

**HEAVY FREIGHT:
LNWR G2 0-8-0
in early crest BR
plain black livery**

LOVERS of 2mm steam locomotives are now reasonably well catered for by Dapol and Graham Farish, with most of the main line steam classes and many of the most popular mixed traffic, goods and tank designs of the post-war era now being offered in N Gauge RTR form in both British Railways and "Big Four" guise.

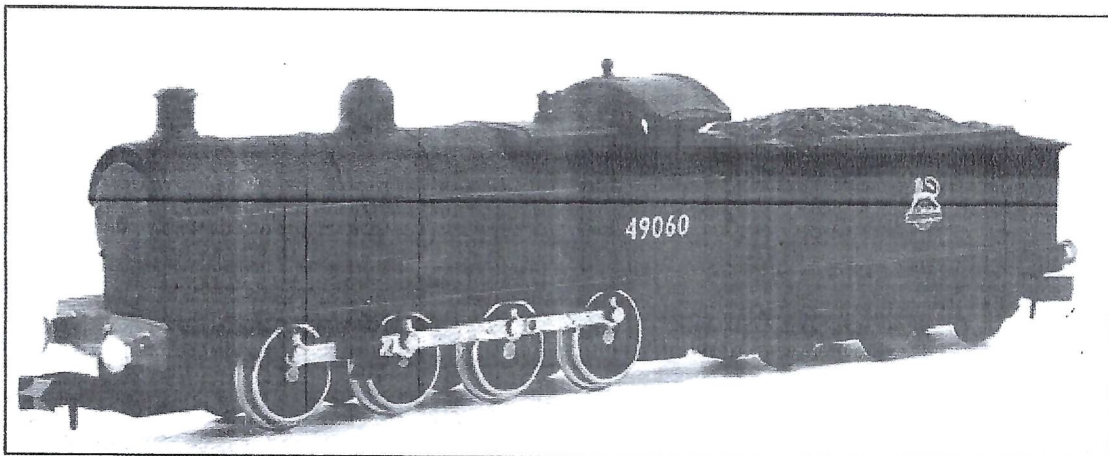
But steam locomotives were, in the main, very long-lived creatures, and as late as 1960, BR could still muster more than 100 distinct classes of loco, including many antiquated designs dating back to the pre-Grouping era and even a handful which first entered service while Queen Victoria was on the throne.

A few of these historic designs are offered in white metal kit form from small-scale manufacturers like Langley and P & D Marsh. But several others would probably be lost for ever from the N Gauge scene except for the amazing efforts of one man – Colin Heard of Union Mills Models.

Colin has been beaver away in his tiny workshop on the Isle of Man since 1994 almost single-handedly turning out a succession of RTR N Gauge versions of historic LMS, LNER, LNWR and Southern Railway locos in BR, "Big Four" or pre-Grouping liveries. All are tender locos with cast metal bodies and chassis using Colin's own unique tender drive mechanism.

Colin started out in the railway modelling business as a toolmaker for Peco in Devon. In 1976, he began his own business based in Somerset making the Cooper Craft range of 00 plastic kits which were marketed through Peco. But his true ambition was to make cast metal N gauge locos, so in 1994 he moved to the Isle of Man and set up in business in the centre of the island on the Union Mills Trading Estate in the village of Union Mills – hence the name.

He started out with just a couple of



THE UNION MAN

■ By BILLY INGHAM

models to test the market but they went down so well with modellers that his range has steadily expanded – by about one new model per year – and currently stands at 16 locos, or almost 40 different models when taking livery variations into account. He admits he has concentrated largely on LNER prototypes because they are a particular favourite of his, but he also offers some iconic LMS designs and two LSWR stalwarts, the Drummond/Urie T9 4-4-0 and the Adams "0395" 0-6-0 which first entered service back in 1881.

MOST are freight or mixed traffic workhorses but he has produced two "namers", the first of which proved very popular and is now sold out. This was Robinson D11 "Large Director" 4-6-0 of Great Central vintage as class leader 62660 *Butler-Henderson* or in LNER Green as 6397 *Lady of the Lake*.

His most recent design is the LNWR Bowen-Cooke Prince of Wales 4-6-0, available in three liveries.

Colin is proud of the fact that every loco he produces will pull at least 14 coaches or 50 wagons up a standard N Gauge gradient and at the same time they will easily negotiate a 9in radius Peco Setrack curve. The cast metal bodies are weighty enough to give good adhesion and current collection,

while the tender drive means there can be daylight under the loco boiler and accurately-scaled firebox details.

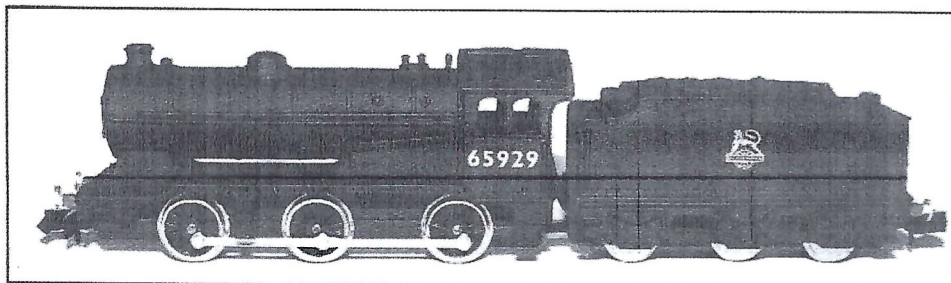
Loco wheels on split steel axles are profile-turned from brass and nickel-plated for maximum electrical conductivity, while coupling rods are photo-etched from nickel silver sheet. Each loco is permanently coupled to the tender by a Delrin drawbar and link wire.

Colin is particularly keen to point out that his locos use no parts sourced from any other manufacturers. All components, down to the separate buffers, are made in-house and have been the subject of exhaustive development and refinement over the years. Even the Rapido-style couplers are made by Colin to his own design.

Each model is individually spray-painted with a grey undercoat before being finished in a semi-matt cellulose paint with lining, lettering and crests applied by stroke pad printing, not transfers. No model goes out from the Isle of Man until it has been fully tested, oiled and "run in".

Despite the care and attention which goes into every Union Mills model, they are very reasonably priced from £69 for his original LNER 0-6-0 designs to £82 for his most recent model, the LNWR Prince Of Wales 4-6-0. Colin points out that he only sells direct to enthusiasts who respond to an advert (he has no website or internet presence) and he has deliberately kept the business small for him to run practically single-handed (he has help from just one other model maker).

He makes 200 of each model design but he is keen to stress that there is no guarantee that any model will be re-made when sales are exhausted. As he says: "If you want a particular model or livery and you see that I have it in stock, it is wise to buy while it is available." ●



OLD WORKHORSE: Gresley J38 0-6-0 from 1926 in plain BR Black livery