

Full Steam Ahead for the 2016 Festival of Model Tramways

Tramfare's Editor Bob Appleton reviews what was new or nice at this year's show

Having visited almost all the festivals held in London since their inception nearly 30 years ago and having reported on many of them, this was my first visit north to Manchester, the festival's home in alternate years. A number of the excellent layouts have not (apparently) been down to London so they were new to me, although many were nevertheless new for the Manchester show held over the weekend of 2-3 July. My first impressions were of excellent organisation and a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

In this, a personal review, I will 'run up the scales' starting at N-gauge. My first visit was to Phil Carver's "Harnser's Loke", a working tramway museum theme with a single-track, street running circuit and a double-track terminus. The accompanying scenery added to the charm and the roadway was also wide enough to support a parallel N-scale trolleybus system. John Marfleet had two N-gauge layouts – his "Huncote Tramway" representing a tramway museum with townscape and "Fleetwood Maries", a Blackpool-themed automatic layout to which more had been added since last year. This was also one of several layouts to feature small, non-tram, operating activities, in this case a field with a traction-engine driving round. A simple but effective oval with nice town scenery was "Town Tramways" from young Jack Docherty, the

Above right: Phil Carver's "Harnser's Loke" pretty little N-scale tram layout even had space for a parallel trolleybus circuit.

Right: New on John Marfleet's "Fleetwood Maries" cloverleaf-shaped N-gauge layout was a traction engine running round a field.



Above: The G-scale "Whiteleaf Tramway" featured a radio-controlled live steam tram engine. With plenty of space available, it was good to see such an extensive layout in operation.
All photos: Bob Appleton



youngest exhibitor for sure. This was next to his dad's rather larger Blackpool 00-scale layout, of which more below.

Describing your layout as a tram museum is a useful ploy if you want to run trams from many different systems and young Jamie Pickering used this to advantage for his "European Museum" as I move up to H0 scale. This was a simple end-to-end display but with very effective scenery that gave just the right atmosphere of, maybe, southern Holland. With some guest appearances from other layouts, I think I eventually saw all of the museum trams running.

"Hampshire Hills", also in H0, by John Huddleston did not refer to Hampshire in England, UK, but to New Hampshire in New England, USA. By his careful choice of scenery and other touches, this end-to-end layout had a strong feeling of authenticity – it looked just right.

Another American-style H0 layout was Tony Loughman's "Pacific Electric" on two levels, although only the lower level was operational, but it certainly had that all-American flavour. Nearby was David Cole's German-inspired "Altstadt" (Old Town), a short end-to-end layout behind glass that ran automatically. Attention to scenic detail also made this worth watching for a while, even though the same tram was going backwards and forwards – almost hypnotic but I snapped out of it.

Our German-speaking group was well represented by a contingent bringing another tramway museum layout in H0 by Werner Jurkowski, some most attractive static models (in H0) of Belgian trams from Hans-Peter Lindemann and a well-laden sales stand from Rolf Hafke that was a magnetic attraction for most visitors. It was also nice for me to meet our frequent 'Tramfare' contributor Helmut Gieramm in person for

From top to bottom:

- Young Jack Docherty's N-scale "Town Tramways", a nicely presented and effective oval layout.
- Jamie Pickering showed his "European Museum" in H0 scale with lots of nice 'old' trams to see.
- "Hampshire Hills", also in H0, certainly had that New England atmosphere - commendable.
- David Cole's "Altstadt" had a wealth of detail to keep the observant visitor busy for quite a while.





the first time.

Andrew Hunt was on hand to show us his H0-scale metre-gauge continental layout which is achieved by using 12mm-gauge track instead of standard 16.5mm. I especially liked the 1902 period tram depot that was reminiscent of several similar depots on the Rhein-Neckar metre-gauge systems in Germany. The scenery and running circuit added to the authentic flavour.

Nudging up to 00/4mm scale, Dave Haughton provided the next example of a tramway museum – “Scrich”. (I wonder how he came up with a name like that....?). A full depot, a depot fan and a double oval running track were the simple elements, supplemented with some town scenery and matching road vehicles to complete a pleasing presentation.

