

GRS Kit : LNER (diagram 5) Horsebox. (review updated October 2009)

I have built 20 wagons from GRS kits over the past few years and, while they provide a good solid base from which to produce an acceptable model, they benefit from a greater degree of detail than is supplied in the box. There are compromises in some kits which do not always match up to the prototype drawings and demand some major modifications if, like me, you happen to be fussy. One major gripe is that the axleboxes supplied with GRS pre-nationalisation wagon kits tend to be one of two main types (RCH split or LNER pressed steel) which are not correct for many of the kits, in particular many of the GWR vehicles.

The particular kit which I am reviewing here is one which has been around for several years and is based around a four-piece resin-cast body and solebar main structure, with a plastic roof, whitemetal running gear plus some etched brass detailing.

The instructions include a photo-copy of the relevant page from 'Historic Carriage Drawings' volume 3 by Peter Tatlow. Fortunately, I have the original book and the benefit of a better photo from which to work and obtained Model Railway Journal No.121 which contains a photo of the opposite side of one of these vehicles. As with many published scale drawings, some of the details shown are suspect.

In this case, the hinges of the upper doors to the horse compartment are different from those in published photos (**see footnote**), neither does the arrangement of battery box and dynamo shown on the drawing tally with photos. The model conforms to this drawing and incorporates these discrepancies. The instructions include a photo of the underside of the model as constructed by GRS : Ignore the location of brake cylinder, dynamo and other detail, it is completely wrong. Refer to the prototype photos for correct positioning.

My first action was to consign the w-irons and axleguards (the LNER pressed steel type) to the spares box and order a Brandbright LNER set of the correct pattern.

Next I removed the offending upper-door hinges and replaced with the correct pattern. The small louvre vents in the upper doors of the horse compartment were rather crudely scribed on and not very convincing. These I removed with a drill and piercing saw before filing back. I made new vents by casting (in resin) replacements from a mould made using louvre mouldings available from Cambrian Models. For some reason the kit contained 'shell' roof vents (the type used by the LMS and GWR) and not the correct torpedo vents.

As with many of the kits I have built, there were parts missing : In this case the eight brackets from which the brake hangers are suspended. A phone call to GRS (who were, as always, friendly and helpful) produced the required parts.

The kit assembles easily and produces a pleasing model. As with any kit, the amount of work you are willing to put into the detailing is reflected in the end product.

The final gripe relates to the transfers : The LNER set supplied by GRS is yellow, whereas they should be white (yellow would be correct for a BR set to be used with the crimson livery). I will be adding a correct set to my next order for custom transfers.

Footnote: Since writing this review in early 2009, I have obtained from the NRM a photo of 2337 (the second of the batch of 30 vehicles) which carries the type of hinge shown in the drawing and represented by the GRS kit.

There are a number of questions raised by this photo, since the solebar build plate says 'Darlington' whereas the vehicles are listed as having been constructed at York.

Were the first few built at Darlington with different hinges? Were the original hinges later replaced by the alternative type? Were the underframes from Darlington and the bodies added at York?