

The Hornby Railway Collectors Association



Nicholas Kitchen, President of the Hornby Railway Collectors Association, explains the joys of vintage model railways, the history of the club and why you should consider collecting Hornby railways.



BRM: When was the HRCA formed?

Nicholas: April 1969, when Hornby ceased production of its O gauge trains. My late father was one of the founder members, number 15, and as a child, I was 15a. My mother is now number 15, and having got a little older, I now hold membership number 16. We are the longest serving members.

BRM: Presumably, when the HRCA was formed, it was intended to serve the needs of the O gauge, and Dublo enthusiasts?

Nicholas: Not quite. Initially, only O gauge

was supported, and when it was suggested that Dublo be included, some members disagreed! Now, however, we cover both Dublo, and the French Acho system. Our only limit is that we are only interested in models produced in Liverpool. We leave the later Margate-produced railways to other groups.

BRM: How would you describe your members?

Nicholas: Many and varied. We have more than 2300 spread around the world.

Admittedly, they tend to be rather more advanced in years than those of other clubs, but that doesn't mean they aren't still full of enthusiasm.

BRM: What benefits does HRCA membership bring?

Nicholas: Quite a list! For a start, 10 issues each year of our journal, *Hornby Railway Collector*, with more than 40 A4 pages – it's an excellent read, including articles on the history of Hornby and details of the local groups activities – of which there are many.

HRCA groups can be found all over the world, and we host two extravaganzas each year, the latest one was at the motor museum in Gaydon, where you will find both layouts and trade.

Our trains have a reputation for long lives and reliability, but if you need spares, or to find someone to repair a model, there is a directory of replacement and repair services with over 100 suppliers. To help you, there's also a lively online discussion forum.

Of course, you need to buy models to collect them, and we host auction sales for members, complete with a catalogue, the online version of which shows photographs of each lot. Our extravaganzas host a large number of traders selling both complete models and spare parts.

BRM: Is the Association mainly for those who collect boxed models, or those who want to give them a run?

Nicholas: We certainly have many hardcore collectors among our members, but we all enjoy seeing trains running, so there's a lot of support for layout builders, and you'll find write-ups of their efforts in our Journal.

BRM: Why would someone take up collecting Hornby railways?

Nicholas: Well, for a start, the older models are much cheaper than modern ones. If your intention is to build a working layout, and you aren't looking for mint boxed items, anyone could visit one of our events and purchase many models for little money. Those models will be easy to look after, they are a quality product and provide the owner with many years of pleasure.

BRM: Is the hobby about nostalgia, or are there new modellers coming in to the hobby?

Nicholas: Nostalgia plays a huge part, of course. I started with a Dublo three-rail set as a seven-year-old, but hankered after my father's O gauge railway, and eventually, we started to collect it together. Much as I enjoy Dublo, O gauge is still my favourite. Having said this, there is a lot for the newcomer to enjoy. These are beautifully-made models and Hornby spared no expense. For youngsters, model railways offer a more tangible experience than a mobile phone or computer. They can learn many useful hand skills, and maintaining models could even be considered to be part of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) curriculum.



Hornby O Gauge No.1 Special clockwork Tank locomotive on the 'Northanger Abbey' layout.



French Hornby O gauge SNCF railcars.

BRM: How can readers find out more?

Nicholas: Our website, www.hrca.net, has all the details, or, you could visit any exhibition with a Hornby O gauge, or Dublo layout and talk to the operators. They will normally have one of our leaflets and will be pleased to talk about their model. Be warned though, our layouts with vintage trains thrashing around always make a terrific noise and draw a crowd, so you might have to be patient until you can get to the front!

Quick facts

Members: 2300
 Membership fee: Online – £25, paper – £33 (annual)
 Website: www.hrca.net



Nicholas Kitchen, President of the Hornby Railway Collectors Association, with a model of LNER 4-4-0 No. 201 Bramham Moor.