it too far and it will no longer track the wire!

**Wheel Clearances.** Make sure the wheels cannot catch on the body. Even the slightest touch on the front wheels can disturb the steering – this is more likely to be an issue if you have replaced the vehicle body.

**Recharging.** It is a good idea to recharge batteries close to an exhibition, as they lose about 10% of their charge per month. It may help battery life to run the vehicle until fully discharged before recharging; with the Faller this avoids overcharging if the battery was already part charged.

**Avoid Running into Walls!** When a vehicle fails to follow the wire in the road it can end up pushing against a wall or tree with the motor working hard and draining the battery more quickly than usual. Similarly if it runs into a stationary vehicle in front. Keep your eye on them and check regularly that none have gone missing (one of our lorries once managed to turn off through a gap between 2 buildings that did not look wide enough and ended up stuck inside a loading shed!).

### **ANYONE FOR T By Ken Jones (My T gauge layout) - West Midland N Gauge Club**

Updated July 2020

Built in a cutlery box 2009, and mothballed since 2013, this is actually an O gauge garden layout with O gauge scenery and the garden railway in T gauge. Part of an affluent household, their gardeners are still on site whilst some friends have popped round for lunch to see the trains running and take some pictures.

It only went to 5 exhibitions before being mothballed. It was lightly damaged at a church hall with a sprung floor when children running around the hall caused the trains to jump off the track and crash. It was more severely damaged in 2013 when a visitor with a back pack trying to reach a trader's stand turned round and sent the whole layout to the edge of the table pulling out wires and sending the trains flying within the layout. It was lucky the layout didn't end up on the floor. I wish people with back packs at exhibitions would carry them if they have to bring them in to the exhibition – end of rant.

What this lock down has enabled many modellers to do is to go back and look at such mothballed layouts, and I've just done that with this T gauge layout. The scenery was not affected by the damage – the main flower beds and lawn were made for me by our very own Rodney Hodge. So, the wiring was out, easily fixed and then clean the track. After this, and the usual questions like – so why is nothing happening? are the wheels dirty? why is this happening to me? – the 2 power cars of the HST started up.

T gauge, and the original controllers for it that I'm using, have since been improved meaning my trains, when running, just wizz round, but at least they were running. Next try the other track by taking off one of the power cars and cross fingers – that's optional. Great, 2 tracks running, time for a coffee.

Now what else will work – well after a while, and more coffee, my blue 4-car Japanese EMU started up, and I also got the single locomotive, actually built for a garden railway, to work as well. The rolling stock involved in the 2013 crash didn't work. They are a brown 4-car Japanese EMU and a Japanese single car unit. I will need to send them next year to Alan Ramsay at [www.tgauge.com](http://www.tgauge.com) to see if they can be repaired. The pictures show various details of the layout during the hours spent getting the layout to work again.

Following the article in WM N Gauge Club interim newsletter number 5, I did send the two non-running units, damaged by the man with the rucksack, to Alan at [www.tgauge.com](http://www.tgauge.com) for his assessment. He removed all the wheels on the 5 carriages, ultrasonically cleaned and re-fitted them and the 4-car unit was working again. Not so lucky with the single unit and he had to take it apart, where he found a split gear. We decided while the unit was apart not only to change the gear wheel but to upgrade the motor to give me better overall running. The 2 units are now back with the layout as per the final picture.

This layout within a layout has always generated interest so I've now started a T gauge layout with N gauge scenery so that it appears to be a N gauge miniature railway. It's my treat to myself as apart from the board which is actually an over bead table, I'm having to buy everything new for it. Currently we have the back scene up and a layout name "Seen Better Days"

Contact Alan at [www.tgauge.com](http://www.tgauge.com) if you have any questions on T gauge. A very useful and friendly person – his range of items for rolling stock, track and accessories has expanded over the years.

