



TRAIN TALK

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for Enthusiasts

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Guards Van Tail Lights. ⁷

By Les Downey.

Some years ago I started experimenting with lighting the tail lights on my QR guards vans. Each railway has its own type of lights, QR has two lights, (in my modelling era) sometimes at both ends and are permanently fitted and electrically powered, and sometimes at one or other end. 1185 had electric lights at both ends.

I run DC so no fancy gizmos from the controller for me. I looked at all the options such as track powering which can vary according to the setting of the controller and if one is using LED's instead of bulbs then the polarity has to be considered also.

And a big part of the effects of the controller settings is that unless you're using more complex circuits like with capacitors the lights are extinguished when the train is stopped and this is unprototypical.

So for me the logical choice seemed to be battery powered lights which would stay illuminated until I specifically turned them off.

I started by using two AAA batteries but I found in a narrow bodied bogie van the battery box was rather large and left little room for the switch and the normal goodies such as brake operating cylinders etc that usually hang around visibly under the vans.

On a visit to Jaycar (usual disclaimer) I found they have quite a selection of small batteries and some fit in neat battery holders. I chose the compact 3 volt batteries #

**The components and as assembled in the van.
QR carriage BGV 1185**



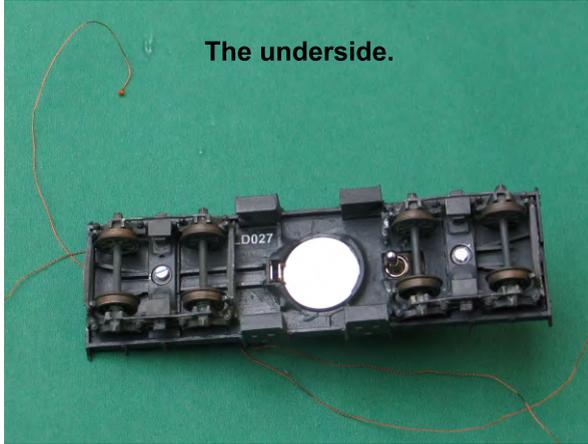
Realism but this time on a CB class van scratchbuilt by me.
Photo Peter Kennedy.

2032 and their holders because of their convenience and catalogue listed length of power supply. A calculation of various current draws assured me that these batteries would light the tail lights for a reasonable time and certainly this has proved to be the case as on more than one occasion after a running session I've returned several days later to find I had forgotten to switch the lights off. This was on installations using LED's.

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This van started life as a Paget Models QR Dinky guards van kit. I always like to have something different so I modified it as QR did to one only van, number 1185. This only had one passenger compartment and the rest was an enlarged goods compartment containing the Guards area. As I'm describing the tail lights I won't bore you with the details of the structural alterations.

The kit had resin cast on tail light housings which were quite tiny to fit working tail lights to. These days there are lots of super mini LED's so the task would be easier



With a small drill in a pin vice I started work by boring holes to hollow out through from the lens glass positions and anywhere else that left the lamp housing outer shell intact. Then with a new # 11 pointed blade I started carving out obstructions in the van resin sides and ends so the LED's would fit in the housings and the wires would be hidden in the cut out troughs through to the "works" inside the van.

I cut a hole in the van floor to accommodate the battery holder and after soldering a red and a black wire to the appropriate terminals I glued the battery holder into the floor making sure it didn't protrude below the solebars and be visible from trackside. Batteries can be changed simply by pressing the little clip on the holder and the battery drops out. And don't forget these button batteries are extremely dangerous to children and animals so proper disposal is essential.

Because the QR van has permanently fitted lights at both ends which are switched according to direction of travel I used a double throw centre off mini toggle switch. The toggles are fairly long so I made up a spacer to raise it up inside the van so it's not visible from the side view when running on the track.

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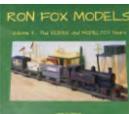


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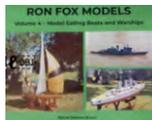
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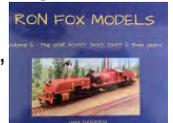
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Inside the van is a veroboard panel fitted with an individual resistor for each surface mount LED. The LED faces have been coloured with Tamiya clear red liquid. Or if you can now source red coloured ones, so much the better.

Oh I do love watching the tail lights disappearing up through the cutting and into my tunnel.

Just a few words about my 1185 model which by the way is S or 1/64th scale running on 16.5 mm gauge track..

I am a fan of at least some windows and doors open on my carriages and guards vans as that's how it used to be prior to air conditioned rolling stock.

So I modelled the windows in the passenger compartment doors in the open position and have one of the guards compartment doors open. The guard is visible inside the doorway and I'm sure he also appreciates the flow of fresh air from the open door.

Photos – By Les Downey except where marked otherwise.



1185 running on the AMRA layout at Zillmere. Photo Gary Schwarzrock.



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