

Lilla shunts a train of loaded Slate Wagons prior to departure from the quarry



Roundhouse 'Lilla' – A Review

David Williams takes the regulator of the new Hunslet Saddle Tank from Roundhouse and puts it through its paces

The full size locomotive Lilla is a 2ft Gauge, 0-4-0 saddle tank, which was built by Hunslet in 1891, with the works number 554. Although Hunslet produced a catalogue sheet for the loco, with the code word 'LILLA', she appears to be unique, sharing no definitive common combination of features when compared to any other loco.

However, the classic 'Quarry Hunslet' outline is readily apparent and she was supplied new to the Cilgwyn Slate Quarry Company at Nantlle, where she was utilised on the 'main line' between the 'Slate Mills' and the 'West Tip'. In 1923 the Cilgwyn Quarry was linked with the Fron Quarry, which provided access to the Drum Head of the Bryngwyn Incline and subsequently on to the Bryngwyn Branch of the Welsh Highland Railway (WHR) and beyond. It is believed that for a number

of years, Lilla was employed working trains to and from the Drum Head. In May 1928, she was sold from Cilgwyn to Penrhyn Quarry and was hauled to Dinas Junction on the WHR on her own wheels. From here she was loaded onto a standard gauge transporter wagon and taken to Port Penrhyn; being unloaded on the 21st May 1928. After extensive work carried out at the Penrhyn Quarry's, Coed-Y-Parc Workshops, she was given the much admired Penrhyn Livery of black, with blue and red lining and despatched to work in the quarry in August 1928. There are various theories as to the duties she was allocated, but is thought to have worked predominantly on Red Lion Level between the 1930s and 1950s. She was withdrawn from service in February 1955 having failed a boiler test and found her way to the 'Scrap-Line' at Felin Fawr, where she remained

until 1963.

In December 1963, she was purchased by Bernard Latham and removed to his Woking base. However, it took a number of years before he was able to track down various parts which had been removed. The name and works plates had been left with the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Tywyn, whilst, the coupling rods had found their way on to the Ffestiniog Railway's 'England Engine' Prince; the wheelbases being common. Eventually Lilla was returned to steam in April 1972, first appearing at a steam exhibition at Battersea Park. She was then moved to the Knebworth West Park and Winter Green Railway for a season; then returned to Woking.

At this juncture, she received a new livery, with nutmeg brown frames, a dark blue superstructure and scarlet lining. She went on to visit a number

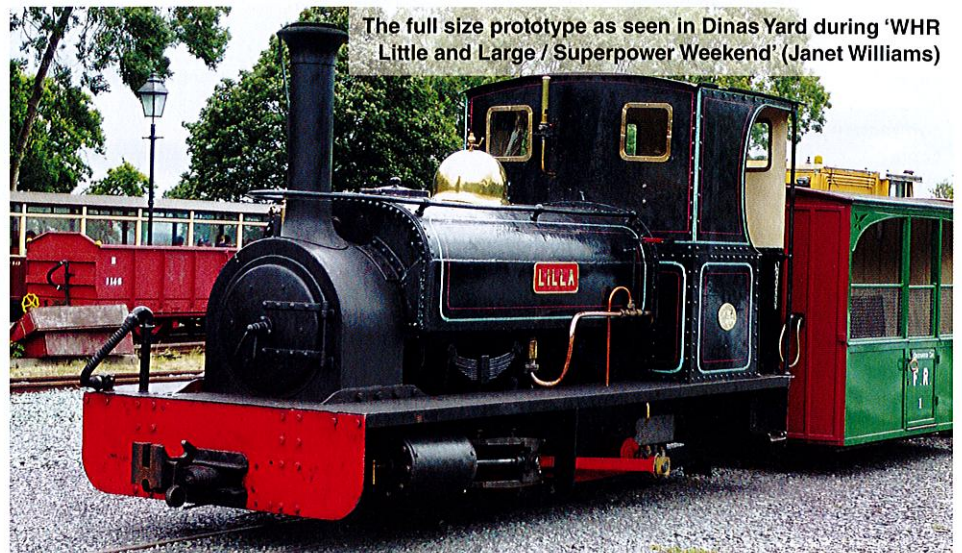
of railways, including Kew Bridge Steam Museum and Bala Lake Railway, before finding her way to the Ffestiniog Railway (FR) for the Hunslet Hundred Celebration in 1993. She has been based at the FR ever since and in 1997 was sold to a consortium of FR members, via the FR Trust, who technically own the locomotive. At around this time she also reverted to her Penrhyn lined black livery. During the intervening years she has received much attention, including a new boiler and the fitment of a vacuum ejector.

