



'00' GAUGE Murphy Cravens coaches

Rating 94%

Model
Murphy Models
MM1508/21/23 Iarnróid
Éireann orange/black/
white Cravens coaches

Price
rrp £45.00 each

Period
1980s-2007

Region
Ireland

Availability
Murphy Models
stockists

One of the downsides of the superb Bachmann/Murphy Models 'Small GM' diesels launched last year was the lack of suitable rolling stock for them to haul. Fortunately, Murphy Models recognised this and has spent a couple of years developing models of the most characteristically Irish coaches of the past 40 years.

As their name suggests, the Cravens coaches were designed by the famous Sheffield carriage and wagon builder, which also built rolling stock and DMUs for British and overseas railways. Delivered from 1963-67, the first coaches were built in England but later batches were sent as kits and assembled at Inchicore Works in Dublin.

For many years, the coaches were used indiscriminately with older designs, such as the wide-bodied Park Royals and even pre-Nationalisation wooden-bodied vehicles. Only in the 1990s, when the older coaches had been retired, were the Cravens formed into matching sets, ranging from a single coach and boiler van branch train to secondary express sets of up to eight or nine vehicles.

For the first time, Murphy Models has commissioned models direct from a Far East manufacturer, and the Cravens coaches are presented in smart, high-quality MM branded packaging. Three versions are available initially, Standard Opens 1521/23 and Cafeteria Car 1508 in final condition - IÉ orange/black with white lining and 'dayglo' squares either side of the gangways. Further Standard Opens are planned, as are older CIÉ liveries for the 1960s-1980s.

It's immediately clear that MM has captured the shape and character of the design extremely effectively. Cravens took advantage of the more generous Irish loading gauge to produce a wide-bodied vehicle with tapered sides and a distinctly bulbous outline, and this is perfectly demonstrated in 1:76 scale by MM. Roof, body, end and underframe detail compares very well with photographs of the prototype.

Decoration and printing is to the highest standards, and a good match for the prototype. Printing even includes works visit information on the underframe. The orange and black base colours have a pleasing matt



Above: One of the finest 1:76 scale RTR coaches ever produced - just look at that interior!

Left: Fine end detail and body shape are topped off with a superb gangway.

finish.

Also apparent through the large saloon windows is the careful attention paid to the interior. Seats and tables are fully decorated, and the Cafeteria Car has an accurate representation of the serving counter and display shelves. All that's missing is a steward and queue of passengers waiting for tea and sandwiches!

Looking more closely, a wealth of fine detail is evident; wire handrails and toilet water tank filler pipes, sprung metal buffers, detailed gangways complete with suspension arms and an accurate rendition of the sparse

Below: A typical branch line train of the 1980s-2000s.



underframe equipment. The BR-designed B4 bogies are also very convincing.

We found the separately fitted buffing plates on the gangways a little too easy to detach during normal handling, but a spot of glue will cure this. Optional red tailboards are provided for the rear gangway of your train. Also supplied are bilingual 'No Smoking' warning notices for the saloon windows, although unfortunately no instructions for application are included.

Tension lock couplings are fitted in NEM pockets mounted on a sprung, self-centring arm that provides both close couplings and sufficient buffer clearance on curves. The system is similar to that employed by Bachmann's Mk I coaches. Gangway length and NEM box position make it impossible to fit Roco or Fleischmann close couplings, although Kadee buckeye type couplings may work.

If you've purchased any of MM's 141/181 Class locomotives, these coaches will be the perfect companion. Do remember that you'll also need a Silver Fox Models ex-BR Mk 1 Generating Steam Van (GSV), as Irish locomotives are not fitted with train heating supply and the Cravens coaches did not have a dynamo or batteries for lights.

