

The new Aster BR Standard class 9F- Gauge One, Live Steam.

For the Spring of 2018 we are offering a short run of the very successful and much admired Aster BR Standard class 9F 2-10-0 locomotive and tender. This is similar to the Aster model of 2007 but this time with single blast-pipe and chimney and BR 1C (1B) high-sided tender.



How many times have I been asked - please get Aster to do a few more 9F's? Well the answer is very many times and probably more frequently than for any other model during my 20 years representing the Aster Hobby Co Inc! The BR 9F locomotive was an extremely successful Aster model in 2007/8 and sold out in just 9 months! In the last 10 years we have rarely seen BR 9F's being offered for resale and that's because they look so good and they run so beautifully.

As noted, this is not an identical model to the Aster offered 10 years ago. This new version has a single blastpipe and chimney and a high-sided BR 1C tender. It is also detailed to match the earlier BR production, so for example, there are no steam heating pipes and the correct 'two step' front footplate arrangement and other subtle details are modelled. It is surprising how these changes alter the overall appearance.

At the beginning of the BR 9F production in 1954, all 9F's had a single chimney. As the production process continued, later engines had double blastpipes and chimneys and some earlier single examples were converted to double. However, many locos kept their original single chimney to the end of their BR careers. Tender styles varied according to local requirements; the BR 1C (and visually near-identical BR 1B) were attached to many 9F examples.

As you may be aware, the Aster Hobby Co Inc has formed a new business partnership with Accucraft Trains Inc. Together they are working on an all-new offerings for the future combining their individual skills to common effect. The product of their first Joint Venture is the new BR 9F. With this newsletter you will find the official Accucraft announcement. This leaflet contains all the specification information that you would normally expect with a new Aster announcement. However, there are a couple of additional points worth noting. The total run size for the new BR 9F will be 150 pieces. All kits coming to the UK will be undecorated for your choice of number and tender crest. I am commissioning a set of cabside numbers and tender crests (both correctly scaled for 1/32nd) from Fox Transfers. A set will be supplied with each kit. Factory built-up models will be decorated as 92059 and feature early BR crests on the tender. All models and kits come with a numbered registration plate.

Prices. The cost of the new BR 9F kit will be £3950.00 including shipping to your UK address. Factory built-up models will be £5250.00. NB Factory built means built at the Accucraft factory in China.

Quality. Clearly the new partnership of Accucraft Trains Inc and Aster Hobby Co Inc will raise many questions, most especially about component quality. We might as well deal with this concern head-on.

It should be understood that many parts are made in China and other parts are made in Japan. So far, I have seen two kits and one factory-built example. My overall impression is very favourable. The kits show only small differences when compared with a regular Aster kit. In my opinion and in the opinion of those who have seen the kits, these differences are negligible. Some Chinese made components are distinctly better than recent Aster production; the connecting, coupling and valve gear rods are very nicely cast. The silver solder boiler is very neatly done and the fuel tank much improved to recent Aster manufacture. Cast brass detailing parts are as good as before.

A couple of concerns expressed by customers when contemplating the new partnership are worth mentioning. These relate to the quality of the fasteners (nuts, bolts, washers etc) and the finish of the paint. The fasteners are the usual Aster quality and provenance. O rings are the usual Aster supply. The painting quality of parts appears to be well up to Aster standards. The books of instructions and drawings are well printed and similar to usual Aster Hobby Co issue.

The factory built-up model is indistinguishable from an Aster Hobby Co factory-built model.

Spare Part Service Aster Hobby Co Inc will be supplying parts for the new BR 9F from an inventory in Japan. This service applies to parts under warranty and into the future. I would expect to hold a stock of parts here in the UK to support builders in addition to the service from Japan. i.e. business as usual.

Building a Kit As with all previous kits, Aster Hobbies (UK) will offer warranty with full back-up and parts service. If you run into difficulties, then help will be available Monday-Friday during office hours. The BR 9F is no more difficult than any recent British outline kit and simpler than the Aster Rebuilt Merchant Navy class! It will take a time to build because there are a lot of parts but nothing inherently difficult. A 'crib list' made from information from the test builds will be supplied to customers. If you would like a kit built by one of my band of expert builders, then this can be easily arranged for you. Please ask for contact details which will be gladly forwarded.

How to proceed We hope you will want to purchase a new Aster BR 9F. Stocks are expected mid-February. Demand is likely to be strong, after all it is three and a half years since the last British Aster offering and regular customers are missing their 'fix'!

You can pay with a cheque made payable to Aster Hobbies (UK) LLP, or Visa / MasterCard or Bank Transfer. So kindly send a cheque or telephone with your Card details. Bank Transfers to Aster Hobbies (UK) LLP - **Sort Code 30-99-21 Account 04035858** (Lloyds Bank) and please add your name as payment reference. Cheques will not be presented for clearance and Cards will not be debited until we have agreed your specific delivery date. I will contact customers who have paid by Bank Transfer to organise delivery.

Thank you for your support during the difficult development phase. We are delighted to offer you, our valued customer, a new Aster with standards just as high as every other classic Aster dating back to 1975!

Andrew & Daphne Pullen – February 2018

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