New to me was a compact layout, full of period detail, running Scottish trams. Douglas Sutherland had assembled an interesting selection of trams from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen to run on it – maybe I missed seeing Dundee.

Moving south to Blackpool, John Docherty had his new “Blackpool Illuminations” effort on display. It represents a section of the promenade at dusk, from The Tower and running south for some 10-12 ft. It was all very effective, with imaginative use of clear plastic ‘tic tac’ (peppermint sweet) boxes as illuminated displays mounted on lamp standards along the pavement.

There were old favourites of course. “Florin Street” by Andy Burrows is always a joy to behold, not least because this compact Leeds-inspired layout is full of excellent scenery. I had not seen the Leeds

advertising tram before; a silver car promoting local industry for the 1951 Festival of Britain.

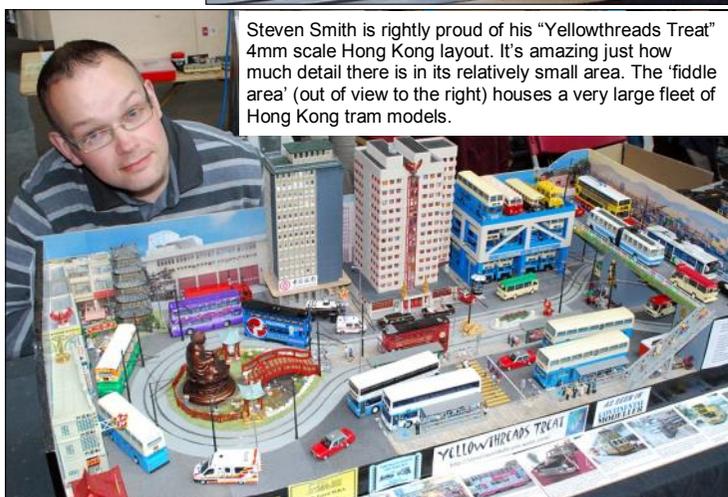
“Yellowthreads Treat” is also an old favourite which has been displayed widely in recent years

Top: Hans-Peter Lindemann from our German-speaking group proudly shows his Belgian H0 resin models.
Centre: The impressive depot on Andrew Hunt’s metre-gauge (12mm in H0-scale) German layout. Very nice.
Bottom: Dave Haughton had another tram museum layout, “Scrich” in 00-scale - another excellent effort.



Above: Douglas Sutherland had a really attractive 00-scale layout of "Scottish Tramways". Aberdeen 98 negotiates the curve outside the church. There was a very nice depot as well.

Right: "Blackpool Illuminations" from John Docherty made use of old peppermint boxes for post-mounted illumination displays and the long section of promenade was well put together.



Steven Smith is rightly proud of his "Yellowthreads Treat" 4mm scale Hong Kong layout. It's amazing just how much detail there is in its relatively small area. The 'fiddle area' (out of view to the right) houses a very large fleet of Hong Kong tram models.

but I was seeing it for the first time, so please allow me to indulge. Steven Smith has captured, in magical detail, the oriental atmosphere of Hong Kong in 00 scale. Based around a loop of dumb-bell shape that disappears into a 'fiddle area' under a bridge, the baseboard is crammed full of interest. In that 'fiddle area', best seen from behind the stand,

was a very large fleet of Hong Kong model trams, only rivalled in number by the manufacturers' warehouses I would imagine. Steven's frequent rotation of rolling-stock meant that you could actually do nearly an hour's tram spotting before seeing the same trams all over again.

"Beamish" was a trim new layout from Gor-

don and Margaret Bulmer. From my memory of the actual museum, it certainly had the right feel - although the real-life wheel squeals at the town centre curve were missing! It was a tidy little layout truly reminiscent of the real thing.

Work in progress was represented by Huw Cairn's "Spring Hall Lane" Halifax stand, which proved it isn't always necessary to have a completed layout to make it interesting. The trams ran fine although the street scenes are 'under construction'.

Dave Carson was back with his short but excellent "Terminus - All Change!" heritage end-to-end run. Attention to detail is the hallmark of this layout, especially obvious when you get your eyes down to street level. Nice one Dave.

