

Tri-ang Railways and Tri-ang Hornby Battle Space
by Emira Blight



R.216 Rocket Launching Wagon.

What was to become, in 1966, the Tri-ang Hornby "Battle Space" range started in a small way, in 1957, with the Tri-ang Railways R.216 Rocket Launching Wagon.

This was the R.110 Bogie Bolster wagon, fitted with a rocket launching mechanism from a Tri-ang MINIC 000 M328 "Push and Go" Low Loader with Rocket Projector. An articulated rocket launching lorry. The plastic rocket was fired by a spring-loaded plunger. This was released by a trigger under the launching ramp. This ramp could be elevated and locked in position by a hand wheel on one side. The rocket itself had a "warhead" of a dense material, which slotted into the top of the hollow plastic rocket body. Made in Clear, Silver, and Red plastic, the body settled on Red, and the warhead became usually Black, though other colours were also used, including Red. The wagon was the same grey as the usual R.110 Bogie Bolster Wagon, with the same number printed on the sides. Early examples had two of the three bolsters fitted, but later examples seem to not have had these fitted. The Rocket Launching Wagon was to go on to become a part of the Battle Space Range in 1966 as R.216K (K for Khaki) Tactical Rocket Launcher, in Khaki Green with a Battle Space sticker on the deck, and a squad of Commandos.

R.241 Bogie Well Wagon with Tank Load.

The Rocket Launching Wagon was followed by the R.241 Bogie Well Wagon with Tank Load, in 1960, when some wagons were released with "loads". This was the R.118 Well Wagon, with the MINIC 000 "Push and Go" Conqueror Tank as a load. This had a friction drive motor, and a "spark generator" in the turret that "fired" sparks as the tank ran along. Various colour wagons were used, including Green, Grey and Brown. The Brown examples seem to be most common with the tank load. This was only available from 1960 -1963, and so did not become part of the Battle Space range.

In 1962, Lines Bros (Tri-ang) had an agreement with Lionel of the U.S.A., which entailed Lionel selling "Scalextric" Motor Racing Slot-Cars in the U.S.A. and Tri-ang selling the Lionel "Science Series" of scientific "kits" in the UK. Lionel had many operating features in their O gauge and HO gauge ranges, including many military inspired railroad cars with operating features. These included missile launchers, and "Exploding Target Cars". This led to several Tri-ang Railways models which, apart from the military models, included the R.348 Giraffe Car, and the R.345 Side Tipping Car with Log Load.

R.128 Operating Helicopter Car.

The "NATO" R.128 Operating Helicopter Car of 1962 was a Lionel inspired model. This was clearly inspired by the Lionel HO Operating Helicopter Launching Car, Cat. No. 0319. This had a spring-loaded drum, which was wound up by hand, mounted on a converted T.C. Series R.234 Flat Car. A trip lever on the side of the wagon locked the drum in place. The sides of the wagon had "NATO" branding. Though early models were grey in colour, the same as the Flat Wagon that formed the basis of the Helicopter Car, most were green in colour. A plastic helicopter was fitted on top of the drum, the drive shaft on the

helicopter engaged with the drum so that it would drive the helicopter rotors as it unwound, causing the helicopter to lift into the air when a track-side post released the trip lever. The helicopter was also briefly sold solo, as R.165 Helicopter, in 1962.

In 1966 the Helicopter Car became part of the Battle Space range, and was now made in a khaki colour plastic. The reference number was changed to R.249K. Battle Rescue Helicopter Car. The NATO lettering and number was removed, but a self-adhesive Battle Space logo was attached to the deck at one end. It also came with a squad of Battle Space Commandos.

The Helicopter Car was last made in 1969, but remained available until the end of the Battle Space range in 1971. In 1974 the Helicopter Car appeared in yellow, with a red helicopter, as part of the R.536 Dockyard Police Set in the first printings of that year's catalogue. For some reason this set was not made, and later printings of the 1974 catalogue had the page changed, the Dockyard Police set was replaced by the R.522 Pick Up Goods Set.

In 1982, some of the Battle Space range returned in three train sets.