A ROVING AMBASSADOR

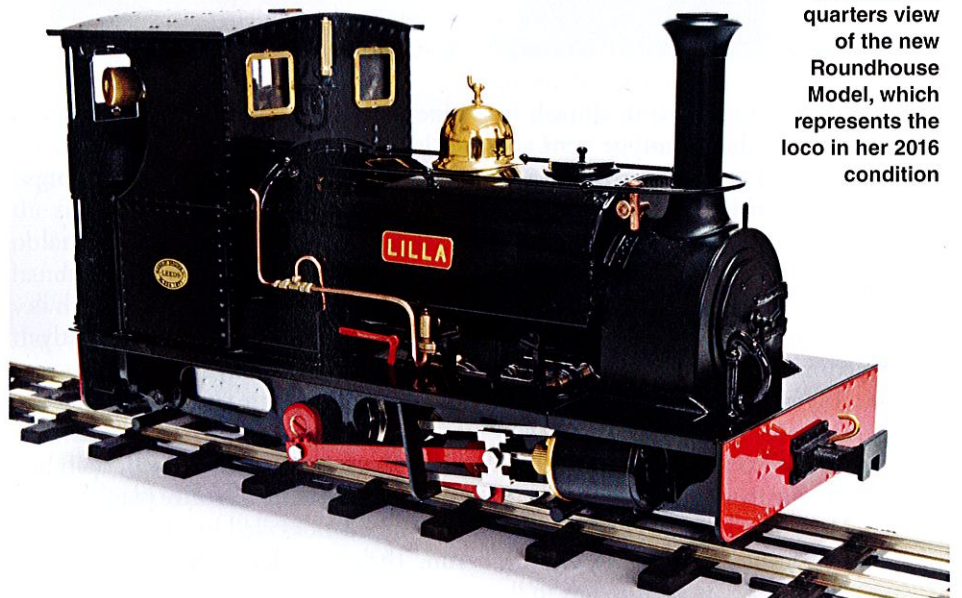
Today she is an integral part of the FR fleet, but obviously not for use on regular service trains. Instead she is ideal for giving footplate rides in station yards on high days and holidays. At the age of nine I can clearly recall first riding on her footplate around Boston Lodge Yard during a gala weekend; although these days it is often me doing the driving, as a member of the Lilla Team. She is also one of the principal locomotives utilised on the Slate Shunt Experience, offering participants the opportunity to practice the fine art of shunting loose coupled slate wagons, both from the footplate and on the ground. Full details can be obtained from the booking office at Harbour Station. Lilla is also capable of working short special trains on the F&WHR, and visits other railways and events as a roving ambassador. At various times she has visited locations as diverse as The Lynton and Barnstaple Railway, Tyseley Locomotive Works; only last year she was in use at the Albert Dock in Liverpool(to name but a few). To bring the story right up to date, at the time of writing, Lilla is in the process of a being completely repainted. Taking advantage of this, she will for a short time appear in a green livery, similar to that carried at Cilgwyn, before being returned to Penrhyn colours.

OF SCALE DIMENSIONS

Having firmly nailed my colours to the mast as a distinct fan of the full sized locomotive, how does the new Roundhouse model stack up? Doubtless many people will be wondering what compromises might have been made in terms of scale dimensions to permit dual 32 and 45mm gauge on this comparatively small prototype.



