

## **S trains made in Europe (France, Germany and the UK) by Fred van der Lubbe** TCS 1297

Some call it S Scale, others S Gauge so I just call it S. S is still alive in the USA, in Europe there is, as far as I know, only some following in the UK (mostly scratch builders) and Germany (come collecting activity). But there has been some European S and I will present here some commercially made S trains from France, Germany and the UK.

### **France**

JEP (Jouets de Paris = Toys from Paris) was the largest toy train manufacturer in France. After a visit to the USA in the fifties of one of the JEP employees they decided to add S gauge trains to their range (their range included then 0 gauge and H0 gauge). They only made a small number of different items: some clockwork trains and some electric trains. The range was not successful at all and JEP quit making S gauge in 1960, 4 years before the company was dissolved. In their catalogue of 1955 they did mention the advantages of S gauge (maybe copied from an American Flyer brochure?) like: You need less space for a layout (compared with 0 gauge); scale rolling stock can be made which will not be too large; 2-rail track is more realistic than 3-rail. In 1959 S gauge had disappeared from the catalogue (but was still on the pricelists for a couple of years).

JEP mentioned scale rolling stock but they did not make that. They however made, in their typical JEP method, S gauge trains in various sizes as you can see in Fig 1 showing coaches in 3 sizes. All S gauge products were made of lithographed tinplate except for the "larger" steam locomotive which had a plastic body and a tinplate tender (Fig 2). The smallest one was clockwork (4 wheel loco with 4 wheel cars, see Fig 3), the largest could be had in clockwork or electric and in the end they introduced the middle size with an electric outline locomotive and with 8-wheel coaches (see Fig 4 for the sleeping car). Since S gauge was not known in France they only mentioned "Voie S" once and further called it 25 mm as you can see in the catalogue page (Fig 5). The 25 mm was not the gauge between the rails but measured from the middle of the rails.

For rails the choice was only one radius curved rail, straight rail in one size and a Y-type point (so they did not have to make a left and a right one).

The French manufacturer LR (Le Rapide) made some of their line in a scale approximately S (1:64), however it still used 0 gauge track.

### **Germany**

Carl Liebermann founded the company Carl Liebmann Metallwerke in Stadtilm (East Germany) after WW2. The company made 0 gauge trains according to the plans Liebermann made in 1938. The factory was transferred in 1951 to the VEB Metallwarenfabrik Stadtilm and the production of 0 gauge was stopped. In 1956 the production of S trains started in Stadtilm. The bodies of the locomotives are made of plastic, the chassis is made of sheet metal. The wagons were mainly made of sheet

metal which was either lithographed or painted and decalced. Production stopped in 1964. I wonder why in East Germany S, and also TT gauge, were a success; of course less raw material is required for the manufacturing compared with 0 and HO gauge.

The Stadtilm S production included 2 steam and 1 electric locomotive and a railcar. Further coaches, wagons and a complete assortment of track was made. The locomotives were made with 4.5 V and 12 V motors; the lower voltage could be supplied by batteries. The smallest steam locomotive was also made in a simplified clockwork version in a set, see Fig 6. The electric 0-4-0 locomotive has inscriptions for a Baureihe 80, which however in reality is an 0-6-0 (see the Stadtilm locomotive next to a RivaRossi 0 gauge model in Fig 7). The larger 2-6-0 locomotive was a better model, based on the German Baureihe 24. The couplers Stadtilm used were very similar to the couplers TTR used on 00 gauge, see Fig 8 showing two goods wagon. Although these S trains are sometimes called Liebman the brand and trademark are Stadtilm, see Fig 9

BUB (KBN) was before WW2 one of the larger toy train manufacturers in Nurnberg, Germany. In 1948, in addition to continuing manufacturing 0 gauge trains, a production of 2 rail DC trains in an 'S' like gauge (1:64 scale running on 24 mm gauge), with tubular track and inspired by American Flyer, was issued. These trains could not compete with the upcoming trend of HO gauge and proved to be a commercial failure. In 1958, after a heavy commercial loss, BUB discontinued this program. In 1966 BUB ceased its entire production and was sold.

