

PRODUCT REVIEW

Ixion GWR/BR N gauge 'Manor'

This long awaited new model launched at 'Ally Pally' is sure to be a big hit says **Richard Dockerill**.



but re-used components from withdrawn 43XX 2-6-0s built expressly for working over the more fragile GW branch lines, particularly the Cambrian lines where many Victorian-built 'Dean Goods' and the 4-4-0 'Dukedogs' were in regular service. At first the 'Manors' were a disappointment having neither the steaming ability or guts of the slightly heavier 'Granges'. However, in 1952 No.7818 *Granville Manor* was taken into Swindon Works and subjected to rigorous controlled steaming

Way back in 2008 the hot news in N gauge was the entry into the market by Ixion, a new name to British outline N gauge alongside the well established names of Bachmann and Dapol. In July 2007 Lindsay O'Reilly approached his friend and renowned Australian modeller Phil Badger for advice about a suitable chassis for a tank engine for his Australian N gauge layout. Phil, a fan of small engines, entered into the hunt with enthusiasm. When none could be identified Lindsay started to cast about on the internet to discover the possibilities of having a chassis made in South East Asia and Phil began to investigate design and manufacturing methods. The end result was an offer from an established firm to sub-contract the manufacture of a locomotive of their choice.

Intimidated by the complexities of the business side of becoming manufacturers, Lindsay enlisted his English friend Chris Klein as a financial adviser. Chris Klein will be a familiar name to British modellers through his articles over many years on his layouts based on the Cambrian section of British Railways in 4mm scale. The end result was that all three modellers formed Ixion Model Railways Ltd, a company incorporated in the UK.

The Ixion name was suggested by a friend and chosen because it was distinctive. The stylised logo represents the winged wheel to which the mythical Ixion was affixed by Zeus and featured the seven-pointed Federation star from the Australian flag whilst the

colours are inspired by the Australian outback. N gauge was chosen as the scale for the first model as it was Phil's area of technical expertise and Lindsey's modelling interest. Convinced that N gauge was increasing in popularity and that a GWR 'namer' was likely to be a popular choice the 'Manor' was selected as Ixion's first product. Following the well documented problems of the Mk.1 'Manor' released in 2008 but found to be overscale, Ixion ceased production and retooled the locomotive completely resulting in a superior model.

In your reviewer's opinion it was a truly courageous decision by Ixion to retool the model and highlights the advances made by British outline N gauge in recent years, especially in comparison with the fledgling years of the scale. Few times have changed since Lima's early offerings when their 'Deltic' model towered over the coaches (produced to a scale of 1:160). Having outlined a brief history of this new name, how does their first offering shape up to the rest? It is sure to please Great



Western modellers. Dapol paved the way with their 14XX and 45XX tanks. A surprise re-entry into the market by Peco raised the bar even further with their 'Collett Goods', whilst Ixion's new 'Manor' only highlights the ever widening gulf with the old Graham Farish N gauge products first produced in Poole some 40 years ago.

The 'Manors' were built between 1938 and 1950 as a lighter version of Collett's 'Granges'. The 'Manors' used a new standard No.14 boiler

tests supervised by the legendary Sam Ell. Under his skilful direction the 'Manors' were transformed into fast moving and free steaming machines. They survived until 1964/65 becoming one of the last remaining classes of GWR 4-6-0s, nine of this popular class surviving into preservation.

And so to the model. First impressions are extremely favourable. The packaging follows Dapol's style of clear plastic box with the card insert highlighting



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Ixion's logo and orange colouring with the model nestling in two halves of vac-formed plastic. This is a vastly preferable idea in your reviewer's opinion to the Dapol and Bachmann style of foam inserts, making removal of the model easier especially with the trend of models featuring ever increasing amounts of separately applied details. Full marks to Ixion here, once removed, one can appreciate what a superb model the 'Manor' is, capturing the look of the prototype perfectly. The models received for review were 7800 *Torquay Manor* in BR lined green, and 7823 *Hook Norton Manor* in unlined BR black.

One is immediately struck by the superb rivet detail on the running plate and around the saddle along with the lamp irons. The smokebox and boiler are equally well executed with all the boiler washout plugs faithfully replicated. Equally well done is the firebox with the cladding and rivet detail fully visible. The cab features flush-glazing and backhead detail, of note are the separately fitted 'L'-shaped handrails around the cabside windows and separately fitted etched cabside numerals. The reversing rod and linkage are separately fitted items and once again extremely well executed. As is now customary with other manufacturers the boiler features separately fitted wire hand rails.

