British layouts from overseas

**CHRISTOPHER DAY** *explains how building this tramway, an adjunct to the huge OO layout housed at his father's home in Australia, helped him to gain some additional model making experience.*

# Trams for Banbury Connections

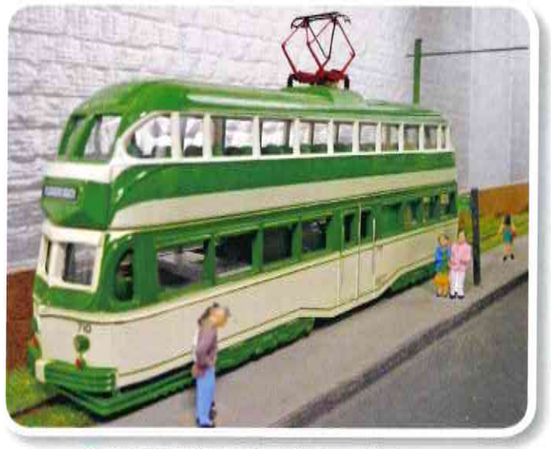
***Photography by the author***

Our vast 35-station British railway layout *Banbury Connections*, appeared in the January 2018 RAILWAY MODELLER. Its dominating presence encompasses much of the 16m by 7.3m shed in which it is housed. Notwithstanding, one of the gems of the railway is this little-known addition known as the *Gosport Corporation Tramway*.

One might ask why I would construct a OO scale electric tramway with such a large and complex model railway to run and maintain?

The answer probably lies deep in my childhood memories of Blackpool's beautiful 1934 Balloon Trams. Despite being Australian, my first trip on a Blackpool Balloon took place when I was 16 months old and has been memorably retold by my parents as an amusing incident in which I decided to mimic the tram conductor. The tram conductor, who came up to sort out the sarcastic 'yob' upstairs, only found an innocent(?) little boy!

Following that first memorable trip, I have been on the heritage Blackpool trams numerous times as well as travelling on many other tram systems in places such as Melbourne, Zurich and Hong Kong.



**It began with a pair of Blackpool Balloon Tram models; here's one of them at Gosport Station Terminus.**

## The collection begins

Following the release of Original Omnibus's and EFE's OO diecast tram models, at age 14, and despite my father's strong resistance, I made my first move by purchasing two Balloons and one Brush Railcoach. Secretly my father really likes trams (so much so, he was a driving force behind their initial reintroduction in Sydney!) and within months purchased two Leeds Corporation ex-London Felthams.

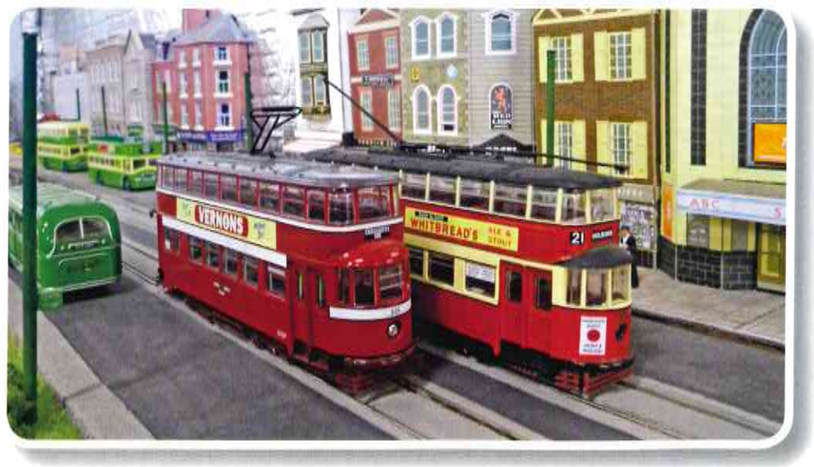
This left me with five trams which each needed to be motorised by someone lacking in the skills and expertise to perform the delicate operation. Undaunted and with the confidence of youth, I ordered a couple of Bec-Kit motors (now KW Trams see; www.kwtrams.co.uk) and, with the aid of my father, we motorised our first Balloon and Feltham tram. Naturally as time went on (and I replenished my reserves of pocket money) I gained the skills with which to finish motorising the fleet.

Dad and I then purchased an EFE Horsfield Tram from a Dr Days Bridge Junction on eBay (ironic when your father is Dr Day!). The Horsfield posed a new challenge as I had to use the cutting disc to cut through metal for the first time. Nevertheless, without too much ado, I motorised my first Horsfield which was deemed to be a simple and reliable tram. Accordingly, two more were motorised to develop a standard fleet of three. As with many real-life experiences, both subsequent motors differed from the first! However, I found that the last motor was by far the best and eventually replaced the worst performing tram with a new Mashima mechanism.