BUB introduced S with an ambitious product range including a rail system and many buildings (see the station in Fig 10) and accessories such as signals, tunnels, buffer stops and figures etc. They made trains in 2 ranges: a toy like range with simple hook and loop couplers and a more scale like range with automatic couplers. In the toy range clockwork as well as electric trains were made while the scale range was all electric. During the 8 year production quite a range of different sets were issued; most set boxes looking like the one in Fig 11.

The top of the line was a German Baureihe 05 4-6-4 locomotive with tender and a matching express train (Fig 12). This 4-6-4 was also available in blue with coaches in an English (red/cream) livery, BUB made this version for the English market (without any success as far as I know). To show some further differences in specific items, which makes BUB more collectable, some examples: Their simple 0-4-0 electric tender locomotive was made in two, but almost equal, lengths. The longer one with buffers and a headlight, see Fig 13. Their 4-wheel passenger car was made with lithographed or with opened windows, the version with opened windows having automatic couplers, see Fig 14. And as can be seen in Fig 15 the simple open goods van could be had with or without opening doors. Fig 16 shows some further goods wagons and Fig 17 a short passenger train. The tinplate rail came with tinplate sleepers for clockwork sets and with Bakelite sleepers for electric sets; points and crossings were also available, see Fig 18.

Since I have some S trains by various makers I added another rail to my gauge 1 garden track such that I could run this S trains. I looked at the NEM and NMRA standards and since I do not use any switches I just kept the gauge to (approximately) 22.5 mm. During the construction I checked with an American Flyer bogie whether the gauge was right but when the track was finished I pushed some cars from different manufacturers around the track to further check. Then I found that BUB S did not fit. I looked on the internet and found a German forum post mentioning that BUB S is close to 24 mm since BUB made an error when translating from Inches!

## **UK**

I have found no examples or mentioning of British S trains except for Palitoy.

In Book 1 of British Toy Trains, Michael Foster describes and picturizes the history of Palitoy and their S trains, which I shall not repeat. There is no mentioning that Palitoy was in anyway influenced by American Flyer; I assume they just thought that S was a usable size for their trains. Note that the gauge of Palitoy is even a bit over 24 mm, so it is not compatible with other S trains (including BUB). The set box announces, see Fig 19, that extras could be had to expand the set but apparently not many extras were made.

The set I have with a red locomotive and blue coaches (see Fig 20) was also pictured in Book 2 of British Toy Trains. The locomotive (Fig 21) wears the name Flying Scot and the number 4910; of course it is a toy, but I still wonder why no correct name and number was used. I however wonder most about the interpretation by the tool maker of the layout of the valve linkage.

## **Conclusion**

I have found on a German internet forum some mentioning and a few pictures of other S trains from amongst others the Czech Republic and Italy. But I have never seen these in person.

All pictures made by me from items in my collection.



Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3



Fig 4

**LE JOUET DE PARIS**  
**LA PLUS IMPORTANTE FABRIQUE FRANÇAISE DE JOUETS EN MÉTAL**  
**DEPUIS CINQUANTE ANS FAIT LA JOIE DES ENFANTS**

**JEP**  
**Les trains JEP**

**NOUVEAUTÉ**  
*Serie Réclame Voie de 25 mm*



Train 4224-2

Motrice 4224

Les trains JEP sont de véritables trains en réduction. Les machines, les nombreux wagons, les accessoires JEP sont des reproductions exactes du matériel de la S.N.C.F. Chaque année JEP réalise de nouveaux éléments avec lesquels vous pouvez compléter votre réseau. Achetez en toute confiance un train JEP, vous aurez un article de qualité, garanti, à un prix raisonnable.

JEP présente cette année la voie de 25 mm dite « voie S ». Elle permet de réaliser des circuits variés dans un espace restreint. Elle est économique, robuste et très réaliste grâce à son rail profilé. Le montage et le démontage des éléments de voie se fait très rapidement par un dispositif d'embouts élastiques brevetés. Le roulement est très doux sur le boudin plat.  
 Voie de rechange : Rail droit, Rail courbe.

