



The Electra Railway Graphics Guide to N Gauge Coaches

I am often asked which the best coaches to use for Electra conversions and the answers are not always easy, as there are so many different models to choose from. To make things a little clearer, I have compiled a guide showing the best coaches to get and which to avoid.

Mark One

The Mark One coach is probably one of the most versatile vehicles, dating from the early 1950s and still in use on charter services today. The design also formed the basis for diesel and electric multiple units, including the well-known Southern Region EMUs.

The Mark One has been produced in N Gauge by Minitrix, Lima and Graham Farish. It is the Graham Farish version that we need.

There have been three distinct releases on the Mark 1

- 1) Original: This features a plastic bodyshell with a separate, printed window inlay that could be removed. Generally, this is not suitable for Electra conversions but TPM produced a range of replacement inlays to produce other coach and EMU types.
- 2) Clear Bodyshell: This is the most widely available version of the Mk1, produced until about 2011. The bodyshell is a one piece moulding that can be easily stripped to a perfect clear shell that can become any Mk1-bodied coach you like.
- 3) Blue Riband: Released around 2011, this is a new generation of super-detailed Mk1, with moulded bodies, separate glazing and close couplings. These are not suitable for Electra Conversions, though some modellers have married the clear bodyshells with the Blue Riband chassis to great effect.



Typical clear-bodied Mk1 coaches.

As well as the loco-hauled Mk1 coaches, these can be used for a huge range of DMU and EMU types, including the Class 120 and 123 DMUs, 205 and 207 "Thumper" DEMUs and EPB, CEP, CIG, CEP and VEP EMUs (to name a few!)

Watch Out for:

Catering Vehicles – these will have extra hatches and vents on the roof that may not look right on your choice of coach.

Full Brake (BG) – this is a Mk1 but on a shorter 57ft wheelbase. Electra produces some Parcels van conversions for this vehicle.

Bogie Types - All Mk1s have been produced with three bogie types – see below:

Bogie Types

The Mark 1 Coach ran on three distinctive types of bogie

- 1) **BR1 Bogie** – Fitted to the Mk1 from new, these were quite rough-riding and were gradually phased out of front-line use from the 1960s. Most Graham Farish Mk1s are fitted with these bogies. The BR1 can also be used for first-generation DMUs by removing the cross-member between the axleboxes.



- 2) **Commonwealth** – A far superior US-designed bogie that was fitted from the early 1960s and also was used under the Class 309 Clacton and 411 4-CEP EMUs.



- 3) **B4 (and B5)** – the same bogie type as used under the Mk2s, many Mk2s were retro fitted with the B4 for much improved ride. These were also used under the Class 421 4-CIG, 423 4-VEP, 491 4-TC and 430 4-REP EMUs, as well as the Swindon Class 123 DMU.



Mark Two

Graham Farish quickly followed up the Mark One with a range of Mark Two coaches, based on the BR Mk2D air-conditioned design dating from the early 1970s. Again, there are three types model:

- 1) **Original:** This has a separate printed window inlays and is again unsuitable for Electra conversions, though TPM inlay kits can be used.
- 2) **Clear Bodyshell:** Used for all releases of the air-conditioned Mk2d and some releases of the earlier Mk2b type in Network SouthEast and Regional Railways colours. This has been produced in a huge variety of liveries including Virgin and First Great Western and is ideal for Electra conversion.
- 3) **Blue Riband:** Released in 2013, these represent the Mk2a with larger windows with Mk1 - style opening panels. These have been produced in blue/grey and Network SouthEast liveries and have very fine detail, moulded windows and close couplings. Currently there are no Electra Conversions for these.



As the coach bodyshells and roofs are identical, it does not matter if you use a brake end or catering vehicle. All MK2s run on B4 bogies.

As well as the air-conditioned Mk2Ds, as shown above, Electra produces conversions for the earlier Mk2A, 2B and 2C coaches, which can be further enhanced with the addition of roof air-vents and underframe modifications.

Electra also produces conversions for the Class 310 and 312 EMUs, which were also based around the Mk2 bodyshell. These require some more work to modify the roofs and fit cab ends, which are available as a separate item.



Electra Class 312 EMU with ends available from N-Train

Mark Three

The striking 75ft Mark Three coach was introduced for the Prototype High Speed Train (HST) in 1972 and was soon put into service as locomotive hauled stock on the West Coast Main Line and in production HSTs from 1976 onwards. The design was also exported to Ireland and used as the basis for the Class 442 Wessex Electric EMUs.

The Mark Three has been available in N Gauge since 1981 as part of the Graham Farish range in two distinct versions.

- 1) **Original:** This featured separate window inlays but was rather underscale. Not suitable for Electra conversions.
- 2) **Current:** The Mk3 was totally retooled in 1986 with a one-piece clear bodyshell that was much closer to scale and formed the basis for all Electra conversions, still being produced today.
- 3) **Dapol** have also released a Mk3 with separate windows and finer detail – not really suitable for Electra conversion but it is possible with a little work.



All Mk3s run on the same BT10 bogie, with the exception of the Class 442 EMU, which uses the BREL "Sprinter" Bogie, available as a separate item.

Watch Out for:

Buffet/Restaurant Cars – these have extra roof hatches

If possible, try to use the more recent Bachmann-built Mk3s with the tinted glazing, as these strip down to a clear shell really easily. Some of the earlier Poole-built models with clear shells can crack if the wrong stripping agent is used.



Mark 3 Based Class 442 EMU