R.579 Task Force Action Set (No Power Controller)

R.580 Task Force Action Set (With UK Power Controller),

R.865 Grattan's Mail Order Task Force Action Set (With UK Power Controller).

For these sets the Helicopter Car was made in a white plastic, with red printing on the deck. The helicopter was Yellow. This version also has plastic bogies, making it less stable than the earlier versions with metal bogies, which kept the centre of gravity low down.

R.239 Bomb Transporter.

The first "Trestrol" based NATO Green wagon was the R.239 Bomb Transporter, Made in 1962. This was a Dark Green R.242 Trestrol Wagon fitted with two brackets holding a large "Red Arrow" Bomb from the MINIC Toy range. This was a Cap-bomb which had a pin in the nose that would cause an exploding Cap to explode when the bomb was dropped nose first onto a hard surface. The sides of the wagon had "NATO" branding. The Bomb Transporter was also to go on to become a part of the Battle Space Range in 1966 as R.239K Red Arrow Bomb Transporter. This was Khaki in colour with Battle Space stickers and a squad of Battle Space Commandos.

R.341 Searchlight Wagon.

Also released in 1962 was the R.341 Searchlight Wagon, another Trestrol based wagon. This had a cabin fitted to one end platform, and a larger cabin topped with a working searchlight on top, mounted in the well of the wagon. Metal wheels fitted to one side of each bogie with pick-ups and wire connected the bulb in the light with the track, so it would light up when the track was live. The Searchlight Wagon was also to go on to become a part of the Battle Space Range in 1966 as R.341K Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Wagon. This was also Khaki in colour with Battle Space stickers and a squad of Commandos.

R.249 Exploding Car.

In 1963 a Target for the R.216 Rocket Launching Wagon was released. This was The R.249 Exploding Car, which was clearly inspired by the Lionel HO Exploding Target Car, Cat. No. 0847. This was a red boxcar labelled "Warheads" that was made in parts, which were able to "blow apart" when a spring-loaded striker was released by a rocket hitting a circle on one side of the wagon. In 1966 the Exploding Car became part of the Battle

Space range, and was now made in a khaki colour plastic. The reference number was changed to R.249K. Exploding Car. The lettering remained the same, but a self-adhesive Battle Space logo was attached to each side. It also came with a squad of Battle Space Commandos.

The Exploding Car was last made in 1967, but remained available until the end of the Battle Space range in 1971. In 1982, as part of the three Task Force Action Sets, the Exploding Car was made in a red plastic (The catalogue illustration shows a grey roof, but production models were all red.), and the lettering changed. "WARHEADS" became "ROCKETS". The operating side lost the target circle, the target now being the car number "455", on the side with "LOCK" and an arrow printed on it. (This being the Safety Lever position.) This version also has plastic bogies, making it less stable than the earlier versions with metal bogies, which kept the centre of gravity low down.

R.343 4-Rocket Launcher.

Also from 1963 was the R.343 4-Rocket Launcher. Another NATO Green Trestrol based wagon. This had the cabin on one end platform and a cradle for 4 "Red-Eye" rockets on the other. The well had a floor added, with a revolving turret housing 4 spring-loaded launchers. These each had a "trigger", so the missiles could be fired individually or together in a "savage salvo" (Quote from the catalogues). The missiles were plastic with a hard (metal?) nose. The early rockets had a red nose (Hence "Red-Eye"), with a paper label around the body part way down. Later models had black noses, and no labels. The 4-Rocket Launcher was also to go on to become a part of the "Battle Space" Range in 1966 as R.343K. Multiple Missile Launcher. This was a Khaki wagon with "Battle Space" stickers and a squad of "Commandos".

R.248 Ambulance Car.

The simplest military model must have been the R.248 Ambulance Car from 1963. This had no operating features at all. It was a re-use of the T.C. 2nd Series R.337 (etc.) Baggage Car, in a White and Green livery, with Red Cross stickers, and "R.A.M.C." on the side panels, for Royal Army Medical Corps. From 1966 it was the R.248 Medical Corps Ambulance Car. It was the only Battle Space model not to come with some Battle Space Commandos!

R.562 Plane Launching Wagon.