The full size prototype as seen in Dinas Yard during 'WHR Little and Large / Superpower Weekend' (Janet Williams)



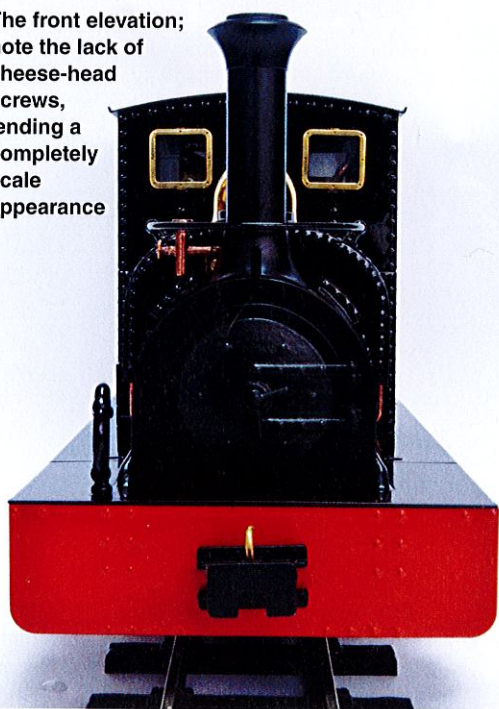
A front three quarters view of the new Roundhouse Model, which represents the loco in her 2016 condition

Therefore this would seem a good place to start. The various footplates, chimney and cab heights as well as the length over the bufferbeams are absolutely spot-on and the width of the cab is within a millimetre or so. Obviously the running boards and cylinders do protrude a little beyond scale dimensions, but this is really only detectable with a pair of callipers as all of the proportions sit very well together; capturing the overall outline to great effect. It is clear from the outset that every effort has been made to ensure everything is as close to scale as possible, with great thought having gone into the location of all the onboard equipment and fittings.

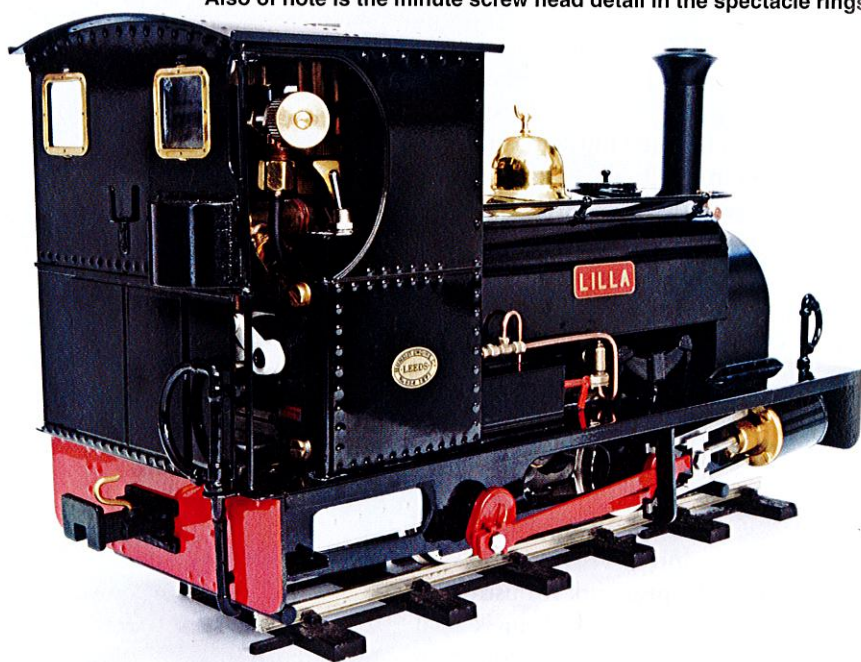
Having dealt with the overall dimensions, it is time to for a closer inspection of the loco, which is representative of the prototype at

