

# ACCUCRAFT IOM CARRIAGES

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**I**t seems a very short time ago that I was reviewing Accucraft's four-wheeled version of the Isle of Man passenger stock and at that time I intimated that there would be bogie versions of the carriages coming – but I had no idea it would be quite so soon. Part of the reason for the speedy supply is the relative ease of conversion from small coaches into the more imposing bogie variant.

So what do you get in exchange for all those secretly saved 'Thatchers'\*\*? A quite dominant replica – the four-wheeled coaches are of modest dimensions; but the addition of two small flitch panels and some bogie trucks completely changes the dynamic envelope. Should you choose to model a typical IoM Steam Railway four-car passenger train then be certain you have the all important lengths in sidings and stations. In fact over three metres would not be excessive accommodation and those with more modest lines may have to make a few compromises. All the models, bogie and four-wheeled, are finished in the same livery so mixing them together through a series of rakes would be perfectly permissible.

## TROUBLE FREE RUNNING

The standard Accucraft coupler is fitted and these are renowned for actually staying coupled on undulating lines – which is more than can be said for some of the competition. Parting them, when required, can be frustrating so a prototypical leading end 'live,' trailing end



**Top:** Accucraft's Isle of Man bogie coaches, one each from the range of all 3rd, composite 1st/3rd and Composite-Brake. At almost two metres in length without loco this is a sizeable passenger rake. Manx trains normally consist of a four-car rake, so BIG demands on modest lines with minimal siding space...

**Above:** Recipe for making a bogie coach; take two four-wheelers, erect a new underframe, add a fillet section and paint. This is basically what the railway company's own carriage and wagon department did on the full scale items. This is the fillet section on the composite coach... "Ern! You can barely see the join!"



**Above left:** Invert the model and the join between the two four-wheel bodies is seen. Somewhere in the dark recessed area are a couple of screws, which hold the fillets in place. The keen eyed can just glimpse one as a black blob on the fillet/roof conjunction.

**Above right:** Purists should look away. The bogies have the couplers attached rather than the body. This allows the model to traverse curves of approximately 3ft radius, body-fitted couplers would probably demand six to eight feet minimum radius. No doubt someone will write in to announce they will go around 2ft. However, the bogies' limited swing ultimately controls the operating radius, LGB R3 was no problem and R2 should be feasible. The bogie pivot point is also sprung which allows these vehicles to handle lines with slightly less than perfect track.

**Left:** From rail level these coaches make a fine sight although all that chunky side steppary is very intimidating to 1:20.3 passengers. Those that have arranged platform height to match the carriage floor level may wish to dispense with the side steps, 64 scale-sized set-screws per vehicle does the job. Here we can see the brake handle 'blister' on the rear of the guard's compartment.

'dumb' is your way around this little niggle and then take your chance on rough or indifferent track. Trundling up and down my LB&HT was no problem, although there were a few moments of binding on immediate reverse curves at LGB R3. Those with even a minimal straight section between the curves provided trouble-free running.

For those who want a range of 1:20.3 UK profile rolling stock these are the starters, and it will be interesting to see if any of the Irish narrow gauge system stock finds itself available in the future. Those who find 15mm/ft an attractive scale gauge permutation on 45mm track would look for a range of live steamer locomotion to compliment the rolling stock.

**THE PROS**

These carriages complete the range of passenger stock for Manx Railway modellers, and in combination with the four wheelers allows a substantial consist to be assembled. This assumes that you have enough siding and station space for such shenanigans. Accucraft supply a range of six numbers with the composite and a further six with the all-third, so a decent range of consist permutations is possible. The choice of motive power is somewhat limited at present because the Manx 'Peacocks' are only available as electric rodents, although steam power is on the cards; alternatively the Victors 'Shoema' Diesel could head an off-season modern image train.

**THE CONS**

As the saloon bar philosopher A Garnett said, "They all look the bleeding same..." and this does rather spoil the effect. It is not easy to separate the various types until one becomes more accustomed to their appearance. The numbering scheme for the brake composite is a bit limiting at F54 and there was only one with the hand-brake blister. No doubt aftermarket suppliers will provide additional numbers for

those who wish to run a 'brake' in every rake, alternatively you could employ a four wheeled brake/third as the numbering system is wider.

The coupling height is fixed at the 16mm standard height, but should you wish to couple to your four-wheel Manx stock running to the prototype setting, an adaptor bracket is provided to lift things the required amount. A small but vital addition as are the 32mm gauge wheel-sets for those wishing to run on nominal 2ft 2in gauge lines.

With the success of the recently introduced Pickering Coaches for the Welshpool & Llanfair, there will be a ready market for these models. One positive factor is pricing, a complete starter rake need not be too demanding on your beer token supply, more so as typical train length is four bogie coaches. If you are contemplating starting out in large scale modelling there has never been a better time – only five years ago the choice of ready-to-run stock was limited to a few wagons or dodgy secondhand cast off kit-builds. Now chequebook modellers and the ten-thumbed can have locomotion and rolling stock to rival the best bespoke items at a price that demands a second look.

On your behalf I asked Accucraft UK about fitting the Brandbright carriage interior liners and or passengers.

Accucraft replied that it is not recommended to remove the bodies from the underframes because the complete coach, like the real thing, relies on the whole for its strength. The roofs on these coaches are more difficult to remove as there are fixing screws in the middle section and these can be got at, but it is best with a long handled magnetic screwdriver. The fixings at the ends are the same as the four-wheelers.

*\* Thatchers – coined (ouch) when the pound note transformed into pocket shrapnel. Described thus because it is hard-edged and thinks it is a sovereign, much like the then Prime Minister...'eye thang yew!'*



**From top:** Profile of the all 3rd Coach. As owner you get to research any minor changes to the exterior that mark out one coach from another. Fortunately Accucraft supply a range of six different numbers for you to affix at your leisure although I do feel that some may not bother...



Side view of the 1st/3rd Composite Coach. In common with the all 3rd coach a choice of numbers is supplied for you to fix, plus you can confuse ardent 'spotters' by swapping numbers between the two. A matter which will lead to the well know phrase "Excuse mee, but did you know..." which is frequently exercised at exhibition steaming-ups.



Completing the set is the Composite Brake. There is only one of these and it should be easy to tell from the others, due to the brake blister on the back wall of the guard's compartment.

**Below right:** The roofs are plain, not even a rain strip diverting attention. Considering many run at ground level this will become the predominant view. Seen here accompanying a rake of Accucraft's W&L passenger stock. Compressed perspective accounts for the height difference, this is not less apparent at track level.

**CARRIAGE DIMENSIONS**

**Length over coupling faces: 585mm**  
**Width over footboards: 132mm. Height: 140mm**

**To find out more about the Isle of Man Steam Railway go to: [www.iomguide.com/steamrailway.php](http://www.iomguide.com/steamrailway.php)**

**Don't forget the Atlantic Publication: Manx Railways A Celebration, [www.atlanticpublishers.com](http://www.atlanticpublishers.com)**

**GardenRail Resource**

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