The last "NATO" wagon was the 1966 R.562 Plane Launching Wagon. This was another Trestrol based wagon, with a ramp for launching a Plane. This was powered by an elastic band. A notch in the tail of the Plane engaged with a pin which held the Plane back, with the elastic band in tension. A track-side trip lever caused the pin to drop, so launching the Plane into the air.

The Battle Space range was launched in 1966, therefore it seems likely that the NATO green Plane Launching Wagons will not be as common as the Khaki ones with Battle Space stickers, which also came with a squad of Commandos.

R.164 The Battle Space Men (Set of 6)

The Battle Space Commandos were a mixed lot of toy soldiers, mainly on round green bases. These were meant to add play value to the range. The poses varied, a squad of Commandos was supplied with all Battle Space models, except the R.248 Ambulance Car. They were also available separately as a set of 6.

R.566 Spy Satellite Launcher.

The "Space" side of Battle Space was represented by the bright Red and Blue R.566 Spy Satellite Launcher wagon from 1966. This was another Lionel inspired wagon, being inspired by Operating Satellite Launching Car Cat. No. 0333.

It was basically the R.218 Helicopter Car, but without the tail support bracket. Instead, a cabin (The same moulding as on the Searchlight Car and Multiple Missile Launcher, but in Blue plastic.) was mounted in this position. This wagon also had a spring-loaded drum, which was wound up by hand. Again, a trip lever on the side of the wagon locked the drum in place. A plastic Satellite with vanes was fitted on top of the drum, the bottom of the satellite engaged the drum so that it would spin the satellite as it unwound, causing the satellite to lift into the air as a track-side post released the trip lever. This wagon also had Battle Space stickers, and a squad of Commandos.

R.567 Radar Tracking Car.

To go with the Satellite Launcher, the R.567 Radar Tracking Car was also produced in 1966. This had a rotating "radar" scanner, and a flashing light inside a clear plastic dome, both mounted on a Blue body moulding, unique to this model. These were driven by a rubber band, which was wound around the axles and a drive drum, under the wagon. The chassis was a metal one, and based on the R.124 Long Wheel Base W.R. Brake Van chassis. The wheels were knurled metal (to grip the rails to turn the radar and supply current to the flashing light) and had plastic axles with the pulleys for the drive band. This complicated model took some time and experimental versions to get working! This wagon also had Battle Space stickers, and a squad of Commandos.

R.752 Turbo Car.

A really unusual model was the R.752 Turbo Car. This was propeller-driven. The chassis was free rolling, and the wheels collected electric current to run the motor connected only to the propeller. This model takes some getting used to when driving it! It is all too easy to send it flying off the track at a corner! It can move very fast. To slow down and stop, it was necessary to reverse the controller, so reversing the airflow from the propeller. Mounted on the front was a plastic spike ram. Later models had a slightly safer rubber spike! (You could really have someone's eye out with one of these!)

R.568 Assault Tank Transporter.

A replacement for the R.241 Well Wagon with Tank Load came in 1966. This was the R.568 Assault Tank Transporter. This again was the R.118 Well Wagon, with a tank using the bottom moulding of the MINIC 000 "Push and Go" Conqueror Tank, but without the friction mechanism and spark generator. Instead, it was fitted with a metal base plate with four "TT" Gauge un-flanged locomotive driving wheels in loose bearings. A new turret housed a spring loaded 2-Rocket Launcher, which fired two "Red- Eye" Rockets, the same rockets used on the R.343K Multiple Missile Launcher. The wagon was in Khaki, and some may not have had Battle Space stickers. The Tank was also

Khaki, and had a Battle Space sticker on the front of the hull. The wagon also came with a squad of Commandos.

The Assault Tank was also sold solo, without the wagon, as R.673 Assault Tank, with a squad of Commandos. In 1982, as part of the three Task Force Action Sets, this wagon and tank were to re-appear in a "Desert Sand" colour. Despite the catalogue illustrations, it seems that the Red-Eye Rockets were in production replaced by a "Ball on a stick" rocket! Health and Safety had arrived!

R.630 POW Car.