around the present time. Starting at the smokebox end, the first thing that strikes you is the beautifully finished prototypical coupling, but here you may also observe something is missing... There are no cheese head screws to be found on any outwardly visible part of the loco, which results in a very 'clean' bufferbeam, endowed with the usual crisp embossed rivet detail. Moving up to the apron, the vacuum stand and pipe is correctly located on the right hand side of the loco; it was previously located on the left hand side of the full sized prototype, but was moved last year to facilitate easier access into the smokebox. Speaking of the smokebox, the model sports a crisply finished item, complete with headlamp bracket and sporting a correctly profiled smokebox door modelled in full relief. The chimney base is nicely proportioned

The front elevation; note the lack of cheese-head screws, lending a completely scale appearance



A rear-three quarters view, note the protrusion from the cab-sheet which houses the handbrake handle on the full size prototype. Also of note is the minute screw head detail in the spectacle rings.



and the chimney capped with a fine representation of the prototype item.

The superstructure is perfectly formed, with plenty of correctly placed rivet detail. The single displacement lubricator on the right hand side of the tank front is also present and the handrail and handrail knobs around the tank are correctly placed and finished in black. The water fill cap in front of the dome cover is spot-on, whilst the dome cover itself is perfectly executed, and complete with dummy lubricator. Moving down a little there are dummy injectors, clack valves and associated

pipe runs placed on both sides. Dummy spring mechanisms are modelled in full relief, with the leaves of the springs engraved as appropriate. The 'Team Lilla' toolbox is ensconced in its usual home on the right hand side, just in front of the cab-sheet, behind which is the dummy reverser reach rod. Neatly executed and perfectly legible name and works plates are provided in the appropriate positions.

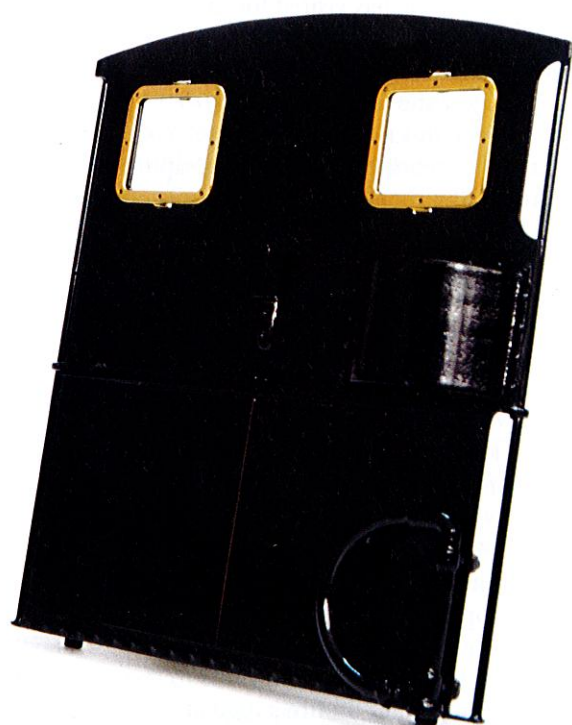
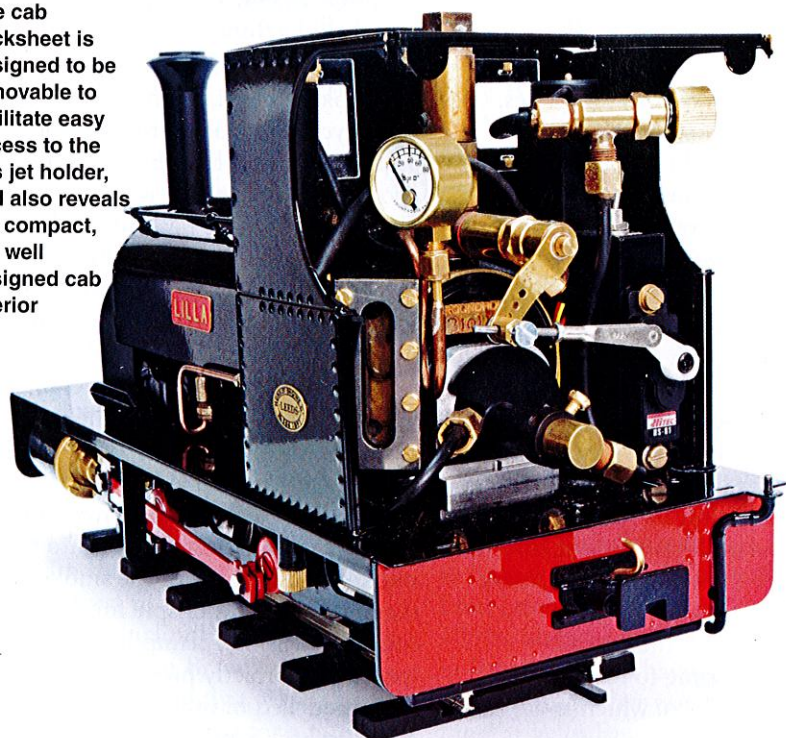
On the front cab-sheet itself, the dummy whistle is correctly placed along with its fully detailed bracket and pipe run. The spectacles are fully glazed and