Price per coach is higher than we're accustomed to, but this is a reflection of a quality item produced in limited quantities for a niche market. These Cravens vehicles are among the finest coaching stock models yet released in 1:76 scale - either British or Irish. (BJ)

VERDICT

- Decoration, shape, attention to detail, interiors.
- Fragile parts.
- Verdict: Another giant step for Irish modelling.

Millhouses 'Jubilee' from Rails

'00' GAUGE Rating 90%

Model
Bachmann 31-176Y BR early crest lined green 'Jubilee' 4-6-0 No. 45609 Gilbert & Ellice Islands (Fowler tender)

Price
£99.50

Period
1950-58

Region
London Midland

Availability
Rails of Sheffield, 27-29 Chesterfield Road, Sheffield S8 0RL. Tel: 0114 2551436, web: www.railsheffield.co.uk

A 'Jubilee' for 1950s Midland Main Line express work.

Rails of Sheffield has just taken delivery of its latest limited edition model from Bachmann - Stanier 'Jubilee' 4-6-0 No. 45609 Gilbert & Ellice Islands. No. 45609 was a long-term resident of Millhouses shed in Sheffield (close to Rails' Chesterfield Road shop) in the 1950s and was a regular on Midland Main Line expresses to St Pancras.

Apart from decoration, the model is a standard Bachmann 'Jubilee' coupled to a flush-sided Fowler 3,500gal tender. Etched brass nameplates and smokebox door numberplate are supplied. The former are easily fitted on to the mounting plates provided on the leading driving wheel splashers.

Standard features include an eight-pin DCC decoder socket, sprung metal buffers, wire handrails, NEM couplings, opening smokebox door, sliding cab roof ventilator and turned metal boiler fittings. A bag of extra detailing parts contains brake rodding, cab glazing and doors, a metal fallplate, bufferbeam details and cylinder



Opening smokebox door is useful for shed scenes.

drain cocks.

As our review in MR113 demonstrated, Bachmann's 'Jubilee' is an excellent model with superb looks and performance. This limited edition of 500 pieces is perfect for anyone modelling Midland Main Line or cross-country operations on the Sheffield-London and York-Bristol axes in the 1950s. It's also a fitting reminder of Millhouses shed and its stud of ex-LMS passenger locomotives. Highly Recommended. (BJ)

VERDICT

- Superb model, decoration, etched plates, performance.
- Little of note.
- Ideal for 1950s Midland Main Line operations.



DCC MASTERswitch items

DCC Rating 75%

Model
MASTERswitch Ultimate Detector MASTERswitch Quad Relay Board

Price
Ultimate Detector - £42.00
Quad Relay Board - £29.00

Period
N/A

Region
N/A

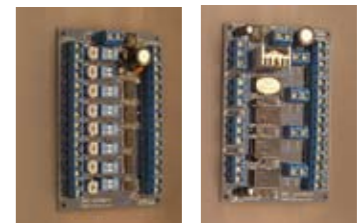
Availability
Bromsgrove Models, tel: 01527 977066, web: www.bromsgrove-models.co.uk

The Ultimate Detector, from DCC Concepts, is a light sensitive train detector using light sensitive resistors. Where detection is needed in dark areas, such as tunnels, the detector comes with two infra-red LEDs to provide 'invisible' light.

Up to eight detection zones can be configured for either momentary or latched output - depending on what detection of a train is going to do. This can be as simple as a panel indication through to complex interlocking or signalling applications. An eight-page manual covers all the basics. Also supplied are LEDs for panel display, series resistors and a good selection of shrink wrap tubing. The Quad Relay Board includes four double pole-double throw relays.

The relays can be energised from a detector such as the Ultimate Detector or something as simple as an on-off switch. The board enables low power outputs from detectors to control high power devices.

The board can be used as a building block to more complex switching systems. In fact, the uses are only limited by the user's imagination. (PG)



VERDICT

- Well-built, comprehensive instructions, building blocks for complex switching and layout control, DC or DCC.
- Not for beginners, not widely available.
- Invaluable building blocks for layout control and automation.