Moving below the footplate, full brake gear and rigging are featured whilst the coupling rods are of the correct plain pattern with the

coupling bar. Access to the motor is via a screw underneath the tender water dome and by gently lifting the tender body at the cab and to disengage the clips.

Performance wise Ixion's 'Manor' was exemplary. After lightly oiling the drive gears and motion as instructed, the loco was tested on the local club's N gauge layout with a Gaugemaster controller. Ixion's new 'Manor' ranks as one of the best British outline locos I have



connecting rods correctly fluted. The front face of the cylinders are cut back, not immediately noticeable, to allow clearance for the front pony truck on tight radius curves. Equally pleasing is the rivet detail on the balance weights on the see-through spoked blackened wheels.

Moving back to the tender, the high standards are maintained with exquisite rivet detail, a full set of brake gear and rigging and - as far as I am aware and a first for British steam outline N gauge - Ixion has included the water scoop. The top edge of the sides are commendably thinly moulded.

Moving onto the mechanics of the model, the motor is a five-pole skew-wound with 'super creep' which is fitted in the tender driving, via a cardan shaft to the locomotive, 40:1 gearing to all three coupled axles. Electrical pick-up is through 12 wheels, these being the coupled driving wheels and split-axle tender wheels through self-lubricating phosphor bronze bearings. Electrical continuity between loco and tender features a new novel method which utilizes two phosphor bronze springs fitted either side of the tender

had the pleasure of operating. After a gentle running in period straight from the box performance was superb, especially the slow running. Peco slips posed no problem, the loco being superbly smooth throughout the speed range. Ixion state 'high density tungsten weights in the boiler perfectly placed to provide unparalleled balance on hauling power (on test in excess of 30 bogie coaches on a 1:75 rising grade); a quote from Ixion I can vouch for. Being unable to muster 30 bogie vehicles on the club layout, the 'Manor' handled the 18 coaches we had to hand with ease - a truly outstanding performance.

If there is a negative to Ixion's 'Manor' it is that owing to the small size of the tender the model is not fitted with a plug to make the loco DCC ready. However, Phil Badger, Ixion's Technical Director, is working on advice for DCC users which will be posted on their website when current investigations are complete. Hardwiring a DCC chip will invalidate the manufacturers warranty and is therefore only to be attempted with this knowledge in mind.

Other features include the now obligatory detail packs of which Ixion supply two! One features an exquisite etch of various fire irons and shovels, the other a painted crew for the cab, spare cardan shaft, four lamps, dummy screw couplings, vac pipes and cylinder drain cocks, front steps and a set of buckeye couplings - a simple clip fit into the NEM coupling pockets.

Livery is superbly applied on the BR liveried review samples. Of special note is the superbly applied lining around the wheel splashes. Further refinements include factory fitted etched cabside number and nameplates. To conclude, Ixion's first entry into the N gauge market has been well worth the wait after retooling and ranks amongst the best in steam outline RTR British outline models, giving a much needed boost to modellers of the GWR. With very little to criticise in your reviewer's opinion, possibly the motion's appearance may have been enhanced by chemical blackening, that however is only a personal preference.

Ixion's Manor is an extremely welcome addition. Equally eagerly awaited will be their next release, the GWR/BR 63XX Mogul. These releases are sure to prompt some Cambrian layouts in the future. Dare one hope Ixion will take the bull by the horns and go for a 'Duke Dog'? Whilst there is a yawning gap now for a 'Castle' or a 'King' to current standards or maybe some Hawksworth coaches. One thing for sure is that Ixion's 'Manor' is a great start and their entry into the N gauge market is great news for the scale. I hope their entry into the scale will do the same for N gauge as Heljan's entry into the 4mm scale market did, alongside Hornby and Bachmann.

Product Details

Scale/gauge: N/9mm
Produced by: Ixion Models
 Available in the UK through Dapol Model Railways, Gledrid Industrial Park, Chirk, Wrexham LL14 5DG.
email: sales@dapol.co.uk
www.dapol.co.uk
www.ixionmodels.com
Price: 7800 *Torquay Manor*, BR lined green/late emblem; 7808 *Cookham Manor* GWR unlined green/shirt-button; 7818 *Frilsham Manor* unlined green/GWR; 7823 *Hook Norton Manor* BR unlined black/early emblem £104.99 each.



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