even carry etched detail representing the screws which hold the full size items in place on the prototype. The cab roofline looks perfect and the rainstrips are correctly represented. This level of attention to details continues on the cab back-sheet with the dummy rear sliding doors, Vacuum Pipe Stand and Pipe Run, Lamp Bracket and extended housing for the handbrake.

RELATIVELY LITTLE CLUTTER

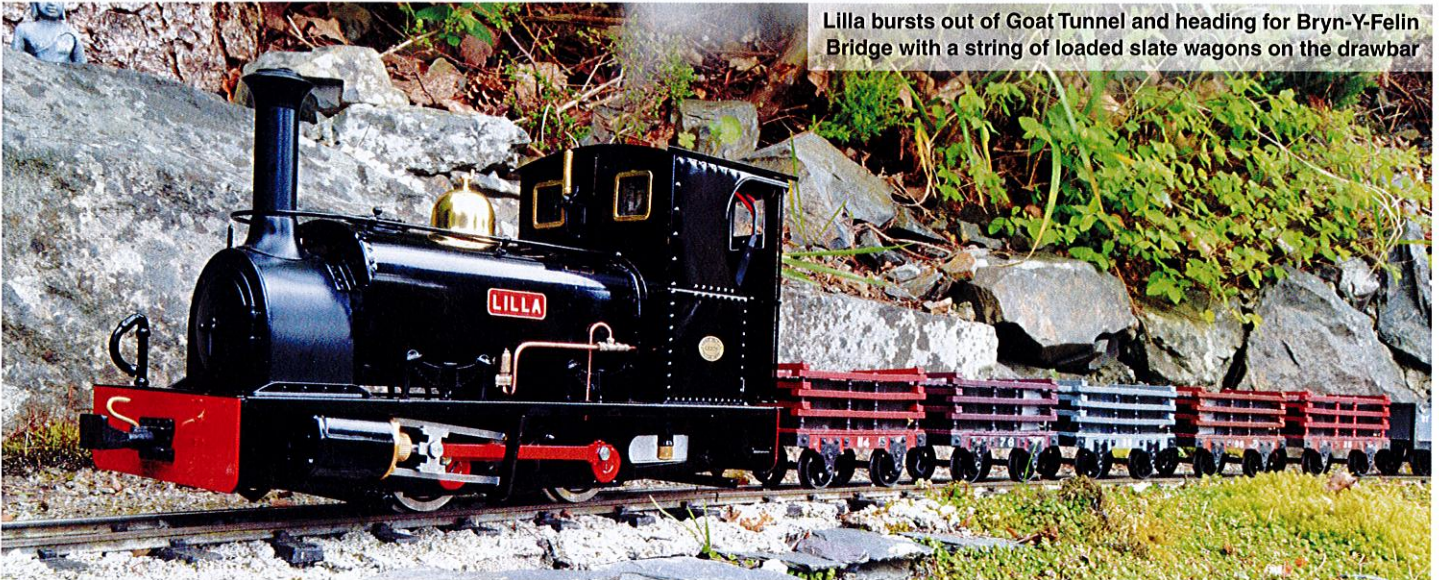
One of the beauties of early locomotives like this is that there is relatively little clutter visible on the outside, especially