TRAIN 4224-2 - Train complet en boîte, comprenant une superbe locomotive type vapeur en matière moulée incassable avec pare-fumée et tous les détails d'une vraie locomotive — mouvement d'horlogerie très puissant à longue durée de marche — levier de marche AV et d'arrêt. Tender, deux wagons richement décorés avec accrochage automatique, un jeu de 8 rails courbes.  
 TRAIN 4224-22 - Même modèle mais avec un choix d'accessoires variés : tunnel, gare, signaux, personnages... et un jeu de rails droits et courbes, le tout dans une grande boîte.  
 TRAIN 4222-2 - Même modèle que le 4224-2 mais avec une motrice type électrique en matière moulée incassable avec super-détails.  
 TRAINS 4222-22 - Même modèle que le 4224-22 mais avec la motrice type électrique.

**JEP : HAUTE QUALITÉ — PRIX RAISONNABLES**

Fig 5



Fig 6

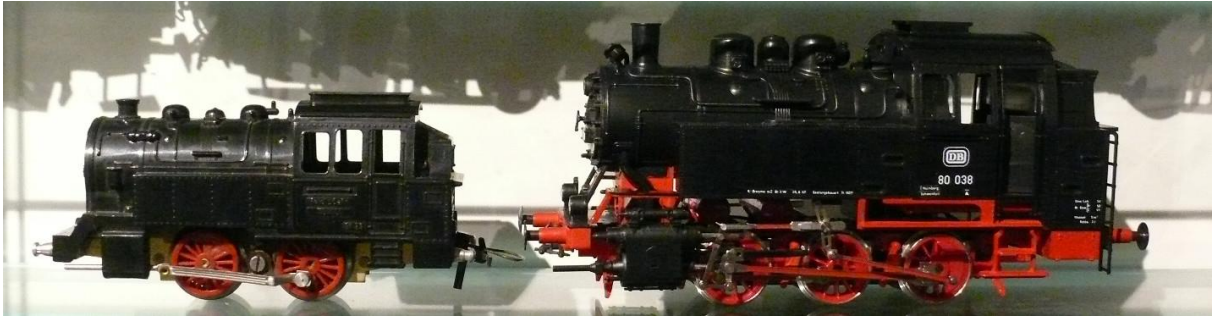


Fig 7



Fig 8



Fig 9



Fig 10

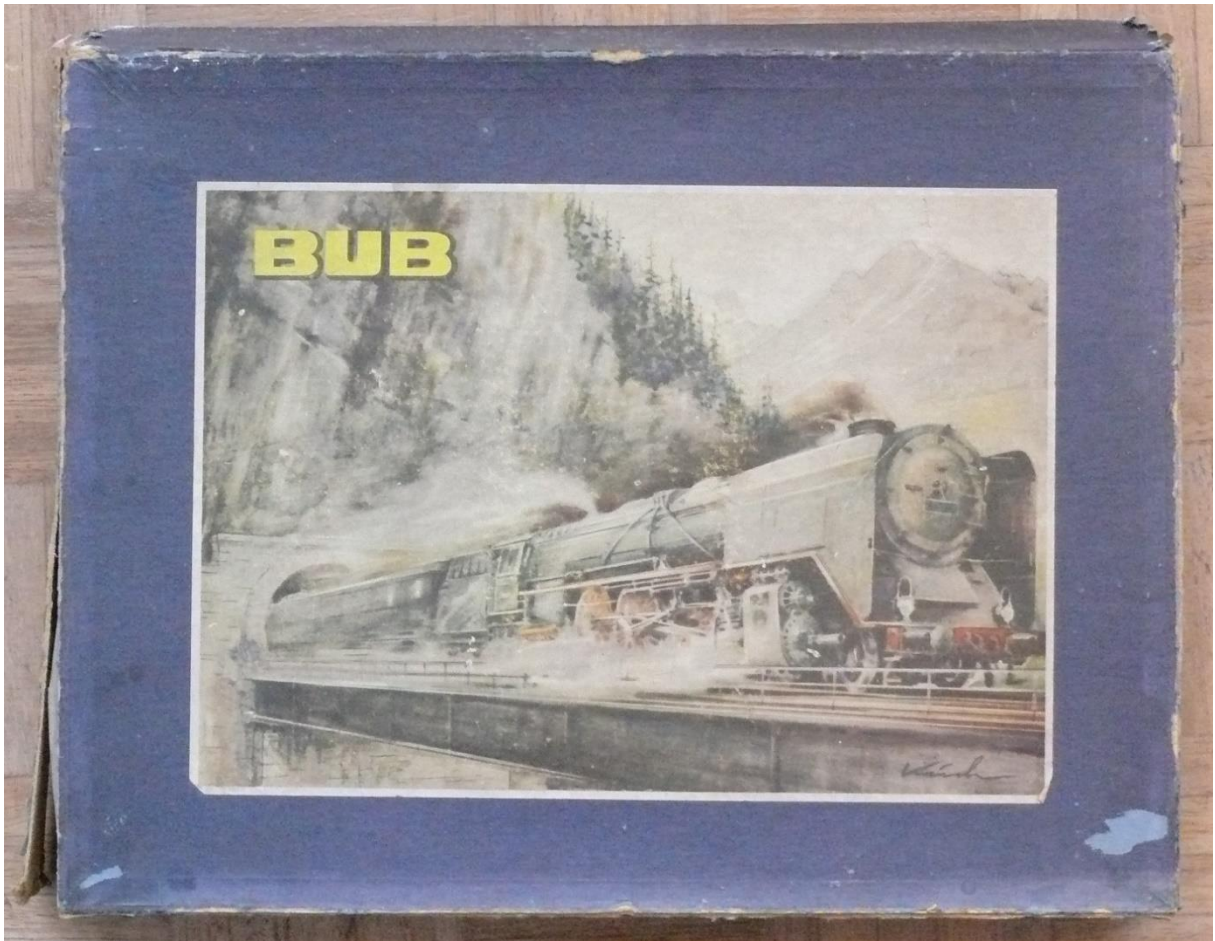


Fig 11





Fig 12

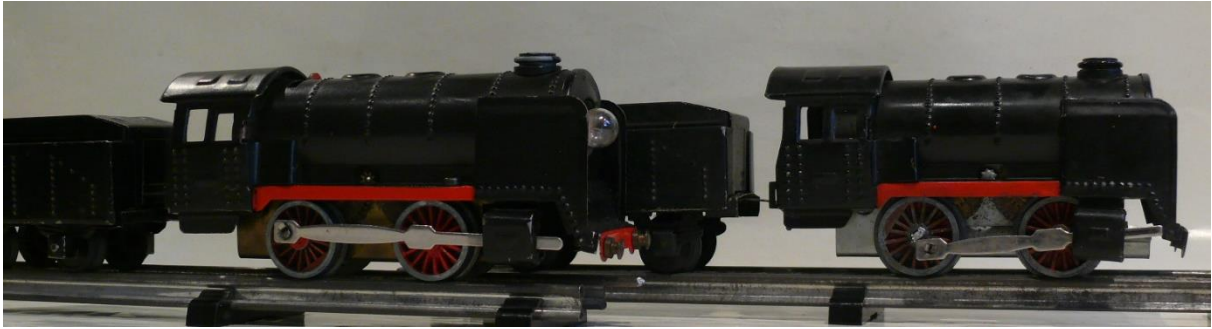


Fig 13



Fig 14



Fig 15



Fig 16



Fig 17

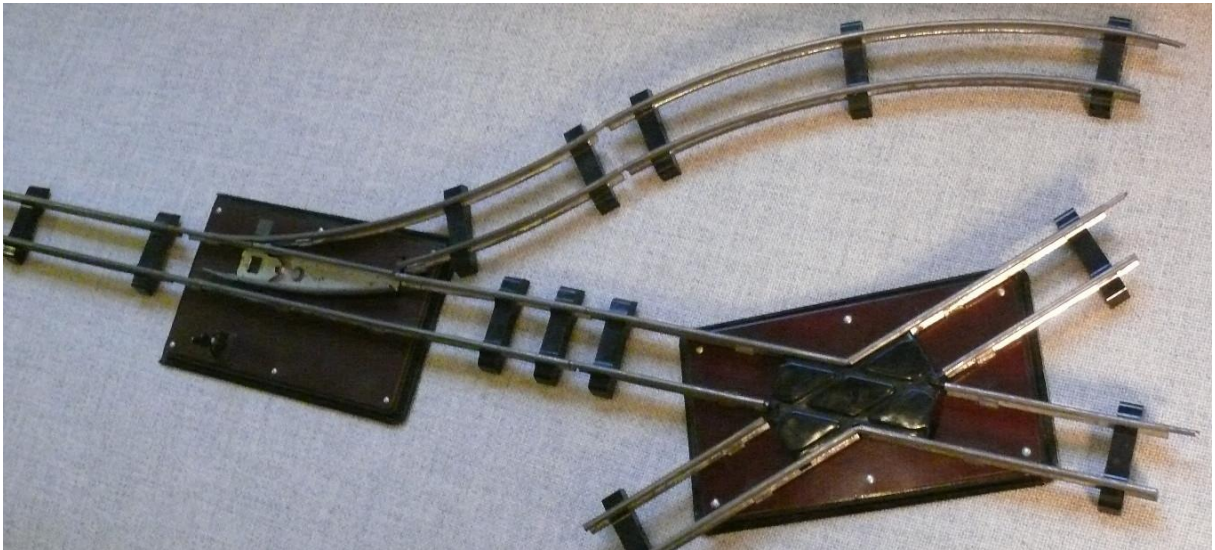


Fig 18

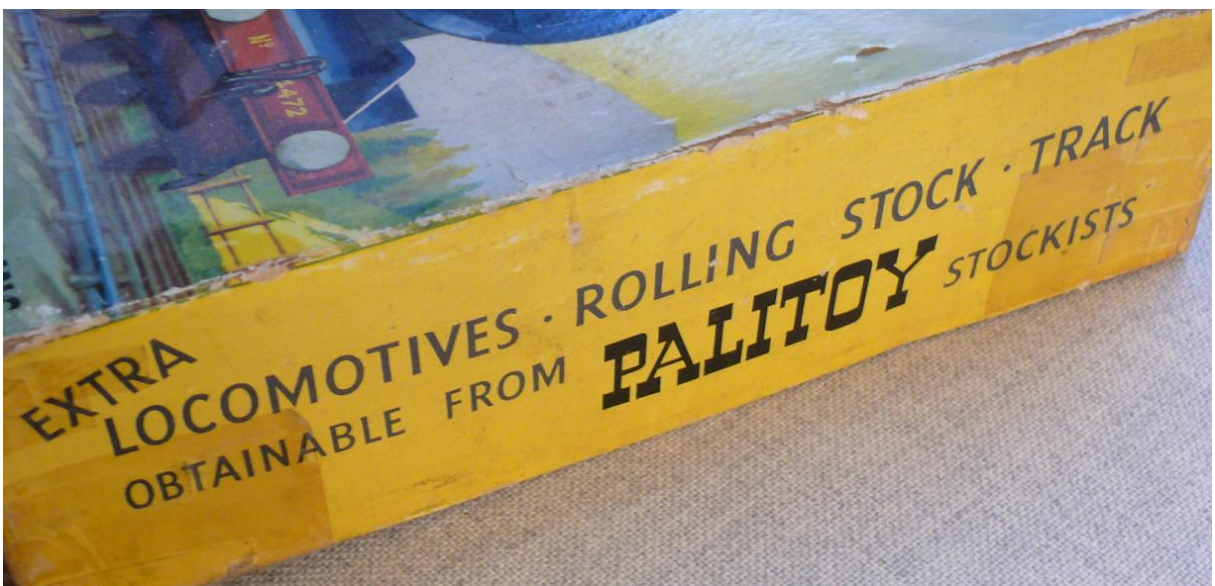


Fig 19



Fig 20



Fig 21