Another very simple Battle Space model was the R.630 POW Car, from 1967. This was a Khaki version of the T.C. Series R.126 Stock Car, with opening doors. Designed for carrying Prisoners of War, these wagons probably spent a lot of time stuffed full of Battle Space Commandos, or other toy soldiers! The wagon came with a squad of 6 Commandos, and had the number 334, and Battle Space stickers on the sides.

R.639 Sniper Car.

The R.639 Sniper Car, also from 1967, was a Khaki version of the R.348 Giraffe Car. Instead of a Giraffe's head and neck sticking up from the roof, this had a "sniper" soldier with a rifle. A magnet on the bottom of the lever assembly that the sniper was mounted on would be attracted to a rail mounted in the centre of the track. This would cause the sniper to duck inside the wagon. Rather the reverse of the behaviour expected from a sniper! Numbered D-549, and with Battle Space stickers on the sides, this also came with a squad of 6 Commandos.

R.631 Tank Recovery Car.

The R.631 Tank Recovery Car, also from 1967, was a Khaki version of the R.560 Crane Car from 1962. This was the R.118 Well Wagon fitted with the crane body of the R.127 Crane Wagon, and with a bolster from the old first series R.16 and R.118 Bolster Wagons glued to the platform over the bogie at the other end. Numbered 901, and with a Battle Space sticker, this also came with a squad of 6 Commandos.

R.725 Command Car.

The R.725 Command Car from 1967 was the Transcontinental Series R.401 Operating Mail Car. In Khaki, with the number D-778, "COMMAND CAR" lettering and Battle Space stickers, this came complete with Dispatch Bags, the pick-up and set-down apparatus, also mainly moulded in Khaki colours, and a squad of Battle Space Commandos.

Three non-railway items were released in 1967. These were the R.670 Twin Missile Site, R.671 Multiple Missile Site, and the R.672 Honest John Missile Pad.

R.670 Twin Missile Site.

The R.670 Twin Missile Site used the turret and missile launchers from the R.673 Assault Tank. This was mounted in an expanded polystyrene emplacement. It came with two "Red-Eye" rockets, and a squad of Battle Space Commandos. R.671 Multiple Missile

Site. To make the R.671 Multiple Missile Site, the same emplacement was fitted with the turret and missile launchers from the R.343K Multiple Missile Launcher. This also came with a squad of Battle Space Commandos.

R.672 Honest John Missile Pad.

The R.672 Honest John Missile Pad used parts from various models. The base was the base from the R.475 Platform with Operating Crane (Which was itself another use for the crane part of the R.127 Crane Wagon). The launcher was from the R.216K Tactical Rocket Launcher, with Battle Space stickers on the sides. The Honest John Missile came from Meccano Limited (Binns Road, Liverpool), which by now was part of the Lines Bros. Group. It was from the Dinky Toys range, where it was used with a U.S.Army Missile Launcher vehicle.

R.571 Q Car.

The last Battle Space model to be released was the R.571 Q Car in 1968. This was basically the R.249K Exploding Car body, but in plain green with the number "G-10". It contained a missile launcher based on that from the R.673 Assault Tank. It came with two "Red-Eye" rockets. The supplied track-side trip lever tripped the locking lever on the wagon, allowing the spring-loaded missile launcher to "swing round 90 degrees and elevate into firing position!" (Quote from the catalogues) so pushing the body panels and roof of the wagon away. This also came with a squad of Battle Space Commandos. Only made for the one year, this has become the hardest to find of the Battle Space models.

Several Train sets were released over the years containing some military models.

RS.65 "The Conqueror" Train Set.

First from Tri-ang Railways was the RS.65 "The Conqueror" Train Set from 1964. It was not listed in the catalogue, but was advertised on Television. This contained:
R.251 Class 3F 0-6-0 Tender Loco ("Deeley") in B.R. Lined Black.
R.216 Rocket Launching Wagon.
R.249 Exploding Car.

RS.50 "The Defender" Train Set.

The RS.50 "The Defender" Train Set was available from 1965. This contained:
R.152 BR Green 0-6-0 Diesel Shunter.
R.341 Searchlight Wagon.
R.343 4-Rocket Launcher.
R.249 Exploding Car.

Battle Space Branded Train Sets included the
RS.16 "Strike Force 10" Set, and
RS.17 "The Satellite" Set.

