



# Bulldog – A Review

*David Williams takes a look at the new Roundhouse Diesel*

**B**ack in 2013, Roundhouse Engineering unveiled the latest edition to their 'Diesel Series', in the shape of 'Little John'. This characterful little 0-4-0 diesel outline battery electric locomotive has met with immense success – the legendary Roundhouse reliability coupled with an attractive generic design proved a winning combination. Given this success it

wasn't all that surprising when at the Llanfair Garden Railway Show 2015, 'Little John' was joined by 'Bulldog'. Whilst there is an obvious family resemblance, 'Bulldog' had a new, most striking body shape and a host of different details and features – the phrase which immediately sprang to mind was 'Little John on Steroids'. Naturally I was more than happy to undertake a review of the loco, and a

few weeks later, the review model duly arrived on the PTLR for trial running.

Along with the loco came a fast charger and a radio control handset complete with batteries, not forgetting the instruction booklet. As is my wont, when running a new loco for the first time, my first course of action is to have a read of those instructions. Of particular note, was the advice recommending that the batteries should never be allowed to fully discharge, or else damage might result. It went on to say that the loco ought to be fully charged before running and before long periods in store. As per the 'Little John' the charging jack was located in the cab, and locos six, onboard, NiMh AA batteries, were permitted to receive a full charge – as indicated by the colour light on the charger. I must assume that the batteries had already been well charged as this process didn't take too long.

With the loco batteries fully charged, the batteries were then inserted into the handset, and the loco taken outside for a closer inspection.



The cab interior remains a simple affair, with the three printed gauges on the dashboard. Meanwhile, the charging jack is visible to the right, whilst the power on/off switch is to the left.

A detail view showing the area beneath the running boards – note the laser cut axlebox detail along with the dummy ballast weights fore and aft



Photos by Author



'Bulldog', in charge of a demonstration freight working, is seen having just passed the summit, heading downgrade towards Sparrow Falls. Note the working headlight and additional detail on and around the bonnet.

My first impression was that the loco looked particularly purposeful. Whilst its older brother 'Little John' had the feel of a first generation diesel shunter, which still harked back to the steam era, 'Bulldog' was clearly a more modern machine. The bodywork was of neat, etched brass construction and carried a reasonable level of detail, including the engine bay door panels, complete with hinges and pronounced wire handles. However, unlike the 'Little John' with its smooth flowing curves, 'Bulldog' has more angular bodywork, and the circular cab spectacles replaced with larger Trapezium shaped affairs. The top of the bonnet was flat, and endowed with a dummy horn, air-filter, exhaust pipe and radiator cap. Unlike the fine diamond pattern mesh used for the front grille on 'Little John', 'Bulldog' sported a more coarse grille, which gave an excellent representation of being made up from round bar. This was covered by a row of wire guardrails down the front of the bonnet. As per usual, the paintwork is finished to a high standard throughout, Roundhouse Crimson Lake featuring as the main body colour on this occasion.

Now, one of the more outstanding new features of Bulldog is the working headlight mounted on the

front of the bonnet. This illuminates whenever the loco's power supply is turned on and adds a sense of modernity, with most modern industrial diesels featuring some form of marker light – as much to be seen as to see. As for the cab interior, this was the same spartan affair as the 'Little John', with just three printed gauges on the dashboard. The charging jack was sited below the dashboard on the right hand side, whilst the power switch was located on the left hand side.

Moving on to an inspection below the running board, the rolling chassis was again mechanically similar to the 'Little John'. However, the laser-cut, leaf spring detail had been replaced by a more modern looking representation of coil springs, and dummy ballast weights had been added immediately inboard of the bufferbeams. The latter were equipped with multi-height couplers and finished in black and yellow wasp stripes. It was also pleasing to note that there were still no obtrusive cheese head screws visible.

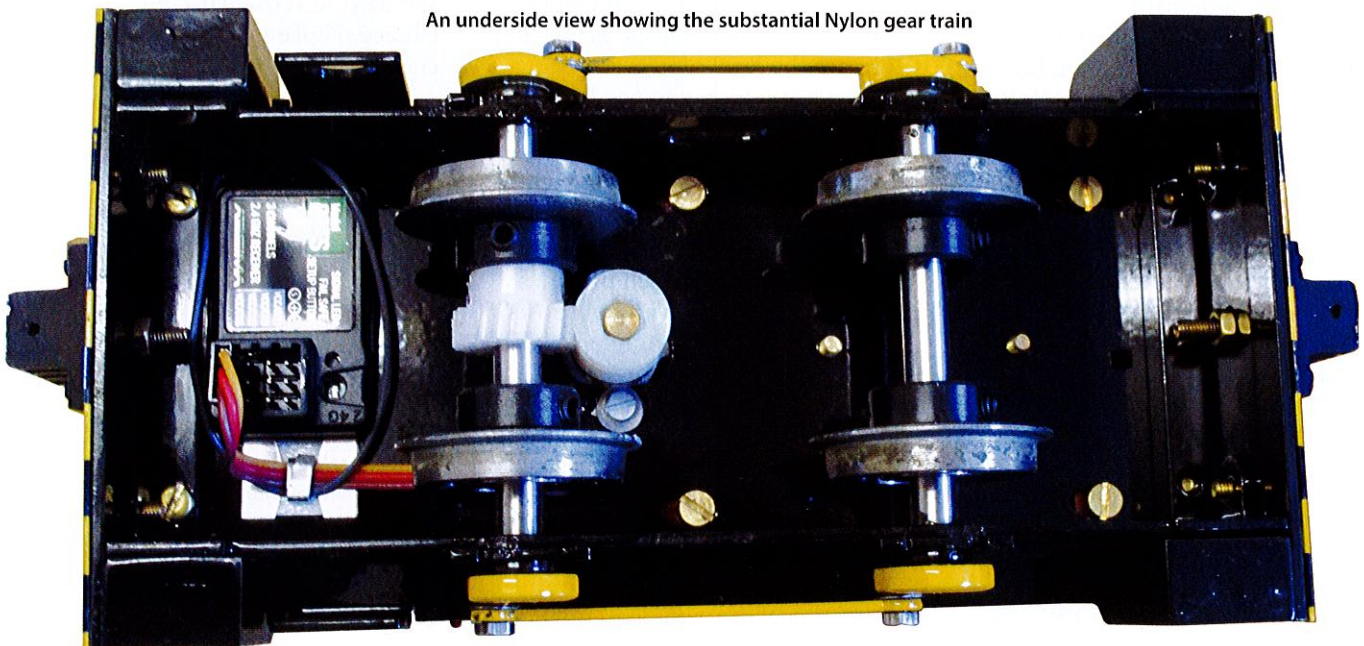
As per normal with outside framed locos from Roundhouse, the wheels (insulated as standard) can be moved on the axles to alter the gauge between 32mm and 45mm. The loco is equipped with a Hi-Power motor driving the rear axle via the proven and very substantial Nylon Gear train – power being distributed to the front axle via the coupling rods. As an aside, Roundhouse now supplies the loco complete with a small pot of silicon

