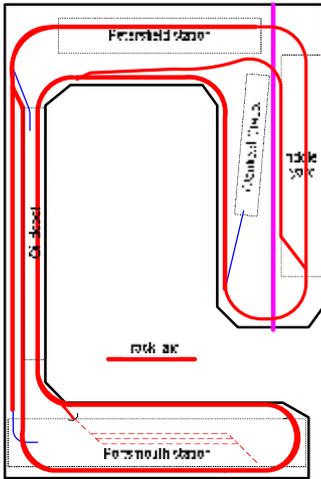


10: Loco Roster



No new track since last time. Actually not much of anything since the last report!

The New Starter

The loco roster has gained a new train: the Dapol Voyager. This is a 4 car set, shipped ready for DCC and ready for DCC sound. It's hungry on decoders though: it has lights both ends and a powered mid car, needing 3 decoders in all. It has the new 6 pin socket, so a Digitrax DZ125IN was the obvious choice.

Installation is really simple: remove the body shell (needing fingernails), remove the dummy decoder, plug in the new decoder and refit the bodyshell. That really is all there is to it!

Great, but it doesn't run reliably. For some reason it comes off the rail at most junctions. It isn't yet clear why this happens; investigation required.

Thomas

Thomas the Tank Engine now has a decoder, which wasn't as easy as I'd expected. Thanks to Tony Ellary for helping with this one! I'd found instructions for fitting one on the web, and it sounded easy. However as soon as the clip-on bodyshell was removed it became obvious that there had been some redesign underneath!

The Tomix "Thomas the Tank Engine" is based on a split frame chassis. As is usual with these, it's best to let the chassis sides continue to collect power; isolate the motor from the sides, then add wires to the decoder. The decoder itself would fit in the cab – what's the problem?

The chassis came apart into a neat pile of bits without problems. It wasn't too hard to isolate the motor, with a little metalwork. Unfortunately we couldn't find any obvious way to connect to the chassis sides for wheel pickup. In the end I've soldered to them, but I'm not convinced of the joint quality.

Reassembly was trickier. Each axle is driven AND there are connecting rods. That means the drive gears need to be on the correct tooth. The first two times I reassembled him, the chassis limped awkwardly along the track. It took 3 goes to get it right!

That isn't the end of the story: whenever he runs, the track power isolators (Digitrax PM42) keep tripping. The same thing happens with the class 08 shunter; but I don't get shorts on a different railway.

Eurostar

The Eurostar, having been clocked at 204 MPH by the speedometer window on "Locoanalyse", has gone into a sulk. This may have been initiated when it was renumbered to give "01" back to Thomas. Now it runs, then coasts to a halt then runs again.

This was thought to be a decoder fault: we'd determined that power to the motor was removed but the lights were still lit. I've resoldered all the high current path on the decoder, and soldered the brass tabs into the motor. Alan readjusted all the phosphor bronze pickup strips... but still it misbehaves. Interestingly, it seems to do this on the same areas of track: that suggests an interaction with the track or power feed somehow.

A PC Roster

All the loco settings have now been read into "Decoder Pro" (part of the JMRI tool. See jmri.sourceforge.net for details.

This means I now have a record of all the CV settings, and they can be called up for changes easily. This can be live on the main track, or on the programming track, without needing any CV numbers or values.

Locomotive	Picture	Cab Number	DCC Number	Functions
Eurostar		3201	32	F0 lights
SWT Class 159 DMU		159019	19	None
Cross Country Trains Voyager		221120	20	F0 lights
Virgin class 47		47814	14	None
EWS Class 66		66135	35	F0 lights
EWS Class 60		60052	52	F0 lights
First Great Western Class 57		57602	02	F0 lights
Class 08 Shunter		08648	48	None
GWR Class 94xx Pannier Tank		9400	94	None
Thomas the Tank Engine		1	1	none