RS.16 Strike Force 10 Set

Locomotive: R.588S A Khaki "Jinty" 0-6-0 Tank Loco with Synchrosmoke. No lettering, and Khaki Buffer Beams. It has one Battle Space sticker on each tank side.
Wagons: R.568 Assault Tank Transporter with R.673 Assault Tank.

R.562 Plane Launching Wagon with Plane and Track-side Trip Lever.
A squad of Battle Space Commandos.

RS.17 The Satellite Set.

Locomotive: R.756 0-4-0 Diesel Shunter Plain Red with one Battle Space sticker on each side.

Wagons: R.566 Spy Satellite Launcher with Satellite and Track-side Trip Lever.

R.567 Radar Tracking Car.

A squad of Battle Space Commandos.

Most of the Battle Space models sold well for the first two years, but the range died slowly until finally stocks ran out around 1971. In 1982, some of the Battle Space range returned in three train sets.

R.579 Task Force Action Set (No Power Controller)

R.580 Task Force Action Set (With UK Power Controller)

R.865 Grattan's Mail Order Task Force Action Set (With UK Power Controller).

R.579 R.580 R.865 Task Force Action Sets.

Locomotive: R.339 WD 0-6-0 Diesel Shunter. Light Green BR Class 08 Diesel Shunter with white ladders and yellow "Wasp" stripes. "WD" and "17" printed in white.

Wagons: R.128 Operating Helicopter Carrier. With Helicopter and Track-side Trip Lever.

R.249 Exploding Rocket Car.

R.568 Tank Transporter with Missile Firing Tank.

Triang HORNBY BATTLE SPACE!

All items shown, except R.752 Turbo Car, are supplied with a squad of Battle Space Commandos. Clip Fit accessories are suitable for Super 4 Track only.

STRIKE SET R.516 "STRIKE FORCE 10" SET. Mobile Air and Ground Combat Train, Catapult Plane Launch Car and Assault Tank Transporter hauled by Synchronosmoke Locomotive.

SATELLITE R.517 "SATELLITE" SET. Complete train with Spy Satellite Launcher and Radar Tracking Command Car hauled by Diesel Locomotive.

R.567 RADAR TRACKING COMMAND CAR. Radar scanner revolves to track enemy aircraft or satellites and dome emits light flashes.

R.725 COMMAND CAR. Battle group headquarters for Staff Officers. Picks up and delivers despatches, maps, rations and ammunition whilst on the move. Complete with pick up and delivery points.

R.633 SNIPER CAR. Innocent-looking supply wagon houses hidden sniper who springs up to fire.

R.630 P.O.W. CAR. Transports prisoners of war away from combat zone. Will also carry freight and ammunition.

R.216 TACTICAL ROCKET LAUNCHER. Powerful spring loading rocket launcher with long range BIG-X missile. Elevate to fire!

R.128 BATTLE RESCUE HELICOPTER CAR. As rail car passes trackside trigger, pre-wound launch mechanism launches BR-1 Helicopter on rescue mission. It really flies!

R.341 ANTI-AIRCRAFT SEARCHLIGHT WAGON. Powerful searchlight picks up electric current from track.

R.568 ASSAULT TANK TRANSPORTER with operating rockets.

R.871 MULTIPLE "GROUND-TO-AIR" MISSILE SITE. "Red Eye" rockets in rotating turret, spring loaded launchers with fingertip control.

R.678 "TWIN" "GROUND-TO-AIR" MISSILE SITE. Rotating elevating launchers in camouflaged fortified emplacement.

R.631 TANK RECOVERY WAGON with working crane.

R.239 "RED ARROW" BOMB TRANSPORTER. Massive blockbuster bomb has cap loaded warhead that detonates on hitting hard surface!

R.562 CATAPULT PLANE LAUNCH CAR. Close support fighter plane flies over 15 ft. when launched by trackside trigger.

R.566 SPY SATELLITE LAUNCHER. Pre-wound launch mechanism boosts satellite on spy missions as rail car passes trackside trigger.

R.249 EXPLODING CAR. When hit by Battle Space rocket missile, car explodes realistically! Easily re-assembled for further attacks.

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