There was only one O-gauge layout at this year's festival, the justly applauded "Chesfield" by Rob Wardle and friends. It's another old favourite but, again, one I was seeing for the first time. It's a complex layout made all the more interesting by superb and extensive scenery that was as enthralling as the first-class models running. There was no shortage of trams either. Several themes could be set in motion from Scotland (Glasgow and Edinburgh cars at least), to Ireland (Belfast and Dublin, with a little gauging 'licence' in the case of broad-gauge Dublin) and, appropriately, Manchester. Not just Manchester trams of course, but virtually anything that joined, or nearly joined, with the city's

Top: The town area of "Beamish" museum was well modelled in 00 scale by Gordon and Margaret Bulmer.

Centre: The arrival of a Salzburg works car on "Terminus - All Change!" by Dave Carson.

Bottom: Attention to detail of trams and scenery at "Chesfield" is legendary. O-gauge Ashton-under-Lyne 32 passes the Yorkshire Penny Bank.



tracks. It needed several visits to see everything but I know I missed something; the fully working Blackpool illuminated 'standard' for a start.

Next up the scale was the most extensive version I've yet seen of the "Whiteleaf Tramway" in G-scale. This tramway has featured several times in 'Tramfare' and appeared at the London festival but new to me was the live-steam tram engine quietly chuffing along under radio control.

I now arrive at 1:16 scale (3/4in./ft) in which there were two working layouts. One never fails to be impressed by Greg Marsden's superb Stockport Corporation models, as depicted in

1936-37, together with the extensive end-to-end track on which they smoothly run. It also features an automatic trolley reverser, one that I never saw fail. There is no background scenery but that only makes you concentrate more on the quality of the models, which is time well spent.

The second large-scale layout was Harry Moore's narrow-gauge "Tramway Avenue". Originally owned by Ron Leach (a former TLRS Model Engineering Sec.), as were several of the models, it was good, for example, to see Hastings, Poole and Llandudno models running.

There were displays of various static model trams by the TLRS North Lincs Group and East London cars in 00 by John Prentice.

Mention must be made of the numerous sales and society stands that all tempt money out of pockets. Static and ready-to-run model trams in the smaller scales were well to the fore, as were hundreds of books, both new and second-hand. Such stands are essential to the health of the tram hobby we all enjoy and deserve our support.

As usual, the festival featured a model tram competition. 'Best of Day' on Sunday was Julian Carr's O-scale diorama of London HR/2 car 1858 set in post-war SE London, complete with a 'prefab' and an Anderson air-raid shelter in the garden. For 'Best Model Tram - 2016', it was a very close contest between this entry and Saturday's 'Best of Day'. This was Ashley Best's 1:16 scale Bolton 46, an open-balcony double-decker that lifted the trophy by a whisker.

Also in 1:16 scale were two 'Very Highly Commended' models from Richard Hargreaves - York single-decker 37 and Darwen Corporation demi-car 15. The range of smaller



Above left: One of Greg Marsden's first-class Stockport trams in 1:16 scale, here no.66. The prototype was built by Craven, both truck and body, in 1923.

Left: On "Tramway Avenue", also 1:16 scale but narrow gauge, Hastings 43 built by Ron Leach is seen in service.

WINNERS ALL!

Left: Bolton 46 in 1:16 scale by Ashley Best won the 'Best Model Tram 2016' trophy at the festival.

Below: Very close behind was Julian Carr's post-war London diorama of HR/2 1858 in O-scale. Regular 'Tramfare' readers will remember his London diorama article in issue 289 (March-April 2016).

'Last Tram Week' by John Whitehouse.

Regardless of venue, this is always an enjoyable and impressive show and 2016 was no exception. It had something for everyone and was a compliment to all who contributed to its success.

My special thanks to the organiser, John Prentice, for affording me the opportunity of preparing this review.



scale models in the competitions was impressive. They were all good and there should have been prizes for all. Two of Alan Catlow's 5.5mm scale Blackpool trams, Coronation 307 and Engineering Car No.3, were justifiably 'Very Highly Commended'. Also so commended was Sheffield 510 in 00-scale, decorated in detail for

The next Festival of Model Tramways will be back in London on 22-23 July 2017 at the London Museum of Water and Steam (formerly Kew Bridge Steam Museum). Further details will be available later but make a note of the dates in your diaries now.