The cab backsheet is designed to be removable to facilitate easy access to the gas jet holder, and also reveals the compact, but well designed cab interior



The removable cab back sheet

Lilla bursts out of Goat Tunnel and heading for Bryn-Y-Felin Bridge with a string of loaded slate wagons on the drawbar



with all the valve gear tucked neatly away inside the frames. The frames themselves are accurately profiled, including the cut-outs between the axleboxes and for access to the bottom of the firebox. In addition, the bottom of the frames angle slightly upwards towards the ends of the locomotive, not forgetting representation of the horn-guides and axlebox keeps. The dummy firebox is of etched construction and is complete with rivet detail, visible through the aforementioned cut-outs in the frames. Underneath the right hand side cab you will find the armature for the handbrake and the cab steps are even provided complete with their side lips.

Cylinders, rods, cranks and dummy motion bracket are all prototypically placed and well executed. A fine touch is the finishing of the rods and cranks in red and the front cylinder cover in black. In terms of appearance and detail, this locomotive is as close to the full size prototype as you are likely to find, on a practical working model.

So, it looks good; but how about the practicalities? Lifting off the cab roof reveals a fairly standard Roundhouse Engineering cab layout that is neatly

compressed into the comparatively small space. Starting from the left hand side, we have the reliable and easy to read block type water gauge. Positioned immediately above it is the pressure gauge, which is easily visible through the cab-door. The main steam-turret is atop the boiler barrel, from which the safety valve is also mounted. An oblong gas tank is located in the right hand corner of the cab with the gas valve positioned for ease of access from the cab-door. This feeds an F.G type burner, in a single balanced flue boiler, pressed to 40 Psi. Steam passes from the main steam-turret via the regulator and displacement lubricator, through the single superheater element to the steam chests. Roundhouse Inside-Valve Gear then actuates the pair of slide valve cylinders. A water top-up valve/filler plug is provided under the dummy dome cover.

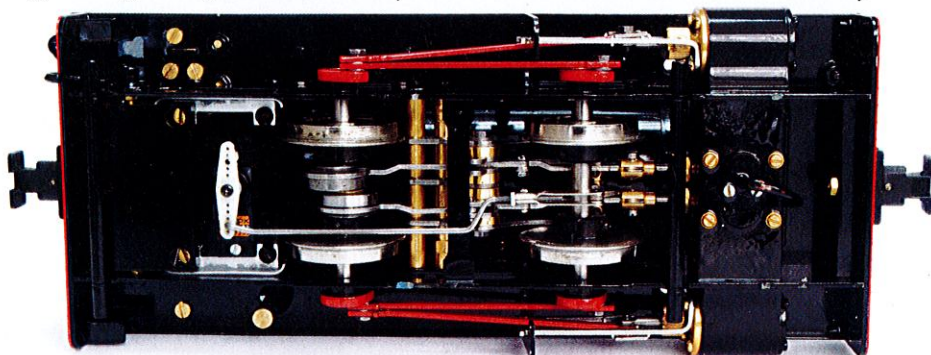
On radio controlled models the battery box is located in the roof space and can be removed for charging. The on/off switch is located to the right hand side of the cab, atop the regulator servo, whilst the receiver and reversing servo are tucked away below the cab floor in the dummy

firebox. It is testament to the skills of the Roundhouse design team that even with the Radio Control fitted, there is still enough room if required to place an engineman on the left hand side of the cab, without modification to the loco. Indeed should you wish to tweak the position of the gas regulator slightly, a driver would easily fit in his customary position on the right hand side. That more or less takes care of the practicalities, leaving the final question of how the locomotive performed out on the road. Of course it ran perfectly; but to be more specific...