## Kiwi influences

Ironically, New Zealand is responsible for a couple of the model trams found operating on *Gosport Tramway*.

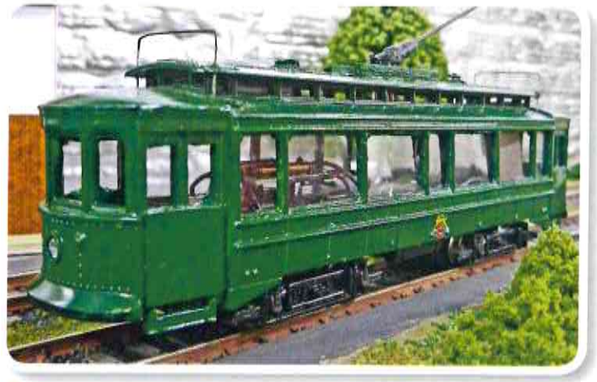
First, on a visit to the large Middleton Model Railway near Wellington, I was inspired by the owner's conversion of a Bachmann Brill Tram into a Grimsby & Immingham car. The conversion of this tram was relatively simple and required the removal of several window frames, the construction of a new pole and a new coat of paint. Another trip down to the deep south of New Zealand, to Invercargill, was responsible for the acquisition of a Tower Trams London E3. A model shop there had a basket of Tower Tram kits and they just happened to have an E3. Yes, it's about as far away from the Blackpool home of Tower Models as you can possibly get!




**A pair of Feltham trams (EFE models) pass in the main street. The left-hand one is in Leeds Transport livery.**







**My Bachmann Brill Tram converted into a Grimsby & Immingham vehicle.**

This tram kit was probably the most challenging one I have worked on given it required careful construction to accommodate the motor and the scratchbuilding of two working poles. Furthermore, I was able to recycle the headlights off some of my Original Omnibus Felthams on the E3 by carefully drilling a hole in the correct position on each end. Given my liking of the London Transport livery, the E3 was shortly joined by another Feltham!

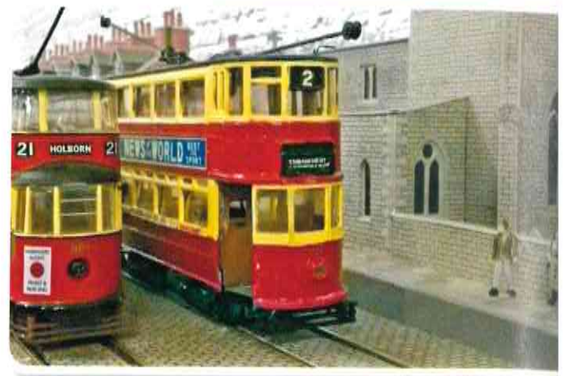
Unlike any of the British manufacturers, Cooee Collectibles in Australia produced a OO gauge Melbourne W class tram (why the company made it in OO is a bit of a mystery) which came in both a motorised and non-motorised form. Initially, I procured a bargain un-powered version from the UK which I planned to motorise. However, unable to resist a sale at my local model shop, I eventually ended up with a beautiful ready-to-run model, leaving the static tram to form part of the beer garden of a pub at the end of the line!

## Construction of the tramway proper

All in all, my tramway has finished up with 12 motorised trams which traverse the cobbled streets, reserved track and asphalt sections of the layout. The tramway provides an interesting cross-section of a British town starting at the railway station and fishing harbour before running down the main street past the shop fronts, the terraced houses, the semi-detached houses on reserved track and finally into the small dockside town from which a ferry runs. Superquick card kits will be recognisable in the background.

Construction took place in two stages with the high-street and depot ends being constructed a couple of years prior to the terraced house and semi-detached house sections. Two operators are required to run the tramway. One operator oversees the railway station end and section up to the semi-detached houses whilst the other operator runs the section between the ferry and semi-detached houses and is also responsible for shunting trams in and out of the depot. Given the modest size of the tramway, I was able to ballast the reserved track sections and scratchbuild all my tram poles out of brass.

However, I have not put up any overhead wiring due to the practicalities of tramway track cleaning. Unlike the majority of model trains, model trams, given their small and fine profile wheels, seem to pick up dirt rather quickly.




**The Tower Models London E3 model – th kit of which I found in an Invercargill model shop – halts alongside one of the Felthams a the Chapel Street tram stop.**

## Conclusion

Overall, construction of the tramway has provided me with a wide selection of skills that I would not have gained from modelli railways alone. Nevertheless, anyone considering the plunge into tramway modelling should ensure when laying thei streets that the rails are slightly raised abov the road surface so that the tram front and rear lifeguard grids have sufficient clearan My earlier attempts still have the odd operational hiccup as a result of too little clearance being provided!

**The harbour terminus of the tramway just be seen on the extreme right the picture, opposite the moore fishing fleet, and adjacent t Gosport railway station.**