Lostock Junction Revisited

A comprehensive description of the LJR placed on the Platelayer's website in March 2007 as we completed the 50th operating session. The Platelayers meeting here in September 2010 was the 100th session so an update is timely, but first a summary description of Lostock.

Lostock Junction Railway – A Summary Description

Overall, Lostock measures 45' x 24' and occupies two rooms in the basement with over 700' of "00" gauge track. The mainline track is Peco code 100 while Windermere is SMP code 70. I have been building on the site since 1969 but it could be said that the layout was started in 1977 when I dug out the pit in the crawl space. There was a major rebuild in 1991 when the crawl space was insulated and dry walled. At this time the sagging wooden framework replaced with steel studs. By 2002 the network was complete (working in both rooms) and we started operating sessions without Windermere. By 2007, and the 50th session Windermere was functional. While originally wired to accommodate both DCC and DC, the locomotive power is now strictly DC. General we have 9 or 10 operators, all Platelayers, for the monthly operating sessions.

Developments between the 50th and 100th Operating Sessions.

The control system has seen many changes over the past three years. The new network control system with 19 controllers has improved network operation dramatically and eased the flow of Windermere traffic. We have run with up to 14 trains on the network. In practice we find 8 to 12 trains interesting and controllable.

While Windermere was functional for the 50th session there is still a lot of work to do. Some scenery was added in the form of 4 platforms but little else in the way of scenery.

At the 61st session we introduced schedule passenger train operation based on the 1953 Windermere timetable. This intensive activity exposed some operational problems. The main problem was that merging Windermere trains with the network traffic at Preston Junction was extremely difficult. The control system was modified. A new set of control blocks was introduced to the Blackpool Sections. New blocks were introduced to hold trains arriving or departing Windermere for the mainline. This required a completely new set of controls for the Blackpool operator.

Recently we introduced scheduled goods operation. 60 wagons are rotated in 12 different train configurations. Morning and afternoon trains arrive and depart daily. Shunting must be conducted in real time so this keeps the yard operators fully occupied for the entire session.

A weekdays' operation is completed in by eliminating the boring bits (waiting time). For this.

The introduction of prototypical operations Windermere has been very challenging. It has taken a long time to get to grips with the complex controls and procedures required. Over time the 4 or 5 operators have honed their skills and can to complete a weekday's operation in about 2 hours.

A milestone was achieved in November in the 102nd session. For the first time we completed both daily goods and passenger schedules in a one day session. We achieved truly prototypical operation at last.

Plans for the Future.

Work on the computerised interlocking system is ongoing using MERG RPC modules, SSI software and Bouncer servo controlled signals. 18 operating signals have been added to synchronise network operations. The system includes Train on Track Indication (TOTI) which is really needed before more scenery further obscuring the operators view is introduced.

Plans are in place for an 8 foot long model of Arten Gil viaduct but that will have to wait.

Photographs

Windermere Station, the scenery will extend over the three network tracks, bottom left.

Operators Brian Fayle (Station Master), Ron Smith (Traffic Controller) David Knight (Yard) and Gerry Taylor (Preston Junction) are shown. Other Windermere operators not shown include David Youngs and Terry Brown (Shed).

The scratch built LMS turntable is replica of the one at Patricroft. It has 12 feed tracks and is fully automatic and self indexing. Windermere didn't have extensive shedding facilities so we mimic the shed's Oxenhome location by routing light engines around the network. A Hornby Royal Scot "The Green Howards" sits on the turntable and a scratch built Lawrence & Goddard LMS Stanier Mogul sits in the background

Here two trains wait at Lostock Junction for two trains to cross the junction. The steel stud baseboard construction can be clearly seen in this photograph.

David Young’s Lord Nelson with Devon Belle Pullman train waits for the signal at Kearsley. The sky was surprisingly easy to hand paint.

The layout's ruling grade matches that of the Settle and Carlisle railway (1 in 100). Here Ron Smith's Hornby Clan hauls a 12 carriage train up the long drag to the summit. We conducted extensive engine trials to enable us to assign appropriate engines for the job at hand

To keep interest alive and broaden the skill base operators are reassigned to fulfil several roles as much as practical. Other regular operators not already mentioned include Ken Sherwood, Alan Farmer, John Rowe, Phil West and Denzel Sterling.