As ever with a new locomotive the first job was to read the instructions supplied, in case of any instructions specific to the individual loco. Only then could I make a start oiling round all of the moving parts, to ensure no parts were unduly loose and that all steam fittings were tight, as well as checking the correct function of the r/c equipment. The usual sequence of gas, oil and water was then observed, with 30mls of water being withdrawn to leave a steam space. The burner lit up easily via the chimney and could soon be turned right down to allow a gentle warm up.

SMOOTH AND RESPONSIVE

On the day in question, the air temperature was around 10 degrees centigrade and steam was raised in around 5-6 minutes. As the locomotive is intended to be operable on the single fill system, I elected to proceed straight off-shed at this point. There was very little condensate to clear and the Roundhouse Exhaust enhancer prevented any from being ejected over the paint work. It immediately



An underside view showing the compact, but highly effective layout of the valve gear and motion



proved smooth and responsive, with slow running and shunting perfectly achievable. I proceeded to send the loco around the circuit light engine, in both forward and reverse and encountered no problems, it demonstrating no tendency to run away excessively on the 1:70 downhill gradients. Happy as to the qualities of my charge, a rake of 'Bug Box' carriages and Van 10, made for a fairly prototypical sort of load. Naturally, it didn't make any difference to the performance, but it looked well perambulating the circuit with distinct Hunslet elegance.

I continued in this fashion for around 15 minutes, which when combined with the steaming time and initial light engine moves gave a burner duration of around 25 minutes, with water still visible in the bottom of the glass. Once the loco had been allowed to cool sufficiently everything was replenished and again steam was raised. A sterner test was attempted using five heavy bogie carriages. Just like the full size prototype, the Roundhouse model is comparatively small, but well balanced, with quite large cylinders and small driving wheels. It walked off with the train, without more than a slight increase in the regulator opening. This was even the case when restarting on adverse 1:72 reverse curves without a hint of a slip. The set of 'Bug Boxes' were added to the formation, but even then it didn't cause the engine any

problem, and it continued to dismiss the load. As this loco wasn't mine, I wasn't minded to over exert it, but I suspect that it would take several more bogie carriages without effort. With the slightly heavier load the gas lasted about 20 minutes and the water still just in sight. Of course, seeing as a reliable gauge glass is provided, it is always prudent to check every now and then.

SLATE QUARRY ENVIRONMENT

I later went on to trial the loco in continuous steam and had no problems; the boiler proving exceptionally free-steaming. As always adding water a little and often was the best policy and I was soon able to set the gas, such that the pressure could recover sufficiently prior to the next water stop. In short, it was absolutely delightful to both observe and operate. Of course it would have been churlish not to see how the loco sat in a slate quarry environment, and the Wigfa and Llanrwst Light Railway, belonging to Dave Mees of Abbey Bach works provided the perfect setting. You can judge the results for yourself in the accompanying photographs, but to my mind it was perfection personified.

Normally I would at this point have at least a short list of minor improvements. However, apart from the aforementioned tweaking of the gas regulator in order to fit a driver figure, the addition of a suitable lining scheme, and painting the wheels and some cab

fittings black, I think you would be hard pushed to make any meaningful additions. Of course you don't have to stick to prototype; afterall LILLA appeared in The Hunslet Catalogue, so there is no reason why more locomotives couldn't have been built to this design... the world is your Oyster.

PROS

This is an excellent model of a recognizable and much loved prototype, which is reliable and easy to operate.

CONS

Given the amount of work that has clearly been expended on this model, I have found it very difficult to make any meaningful criticism.

PRICE

Lilla Manual (LM): £1510.00 (Inc VAT)

Lilla R/C (LRD): £1725.00 (Inc VAT)

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