grease, which can be used sparingly to lubricate the gear train every now and then. Also found between the frames, is the receiver for the radio control system (supplied as standard), with the aerial directed up the right hand corner of the cab backsheet.

Only one channel is required to work the Roundhouse, LocoGlyde electronic speed controller, and the loco was supplied with a 2 Channel 2.4 GHz radio control system, which incorporated a model car type handset – all control was from the sprung centre-off steering wheel. However, I should also point out that the radio control sets for this model have an Autodrive feature, where you can turn off the radio control handset, and the loco will continue to amble along, at the last power setting.

So, how did the loco actually perform? Of course this is a proven chassis, and would you expect anything less than a perfect performance from a Roundhouse product anyway? I can safely say all expectations were met, and the loco demonstrated it was easily capable of suitably progressive, positive and negative acceleration. It could also run particularly smoothly at low speed. Initially I proceeded to engage in a little shunting around the yard and thoroughly enjoyed the precision with which buffering up could be achieved. A short while later the loco was allowed to amble around the PTLR light engine for a couple of circuits, before the standard test train of four, heavy bogie carriages was added to

An underside view showing the substantial Nylon gear train







Above: 'Bulldog' runs through Rhiweli station throat with its hefty four car test train

Left: A rear three quarters view, which helps highlight the locos more angular and purposeful appearance

the drawbar. This is no mean test, but the loco walked up the 1:72 with suitable aplomb, at least three or four times. The top speed was probably about a scale 25-30mph maximum, and would be more than adequate for keeping pace at a moderately well behaved garden railway gathering – not that a loco like this would ever have run at such speeds in reality.

Now, to my way of thinking, this is very much an industrial looking loco so I couldn't resist furthering my running trials, by exchanging the passenger stock for my rake of 15 Binnie tipper wagons. The multi-height couplers on the loco made coupling up a piece of cake, and the ensemble rumbled off around the circuit at a steady scale 10mph – I must say it looked every inch the part, with the working headlight helping to add to the air of reality. Of course, much like 'Little John' this generic loco actually looks at home in a variety of settings. The short wheelbase allows it to work down to the tightest radius, whilst it has the necessary power and speed to work a longer line. It would look at home shunting a yard, working a short trip-freight or on an industrial line. Naturally it is also just the sort of

thing to stand in for a live-steamer at short notice, or to give youngsters an opportunity to drive.

As with any generic loco, 'Bulldog' retains plenty of scope for personalisation. Minor jobs like blackening the wheels and placing a driver figure in the cab are but a few moments work. However, for the more adventurous, glazing the spectacles always helps bring a loco to life, as does a coat of satin varnish, which helps bring out the detail, and enhance the level of realism. For further inspiration you need only look back to last month's edition **GR256**, where Tag Gorton really went to town on his 'Little John' locomotive, creating a superb, work-stained effect.

In short this is an excellent, all round locomotive, which provides a slightly more modern and purposeful looking, small diesel-outline loco. It is quite equal to a live-steamer in normal service, whilst offering the option of instant propulsion and the ability to look at home in most narrow gauge railway environments.

#### Pros

Well engineered small loco, excellent running qualities, simple to operate

and highly controllable. Excellent possibilities for personalisation. Looks at home in any narrow gauge setting.

#### Cons

Nothing of note.

#### Technical Specification

: 0-4-0 outside-framed steel chassis, long running time, Hi-Powered motor and tough nylon gear set. Dimensions: length 179mm over buffers, width 80mm, height 139mm, weight 1.4Kg (with r/c). Full radio control – stop, start and speed in both directions using Roundhouse 'Locoglyde' electronic speed controller (ESC). Powered by 6 AA NiMh rechargeable batteries for long duration, complete with fast charger for in-situ charging. 2.4Ghz r/c transmitter included. Gauge adjustable 32mm and 45mm gauge. Insulated wheels as standard. Working head lamp. Available in any standard ROUNDHOUSE colour. Choice of plain red or black/yellow chevron buffer beams.

#### Price

£595.00 ■

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